CORERJ

Cambridge Open-Review Educational Research e-Journal

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the UK, there is a tide of increasing recognition of the importance of open access publishing. Since its inception, CORERJ has been free to submit, free to publish, and free to access – and we are proud to have been recognised for this Diamond Open Access status with our listing on DOAJ.

At the core of CORERJ's mission is to promote the work of the outstanding early career researchers within the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education. As science is more than ever an international endeavour, we are also proud to develop the skills of early career researchers worldwide – and there is a strong international dimension to the work presented in this volume.

We are extremely proud of our authors who explore crucial education questions in post-conflict contexts, including peace education and refugee access to higher education. The international nature of this volume is also highlighted in the breadth of explorations of the practice of teaching English as a Foreign Language - including perspectives of Vietnamese teachers on code-switching, the use of multimodal text for reading comprehension in a Chinese context, and leadership in administration within a higher education context in Hong Kong. Other authors explore language learning itself – including intercultural communicative competences, and the use of creative writing within the language learning curriculum.

Insights around the importance of sustainable school organisation and innovation is highlighted by authors which investigate early childhood education, sustaining the use of new learning platforms, and the evidence for and against mixed age groups in primary schools. Other authors have researched how students are learning in schools – including the use of play to disrupt power in creative arts, how gesture is used as a response to wordless picture books, and issues surrounding GCSE textiles courses.

This publication has been made possible through the work of the CORERJ committee – particularly Giovanna Lucci, who has gone above and beyond her role as Research Communications Officer & Co-editor, and Hogai Aryoubi, this year's Deputy Editor - and I am incredibly grateful to you both for your hard work. I would also like to thank Olivia Marsh, Emily Goodacre, Nasia Kostiou, and Jenny Jiang for their work on this volume as sub-editors, to Tom Cohwitt and Anna Purkiss for their support as Chair of FERSA, and our faculty advisors Professor Susan Robertson and Dr Louis Major for their guidance.

The high calibre of the work submitted this year has resulted in our largest volume to date, with thirteen articles having successfully passed both rigorous peer review and open review stages. For this, I would like to thank our CORERJ Associates - the reviewers who participated in peer review for this volume. Without you, this would not be possible.

It is a privilege to have been elected as Editor to oversee the publication of Volume 6 of the Cambridge Open Review Educational Research Journal. Bringing together these insights, research, and practice in one volume is our pleasure. We hope you enjoy it.

Liz Killen

Editor CORERJ Volume 6
PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

EMBODIED MEANING MAKING: A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE USE OF GESTURE IN THE RESPONSES OF YEAR 1 CHILDREN TO A WORDLESS PICTUREBOOK

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This research paper explores how embodied communication modes affect the dialogic meaning making of year 1 children when responding to wordless picturebooks. Through observing the paired interactions of children, it appears that children are able to use gesture to navigate between intra-dialogic and inter-dialogic meaning making. A review of the literature identifies talk as a key strategy for meaning making (Mercer, 1994; Alexander, 2011). However, the theory of multimodality is used to support the claim that attention should be paid to how children use embodied modes, specifically gesture, as part of meaning making. It is suggested that this is of significance to year 1 children as they have recently experienced the Early Years Foundation Stage, which supports the use of multimodal resources and responses. Methodologically, this research paper is rooted in qualitative, naturalistic inquiry. This approach was selected for its ability to allow for 'thick description' of complex interactions (Geertz, 1993). The research design involved a small-scale, theory-seeking case study that used unstructured video observations. This resulted in multimodal data. Inductive coding, influenced by constructivist grounded theory, was applied to the gestural content of the data. These codes were then grouped into themes that suggested how children used embodied modes to manage space, identify narrative entities, make connections across those entities and to imagine beyond what is immediately present in a visual text. The latter two themes involve creative 'possibility thinking' (Craft, 2000). The prominence of creative 'possibility thinking' makes a case for recognising the value of embodied modes as part of meaning making for year 1 children. However, it is recognised that the research presented is preliminary and the field of embodied meaning making in primary schools deserves further research.

Keywords: EYFS, Dialogic meaning making, Multimodality, Wordless picturebooks

Introduction

The research context, the focus of the study and the research question

Talk is seen as critical to the education process as it is a tool for collaborative *meaning making* (Department for Education, 2014a). Meaning making is where understandings are co-constructed through unique and dynamic interpretations (Postman & Weingartner, 1969). This project is concerned with the *dialogic* meaning making of children in the year 1 classroom. The term dialogic, as used in this paper, is influenced by the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1984). He saw the development of ideas as a process of exchange between voices, both internalised and externalised. However, it is this research paper's contention that meaning making is not limited to talk. The pedagogical approaches of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) seem to support this interpretation as attention is paid not only to what children say but to what they do as part of meaning making (Early Education, 2014). Thus, in the EYFS meaning making appears to be appreciated as *multimodal*. The theory of multimodality proposes that communication encompasses myriad modes (Jewitt, 2014). These modes include *embodied* content, such as posture or gestures. The term embodied is used here to mean communication practices that, at their point of dissemination, exist through bodily movements (Norris, 2004).

Recent literacy research has drawn attention to the value of multimodal artefacts, such as visual texts, for developing meaning making skills (Maine, 2015). Despite an increased appreciation of multimodal artefacts, multimodal responses are under-researched. In light of this lack, a research project was developed to explore how children use embodied meaning making to respond to multimodal artefacts. The project was particularly concerned with the multimodal responses of year 1 children as they have just completed the EYFS. The focus for this project is how children use gesture as part of embodied meaning making. McNeill (1992) suggests gestures connect internalised thoughts and externalised communication, indicating their suitability for supporting dialogic meaning making. In this research paper, the role of gestures in embodied, dialogic meaning making is explored through children's engagement with a wordless picturebook. The research question to be explored in this paper is as follows: *How is dialogic meaning making embodied in the paired reading of a wordless picturebook by year 1 children?*

Literature Review

At the outset of this study a review of the literature was conducted. This involved searching the British Education Index (BEI). Figure 1 indicates the searches' key terms. It also details how terms were combined to refine results. Searches were limited to peer reviewed journals published from 1962 until the present day. The earlier date was chosen to reflect the 1962 publication date of Vygostky's *Thought and Language* in English, indicating the theoretical framework underpinning this project.
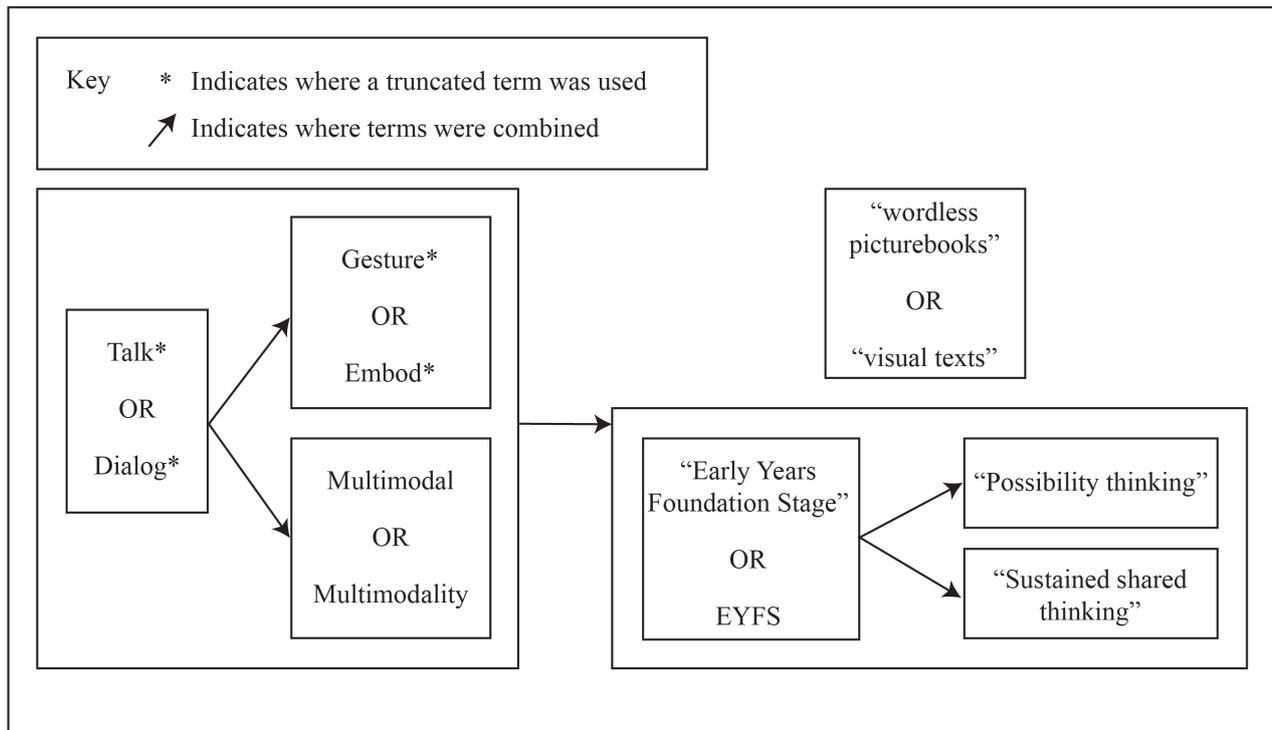
Figure 1. An overview of terms searched for on BEI

Underpinning theoretical framework

Social constructivism holds that all meaning making must first occur on a social level. Vygotsky calls externalised, social meaning making "interpsychological" and later, internalised meaning making "intrapsychological" (1978, p. 57). However, interpsychological meaning making is far from seamless. Instead, a tool is needed to mediate this meeting of minds. Vygotsky (1962) proposes speech. Speech allows children to structure their thoughts about situations into communicable units to be shared with others, which then affect the thoughts and speech of another. Vygotsky (1978) calls this socialised speech. In keeping with Vygotsky's notion of the interpsychological developing into the intrapsychological, socialised speech develops into ego-centric speech. This is when children talk out loud to themselves. This then becomes silent, internalised speech. Despite the development of internalised speech, socialised and ego-centric speech continue to be of use when a child encounters a new situation. The logocentricism of Vygotsky has led to socialised speech being a concern in the classroom, as is evident in Alexander's (2011) *dialogic teaching*.

From dialogic talk to dialogic meaning making

Alexander's dialogic teaching is significant to this project as it links to Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) use of the term *dialogic*. Bakhtin states that there is "an elastic environment" that words navigate between speaker and listener, gathering traces of previous usages, intentions and meanings (1981, p. 276). This is the Bakhtinian dialogic imagination: the ability to hear another voice. In so doing, meanings are co-constructed in a manner similar to that proposed by Vygotsky. However, Vygotskian social constructivism is dialectical, as it seeks synthesis through experience. In contrast, Bakhtin's

dialogic is only ever dialogic if each response evades synthesis and, instead, prompts another response (Wegerif, 2008). Dialogic thinking halts the moment divergent responses halt. There is an issue here, though, if a child is engaged in Bakhtinian dialogic thinking through Vygotskian internalised speech. Externally, it may appear that the dialogic exchange has halted, whereas it has become internalised.

The process of dialogic meaning making is complicated by the theory of multimodality, which highlights that communication is not limited to verbal language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Instead, multimodality recognises that we make meaning in a variety of ways, including gesture. Thus, multimodality can contribute to dialogic exchanges. Gestures are identified as a mode that can connect internalised, dialogic meaning making to externalised situations (McNeill, 1992). This interpretation is not unique to multimodality. Indeed, Vygotsky (1978) recognized gesture's communicative potential. He noted that children will use a grasping gesture as embodied, socialized communication, indicating to another that they want an object. Understood in light of socialized speech, gestures orientate people towards one another and create a connection between the intrapsychological and the interpsychological. Gestures do this by giving physical form to thoughts (McNeill, 1992). In this sense, embodied modes, such as gesture, affect dialogic meaning making by providing an insight into internalised thought.

Multimodality in the EYFS

Using this understanding of gesture, it is important to offer learning environments where embodied modes of meaning making are appreciated. This seems to be provided in the EYFS. The EYFS emphasises the importance of providing varied learning experiences (Early Education, 2014). According to the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project, the efficacy of these experiences is improved by 'sustained shared thinking' (Sylva et al., 2004). Sustained shared thinking is when two or more individuals collaborate to develop, extend and evaluate meaning (Sylva et al., 2004). It is significant that this practice is called sustained shared thinking, not sustained shared talk (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007). I contend that this allows for a broad interpretation of how shared thinking can manifest. The Reggio Emilia approach to learning is a precursor to this assertion. This approach proposes that children have 'one hundred languages', or multiple modes of expression, including embodied modes (Edwards, Gandani & Forman, 1998). I argue that these sentiments towards meaning making need to be appreciated beyond the EYFS. Meaning making in the year 1 classroom should not be limited to verbal modes but should encompass a range of modes, including embodied practices (Nyland et al., 2008; Rinaldi, 2001).

Picturebooks as multimodal artefacts that support multimodal responses

A pivotal part of multimodal research has involved analysing visual modes (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013). This has involved identifying visual material as texts that can be read

for meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress, 2003). Wordless picturebooks are an example of a multimodal, visual text (Arizpe, Colomer, Martinez-Roldan & Bagelman, 2014). *Wordless picturebooks* are texts where images carry the weight of meaning (Arizpe, 2013; Nikolajeva, 2005). Hassett (2010) asserts that a wordless picturebook will garner different modes in response to it. She draws attention to how gesture might be used to support spatial elements of a visual text. For example, the extension of a reader's arm can indicate the dynamic trajectory of a character, despite their static rendering on the page. In this sense, gestures provide a three-dimensional element to a two-dimensional text. This is an example of multimodal transduction, where the mode of communication switches to a new mode during the process of interpretation and meaning making (Jewitt et al., 2016; Kress, 1997). This makes a case for the use of spatially-orientated embodied modes, such as gesture. If the artefact's mode is spatial, the mode of interpretation should have the opportunity to be spatial as well.

Research Design

Methodology: The influence of naturalistic inquiry

This research project's methodology utilises naturalistic inquiry, within an exploratory case study. Like social constructivism, naturalistic inquiry asserts that "realities are multiple, constructed and holistic" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Moreover, instead of offering positivist generalisations and causalities, naturalistic inquiry offers "time- and context-bound working hypotheses" (p. 37). By acknowledging that meanings are socially constructed it is not possible to know enough about the prospective research context to design in advance a flawless research plan. Instead, the researcher enters the field with research questions and initial actions but allows subsequent steps to unfold in response to the context and participants. It is for this reason that this research project utilises aspects of grounded theory, which will be discussed below.

The context of the case study

The case study was conducted in a single Year 1 classroom within a suburban primary school, during guided reading sessions. The research involved six children completing an activity in pairs. This being a theory seeking, exploratory case study a purposive sample of the class cohort was selected. All members of the class were given the option to participate in the research. Of the 17 class members, 11 wanted to participate and had the necessary permissions. I purposefully chose to focus on the observations of six children who reflected a range of attainment and communication competencies. Initially, I was unsure about whether to construct purposive pairings that could lead to informational reinforcement or to construct deviant cases that could provide informational variation (Flyvberg, 2006). However, indicating the project's emergent research design, the children said they wanted to choose their partners. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper and are as follows (Table 1):

Table 1
An overview of the participants and their pairings

Pair	Pseudonyms	Age related expectation (ARE)	Speech, language and communication needs
1	Pippa	Above ARE	No
	Flora	At ARE	No
2	Mila	Above ARE	No
	Thomas	Below ARE	Yes
3	Fran	Below ARE	No
	Sam	Above ARE	No

The research activity

The research activity was a paired reading of the wordless picturebook *Journey* (Becker, 2013). Each paired activity was recorded using a fixed camcorder. A crucial quality of the data generated was its multimodality. Additionally, the comprehensiveness of the video data resisted prematurely reducing it to codes (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff, 2010). Instead, the data could be repeatedly scrutinised throughout the transcription process. The data was transcribed using the ELAN annotation tool (Wittenburg, Brugman, Russel, Klassmann, Sloetjes, 2006). This tool creates 'tiers' of transcription, allowing for multiple modes of communication to be recognised. Below is a diagram that identifies the transcription and coding tiers I created (Figure 2).

Original video data visible throughout transcription and coding process

Language transcribed for each child.

Gesture transcribed for each child.

Verbal and gestural codes.

Critical instances were moments where I perceived there to be interesting embodied content either supporting the role of embodied modes in meaning making or challenging this suggestion.

Figure 2. A diagram of annotation tiers used for transcription in ELAN.

Although ELAN was used for the transcription process, the presentation of data in this research project used a different method. The method used for the latter was influenced by Norris (2004), who created a multimodal transcription involving sequential still images with text overlaid. The advantage of this method is that the simultaneity of communication modes can be indicated. I adopted this style, by using arrows to indicate gesture direction, but simplified the presentation of talk, using text boxes (Figure 3).
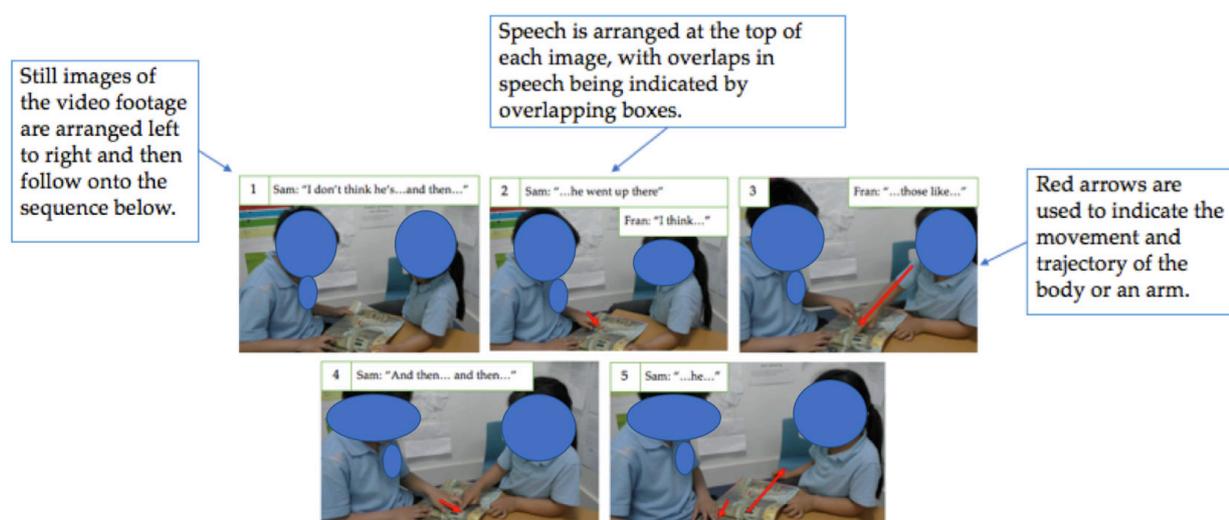
Figure 3: An example of how this project's multimodal data will be presented.

Ethics

This research project adhered to British Educational Research Association's (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2011, 2018). BERA (2018) stipulates voluntary informed consent as a prerequisite for participation in research. When working with children, BERA advises seeking the approval of "responsible others" (p. 15). I sought consent from the school's head teacher and the children's guardians. Seeking consent from adults on behalf of children is a preliminary step as children have the right to directly express their views on aspects affecting them (United Nations, 1989). Therefore, researchers need to facilitate children "to give fully informed consent" (BERA, 2018, p. 11). For this project, this involved circle time discussions with the children about the research. I stressed to the children that they could decide if they participated and that they could change their mind and stop being part of the research at any point (BERA, 2018). Additionally, I explained that details would not be shared and that anything said or done during the research would not be attributed to them (BERA, 2018). The issues of confidentiality and anonymity are heightened with video content due to identifying features such as uniform logos (Robson, 2011b). For this project such identifying features are obscured and all names are pseudonyms.

Grounded theory and inductive coding

Once the video recordings had been transcribed, the coding process began. This process was influenced by constructivist grounded theory, which asserts that knowledge and, thus, theories can only ever be

subjectively constructed, not discovered (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011). The influence of constructivist grounded theory on this project's research design meant that pre-existing coding schemas, such as the Scheme for Educational Dialogue Analysis (Hennessy et al., 2016), were rejected. Instead, inductive, open coding was used (Creswell, 2012). The language used in coding is not neutral. Instead, it indicates research values. To raise my awareness of my own assumptions, I repeatedly reviewed the data and the codes assigned to it. The codes and the definition of the codes used for the data are given below (Table 2). At the outset, the data was transcribed for both verbal and gestural content. Additionally, codes were allocated for both verbal and gestural content in order to facilitate interpretations of how gestures support dialogic meaning making. However, this paper will foreground the gestural content of the data.

Table 2
Codes and their definitions

Codes	Definitions
Commanding space	When the whole body of limbs are angled to block the movement of the other child.
Creating distance	When the whole body or limbs are angled away from a space.
Following partner	When the whole body is angled towards the other child, reducing the distance between them.
Showing uncertainty	The elevation of one of both upper limbs in either an upward or peripheral direction.
Directing	Moving the hands so as to conduct the movements of the other hand.
Pointing	Extending the arm towards a distinct object, affirming existence and location.
Linking objects	The movement back and forth of a finger or hand between two or more objects.
Tracing motion	Moving a finger or hand over a section of the book to indicate how an entity moves.
Enacting	Moving either the whole or parts of the body to act out the story.
Illustrating	Broad movements of the hands so as to express abstract qualities.

Findings

Presentation of the data

In the first instance, the codes assigned to the data and their frequency will be provided (Table 3). Despite this research project being a qualitative inquiry, the use of a quantitative approach to the data at the outset helped me to identify significant aspects of the data, both in terms of increased and reduced frequency, and what aspects warranted further qualitative analysis. Table 3 shows that pointing was the most frequent code across the pairings, indicating a concern with identifying the features of the wordless picturebook. However, within this task, one pair of children showed an additional preference for another set of actions, namely linking objects and tracing motion. This suggests an interest in creating connections between features.

Table 3
Codes and their frequency

Code	Pair 1	Pair 2	Pair 3	Total instances
Commanding space	8	7	5	20
Creating distance	3	4	4	11
Following partner	8	4	1	13
Showing uncertainty	2	2	1	5
Directing	8	4	5	17
Pointing	46	30	21	97
Linking objects	21	5	3	29
Tracing motion	11	6	7	24
Enacting	14	10	3	27
Illustrating	6	3	3	12

From the creation of codes to the construction of themes

Having assigned codes to the data, I constructed four descriptive themes: managing space; identifying entities and negotiating priorities; making connections and identifying causality; imagining and becoming beyond the self. The first theme is concerned with how children use a combination of verbal and gestural modes to orchestrate space. The second theme looks at how children use verbal and gestural deictics to identify salient aspects in the text. The third theme notices how pointing can be refined to connect objects and establish causality. The final theme investigates how the children use enactment, as a form of transduction, to imagine themselves into alternative possibilities. Exemplification of the themes will be provided through the analysis of critical instances. These instances address issues pertinent to the research question and, thus, traverse issues related to dialogic meaning making and sustained shared thinking. Below is a representation of how the codes were assigned to each theme, including where codes appear in more than one theme (Figure 4).
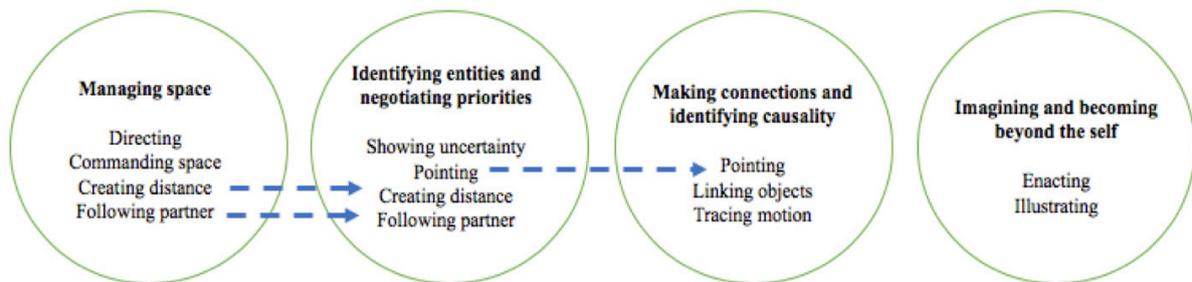
Figure 4. A diagrammatic representation of the assignment of codes to themes.

Theme one: using embodied modes to manage space and mirror narrative effect

The code 'commanding space' suggests an assertion of social dominance. This interpretation was indicated in the first research activity where, for each pairing, there were instances when one child pushed away the arm of their partner. Figure 5 captures one such occasion. Sam is expressing an opinion at the same time as expressing uncertainty: *"I don't think he's... and then..."*. Fran seemingly interprets his uncertainty as an opportunity to offer her own opinion: *"I think ...those like..."*. However, Fran's contribution is interrupted by Sam pushing her hand away from the book. His embodied contribution acts as a negative case as his pushing gesture seems to limit the potential for dialogic meaning making. This reading is supported by a subsequent rise in volume in Sam's voice as he returns to where he had earlier trailed off.
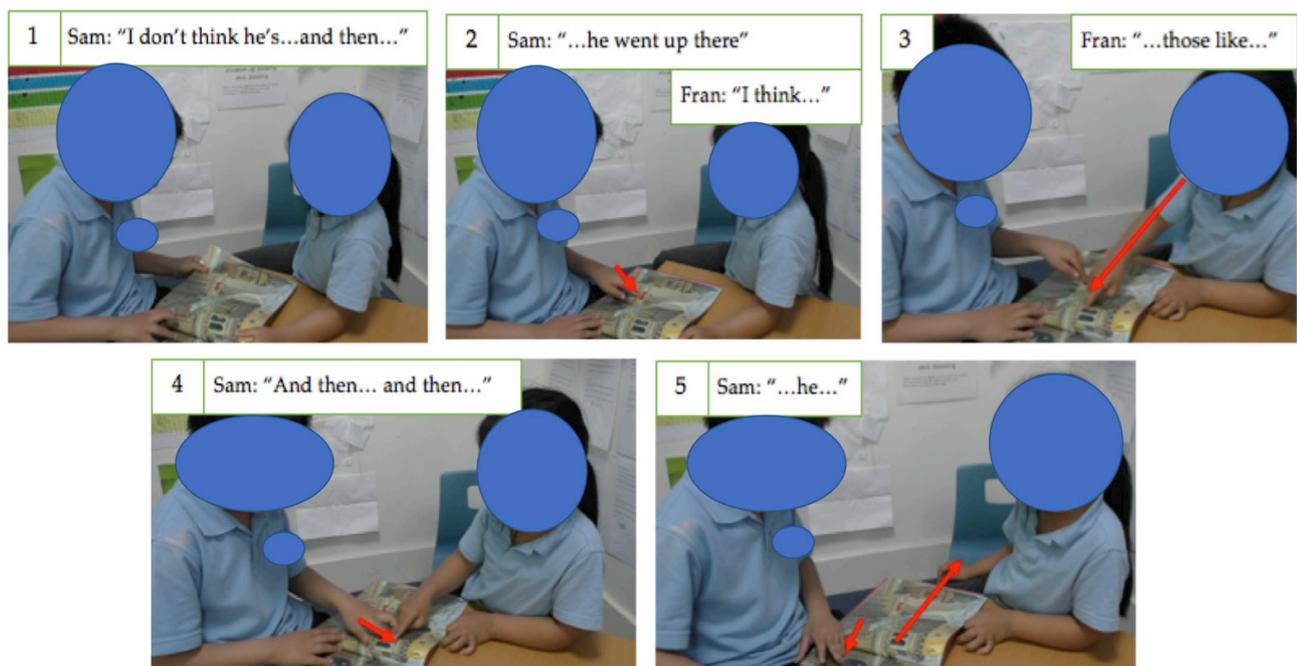
Figure 5. Commanding space for social dominance.

In contrast to this example, there were instances when commanding space appeared to contribute to meaning making (Figure 6). In Figure 6, Pippa instructs Flora not to look at the book, managing the space by folding over a double page spread and using her body to reduce Flora's access to the text.
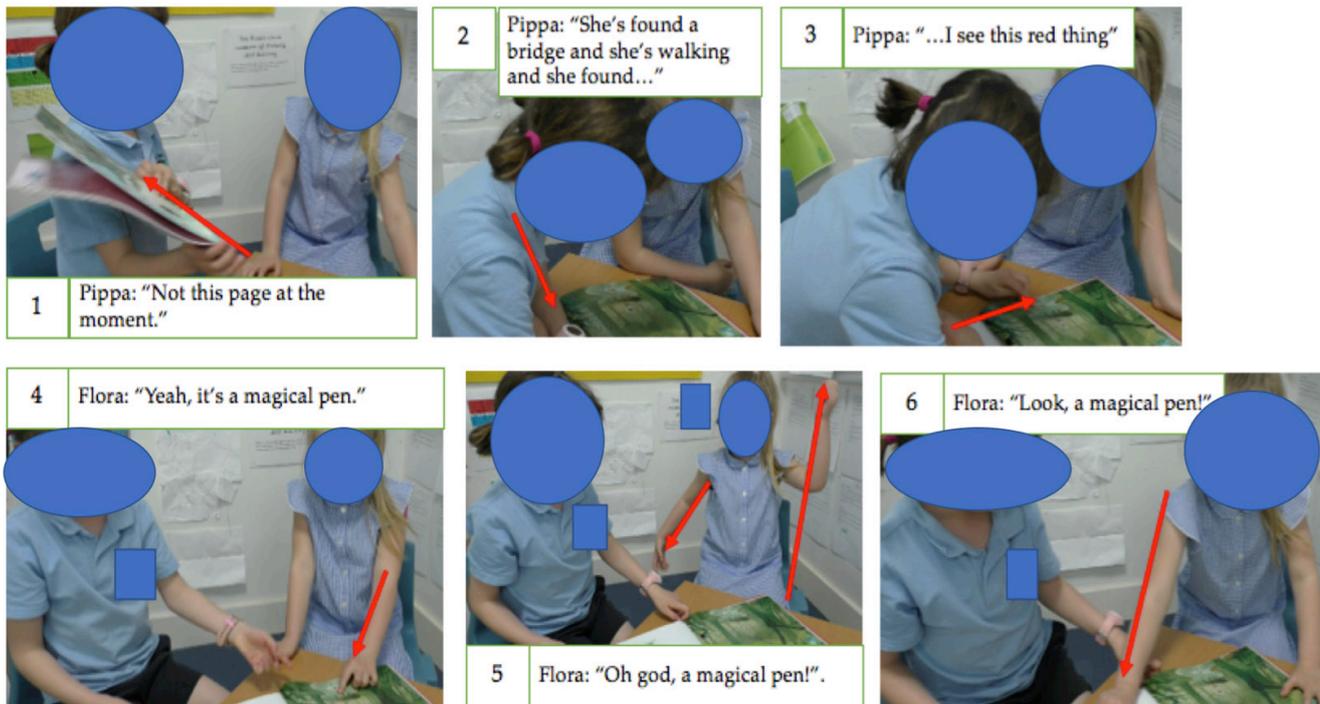
Figure 6. Commanding space for social dominance.

Nikolajeva (2010) notes that page-turning is a key mechanism for creating narrative gaps in wordless picturebooks. On this occasion, the double page spread means the narrative gap is reduced. Pippa appears to have read both images, identified the causal connection between the two and is attempting to enhance the narrative gap between the two images for her partner. In so doing, Pippa extends the book's narrative beyond the two-dimensional page into the three-dimensional space shared by her and Flora. Pippa's attempt to create narrative suspense through commanding the space is supported by her verbal content, with a significant ellipsis: *"She's found a bridge and she's walking around and she found... I see this red thing."* Throughout this, Flora has followed Pippa by leaning her body towards her partner. Pippa responds to this by creating distance between herself, the book and Flora as she reveals the other side of the double page spread. Flora's response is memorable. She quickly extends her left hand towards the left-hand side of the book pointing at and labelling the red crayon: *"Oh God, it's a magical pen"*. Flora leans her body away from the book as she extends both arms over head in an illustrative gesture, implying narrative significance. Having momentarily withdrawn her body she quickly leans forward and extends her right hand towards the right-hand page, pointing at the red crayon as she implores *"Look, a magic pen!"*. Pippa's commanding of space appears to control the narrative pace, allowing for Flora to place narrative emphasis on the child's act of discovering the red crayon. What is more, Flora's leaning forwards and backwards indicates how following a partner and creating distance can indicate shared attention and shared thinking.

Theme two: using gesture to identify entities and negotiate priorities

Verbal labelling and gestural pointing were frequently occurring codes within the data. The prominence of these codes necessitates questioning how they are being used and whether they contribute to meaning making or shared sustained thinking. In one instance (Figure 7), Sam succinctly labels the contents and actions of a page: *"He drops four pieces of paper. Then he did that. And then he did a line. And then he went out the door."* Sam's gesture is synchronised with this verbal content, discretely pointing from one aspect of the picture to the next. During this, Fran follows her partner, without moving her arms from her body's midline, and briefly utters *"yep"*. Although Sam is demonstrating his ability to use an embodied mode alongside his verbal mode to identify salientities in the text, it does not seem to contribute to dialogic meaning making as there is no clear sign of an exchange between him and Fran. However, it is possible to interpret labelling and pointing as preliminary steps towards meaning making. This is because pivotal entities need to be identified and agreed upon before their significance is negotiated by using demonstrations of uncertainty.
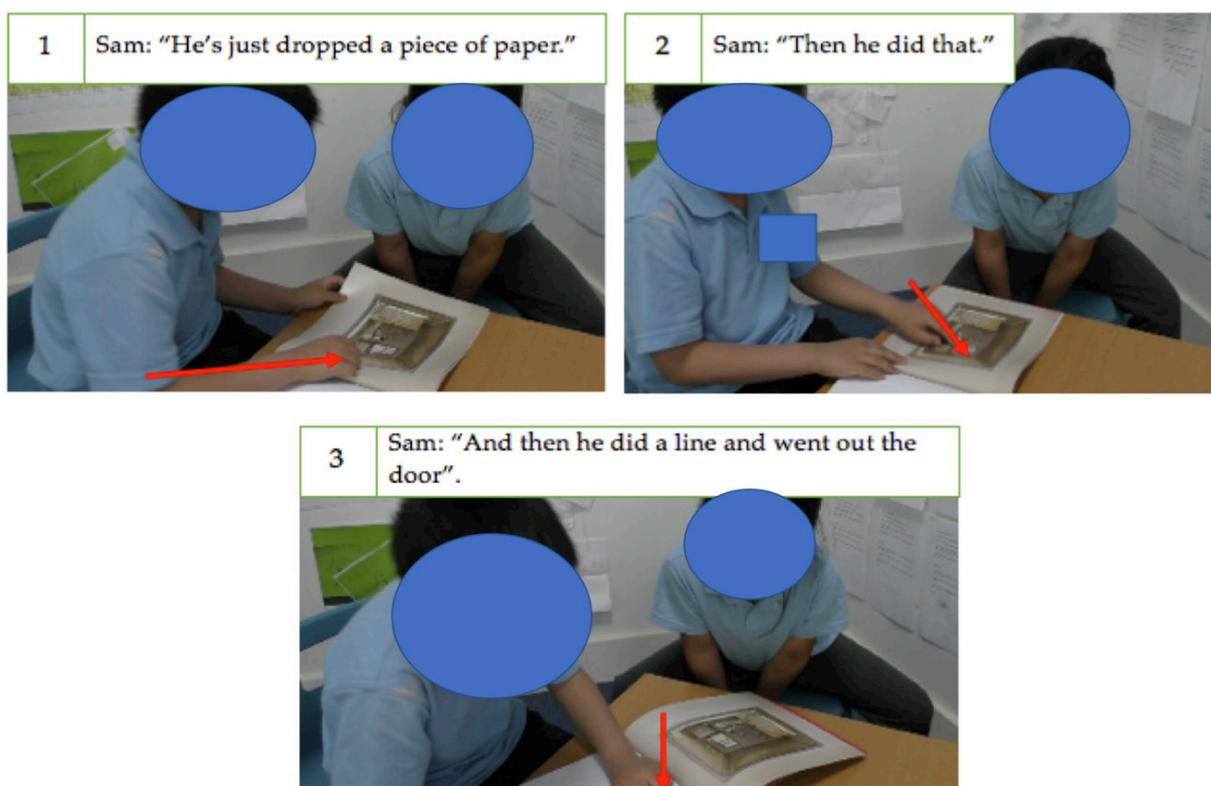
Figure 7. Labelling and pointing to identify entities.

In Figure 8, Sam uses the succinct declarative statement *"And then he's going to bed"* to label the text. He synchronises a pointing gesture with his verbal labelling and then rotates the book towards Fran. However, instead of succinctly agreeing as in an earlier excerpt, Fran replies: *"Nah. And he's... he's reading a book in there and then he went... Then he was going to..."*. In this brief segment, Fran quickly moves from disagreeing, to labelling, via expressing uncertainty. I suggest that Fran's disagreement

with Sam, along with her expression of uncertainty provides an opportunity for Sam to reconsider his earlier assertion. This interpretation is based on Sam's gestures. At the moment of Fran's *"Nah"*, Sam opens both palms up and away from the midline of his body, showing uncertainty. This gestural moment connects with McNeill's (1992) suggestion that gesture gives insight into moments of discord between thought and discourse. However, Sam remains silent as Fran begins her interpretation, meaning his use of an embodied mode to show uncertainty does not interrupt Fran's verbal meaning making. It is only when Fran herself hesitates and expresses uncertainty that Sam iterates and exaggerates his open palm gesture, combining it with verbal content: *"But, what...?"*. Although Sam is not categorically disagreeing with Fran he is unsure about accepting her contribution. His question and exaggerated gesture prompt Fran to continue and to develop her idea further: *"Then he was going to..."*. When Fran's speech trails off Sam seems to interpret this as an opportunity to reengage, both verbally and gesturally. It seems that the embodied and verbal manifestations of uncertainty by both children in this extract allow them to move from labelling and pointing to negotiating an understanding together. Significantly, it is when one child uses embodied modes, without complementary verbal modes, that the other child can verbally extend an idea without vocal interruption. This indicates how the children are using gestures to support the construction of dialogic meaning making.
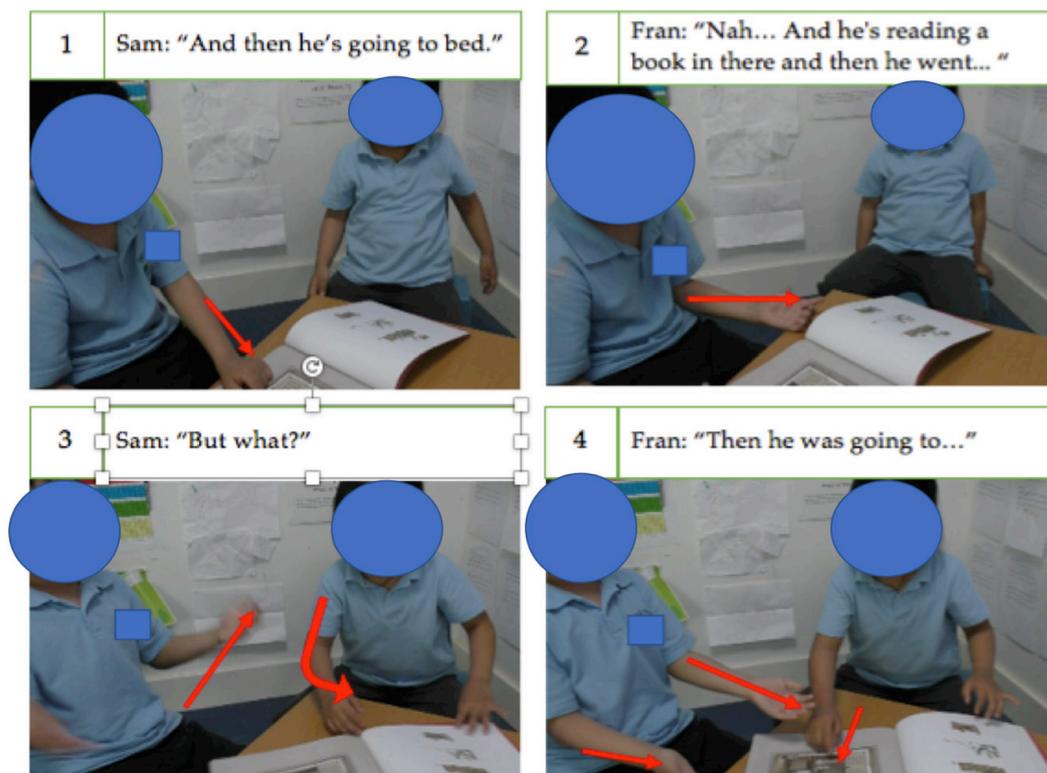
Figure 8. Using uncertainty to develop ideas.

Theme three: using gesture to make connections and identify causality

Within the data corpus there were instances when the children refined the gesture of pointing to indicate character and narrative trajectories. For example, pointing transitioned into tracing motion and linking

objects. This prompts a consideration as to what impact these movements have on meaning making. Nodelman (1988) has suggested that wordless picturebooks are particularly suited to depicting action as opposed to feelings. Nikolajeva reasons that this is because the primacy of the visual mode is "naturally well suited to the description of spatial relations", whereas conventions of characterisation are harder to execute (2002, p. 92). Using these assertions, it is possible to suggest that tracing motion and linking objects contribute to meaning making by creating three-dimensional representations of action previously restricted to two-dimensional, visual modes.

In Figure 9, Mila starts with labelling and pointing at an aspect of the visual text: *"She's now at a big..."*. However, Mila trails off and Thomas finishes the labelling and pointing process: *"At a castle"*. Significantly, his pointing transitions to tracing motion as his right index finger follows the flow of a body of water depicted on the book's page. Mila then offers a clarification to Thomas' interpretation of the building. She proposes it is a kingdom. She then goes on to justify her opinion by saying *"because, it goes like that"*, tracing her finger over the water. I suggest that Thomas' gesture of tracing the motion of the water contributed to the pair's spatial understanding of the picture. In particular, Mila seems to recognise the complex nature of the water network when she says *"then, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla. Like that"*. At this point, she deviates from tracing the motion of the water to illustratively scuttling her fingers across the page. Mila's scuttling fingers provide a three-dimensional, spatial rendering of this two- dimensional, visual representation. The gestures of tracing and illustrating in this excerpt contribute to understanding the spatial relationships in the text.
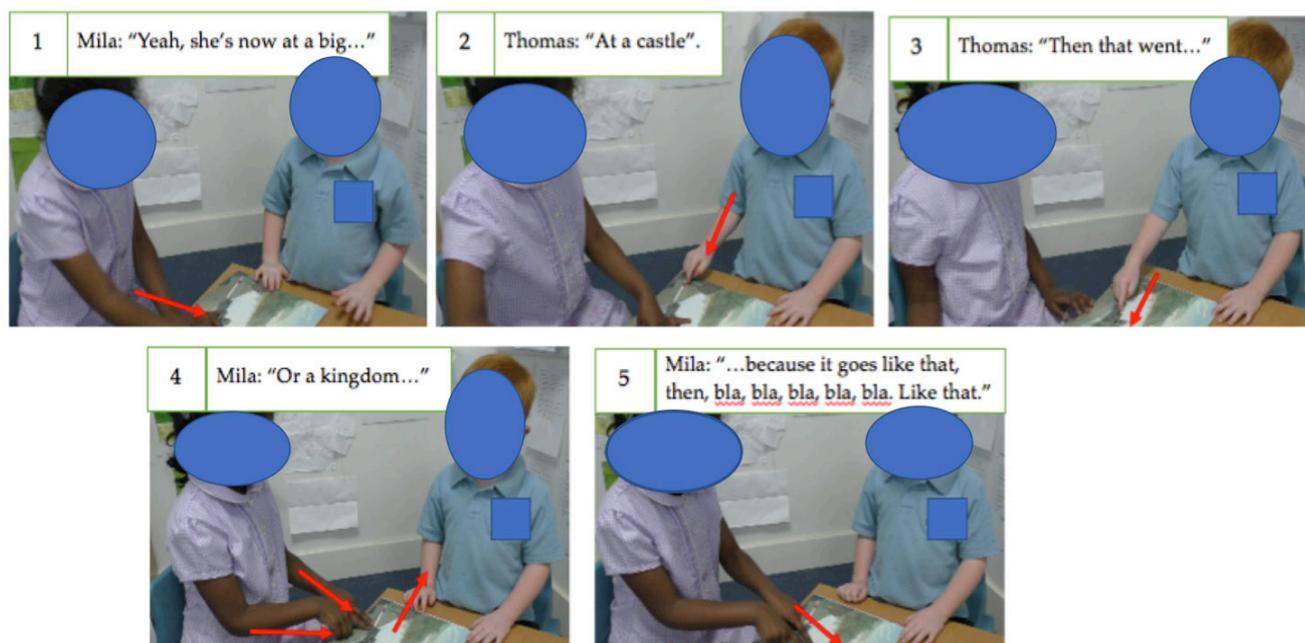
Figure 9. Tracing motion to understand spatial relationships.

Although Nodelman (1988) and Nikolajeva (2002) assert the suitability of wordless picturebooks for depicting action as opposed to feelings, one partnership in the research used gesture to identify causality of action but also causality of sentiment. Pippa and Flora used the action of linking objects

significantly more than the other pairings, whereas all pairings used comparable amounts of tracing motion. In so doing, Pippa and Flora were able to explore the cause and effect of actions on character's feelings.

In Figure 10, Pippa attempts to express her opinion about one of the characters: *"Um, I think the girl is sad, feeling sad, because, feeling sad"*. Her use of the word 'because' suggests that she is using reasoning language to identify causality. However, the causal relationship she is attempting to establish is unclear. Instead, the quality of her speech is tautologous. In contrast, by paying attention to her gestures it is possible to gain an insight into Pippa's intrapsychological process and perceive the causality her verbal content is lacking. She points to a character and then links this character with a static scooter, her finger moving rapidly between the two. Her gesture fills the gap in her verbal content, providing an embodied complement to the word 'because': the child is sad because she is not playing on her scooter. At the end of Pippa's declarative statement, Flora points to the previous page, questioning *"What is that?"*. Flora's pointing and questioning prompts Pippa to follow her partner. Pippa traces her finger between the characters depicted on the page and then drags her finger from them to the earlier character, saying *"These aren't playing with her"*. This time, although lacking the word 'because', Pippa's linking gesture can be seen to elaborate on the causality identified earlier. Namely, the child is sad not simply because she is not playing with her scooter, but because she does not have anyone willing to join her in her scooter play. This exchange between Pippa and Flora has shown how gestures can complement verbal content in the identification of causality. What is more, that causality can be linked to feelings and characterisation, aspects of narrative story telling previously seen as minimal in wordless picturebooks.

Figure 10. Linking objects to bridge narrative gaps.

Theme four: using the body to imagine and extend beyond the self

Previous research has shown that children are capable of enacting the world presented by a text (Sipe, 2007). When they do so they use their bodies creatively to engage in possibility thinking (Craft, 2000). Furthermore, by using embodied modes to bring the abstract and the visual into the physical realm they are using transduction to make meaning (Kress, 1997; Franks & Jewitt, 2001; Jewitt et al., 2016). A crucial aspect of this involves using physical, three-dimensional space to make meaning from two-dimensional artefacts (Hassett, 2010). In this research project, examples of enacting and illustrating are seen to support sustained shared thinking as well as possibility thinking as a style of meaning making.

In Figure 11, Mila begins by labelling the contents of the book. She uses a hesitative pause to alter the direction of her labelling before letting her verbal content trail off and moving into gestural enactment, replicating the action of a character. Her switch from a verbal to an embodied mode allows her to move from commentary on content to interpretation of the situation. She then seeks Thomas' agreement of her physical interpretation. Thomas verbally agrees but then, significantly, provides his own enactment of another character. He places his fists under his chin and slumps his body forward.

1 Mila: "In this book, we've... there is some people and..."

2 Mila: "...this person is like".

3 Mila: "Isn't he?"

Thomas: "Yeah, and that person's like that."

4 Mila: "Yeah."

5 Mila: "What do you think he feels like?"

6 Thomas: "Um, not, not happy? Cross?"

Mila: "Or, like, um bored or something."
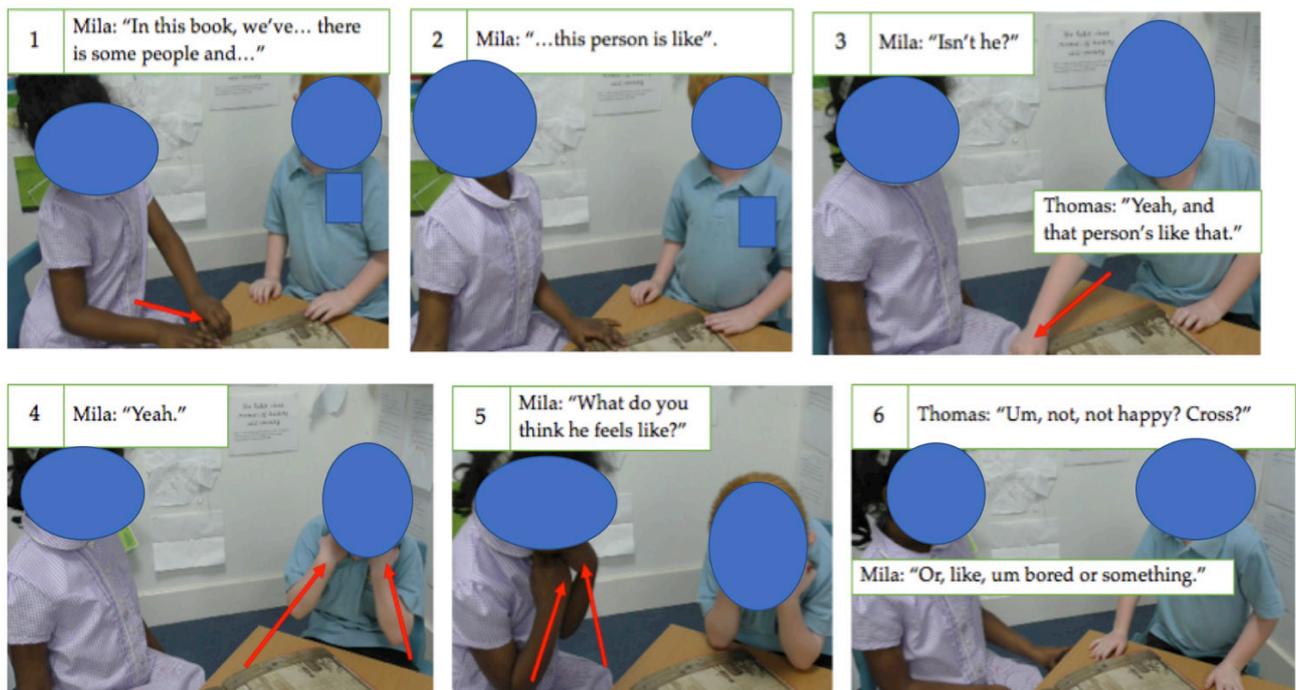
Figure 11. Enacting to interpret latent aspects in a text

Thus, both children have used embodied modes to enact feelings portrayed on the page. Mila then uses this shared physical experience to seek a verbal label for these feelings. The pair come up with the phrases *"not happy"*, *"cross"*, *"bored"*. Mila's pause and transition to

embodied enactment seem to not only provide silent time for her to refine her interpretation but also provided Thomas with license to approach the text non-verbally. Moreover, the exchange and refinement of enacting gestures between Mila and Thomas seems to prompt their verbal exchange, refining their interpretation of the feelings represented in the text. Through enactment, the children developed an idea about a latent aspect of the text. The example shows how illustrating can induce possibility thinking as gestures make salient more than is immediately presented in the text.

In another instance (Figure 12), Sam has just asked Fran if she has something to say. This follows an early episode where Sam has established a spatial and causal connection between a bird and a flying carpet. Fran leans away from the table opens her arms out to either side to enact flying. Her gesture is expansive, giving it an illustrative quality, indicating the spacious nature of the journey being undertaken. Interestingly, Sam seems to respond to Fran's transition from enacting to illustrating by tracing the motion of an arch across the page. He appears to be establishing a connection between Fran's physical manifestation and the implied narrative in the text. Fran's illustrating is complemented by a transition away from labelling to narrating: *"And then, he flew over the sky and it was night-time and he was going home, back to his home"*. Fran's illustrating seems to have allowed for possibility thinking in the form of her constructing narrative elements that are not depicted, as the page she is responding to does not visually indicate the journey's destination. Fran uses gesture as part of possibility thinking.
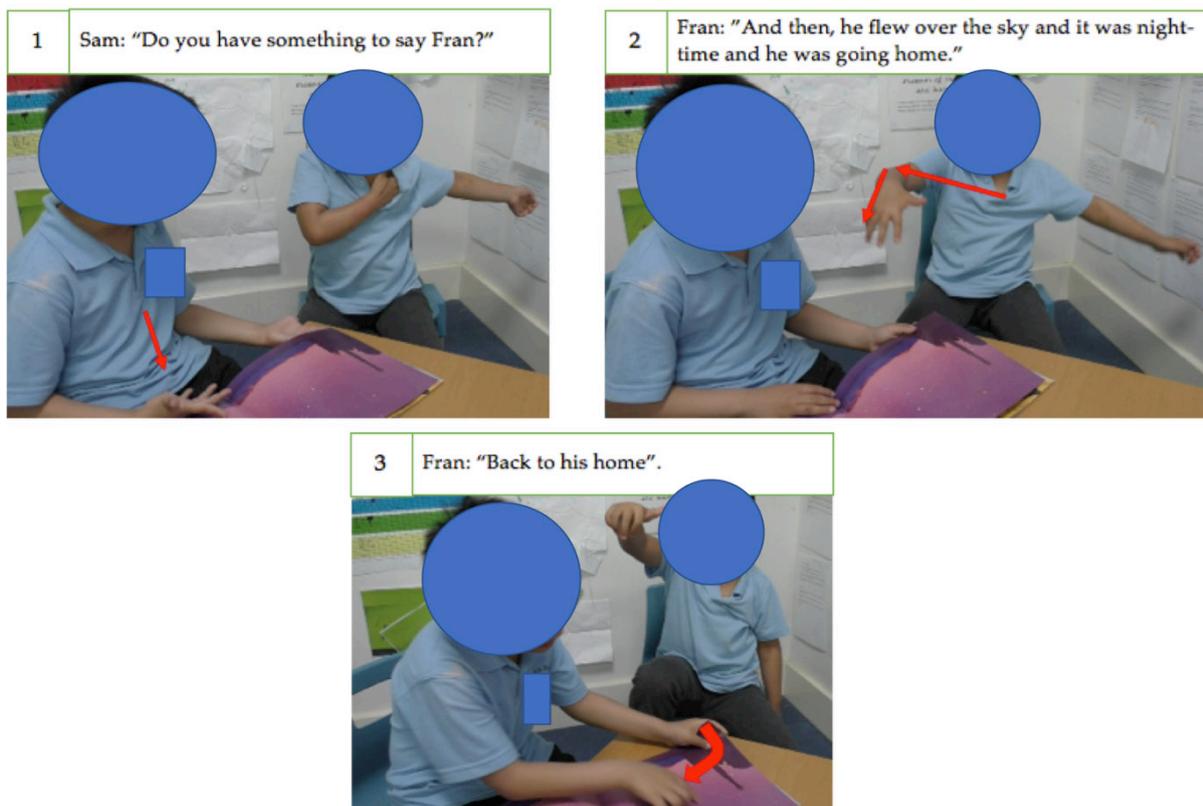
Figure 12. Illustrating to enable possibility thinking

Discussion and conclusion

How is dialogic meaning making embodied in the paired reading of a wordless picturebook by year 1 children?

Embodied modes link intra-dialogic and inter-dialogic meaning making

Embodied modes affect dialogic meaning making by providing an insight into internalised thought. Gestures, for example, connect the intrapsychological and interpsychological. Hence, when considering embodied, dialogic meaning making this should be taken to mean 'intra-dialogic' and 'inter-dialogic' processes. 'Intra-dialogic' is used here to indicate how a child navigates their own thought process and connects it with their external environment. 'Inter-dialogic' is used to indicate how a child interprets the thoughts of another and connects them to their own. The act of managing space could be seen as counter-productive to meaning making as such movements might hinder inter-dialogic meaning making; when a child uses his body to control space not only does he impede another child's range of movement he also interrupts the other child's embodied and verbal contributions to meaning making. However, the children who commanded space in this project appeared to be doing so when also negotiating an idea on an intra-dialogic level. Thus, the children may be attempting to control the discourse space by controlling the physical space, giving themselves time to externalise their internalised speech. Nevertheless, 'commanding space' for intra-dialogic meaning making runs the risk of hindering inter-dialogic meaning making.

The themes of identifying narrative entities and making connections are linked as children used pointing, linking objects and tracing motion to traverse narrative gaps, establish unexpressed narrative causality and imagine beyond what was visible. In brief, the children had to make salient that which was not explicitly there, both to themselves and to each other. Thus, the effects of embodied meaning making in this case was to affect possibility thinking as it gave visible representations to abstractions. In turn, this allowed the children to imagine beyond what was explicitly presented in the text. In one pairing a child used her arms to represent a bird flying to its home, imagining a narrative trajectory not present in the text. This imaginative potential links embodied modes to the pedagogy of the EYFS. The EYFS recognises imaginative play as crucial to development (Department for Education, 2014b). The aptitude of children to imagine does not disappear at the start of Year 1. This assertion makes a case for the continued recognition of embodied imagination and meaning making beyond reception. This seems particularly apt, given the increased emphasis on reading comprehension as part of the 'reading for pleasure' remit with the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2014a)

Implications: recognising and valuing multimodal responses

The research project revealed a range of effects caused by embodied modes, such as establishing narrative and causal connections. Above all, they showed the potential of embodied modes for meaning making and that children are competent at utilising these modes. An implication of this research is that teachers could provide opportunities for children to access multimodal resources and to support multimodal responses. For example, teachers could regularly integrate small world play into literacy learning. This would allow Year 1 teachers to be sensitive to the multimodal learning environment

of the EYFS that children have just left. Additionally, it is crucial that teachers 'listens to' children's embodied modes. This could take the form of integrating enriched provision in the year 1 classroom, where children have the opportunity to engage with a range of multimodal resources and teachers can observe what children do as much as what they say in order to support learning. These suggestions should be able to occur without jeopardising the role of talk as the research project recognises that talk continues to be a crucial communication mode. What is more, the theory of multimodality asserts that modes are not to be analysed or assessed in isolation but in concert as the meaning will be "more than the sum of the parts" (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013, p. 96).

Reflections: project limitations and suggestions for further research

This project's strength is that it has provided an insight into the potential of embodied modes to affect meaning making. Moreover, it has drawn attention to the skills children have of interpreting wordless picturebooks, both for linking narrative entities and imagining narrative trajectories. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the project. In so doing, it will be possible to outline suggestions for further research. A methodological limitation was that this project was a small scale, case study. The cohort sample was necessarily small due to the time-restraints of the project. Moreover, it has been acknowledged, that the selection of the school was a convenience sample. However, this study design limitation enables the suggestion that an alteration to the boundaries of a future case could generate interesting research insights. At the outset, it would be preferable to conduct observations over a longer period of time and with a larger cohort of children. This would allow for a greater body of data for comparison.

A crucial aspect of this project was the assertion of the impact of the children's recent, previous experiences of the EYFS on their meaning making strategies in year 1. My interpretation of the data suggests that children in year 1 are adept at using embodied modes to make meaning, both intra-dialogically and inter- dialogically. The need to continue to research the effects of embodied modes on meaning making seems particularly pressing when the case has already been made for the value of multimodal texts in meaning making (Maine, 2015). The recognised and supported modes of response need to keep pace with the acknowledged modes of representation. It would be interesting to see whether these embodied modes continue to be used later in primary school. This suggests the possibility of a longitudinal study that could investigate how multimodal meaning making develops and alters during the course of children's time at primary school.

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DOES 'WOW' TRANSLATE TO AN 'A'? EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF VIRTUAL REALITY ASSISTED MULTIMODAL TEXT ON CHINESE GRADE 8 EFL LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION

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In recent years, the incorporation of multimedia into linguistic input has opened a new horizon in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). In the reading aspect, the advent of virtual reality (VR) technology extends the landscape of reading repertoire by engaging learners with auditory, visual and tactile multimodal input. However, few studies have yet examined the pedagogical potential of VR technology in enhancing learners' reading comprehension. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing the effects of VR-assisted multimodal input on learners' expository reading comprehension. Three classes including 140 Chinese 8th grade EFL students participate in this study, and these classes are randomly assigned into two experimental groups and one control group: VR-assisted multimodal text group, video-assisted multimodal text group and print-based monomodal text group. This study adopts mixed methods methodology and triangulates pre-post-retention tests, questionnaires and interview data to compare three modes of text input on learners' reading performance and explore learners' cognitive processing in the multimodal learning environment. This study is the first attempt to integrate VR technology with input presentation and cognitive processing in second language reading comprehension and offered a new line of theorisation of VR-assisted multimodal learning in the cognitive field of SLA.

Keywords: Multimodal input, Virtual reality, Second language acquisition, Reading comprehension, Cognitive load

Introduction

As the world told becomes the world shown, dynamic and multiple representations by using multimedia tools redefine the conventional print-based text and encourage different conceptualisations and different ways of thinking (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). This implies that conventional theories of reading comprehension based on paper texts in second language acquisition (SLA) can no longer give a full account on the way people process multimodal texts including sound, words, images, and movement. It is worth exploring how different modes of input affect readers' understanding as well as how readers process different text input and construct multiple mental models. In this study, I used the term "multimodal text" (Walsh, 2007, p. 26) to encompass a broad concept of engaging in, interacting with, and reflecting upon the text presented by different multimedia. This study is situated in the cognitive account of SLA, aiming to find out the potential impact of multimedia on reading comprehension, specifically how EFL learners decode word meanings and construct mental representations of the screen-based multimodal text in the memory system that differs from the print-based monomodal text. This article is a short summary of an ongoing study that aims to fully gauge the efficacy of multimedia, especially VR technology, in providing multimodal input and enhancing Chinese 8th grade EFL students reading comprehension and offers a new category of multimodal text in the scholarship of SLA.

Theoretical Background

Conceptual Framework

This study draws on the cognitive theory of learning with media (Moreno, 2006) and examines the efficacy of multimodal input in enhancing learners' L2 reading comprehension. The cognitive theory of learning with multimedia adapts from the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2002), which has been adopted as the theoretical framework by many empirical studies to investigate the effects of multimedia on learners' listening comprehension (Jones & Plass, 2002), vocabulary acquisition (Jones & Plass, 2002; Altarriba & Knickerbocker, 2011) and reading comprehension (Plass, Chun, Mayer, & Leutner, 2003) in the L2 field. The cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2002) incorporates Paivio's dual coding theory, Baddeley's model of working memory and Sweller's theory of cognitive load and the central concept is that the dual input through words and pictures within learners' working memory capacity together with prior knowledge can promote learning outcome (see Figure 1).
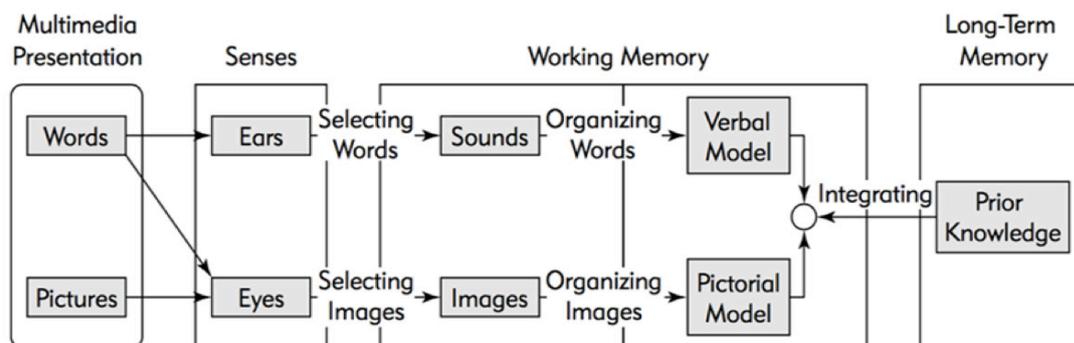
Figure 1. Cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2002)

Moreno (2006) expands Mayer's theory (2002) to include "media such as virtual reality, agent-based, and case-based learning environments" (p. 313) by adding manipulative input that enters into tactile sensory memory (see Figure 2), because the development of multimedia technologies such as VR platform extends multimedia learning to a multidimensional level beyond the scope of 2D verbal and pictorial input. For example, haptic feedback in VR platform allows information to be reinforced through the tactile sensory modality. Hence, VR-assisted input can provide learners with visual presentation, auditory narration and tactile interaction in the reading activity. In brief, this framework shows how multimodal input can promote learners' active cognitive processes through a triple memory model.
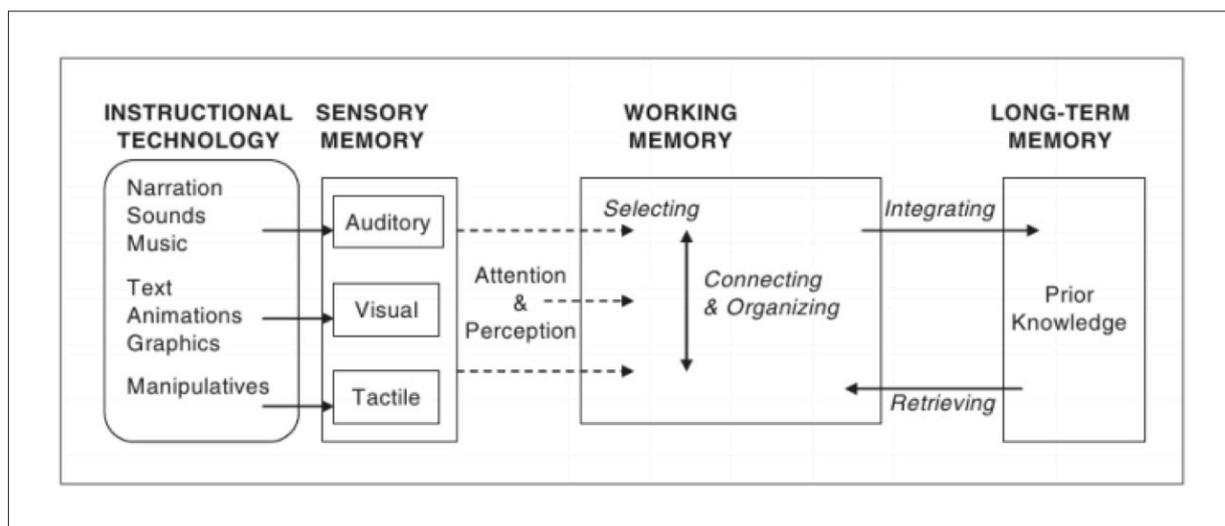
Figure 2. Cognitive theory of learning with media (Moreno, 2006)

Situated in a broader picture of SLA, working memory as a gateway between sensory memory and long-term memory has been found instrumental in facilitating learners' vocabulary acquisition and text comprehension. According to Kintsch and Kintsch (2005), readers' comprehension can be further divided into microstructural and macrostructural levels that serve different functions. The microstructural comprehension means that readers can decode small linguistic units such as word meaning while the macrostructural comprehension requires readers to establish memory representation of the text. Both levels of reading comprehension require learners to identify words meaning, make links between sentences, develop a coherent representation of the content, integrate the textual information with prior knowledge and then organize it in the working memory. Thus, learners' reading comprehension in the multimedia learning environment largely depends on how multimodal input would influence the working memory.

However, working memory has limited capacity to process and store multimodal input and there are mixed findings regarding the effects of multimedia assisted input on learners' cognitive load. On the one hand, multimedia assisted input may exert the modality effect and reduce learners' cognitive load when information is presented in different channels, while on the other hand it may exert the redundancy effect and increase learners' cognitive load when identical information is presented in different channels simultaneously (Mayer, 2005). Since most studies have focused on visual and auditory input, it is of conceptual value to evaluate the effects of visual, auditory and

tactile multimodal input imposed by VR technology on learners' cognitive load and memorisation of textual information. Therefore, the proposed study will examine whether VR-assisted multimodal text could reduce learners' cognitive load and deepen working memory, thereby enhancing reading comprehension in comparison to video-assisted multimodal text and print-based monomodal text.

Literature Review

Multiple studies have applied different modes of multimedia such as pictures, audio, video and subtitles to facilitate learners' L2 acquisition (Lorenz, 2009; Lan and Sie, 2010) by using pre-test and post-test methodology in controlled experimental environment, while the cognition of learners (Neo, 2009; Wiebe & Kabata, 2010) has been less explored to capture a comprehensive snapshot of the effects of multimedia, especially VR technology on the reading aspect of SLA. Thus, this study will bridge the gap by conducting stimulated recall interviews to probe into learners' cognitive processes in the reading activity to understand how multimodal input affect their memorisation of textual information. Furthermore, several studies have explored the effects of auditory and visual input on learners' reading comprehension. Son (2003) found the integration of text with sound and image achieved greater reading comprehension than paper-based text reading. Similarly, Lewandowski, Begeny, and Rogers (2006) found that computer-based reading program with visual and auditory elements improved 3rd grade learners' word recognition, reading speed, and accuracy scores significantly. Segers and Hulstijn-Hendrikse (2008) compared three ways to teach reading comprehension and found that using oral presentation with pictures offered the optimum way to improve learning outcome. It is noted that the majority of previous studies was limited in providing auditory and visual input, and to date there exists a paucity of studies examining the use of VR-assisted multimodal text in the context of L2 reading and no study to date has focused on Chinese EFL beginners' reading comprehension. Therefore, this study will address the research gaps in MCALL and SLA fields by exploring the effects of VR-assisted multimodal input on Chinese 8th grade EFL learners' macrostructural and microstructural reading comprehension from objective performance and subjective cognition.

Research Questions

Situated in the cognitive theory of learning with multimedia, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the immediate and delayed effects of input modality (VR-assisted multimodal text, video-assisted multimodal text, print-based monomodal text) on Chinese EFL learners' macrostructural and microstructural reading comprehension?

2. Does input modality (VR-assisted multimodal text, video-assisted multimodal text, print-based monomodal text) affect learners' cognitive load? If so, how does the changed cognitive load influence Chinese EFL learners' reading comprehension?

3. How do Chinese EFL learners perceive the effects of input modality (VR-assisted multimodal text, video-assisted multimodal text, print-based monomodal text) on reading comprehension?

The first question aims to examine the efficacy of multimodal input on learners' reading comprehension at two levels. Screen-based multimodal text including VR-assisted and video-assisted multimodal texts and print-based multimodal text will be compared regarding the effects on macrostructural and microstructural reading comprehension. The second question evaluates whether multimodal input would exert the modality effect or redundancy effect on the working memory, thereby affecting learners' reading comprehension. The third question captures learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of multimodal input and provides a detailed account of learners' cognitive processes in the multimedia-assisted reading activity. Overall, the three questions aim to fully gauge the efficacy of multimodal text on L2 reading comprehension from objective performance and subjective perception.

Research Design

To address the three research questions, this study takes an important notion from Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) to design the research, starting from ontological assumptions to epistemological assumptions to methodological considerations and instrumentation, which can be briefly summarised in the Table 1.

Table 1
The Integrated Mixed Methods Research Design

	Focus	Data collection	Data analysis
RQ1: the effects of input modality on reading comprehension	Immediate effects	Reading task after each session	SPSS: ANOVA
	Delayed effects	Reading task two weeks after sessions	
RQ2: the effects of input modality on learners' cognitive load	Immediate effects	Cognitive load scale	SPSS: Paired sample t-test
	Delayed effects	Cognitive load scale	
RQ3: learners' perceptions towards the effectiveness of multimodal text	learners' perceptions	Stimulated recall interviews	Coding: descriptive and pattern coding

Research Methodology

This study is situated in the pragmatist paradigm which "is not committed to any one system of philosophy or reality but focuses on the 'what' and 'how' of the research problem" (Creswell, 2003, p.11). The major rationale behind using pragmatism to guide this research is because the focus of this study is to design, implement and evaluate an intervention regarding multimodal text input. Based on the pragmatist paradigm, the study adopts mixed methods methodology to address research questions, which does not only combine separate strengths of relevant quantitative and qualitative methods but also integrate them into a systematic set of data collection methods. The choice of mixed methods methodology derives from the three research questions. The first and second questions compares different input modalities on Chinese EFL learners' reading performance and cognitive load by collecting quantitative data from pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test and scale ratings. The third question probes into participants' perceptions towards multimedia assisted reading experience, thereby encouraging the researcher to utilise a qualitative method such as interview to collect feedback.

The study utilises concurrent triangulation strategy by collecting quantitative data and qualitative data in one phase as shown in Figure 2, although quantitative data will be given more weight over qualitative data in this study. The data will be analysed separately and then synthesised in the interpretation stage. The rationale for adopting this approach is that it can answer the research questions and triangulate quantitative and qualitative results to cross-validate research findings and conclusion.
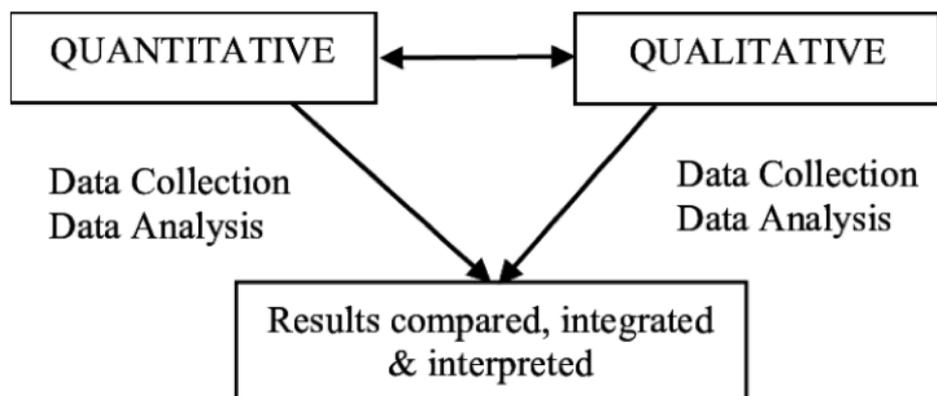
Figure 3. Visual diagram of mixed methods concurrent triangulation strategy (Atif et al., 2013)

Ideally, the controlled experimental research design offers the optimum way to explore the causal relationship between input modality (independent variable) and learners' reading comprehension (dependent variable). However, since the study will take place in a local middle school, it is not feasible to assign subjects into different conditions randomly, which may disturb the normal operation of the target school. Thus, this study adopts a quasi-experimental approach to examine the effects of multimodal input on learners' reading comprehension. While quasi-experimental design is more practical to implement than experimental design, it is more susceptible to threats to internal validity. The target school has streamed classrooms by grouping students based on their academic performance into above average, average or below average. Students within a certain grade range are grouped together as a class. This study addresses the potential threat by selecting three average classes in which students have similar academic performance and language proficiency.

Participants and Sampling

The target sample in this study is Chinese L1-English L2 learners in grade 8 of a middle school. Three classes with a total of 140 students will participate in the study, and the average age of participants is 14 years old. The target school is located in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province where the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the provincial government take the lead in building a world-class VR centre. Given the limited time to undertake the research, I collaborate with the school that has been selected as a pilot school to apply VR technology into secondary education and equipped with a VR lab, rather than to find new schools to implement the technology from scratch. This school pays special attention to integrate technology into the curriculum and begins to teach biology, geography and history classes in the VR lab while the VR technology has not been incorporated into English subject yet.

This study adopts non-probability purposive sampling. Due to the restriction of the research site, it is not practical to draw a random sample from all the Chinese 8th grade EFL learners in the target school. In order to address the threats to the validity and generalisability of the research findings posed by non-probability sampling, this study selects three classes from the same average level of academic performance without previous exposure to VR-assisted learning experience that can largely represent the sample. The three classes are randomly assigned into two experimental groups and one control group to control the variables of English proficiency and previous related experience. Experimental group A interacts with VR-assisted multimodal text with visual, auditory and tactile elements, and experimental group B watches video-assisted multimodal text with visual and auditory elements, while the control group C is situated in the traditional reading environment and read print-based text with visual element only. The English teacher involved in this study has more than twelve years of teaching experience with a Master's degree in English and previous experience of using the research apparatus. The teacher only leads the reading activity with minimal involvement in assisting learners' reading.

Research Apparatus and Treatment Materials

Figure 4. Major components of the zSpace platform

zSpace all-in-one computer is used as the apparatus to provide VR-assisted multimodal input for participants in the experimental group A. It mainly consists of three components as shown in Figure 3: a specialised all-in-one computer with a 24-inch HD LCD display, a pair of polarized glasses, and a laser-based interactive stylus. The three components will be activated simultaneously to provide learners with an immersive and interactive learning environment. zSpace has developed modifiable curriculums in 3D models based on textbooks in secondary schools.

zSpace brings visual, auditory and tactile elements together and provides learners with multimodal input. I will use the topic 'the lifecycle of butterfly' to illustrate how zSpace is used in the experiment. The VR-assisted multimodal input consists of visual input that presents 3D animation of different stages in the lifecycle of butterfly and digital text that will pop up on the screen once learners click on the relevant image, auditory input that narrates the digital text on the screen with sound effects and tactile input that enables learners to touch, interact with the butterfly, turn it around 360 degrees and even allow learners to closely observe it as if they were taking it out of the device. For experimental group B, the video-assisted multimodal input consists of visual and auditory elements without haptic feedback. Participants watch videos that illustrate the same content such as the lifecycle of a butterfly with subtitles as the digital text and narration as auditory input in a classroom with a computer and projector. Students in the control group C only receives the visual input of print-based text. Under three conditions, new words in the text are annotated in learners' first language Chinese. The treatment materials are selected from 9th grade lesson plan to ensure that 8th grade learners are unfamiliar with topic knowledge, and learners' language proficiency level and availability of the same content in both VR and video platforms are taken into consideration.

Data Collection

Under the guidance of mixed methods methodology, the study utilises both quantitative and qualitative primary data collection methods to attain methodological diversity and triangulation of findings. Firstly, the study mainly uses reading tasks to assess learners' understanding of the expository text. The reading tasks are formatted in multiple-choice questions and blank-filling questions in order to minimise the effect of subjective judgement that may be caused by open-ended questions and evaluate learners' reading comprehension in an objective way. In each reading task, there are six questions with three on testing microstructural understanding (e.g. the meaning of certain words) and three on macrostructural comprehension (e.g. the main idea of the text). One point is given for a correct answer to each question and the final grade will be objective measure of learners' reading comprehension.

Moreover, the survey instrument consists of three parts. Firstly, participants complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix 1) prior to the intervention to get a snapshot of learners' background information including age, gender, English learning experience and previous experience of using multimedia, allowing the researcher to describe the sample accurately. Secondly, a prior knowledge survey (see Appendix 2) is administered to remove those who had already known the domain-specific topic well before the intervention so that the variable of prior knowledge will be controlled. Thirdly, participants will complete a cognitive load questionnaire that focuses on learners' invested mental efforts in the reading task and perceptions of material difficulty. This questionnaire is adapted from the measures of Paas (1992) and Sweller, van Merriënboer, and Paas (1998) and Hwang, Yang, and Wang (2013). This questionnaire consists of eight items in mental effort and mental load dimensions with a five-point Likert rating scale (see Appendix 3). Although the self-reported nature of the rating scale may

appear questionable, it has been applied in multiple studies and demonstrated that people were capable to measure their perceived cognitive load by giving numerical indications (Gimino, 2002; Ayres, 2006).

Lastly, stimulated recall interview as an introspective method will be used to elicit learners' thoughts of cognitive processes involved in the reading activity with a visual or audio prompt (Gass & Mackey, 2013). In this study, six participants in each group will be invited to take part in a stimulated recall interview respectively on a voluntary basis. To ensure the validity of interview questions (see Appendix 4), opinions from the two English teachers have been obtained. A total of three interviews will be recorded for further transcription.

All participants remain anonymous during the data collection process. All data from the three sources mentioned above will be triangulated to compare the effectiveness of VR-assisted, video-assisted and print-based input on students' reading comprehension at macrostructural and microstructural levels and explore participants' perceptions towards multimedia-assisted reading.

Research Procedures

The empirical research project can be largely divided into three stages: pre-intervention, reading intervention and post-intervention. Prior to prevention, participants will be introduced to the study and signed the consent form. Baseline data will be obtained by having students finish a pre-test that includes three expository text reading and the prior knowledge survey. A pilot study has been conducted with nine students in a non-participant class. More annotations of words have been added in the text in alignment with learners' language proficiency and one video used in the experimental group B has been changed to a short one with captions.

In the second stage, the three-week intervention will begin in the target school. The treatment will be offered in three sessions at the rate of one per week. The three sessions will be conducted in student-led group work format, in which three students as a group will be given a reading task to guide the reading process and a teacher will give corrective feedback regarding the reading task before implementing the immediate post-test. During the intervention, participants will read, watch, or interact with three treatment materials. In each session, participants will be required to read, watch or interact with multimodal texts within 20 minutes and finish six questions as the immediate post-test within another 20 minutes. Participants in the experimental group A will engage in the VR-assisted reading task and interact with virtual objects actively while participants in the experimental group B will receive video-assisted input.

In the third stage, participants will fill out the cognitive load questionnaire immediately after finishing the reading tasks. After each session, students will be invited to participate in the stimulated recall interview on the same day, during which they will be encouraged to describe the learning experience and reflect on the usefulness of multimodal text after watching a short clip of video or several video images taken in the session. Two weeks later, a delayed post-test as well as the cognitive load scale will be administered again to evaluate the retention of multimodal text on students' reading performance. Overall, the data collection procedure can be summarised in the Table 2.

Table 2
Timeframe of Data Collection Procedure

Time	Stage of plan	Activities	Data set
Week 1	Pre-intervention	Introduction of the study and research apparatus; informed consent form; demographic questionnaire; prior knowledge survey	Questionnaires
		Pilot study; reading task	Pre-test; fieldnotes
Week 2	Intervention	Session 1; cognitive load questionnaire; stimulated recall interview	Post-test; questionnaire; interview
Week 3		Session 2; cognitive load questionnaire; stimulated recall interview	Post-test; questionnaire; interview
Week 4		Session 3; cognitive load questionnaire; stimulated recall interview	Post-test; questionnaire; interview
Week 6	Post-intervention	Reading task; cognitive load questionnaire	Delayed post-test; questionnaire

Data Analysis

After the fieldwork, quantitative data and qualitative data will be analysed separately and integrated at the interpretation stage of the research. SPSS 24.0 will be used to analyse the quantitative data. A two-way mixed ANOVA will be calculated with time of testing and type of input modality as independent variables and test scores as dependent variable to examine if the three groups' performance is significantly different. If there are significant differences among three groups, one-way ANOVA will be performed to examine the effectiveness of three input modalities on expository text comprehension at each time of testing. Post hoc analyses will be applied to further compare the three groups and find differences at macrostructural and microstructural levels of reading comprehension to examine the causal relationship between input modality and reading performance. Moreover, a paired-samples t-test will be performed to compare learners' cognitive load scale in three conditions and examine whether multimedia assisted input exceeds the working memory capacity and hinders learners' reading or lies within the capacity and improves learners' reading performance.

As for qualitative data, content analysis method will be utilised. Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and coded thematically and analysed by NVivo to answer the third research question regarding learners' perceptions. The interview will be used to capture learners' cognitive processes in the intervention and their evaluation of three input modalities in assisting their expository text reading, which will be helpful to explain the quantitative findings in terms of test scores and cognitive

load scales. The coding will take two steps: (1) descriptive coding that transcribes the recording line by line and provides a detailed inventory; (2) pattern coding that classifies the transcript into focused themes and identifies patterns (Saldana, 2009). At the interpretation stage, the research findings from the two strands will be synthesised and examine the effectiveness of VR-assisted multimodal text in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension from the perspectives of objective learning outcome and subjective individual cognition.

Conclusion

This paper mainly introduces theoretical background, research questions and research design of a study in progress. Upon completion, this research will contribute to the development of MCALL and SLA in three aspects. Firstly, the study incorporates VR technology into L2 reading, extending the scope of multimedia learning in the L2 education field. Secondly, the study offers valuable insight into a new line of theorisation in the aspect of multimodal text, that is screen-based multimodal text and print-based monomodal text, expanding the concept of reading in the digital era. Thirdly, the study presents methodological procedures for implementing VR-assisted reading intervention and sheds light on future pedagogical practice to integrate multimedia technology with language education. Due to the limited time and resources of fieldwork, this study will only expose learners to limited multimedia-assisted input and focuses on expository text reading. Thus, this study will not attempt to make a confirmative conclusion regarding the effectiveness of multimedia technology in L2 education since it takes deliberate, thoughtful, and specific applications for multimedia to be effective and it largely depends on the research design and pedagogical practice. More longitudinal research and careful experimental design need to be done on multimedia-assisted learning within the L2 education field.

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Appendix A: Demographic questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

○ Female

○ Male

○ I prefer not to say

2. What is your age in years?

[   ]

3. How long have you studied English at school?

[   ]

4. Which aspect of English learning do you find most difficult?

○ Listening

○ Reading

○ Writing

○ Speaking

5. Which type of reading have you learned at school?

☐ Narrative reading 记叙文

☐ Descriptive reading 描写文

☐ Expository reading 说明文

☐ Persuasive reading 议论文

6. How difficult is it for you to read something for academic purposes (such as school homework/exam)

○ Very difficult

○ difficult

○ not very difficult

○ not at all difficult

7. What kind of activity will you do before reading?

○ Search background information online

○ Watch videos

○ Brainstorm

○ Check vocabulary

○ Other, please specify

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

9. Have you used virtual reality (VR) technology to learn English or other subjects?

○ Yes

○ No

Appendix B: Prior Knowledge Survey

Please answer the following questions about the lifecycle of butterfly.
1. Please explain what is lifecycle.
2. Please list the four stages of a butterfly's lifecycle.

3. Please write down the Chinese translation of caterpillar:
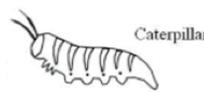
4. Please write down the Chinese translation of chrysalis:
5. Please write down what will happen after the adult butterfly stage.

Please rate your knowledge of the lifecycle of butterfly and circle the number of the item that applies to you.
1. Very little
2. Between very little and average(很少和中等之间)
3. Average
4. Between average and very much(中等和很多之间)
5. Very much

Appendix C: Cognitive load questionnaire

Please rate the following statement from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Mental load
1. The learning content in this learning activity was complicated.
2. The instructional way in the learning activity was difficult to follow and understand.
3. It was troublesome to answer the questions in this learning activity.
4. During the learning activity, the way of content presentation was hard to follow.

Mental effort
1. I felt frustrated answering the questions in this learning activity.
2. I did not have enough time to answer the questions in this learning activity.
3. I need to put lots of effort into answering the questions in this learning activity.
4. I have tried my best to answer the questions in this learning activity.

Appendix D: Interview questions

Questions	Rationale
What aspects of the VR/video assisted reading activity are most memorable to you?	Encouraging learners to reflect on the reading process
How would you describe your reading experience with VR/video?	
Does the VR/video assisted reading activity help you know more about the reading topic? If so, how does it help you read expository text?	Asking learners to examine the effectiveness of multimodal text reading
Do you think you would use VR/video again to learn English? If so, in what aspects do you plan to use it (vocabulary, writing, listening, storytelling, etc.)?	
Compared with using paper and pen to read print-based text, what do you think are the advantages of using VR/video in the reading activity?	Asking learners to identify advantages and disadvantages of multimedia in reading by comparing traditional print-based text reading and multimodal text reading
Compared with using paper and pen to read print-based text, what do you think are the disadvantages of using VR/video in the reading activity?	

THE NEXUS OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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The issue of intercultural communication has garnered more attention than ever as the world changes with increasing mobility both physical and virtual. Such change not only transforms how we communicate but also foregrounds cultural differences and the implications of intercultural understanding. Scholarly debate on the nexus of language and culture has ignited considerable research effort to contextualise foreign language education to accommodate such changing landscape. This article reviews both this debate and empirical effort with two aims. First, it aims to explore theoretical debates on the nature of the relationship between language and culture to identify the theoretical underpinnings of educational practice. Second, it reviews relevant empirical research to reveal how the issue of language and culture has been addressed in foreign language classrooms. In the theoretical overview, three highlights in the language-culture nexus debate are summarised, followed by the proposed dual focus on language and culture in foreign language education. Particularly, a model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is reviewed in detail as the paradigmatic example of addressing both language and culture in foreign language education. In the empirical review, scholarly works inspired by the ICC model are synthesised into three different themes, namely "Developing ICC: The traditional classroom approach", "Developing ICC: The telecollaboration approach" and "Assessing ICC". Insights and limitations of previous studies are discussed and future research directions are proposed at the end.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, Intercultural communicative competence, Foreign language education, Telecollaboration, Literature review

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed dramatic changes in the world landscape: technological advancement makes available real-time global communication, crossing spatial and temporal borders, thereby transforming the way we use languages (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015; Norton & De Costa, 2018). Increasing mobility either virtual or physical not only brings forth changes to how we communicate but also foregrounds cultural differences and the implications of intercultural understanding (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Duff, 2015). In no other times are issues of intercultural communication more pronounced than the age we live in, thereby calling for educators, particularly foreign language educators, to reimagine and reconceptualise the goals and tasks of foreign language education (henceforth FLE; Byram & Wagner, 2018). How should we as educators address the intricate relationship between language and culture? What competences should we cultivate in learners to prepare them for the increasingly pluralist and globalised world? More importantly, how to translate these insights into pedagogical practices in language classrooms? Answers to these interrelated questions could potentially guide us to recontextualise FLE to accommodate this changing landscape.

Guided by these broad questions, this literature review unfolds in two parts. The first part is situated in the theoretical literature, scoping out the interrelation between language and culture and proposing intercultural communicative competence (henceforth ICC) as a conceptual middle ground. The second part concentrates on empirical research, summarising trends and themes in ICC literature and advancing directions for further research.

Theoretical Overview: The Language-Culture Nexus

Theoretical Debate on the Language-Culture Nexus

The discussion on the language-culture nexus could be dated at least back to the 18th century. The intertwined relationship between language, culture and thought appeals to prominent scholars from anthropology, linguistics and psychology, such as Boas, Sapir and Whorf (see Sharifian, 2015 for a detailed introduction). The enduring and unsettled debate can be partly attributed to the contested conceptualisations of language and culture, with each school of thought viewing them differently. To quote Sharifian (2015a) in his summary of this debate, language on the one hand has been viewed "from language as a cognitive system/faculty of the mind to language as action, language as social practice, language as a complex adaptive system, etc.", whereas culture, on the other hand, "as a cognitive system, as a symbolic system, as social practice, or as a construct" (p. 3).

Three highlights in the debate relevant to FLE are summarised here, from the earlier language-determines-reality view to the more recent debate over the separability and inseparability of language and culture. It should be noted that space does not permit a full review of each key figure's theory, and readers are encouraged to consult the original works.

The earlier and most well-known voice among this debate would be the theory of linguistic relativity by Sapir and Whorf, according to which language has a powerful impact on thinking and our understanding of reality:

> The 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached (Sapir 1949 as cited in Kramsch, 2015, p. 32).

Though the stronger version of the Sapir-Whorf-Hypothesis whereby language determines and limits the mind has been largely rejected, the weaker version as captured in the citation above has been generally accepted by linguists (Brown, 2006).

Another highlight in the debate is the conceptualisations of *languaculture* to accentuate the inseparability of language and culture, initiated by Michael Agar (1994). The coinage of language and culture into one word is to emphasise both the discourse level meanings and those that go beyond lexico-grammatical meanings, hence the culture embedded in language. To Agar the linguistic anthropologist, this intertwined relationship between language and culture can be best observed in conversations where miscommunication or misunderstanding takes place, a rich point in which cultural differences are foregrounded. Siding with Agar, Lantolf (2006) opposes the language culture divide proposed by Saussure, attributing his sole focus on linguistic rules to the dire need of establishing linguistics as a field of science at that time. To Lantolf the applied linguist, separating language and culture, leaves language learners fragmented pieces of language and rules of thumb, without truly comprehending the conceptual thinking that is shaping the form of language. If for Agar the miscommunication as rich point functions to unveil the cultures that are in play, then for Lantolf these rich points represent where pedagogical effort should be exerted and where second language learners will need help to break the habitual thinking formed by first language and culture. Similarly, there is Byram (1988) who also views language and culture as inseparable and as early as 1980s stated that language should be taught with culture in an integrated manner.

On the other side of the debate are scholars who divert attention to the separability of language and culture. In contrast to Agar and Lantolf's focus on the inseparability of language and culture, Risager (2006) examines the cases where language and culture are split and travel towards different directions. To Risager, it is important to take into account the global mobility of people and languages in conceptualising this language-culture nexus. Specific languages and cultural phenomena can be separated and spread along different routes. For instance, when an individual mobilises across the world, the first languaculture and/or any other languacultures go or "flow" with that person and interact with new languacultures, a view that is opposite to that of the nationalist paradigm, in which nation is equivalent to culture and remains stable and fixed. To compare notes with the sociolinguist Blommaert (2005):

> Whenever discourses travel across the globe, what is carried with them is their shape, but their value, meaning, or function do not often travel along. Value, meaning, and function are a matter of uptake, they have to be granted by others on the basis of the prevailing orders of indexicality, and increasingly also on the basis of their real or potential 'market value' as a cultural commodity (p. 72).

In this sense, the "flow" of culture and language can be bifurcated. Unfortunately, till now there seems to be no consensus as in whether or when are language and culture conflated or separated, demanding more theorisation in the future. Notwithstanding points of discordance, the on-going debate about the language-culture nexus confirms at least the significant role of culture in language and vise versa, which begs the question particularly from the field of FLE: how should teachers and learners address the languacultures, be

it foreign or native in the classroom? A tentative answer could be found in studies on intercultural communicative competence (ICC), a middle ground proposed by Byram that strikes a dual emphasis on both language and culture in teaching (1997, 2012, 2014; Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013; Byram & Wagner, 2018).

ICC as a Middle Ground

It should be acknowledged that Byram is not the only scholar who conceptualised theories on intercultural competence in the field of FLE. Other frameworks, though not explicitly labelled as ICC, touch upon the same essence. For instance, Kramsch's symbolic competence model (e.g., 2006) and Canagarajah's performative competence model (e.g., 2012) have been influential in this field.

The focus of this review is Byram's ICC model for three reasons. First, it is a very comprehensive model of intercultural competence with a dual focus on both language and culture, which offers both teaching objectives and assessment guidelines that can be subject to empirical test and modification (Belz, 2007, p. 136). Second, proposed as early as 1997, Byram's model has been widely adopted across traditional classroom settings and technology-mediated settings, with more empirical lessons to be learned from the past. Third, this model situates itself among the broader interdisciplinary field of intercultural competence research, ripe for interdisciplinary insights from fields such as psychology and international business management.

Byram's ICC Model

Simplistically, ICC can be viewed as an in-between of the two ends of a continuum, one being communicative competence and the other intercultural competence, the former of which has been criticised for its exclusive focus on the linguistic aspect whereas the latter insufficiently so (Baker, 2015; Byram, 2012; Leung, 2005).
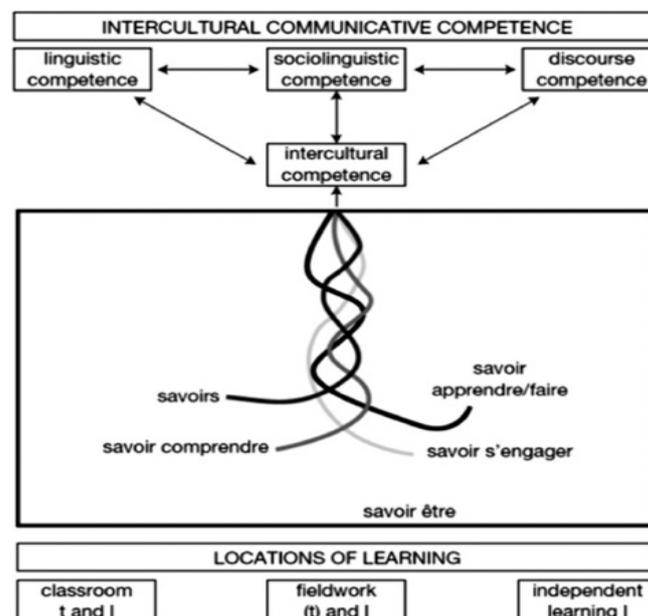

Figure 1. Model of ICC (Byram, 1997, p.73)

Skills
interpret and relate
(savoir comprendre)

Knowledge
of self and other; of
interaction: individual and
societal
(savoirs)

Education
political education
critical cultural awareness
(savoir s'engager)

Attitudes
relativising self; valuing
other
(savoir être)

Skills
discover and/or interact
(savoir apprendre/faire)
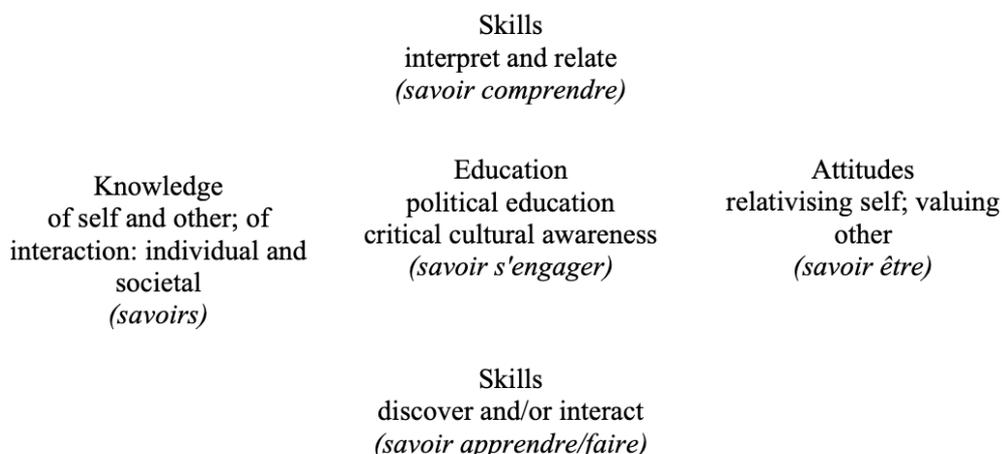
Figure 2. Intercultural competence (Byram, 1997, p.34)

Originally proposed as a replacement of and reaction against the pedagogically dominant native speaker model, Byram's ICC model focuses on the characterisation of an "intercultural speaker" who is equipped with some or all of the five competences or "savoirs", namely "savoir être", "savoirs", "savoir comprendre", "savoir apprendre/faire", "savoir s'engager" (Figure 1 & 2). Established upon and inspired by previous works on language and communication by van Ek (1986), these factors range from the communicative end, i.e., linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse competence to the intercultural end, i.e., intercultural competence, thereby expanding the goal of FLE. One of the contributions of this model is therefore the act of resistance against the unequal power relation between the native speaker and the foreign language learner, echoing like-minded scholars such as Kramsch (1993, 1997). The guidelines concerning teaching, learning and assessment objectives provided by Byram (1997) for teachers to plan and structure their curricula are a major step in progress and the past two decades have witnessed many researcher-practitioners' effort to implement such guidelines, with ICC evident from course syllabus to policy documents (Byram, 2014).

It should be noted that since its inception in 1990s, the model has received a few criticisms. It is argued that the conceptualisation of nation as the boundary of culture implies a clear-cut dichotomy between self and other, native and foreign, which is far from the reality of today's world (Kramsch, 1999). Moreover, a perspective of culture dependent on the concept of nation inevitably runs the risk of downplaying the intracultural variance and complexity (Belz, 2007). Admittedly, as Byram himself has acknowledged, the understanding of culture underpinning the conceptualisation of the intercultural speaker is pragmatically simplistic (Byram, 2009). Yet it is understandable the pragmatic decision to simplify culture as designated by nation and country in a geographical manner, particularly in the context of two decades ago when Byram's model was first brought forth. The simplified conceptualisation of nation and country was in line with the widespread teaching practice back then and some might argue still the case nowadays. Pragmatically speaking, in classroom settings, a simplified understanding of "national culture" could serve as a scaffolded starting point for learners to gradually develop a sophisticated understanding of cultures as multifaceted and relativist. What is overlooked by his critics is the explicit emphasis Byram repeatedly placed on the "savoir s'engager", i.e., critical cultural awareness, in the centre of his model, which is in line with the critical awareness of the complexity and hybridity of cultures required by the globalised world today.

Since 1997, many researchers have expanded the original model, including Byram himself. Focusing on the central "savoir s'engager", Byram (2008) furthered the concept of "intercultural citizenship", placing the political dimension of education under the spotlight. The "intercultural competence of the world citizen" by Risager (2007) is along the same lineage but moves forward by adopting a "transnational paradigm". Systematic operationalisations of this model have also been proposed which on the meso and micro level promote the application of ICC into language teaching (Baker, 2012, 2015; Houghton, 2012). To accommodate the increasing globalisation brought about by technology, Guth and Helm (2010) in what they term as "telecollaboration 2.0" stage added the digital literacy dimension to the ICC model. All these theoretical endeavours attest to the potential of the ICC model to accommodate the changing world landscape. Empirical development will be reviewed next to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Empirical Review: Themes in ICC Literature

To sketch a rough map of the field, a broad search was undertaken across education-related databases, including British Education Index, ERIC and Scopus. The search terms of ICC and FLE (thesaurus included) were input in title, abstract and keywords across these databases and returned over 250 articles. After duplication elimination, the number is down to circa 180. Abstracts were then read by the researcher and coded with different themes. Two broad categories emerged, namely "Developing ICC" and "Assessing ICC". The former refers to studies with an intervention[1] or pedagogic focus, mostly with classrooms as the setting. The latter covers studies on obtaining baseline data of ICC through assessment, aiming either at discovering the status quo or at developing an ICC inventory. It should be noted that two subthemes were differentiated under the "Developing ICC" theme, one labelled "The traditional classroom approach" and the other "The telecollaboration approach". The subthemes are categorised based on their contexts, with the former in traditional classrooms either in local or study abroad context and the latter in online context.

Considering the sheer volume, only a limited number of studies are included in this review, based on the criteria below:

1. Explicit focus on ICC: ICC as the main focus of the study and discussed at length;

2. Timing and impact: influential (cited) or recent (within the past five years) studies are prioritised;

3. Accessibility: whether it can be accessed from local libraries and written in English or Chinese (researcher's L1).

Particularly, a more detailed review is dedicated to one subcategory of the above-mentioned themes, "Developing ICC: the telecollaboration approach", as it not only addresses the language-culture nexus but also incorporates technology which is more in line with the reality educators and learners face today.

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[1] Most intervention studies also touch upon the assessment of ICC but the primary goal is to provide evidence for the impact of intervention and hence categorised as intervention.

Developing ICC: The Traditional Classroom Approach

In this strand, ICC has been approached in the traditional classroom settings, either through literary reading or study abroad programs. The revival of literature and literary texts in foreign language teaching, and the underutilised potential of literature for cultural development are coming to the fore (Hoff, 2016; Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000; Paesani, 2011; Piasecka, 2013). Resources such as American short stories have been utilised to afford learners the opportunity to engage in meaning negotiation and relate to personal experience to enhance understanding (Rezaei & Naghibian, 2018; Rodríguez, 2012, 2015). Compared with the earlier approach to culture in classrooms using fact sheets of nations and countries, the majority of research in this line has moved forward in fostering interactive and multimodal understanding of culture (e.g., Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). Nevertheless, most of these studies still implied or assumed an understanding of culture as nation-bound, without accentuating the dynamic and situated nature of cultural representation and value judgement.

This line of ICC studies also intersects with study abroad research (Kinginger, 2009), usually involving short-term international exchange programs such as Erasmus and the like (Almarza, Martínez, & Llavador, 2015, 2017; Czerwionka, Artamonova, & Barbosa, 2015; Houghton, 2014; Jackson, 2011; Martínez, Gutiérrez, Llavador, & Abad, 2016; Shiri, 2015). Findings converge in the overall positive evaluation of the experiential benefit of living and studying in another country. Learners to a varying degree exhibit ICC growth, ranging from heightened curiosity to increased deliberation of one's own identity and intercultural citizenship. Valuable and impactful as study abroad is, the economic and time commitment required by such programs may deny the learning opportunity of the great majority of students, rendering it a privileged experience for an elite group.

Developing ICC: The Telecollaboration Approach

Compared with the traditional classroom approach, networked technologies with the affordance to bring learners from different cultural backgrounds together at a much smaller cost both economically and temporally harbour huge potential. Particularly this approach is unique and promising in its integration with modern technologies, which may gradually become the default learning context for future generations. In fact, empirical studies on ICC with technology seem to outnumber the strand of the traditional classroom approach and have been reported to have an overall positive effect on ICC development (Lewis & O'Dowd, 2016; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). It is for these reasons that more space is devoted to this strand of research. A screening process of articles with an explicit focus on ICC and telecollaboration results in 21 articles from 2003 to 2018 (see Appendix)[2] . A broad sketch of this strand will be offered first, followed by a few noteworthy discoveries.

In terms of geographical distribution, most of the studies investigating ICC development via telecollaboration are located in North America and some European countries, with the United States involved in 16 out of the 21 studies, Germany in 8, followed by Spain in 4. The majority of the studies involve parallel classes of language learners, and/or student-teachers, collaborating on assignments or communicating on assigned or self-selected issues. All but two studies conducted transcript analysis

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[2] It should be mentioned that the terminology used pertaining to technology vary from telecollaboration, online intercultural exchange (OIE), virtual exchange (VE), e-tandem, to the broader computer mediated communication (CMC), computer assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile assisted language learning (MALL), each with nuanced focus and scope, some more interchangeable than others, and all with a reflection of the rich affordances and versatile nature of technology.

of some sort, though with varying granularity ranging from linguistically oriented discourse analysis to thematic coding. Interviews and questionnaires are widely adopted to obtain data on learners' reaction to such intercultural exchange and/or cultural awareness. In terms of findings, most studies express to varying degrees the promise telecollaboration holds for developing ICC, though there are equally strong caveats that such communication could reinforce stereotype and misunderstanding (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Ware & Kramsch, 2005), indicating the need of continuing research.

In the meantime, there are quite a few issues worth highlighting. First is the lack of research in Asia and less commonly taught languages, with only 4 out of 21 involving Asian learners, echoing what Lewis and O'Dowd (2016) described as "disappointingly small" number of research in this strand in their review of studies on telecollaboration (p. 25). The second issue is the unclear prescription of the specific language as the medium of communication in specific tasks in many studies, with only less than half clearly stating the specific choice or requirement of language, despite the significant space devoted to project and task description. It is acknowledged that language prescription is a significant matter, as shown in Furstenberg and Levet's study (2001) where students were asked to complete the word association task in their native languages to allow for a better elicitation of the cultural schema. Whether the absence of such prescription is intentional, as is the case with some studies where a naturalistic stance is taken to map out the actual use of languages by learners (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011), or perhaps more problematically, a neglect of the full linguistic repertoire of the language learners, remains unclear. It appears that many researchers are unconscious of whether or not there are more common languages available among the learners in addition to the target and native languages, which in turn overlooks the possibility that learners are not deploying their full repertoire that could better facilitate learning. It is a pity that in an early study by Belz (2003), the phenomenon of linguistic hybridity was mentioned in the discussion but no further investigation seemed to be taken up along this line. With reference to more recent literature in translanguaging and translingual practice (e.g., Canagarajah, 2012), a bolder move would be to encourage the use of any linguistic repertoire even if it is not shared by the interlocutor and some curiosity of such "foreignness" might be piqued to open up new possibilities for learning to happen (Canagarajah, 2011). Yet none of these cases could be confirmed or denied given the lack of attention being placed on this issue. Even though most articles adopt the term ICC, the linguistic connotation that distinguishes intercultural *communicative* competence from intercultural competence seems to be insufficiently explored.

Another related issue is the paucity of studies that systematically operationalise the construct of ICC. Across this strand, ICC has been approached from different perspectives, from the most common "compare and contrast" ability, to perspective transformation, awareness of current affairs and decentring and relativist perspectives (Basharina, 2007; Furstenberg et al., 2001; Itakura, 2004; Meagher & Castaños, 1996; Stickler & Emke, 2011; Zeiss & Isabelli-García, 2005), all with valuable insights to offer. In many studies across different strands, however, the term ICC has been dealt with rather loosely, resorting to broad stroke general statements more often than it should be. Interestingly, there are a few studies where the link between cultural competence and language seems to be clearer, through the lens of linguistic theories and discursive analysis (Belz, 2003, 2005; Chun, 2011; Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010; Menard-Warwick, 2009). Yet it is slightly surprising that only three studies in this strand explicitly utilise Byram's model (Liaw & Bunn-Le Master, 2010; O'Dowd, 2003; Ryshina-Pankova, 2018), which is in contrast with the wide popularity this model has received in other strands. Perhaps this is related to the unique nature of the internet as a third space culture (Dooly, 2011), being distinct from the face to face reality that Byram's model was arguably originally designed for (Guth & Helm, 2010). Or this could reflect the

difficulty and challenge in systematically operationalising ICC into teaching practice and task design. Either case, Byram's model deserves further attention.

A final issue is the scarcity of studies in this line that highlights identity, with only 3 out of 21 taking into account the role and influence of identity explicitly (Dooly, 2011; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017; Pasfield -Neofitou, 2011). As identity is intricately intertwined with both language and culture, it stands to reason that identity should be looked at with greater attention. Particularly in the case of online intercultural exchange, a speaker's multiple linguistic identities are interconnected intricately, and how a speaker identifies with, or endeavours to maintain a balance in this identity ecology, will very likely influence that speaker's communication and language learning. Another relevant point would be to address the "genre" issue raised by Kramsch and Thorne (2002) from the perspective of linguistic identities, to call on the learners to reflect on and deliberate what and how the linguistic identities are expressed by themselves and identified and understood by their partners (Fisher, Evans, Forbes, Gayton, & Liu, 2018).

Assessing ICC

Another area of research in previous literature that could benefit FLE focuses on the issue of assessment. Different theoretical models guide the construction of instruments to measure ICC. Particularly, the thorny issues of assessing ICC have been deliberated by many researchers from a variety of fields, such as international business and management, communication studies, psychology and education, leading to the construction of a number of standardised tests with psychometric validity. One of the earlier and most influential works of intercultural competence in these broader fields include Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (1986), which was later developed into the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Other theories originated from the field of business management and psychology have also contributed to assessment of ICC, such as Cultural Intelligence Theory and the Cultural Intelligence Scale (Van Dyne, Ang, & Koh, 2008; Van Dyne et al., 2012) and Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (Matsumoto et al., 2001), to name just a few. A potential challenge uncovered in these different models is the gap between ICC theories and the assessment; even though in theory ICC is usually defined as an ability or skill, the measurement usually focuses on attitudes or awareness. Therefore, more behaviour oriented assessment research is needed to measure directly the ICC "in action" or examine to what extent such attitudes or awareness translate into abilities or skills.

Conclusion

To sum up, this review first explores the theoretical literature with regards to the on-going debate of the language-culture nexus. Particularly, different scholars dedicate attention to either the nature of the languaculture or the divergent routes the two can take. The jury is still out on the separability or inseparability of culture and language yet it is acknowledged that the intertwined relationship between the two should be addressed and taken into account in the practice of foreign language education. More theorisation is needed to delineate for instance what and when aspects of language and culture are conflated or divergent and how these insights could be translated into classroom practice. A potential solution to this thorny issue resides in the field of ICC research, the conceptualisation of which serves as a middle ground with dual focus on both language and culture in the education of foreign languages. The particularly influential ICC model proposed by Byram has elicited promising endeavours by

scholars from a variety of strands in FLE to pin down the pedagogical contribution to the language-culture nexus, the empirical focus of this review.

Looking back at the past decades' research in ICC and FLE, great progress has been made. To begin with, the significance of ICC has been widely acknowledged, both by academics and practitioners. The unrealistic model of Native Speaker competence has been largely deconstructed and the intercultural model has been recognised as in line with the present world as globalised and multilingual. The overall positive findings from a variety of approaches to ICC attest to the value ICC brings to FLE in cultivating learner's intercultural competence. Within the traditional classroom approach, there has been a promising move towards the more complex multimodal and cultural studies direction away from the simplistic fact sheet and nationalist route. Furthermore, there have been some exciting collaborations between ICC development and communicative technology, making intercultural experience more widely available to foreign language learners and representing a new trend for approaching ICC via telecollaboration.

Nevertheless, several issues remain unresolved. The abstract nature of ICC presents the challenge of systematic operationalisation, not to mention the varied approaches to conceptualise ICC. Such variation also lends to the difficulty of comparing literature as a whole which could potentially hinder the progress. Future research is needed to systematically review the operationalisation of ICC, particularly in intervention-focused studies to better compare the results across studies. Moreover, the intricate entanglement of language and culture remains underexplored, rendering language as being overshadowed in the backstage in many of the studies. For instance, it remains unclear whether students are fully utilising their linguistic repertoire and whether target language only or translanguaging would be optimal for ICC development. Pedagogically, whether target language only or translanguaging is better remains unclear. Further research focused on comparing approaches with different prescriptions of languages as medium of communication could potentially shed light on the issue and tease out for instance the value of L1 in foreign language and culture learning. Lastly, the element of identity seems to be overlooked which could potentially shed light on individual differences in the learning of language and culture. Also, findings suggest the internet offers a third space where learners are afforded the agency to deploy a range of semiotic resources to construct and perform identities but how this insight feeds back to language learning and teaching practice remains unexplored. More research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of online space as a site for learners' multi/intercultural identity development and to explore the relationship between identity, language and cultural learning.

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Appendix: List of Studies

Bibliographic details	Year	Geographical context	Language of communication	ICC Focus
Zeiss, E., & Isabelli-García, C. L. (2005). The role of asynchronous computer mediated communication on enhancing cultural awareness. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 18(3), 151–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220500173310	2005	United States, Mexico	Two tasks in English(L1) and one in Spanish (L2) for US experimental group	Awareness of current events
Ware, P. D., & Kramsch, C. (2005). Toward an intercultural stance: Teaching German and English through telecollaboration. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(2), 190–205. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00274.x	2005	Germany, United States	English only or German only (alternating between tasks)	cultural misunderstanding
Ware, P. D. (2005). 'Missed' communication in online communication: Tensions in a German-American telecollaboration. *Language Learning and Technology*, 9(2), 26.	2005	Germany, United States	English only or German only (alternating between tasks)	attitudes, beliefs, expectations
Stickler, U., & Emke, M. (2011). Literalia: Towards developing intercultural maturity online. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(1), 147–168.	2011	United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Italy	English No prescription?	perspective transformation
Pasfield-Neofitou, S. (2011). Online domains of language use: Second language learners' experiences of virtual community and foreignness. *Language Learning*, 17.	2011	Japan, Australia	Naturalist stance. No prescription	identity, nationality, foreignness
O'Dowd, R. (2003). Understanding the 'Other Side': Intercultural learning in a Spanish-English e-mail exchange. *Language Learning & Technology*, 7(2), 118–144.	2003	Spain, United Kingdom	Target language for task and native language for corrective feedback	Byram's model
Menard-Warwick, J. (2009). Comparing protest movements in Chile and California: Interculturality in an Internet chat exchange. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 9(2), 105–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470802450487	2009	Chile, United States	English	discourse, pragmatics
Meagher, M. E., & Castaños, F. (1996). Perceptions of American culture. In S. Herring (Ed.), *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social, and cross-cultural perspectives* (Vol. 39, pp. 187–201). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.	1996	United States, Mexico	English and Spanish	decentring, other-orientation
Liaw, M.-L., & Bunn-Le Master, S. (2010). Understanding telecollaboration through an analysis of intercultural discourse. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 23(1), 21–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220903467301	2010	China (Taiwan), United States	English	discourse, lexis, Byram's model
Lee, L. (2009). Promoting intercultural exchanges with blogs and podcasting: A study of Spanish–American telecollaboration. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 22(5), 425–443. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220903345184	2009	United States, Spain	Target language	topics and tasks

Kramsch, C., & Thorne, S. L. (2002). Foreign language learning as global communicative practice. In *Globalization and language teaching* (pp. 83–100). London, England: Routledge.	2002	France, United States	Target language	cross-cultural misunderstanding
Itakura, H. (2004). Changing cultural stereotypes through e-mail assisted foreign language learning. *System, 32*(1), 37–51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2003.04.003	2004	China (Hong Kong), Japan	Japanese	cultural stereotypes
Furstenberg, G., & Levet, S. (2001). Giving a virtual voice to the silent language of culture: The CULTURA Project. *Language Learning & Technology, 5*(1), 55–102.	2001	United States, France	Native language	cross-cultural comparison
Dooly, M. A. (2011). Crossing the intercultural borders into 3rd space culture(s): Implications for teacher education in the twenty-first century. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 11*(4), 319–337. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2011.599390	2011	Spain, United States	English, no prescription of language use	identity in third space
Chun, D. M. (2011). Developing intercultural communicative competence through online exchanges. *CALICO Journal, 28*(2), 392–419.	2011	Germany, United States	German, English(mixture)	discourse features of
Belz, J. A. (2005). Intercultural questioning, discovery and tension in Internet-mediated language learning partnerships. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 5*(1), 3–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470508668881	2005	Germany, United States	German, English(mixture)	intercultural questioning
Belz, J. A. (2002). Social dimensions of telecollaborative foreign language study. *Language Learning, 6*(1), 60–81.	2002	Germany, United States	German, English(mixture)	FL/ICC (socio-institutional differences)
Belz, J. A. (2003). Linguistic perspectives on the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. *Language Learning & Technology, 7*(2), 68–117.	2003	Germany, United States	German, English(mixture)	expr. of affect
Basharina, O. K. (2007). An activity theory perspective on student-reported contradictions in international telecollaboration. *Language Learning, 11*(2), 36–58.	2007	Japan, Mexico, Russia	English	cross-cultural contradictions
Kohn, K., & Hoffstaedter, P. (2017). Learner agency and non-native speaker identity in pedagogical lingua franca conversations: Insights from intercultural telecollaboration in foreign language education. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 30*(5), 351–367.	2017	France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain	English	Agency, non-native speaker identity
Bradley, L. (2014). Peer-reviewing in an intercultural wiki environment - Student interaction and reflections. *Computers and Composition, 34,* 80–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2014.09.008	2014	Sweden, United States	English	ability to change perspective
Ryshina-Pankova, M. (2018). Discourse moves and intercultural communicative competence in telecollaborative chats. *Language Learning and Technology, 22*(1), 218–239.	2018	United States, Germany	German	Byram's model (skill of discovery and interaction, attitude of openness and curiosity and the ability to change perspectives)

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON PERSPECTIVES OF VIETNAMESE EXPERIENCED TEACHERS AND STUDENT TEACHERS TOWARD TEACHERS' CODE-SWITCHING

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There have existed different perspectives on teachers' use of code-switching (CS) in sec-ond/foreign language (L2) classrooms. While some suggest teachers' exclusive use of L2 in L2 classrooms, others argue that teachers' switching to first language (L1) can have val-uable contributions to L2 teaching. Also, little research has examined student teachers' perspectives on this issue even though student teaching experience plays a significant role in teacher education programmes. This exploratory qualitative study aims to compare the perspectives of student teachers and experienced teachers toward CS use in teaching Eng-lish as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnam. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with fourteen Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers. The findings revealed that all student teachers and experienced teachers had positive attitudes toward CS. In line with previous research, CS was reported to be employed for several different pedagogical functions in L2 classrooms, such as explaining grammar points, clar-ifying difficult concepts, checking students' comprehension, and dealing with students' misbehaviours. In addition, apart from the previously reported benefits of CS, such as facilitating students' comprehension, saving time, motivating students, and accommodating students' low English proficiency levels, the student teachers in this study also maintained that CS could help them address their anxiety in delivering instructions while the experi-enced teachers believed that CS could help them deal with their lack of confidence about their pronunciation and avoid students' judgements. Based on the findings, this paper suggests that CS could be considered as an instructional strategy and EFL teacher education programs in Vietnam should consider incorporating training on teachers' CS use to im-prove their awareness and confidence.

Keywords: Code-switching, English as a foreign language, Teachers, Student teachers, Perspectives

Introduction

In foreign/second language (L2) teaching, the teachers' use of first language or mother tongue (L1) in L2 classrooms has been discussed over recent years and attracted contradictory opinions. Some researchers recommend L2 teachers using L2 exclusively in their classrooms (e.g. Chambers, 1991; Krashen, 1985; MacDonald, 1993; Moeller & Roberts 2013) while others believe that switching to L1 has its valuable contributions to foreign language teaching (e.g. Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Cook, 2001; Critchley, 2002; Harbord, 1992; Macaro, 1997, 2001, 2005; Schweers, 1999). Proponents of teachers' CS use argued that excluding teachers' use of L1 in L2 classrooms is impractical and prevents learners from using L1 as a crucial tool for their L2 learning (e.g. Atkinson, 1993; Macaro, 1997).

In the context of Vietnam, only a few studies have investigated this issue (e.g. Grant & Nguyen, 2017; Le, 2014; Nguyen, 2012) while no research has examined how Vietnamese EFL student teachers perceive code-switching during their student teaching experience, the most influential part in teacher education programmes (Glenn, 2006; Tang, 2003). For student teachers, the role of mentoring is undeniably important and experienced teachers are assigned to guide student teachers during practicum; thus, experienced teachers can be seen as important models for student teachers. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the beliefs of both student teachers and experienced teachers on using code-switching in L2 classrooms to gain a deeper insight into their teaching practices and subsequently inform relevant policies and teacher training programmes.

Literature review

Different perspectives on code-switching

Code-switching (CS) in L2 classrooms refers to teachers' choice of languages between the foreign language which is taught and the language of either school or society (Simon, 2000). There have existed different perspectives on the use of CS in L2 classrooms.

Some researchers advocate L2 use in L2 classrooms. Krashen (1985) suggested L2-only use in ESL/EFL classrooms because L2 environment is of "paramount importance to success in a new language" (p. 13). Similarly, Chamber (1992) suggested that students should be exposed to L2 in L2 classrooms as much as possible. MacDonald (1993) argued that excessive reliance on L1 could be demotivating to students and negatively affect their need to develop their understanding of L2. Moeller and Roberts (2013) commented that: "Together with best pedagogical practices, maximising the TL [target language] in the classroom will ensure a lively and engaging language experience that can approximate authentic language use and make language learning meaningful to learners" (p.35).

Others, however, take the merits of CS into consideration. Macaro (1997, 2001, 2005) viewed L1 usage as a natural practice in the L2 acquisition process and that using both languages seems to be a more time-efficient strategy than using only the target language. Similarly, some other researchers also considered CS as a time-saving method in EFL classrooms (Atkinson, 1987;

Critchley, 2002; Harbord, 1992; Medgyes, 1994) since using L1 could reduce dramatically the amount of time spent on explaining the lessons. In addition, Cook (2001) supported incorporating CS in L2 classrooms because he contended that the use of L1 was a natural phenomenon and could create authentic learning environments and it thus should not necessarily be discouraged.

Functions of code-switching

Teachers' CS has been reported to serve different functions for both teachers and students. For teachers, L1 was suggested to help them in explaining difficult concepts as well as grammar instruction (e.g. Kim & Petraki, 2009; Levine, 2003; Macaro, 2001; Schweers, 1999). Atkinson (1987) indicated that the switch between L1 and L2 could provide "useful reinforcement of structural, conceptual and sociolinguistic differences between the native and target language" (p.224). Atkinson (1987) also noted that using L1 to check comprehension of the underlying concepts in either a listening or a reading text was even much quicker and more effective than other techniques. Medgyes (1994) considered L1 as "an indispensable teaching device for explaining structures and vocabulary, giving instructions, doing various kinds of exercises, and so on" (p.65).

In addition, Macaro (1997, 2001) reported other uses of L1 for various purposes in EFL classrooms, such as giving instructions for pair or group activities, dealing with students' misbehaviours, fostering relationship with students, making instructions clearer to students and coping with the lack of time in class. Polio and Duff (1994) pointed out that teachers could switch to L1 for isolated words or phrases in L2 with the goal to ensure the key information was conveyed to students or for rapport-building and interpersonal purposes with the view to relieving the anxiety of students. These functions were also mentioned in Cahyani et al. (2018). In Orland-Barak and Yinon's (2005) study on Jewish and Arabian student teachers, they used CS for different functions in communicative L2 classrooms, including comparison and clarification of L2 meanings, encouraging communication and student participation, enhancing classroom management and rapport with students.

As for students, CS was suggested to reduce the anxiety and pressure on them (Schweers, 1999). Schweers (1999) reported that his students seemed to be enthusiastic about classroom activities and learnt L2 actively and positively when L1 was used in the classroom, justifying that teachers' using L1 in EFL classrooms proved their respect for the culture and native language of their students and thus reduced the negative attitudes of students toward their L2 learning process. Atkinson (1987) also suggested that using L1 encouraged students as well as teachers to actively say what they wanted to say. He indicated that teachers could, by means of CS, encourage their students to brainstorm effectively to express their thoughts, which helped them to speak the target language. Additionally, Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) and Franklin (1990) suggested that advanced learners demonstrated good progress when they learned grammar in L1.

Beliefs of teachers and student teachers about code-switching

Teachers' belief systems are considered the main sources of teachers' classroom practices when they illustrated the information, values, attitudes, expectations, assumptions and theories related to teaching along with learning (Richards, 1998). Teachers' beliefs can have an impact on the approach to their instructional practices as well as language teaching (Burns, 1992). On the other

hand, student teachers, or pre-service teachers, who may experience high levels of stress and anxiety during their practicum (Agustiana, 2014; Paker, 2011), can bring their specific ideas and beliefs into their teacher training programme, which can affect their knowledge construction together with the approach that they follow during practicum (Kagan, 1992). In other words, student teachers' beliefs can "influence what they say and do in classroom, which, in turn, shapes their beliefs" (Zheng, 2009, p.80). Considering the importance of teachers and student teachers' beliefs, studies investigating them are necessary.

A number of publications have discussed the beliefs of teachers and student teachers concerning CS and generally showed that they held positive attitudes toward it (Batemen, 2008; Macaro, 1997, 2001, 2005; Schweers, 1999). Macaro (2005) found that most bilingual teachers considered CS as "unfortunate and regrettable but necessary" (p. 68), which he found common among teachers in different age phases and educational contexts. Schweers (1999) reported that all teachers reported using L1 to some extent. Bahous et al. (2014), however, reported that teachers had mixed views toward CS use. Some teachers supported using CS while other denying it, but classroom observations showed that they all used CS but some were not aware of using it. Regarding student teachers, Bateman (2008) found that they advocated using CS because they found it difficult to manage their class by using L2 only and beginner students or those having trouble with cognitive ability and abstract grammatical concepts could face more difficulties in L2 acquisition than advanced students.

Code-switching in Vietnam

In Vietnam, Le (2011) revealed that Vietnamese EFL teachers often switched to Vietnamese to check students' understanding of meta-language as well as to explain grammatical rules. They had a tendency to use English first and then translated the message into Vietnamese since they perceived that students with low English proficiency levels could understand grammar thoroughly with L1 support. More recently, Grant and Nguyen (2017) found that Vietnamese EFL teachers used CS frequently for both pedagogical and affective reasons, such as students' low English proficiency levels, lesson content, students' attitudes and emotion, along with teachers' lack of awareness of CS. Nguyen's (2012) study on the use of CS in tertiary context in Vietnam found that contextual factors, including time budget in class, students' English proficiency levels, cultural values, teacher evaluation systems, and teacher cognition can affect CS use. These studies, however, merely focused on experienced teachers, so it is unclear how student teachers perceive CS during their practicum.

Research gaps

In the context of Vietnam, a few studies have investigated CS in L2 classes and found that it is frequently used in EFL classes and supported by the majority of Vietnamese EFL teachers and students (Grant & Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen, 2012; Le, 2014). No studies to date, however, have investigated the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL student teachers on CS use or compared them with those of experienced teachers. Such studies may have important implications for EFL teacher education in Vietnam since they can shed light on whether these teachers are fully aware of CS use in their teaching, which is considered essential (Bahous et al., 2014). For that reason, this study was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers towards CS?

2. In which situations do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers report to use CS?

3. What do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers think are the benefits of CS?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 14 Vietnamese participants including 7 student teachers (6 females, 1 male) aged 21-22 and 7 experienced teachers (all females) aged 37 to 40 in different public high schools in both rural and urban areas in northern Vietnam participated in this study. All the experienced teachers held a university degree in English language education and their class sizes often ranged from 35 to 40 students. Their self-reported English proficiency was upper-intermediate, or equivalent to B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The seven experienced teachers in this study had extensive experience in tutoring student teachers in their teaching practicum. These experienced and student teachers were selected based on their teaching experience as well as their willingness to participate in the study. All the names mentioned in this paper are pseudo names to preserve the participants' anonymity.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were employed because, as Payne (2000) suggested, the semi-structured interviews are flexible enough to allow the respondents to not only expand on the relevant issues but also initiate new topics. The interviews were conducted in either Vietnamese or English at the participants' discretion. Because the participants were based in different places, the interviews were conducted via Skype and Facebook video calls (10 via Skype and 2 via Facebook). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Procedure

First, the participants and researchers agreed on schedules for interviews through Skype or Facebook. Then, consent forms were sent to the interviewees to ask for their permission to record and use their data anonymously for the study. After the interviews, all recordings were transcribed. The transcripts were offered to the interviewees to confirm their accuracy because 'member checks', i.e. participants' reading data to check, are important to establish credibility in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants read, commented and made suggestions for some corrections when necessary. Afterwards, those transcripts were translated from Vietnamese (if necessary), coded, and analysed thematically. The answers from both Vietnamese EFL teachers and student teachers were categorised into three aspects, including their general attitudes toward CS, the reported situations in which they used CS and the reported advantages of CS in English classrooms. These categories were later used to identify the similarities and differences between experienced teachers and student teachers' beliefs. Where necessary, the translated quotes below have been modified to clarify meaning, following discussion with participants.

Findings

Research question 1: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers towards CS?

The attitudes of Vietnamese EFL student teachers towards CS

All Vietnamese EFL student teachers showed positive attitudes to CS. The interviewed Vietnamese EFL student teachers generally viewed CS as an interesting way of teaching English.

> I love to use code-switching in my English classes. It's so easy for me to actively switch between two languages. It's very interesting. (Lan)

> I am a type of person who cannot do something repeatedly for a long time, but using code-switching in teaching English is like reading books in a new pattern and I can thus stick to it for a long period of time because it's extremely interesting to me. (Ngoc)

Another student teacher said she supported CS since it could help all students understand the lesson correctly regardless of their English proficiency.

> To me, switching from English to Vietnamese in my English classrooms is an effective tool to help students of different English proficiency levels to fully understand English lessons. (Van)

The student teachers also considered CS realistic in the Vietnamese context, saying English-only classrooms are not suitable for Vietnamese EFL learners whose language skills are not yet good enough to due to their limited exposure to English outside their classrooms:

> To me, using code-switching in teaching English is necessary because Vietnamese students do not have a suitable English speaking environment to get used to using English only in the class. That is to say, their speaking and listening are not well developed, they thus may not understand when their teachers use English only. Accordingly, I think code-switching is suitable for Vietnamese students to understand the lessons. (Sa)

The attitudes of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers towards CS

All the Vietnamese experienced high school EFL teachers involved in this study held positive views toward CS for many reasons, one of which was because CS was reported to give them more confidence and motivation.

> I feel more confident when I use code-switching because it gives me more flexibility. This also somewhat motivated me in my teaching. (Ly)

> When I used only English to teach my students, they showed their tiredness toward learning English which really demotivated my willingness to teach English. But when I switched to Vietnamese to teach them in some difficult situations, it seemed to make them feel better. Thus, code-switching somehow inspired me to teach. (Hien)

CS was also perceived to be an effective tool to encourage their students' willingness to learn English:

> I think using code-switching in teaching English is so interesting and effective because I do not need to force students to remember a number of difficult terms and concepts by heart, which is too stressful for them. In fact, besides learning English, they need to learn other subjects at school, so I think that is one of the reasons why they are not interested in English. However, when I use code-switching in class, my students seem to feel much more comfortable, which can facilitate their English learning process. (Lan)

Research question 2: In which situations do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers report to use CS?

In general, both Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers reported to frequently use CS in teaching their EFL classes in a variety of situations. The Vietnamese EFL student teachers, however, all showed their lack of confidence about when and how CS should be used and questioned whether it would be theoretically appropriate to use CS or not.

> Honestly I'm not sure about whether and when I am allowed to use code-switching in my English classes. I just use it when I feel I need to, but sometimes I feel scared when doing so because I don't know if it's appropriate at all.

Situations of using CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL student teachers

The most common situations in which the student teachers reported to use CS were to explain grammar points and to clarify difficult concepts. All seven student teachers reported that they mostly employed CS in these cases with the hope of helping students understand the knowledge and pass their examinations:

> I can frankly say that, during English lessons I mostly used Vietnamese while teaching both grammar and new concepts because I wanted to help my students can understand the key knowledge to pass the tests successfully. (Ngoc)

Another common situation where the student teachers said they used CS was to check students' comprehension. When realising students' uncertainty about the knowledge that they taught, the Vietnamese EFL student teachers had a tendency to switch to Vietnamese to check their understanding:

> Sometimes, when realising that my students seem to be worried about the content knowledge, I often switch to Vietnamese to check their understanding. (Van)

The interviewed student teachers also reported to sometimes use CS to give instructions for in-class activities and deal with students' misbehaviours.

> Since students' English proficiency was not quite high, I had to switch to Vietnamese whenever I needed to make my instruction well understood or deal with their inappropriate behaviours in class. (Lan)

Situations of using CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers

Similar to the student teachers, all the experienced teachers in this study, viewed that L1 was mainly employed to teach grammar and clarify difficult concepts. They reported that they used CS in these situations with a view to helping students understand the lessons more quickly and easily.

> I often use Vietnamese to teach both grammar and new concepts because I realise that it can help my students understand the lessons easily. (Sa)

As for grammar, the experienced teachers perceived that there were significant differences between L1 and L2 and thus using CS in these cases could help their students easily visualise the variations in the grammatical structures of L1 and L2.

> Due to the differences between Vietnamese and English, when I taught them the positions of English adjectives, my students could hardly understand English grammatical structures. Therefore, I had to use Vietnamese to make it easier for them. (Lan)

Additionally, the experienced teachers reported that CS was commonly used to address students' misbehaviours. They believed that their students' English proficiency levels were quite low; thus, their students might not understand their requests as well as advice in English:

> It's hard for me to use English to deal with my students' improper behaviours because their English proficiency levels are quite low. I'm therefore afraid that they cannot understand what I say. When I switch to Vietnamese, this issue can be solved effectively. (Hien)

Three of the experienced teachers also said that they sometimes used CS for checking their students' comprehension and giving instructions for activities or games in class.

> In some circumstances where the instructions were complicated and students didn't understand them in English, I had to switch to Vietnamese to make sure that they all knew what they would have to do in those activities, especially those new activities they had never experienced before or those which were very complex. (Mai)

Research question 3: What do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers think are the benefits of CS?

Benefits of CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL student teachers

Six out of seven student teachers believed that it was beneficial to use Vietnamese to aid students' comprehension and deal with students of different English proficiency levels, especially low-level students. They pointed out that there were a number of Vietnamese students who were not placed into suitable English classes for their existing English proficiency levels. This problem, according to them, made it difficult for those students to understand the lessons explained in English and might take teachers a huge amount of time to provide long and repeated explanations. Consequently, as they reported, they needed to switch from English to Vietnamese to facilitate students' comprehension in EFL classrooms.

> In my English classrooms, I often switch from English to Vietnamese because there are various English proficiency levels in my class. For students who have poor English proficiency, I often switch to Vietnamese more often than for those with higher levels of English proficiency. The reason is that I realise that some low-level students cannot catch my points when I teach them in English, although I try my best to explain to them several times. Thus, sometimes the only way that I can help them easily understand what I teach is using Vietnamese when necessary. (Ngoc)

All the student teachers also reported that CS could help them deal with the pressure of time. Since the allowed time for each lesson was 45 minutes, to deal with different tasks in a lesson, the student teachers had to finish each certain section on time in order that they could move on to another. In this case, they believed that using Vietnamese was the quickest method to help students understand the content knowledge.

> Frankly speaking, for teaching difficult grammar points such as verb tenses or phrasal verbs, it takes me a long period of time to help students understand what I want them to acquire when I use English to teach. Consequently, I cannot either cover all the content of the lesson or finish my lesson in the allowed time. Thus, to address this problem, I have a tendency to use Vietnamese to teach them in such cases. (Thuy)

CS was also claimed to help create a motivating learning environment for students. The student teachers believed that using CS could reduce cognitive loads for their students, which makes their students feel more secure as well as comfortable and thus facilitates their students' learning process.

> I think the more comfortable students feel, the better they acquire knowledge. Thus, I often switch to Vietnamese when I need to teach some difficult content with the aim of avoiding demotivating my students. (Lan)

In addition, three of the investigated student teachers admitted that CS can help them handle their stress and anxiety when they gave instructions as well:

> I'm not used to standing in front of people and I'm always afraid that I might be misunderstood, so I'm quite stressed whenever I have to give instructions. Then, I switch to Vietnamese at times to help me cope with that stress. (Hieu)

Benefits of CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers

All the experienced teachers reported that switching from English to Vietnamese could help aid their students' understanding effectively. They explained that their students had inadequate knowledge of grammar and essential social background knowledge; therefore, they thought it could make them further dislike learning English if they continued teaching grammar and vocabulary in English only.

> Almost all of my students have little knowledge of grammar as well as social background knowledge, so if I keep teaching grammar and vocabulary in English, they may even hate learning English more. Thus, I need to switch to Vietnamese to help them understand the lessons effectively. (Xa)

Also, two other experienced teachers explained that CS could be effective for diverse English proficiency levels of students, especially for those with low levels of English competence.

> For students who have low English proficiency levels, I often switch to Vietnamese more often than high level students since I believe that by doing so, all students in my English class can understand the content knowledge. (Ha)

Another benefit of CS mentioned among Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers was to save time. By using CS in teaching English, they believed they would not be scared of running out of time and could spend time on other activities in their classes.

> Whenever teaching grammar in English, I cannot finish my lesson in the allotted time because I need to explain difficult terms for my students several times. Therefore, I decide to switch to Vietnamese to save time for other useful activities in the lesson. (Linh)

Five out of seven experienced teachers even admitted that using CS could help them hide their weaknesses about their pronunciation and avoid their students' judgements. They said that they did not want their language competence to be questioned by their students just because they might mispronounce some words; therefore, they chose to switch to Vietnamese.

> In some teaching situations, I did not know how to pronounce the words correctly so I decided to skip speaking aloud those words in front of my students and switch to Vietnamese to avoid my language competence being judged by my students. (Xa)

Discussion

Overall, it could be seen that both Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers held positive views toward CS in their English classrooms. Positive attitudes among Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers were similar to those attitudes of teachers found in previous studies (e.g. Macaro, 1997, 2001; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005; Schweers; 1999). Regarding situations where CS is used, both Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers reported to frequently employ CS, which was in line with Grant and Nguyen (2017).

The pedagogical functions of CS reported by both the student teachers and experienced teachers in the research were also supported by previous research: to explain grammar points (e.g. Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Franklin, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Levine, 2003; Kim & Petraki, 2009), to clarify difficult concepts (e.g. Schweers, 1999; Macaro, 2001), to check students' comprehension (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Schweers, 1999), to give instructions (e.g. Macaro, 1997; Polio & Duff, 1994) and to address their students' behaviour issues (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Cahyani et al., 2018; Macaro, 2001).

In terms of the benefits of using CS, this study reported similar findings to previous studies, including aiding students' understanding of the content knowledge (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Macaro, 2001), saving time (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Critchley, 2002; Macaro, 1997, 2001, 2005; Medgyes, 1994), motivating students (e.g. Schweers, 1999), and accommodating students' low English proficiency levels (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Grant & Nguyen, 2017).

There were, however, some additional benefits of CS perceived by the Vietnamese student teachers and experienced in this study that were not reported in previous studies. For the student teachers, three out of

seven believed that CS can help them cope with their stress and anxiety during their giving instructions, indicating these feelings might be experienced by some Vietnamese student teachers as similarly found in other contexts (Agustiana, 2014; Paker, 2011).

The majority of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers in this study, on the other hand, viewed CS as a technique to help them hide their lack of confidence about their pronunciation and avoid being judged by their students. Vietnamese teachers' status as well as power are important values in the culture of learning in the education system in Vietnam (Le & Phan, 2013); therefore, it was understandable why these experienced teachers disliked their students' judgements and resorted to CS to prevent them. It seemed that CS might be "unfortunate and regrettable but necessary" (Macaro, 2005, p. 68) to Vietnamese EFL teachers.

Apart from those findings, it was worth noting that Vietnamese student teachers in this study were not certain about whether or when it is appropriate to use CS in their L2 class-rooms. One assumption is that they did not receive training on CS use during their practicum or in their teacher education programmes; therefore, their awareness of CS use, which is considered essential (Bahous et al., 2014), seemed to be inadequate.

The results of this study, however, should be interpreted with caution. Firstly, it was a small-scale study with a limited number of participants, so the results were just tentative and exploratory. Second, this study just showed teachers' and experienced teachers' beliefs about the use of CS, so it was not yet clear how CS was used in practice. Studies that observe their real practice in EFL classrooms can help confirm and evaluate their beliefs.

Conclusion

This study examined the perspectives of student teachers and experienced teachers toward CS in EFL classrooms in Vietnam. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with a total of fourteen Vietnamese student teachers and experienced high school teachers, the results showed that both these student teachers and experienced teachers held positive attitudes toward CS in EFL classrooms, considering CS beneficial to their L2 teaching and their students' L2 learning. The student teachers reported to use CS to provide explanations for grammar points or difficult concepts, to evaluate their students' comprehension, to deliver instructions, and to address their students' inappropriate behaviours. These situations were all similar to those where the experienced teachers claimed to adopt CS. The benefits of CS such as facilitating students' comprehension, accommodating students' low English proficiency levels, motivating students, and saving time were shared beliefs of both the student teachers and experienced teachers in this study. Furthermore, the student teachers believed that their use of CS could help them handle their own stress and anxiety in giving instructions while the experienced teachers admitted that using CS could help them cope with their lack of confidence about their pronunciation and avoid students' judgements.

Pedagogical implications

This study shows that CS was perceived by both Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers as a useful tool for their EFL teaching and could be considered as an instructional strategy because of

its reported benefits and functions. Moreover, this study also indicated that Vietnamese EFL student teachers' awareness of CS should be improved during their practicum or teacher education programmes. EFL teacher training programmes in Vietnam should consider providing further information on CS use to help teachers better understand about it and improve their confidence in using it in their EFL classrooms.

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Appendix: Interview questions for Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers about their perspectives on teachers' code-switching in L2 classrooms

1. What do you think about switching from English to Vietnamese in teaching English? Why?
2. In which situations do you often switch from English to Vietnamese in teaching English?
3. What do you think can be the benefits of switching from English to Vietnamese in teaching English?

BETWEEN IDEALISM AND REALISM: CRITICAL PEACE EDUCATION IN DIVIDED POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

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This paper navigates through Critical Peace Education (CPE), a concept that emerged in response to criticisms of peace education as 'politicised', 'propaganda', 'not objective' and 'lacking criticality'. CPE aims to develop students' critical consciousness that would enable them to explore contradictions in their social, political and economic realm. It would also prepare them to act against these contradictions. This paper compares and contrasts theoretical grounds of CPE with three other approaches to education, namely Allport's (1954) Contact Theory, Taylor's (1994) Multiculturalism and Gallager's (1996) 'teaching contested narratives'. Building on the epistemological similarity between CPE and these three other approaches and given the scarcity of CPE application and evaluation (Bajaj, 2015), I find that scrutinising applications, evaluations and implications of these approaches in conflicted contexts must yield valuable insights to CPE. Accordingly, I explore two conflict/post conflict contexts, namely Rwanda and Palestine- Israel. I review relevant literature that examines and evaluates these approaches and I highlight three challenges to their application; 'The power of the victor', 'identity accentuation', 'social transformation: The individual or structural asymmetry?'. The paper concludes with suggesting three parameters that are worth considering when conceptualising CPE: 'Practicality', 'Sustainability' and 'Scalability'.

Keywords: Critical Peace Education, Contact theory, Multi-culturalism, Contested narrative

Introduction

Education has a critical role in rebuilding fractured post-conflict societies and preventing further conflict (Gallagher, 2004). Educators who believe in the potential of education and its role at the heart of social transformation started teaching for peace to create a common positive vision of the future (McGlynn and Zembylas, 2009). However, in a divided society, education is an important tool for conflicting parties to legitimatise and enhance their position (Davies, 2004). Given this, there is a dire need to pay due attention to the content, role, value and purpose of a peace education programme (Bajaj, 2015). The current paper responds to this need by exploring pedagogical calls in the field of peace education to critically engage students with the conflict. It problematises these calls and assumptions and reviews relevant literature to examine the feasibility of their application in some post-conflict contexts. In this paper, I focus on words that I find standing at the heart of much of what post-conflict critical peace education seems to be influenced by; 'multiculturalism', 'contact' and 'contested narratives', and seeking to achieve; 'recognition' and 'criticality'. I take these words to be precarious. This is mainly due to their theoretical aura that fades into a mirage when put to implementation and praxis in some post-conflict divided context with complex dynamics.

Because the topic is heavily informed by literature from the field of peace education, the paper focuses on the concepts of peace and peace education as an entry point to this review. Following this, two main sections are presented. The first one starts by identifying 'misrecognition' as an aspect of structural violence in a post-conflict divided context, which peace education scholars try to address by their recent calls to critical peace education (CPE). Then, I trace CPE in conflict contexts back to Allport's (1954) Contact Theory, Taylor's (1994) Multiculturalism and Gallager's (1996) 'teaching contested narratives'. As I find these approaches to education intrinsically linked to CPE, I briefly discuss conceptualisations relevant to each one of them before elaborating on those of CPE. After establishing an epistemological connection between the four approaches and given the scarcity of CPE's application, I draw on two contextual resources where 'Multiculturalism', 'Contact Theory' and 'Contested Narratives' have been applied or studied. I highlight some reported challenges to their application and draw some insights in light of CPE. Ultimately, I leave it to the reader to locate post conflict critical peace education on the idealism–realism spectrum. I turn now to unpack the concept of peace and explore the goals and aspirations of peace education.

Peace and Peace Education: Mission and Aspirations

Defining peace is not the most straightforward undertaking. This is mainly due to how wide the concept is and how it varies according to the context and within different cultures (Groff, 2002). While moral conceptualisations of peace are mostly connected to war and conflict, some cultures emphasise the distinction between inner and outer peace and use spiritual capacities to experience connections between the inner and outer world (Harris, 2004). Indeed, a recognition of the complexity of the concept seems to be the best contribution to the field of peace education in the 21st century. This complexity has been captured by Bevington, Kurian and Cremin (2018, p. 1418) in what they expressed as a need for "a nuanced understanding of the plurality of peace". Put differently, there is no single umbrella that can house all the experiences of people around the world (Denzin and Lincoln,

2000). Therefore, it is justifiable to argue that peace is contextual and interactional (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013).

In essence, peace education is concerned with creating structures that facilitate building a just, equitable and peaceful world (Bajaj and Hantzopoulos, 2016), increase tolerance, reduce prejudice and change perceptions of the self and the other (Bar-Tal, 2002). Recognised as the father of peace studies, Johan Galtung significantly contributed to defining the field (Lawler, 1995). Galtung distinguished between the two concepts of positive and negative peace (Galtung, 1969). The significance of his contribution lies in shifting the focus to the process-oriented understanding of 'peace'. In other words, while achieving negative peace requires stopping direct violence such as physical harm, reaching a state of positive peace is a more complicated process because it implies removing indirect violence that includes both structural and cultural violence (Harris and Morrison, 2003). Examples of a structural violence in a society include injustice, inequality in education, health services or life chances (ibid.). Cultural violence does extend both direct and structural violence by legitimising them and reproducing them across generations (Galtung, 1969).

Galtung (1990) advocates that peace education must abolish direct, structural and cultural violence. This stance has been substantiated by other prominent scholars in the field such as; Bajaj (2008); Harris and Morrison (2013) and Reardon (2001). Similarly, Page (2008) criticises understandings of peace education that draws on the definition of peace as the absence of overt violence. He believes that such definitions exclude the existence of structural violence that prevents individuals from reaching their full potential. Building on these declared goals, it is justifiable to conclude that a successful peace education initiative in a post conflict context should be concerned with addressing structural and cultural violence given that direct violence will have supposedly stopped by the time of the implementation. Starting out from this juncture, the following section seeks to explore two main points that are of paramount importance towards reaching a conclusion of what content should take a priority in a post-conflict peace programme.

The Content of a Post-Conflict Peace Education Programme

This section consists of two main parts. It first explores one aspect of structural violence that is most likely to be found in a post-conflict divided society, namely 'misrecognition'. Then, it discusses 'critical peace education' which is perceived as a necessary tool towards demolishing different aspects of structural violence. Before delving into conceptualisations of CPE, I examine some similar approaches to education.

Misrecognition as Structural Violence

Injustice and inequality are two main forms of structural violence (Galtung, 1969). Martinea, Meer and Thompson (2012) described how 'misrecognition' in a post-conflict society evolves into epistemic injustice where localised knowledge goes unheard or is silenced. Accordingly, structural violence in a post-conflict society can exist in the form of a lack of recognition of one of the previously conflicting parties. This usually happens because of unbalanced power relations and dynamics when one of the conflicting parties wins or prevails over the other (Lau and Seedat, 2017).

Tiger (2009) argues that oppression is not only in what is done to people but also about what is taken from them. Interestingly, to unveil structural forms of violence that are often disguised, Lau and Seedat (2017) analysed community leaders' narratives from marginalised peri-urban township of Thembelihle in post-apartheid South Africa and concluded that positive peace is contingent on social justice, representation and recognition of the knowledge and voice of its communities. Participants described their community members as being voiceless victims of oppression. This violence of misrecognition affirms a Manichean[1] worldview in a society where groups are identified as 'good' or 'bad'(ibid.). Ben-Porath (2005) argues that an essential component of recognition in a post-conflict context is acknowledging social groups past relations, how they wronged each other and the impact that past practices have on their present conditions. To achieve this end, it requires the content of a peace education programme to recognise the historical perspective of the other while allowing different parties to hold on to their own version of the conflict (ibid). The following explores the concept of CPE which seems to respond to this specific point.

Theoretical Responses: Critical Peace Education

Despite the love, compassion and nonviolence philosophy of peace education, mainstream peace education has been critiqued for working towards developing technical proficiencies without focusing on broader issues of social justice and liberation (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013). It has been argued that an uncritical application of peace education could perpetuate structural and cultural violence (Cremin 2016; Wessells, 2012) and accordingly render peace projects part of the problem and the reality they are pretending to address (Gur-Ze'ev's, 2001; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013).

When it comes to the content of a peace education programme in a post conflict context, CPE seeks to present problems of violence objectively. Instead of convincing students with the correctness of one side, it engages students critically with the conflict. Moreover, it aspires to disrupt asymmetrical power relationships and unpack their political, economic, social and historical roots (Bajaj, 2015). It empowers individuals, enable voices to be heard and boost the participation and agency of the marginalised (Diaz-Soto 2005; Bajaj 2008; Bajaj and Brantmeier 2011; Brantmeier 2011; Trifonas and Wright 2012; Hantzopoulos, 2011).

Reflecting on CPE's goals and ambitions, the following reviews relevant literature and establishes connections between CPE's argument and those of Allport's (1954) 'Contact Hypothesis', Taylor's (1994) 'Multiculturalism' and Gallager's (1996) 'contested narratives'. The following first briefly discusses each of them and then more details about CPE are presented.

Allport's (1954) Contact Hypothesis

Allport (1954) believed that ignorance of the perspective of other groups and communities results in prejudice and fear. Therefore, he suggested that group contact could enable individuals to learn about the other and accordingly alleviate conflict between groups and develop positive intergroup emotions and attitudes towards them (see also Amir, 1976; Pettigrew, 1998). Other scholars further developed this hypothesis into a theory (Hewstone and Brown's, 1986) and established its

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[1] dualistic.

original proposition that intergroup contact decreases intergroup prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

It is worth noting, however, that Allport (1954) proposed some conditions as prerequisites for effective contact. These conditions include; equal status[2], support by an institutional and social authorities[3], cooperation[4] and superordinate goals[5]. Later, Hewston and Brown (1986) suggested that to achieve an effective reduction of intergroup conflict, identities should be highlighted, and controversial issues should be discussed.

Taylor's (1994) Multiculturalism

'Multiculturalism' is meant to offer learners a chance to learn about the others and acknowledge the multiplicity within a nation (Taylor, 1994). Multiculturalism which is based on political science theories such as Pluralism and Liberalism has prompted various curricular developments especially in societies with relative peace (Niens, 2009). Multiculturalism is thought to aim to facilitate social cohesion in democratic societies (ibid.) and have little impact on peace education in conflict contexts (Bekerman and McGlynn, 2007). Despite this, one important aspect of the multicultural thought that seems to align well with the implications of critical peace education in conflicted settings revolves around the importance of acknowledging rather than dismissing past wrongs, which multiculturalists find essential to overcoming mutual hostilities (Taylor, 1994).

Teaching Contested Narratives

In post-conflict societies, a country's history is often a central concern (Freedman et al., 2008; Smith and Vaux, 2003) and questions of how to deal with past narratives are critical (Dierkes et al., 2007). Therefore, the focus on exploring how we should teach history in such conflicted contexts has significantly increased (see for example Gallagher 2004; Smith and Vaux 2003; Tawil and Harley 2004).

A multi-perspective, enquiry-based model of history teaching began in England in the late 1960s[6] (Shemilt, 1980). From the 1990s, international agencies such as OSCE and the Council of Europe have been promoting principles of this model in contexts emerging from conflict (McCully, 2012). In line with this enquiry-based model, Gallager (1996) advocated that history teaching should equip students with critical thinking and moral reasoning skills. Such a skills-based approach helps students to reach informed and balanced conclusions after being exposed to various viewpoints (ibid.). This, in turn, contributes to a deeper social understanding (Smith, 2005) and reinforces peaceful tendencies in societies emerging from conflict (Cole and Barsalou, 2006). This stance is also enhanced by VanSledright (2008) who views using history education to

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[2] Members of the two groups should enjoy similar characteristics, qualities and equal engagement in the relationship.

[3] Authorities should support positive contact.

[4] The environment should be non-competitive and encouraging cooperation.

[5] While political leaders usually see social amnesia as the best way to 'move on' and maintain stability (Cole and Barsalou, 2006), many argue that schools' history curriculum should be revised and a more truthful history should be presented (Hodgkin, 2006; Cole, 2007).

[6] It originated in the Schools' Council History Project (SCHP).

construct one collective memory as an ideological indoctrination that limits students' chance to develop their cognitive abilities. Also, Buckley-Zistel (2009) believes that providing a 'more situated version of the past' (P.48) where different stories from the population are represented helps to avoid further conflict.

On the other hand, however, Cole (2007) advises that such interventions in the history curriculum should only be done after addressing other structural legacies. Another interesting remark comes from McCully (2012) who warns against making generalisations concerning a positive impact of a multi-perspective, enquiry-based history. McCully believes that all such claims lack empirical evidence and there is a need for a systematic research scrutiny of classroom practices.

Critical Peace Education (CPE)

Some aspects of the three previous arguments are interrelated with the aims of post conflict critical peace education. Similar to them, CPE promotes 'taking the other's perspective' and 'recognising other historical narratives' (Ben-Porath, 2005). The ultimate goal of CPE is developing students' critical consciousness that would enable them to explore contradictions in their social, political and economic realm and prepare them to act against them. CPE scholars such as Fisher (2000) reports how some practitioners realise that peace education should shift its focus from making people nicer to each other to promoting a 'culture of resistance' against propaganda and manipulation of government, media and powerful people. Fisher (2000) believes that a peace education programme should include '3Es'; 'exposure, encounter and experience'[7]. In a similar vein, McMaster (2002) believes that to lead people out of a culture of violence, there is a requirement for antagonists to walk through history together to achieve critical probing and shatter reductionist readings of historical narratives. Bajaj (2008) argues that peace education research and efforts should be made towards developing understanding of how to practically achieve these ends.

To provide practical guidelines, Bajaj (2015) builds on Brantmeirer's (2011) stages for critical peace education[8] and comes up with six core competencies[9] that she thinks CPE initiatives should be oriented towards. She also suggests some possible education activities that could help achieve each competency. Of relevance to my argument here are the possible education activities that Bajaj suggests for promoting 'conflict transformation skills' competency. Bajaj sees exploring the roots of violence and attending to the power relations of entrenched conflicts as possible education activities. Moreover, Harris and Morrison (2013) contend that the role of peace educators is to present a variety of points of view so that students receive as comprehensive an understanding as is possible.

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[7] 'Exposure' to the conflict is vital and could be achieved through reading other narratives or people deeply reflecting on their own positioning in a conflict. Afterwards, it is necessary to 'encounter' those with opposing views and different stances. Finally, it should include 'experience'. In other words, allowing students the opportunity to act together with others whom they disagreed with in the beginning.

[8] "(1) Raising consciousness through dialogue (2) Imagining nonviolent alternatives (3) Providing specific modes of empowerment (4) Transformative action (5) Reflection and re-engagement" (Brantmeier, 2011, 356)

[9] The six core competencies are: ''Critical thinking and analysis, empathy and solidarity, individual and coalitional agency, participatory and democratic engagement, education and communication strategies, conflict transformation skills and ongoing reflective practice" (p.162)

Discussion

I find establishing the link between the three arguments of 'Multiculturalism', 'Contact Theory' and 'Teaching contested Narratives' on one hand and CPE on the other necessary and enlightening. This is due to the undeniable similarity in the epistemological and theoretical rhetoric of these arguments which renders a careful drawing on each other's research findings, implications and practical recommendations not only justifiable but necessary and insightful. This is particularly effective for CPE. While the theoretical propositions in CPE field are rapidly growing, there is a stark lack of application in contexts with different conflict natures, levels and dynamics. As a result, there is also a scarcity in evaluation research that is needed to constantly develop the theoretical grounding of the field. Accordingly, seeking insights from such arguments and from contexts where they have been applied responds in a way to Zembylas and Bekerman's (2013: P. 206) call to revisit the theoretical groundings of our vision of peace education and attempt to 'move away from limiting epistemologies to pragmatic ontologies'.

While all four arguments sound attractive and of an emancipatory promise, such pedagogical approaches require a responding and cooperative political climate to facilitate their application. Also, because of the vast variety of conflict natures, there is a need to articulate the theoretical groundings of these arguments in an intricate nuanced way. Considering this last point reveals the following:

- 'Contact Theory' enlists important conditions as prerequisites for its success.

- Multiculturalism scholars have recurrently disclosed the need for a democratic context for their approach to be implemented.

- Proponents of teaching contested historical narratives highlight the importance of addressing structural legacies before introducing such interventions and accentuate the need to avoid sweeping statements about a positive impact without solid empirical evidence.

On the other hand,

- Although theoretical work in the field of CPE is increasingly on the rise, no attempt at defining some conditions or requirements that could guide CPE scholars to identify different levels of analysis can be detected. Also, no identification of features or particularities of conflict contexts where CPE can be successfully applied or not practically possible can be found. Furthermore, addressing structural legacies is recognised as part of the CPE mission.

Having explored theoretical groundings of the four arguments under focus (Check figure 1), the following second section of this paper reflects on contexts where 'Contact Theory', 'Multiculturalism' and 'Contested Narratives' have been operationalised. This has been done to offer further insights into CPE in practice.
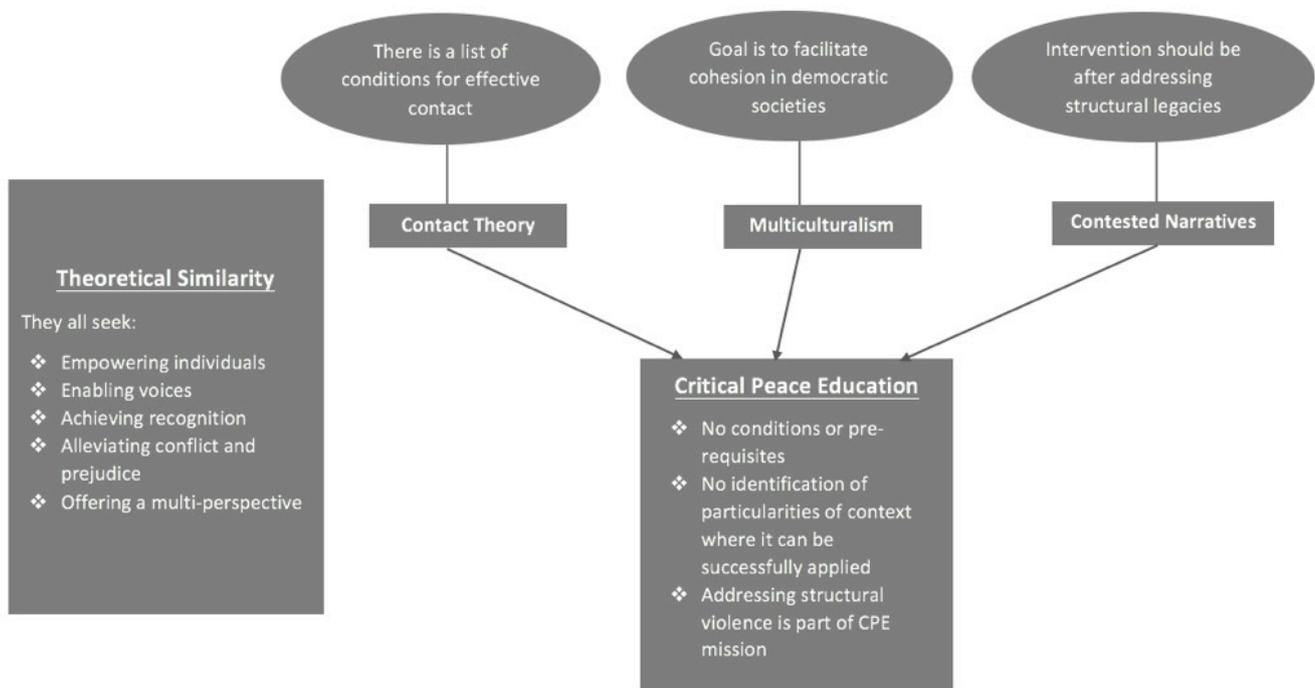
Figure 1[10] . Contact theory, multiculturalism, contested narratives and CPE

Reflection on Contextual Resources

The conflict/post conflict contexts of Rwanda and Israel/ Palestine offer compelling insights. In the following, I first justify my selection of these two contexts. Then, I elaborate on three challenges to the application of 'Multiculturalism', 'Contact Theory' and 'Contested Narratives' there.

Rwanda and Israel/ Palestine

Rwanda is a country that was ripped apart by violence from 1990 till 1994. Two main ethnic groups constitute the population of Rwanda, Hutu and Tutsi. The Rwandan genocide was mainly against the Tutsi. 70% of their population were killed in a 100-day period. However, the genocide ended with the victory of Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) which was Tutsi-dominated (Buckley-Zistel, S., 2009). In other words, the conflict did not end with a mutual peace agreement where conflicting parties were in a position to impose equal power. This is the exact reason this context was selected.

Israel/ Palestine is an ideal example to investigate a deeply divided context where Multiculturalism and Contact Theory have been vividly applied to improve Jewish-Arab relations there. While Palestinians

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[10] This figure has been designed by the author of this essay.

formed the majority in Palestine up until 1947, they now constitute a minority, as only a few of them remained after their defeat in 1948[11]. Although Israel is considered a democracy and should technically meet the conditions of Multiculturalism and intergroup contact approaches, its democratic character seems to be struggling with living up to these approaches goals and aspirations. Several failures and challenges have been reported which are worth bringing forward in light of CPE.

Challenges and Insights

The first challenge that cases of Rwanda and Palestine/Israel yield is the unavoidable power of the victor.

The power of the victor

Benjamin (1968) famously remarked that history is written by winners. After the end of a conflict, victors manipulate the process of developing the history curriculum (Stover and Weinstein 2004), resist histories that include the presentation of the other side's perspective (Cole and Barsalou, 2006) and choose which narrative to remember and what to forget (Buckley-Zistel, 2009). As a result, the official narrative usually defines the past according to the interests of those in power, who mostly choose to silence alternative discourses (Conway 2003; Epstein and Lefkovitz 2001).

AlHaj (2002) examined multiculturalism in Israel as it was represented in Jewish and Arabs schools' history curriculum. He found that history curriculums in Jewish and Arab schools reflects the wider social power system and is a tool in the hand of the powerful to legitimise the dominant Zionist ideology. AlHaj concluded that the history curriculum is far from any model of multiculturalism and reflects the asymmetrical relationships between Arabs and Jews in Israel/ Palestine.

In Rwanda, Straus and Waldorf (2011) reported the challenges of their work on a project that helped move Rwanda closer to reintroducing teaching history into Rwandan schools[12]. Unfortunately, their project failed to include a content that would enable students to engage critically with past violence. The authors justified this failure by the wider political context where the Rwandan government wanted to abolish ethnic identities (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa), and accordingly presented a national narrative that denied the existence of ethnic rivalries before the Belgian colonialism and prohibited any other interpretations of the past. Buckley-Zistel (2009) explains how this national narrative is perceived in the Rwandan context where the government is thought to be following this approach to further its legitimacy, mask the Tutsis' monopoly of the country's military and political power and to eradicate all criticism of the government. A sense of resentment among Rwandan people is also reported especially that any account of the genocide other than the official one is a criminal offence added to Rwanda's penal code in 2002 and is legally prosecuted (Hilker, 2011). A relevant interesting suggestion from Straus and Waldorf's (2011: P.309) research is that ''When one identity group has power and others are subject to that group's policies, history reform becomes almost an impossible task''.

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[11] The rest have been forced out and rendered refugees in surrounding Arab countries and other parts of Palestine.

[12] That was after ten years of no history courses taught in secondary schools.

Discussion

Reflecting on the 'Power of the Victor' presents the first challenge to the implementation of CPE and the ability to propose different viewpoints, let alone to achieve the actual wanted change[13]. In the Rwandan case, critical engagement with the conflict is likely to take place from a new position whereby a third party is to be blamed for the interethnic conflict of the mid-90s. Rwanda's example suggests that applying CPE there is not practically possible. Ironically, given the penal code introduced in 2002, CPE educators are likely to be legally prosecuted.

In the Israeli Palestinian case, the main narrative continues to be dominated by the winner group and although there have been efforts to offer a more multicultural balanced perspective of the conflict, the objectives of multiculturalism completely vanish in the history curriculum in the Jewish schools.

Some might argue that in such contexts that are unwelcoming to the idea of involving students with different narratives, it is our mission to ask questions like: 'Where do we target our interventions?' and 'What other forms of peace initiatives can we introduce?'. While my thoughts are in line with this last argument, it is worth remembering that 'misrecognition' is an aspect of structural violence and a CPE initiative that starts out reconciling with the fact that addressing structural violence is beyond its capacity is indeed failing before it starts. This is particularly relevant if we are to remember the goals that are established in the field about addressing all forms of violence. Here, we reach a dilemma that raises several questions. A big nagging question is: Does CPE need to articulate more realistic goals that respond to different natures and levels of conflict in a more nuanced way?

Identity Accentuation

Indeed, Rwandan government's excuse for suspending to teach history and then teaching one national narrative is its fear of retriggering the conflict. As a result, it chose to evade the possibility of re-igniting ethnic distinctions at the expense of addressing the resulting structural violence. Although some Rwandans view the government approach to the issue as manipulative, some previous research on intergroup contact highlights how intergroup encounters where different identities and perspectives of the conflict are discussed enhance negative attributions and stereotyping among participants (Moaz, 2000a and 2000b). This stance is later substantiated by Bekerman and Maoz (2005) who expressed what they see as an inherent challenge in such initiatives and their tendency to create a context where conditions of the conflict and nationalist discourse can be easily reproduced. Hammack (2009) explored two American-based coexistence programs for Israeli and Palestinian youths. These programmes follow the contact theory approach. Professional facilitators conducted dialogue sessions where the conflict has been directly discussed and participants' social identities were brought up to the forefront. The overall aim of the two programmes was to achieve a transcendence of a delegitimizing in-group narrative. Unfortunately, results show that the identities of many ofthese programmes participants were accentuated instead and their identification with the narrative of their own groups was further elevated. Literature in realistic conflict theory (Sherif, 1958) has consistently demonstrated that opening lines for discussing conflict and different perspectives is necessary towards reducing hostility. However, doing so without 'superordinate goals' only intensifies a sense of in-group identification and solidarity, increase accusations and recriminations and reproduce conflict. For this

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[13] Critical thinking, participatory engagement, reflective practice, conflict transformation skills.

reason, Hammack (2009) suggested that identity accentuation in these programmes was normal and expected. Interestingly, while identity accentuation is the least desired outcome for CPE for its implication of conflict reproduction, Hammack (2009) tries to highlight a positive side which is intrinsically linked to an aspect of structural violence, namely 'lack of recognition'. Hammack views identity accentuation in a positive light because it enables individuals to recognise and express the distinctiveness of their social identities. Furthermore, Hammack calls for a model that embraces identity accentuation as necessary.

Discussion

Reflecting on 'identity accentuation' presents the second challenge to the practice of CPE, especially in terms of the ability to move from implementation of 'exposing students to different perspectives' to tackling questions like; How are we to sustain the positive side of the tricky result of 'identity accentuation' and any other transformative skills students might acquire? The Israeli Palestinian case presents a real challenge where achieving 'recognition' in the settings where these programmes are delivered might be pointless and rather counterproductive if those in power are unwilling to lift structural inequalities. In this scenario, minority group members who further recognised their identities and accentuated their narratives might see no other option to regain their rights than generating conflict. Resorting to violence might be their only way to stand up to the macro socio-political reality and other aspects of power imbalance, structural asymmetry and majority-minority relations.

Highlighting the importance of the macro socio-political reality, Bar-Tal (2004) argues that intergroup contact contributes minimally to conflict reduction because it lags behind political change. The following section further elaborates on this point.

Social Transformation: 'Individual' or 'Structural Asymmetry'?

One of the criticisms to intergroup contact is that it relies on a bottom up theory of how transformation occurs and views individuals as 'producers' and not 'products' of a social structure (Hammack, 2009). I argue that this does indeed apply to 'Multiculturalism', 'contested narratives' and accordingly to 'CPE' too. They all connect social transformation to the individual rather than structural inequities or social policies. Interestingly, Hammack (2009) assimilates this with the American Dream myth where individuals are deceived into thinking that they have an equal chance to succeed. The truth is, however, that the huge undeniable structural inequality does disenfranchise minorities from advancement opportunities.

Noteworthy is that this approach was challenged by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory that attribute the origin of conflicts to the social structure that has a significant influence on the individual and not vice versa. Studies of intergroup contact in Israel/ Palestine (Bekerman, 2002; Halabi & Sonnenshein, 2000, Moaz, 2000a) enhance this theory and highlight the importance of the sociohistorical context and the influence of the outside power relations and structural asymmetry on the success of the encounter. Bar-Tal (2004) highlights how intergroup contact projects in Israel/ Palestine completely collapsed when violence erupted in the two Intifadas of 1987 and 2000. Therefore, he contends that coexistence efforts should not be exerted with big aspirations

for social change. This is because the effectiveness of these efforts and intergroup relations are inextricably interrelated with an encompassing conflict resolution process where the political, economic, societal and military conditions are in line with the goals of these efforts (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).

Discussion

Reflecting on how applications of 'multiculturalism', 'contact theory', 'contested narratives' and CPE are embedded in a system of structural asymmetry is a third challenge. It is not only the individual change that is needed, but also structures that are in place to enable such a conflict transformation to come to light. Indeed, CPE might successfully manage long term transformation in individuals without achieving a critical mass to make change at scale. Thus, 'how can we amplify the effects on the individuals that are changed so that they affect the environment? Due to the powerful structural asymmetry as being very strong over us, the question naturally arises of how feasible it is to scale up any prospective ripple effect. Other critical questions are: Is CPE in a need to reconsider its target? sort out its priorities? or just define more modest goals? Noteworthy is that Bekerman and Moaz (2005) identified this challenge to the application of CPE when they advocated a post-positivist realism in the field. This view recognises that although some theoretical conceptualisations are valid and describe the empirical world well, they might be of a little influence due to stronger constructed hegemonies that control our lives and the opportunities available to us. Although this call has been there since 2005, rigorous responses to it in the field are difficult to be detected.

Insights

Building on the analysis and the three discussions under 'The Power of the Victor', 'Identity Accentuation' and 'Individual or Structural Asymmetry' sections, I suggest that one way of pushing the field of CPE toward the realistic end of the spectrum could be by conceptualising it in a three-dimensional way: Applicability, Sustainability and Scalability.

Applicability: The parameter of 'applicability' acknowledges the complexity of CPE implementation and the particularity of different post-conflict contexts. Therefore, it facilitates the advancement of acontext-specific, location-sensitive CPE that is based on a true understanding of local socio-political climates.

Sustainability: The parameter of 'sustainability' acknowledges that CPE can serve as a factor of sustainable long-term change only when an equitable social structure and reality provide a background for it.

Scalability: The parameter of 'scalability' acknowledges the tricky relationship between individual transformation and social structural change. Therefore, it has a modest vision of the scale at which CPE can effectively operate. It also decides on targeting CPE efforts based on answers to the question: 'How effective is individual agency in the face of structural asymmetry in this particular context'?

Conclusion

There seems to be a need in the field of peace education to be reoriented towards a more realistic view of its role in a post-conflict context. This can possibly start with acknowledging reality and articulating goals that respond to different natures and levels of conflict in a more nuanced way. The field might benefit from enlisting some prerequisites to its application.

A political will is needed to be in line with CPE objectives and to provide background for it. CPE needs to reconsider the possibility of accentuating students' identities by exposing them to different views of the conflict especially in contexts with aspects of power imbalance, structural asymmetry and unjust majority-minority relations. It is informative to pose questions around the chances that CPE would serve as a factor of sustainable change in such contexts.

Finally, there is a need to reconsider the relationship between individual transformation and social structural change. This paper invites peace education scholars to contemplate some critical questions such as; Can CPE goals be achieved by targeting all our efforts towards transforming the individual? Does CPE need to sort out its priorities and be more critical on how to operate in conflict/ post conflict contexts?

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LITERATURE REVIEW ON ISSUES SURROUNDING GCSE TEXTILES COURSES IN ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Textiles is currently the least popular mainstream GCSE option in England, and because I am a Textiles teacher, I conducted a literature review to determine and understand why this may be the case. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the number of male pupils' opting to take a GCSE in Textiles is very low. Indeed, the association between sewing and female domesticity appears to have had a negative impact on male students opting for the subject, as the low male GCSE numbers are also present in Child Development, Dance and Health & Social Care. Additionally, the literature suggests creative subjects in general have been taught in a manner that does not motivate pupils nor allow creativity within the lessons. Furthermore, many pupils in Textiles classes are often given projects that result in stereotypical and unoriginal final outcomes, as teachers favour the reliability of getting all their students to produce the same outcome e.g. an embroidered cushion. Additionally, as a result of these sorts of Textiles projects, pupils struggle to see the point in the designing and planning stages of their products, as they will all be the same. Moreover, uninspiring projects that favour practical skill learning, over designing, planning and problem solving activities, have resulted in schools and the government questioning whether Textiles can be considered an academic subject. Indicatively, Textiles subjects have not been included in the English Baccalaureate qualification, and feasibly, this may have led to certain top UK universities listing Textiles subjects as undesirable academic qualifications to possess.

Keywords: Textiles, Fashion, Design and technology, Creativity, Gender.

Introduction

This literature review is presently active and ongoing, and has been compiled as part of a thesis investigating the potential reasons as to why Design and Technology Textiles and Art and Design Textiles are so unpopular at GCSE level. It should be noted, in English secondary schools, Textiles education is taught via two alternative GCSE, Art and Design: Textiles (AD:T), and Design and Technology with a textiles speciality (D&T). Similarly, both courses assess using a project-based Non-Exam Assessment (NEA), and D&T students also undertake an exam paper. Furthermore, the D&T qualification does not have a specific textile course, although all students opting for D&T must study textiles as part of the exam. However, this literature review will often refer to Textiles, and this should be taken to represent both AD:T and D&T Textiles.

After establishing the research questions for my thesis, I was able to set the parameters for selecting the literature for the literature review, and I also had a clear picture of the questions I wanted to ask the literature. Furthermore, the answers I received from the literature would go on to form the questions included within the semi-structured interviews conducted as part of my thesis research study. The aforementioned parameters were as follows; the research was published in one of the following formats: a peer-review journal, a book from an established publisher, government documentation, and official documentation. However, in a small number of cases, newspaper articles have been referenced, this is due to the lack of research into Textiles within English secondary schools, although, these articles are often used to add weight to a point made by an author from the former list. Furthermore, the majority of the research featured within the literature review is qualitative studies, which was a deliberate decision, as the thesis with apply qualitative semi-structured interviews as the research method. The literature also needed to reference Textiles, Gender, Creativity, Design and Technology or Art and Design, and unless a seminal text, needed to have been published after 1991, as this is the date Design and Technology was introduced to English schools.

Currently, Textiles is the least popular mainstream GCSE option in England. Indeed, in a recent report published by Cambridge Assessment, AD:T is the least popular subject at GCSE, with 1.1% of students taking it, and D&T Textiles had 3.2% of students taking it at GCSE (Carroll & Gill, 2018, p. 6). Certainly, the literature suggests that the main reasons behind the unpopularity of Textiles are: the way Textiles is taught within English secondary schools (Baum, 1988; Brendtro and Shahbazian, 2004; Kimbell, 2000; McClusky, Baker and McClusky, 2005; McLellan & Nicholl, 2013; Nicholl and McLellan, 2008 Renzulli and Reis, 1997; Tannenbaum and Baldwin, 1983; Treffinger, Schoonover and Sebly, 2013), gender divides (Bain, 2016; Bell, Hughes & Owen-Jackson, 2013; Bramley et al, 2015; Carroll & Gill, 2018; Sayers, 2002) and gender stereotypes (Butler, 1988), the association with Textiles being a non-academic subject (Abrahams, 2018; Coe, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2013), and implementation of the *English Baccalaureate* (Ebacc) and *Facilitating* subjects (Bloom, 1958; Bell, Hughes & Owen-Jackson, 2013; De Bono, 1992; Greevy, Knox, Nunney, & Pye, 2015; Nicholl & McLellan, 2008; Torrance, 1965). To conclude, the literature review presents my opinions on, personal experiences of issues outlined above, drawing the three sections together and explaining why society should take note of the decline in Textiles. Furthermore, the conclusion briefly describes the research that this literature review is part of, and will clarify how the project will continue in the next few months.

Firstly, the literature on how Textiles is taught within schools is focused on D&T Textiles, as opposed to AD:T. Essentially, this is due to the lack of literature that focuses on AD:T, rather a bias towards

D&T. Nevertheless, the emphasis within this section is on how creativity, in general, is taught (McLellan & Nicholl, 2013), and the consequences that not allowing pupils' to express their creativity has on their motivation levels (Baum, 1988; Brendtro and Shahbazian, 2004; McClusky, Baker and McClusky, 2005; Renzulli and Reis, 1997; Tannenbaum and Baldwin, 1983; Treffinger, Schoonover and Sebly, 2013). Furthermore, the section aims to present theories as to why teachers use projects that do not facilitate pupils' creativity, despite teachers acknowledging that creativity is an important life skill (Kimbell, 2000; Nicholl and McLellan, 2008).

Following on from concerns with how Textiles is taught, the focus turns to literature surrounding how gender affects a pupils' likelihood in opting to study Textiles at GCSE. However, while the literature review makes reference to gender and gender biases within Textiles, and while the thesis will be able to tackle the issues of gender in more depth, this shortened version refers only to male and female sex, and does not focus on the role of those who identify as transsexual, non-binary or ambiguous. Certainly, the fashion industry as a wider sector has often provided a place for members of the LGBQT+ community, and there are many celebrated, high profile gay fashion designers, and transsexual models that work within the fashion industry (Davis, 1992; Steele, 2013). However, this openness to fashion within schools does not include cis male teenagers, who are not opting to study GSCE Textiles (Bell, Hughes & Owen-Jackson, 2013; Bramley et al, 2015; Carroll & Gill, 2018; Sayers, 2002). In order to explain the lack of male pupils, the literature offers historical associations with female domesticity (Bain, 2016), an abundance of female (and a dearth of male) Textiles teachers (Sayers, 2002), gender performativity (Butler, 1999), and a preoccupation with getting girls to study traditionally male subjects (Bell, Hughes & Own-Jackson, 2013; Sayers, 2002), which thus enforces a stereotype of Textiles being a feminine subject.

Perhaps as a result of Textiles association with female domesticity, it is not considered to be a difficult, intellectual or academic GCSE choice (Abrahams, 2018; Coe, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2013). Furthermore, the result of Textiles not being perceived by the government as an important qualification is that the subject is not included in either the UK Government's English Baccalaureate (GCSE), nor the Russell Group's Facilitating subject list (A-Level). Both the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc), and the facilitating subject list were designed to allow students the best possible chances of getting into university (Department for Education, 2019; Informed Choices, 2017). Although, the EBacc and the Facilitating subject list, include maths, English, science, geography, history, and modern foreign languages (Department for Education, 2019; Informed Choices, 2017). However, the consequences of students not being able to pursue traditionally creative subjects, is that creativity becomes less valued by society, and directly negatively impacts on pupils' motivation levels (Bloom, 1958; Bell, Hughes & Owen-Jackson, 2013; De Bono, 1992; Greevy, Knox, Nunney, & Pye, 2015; Nicholl & McLellan, 2008; Torrance, 1965).

Issues with how creativity is taught in Textiles

Within the context of D&T Textiles, the teacher will often begin a project by showing students' what the final outcome will look like, for example, everyone will make a cushion cover. Furthermore, the project will often involve a decorative element, e.g. the pupils need to come up with an applique design for the front of their cushion (Nicholl & McLellan, 2013, p. 167). However, McLellan and

Nicholl take issue with the fact that often pupils lack the opportunity to come up with original and novel designs as a result of the constricting briefs set by their teachers (2013, p. 167). Indeed, as part of their research, McLellan and Nicholl (2013, p. 176) interviewed D&T GCSE students, and one pupil stated, "I think if you look at everyone's folios and all the research is the same, you've got a specification and you've got an analysis and you've probably got a mood board" (2013, p. 176). However, in a paper titled Creativity in Crisis, Kimbell blamed Ofsted, and not just teachers, for limiting creativity in schools, as the emphasis from Ofsted was on measurable results, and not creativity (2000, p. 209). In addition, Bloom suggested that when teachers, schools and pupils focus solely on memorising established facts about a subject, there is a direct negative impact on a pupil's creativity and ability to problem solve (1958, p. 599). Also, Torrance underlined the importance of teaching creativity, praising its role in pioneering inventions, such as "the alphabet, printing, radio, television, computers, spacecraft, great art, architecture, music and literature." (1965, p. 10). Likewise, De Bono listed four ways that creativity can aid human development: for improvement; for problem solving; for the future and for motivation (1992, p. 55-56). These creative skills can be applied in many different subjects, and not just within the traditionally creative ones (such as Textiles, Art or D&T), although, creative skills need to be taught somewhere.

Indeed, both state and private sector teachers are under pressure to produce good results for their pupils, in both official examinations and internal end of unit assessments. However, in a study by Nicholl and McLellan that conducted interviews with English state secondary teachers, they found that the pressure on good grades often results in D&T teachers focusing on developing projects that easily and routinely produce consistent results (Nicholl and McLellan, 2008, p. 587). Conversely, projects that reside within the consistent and safe area of Textiles do not often require any creative input from the pupils' (Nicholl and McLellan, 2008, p. 587). Furthermore, the teachers interviewed in Nicholl and McLellan's study stated that creativity is an important skill for pupils to develop (2008, p. 591). Although, the teachers also believed creativity was not an essential skill for achieving a high grade at GCSE, and therefore, they often favoured the routine outcomes over creative ones (2008, p. 591). Moreover, teachers also valued the practical skill and craft element of D&T over teaching creativity, as they believed the pupils needed to learn these skills before they could effectively design (Nicholl and McLellan, 2008, p. 595). However, this rolls back to the rote learning of step-by-step skills, and these procedural projects result in pupil's perceiving many aspects of the subject as somewhat pointless (Nicholl and McLellan, 2008, p. 592). In turn, these kinds of D&T projects lead to formulaic learning, which is problematic because it limits both pupil creativity and motivation levels, and arguably puts students off opting for the subject at GCSE.

Furthermore, when pupils are not encouraged to practise creativity in their D&T projects, they often produce unimaginative and stereotypical designs. In addition, Textiles projects that produced the most fixated design responses from pupils were tasks that required students to design a motif or embroidery to go on top of an object (Nicholl and McLellan, 2007, p. 40). As Nicholl and McLellan state, "stereotypical ideas were more evident in some projects than others. For instance, if pupils had to decorate or embellish a product (for instance, the lid of a pencil box or the design on a cushion), stereotypical ideas were particularly common" (2007, p. 40). Likewise, the benefits of pupils following child-centred projects that focus on an issue they are interested, and invested in has been widely reported to have a very positive effect on underachieving pupils' behaviour and motivation levels within school (Baum, 1988; Brendtro and Shahbazian, 2004; McClusky, Baker and McClusky, 2005; Renzulli and Reis, 1997; Tannenbaum and Baldwin, 1983; Treffinger, Schoonover and Sebly, 2013).

Concerning D&T, the projects that have been found to motivate and inspire pupils the most are, "real world problem solving, and self-selected topics" (Renzulli, McCluskey and McCluskey, 2014, p. 4). Nevertheless, in my experience as a secondary school D&T teacher, these sorts of embellishment projects are very common and, as a result, stereotypical designs are prevalent within schools. Indeed, potentially, pupils could feel frustrated at the levels of control over the outcomes of their projects, leading them to not opt for the subject at GCSE.

Issues of Gender within GCSE Textiles Courses

Alongside projects that do not facilitate pupil creativity or choice, gender also plays a role in the unpopularity of GCSE Textiles courses. The strong association between femininity and fashion has limited the appeal of Textiles GCSE courses to male students. Certainly, an important theory for understanding the reason for why this gender divide exists within the textiles GCSE is Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Thus, Butler's theory of performativity (1988, p. 519) is a theory as to how humans construct their outward identities. Indeed, Butler suggested we consistently perform a "stylised repetition of acts" in order to construct our own identities, and these 'acts' are entrenched within our societal traditions, e.g. a female displays her gender by wearing a skirt or boys don't study Textiles GCSE, and these rules are learnt through repetition, as opposed to a natural act, (1988, p. 519). However, Boucher criticises Butler's performativity theory, questioning who decides what we repeat and how individuals imitate or repeat, and if these actions are subconscious, then why do we not replicate everything we witness (2006, p. 116). While Boucher's point is valid, it could be argued that within the context of GCSE options, gender as 'performance' acts as an inhibitor to males opting for Textiles GCSEs.

In order to illustrate the gendered issues within textiles, in a study by Bramley et al (2015), it was found that out of all the subjects offered at GCSE, Art and Design: Textiles, and Design and Technology: Textiles had the lowest percentage of uptake from boys (2015, p. 12). Furthermore, in 2017, Carroll and Gill found that only 0.2% of males were studying GCSE Design and Technology Textiles, and 0.1% of males were studying GCSE Art and Design Textiles (2018, p. 6). These statistics are supported by Bell, Hughes and Owen-Jackson, who state Textiles is "predominantly a female-based discipline, with even smaller numbers of male teachers and boys electing to study it at examination level" (2013, p. 157). Bell at al. suggests the only apparent reason for Textiles' low male GCSE uptake is its strong historical associations with female domesticity (2013, p. 157), and this could also be linked back to performativity in action. Interestingly, Carroll and Gill (2018) found there were three other subjects with equally low percentage levels of popularity with male students: Home Economics: Child Development, Dance, and Health & Social Care (2018, p. 6). All three subjects have been traditionally associated with female domesticity, although it is not possible to say that their links with domesticity are the cause of their unpopularity.

Therefore, as subjects and activities (such as sewing, textiles and fashion) do not have a gender, the associations must be social, certainly gender performativity could be in play, in so much as pupils have learnt, through observing the socially constructed world, that a Textiles GCSE is for female pupils. Indeed, considering the above, even if a male student enjoyed Textiles at school, he may be put off due to gender performative stereotyping. For example, if a male student were to opt to study textiles,

he may be subject to peer or parental pressures not to take it (Bell, Hughes & Owen-Jackson, 2013, p. 153). Additionally, to further illustrate this point, Sayers suggested, "gender, seen as a social construct, allows us to examine typical gender characteristics and even stereotypes" (2002, p. 171). Furthermore, gender stereotyping has been recognised by curriculum developers, and it is acknowledged as occurring within subjects in secondary schools (Sayers, 2002, p. 171). However, action taken on attempting to even out gender imbalances within the secondary school curriculum has been weighted in favour of attracting female students to study traditionally male subjects, and not on attracting boys to study textiles (Bell, Hughes & Own-Jackson, 2013, p. 153; Sayers, 2002, p. 171).

Indeed, sewing and textiles have represented female domesticity, alongside cooking, cleaning, and child rearing; therefore, the subconscious perceives sewing and textiles with femininity (Bain, 2016, p. 58). Similarly, in schools, girls were taught home economics (sewing and cooking) and boys were taught wood and metal work (Bell, Hughes & Own-Jackson, 2013, p. 153; Sayers, 2002, p. 171). Again, this further reinforced the gender performative nature of sewing being for girls, and not for boys. However, second wave feminism condemned dressmaking and sewing due to its deeply ingrained ties with female oppression, "exiting the home and leaving behind its seemingly frivolous activities was a fundamental goal for the activists of second wave feminism who viewed such practices as domestic drudgery and sought women's entry into the public sphere" (Bain, 2016, p. 59). Despite the decline in popularity coinciding with second wave feminism (1960s- 1980s), there has been a resurgence of dressmaking in more recent years, and many haberdasheries, sewing blogs, and craft websites have opened up or launched (Burt, 2011; Dunk, 2009; Holson, 2012; Paul, 2013; Pithers, 2013). However, there has been a certain pressure put on women who enjoy fashion, regarding the fact it is not considered a feminist pastime (Corner, 2015, p. 36). Furthermore, when Bain interviewed female sewers who considered themselves feminist, one striking quote from her research reads "As if sewing is easy and designing patterns doesn't take math, engineering, spatial abilities, and so many other "masculine" skills because it is something traditionally associated with women" (Erin Seamstress Designs in Bain, 2016, p. 61). Thus, potentially, the perception of Textiles being non-academic could impact on a pupil's decision to opt for the subject, as they could be apprehensive about the prejudices they may face.

In addition, male students may be subject to "embarrassment and teasing from others" (Sayers, 2002, p. 177) if they opted for GCSE Textiles. To elaborate on this last point, Bell et al. suggested that within the D&T environment there is "a (western) feminist argument that because food and textiles are considered domestic, and female, they have a lower status than resistant materials and electronics" (2013, p. 156). For example, in single-sex secondary schools, GCSE AD:T was taken by 0% of males in all boy's schools, and GCSE D&T Textiles was also taken by 0% of males in all boy's schools (Carroll & Gill, 2018, p. 8). This could be explained as, historically, "boys would invariably follow a workshop-based curriculum based on metal and wood manufacturing skills, while girls would follow a curriculum preparing them for domestic life through subjects such as cookery and needlework" (Bell et al., 2013, p. 153). What is more, teachers of textiles tend to be females themselves, which further reinforces the gender performance of Textiles as a feminine subject (Sayers, 2002, p. 180). Interestingly, academics concerned with textiles and education have suggested that combining textiles and fashion, a predominantly female subject, with computer science and IT, a predominantly male subject, may neutralise the gender divide (Buechley, Eisenberg, Elumeze, 2007; Kafai, Searle, Kaplan, Fields, Lee, 2013; Searle, Fields, Lui, Kafai; 2013). However, the results of these studies seemed to increase female interest in IT, as opposed to male interest in fashion and Textiles.

Issues with the 'Ebacc' and 'Facilitating Subjects'

In addition to gender issues, another reason for low popularity of Textiles may be that the GCSE is less difficult than more traditionally academic GCSE's, such as Latin, science or English. For example, Coe applied the Rasch model to measuring individual ability and exam difficulty to thirty-four GCSE subjects, this was a statistical approach, which relied on the assumption that a more able pupil could do better in exams than a less able pupil (Coe, 2008, p. 613). In addition, within Coe's Rasch model, individual ability and exam difficulty are related by "the logit function, the difference being equal to the log of the odds, and item difficulties and person abilities are estimated in logit units" (Coe, 2008, p. 615). However, if the subject did not fit the Rasch model, it was not included within the study. Nonetheless, Coe found that GCSE Physical Education and GCSE D&T Textiles were the two easiest GCSE's; and in contrast, GCSE Latin was the hardest (2008, p. 625). Of course, applying a statistical model to 'difficulty' is problematic, as highlighted by Coe within his publication, as a GCSE candidate may do well in an exam because they worked very hard and revised, and not because it is 'less difficult'; likewise, it is very hard to compare subjects, for example, Art and PE have very few overlapping aspects, and therefore why should they be compared; finally, and somewhat important for gender performativity issues, students are likely to succeed in different subjects dependant on their gender (Coe, 2008, p. 611). Although, having said this, statistical and quantitative approaches offer objective results, in the case of GCSE difficulty, an objective approach to an issue that would otherwise be very subjective (Coe, 2008, p. 612).

What is more, Coe's data demonstrated that the ability of a Textiles GCSE grade A candidate is equal to a French GCSE grade B candidate:

> For example, grade B in German, Spanish or French is about equivalent to an A in child development, textiles or PE. For the lower grades, the overlap seems bigger still, sometimes approaching two grades; agrade F in Spanish, IT or history is almost the same as a D in textiles, PE or drama. (Coe, 2008, p. 620)

Therefore, it may be fair to assume prospective students perceive a GCSE in D&T Textiles as a less valuable qualification than one in Latin, Spanish or German. Furthermore, pupils are often aware of the academic value associated with GCSEs in subjects such as Latin; for instance, "some pupils appeared to be distinctly aware of the value of this qualification [Latin], feeling that by studying it they demonstrate a particular form of intelligence" (Abrahams, 2018, p. 1149). Moreover, the issues surrounding the perceived intellectual differences between practical and non-practical subjects has led to the most able students being discouraged in opting to study practical subjects at GCSE.

Another key issue to consider regarding GCSE Textiles courses in English secondary schools is how they are assessed/measured. The British Government measures schools on how well its pupils achieve in the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) subjects at GCSE level: "the EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that keeps young people's options open for future study and future careers" (Department for Education, 2019). The subjects included with the EBacc are English literature, English language, maths, the sciences, geography or history and a modern foreign language (Department for Education, 2019). The UK government advised the EBacc subjects based

on the entry requirements to attend a Russell Group university. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that parents, and self-aware students, will be conscious of how subjects, such as Textiles, might dampen (or at least not aid) their future university prospects, especially if they're aiming for Oxbridge or a Russell Group institution.

Indeed, due to the ease of a Textiles qualification, it is not perceived as a facilitating GCSE or A-Level choice by Russell Group Universities themselves (Informed Choices Guide, 2017, p. 29). Instead, facilitating GCSE and A-Level subjects are maths, further maths, English literature, physics, biology, chemistry, geography, history, and languages (Informed Choices, 2017, p. 29). Although, facilitating subjects are simply defined as ones that "are required more often than others" for study at university (Informed Choices Guide, 2017, p. 29), the guide acknowledges that specific courses may require different subjects, and it does not advise that students should only opt for facilitating subjects. However, the London School of Economics lists both Art and Design, and D&T, as non-preferred A-Level subjects on the website's entry requirement list (LSE, 2019). Furthermore, there are no undergraduate courses in fashion or textile related subjects at any Russell Group university. However, Oxford, Newcastle, UCL, Leeds, Southampton, Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities all offer Art and Design courses (Complete University Guide, 2019). Therefore, it seems as though perhaps the two go hand-in-hand, that is, Textiles being an easy GCSE and A-Level subject, and its relatively low desirability from respected universities.

It can be the case that practical subjects, such as Textiles, are considered less academic in nature by institutions. For example, Martin and Owen-Jackson explained that bright pupils are often discouraged from taking practical subjects, because "higher value is placed on academic subjects, which are deemed suitable only for the more intelligent pupils, while practical subjects are considered less academic, and suitable for less able pupils" (2013, p. 64). Additionally, there is debate around whether D&T is an academic or vocational subject. O'Sullivan suggested that D&T can be perceived as both vocational and academic, in so much as it focuses on developing practical construction skills, problem solving and socio-cultural issues (2013, p. 74). In addition, O'Sullivan stated that if professionals continue to focus on the differences between vocational and academic subjects, there will remain a divide and hierarchy, and inevitably the subjects that occupy this space will be irradiated from the curriculum (2013, p. 74-75). Although, guidance from The Wolf Report (2011) on age 14-19 vocational education advised that any vocational courses should be constructed with the strong involvement of industry figures (O'Sullivan, 2013, p. 81). However, students should at first focus on attempting to obtain academic qualifications before pursuing vocational courses (O'Sullivan, 2013, p. 81). Although subjects such as Art, Textiles and D&T may be considered non-academic, if they are taught well, they do allow pupils to express their creativity, and this impacts positively on their wellbeing and motivation levels, as mentioned in the creativity section.

The government introduced the EBacc in order to even out the number of state school pupils gaining a place at a Russell group university, as it was believed that privately educated pupils were advantaged significantly. However, a UK Government report on the EBacc, found that although there had been an upward trend in state school pupils taking the EBacc, it was not a statistically significant increase (Greevy, Knox, Nunney, & Pye, 2015). In addition, the report also stated that the increases in EBacc uptake were seen in academically selective state schools (Greevy, Knox, Nunney, & Pye, 2015). Furthermore, the report found schools were targeting their most able pupils to take EBacc subjects, and promoting fewer academic

subjects to the least able (Greevy et al, 2015). It could certainly be argued that the EBacc has had a negative impact on the popularity of Textiles GCSEs.

Conclusion

Presently, there is a dearth of research into why specifically the Textiles GCSE is unpopular in English secondary schools as the academic focus has been on engaging female students to take 'male' subjects. However, it is evident that gender is a predominant issue in terms of student uptake of Textiles at GCSE, as half of the pupil population is, on the whole, not opting for it. In addition, many male single-sex schools do not offer Textiles at KS3 or at GCSE, as they may assume that no students would pick it, as the consensus is that Textiles is for girls. Perhaps emphasis should be put on the social benefits for girls of opting to study traditionally male subjects, *and* the promotion of boys opting for female subjects. The role gender plays within fashion and textiles becomes especially important, as it is clear that gender is one of the more prevalent factors in answering why there is a decline in students opting for Textiles at GCSE. Indeed, as we can see in Erin Seamstress Design's quote from Bain's paper (2016, p.61), there is a stigma to working or studying a fashion or textiles-related discipline. It is belittled due to its association with domestic, female pastimes, and is widely considered non-intellectual.

What is more, within creative subjects, such as Textiles, teachers are, according to the literature, giving students uninspiring projects. Pupils are not required to be creative in their lessons, and end up following a set of prescribed steps to complete a project that ends up exactly the same as everyone else's. These factors arguably could contribute to the subject being perceived by pupils and society as a non-academic subject. Often, pupils are aware of the pointlessness of the tasks they are set, however, teachers are reluctant to provide more ambiguous and creative tasks due to the higher levels of risk involved with such projects. However, the research highlights just how creative and inspired pupils become when they do have more autonomy and say in how their project will come out, this is especially apparent in pupils who are underperforming at school.

In my experience having worked as a D&T teacher in both private and state secondary schools, the gap between privately and state-educated pupils remains present. Most private and public schools have compulsory extra-curricular clubs and societies as part of their school day. Therefore, pupils have the opportunity to partake in creative activities, which are not part of their GCSE choices. In contrast, pupils at state schools do not have as many opportunities to partake in extra-curricular activities, in so much as there are fewer clubs on offer, and they are optional for both pupils and teachers. Furthermore, those pupils who attend state schools and *do* partake in creative extra-curricular activities often have middle class parents who are willing to pay extra for those opportunities, such as music lessons or art clubs. The risk, therefore, becomes that creativity evolves into something that is only available for those who have the means to pay for it.

The next stages in development for the thesis, of which this literature review is part of, involve gathering data. The research method chosen to collect this data is elite semi-structured, interviews. Furthermore, participants have been selected because of their roles within the fashion/ textiles industry, education, educational research, or in all three and their authority within the subject area means that

through their responses to my interview questions, they can aid in addressing my three research questions:

RQ1: Why is pupil uptake of GCSE Textiles so low within English secondary schools?

RQ2: What consequences may there be from Textiles education being removed from the English secondary school classroom?

RQ3: How can Textiles education be improved within English secondary schools?

The interview questions aim to gauge the participants' levels of agreement, or disagreement with the three main issues surrounding the low GCSE uptake of Textiles, as identified in the literature (projects, gender and subject bias). Furthermore, due to the gap within educational research in Textiles education, the arguments and statements provided by my participants will assist the thesis in producing a balanced argument, and therefore, a well-considered potential solution to the problem of such low Textiles GCSE uptake. On a similar note, the lack of literature on the low textiles uptake at GCSE, meant that there were not many counter arguments to the ones presented which have been published; the completed thesis will provide a multi-dimensional approach to the issue and hopefully provide Textiles teachers with advice on how to improve their subjects popularity.

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RETHINKING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATIVE WRITING: A NEGLECTED ART FORM BEHIND THE LANGUAGE LEARNING CURRICULUM

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In many countries, including China and the UK, creative writing is seen as a subject within the broader area of first language learning. Embedded within language learning, creative writing therefore appears very functional. Teachers often pay more attention to the technical writing skills but neglect emotion and creativity. However, many researchers argue that emotion and creativity should be the core elements when seeing creative writing as valuable for its own sake, as an art form. This essay will draw on the argument that we should rethink the significance of teaching creative writing as an art form. As the author had educational experience in both the UK and China, this paper will mainly use the examples in the UK and China to explore the following questions: in what ways can we see creative writing as an art form and why is it educationally valuable? What is lost in a functional view of creative writing and how does it contribute to language learning? These answers will address the democratic nature of art education, the role of aesthetics in generating creativity and motivation for language learning. From the perspective of democracy, creative writing is a significant way for self-expression and voice of freedom. From the view of aesthetics, aesthetic experience takes an important role in generating emotion and creativity, which helps personal growth rather than only working on the skill-based learning. Another perspective is that creative writing can help students generate motivation in language learning by giving them more space and time for self-expression and helping them experience the beauty of language, which corresponds to the democratic and aesthetic factor.

Keywords: Creative writing, Arts education, Language curriculum, Democratic expression, Aesthetic experience

Introduction

What is creative writing? Is creative writing an art form? During its development, creative writing is first linked to "creation" and "creative power" and then comes to substitute for literature in published works (Dawson, 2005). The modern version of the discipline of creative writing begins in 1940 with the founding of the Iowa Writer's Workshop, which is partly a reinvention in composition of both "ancient dramatic teaching" and "Renaissance rhetorical exercises" (Dawson, 2005).

After the Education Act of 1996, the revised National Curriculum of 2000 contains twelve subjects, which contain English and creative writing (which was historically within the language subject curriculum) (Moon, 2001). Indeed, creative writing education is embedded within the language subject in the curriculum and is not seen as arts education worldwide. During teaching and learning, creative writing is also mainly taught in functional ways rather than creative ways (Winston, 2011).

However, from the democratic, aesthetic and motivative perspectives, it is time to rethink creative writing as an art form, one which can play a significant role in helping students express their voices freely and generate creativity. Just as Dawson (2005) says, "The educational goal of Creative Writing in schools, however, was not to create a nation of literary geniuses, but a nation of children whose creative spirit had been released as a means of assisting their personal growth, via self-expression" (p.15).

Creative Writing - an Art Form

Defining Art

To explore the relationship between creative writing and art, it is important to define these two concepts. The question "What is art?" can generate many controversial answers. Warburton (2003) lists several major philosophical attempts to answer the art question in the twentieth century. The author will draw on five of the answers Warburton introduces in his book.

Warburton (2003) begins with Clive Bell's formalist account of art, which argues that all art of all ages has a common denominator-significant form. Bell (1915) uses a technical term called "aesthetic emotion", which is special to our appreciation of art, is sometimes aroused by natural objects and is derived from its primary meaning somehow. Warburton (2003) further explains that, for Bell, the beauty we feel and realise when we look at natural beauty such as a flower or a butterfly's wing is not the same kind as the significant form of art work. Bell believes that the only common quality that all works of arts share is the significant form:

> There must be one quality without which a work of art cannot exist possessing which, in the least degree, no work is altogether worthless. What is this quality? What quality is shared by all objects that provoke our aesthetic emotions? Only one answer seems possible-significant form. In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. (Bell, 1915, pp. 7-8).

Warburton (2003) introduces another theory by R.G. Collingwood, the Oxford philosopher, who argued that a peculiar form of emotional expression is the common core quality of art work. Collingwood (1958) is strongly against the technical theory which takes art as another kind of craft. In his opinion, art is

the imaginative expression of emotion and art provides an imaginative tactile experience for viewers. Based on such perspectives, Collingwood even believes that a work of art need not exist as a particular form of material and can exist purely in the artist's mind:

> A work of art need not be what we should call a real thing. It may be what we call an imaginary thing. A disturbance, or a nuisance, or a navy, or the like, is not created at all until it is created as a thing having its place in the real world. But a work of art may be completely created when it has been created as a thing whose only place is in the artist's mind. (Collingwood, 1958, p. 130)

Alongside the ideas of significant form and emotional expression, Alfred Lessing (1965) claims that art should be original. In his view, the work of artists is not merely producing works of beauty, but to produce *original* works of beauty, unknown and unexplored realms of beauty.

In the twentieth-century, Institutional Theory was developed as an answer to the mystery of art. Institutional Theory pays attention not to the look of a work of art, but rather to its social context. Dickie (1974), a representative of this theory, writes:

> A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon in the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld). (Dickie, 1974, p. 34)

When you are confused with so many different definitions of art, Wittgenstein (1963) suggests, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, that there is no common feature shared by all things that are under one concept. Wittgenstein (1963) gives an example of the word "game", for which we will not be able to find a single defining common denominator that all games share. Similarly, there is no single clear common essence shared by all works of art, so no simple definition is possible. Likewise, Tony Godfrey has pointed out:

> Art is a concept: it does not exist as a precisely definable physical type of thing, as elephants or chairs do. Since it became self-conscious, aware that it was a special category, art has often played with this 'conceptual' status. (Godfrey, 1998, p. 19)

At the end of the book, Warburton (2003) points out his own hypothesis that "art" is indefinable on the grounds that this is the most plausible position given the evidence. From all these theories, the author comes to her own view that while art cannot have a clear definition, it has some key elements: to help decide difficult cases and to explain retrospectively why what has been called art is art and to tell us which objects in the world are likely to repay specific kinds of close attention. These elements, it may be argued, are *significant form, expression of emotion, originality and creativity*. We cannot find a definitive sentence to decide what is art, but it is possible to define art by these key elements, which are also the most common words pointed out in many theories before. If a piece of work has all or some of the key elements, we can define it a work or partly a work of art. Then, in the next part, we will explore the definition of creative writing and find out how it could be seen as an art form.

Defining Creative Writing

Before answering the question "What is creative writing?", it is necessary to find another definition: "What is creativity?" Unfortunately, the concept of creativity is again widely recognised as complex

and challenging and is a term which is often abused and misused by the government, media and policy makers (Prentice, 2000).

Cropley (2001) believes one of the most important things about creativity is that it should lead to worthwhile results. Pateman (1991) describes creativity as rule-breaking and rule-making: "Creativity is then much more a matter of sniffing out and exploiting an area of ill definition and taking the initiative in making up the rules as one goes along" (p. 62). Pateman (1991) also lists two other ways of thinking about creativity: one may think of creativity as the central element in problem-solving so artists are just like problem-solvers; another will define creativity as the exercise of imagination. As problem-solving, Craft (2000) also claims the process of "possibility thinking" is the core of creativity and highlights the role of problem-solving in this thinking process. Taking creativity as the exercise of imagination, creativity and imagination have had strong links to each other since they were born. As Dawson (2005) says in his *Creative Writing and the New Humanities*, "Creativity is the productive imagination fully secularized and divested of any ambivalent connotations" (p. 17).

Worthwhile results, *rule-breaking* and *rule-making*, *problem-solving* or *imagination*? In Paul Dawson's definition of creativity, these key concepts are all contained:

> Creativity, on the other hand, designates the ability to create; to produce something new and original, to provide innovative changes to anything which is routine or mechanistic. Its products are the unique expression of each individual. (Dawson, 2005, p. 22)

In his definition, we find creating or producing something new and original can be seen as the worthwhile results and capacity of imagination; innovative changes to anything which is routine or mechanistic can be judged as ability of problem solving and rule-making. Besides, what is noticeable in his definition is the word "unique", which is also highlighted in Marshall's definition of creativity and creative writing:

> Creativity is the ability to create one's own symbols of experience: creative writing is the use of written language to conceptualize, explore and record experience in such a way as to create a unique symbolization of it. (Marshall, 1974, p. 10)

Marshall (1974) claims that "unique" means the work that is "creative" should be able to communicate some essential quality of the experience. Marshall (1974) explains further that "creativity" lies both in conceiving and executing the symbol in which it explains its meaning either by measuring up well to already set standards, or by building new standards.

From Marshall's point of view, the medium of creative writing is the written language and the content is the experience of somebody and the result is a unique symbolisation. Based on this definition, Marshall (1974) believes if a child assimilates experience, scrambles it and reconstitutes it in written language that measures up to accepted standards, his work can surely be termed "creative". In agreeing with Marshall's perspective, Dawson (2005) states that "creative writing does not need to refer specifically to 'literary' works, but can refer to any writing which is 'creative', i.e. original, unconventional, expressive, etc." (p. 91), just as the teacher Chapple (1977) defines creative writing as "written expression in which children put down their own ideas, thoughts, feelings and impressions in their own words" (p. 1). He highlights that this written work should not be imitative but original, and such expression is sincere and generated by the unique personality of the child.

As analysed above, what are the key elements that creative writing contains? The answer is: *creativity, unique symbolisation, personal expression and originality.* These key terms highly echo those of "art". Self-expression, originality and creativity are central to both creative writing and art. Unique symbolisation means creative writing should have *a significant form* to record the personal experience and convey self-expression, which is also an important element of art. Based on such analysis, it is not difficult to conclude that creative writing is an or at least part of an "Art Form".

Creative Writing Education

Brief Introduction of Creative Writing History

In order to understand the development of creative writing education, it is first necessary to know the historical development of "creative writing".

The notion of man as a creative being is a product of Renaissance humanism, originating from Italy (Dawson, 2005). Plato and Aristotle gave the name "imitation" to "creation" and poetry was regarded as "creation" in the Renaissance (Williams, 1983, p. 11). Judging the poet as creator was introduced to Elizabethan England in *An Apology for Poetry* by Sir Philip Sidney, who claims that creation is the gift from God, which is "God's creative power" (Sidney & Shepherd, 1973). The word "creative" became established in general usage by the mid-eighteenth century (Dawson, 2005). At that time, it was the concept of man's creative power which stimulated discovery about original talents, as against imitative genius, that began to appear (Dawson, 2005). Throughout the eighteenth century "the creative power" was linked to natural ability from God, which later introduced to the key debate of creative writing: can writing be taught and should it be taught?

The dominating theory of original genius believes that only certain gifted people can possess the creative power which is necessary for the production of great poetry such as Coleridge (Dawson, 2005). However, in America, an oration "The American Scholar" delivered by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1837 claimed that the true scholar will not be the bookworm but a person who can be inspired by books with an active soul (Dawson, 2005). Although Emerson was the first to use the term "creative writing", his point drew on creative reading and only defined creative writing as a practice (Dawson, 2005).

In *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing* Morley (2007) claims, "The modern version of the discipline of creative writing begins in 1940 with the foundation of the Iowa Writer's Workshop, although there were precursors, including George Baker's '47 Workshop' at Harvard from 1906 to 1925" (p. 23). From his point of view, Aristotle and Plato can be seen as the first creative writing teachers (Morley, 2007).

Similarly, with the historical perspective, Dawson (2005) links the development of creative writing tightly to the history of modern English Studies. He demonstrates three important turning points in the history of English Studies which influence the development of creative writing education. The first is the debate between criticism and scholarship in American universities in the early twentieth century, which tries to replace historical and philological research on departments of English with a literary criticism that evaluated literature in terms of its aesthetic qualities. The second is the rise of "Theory" which challenges

the authority of "practical criticism" in English Studies and reconstructs literature as a privileged aesthetic category. The third change is caused by "culture wars" that generate a sense of crisis in universities, such as adaptation of research and teaching to vocational outcomes and job markets. With this history of crisis, Myers (2006) in *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing since 1880* describes creative writing in the 1970s as an "elephant machine" because of its "professionalization", which becomes a production line to produce teaching programs and teachers rather than writers.

Creative Writing Education

From the analysis above we can recognise that scholars often describe creative writing as a discipline for English learning and teacher training, but where is creative writing in primary schools, secondary schools, high schools or higher education? The answer is also within the subject of English.

In order to find creative writing in the curriculum in the UK, an introduction to the National Curriculum is necessary. In *A Guide to the National Curriculum*, Moon (2001) says, "The National Curriculum was first introduced in 1988. It is the public and legal statement about the curriculum that every child should study between the ages of five and sixteen" (p. 41). A National Curriculum now exists in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Scotland has different arrangements. After the Education Act of 1996, the revised National Curriculum of 2000 contains twelve subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, Design and Technology, Information and communication, History, Geography, Modern foreign languages, Art and design, Music, Physical education and Citizenship. Among these subjects, English, Mathematics and Science are the *core subjects*, while others are *non-core foundation subjects* (Moon, 2001).

In the National Curriculum, creative writing belongs to English Studies, not Art. Art and design "includes a craft element and, therefore, involves the use of a range of processes and materials." (Moon, 2001, p. 14) What should be noted is that this particular context of "Art" only represents visual art. In Art classes, students may learn painting, design or photography, but no creative writing. In contrast, another art form, Music, "has always played an important part in the life of schools" (Moon, 2001, p. 15) and is highlighted as a foundation subject in the curriculum. Meanwhile, in higher education, those who work actively in Creative Writing Studies have had to operate most often within the institutional structures of more established subfields of English studies (Mayers, 2016). This is not the only case in the world. Indeed, creative writing education is bedded within the language subject in the curriculum and is not seen as arts education worldwide. Indeed, the Creative writing's lack of recognisable academic research is also a big problem (Hergenrader, 2016). The existing research is also mainly focused on how to teach creative writing to improve language learning rather than seeing it as an art form.

In *Creative Writing*, Marshall (1974) indicates three categories of writing study: handwriting, composition and English. He describes a typical lesson of composition: "The teacher showed the children an object of some sort, and from the entire class, ranged in their rows of desks before her, she elicited 'facts' about the object which could then be written down." (Marshall, 1974, p. 16) Only recording observable but uninteresting facts, such writing classes, in which students compose their own sentences about the selected topic, has very little use to students. In China, the author has experienced so many such writing lessons from primary school: the teacher not only points out the words and sentences that should be used, but also makes an outline on the blackboard to show the "right" order of these sentences. Besides, in Marshall's book, "there was English, when time was spent in exercises (usually from an out-dated textbook), which were meant to ensure that such

compositions as the children did produce were couched in formal, grammatical language and therefore 'acceptable' (as well as assessable in a marks system)" (Marshall, 1974, p. 17).

Indeed, composition as a subject has been seen as a product of the scientific method (Dawson, 2005). For example, in many creative writing lessons in China, students are asked to read poetry and learn unfamiliar words, analyse the structure, learn the rhetoric, then write poems with selected titles to use the words and rhetorical strategy they have learnt before. It is more like a science class; teachers draw attention to the technical skills in writing rather than explore the students' emotion and creativity. Similarly, Andrew Levy (1993) argues that composition was motivated by "a belief that the technical aspects of English composition could be taught with the same rigor and discipline as chemistry or mathematics" (p. 82). From both theory and practice, although students could learn more words to express themselves even through this way of teaching, creative writing is neglected by teachers and students to be seen as an art form rather than a purely functional way to improve language learning. However, it is important to rethink the significance of teaching creative writing as an art form in several aspects, which the author will explain in the next chapter.

Rethinking the Significance of Teaching Creative Writing as an Art Form

Democratic Factor: Creative Writing as a Unique Way for Self-Expression

In the first part, the author concludes that the key elements of art are *significant form, expression of emotion, originality and creativity*. In these elements, expression of emotion plays an important role in art's effects, which is also the key aim of creative writing.

In the epic poem, *The Prelude*, Wordsworth (1995) mentions an "infant sensibility" which first begins in the infant but is gradually lost to most adults. Just as the protagonist said in the fairy tale *The Little Prince*, "Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them. (Saint-Exupéry & Woods, 1943, p. 14) This prompts the question: how is it possible to retain this infant sensibility, to awaken the sense of childhood enthusiasm?

One answer is "Democratic self-expression", which can be taken to mean expressing what you want freely in your unique way (Winston, 2011). "Democratic" in this context represents not the political dimension but free expression without limitations. When you are trying to express yourself freely, you willreconstruct the outer world in your own way and give it your unique meaning, which helps you become sensible to the environment and retain the infant sensibility to some extent (Dewey, 2005).

In addition, Winston (2011) claims democratic self-expression can not only help us remain sensible to the outer world but also develop self-consciousness in a person's growth process, especially in adolescence. "Adolescence is a time of acute self-consciousness, when young people need to declare their own autonomy at the same time as they define who or what groups they belong to" (Winston, 2011, p. 63). Then how can children be helped to express themselves democratically? Certainly, creative writing can be a significant way to help self-expression. As Mearns (1925) explains, literature is simply unique self-expression.

From my own experience, during my childhood, I was fond of writing because it retained my original sensibility to this world and was a good way for me to express myself, just like talking to my soul. To some extent, this habit also helped me to find my personal identity and had positive effects on my mental growth. As a link between the outer and inner world, creative writing has a unique position in such democratic self-expression and it can also generate more creativity. Just as Dawson (2005) introduces Coleridge's view that "creative writing is the democratization of original genius which enables the child to develop their creative potential" (p. 25).

Therefore, writing is not only a communication method for practical use; it is also an expression of instinctive insight which can set free the voices of children. Then how can creative writing be taught to better complete its role in self-expression? From Mearn's view, students should not be given assigned themes and methods of writing in creative writing lessons, but be given freedom for expression to speak out in their unique ways (Mearn, 1929). No matter how rational and practically applicable Mearn's suggestion may be, creative writing should be given greater attention for its unique opportunity in allowing self-expression.

Aesthetic Factor: Beauty and Creative Writing

In *Beauty and Education*, Winston (2011) claims that whether in the detail of curriculum documentation, national strategy papers or educational research reports, beauty is sleeping with few educationalists trying to awaken her, and it is time to rethink the role of beauty in education.

To explain beauty as an educational experience, Winston (2011) begins by introducing the "moment of epiphany", defined by Armstrong as one of revelation in which we suddenly gain a great insight into ourselves and the world. For example, Joanne Kathleen Rowling, who wrote the famous *Harry Potter* series, got the idea in "a moment of epiphany". In 1990, while she was on a four-hour delayed train trip from Manchester to London, the idea for a story of a young boy attending a school of wizardry came fully formed into her mind. She told *The Boston Globe* that "I really don't know where the idea came from. It started with Harry, and then all these characters and situations came flooding into my head" (Rowling, 2012).

However, no matter whether it sounds like fortune or miracle, the moment of epiphany cannot happen without some form of cognitive process. In the book *Experience and Its Modes*, Michael Oakeshott (1933) explains the relationship between beauty and knowledge. He points out that any experience of beauty we encounter is not a simple stimulus response to the environment but it involves a thinking process informed by prior knowledge and cognitive reflection. This leads to an opinion that "teachers can learn from beauty by using aesthetic ideas to shape their pedagogy" (Dewey, 2005, p. 19). In fact, teachers cannot plan such epiphanies, but they can prepare to make them more likely to happen. Justlike the story by Rowling, beauty experience takes an important role in generating writing inspiration and creativity. Many writers have suddenly got ideas when encountering beauty, which illustrates the special relationship between writing and beauty. Therefore, in creative writing education, experience of beauty could be given more attention to help students' writing; however, the picture now is disappointing.

As Winston (2001) says, "unlike beauty, which involves a deep emotional connection between learning and what they are learning, skills-based curricula are founded upon an absolute split between

the one and the other" (p. 11). Unfortunately, English composition, which was also the first name of Creative Writing, is a subject that has been seen as a product of scientific method. Composition was motivated by a belief that the technical aspects of English composition could be taught with the same rigor and discipline as chemistry or mathematics (Levy, 1993).

To rethink this phenomenon, it recalls the debate of whether art is a kind of craft. Collingwood (1958) states that although works of art may involve craft, art is not to be identified with craft. This is because art is not just a matter of technique; it is not something that can be taught as a skill can be taught: "a technician is made, but an artist is born" (Collingwood, 1958, p. 17). From this point of view, education of creative writing, as an art form, should not be centred on skill-based learning but something more like aesthetic learning, with the possibility to help students experience beauty and stimulate their inspiration and creativity. Instead of the technical aims, stated objectives and emphasis on generic skills, education is envisioned as something of a conversation between the learner of the present and the achievements of the past (Winston, 2011). Beauty can convey the past to the present and creative writing education can build the link between past writers and present readers. Based on aesthetic experience, students will find the true beauty of creative writing and may encounter more "moments of epiphany".

Motivation Factor: Creative Writing and Language Learning

In 1976, research by Marton (1976) showed two different cognitive learning styles by students: one is "deep-level processing" aimed at understanding the meaning of what they study; the other one is "surface-level processing", which focuses on the reproduction of the contents from lectures or textbooks. What is worth paying attention to is that research has illustrated that it is students whose intrinsic motivation impels them into "deep" and holistic strategies for learning who actually do best in their final exams (Fransson, 1977).

Indeed, motivation plays a vital role in education. Many people have such experience that when you are strongly interested in something, you will find infinite energy and enthusiasm to explore the relevant knowledge and skills. Therefore, the key aim of education relies not on teaching knowledge or techniques, but on encouraging students to find their unique gifts and learn from their intrinsic interests (Dewey, 2005). Only students who desire to learn can entirely immerse themselves in learning and make valuable results.

To focus on creative writing education, which as we have seen is within the language learning curriculum, the question is whether creative writing can help generate motivation in language learning and how to generate such motivation. To answer this question, it also relates to the two key factors we have discussed before: democratic factor and aesthetic factor. They both generate the motivation of learning.

In relation to the "democratic" factor, in the book *Writing Voices* (Cremin & Myhill, 2012), the authors introduce several examples of research that show young people's attitudes to writing lessons. One of these has suggested that the high profile ascribed to writing and the incessant focus on tests and targets has generated disaffection and lack of interest in writing (Hilton, 2001; Wyse et al., 2007). In another piece of research, young writers are less keen on writing when tasks are entirely set and framed by their teachers and the curriculum (Grainger et al., 2005; Myhill, 2005). In contrast, many students expressed

satisfaction in writing about their own experience and unique emotions without limitation being imposed by teachers:

> I love my beginning-when I did the opening paragraph, I thought: 'I like that.' I just liked it; it brought tears to my eyes- it took me back in time. And I could immediately hear my Mother and Brain's mother yelling at us, 'Get out of the gutter!'- Because we were always in the gutter. So that's where it starts – in the gutter. (Cremin & Myhill, 2012, p. 86)

From the example, we can see that as an art form to express emotion, if creative writing can be given more space and time, it will generate more interests and motivation in learning writing. Therefore, with the democratic consideration, creative writing, a way for self-expression, should be given sufficient freedom. As Dyson (1997) observes, "for children, as for adults, freedom is a verb, a becoming; it is experienced as an expanded sense of agency, of possibility for choice and action" (p. 82). As teachers have a responsibility to nurture students' autonomy in learning, they need to offer more freedom alongside space, time and form for discovery and innovation (Dewey, 2005). In creative writing classes, teachers need to foster the sense of ownership and independence of students. Given more choices, students will feel the authority of their writing and be more autonomous to take part in the learning process, which is a positive circle for learning motivation.

From the perspective of the aesthetic factor, taking creative writing education as an aesthetic education can not only stimulate students' inspiration in creative writing learning, but also can generate motivation for language learning. As an art form, the medium of creative writing is language (Ross, 1986). Indeed, in many people's views, language is fundamentally seen as a vehicle of communication and may therefore be linked to functional learning. As Abbs (1989) argues, English has remained on the very edge of the arts debate, reluctant to become involved, reluctant to be, in any way, implicated.

However, language contains beauty. In the book *The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing*, language is described as a kind of "music". "Reading is also a form of listening; and the tunes of language trigger new writing." (Morley, 2007, p. 46) To see language as music, is to show the inside beauty of language. Another typical example of beauty in language is the work of Shakespeare. "As the dictionary tells us, about 2000 new words and phrases were invented by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's poetry showed the world that English was a rich vibrant language with limitless expressive and emotional power." (*The History of English in 10 Minutes*, 2012)

We can imagine that, if students can experience the beauty of language in creative writing classes, it will stimulate them to learn language from intrinsic interest and motivation. As autonomous learning, beauty generates motivation to learn skills and in turn skills that help students to understand the beauty more deeply. As Winston writes,

> The knowledge I gained from beauty framed the skills I learned as I learned them and indeed provided the impetus for learning them in the first place. And this, in turn, was deeply related to what I liked, who I felt I was and who I wanted to be. (Winston, 2011, p. 35)

Thus, creative writing can be a new way of teaching English as an aesthetic education. It should have a more important role in promoting language learning. The aesthetic experience of art is powerful which makes you immerse yourself in another art world and even lose yourself in moments. Such moments are especially valuable for an individual, which will generate the inner motivation to

explore the secrets of the whole forests. Just as Hector comments at the end of the scene in the movie "The History Boys":

> The best moment in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things—which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met someone who is even long dead. And it is as if a hand had come out and taken yours. (Winston, 2011, p. 59)

Similarly, the best moment in writing is when you come across something, which you had not thought special or valuable to readers, people, for example, you have never met. And it is as if a hand had gone out and taken theirs. What teachers should do in creative writing education is to make such moments more likely to happen. In turn this may help students to find the beauty of language and expect to discover more autonomously.

Conclusion

Creative writing is an art form as it contains the same key elements of art: *significant form, expression of emotion, originality and creativity*. However, current creative writing education is within the subject of language learning in curriculum, which leads to an inconsistent educational system and functional teaching strategy. It is not only neglected behind the language curriculum, but also neglected as an "Art Form".

To rethink teaching creative writing as an art form, the essay draws on three perspectives. From perspective of democracy, creative writing is a significant way of democratic self-expression, which can not only help remain infant sensibility to the outer world but also develop self-consciousness in a person's growth process. From view of aesthetics, beauty experience takes an important role in generating writing inspiration and creativity, which means creative writing education should be more based on beauty education than be centralised on the skill-based learning. With consideration of motivation factor, creative writing can help students generate motivation in language learning by giving them more space and time for self-expression and helping them experience the beauty of language.

Admittedly, it is challenging that teachers may feel difficult to help students express themselves freely, for reasons like some teachers don't want to lose authority over the class and the results of aesthetic education are often not easy to assess. Creative writing education has a long way to go, but it is worthwhile to rethink creative writing as an art form to help democratic self-expression and generate motivation in language learning.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN INDIA: A POSSIBLE INVESTMENT IN BETTER OUTCOMES? A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS USING YOUNG LIVES INDIA

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This paper explores the relationship between early childhood education and academic outcomes for children in India by estimating the ability of preschool participation at age 5 to predict results on major cognitive assessments at age 12. Initially looking at differences in means, it moves on to utilise regression analysis first in an uncontrolled model, and then in a model which controls for both gender and maternal education, as these have been deemed important inputs for academic attainment in the wider literature on human capital development. The sample used for this research is constructed from Young Lives (India), which from 2002 to 2017 surveyed two cohorts of children across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, with a pro-poor sampling strategy. Surprisingly, the results of the analysis find that participation in early childhood education had a negligible effect on test scores, even when controlling for gender and maternal education. Meanwhile, maternal education emerged as a strong predictor of test results. These findings contradict much of the existing evidence that demonstrates associations between early childhood education and cognitive development, and, in turn, improved economic outcomes. Accordingly, it raises questions about the generalisability of the existing evidence and the quality of India's ECE offering. The premise, method and findings of this paper are divided into nine sections, including an introduction, an explanation of Human Capital as the paper's conceptual framework, a literature review, an overview of the context of ECE in India, a section on the paper's data and variables, a methods section, an overview of the results, a discussion, and conclusions.

Keywords: Early childhood education, India, Longitudinal research, Academic outcomes, Poverty alleviation

Introduction

Research Context and Foundation

Research over the past half-century has demonstrated that the period of early childhood is the most critical phase in human development, and that the foundational capacities established during this time can beget improved outcomes across the life course (Black et al., 2016; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Access to early childhood care, health and education (*ECCE*)[1] has been shown to nurture these capacities by enabling children to achieve improved cognitive outcomes (Attanasio, Meghir and Nix, 2015; Engle et al., 2007). Numerous studies have linked preschool[2] participation to increased earnings and progress toward poverty alleviation (see Black et al., 2016; Engle et al., 2007; Heckman, 2006 and Shonkoff and Richter, 2013). The subsequent literature, including Goal 1 of the Dakar Framework for Action (Education for All), and Sustainable Development Goal 4.2[3], has crystallised early childhood education (*ECE*)[4] as a critical lever for economic outcomes. But much of this evidence comes from developed countries, which have very different economic, cultural, and political contexts than those of low-and-middle income (*LAMI*) countries (Levin and Schwartz, 2006). This raises the question of how applicable the existing evidence is to those contexts (Woodhead, 2009; Yoshikawa and Nieto, 2013). This paper explores the relationship between ECE and cognitive outcomes for a sample of children in India, to determine whether India's ECE programmes are capitalising on this critical period and whether the nature of the relationship between these variables matches wider patterns.

To date, research on ECE in India has been limited, and the Indian government has acknowledged that its ECE services are not up to standard (Alcott et al., 2018; Government of India, 2013). But with India's rapidly growing economy and extensive early years infrastructure (Alcott et al., 2018), it offers interesting parameters for the assessment of ECE's role. This paper's findings are intended to contribute to the limited evidence and offer analysis that could be useful in improving India's ECE provision.

The primary aim of this paper is to estimate the ability of preschool participation to predict cognitive outcomes, as they have been widely linked to improved economic opportunities. However, researchers on Indian early education have pointed out the need to go beyond establishing the simple effects of ECE (Kaul et al., 2017). In order to respond to this suggestion, I also consider two factors which have been identified in the literature as important to India's educational experience: gender[5] and maternal education.

Drawing from the body of evidence on ECE, I test the hypothesis that preschool participation should emerge as a good predictor of cognitive outcomes. This hypothesis is tested using Indian students who

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[1] ECCE summarises the inputs and processes that create the building blocks of later social, cognitive, emotional and economic development (Kaul et al., 2017).

[2] Preschool is used within this paper interchangeably with ECE.

[3] Stipulates early childhood development, care and education for all children by 2030 (UNESCO, 2000).

[4] ECE refers to regularly attended education in a setting outside of a child's home for children aged 3-5, during the period immediately preceding primary school (Woldehanna and Gebremedhin, 2012).

[5] In India, 25% of girls are out of school, and 17% of girls have never been to school at all. As these girls grow into motherhood, there are further intergenerational consequences ("Education Statistics - All Indicators", 2018).

participated in early childhood education, from the Young Lives (*YL*) study[6]. Young Lives is a renowned study on childhood poverty[7] consisting of quantitative and qualitative layers, undertaken to inform effective policy and interventions for children (Early Childhood Development: informing policy and making it a priority, 2018; Vennam et al., 2009).

The indicators selected to represent 'early childhood education' and 'cognitive development' are preschool participation at age 5 and test score results on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (*PPVT*) and mathematics assessment (taken from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study or *TIMSS*) at age 12. These types of tests are in line with widely used indicators of cognitive development from related studies (see Cunha et al., 2006; Singh and Mukherjee, 2018; Woldehanna and Gebremedhin, 2012).

The research questions addressed are as follows:

1. Is early childhood education a good predictor of scores on the PPVT and maths tests?

2. Do boys who attended preschool fare better than girls on these tests?

3. Do children with educated mothers fare better on these tests?

4. Once gender and maternal education are controlled, is preschool a useful predictor of test scores?

These four research questions called for the use of empirical data, recorded as categorical and continuous variables. Accordingly, my methodological approach necessitated quantitative analysis[8], for which I employed statistical modelling to estimate the relationships between these variables.

Human Capital as a Conceptual Framework

Early Investments and Future Returns

The human capital perspective on early childhood offers useful theoretical parameters for exploring the economic justification for investment in early childhood education. Human Capital Theory (*HCT*) posits that early investments in education boost overall educational attainment (Heckman, 2011), and that ultimately education generates future returns (Becker, 1964 and Schultz, 1988). HCT thus informs and underpins this paper with these two notions, and helps to connect it to the vast literature on early

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[6] As education research in India has sometimes been hampered by unreliable data (Kingdon, 1996), YL's study offered rare information collected with rigorous sampling and response management procedures, resulting in good quality data with minimal attrition (Singh and Mukherjee, 2016; Young Lives, 2017).

[7] There are two limits to generalisability due to usage of YL's data. The first is geographic: participants were only from one (later two) states: Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Together these comprise only 7% of India's population ("Young Lives India", 2019). The second limitation is due to YL's purposive sampling, employed to explore poorer communities (Attanasio, Meghir and Nix, 2015). However, the YL team limited bias by including households across the socioeconomic spectrum and ensuring a large data set (Kumra, 2008; Young Lives Survey Design and Sampling in India, 2014).

[8] Whilst the original YL research also included qualitative data, its use for a mixed methods approach was not possible due to access constraints.

investments in human capital. It also provides the foundation for this paper's hypothesis by theorising that ECE should contribute to improved academic outcomes.

The notion that education generates future returns represents the initial conception of education by human capital theorists. Originally, the theory posited that educational attainment was a measure of cognitive development, which is ultimately of interest because of its link to economic returns: education economists showed that cognitive ability[9] was an important determinant of labour market outcomes[10] (Heckman, 1995).

Meanwhile, the notion that early investments maximise academic attainment, explored particularly in the research of James Heckman and Flavio Cunha, was predicated upon the idea of a 'time profile' in which early investments offered a longer period to realise future returns (Becker, 1962 and 1964; Mincer, 1958). Cunha et al. demonstrated the value of looking at childhood as two distinct time periods, showing that the rate of return (*RoR*) to a dollar of investment made in early childhood was higher than for the same dollar invested later (2006).

Human Capital and Women's Education

Whilst human capital theory does not offer much on gender and ECE specifically, its framework for gender and wider education is robust. The writings of Paul Schultz in particular advocated for the importance of educating women, especially as a strategy for poverty alleviation (1993), and served as the foundation for other work endorsing this instrumental view (see Herz and Sperling, 2016; King and Hill, 1993). Other major thinkers on human capital have also endorsed this perspective; Erik Hanushek (2008) highlighted that gender equality in education was a human capital investment with important economic outcomes, and Harry Patrinos (2008) undertook specific econometric methodologies to calculate the rates of return to women's education. The implications from the related literature are that women's education is instrumental to a range of intergenerational social benefits (Unterhalter, 2007). Accordingly, HCT offers a lens through which to interpret the potential impact of maternal education (encompassing both 'gender' and 'maternal education') as an input to desirable economic outcomes, which could complement or cloud the role of preschool in those same outcomes.

Literature Review

ECE and its Related Policy Context

The origination of early childhood development (*ECD*)[11] as an area of study was neurological research

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[9] Measures of cognitive ability commonly included test scores or years of schooling (Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1994). For example, researchers such as Denison (1985), Barro (1989), and Becker (1964) used years of schooling to 'explain' variance in per capita earnings distributions.

[10] These outcomes were calculated via their rate of return (RoR), and education economists demonstrated that the RoR to schooling was a critical factor in individual income as well as GDP (Harmon and Walker, 1995).

[11] ECD is "A multifaceted concept from an ecological framework that focuses on the child's outcome (development), which depends on characteristics of the child and the context, such as health, nutrition, protection, care and/or education." (Britto, Engle and Super, 2013).

highlighting the rapid pace of brain development during the first years of life (Karoly et al., 1998; Young, 2007). The amalgamation of other evidence on child development from neuroscience, psychology, sociology and health collectively highlighted the importance of the early years for cognitive development, and shortlisted a number of critical inputs including education (Campbell et al., 2001; Heckman, 2011; Kohlberg, 1968 and Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). A landmark study which helped to catalyse global policy engagement was an ECD-focused series in *The Lancet*, which quantified the loss of development potential and impact on long-term outcomes for children who lacked strong starts in education, nutrition and material stability. Consequently, ECD became tied to international agendas proposing human capital approaches to development. Many studies on ECD captured 'development' indicators through measures related to schooling, such as test scores or grade completion. Schooling-related development studies found consistently that early education helped to shape opportunities across the life course, including improving educational attainment, earnings and market competitiveness (Becker, 1993; Carneiro and Heckman, 2003; Cunha et al., 2006; Cunha and Heckman, 2007 and Heckman, 2011)[12]. Therefore, the Education for All initiative inscribed ECCE as its 'bedrock' (Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education, 2006). Additionally, under the Sustainable Development Goals (*SDGs*), investment in ECE was seen not only as tackling inequality but also poverty alleviation (Morabito, Vandenbroeck and Roose, 2013; Richter et al., 2016). In this way, ECE came to have its own significance for development agendas linked to poverty reduction and socioeconomic mobility (Nadeau et al., 2011).

Gaps in Evidence

Longitudinal studies from the US[13] have found ECE to be a successful predictor of both academic attainment and economic outcomes (Campbell and Ramey, 1994; Currie and Thomas, 1995). In particular, the Abecedarian Study (Campbell and Ramey, 1994) and the HighScope Perry Pre-School Project (Currie, 2001; Heckman, 2011) from the US and the Effective Provision of Preschool Education Study from the UK became widely cited because they involved experimental research. Grouped with these were the ongoing results of two landmark ECCE programmes, HeadStart, launched in the USA in the 1960s, and Sure Start, its later British counterpart in the 1990s (Woodhead, 2006). This group of studies confirmed that ECE improved cognitive abilities and served as a strong foundation for academic success (Black et al., 2016). They also concluded that the most effective time to invest in education to equalise initial differences[14] in endowments was the early years (Currie, 2001).

However, though comprehensive, the evidence being primarily from developed countries is potentially problematic: there has been a noted lack of evaluation of preschool programs in developing countries (Currie, 2001; Woldehanna and Gebremedhin, 2012)[15]. This gap in the literature points to the hegemony

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[12] A number of studies on the effects of early intervention programs on economic outcomes is summarised neatly by Cunha (Cunha et al., 2006).

[13] See Belfield, Nores and Schweinhart, 2006; DeCicca and Smith, 2013; Engle et al., 2007; Goodman and Sianesi, 2005; Heckman and Masterov, 2007; Magnuson et al., 2004 and Sylva et al., 2011 for examples from the US and Europe.

[14] A large portion of the research on ECE underpinned by human capital tested the hypothesis that interventions in early education could remediate circumstantial disadvantages for children (Woodhead, 2006).

[15] The noted paucity of global evidence on ECD outcomes has given rise to an important World Bank initiative entitled SABER-ECD, which now collects, analyses, and disseminates related information. There is growing evidence from LAMI countries; see Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Rao et al., 2013 and the 2016 Lancet series on economic outcomes linked to early years investments (Engle et al., 2011).

of existing evidence[16]. The implications of this are that international policies are being informed by findings from a narrow group of contexts.

ECE Literature from India

This evidence gap[17] extends to ECE research on India. Only a small body of evidence[18] on the association between preschool participation and developmental outcomes exists, but it is cross-sectional rather than experimental, and limited in examination of longitudinal effects. Most of it also covers only particular regions or states, and is therefore limited in generalisability. For example, Arora, Bharti and Mahajan (2006) were able to link preschool participation to higher cognitive development, but their sample was limited to urban slums in Jammu city. A few cover wider geographies but are stock-taking studies, such as CECED's 2013 review (Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013). A small number show the effect of preschool on primary school outcomes such as retention or school readiness (Kaul et al., 1993; NCERT, 1996). Others examine the comparative effects of government versus private pre-primary[19]. But overall, the research is still limited, with longitudinal and more complex evidence particularly scarce (Kaul et al., 2017). Aside from the comprehensive (but geographically limited) data from YL India, the only other sizeable evidence on ECE is from the ASER Centre, which publishes an 'Annual Status of Education' report (Early Childhood Development: informing policy and making it a priority, 2018) and, most recently, the India Early Childhood Education Impact (*IECEI*) study[20].

Perhaps closest to my research is the recent study by Singh and Mukherjee (2018), which takes YL data to examine the effect of private preschool on cognitive achievement and subjective wellbeing at age 12, but uses propensity score matching where this paper utilises OLS regression. While some of the findings overlap, their paper looks only at private ECE provision, and is therefore not able to comment on ECE in India more widely.

Evidence on Gender and Maternal Education

Historically, gender has been a regular predictor of disparity in educational and economic outcomes in India (Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012; Boserup, 1970 and Kaul et al., 2017). But other evidence suggests that this disparity is lessening; official statistics show almost identical enrolment for boys and girls in ECE and primary ("Education Statistics - All Indicators", 2018), and in some studies, gender is no longer found a significant contributor to academic outcomes (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011; Vennam et al., 2009). But other evidence argues that gender may affect the extent to which Indian children benefit from ECE (Garcia, Heckman and Ziff, 2018; Magnuson et al., 2016). Therefore, evidence is mixed[21].

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[16] One of the few exceptions includes the compendium published by Engle and colleagues highlighting the status of ECD globally, though this covers not only education but also health and social welfare (Britto, Engle and Super, 2013).

[17] Alcott et al., 2018; Chopra, 2012; Kaul et al., 2017; Kaul and Sankar, 2009 and Singh and Mukherjee, 2017 have all documented this scarcity.

[18] See Arora et al., 2006; Datta et al., 2010; Nagajara and Anil, 2014 and Shabana et al., 2013 for examples.

[19] See Kingdon, 1996; Pratham, 2010; Singh and Mukherjee, 2017 and Tooley and Dixon, 2003.

[20] However, even the IECEI is limited as it only covers a four-year period.

[21] The importance of measuring gender's impact is also evidenced by the regular disaggregation of outcomes such as enrolment, grade completion, and test scores by gender across global education research (Handbook on Measuring Equity in Education, 2018).

I have consequently included gender as a control variable within this study, as further research may help to clarify.

Tied to the notion of gender is that of maternal education. There is a significant body of literature that demonstrates the intergenerational persistence of economic status[22]. Mothers' education in particular has been associated with higher earnings and better educational outcomes for children (Aakvik et al., 2003; Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1994). Studies using data from YL India have also shown association between maternal education and the completion of secondary school, which itself is linked to improved economic opportunities in other research (Singh and Mukherjee, 2015). This body of evidence supports the idea that maternal education has a role to play in the intergenerational transmission of human capital (Galab, Reddy and Himaz, 2008; Richter et al., 2016). It has therefore been included as a variable of interest within this paper (Question 3).

Context of ECCE in India

Overview of Policies and Infrastructure

The provision of early childhood services in India has long been conceptualised as an investment in human capital (Mohite and Bhatt, 2008; Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011). This notion of ECCE informed India's National Policy for Children and its launch in 1974 of the Integrated Child Development Services (*ICDS*), today the world's largest publicly funded early childhood system. Through the ICDS, India provides universal access to health, nutrition and education services (Alcott et al., forthcoming; Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013). The operating infrastructure for these services includes 1.3 million *anganwadi* centres (preschools), which served over 104.5 million beneficiaries in 2014, from expectant mothers to children (Kaul et al., 2017; Richter et al., 2016).

But pre-primary enrolment in India is still only at 12.9% despite the sizeable infrastructure ("Education Statistics - All Indicators", 2018). Moreover, evidence shows that the anganwadis are poor providers of early childhood education, due to insufficient teacher training, substandard facilities and lack of regulation[23] (Rao and Kaul, 2017; Singh and Mukherjee, 2018). Poor quality pre-primary provision has precipitated widespread lack of school readiness: evidence indicates that pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills at age 5 are vastly below expected levels (Beyond Basics, 2018; Save the Children, 2009). As a result, disillusioned parents seek other options such as low-cost private preschools[24] (Alcott et al., forthcoming; Kaul et al., 2017 and Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011).

The Indian government has made improving ECE a priority by strengthening the policy framework; India's twelfth Five-Year Plan (2012-2017) shifted attention toward early education (Singh and

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[22] see Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012; Hauser and Logan, 1992 and Solon, 1999 for examples.

[23] Anganwadis are noted to have poorly trained workers, with basic education. Moreover, qualitative research from YL shows that teachers generally seem disinterested and disengaged.

[24] Private preschools range from low-cost to highly-priced, but almost all promise English medium instruction, which parents see as a path to upward socioeconomic mobility (Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013, though research shows more boys than girls are sent to private preschool (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011).

Mukherjee, 2017; Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011). Its 2013 National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy was specifically to expand the educational component of the ICDS, coupled with the National Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards for ECE (Kaul et al., 2017). However, while these demonstrate the political will to enhance the ICDS, the system still suffers from lack of resources, direction, and governance (Richter et al., 2016). Consequently, there remains a large gap between policy and practice, with lack of research on the specificities impeding the ability to optimise. (Alcott et al., forthcoming).

The Context of Andhra Pradesh

The state of Andhra Pradesh has a complex set of challenges[25]. It has a long-established government-run ECCE system but also a growing trend of private schooling (Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012). Yet students fall vastly below the expected levels of attainment (Singh and Mukherjee, 2016).

In many cases, children in Andhra Pradesh are first generation learners; this was the case for more children than not in the YL India sample (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011). This has an impact on maternal education's ability to improve outcomes for this generation. Secondly, the rapid growth of private schools is attracting parents with English-medium teaching, resonating with wider national patterns. The government of Andhra Pradesh is therefore under pressure to compete, and is now moving toward English-medium instruction in some secondary schools (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011).

Overall, educational disparity in Andhra Pradesh is decreasing (Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012). However, the trends discussed above show that education in Andhra Pradesh is characterised by differentiation of preschool experiences by wealth status, location, gender, and parental education (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011). These provide an important backdrop for this paper and justification for the examination of gender and maternal education's roles.

Data

Construction of the Sample

This paper draws from the YL study in India, which surveyed families from undivided Andhra Pradesh (later Andhra Pradesh and Telangana). The sample used is the younger cohort[26], comprised of 2,000 children aged 1 at the start of the survey in 2002[27]. Within this sample, only children who participated in both Rounds 2 and 4 were included, as critical data was needed from both rounds. Finally, my sample included only children for whom responses to the key predictor variable of preschool participation were recorded[28]. Table 1 offers descriptive statistics on all variables.

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[25] Comprising just under 10% of India's population, Andhra Pradesh is largely rural, but home to the capital of India's IT sector, Hyderabad. Telugu is its major language, spoken by 85% of the population (Vennam et al., 2009).

[26] Selected because information on both preschool participation at age 5 and test score results at age 12 was collected.

[27] The original sample sizes were n=2,011 in Round 1, n=1,950 in Round 2, n=1,930 in Round 3, and n=1,915 in Round 4 (Singh and Mukherjee, 2016).

[28] Though constraining the sample in this way could have introduced some bias, the non-response count on this question was low.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percent of Sample for Each Input Variable

Variable	*n*	*%*
Gender		
Male	890	53.5
Female	775	46.5
Total	1665	100
Preschool		
Participated	946	56.8
Did not participate	719	43.2
Total	1665	100
Mother's Education		
Some education	836	50.2
No education	826	49.6
Total	1665	100

Source: Young Lives data, Round 2

Variable Selection and Description

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The core concept of this paper is early childhood education. It is therefore the primary explanatory variable of this study (Question 1)[29]. In the YL surveys, parents were asked whether their child was attending preschool. 'Preschool' was thus encoded as a binary variable for this study[30]. In my sample, 56.8% of children were attending preschool during Round 2, when they were approximately aged 5.

It is important to note that local educational policies have different ages of entry for primary school, sometimes leading to early entry or nonlinear trajectories between preschool and primary[31]. This duality of eligibility posed a challenge to the estimation of this variable, but as it proved difficult to calculate or minimise, responses were taken at face value.

Cognitive Outcomes

Cognitive outcomes, as measured by academic performance, were selected as the main outcome variable for this study because of their strong link within the literature to desirable socioeconomic returns. Academic performance is therefore intended to be interpreted as a medium-term indicator of whether the return on investment in ECE is likely to be favourable.

Whilst there are a variety of ways of quantifying academic performance, test scores are most common. Most often, these are children's scores on comprehension, reading or maths assessments[32]. In the case of YL,

[29] It should not be assumed that I consider ECE to be the only explanatory variable accounting for cognitive development. Variance not explained by these models could be due to genetic endowment (see Todd and Wolpin, 2004), parental education, SES, or other inputs.

[30] See Meghir and Rivkin (2011) for a discussion of methodologies for binary education choice, as analysed by Heckman, LaLonde and Smith, 1999.

[31] Despite the RTE Act's stipulation that children should enter Grade 1 at age 5-6, only at age 8 does correct enrolment by age stabilise (Kaul et al., 2017).

[32] Using test scores could constrict the meaning of 'cognitive ability' as outcomes from a range of subjects are not included;

results on only a small selection of tests are recorded, of which I used two: one verbal reasoning test (PPVT) and one maths test (Attanasio, Meghir and Nix, 2015). Scores from two tests were included in this paper's model in order to offer a broader scope of analysis and comparison. Amongst this sample, children's mean score on the PPVT was 75.8% (SD = 13.61%), and mean score on the maths test was 44.6% (SD = 22.7%).

Gender

Literature suggests that ECCE interventions have the potential to compensate for the gender biases that have historically affected Indian education systems (Magnuson et al., 2016; Morabito, Vandenbroeck and Roose, 2013). Consequently, I examined whether gender was associated with preschool attendance for this sample[33], as well as whether it was associated with variation in score results (Question 2). I also included gender as a control variable in the multivariate OLS regressions to determine whether it made up any part of preschool's ability to predict results on the PPVT and maths tests (Question 4).

Maternal Education

Human capital research has positioned women's education as an intergenerational asset, by which parents' education[34] is a determinant of their children's cognitive development[35]. In research from India specifically, mother's education has been shown to be positively associated with children's educational outcomes (Jeong, Kim and Subramanian, 2018). Taking the lead of other research such as the IECEI, which grouped mother's education into larger brackets (Kaul et al., 2017), I recoded this variable as binary[36] for the purposes of this study (Question 3), with mothers falling either into having 'some' education, meaning anything including primary and upwards, or 'none'[37].

Statistical Methods

I selected three methodologies based upon precedent[38], constraints from the data and possibilities for further research. Firstly, I compared mean test scores of the major groups (preschool attendance, gender and maternal education level). This offered an initial picture of any significant differences. Secondly,

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however, maths, comprehension, and reading are usually deemed the most critical skills to assess and are also the most comparable amongst educational studies.

[33] Descriptive statistics on this paper's sample show that 57.8% of boys were attending preschool, while 55.7% of girls were attending. Of the children who were attending preschool, 54.3% were boys and 45.7% were girls.

[34] Not accounting for other education levels in the household presented a risk for bias. But as the majority of literature cites mother's education as a paramount factor, I opted to follow this precedent.

[35] See Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2012; Asadullah and Yalonetzky, 2012; Becker, Murphy and Tamura, 1990; Black et al., 2005 and Magnuson, 2007.

[36] One fundamental issue in estimating the effect of maternal education is unmeasured abilities, or 'endowments', of children (Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1994). Because this is a highly complex matter to calculate, this paper did not account for bias resulting from endowments.

[37] Amongst this sample, 49.6% of mothers reported having no education, while 50.2% of mothers reported having completed ome education. Of the children attending preschool, 43.4% had mothers without any education, and 56.6% had mothers with some education.

[38] Meghir and Rivkin (2011) provided a useful review of methodologies used in the economics of education. A number of these have been used to identify 'causal' relationships, but as this paper is not evaluating the results of experimental research, these models would not be appropriate to replicate in this context. However, they offer important conceptual background.

I conducted linear regression as an uncontrolled estimation of preschool's ability to predict score outcomes. Thirdly, I utilised multivariate ordinary least squares (*OLS*) regression to estimate preschool's ability to predict score outcomes, but with gender and mother's education as conditions.

My bivariate analysis included Chi-square and t-tests[39], as well as looking at resulting values for r, r² and other measures of effect size. I used Chi-square tests to determine whether gender and maternal education covaried with preschool participation[40]. T-tests were used to determine whether the independent variables (preschool participation, and subsequently gender and maternal education) were associated with test score outcomes.

My multiple regression utilised OLS to estimate coefficients[41]. The method of least squares was used to estimate the parameters associated with each of the explanatory variables. Each model was then assessed for its goodness of fit.

Limitations

The first limit to the methodology results from the complexity of measuring the impact of genetic endowments (Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1994). Calculating abilities that are passed down from parents presents a challenge because there is no directly corresponding variable or piece of data to represent the presence or lack of 'endowment', or any more nuanced level of endowed ability. Calculating endowment would need its own method or study in which parents' schooling would be controlled alongside child's early schooling, for example, but such further exploration was outside the remit of this study. However, other studies similar to this paper have also proceeded without considering endowment, not least other YL papers such as Singh and Mukherjee (2018), so there is a precedent for examining the primary and secondary research questions without having to account for endowment.

The second limit to the chosen methods is the issue presented by endogeneity in the form of omitted variable bias (the remaining assumptions for linear regression were met)[42]. This paper included only two variables as controls: maternal education and gender. But literature on ECE highlights socioeconomic status (*SES*) as another important predictor variable[43] of both preschool participation and academic attainment (Woodhead, 2009). Therefore, the absence of SES, or other related variables, within the model could have confounded results[44] and also affected the ability to interpret results as causal (Schonemann

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[39] The level of statistical significance used was a p value of < .05. All tests were two-tailed.

[40] Yates' correction was applied to mitigate against Type 1 errors, as variables were dichotomous. (Field, 2009).

[41] Woldehanna and Gebremedhin (2012) used propensity score matching substantiated with OLS and IV regression to estimate the effects of pre-school attendance on cognitive development in Ethiopia with YL data. As it uses data from the same wider study on the same topic type, it provided a good reference point for my use of OLS methodology. See Loeb et al., 2005 from the US context for other examples of use of OLS on a similar topic.

[42] The assumption regarding multicollinearity could have presented an issue, given there was a correlation shown between mother's education and preschool. However, Field (2012) advises that this assumption is only problematic if any of the input variables correlate highly, above .8 or .9. This was not the case.

[43] Relatedly, as SES is a known correlative of other variables within the models, this represents a violation of the assumption of no correlation with external variables. However, problems of correlation within the error term were checked for using the Durbin-Watson test (Durbin and Watson, 1950).

[44] Other variables such as location, nutritional status, birth order and caste could also have been 'omitted variables' (Singh and Mukherjee, 2018), but were not included to reduce overburdening the model and detracting from the research question.

and Steiger, 1976). However, despite limiting causal interpretation, because YL oversampled from poor communities and households (Kumra, 2008), the results still offer an opportunity to examine the relationship between the chosen variables within a more focused socioeconomic bracket.

One way to reduce the model's biases would be to build a multivariate model that includes a greater selection of predictor variables (such as SES or an estimation of genetic endowment), which could improve the validity of the results by showing, through partial correlations, which coefficients contribute the most to the model, as well as improving the model overall[45]. However, such a model would still not indicate causality, and might be overly cumbersome. I therefore maintained the selection of two variables which past research has deemed particularly important for the intergenerational transmission of human capital.

Results

The goal of the regression analysis was to estimate the role of preschool in predicting test score outcomes of children in Andhra Pradesh at age 12. The findings show that, for this sample, preschool participation and gender were ineffective predictors of test score outcomes, but maternal education emerged as a significant predictor of test scores.

Question 1: Was Early Childhood Education a Good Predictor of Test Scores?

Initial results indicated that preschool participation did not have a statistically significant impact on PPVT scores, but did on maths scores, yet with only a small effect size. Figures 1a and 1b below depict mean scores on each test by children who did and did not attend preschool.
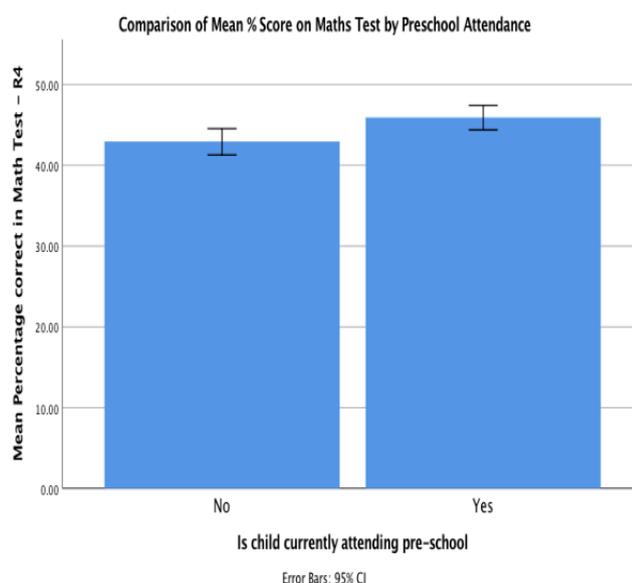
Figure 1a: Comparison of mean percent score on Maths test by preschool attendance (L).
Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

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[45] Another way to limit these biases would be to conduct further research utilising differential effects. This methodology could be used to compare each input variable's explanatory potential, which could help to correct unobserved biases associated with both variables (Rosenbaum, 2006).
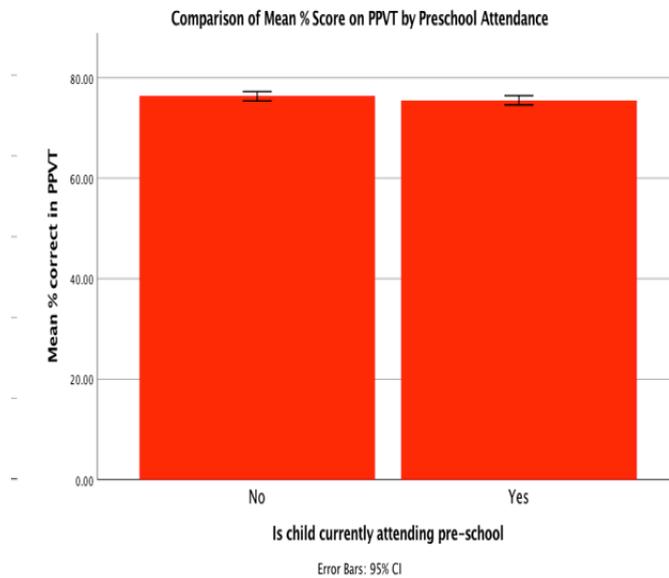
Figure 1b: Comparison of mean percent score on PPVT by preschool attendance (R).
Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

These results contradict the existing body of evidence on ECE. Possible explanations could have to do with bias in the model due to endogeneity, or with the homogenisation of 'preschool' as a single 'treatment' rather than a further disaggregated variable. Table 2 below summarises the findings.

Table 2: Summary of Test Score Means Compared by Preschool Attendance

Is child currently in preschool?		
Test		
PPVT	Yes	No
n	942	718
Mean Score	75.49	76.31
SD	14.27	12.69
t = 1.23	r = -.030	Cohen's d = .06
p value = .220	r-squared = .0009	df = 1658
Maths	Yes	No
n	918	706
Mean Score	45.89	42.91
SD	23.27	22.03
t = -2.62	r = .065**	Cohen's d = .13
p value = .009**	r-squared = .004	df = 1622

** indicates statistical significance at 1% level

Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

Question 2: Did Boys Who Attended Preschool Fare Better Than Girls on These Tests?

Subgroup analysis by gender revealed that boys were not more likely than girls to score higher on either the PPVT or maths test. Additionally, differences in preschool participation rates for boys and girls were not significant. This confirms analysis from YL India conducted by Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead (2011) and also mirrors World Bank data which indicates that pre-primary enrolment across India is now essentially on par ("Education Statistics - All Indicators", 2018). Table 3 below summarises the findings from the gender subgroup analysis, and Figures 2a and 2b below illustrate that there was no significant difference between mean test scores.
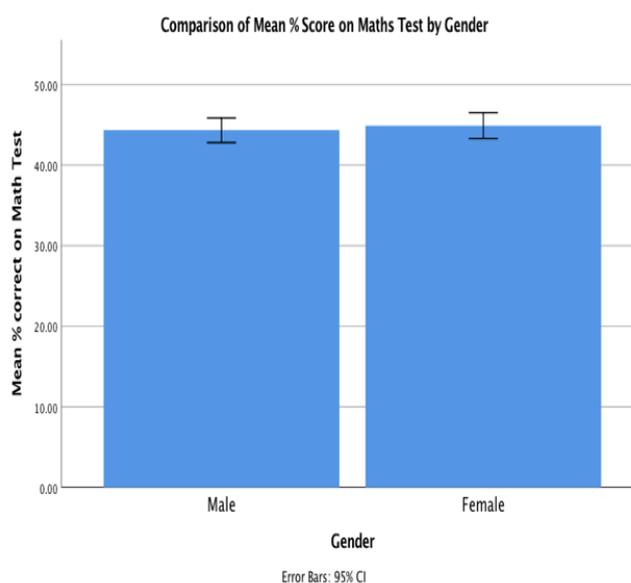

Figure 2a: Comparison of mean percent score on Maths test by gender (L)
*Source:* Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.
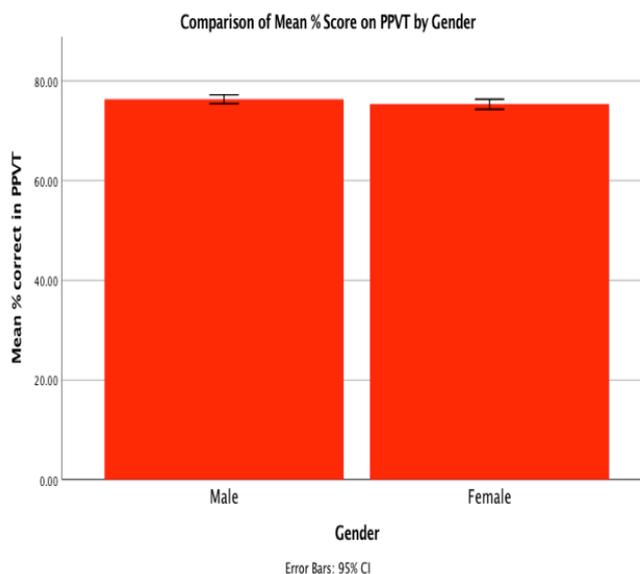
Figure 2b: Comparison of mean percent score on PPVT by gender (R)
Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

Table 3: Summary of Test Score Means Compared by Gender

Test	Gender	
PPVT	M	F
n	886	774
Mean Score	76.31	75.32
SD	13.18	14.09
t = 1.47	r = -.036	
p value = .142	r-squared = .001	df = 1658
Maths	M	F
n	871	753
Mean Score	44.33	44.89
SD	23.06	22.47
t = -.497	r = .012	
p value = .619	r-squared = .000	df = 1622

Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

Question 3: Did Children With Educated Mothers Fare Better on These Tests?

As illustrated by Figures 3a and 3b below, analysis found statistically significant differences between test scores for children whose mothers were educated and those whose were not[46]. The results are summarised in Table 4. Effect sizes as measured by r also showed a medium effect.
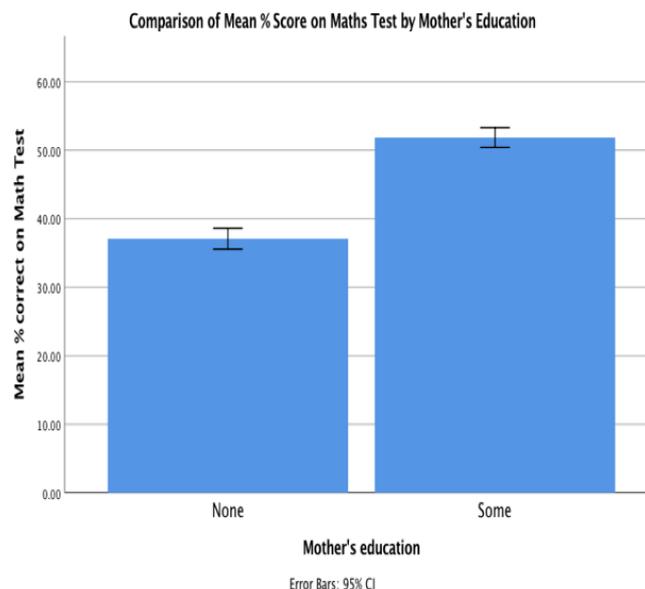

Figure 3a: Comparison of mean percent score on Maths test by mother's education (L).
Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

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[46] However, due to the issue of external variables, it is possible that there was some bias in the coefficient for maternal education resulting from a correlation between SES and maternal education, and between SES and preschool participation.
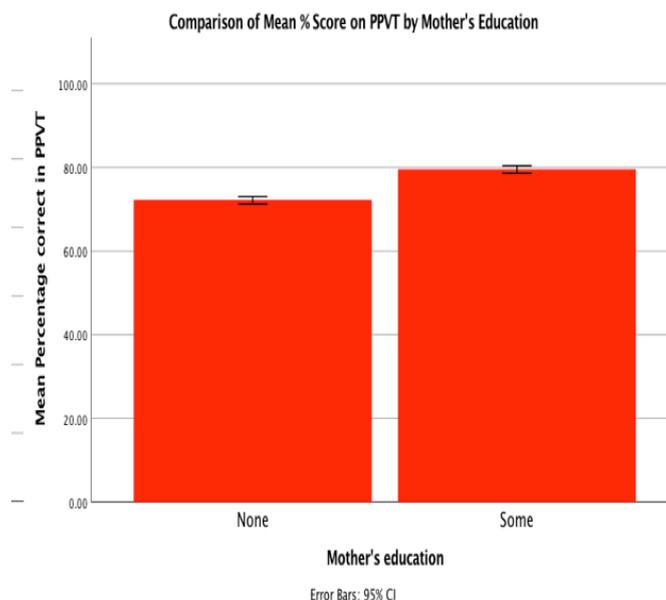
Figure 3b: Comparison of mean percent score on PPVT test by mother's education (R)
Source: Young Lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

Table 4: Summary of Test Score Means Compared by Maternal Education

	Maternal Education Level	
Test		
PPVT	None	Some
n	823	834
Mean Score	72.16	79.52
SD	13.08	13.16
t = -11.42	r = .270**	
p value = .000** r-squared = .073		df = 1655
Maths	None	Some
n	792	829
Mean Score	37.01	51.84
SD	21.66	21.39
t = -13.81	r = .325**	
p value = .000** r-squared = .105		df = 1619

** indicates statistical significance at 1% level

Source: Young lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

Results also revealed that the proportion of children that were not attending preschool was significantly higher amongst families with uneducated mothers. Mothers with some education were also more likely to have children attending preschool than not.

Question 4: Once Gender and Maternal Education Were Controlled, Was Preschool a Useful Predictor of Test Scores?

The results of the multivariate regression indicated that gender and preschool did not offer much value as predictors, but maternal education did. The models for predicting PPVT and maths scores are summarised in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Multivariate Model Summaries for Predicting Maths and PPVT Scores

Model Summary for Predicting PPVT Scores					
Variable	Coefficient	95% Confidence Interval	S.E.	t-ratio	sig.
Preschool attendance	-0.073	(-3.29, -0.72)	0.66	-3.05	.002**
Gender	-0.043	(-2.44, 0.08)	0.64	-1.83	0.067
Mother's education	0.282	(6.39, 8.94)	0.65	11.81	0.000

*F = 47.87**   F sig = .000**   r = .28   r-squared = .08*

Model Summary for Predicting Maths Scores					
Variable	Coefficient	95% Confidence Interval	S.E.	t-ratio	sig.
Preschool attendance	0.013	(-1.54, 2.74)	1.09	0.55	0.581
Gender	0.006	(-1.81, 2.40)	1.07	0.28	0.783
Mother's education	0.322	(12.55, 16.79)	1.08	13.55	.000**

*F = 63.62**   F sig = 000**   r = .33   r-squared =.11*

** indicates statistical significance at 1% level

Source: Young lives India, Rounds 2 and 4.

Summary of PPVT Model Findings

The PPVT model was found to be a 'good fit' for estimating test score outcomes. However, surprisingly, the model showed that preschool attendance had a negative, statistically significant coefficient in the conditional relationship. This is best interpreted as a 'negligible' finding. Meanwhile, gender was shown to have a slightly negative coefficient in the PPVT model, but the significance value of the t-test indicated that it was not a significant contributor, confirming the results of the bivariate analysis. Lastly, the model's results showed that mother's education had a highly significant correlation (p = .000) with test outcomes for the PPVT. In fact, it was the only variable in this model with a positive part correlation (.279). Therefore, though the model as a whole was found to be a good method of estimation, the goodness of fit came primarily from the coefficient for maternal education.

Summary of Maths Test Model Findings

In the bivariate analysis, linear regression showed a statistically significant association between preschool participation and maths test results. The findings of that analysis were consistent with those of Singh and Mukherjee, who also found that preschool was associated with improved maths scores (2017). However, results from the multivariate model showed that the conditional association (with gender and maternal education controlled) was no longer statistically significant. As with the PPVT model, maternal

education provided the bulk of the model's ability to predict maths score outcomes. Though the F-test results found this model to be a 'good predictor' of maths scores, it is important to note that the r-squared value demonstrates that the model could only account for 11% of the variance in score results, and also that the original research question (Question 1) was about whether ECE (not the other conditional variables) was a useful way to estimate score outcomes, which this model indicates it was not.

Conclusion of Results

Overall, though both models were 'good fits', the findings did not support the original hypothesis that ECE would be a good predictor of test score outcomes. Correlation between preschool and maths results was found significant at the bivariate level; however, once gender and maternal education were conditioned out, the coefficient was no longer significant. The correlation coefficients themselves were small, indicating that interpreting a statistically 'strong' association should be done with caution, even when p-values are very small ($<.001$). Effect sizes were negligible in some cases, and only small-to-medium in others. R^2 values showed that no variation in PPVT outcomes and only 4% in maths outcomes could be explained by preschool participation, meaning that variance in outcomes is likely to be better explained, or further explained, by other predictor variables not included in the model. Lastly, the lion's share of the 'predicting' comes from the wrong variable - mother's education. These results contradict copious evidence supporting preschool's positive effect on academic attainment.

Discussion

Three major themes emerged from this paper's findings. The first was that preschool was not a valuable predictor of test scores amongst this sample, supporting the idea that the Indian evidence base for ECE needs further substantiation[47] in order to improve services and policies. The second was that maternal education has significant value as a predictor of academic outcomes, confirming other evidence[48] of its role in intergenerational educational attainment. The third was that gender disparity appears to be reducing in scope. These themes help to substantiate the evidence base on early education in India and clarify areas of progress and residual challenges.

Preschool Was Not a Good Predictor of Academic Outcomes

Surprisingly, the findings indicated that children amongst this sample who participated in ECE did not achieve well academically. These findings resonate with only a limited body of existing evidence. For example, the significant association between preschool and maths in the bivariate analysis was consistent with other YL research in Peru, Ethiopia and Vietnam (Early Childhood Development: informing policy and making it a priority, 2018). The overall conclusion that preschool did not 'make a difference' mirrors other results on ECE in India reported by Chopra (2012), Pattnaik (1996) and Manhas and Qadiri (2010). Reports from ASER (Beyond Basics, 2018) and Save the Children

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[47] See Alcott et al., 2018; Kaul and Sankar, 2009; Kaul et al., 2017 and Singh and Mukherjee, 2017 for other documentation of this need.

[48] See Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2012; Becker, Murphy and Tamura, 1990; Black, Devereux and Salvanes, 2005; Black et al,. 2005; Magnuson, 2007; Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1994 and also Jeong, Kim and Subramanian, 2018 for evidence from India, and Singh and Mukherjee, 2015 for evidence using YL India data.

(2009) also reported low attainment on pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills for 5-year-olds, which indicates inadequate preschooling. However, the results contradict the majority of evidence on ECE.

Two possibilities emerge as to why these findings do not match the patterns. Firstly, problems could have arisen with the transition from data collection to variable construction which obscured important indicators. Secondly, the wider evidence body itself might not be heterogeneous enough to account for variation in patterns on ECE.

Recapitulating the first reason, it is possible that problems with construction of the primary explanatory variable obscured variation because responses to 'is the child currently attending preschool?' were not readily disaggregated by private versus public. Given evidence that preschool type has been associated with variations in attainment (Alcott and Rose, 2015; Beyond Basics, 2018; Chopra, 2012 and Singh and Mukherjee, 2015 and 2018), this would have offered a valuable condition[49].

Additionally, it is possible that families' responses to the question used for variable construction (either a 'yes' or 'no' to 'is child attending preschool?') obscured early entry to primary after attending ECE by the time Round 2 took place (see Alcott et al., forthcoming)[50].

A useful methodological approach to combat the potential threat of inconclusive findings based on these possibilities could therefore entail conducting regression analysis that disaggregates preschool experience by type (as in the research conducted by Singh and Mukherjee, 2018), or also by other determinants of quality. Such research might reveal under what circumstances, or in what conditions, ECE in India matches wider patterns of positive association with academic outcomes.

Recapitulating the second reason, it is possible that this is the case because wider patterns are not diverse enough. Literature authenticating this possibility comes from Woodhead (2006), who noted that there is a distinct lack of literature from LAMI countries on ECE's role in academic attainment, and also from Woldehanna and Gebremedhin (2012). Most ECE studies have had certain commonality in terms of the relative quality of ECE provision, ambient notions of education, patterns of parental cognition, or issues of gender. Thus, there is a possibility that patterns on ECE in LAMI countries could be different from those in developed contexts, but it is difficult to corroborate this without further evidence.

If patterns in LAMI contexts were to differ from the wider evidence body, as these findings indicate may be the case, it is likely that 'quality of ECE' divides them. This conclusion is based on evidence from Rao and Kaul, who found that anganwadis offered insufficient pre-primary education (2017) and Kaul et al. (2017) who noted that even private pre-primary is developmentally inadequate. Accordingly, overall poor quality ECE provision in India could be contributing to lack of statistically significant results.

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[49] However, documented issues with 'nonlinearity' of early educational trajectories might have complicated this anyway, as many children have been shown to complete some government as well as some private preschool (Alcott et al., 2018).

[50] The YL team should have mitigated against this response bias, given 'early entry' is a documented phenomenon. Perhaps a question such as 'did this child complete at least two full years of ECE between the ages of 3-5?' would have allowed for a more accurate analysis of the effects of preschool on attainment.

The Role of Gender in Predicting Attainment Appears to be Diminishing

These findings demonstrate that gender is not a good estimator of academic attainment (Question 2). They corroborate existing evidence on multiple fronts: evidence that gender does not play a role in estimating a range of education-related outcomes has also been found using YL India data by Vennam et al. (2009) and again by Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead (2011). Meanwhile, official World Bank data ("Education Statistics - All Indicators", 2018) supports this paper's findings on preschool participation rates and also offers a backdrop to the evidence on equal attainment.

These results speak to the long-established international focus on reaching gender parity in education, which has been a particular priority since the inception of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ("United Nations Millennium Development Goals", 2018). They also suggest that efforts made by the Indian government to redress gender disparity in education, such as launching the National Programme of Education for Girls at Elementary Level, are making a difference (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011). And whilst these results do not support the views of Kaul et al. (2017) that gender in education is still a point of disparity in India, or evidence from Magnuson et al. (2016) or Garcia, Heckman and Ziff (2018) who indicate that girls in some instances benefit less from pre-primary education[51], they represent an important finding that demonstrates progress is being made.

Maternal Education Was a Useful Predictor of Attainment

Results on maternal education (Question 3)[52] found it to be a strong predictor of academic outcomes amongst this sample. These findings support wide-ranging evidence from the human capital tradition that investing in mothers' education pays intergenerational dividends (see Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2012; Becker, Murphy and Tamura, 1990; Black et al,. 2005; King and Hill, 1993; Magnuson, 2007; Rosenzweig and Wolpin, 1994 and Schultz, 1993). They also corroborate evidence from India that maternal education has an important role to play in educational attainment (Jeong, Kim and Subramanian, 2018; Kaul et al., 2017 and Singh and Mukherjee, 2015). These findings provide clear evidence of the intergenerational nature of maternal education as an 'endowment'.

Conclusions

Theory and literature both indicate that participating in early education should improve overall attainment by providing children with the skills to succeed academically. However, much of the evidence available is from developed contexts, which have very different parameters of experience. The aim of this study was to explore the impact of preschool participation on academic attainment for children in

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[51] A complexity in these findings could arise from the possibility that variation between preschool type and gender was masked by the methodology involved in documenting preschool attendance, which did not account for private versus public. For example, other research, including qualitative research from YL India, has indicated that parents are more likely to invest in private education for sons (Woodhead et al., 2009).

[52] Because 'maternal education' was recoded for this paper as a binary variable, it is interesting to note that having any education at all made a difference to variation in test score outcomes on both tests. This is an important point for policymaking in India, as the country still has an adult female literacy rate of only 59% and a large quantum of first generation learners ("Literacy rate, adult female", 2018).

India[53], which is of interest because of educational attainment's link to important socioeconomic outcomes. This research problem was addressed through layers of quantitative analysis, including the creation of multivariate models controlling the possible influences of gender and maternal education.

Despite being able to successfully create multivariate models that were good estimators of test results, upon interpretation of the results, little to no association was found between preschool participation and academic outcomes. These findings highlight firstly that ECE in India is facing issues of quality and secondly that evidence on ECE is being generalised because it is convincing, and because there is not sufficient evidence from elsewhere to change this. Accordingly, this paper argues that ECE policies for LAMI countries should rely not just on precedent but take into consideration localised evidence. It also argues against viewing 'preschool' as a monolithic or uniform experience, because a plausible explanation for the inconclusive findings is that 'preschool' was not disaggregated. However, considering all preschool experiences as 'uniform' for this sample also had value, because it demonstrated that as a group preschools in Andhra Pradesh are not of good enough quality to enhance cognitive outcomes. This evidence underscores the need to continue reforming ECE services in India (Streuli, Vennam and Woodhead, 2011).

India's government therefore needs to redress inadequate pre-primary services, particularly in light of the increasing competitiveness of the private market. Other researchers have also cited the need for a regulatory body to help with governing quality standards (Chopra, 2012). Increasing the effectiveness of India's ECE models can best be accomplished by garnering more reliable, relevant evidence to inform their improvement.

In this vein, this paper has been an endeavour to help substantiate the limited evidence body on ECE in India, provide nuance to existing debates on topics such as gender, and increase awareness of the limits of generalisability of existing ECE literature[54]. Though the findings are, in themselves, not generalisable, their importance lies in their departure from the results of other research showing ECE's effectiveness.

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[53] In order to determine how existing ECE services can be improved, further research into what elements or types of ECE covary with improved outcomes should be explored (Engle et al., 2007; Engle et al., 2011 and Yoshikawa and Nieto, 2013).

[54] Another opportunity for further research could be to widen the models in this paper by adding other highly pertinent predictor variables, thereby increasing the validity of the analysis. Using partial correlation could improve understanding of which variables are truly playing an explanatory role (Kline, 2004). This could also help to reduce some of the omitted variable bias or endogeneity (Woolridge, 2016). Making use of propensity score matching, as used by Woldehanna and Gebremedhin (2012), could also offer experimental-style research for comparing the effects of various input variables.

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HOW TO AVOID 'CHRISTMAS TREE' INNOVATIONS: INTRODUCING AND SUSTAINING THE USE OF LEARNING PLATFORMS IN SCHOOLS.

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This paper reports the results of a study investigating teacher stakeholder views of the range of leadership factors that influenced their use during the first two years of a new Virtual Learning Environment (Firefly) in a comprehensive school in London. The research was broadened to include ten schools in total. Implications are identified as well as suggestions for further research. According to much of the research reviewed, maximising the benefits of a VLE is dependent on how teachers perceive innovations in general. However, some evidence was found that leaders do have an impact on the take-up of technology in schools. The determination of the overall school leader to bring transformation and modernity to the school was found to have an effect on the uptake of initiatives that are expensive and risky in the sense that they rely on new skills and knowledge that do not at first seem relevant to some teachers. The process also involves risk because of the pace of technological change. This research aims to bring together the two factors: teacher perception and leadership of change. The aim is to help school leaders ensure successful take-up and sustaining of use so that innovations, that they introduce, are not short-lived. Key questions within the evaluation survey draw on theories of leadership and on findings from the literature review about technology acceptance. The research is summarised in a visual representation of how leaders can leverage their influence, both with the initial introduction and the sustaining of the technology, to avoid the 'Christmas Tree' innovation effect: in other words, a purely ornamental technology that quickly goes out of date or fails to serve its primary purpose of improving learning (Bryk, 1992, p. 7).

Keywords: Firefly, Learning platform, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Levels of use, Upside Down Christmas Tree.

There is a recurrent and specific challenge in understanding and applying research evidence as it takes time for robust evidence to emerge in education, and the rapid pace of change of technology makes this difficult to achieve.

(Higgins, Xiao & Katsipataki, 2012, p.3)

Introduction

Technology should make our lives easier and schools are no exception. Schools are under pressure to compete with each other and rise up or keep a good position in the league tables. They are also under pressure to provide value for money. So why would a school purchase an online learning platform such as Firefly? The rationale was that it could improve community cohesion and facilitate improvements in the quantity and quality of homework as well as save teachers' time. Like all school improvements it was hoped that it would "translate into higher levels of student achievement" (Antoniou and Kyriakides, 2013, p. 29). No empirical studies had been done on the veracity of this assumption, but anecdotal evidence and online reviews led a school in London to consider Firefly as the chosen learning platform. Its particular functionalities such as merging with their Management Information System (MIS and motivating appearance led them to select it above other Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) available. A significant impact on teacher and student engagement was noted. From the first four months, there were 418,310 instances of usage. This climbed to 3,335,567 hits for the same period one year later and again to 4,445,743 hits for the same period after a second year. Given the ease of use of this learning platform, leaders were able to encourage widespread and consistent setting of homework.

This study looks at the leadership factors taken from early literature about technology in schools in 1996 to as recent as 2017. The study looks at the factors that led to such a positive outcome, over a two-year period of using Firefly in our school, according to the teacher users. The research was also broadened to include other schools – twenty were invited to join in with the research and, in total, ten took part. Drawing mainly from the literature, a questionnaire was specifically developed to explore factors that influenced the take-up and sustaining of Firefly. The research presents nine factors that impacted on the introduction of the innovation and fifteen factors that impacted on sustaining it.

Literature review

To carry out a literature review, I searched for "Firefly", "VLE" and other related terms on Google, in the Cambridge University libraries and the British Library. There was at that time, little mention of Firefly VLE in the published academic research. I widened the search to include the terms 'school improvement and technology'. The focus in much of the research was to present factors that influence the uptake of technology and then specifically, factors that influence take-up of VLEs, in schools. I also searched for 'sustaining technology use' and also material on school leadership generally. The findings from the literature have been presented chronologically to show the social context of some of the research claims about technology use in schools, between 1996 and 2017. The first report of the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) showed that in 1994, technology was only just becoming popular in schools in the UK. The first research reviewed was published shortly after this period in 1996. I sorted the findings into a list of key factors that influence the introduction of

technology innovations and created a survey. I also sorted the findings into a second list of factors that sustain innovations and added this to the survey in a separate section. The data from the survey was analysed and a metaphorical 'upside down' Christmas Tree was designed, to show leaders how to reverse the effect of ornamental innovations that do not serve their primary purpose of improving learning.

The first section looks at the factors influencing the use of technology, between 1996 when research about technology in schools was emerging and 2010 when there was general recognition that it needed strong leadership (BECTA, 2010).

Teacher Attitudes and Schools as Anti-innovation

By 2000, the majority of research placed responsibility for the slow pace of technology uptake at the feet of reluctant teachers, rather than at the feet of school or national leaders. Mumtaz (2000, p. 320) was no exception. Robertson et al (1996, pp. 194-204), cited by Mumtaz (ibidem) argued that teachers' resistance to computer use came from their resistance to "organisational change" and "outside intervention." Three years later, Mumtaz, Zhao, and Frank (2003, p. 808) looked for reasons why schools were slow to integrate the use of available technology. They considered that schools themselves were naturally set up to resist the use of technology: lessons were either too structured or students did not all have computers at home, to follow up work. They wrote about the 'ecology' of adoption in schools as 'ecosystems'. I found that these are interesting but are not necessarily useful metaphors because I believe that ecosystems are naturally occurring whereas the behaviour of everyone within a school is not. Schools are organisations, not organisms. In this, they are also hierarchical. Teachers at any level might want to embrace innovation but their capacity to do so is restricted by their position within the organisation, rather than by a mutual growth and survival mechanism of an ecological system. Perhaps only humans construct 'anti-ecologies' in that sense. Zhao and Frank (2003, p. 808) used 19 schools but none of the questions focused on the crucial point about digital strategy, e-leadership (leadership of technology) or overall school leadership.

BECTA (2004, pp. 1-8) also identified teachers' perceptions and lack of willingness to change as blocks to technology acceptance. This was perhaps a missed opportunity as 2004 would have been a good moment to focus on e-leadership. Mobile technology was becoming more widespread and this would have moved the debate forward, away from teachers' fear of "public humiliation" if they used 'unreliable' technology or used technology incorrectly (BECTA, 2004, p. 8).

Totter, Stütz, and Grote (2006, p. 96) emphasised lack of training and time for teachers to explore the technology and the choice of constructivist as opposed to traditional teaching styles. They also reported staff "perception that technology does not enhance learning". The authors used data collected from a survey of fifty-two Swiss and Austrian teachers and claim: "only teachers who adopt a pupil-oriented, constructivist teaching style are likely to make use of new technology in classrooms". No mention was made of technology or school leadership.

Four years later, the importance of setting direction through an overall digital strategy within schools or 'technology leadership', was also recognised by Tan (2010, p. 903) when he said that "school technology leadership is a strong predictor on the level of technology use in schools". However, he went further to comment on the skills of the overall school leader and not just the 'technology leader'. He found that "transformational leadership is correlated with a principal's ICT competencies"

(ibidem) and that different types of leadership styles might create different outcomes in terms of technology uptake. Tan concluded that research findings show that transformational leadership has the biggest impact on the uptake of technology in schools (2010, p. 94).

The BECTA report (2010, pp. 26-29) echoes the thinking of Tan. The report identified specifically, conditions that need to be in place for "effective use of a learning platform" in schools. They include a sense of e-maturity, defined as how well providers use technology to meet strategic priorities (Becta, 2008, p.12). They also include a "tradition" of effective use of IT innovations, and "a coordinated, positive and enthusiastic strategic approach by senior leaders and managers". BECTA also reports that schools were not systematically organising their roll-out but instead, letting teachers 'grow' their use, preferring to let a more 'organic' form of development occur. Enthusiasm for the new technology was sparked by a particular need at the time, such as tracking performance data of pupils. This was followed by a gradual extension of the use of the learning platform across other areas of school activities (BECTA, 2010, p.14). Transformational technology leadership was not common. The next section will look at theories about the take-up of technology between 2011 and 2014.

The Beginning of Technology Adoption Models and the Role of School Leaders in Leveraging School Improvement

Research by Šumak, Heričko, and Pušnik (2011, pp. 2067-2077) moved the focus of the research away from leadership and back to teachers and their growing e-maturity. Their research was an impressive meta-analysis involving 42 independent studies. The findings showed that teacher perception about ease of use and usefulness is a critical factor influencing attitudes towards the adoption of technology. The research looked at 494 causal effect sizes in 42 independent studies. However, all the adoption models considered imply that users can choose whether or not to adopt the technology, which experience tells us is not always the case. No link is made to school leadership, e-leadership or school improvement frameworks in the context of adopting technology.

Richardson, Bathon, Flora, and Lewis focused their attention, in line with Tan (ibidem) and Davies (2010, pp. 55-61), on the importance of leadership. They concluded that more research is needed into the performance criteria of school technology leaders, given the expense and the challenges of the role: "[t]echnology driven change will only continue to accelerate. The scholarly community must do its part to provide more and better investigations and literature on technology leadership in the future." (2012, p. 145)

Moreno, Moreno, and Molina (2013, p. 7) identified other factors not covered in previous research, relating to how to generate satisfaction with online learning. They found that e-learning initiatives work best if managers "take advantage of the role played by perceived usefulness, social influence and effort expectancy". This echoed Levin and Schrum's (2013, pp. 29-51) sense of albeit slow progress. Nevertheless, the need to build confidence amongst teachers to leverage school improvement was recognised.

Jackson (2014, p. 256) developed a conceptual model for evaluating expectations and recommends that over-inflated expectations should be avoided, perhaps reflecting a growing sense that technology is not a panacea. Expectations must be properly designed, articulated and realised. Unrealistic expectations that cannot be met should be avoided. By managing expectations, organisations "can achieve a strong sense of VLE benefits success" (Jackson and Fearon, 2014, p. 257). Lochner (2015, p. 63) looks at

concerns around adopting Learning Management systems in the US and uses the CBAM (Concerns Based Adoption Model). Research showed that teachers had important concerns about their ability to adopt the new learning management system. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM; Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1979, p. 63) was used to examine user's attitudes and concerns. Lochner makes a thought-provoking claim that "although systems and organizations (sic) may adopt change, implementation of an innovation is accomplished at the individual level". This new emphasis is on professional concerns rather than on technical know-how, therefore addressing perceptions rather than knowledge. The next section will look at research found between 2014 and 2017

The Digital Savvy Leader, Creating 'e-maturity' Using Quality Products.

Riveros (2015, pp. 490-494) identified two new areas that were impacting on the use of technology: being digitally and media 'savvy' as well as building maturity within the organisation. These concepts fall into the realm of leadership.

It is important to note another feature of technology leadership – keep up or end up with technology that does not serve its primary purpose: "[t]he pressures leaders experience to keep up with technology can result in procuring and implementing technology without aligning technology with clear educational goals, and essentially adopting technology for its own sake." (Webster, 2017, 33).

This echoes comments from David Fairbairn-Day, the Head of Education Strategy and Business Development at Promethean who was quoted in the BESA report (2011) saying that we are entering "a new phase: screen down – classrooms where tablets are on the desk but go unused" and that "[i]n a number of parts of the country I see schools putting in policies for every student to have access to a tablet. Sometimes, once the tablets arrive, they are scratching their heads. Now we have them, what do we do with them?" (BESA, 2011).

Hew, Latifah, and Kadir, (2016, pp. 1557-1584) move the research into the realm of the interrelation between teacher attitude and the quality of the media in question. However, once again, there is no mention of e-leadership or school leadership impacting on teachers' actions in relation to the VLE. The absence of leadership theory is all the more obvious since this is a study of the world's first government-led initiative, using FROG VLE in 10,000 schools across Malaysia – an impressive project. Once again, there is an overall assumption that teacher users can choose whether or not to take-up the innovation within their schools.

A year later, Derboven, Geerts, and DeGrooff (2017, p. 21), from Belgium, maintain the emphasis on the usability of the product as the main factor impacting on take-up. However, the language in the report is much more complex and esoteric than other research in the field and in this way offers little to school leaders. They write about a "multimodal social semiotic approach" which situates the take-up of technology as a combination of its design with its appropriation. This research does not address the scenario of compulsory use but instead describes teachers as engaging with the VLE in a 'do-it-yourself' (bricolage) way. The researchers found that users use few functions of the VLE but they did not link these findings to the levels of use (Hall, Dirksen & George 2013, p. 39) which shows that most users stay at the mechanical (stage 3) use of an innovation because "movement to higher level of use, (LOU), requires time, resources, leadership, and training" (ibidem). There are no recommendations for improving e-leadership.

*S*ummary of Influencing Factors, Found in the Literature Review

The literature reviewed found factors that influence the successful take-up of technology in schools. These included the attitude of teachers towards technology, the usability of the product, the sense of an overall digital strategy in the school and the general e-maturity of the institution and the availability of training (Levin and Schrum, 2013). This research aims to question whether these findings were relevant in the case of Firefly and whether, in fact, there were other factors at play under the umbrella of 'leadership of change' such as ensuring the introduction of the innovation is well-timed and hassle-free, relevant to the job, and aligned to educational goals. The research also aims to explore factors that influence teachers to use and sustain their use of the learning platform, such as style of teaching, ability to inspire the learners and, the feeling that the whole community is involved.

The leadership influences considered included Hargreaves' work on "Uplifting Leadership" from 2015 and Kotter's work on "Leading Change" (1996). These leadership theories have offered guidance for school leaders across all sectors and constitute required reading on school leadership training courses such as the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership. Halpern's theory of EAST from his work on change management "Inside the Nudge Unit" (2016, p. 200) was chosen for its relevance as it influenced the roll-out of Firefly in the main school surveyed. Some statements were derived from papers written by Ofsted (2013, pp. 1-7) or BECTA (2004, pp. 1-8). The next section will look at how the research was structured and carried out.

Research Methods

Leadership influences on the successful implementation of Firefly were the independent variables of the study which was framed in a paradigm of interpretivism. The researcher is "part of" the research being carried out (Briggs et al, 2007, p. 24). The impact on all teacher users was the dependent variable. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to help teachers understand their level of use and to provide the school's leaders with insight into this in order to plan for f uture training. The main section was focused on exploring how teacher users of the VLE perceived the factors that might have influenced them. The research has a phenomenologist perspective, as the researcher aims to see the point of view of the respondents (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975, p. 14). The limits of interpretivism seem clear, as participants offer accounts of themselves that might differ from reality (Briggs et al, 2007, p. 26). The questions in the evaluation survey probe interpretations of readers' actions in the broadest sense and its findings are constrained by the inevitable subjectivity of responses. Working within an epistemological framework that espouses social phenomena as existing "not only in the mind but in the objective world as well" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.182), the research uses a mixed-method in an explanatory design (Cresswell, 1994, p. 564-568) to triangulate quantitative findings from the survey with rich qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, in order to lend a better understanding to the subject. This design also increases the transferability of the findings, especially given the reflexive nature of the researcher's perspective (having been involved in the introduction and sustaining of Firefly as a school leader).

Data Analysis

The following steps were taken. The questionnaire answers were analysed, using an 'Informed Grounded Theory' approach (Thornberg, 2011, p. 1) and converted into charts to show the relative percentage of respondents who selected choices between the different factors listed. Correlations were drawn between the different levels of use and the awareness of leadership influences. Also, inconsistencies in some of the replies were noted and explored in follow-up interviews with staff in the main school. The questionnaire answers pointed to intra-organisational factors that had produced these impacts. The key citations are included in the findings. Two models of 'upside down Christmas Trees' are presented, showing the factors found in this research, in order of influence. The first shows the factors found that influenced the successful introduction of Firefly VLE and the second one shows the factors that influenced sustaining its use. The next section will look at how the research process followed BERA guidelines.

Ethical considerations

The research was carried out with the primary consideration of validity and with full regard to the anonymity of respondents, both within the questionnaire and within the written findings. All attempts were made to ensure the questionnaire, which was online, was of the highest quality and easy to complete (Fogelman and Comber, 2007, p. 129). No research was undertaken without the initial and full consent of the Head teachers to whom all requests were sent. In the main school involved, the Head teacher agreed to be more involved in the process by overseeing the research. Questions to staff about the impact of leadership strategies were with full consent of the Head teacher in advance: due regard was given the sensitivity of the subject. BERA (2011) guidelines were adhered to at all times. There were no risks to participants and the principle of voluntarism was adhered to at all times. No children were involved in the research at any time. The next chapter will look at the outcomes of the research.

Research findings

Levels of Use

Five key functions of Firefly were chosen for staff to evaluate their level of use, using a simplified version of the 'Levels of Use' by Hall, Dirksen & George (2006, p. 17). On average, 56% of the respondents overall, were confident about their use of these functions or even able to suggest improvements to them – this is the highest level of use which can be described as altruistic, where the user reaches a state where he or she "re-evaluates the quality of the innovation, seeks major modifications […] to achieve increased impact on clients…and explores new goals for self and the system" (ibidem). The most common function used was 'setting homework' with 87% of users being comfortable with their skills. The least common was 'monitoring' or 'seeing what other staff had set on the site'. Equally, only 16% of users were communicating with parents on Firefly, despite this being a key function. Most staff evaluated themselves at level 2 for this, or 'needing more help' which reflects the key skills delineated in Level 1-3 of Hall's Levels of Use (2013, p. 17). It implies a positive approach in which the user is going through a process of "orientation" and "preparation" as well as "a stepwise

attempt to master the tasks required to use the innovation, often resulting in disjointed and superficial use".

Although 18 respondents were not at their school when Firefly was first introduced, their answers have implications on the training of new staff, who are expected to join in positively with innovations, while longer serving staff are still grappling with them. They had awareness of the factors in the questionnaire found to influence the take-up of technological innovation, in the range of 67% to 95%. This compared to staff present at the introduction, who showed awareness of the same factors of between 83% and 100%. Staff, who missed the launch of Firefly, were still overwhelmingly positive about it and no one was negatively influenced.
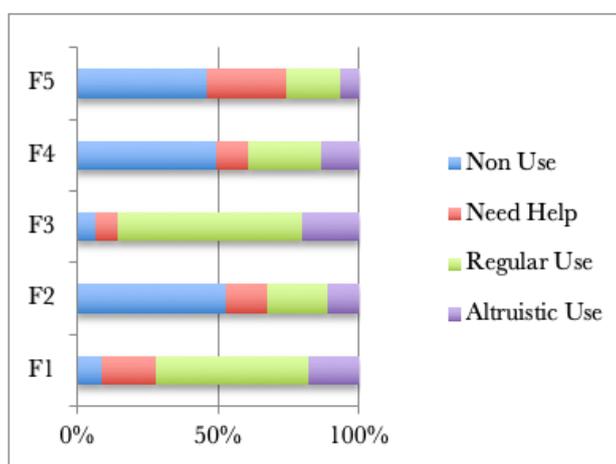

Figure 1. 100% Stacked Bar Chart showing all respondents self-evaluation of their own level of use of five key functions of Firefly, against a four-part Likert scale (F1: sharing resources with learners; F2: communicating with parents; F3: setting homework; F4: monitor and look at what other teachers are doing on the site; F5: seeking feedback)
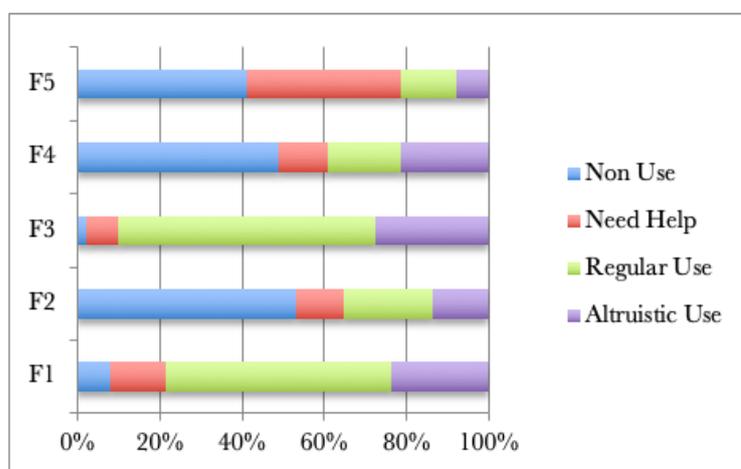
*Figure 2*. 100% Stacked Bar Chart, showing 'Named Main School' only. Staff self-evaluation of their level of use of five key functions of Firefly, against the four-part Likert scale. The difference between the main school and the rest of the sample shows increased confidence and altruistic use in three out of five measures, although this is with the proviso that 19 respondents did not name their school

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Introduction of the Innovation

The factors that influenced the introduction of the innovation and initial teacher use are listed below in order of priority so that school leaders can leverage maximum influence to ensure the long-term success of future initiatives and avoid short term, ornamental or "Christmas Tree" innovations (Bryk, 1992, p.7). I have turned the Christmas tree upside down, as a visual metaphor for reversing the temporary, superficial effect of short-term innovations.

The 'Upside down Christmas Tree'

Perceived usefulness 83%

Relevance to job 80%

Removing the Hassle 67%

Strong support from Senior Leaders 66%

The Quality and Design of the Technology 65%

The Timing of the Introduction 64%

Attentional Spotlight – Feeling obliged 59%

Aligning innovation with educational goals 55%

Leaders addressing initial concerns 50%
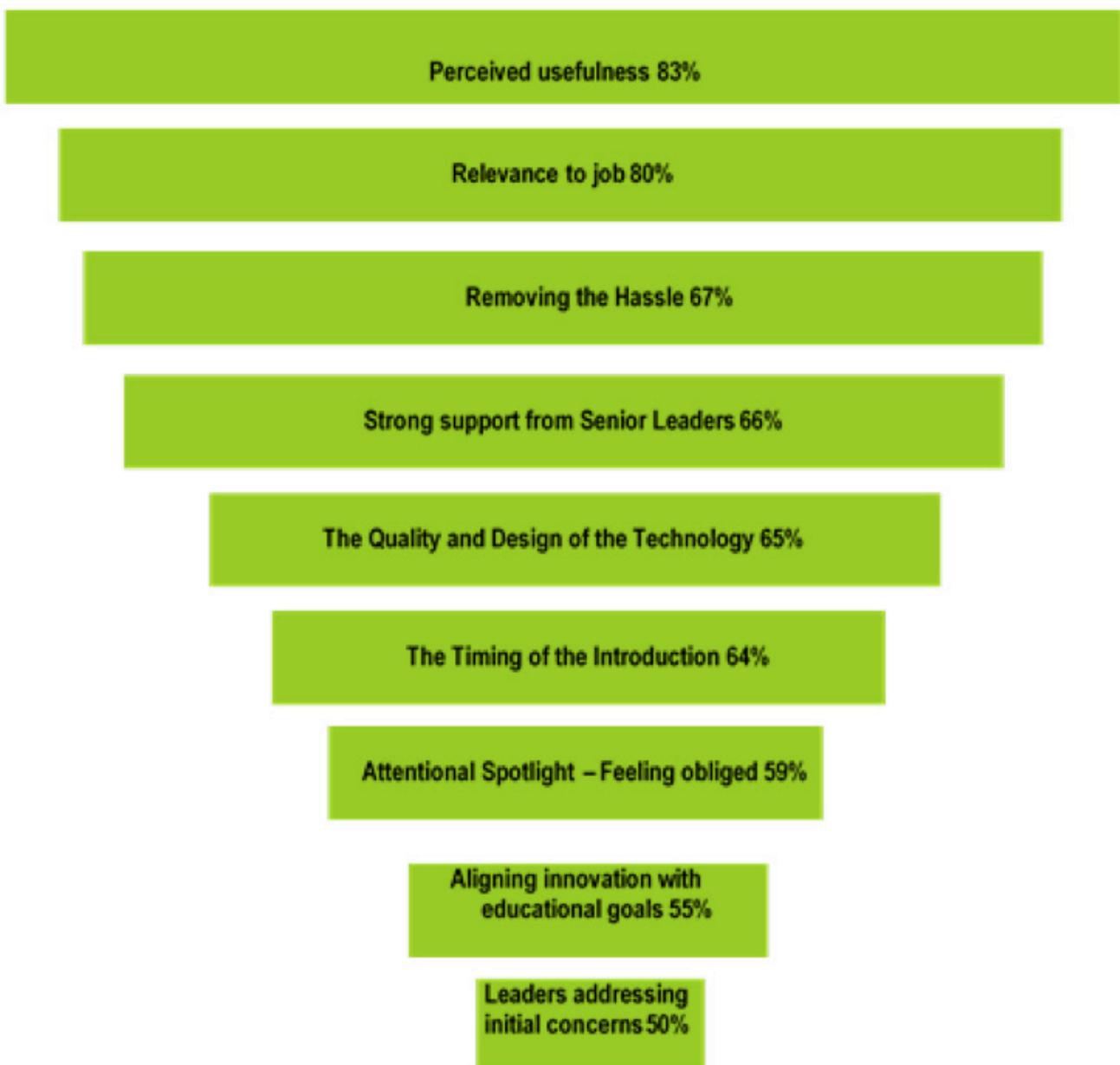
Figure 3. The 'Upside down Christmas Tree' 1. Reverse Taxonomy of Influences on the Introduction of Firefly, showing the most significant influences that support a successful introduction of the innovation.

Sustaining Use of Innovations

The factors that influenced sustained teacher use are listed below in order of priority. Once again, I have turned the Christmas tree upside down, as a metaphor for reversing the temporary, superficial effect of short-term innovations.
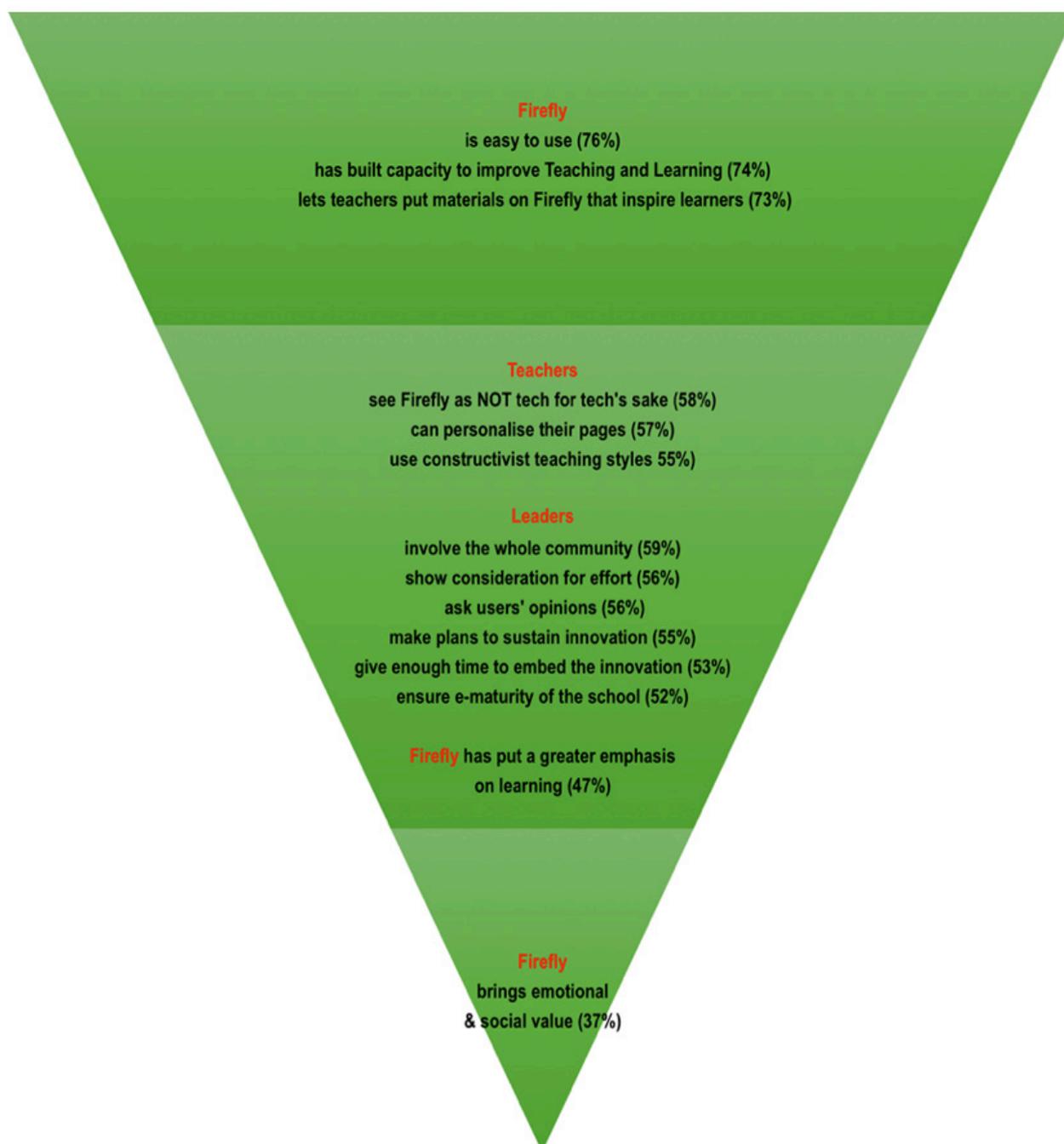
*Figure 4.* The second 'Upside down Christmas Tree' or 'How to Build Success that Lasts'. 'Reverse Taxonomy of influences' on the sustaining of Firefly, with the most significant influences at the top. This chart helps leaders to make strategic decisions about how to sustain the success of the innovation, which in our case, went from 147,000 users in the first month to nearly a million every month, one year later.

Discussion, Limitations, and Suggestions for further study

Discussion

The survey questions were worded carefully so that users of Firefly had to reflect on what might have influenced them. One clear conclusion is that leaders might think they have communicated their educational goals, but this might not be the case unless clear plans are made for sustaining the innovation and goals are regularly revisited (Kotter, 1995, p.10). As Bernard Shaw allegedly once said, "the problem with communication is the illusion that it has occurred." Outcomes from this research show that around 25% of users were satisfied with the learning platform despite the way that the innovation was introduced.

Other issues for school leaders, raised in this research, show the importance of induction for new staff. Introducing innovation takes time and goes through various stages. A member of staff can join at any of these phases but not share the sense of purpose, given during the introduction. Also, leaders should plan to include any non-teachers in staff training, as they will also impact on change efforts. Awareness of various factors was considerably lower amongst non-teachers who might also wish to use the site to communicate with parents, staff, and students.

Introducing Firefly was a positive thing for the vast majority of users. Most staff users were clear that it was useful and relevant to their work. Not all staff users of Firefly were clear about who or what to credit for this: the technology itself, the timing or the strong backup from leaders. An average of 80% of users felt they had been positively influenced by the fact that they could inspire pupils with Firefly and use it easily. These factors had helped sustain the use of Firefly over a two-year period. 80% also thought it had increased the capacity to improve teaching and learning (Bryk, 1992, p. 7).

This research correlated with findings by Derboven, Geerts, and DeGrooff (2017, p. 32) who emphasised the usability of the product as well as the DIY nature of the product, as the main factors impacting on take-up. Findings also correlate to those of Levin and Schrum (2013, pp. 29-51) who looked at how technology is best used to leverage school improvement. Their research was extensive – 150 interviews and 30 focus groups across 8 schools. They concluded that technology only works if schools organise high levels of training such as induction, drop-in sessions, on-hand one to one help and follow up training over time. Technology also works best if school leaders move the curriculum away from teacher-centred delivery towards pupil-centred learning. This echoed the focus on constructivist teaching styles mentioned by Totter et al in 2006 and this also featured as a strong influence in our case. One surprising finding in the research was that users rated the social and emotional impact of Firefly as the least influencing factor, but this could simply be a reflection of the current more pressurised climate in schools, which might have skewed retrospective perceptions.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study

The questionnaire outcomes are subject to the limitations imposed by the Likert scales chosen. The research findings on which the question was based, was not visible to the respondents and so some questions might have become open to wider interpretation. The interview findings were limited by their semi-structured nature, which nevertheless lent authenticity to the subject. The research findings were also constrained by the number of respondents from each school: several schools only offered one

respondent. There was, therefore, a bias towards the researcher's main school where 51 respondents replied out of a total of 88, although a further 19 could have been from the main school but chose not to name the school. The research was also retrospective over a period of two years.

Future longitudinal studies could investigate any direct links between Firefly and academic outcomes and explore the trajectories of implementation and use. There is room for more in-depth studies to understand under which conditions VLEs can be adopted and successfully used in greater detail and with bigger samples. Further research could also investigate how school leaders can be more certain that their aims have been fully communicated. Finally, the transferability of this research could be tested out on other learning platforms or technological innovations generally.

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TO MIX OR NOT TO MIX: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON MIXED-AGE GROUPS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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In this review, I explore mixed-age grouping in primary schools, illustrating, through a review of scholarly research, its position within current education paradigms and in the field of education research. I justify my investigation into this topic and explicate my literature search procedure, considering the difficulties around establishing consistent terminology in mixed-age research. I explain various circumstances that give rise to mixed-age groupings and propose using four circumstantial categories – default, by-product, mandate, and preference – as a conceptual framework for understanding mixed-age phenomena. I then summarize findings from methodologically diverse inquiries into the effects of mixed-age grouping. These studies, conducted over the last sixty years, focus on many forms of mixed-age groups from around the world and consider both academic and social outcomes. Broadly speaking, outcome-based findings are inconsistent across time and place. Systematically measured differences are often small or non-existent. In the context of ambiguous empirical findings, I discuss the perspectives held by parents, teachers, and researchers around mixed-age grouping and highlight limitations of utilizing findings from comparative studies to inform education practice. I position the outcomes of my reviewed literature within the proposed circumstantial framework and discuss the implications of this standpoint. I deconstruct arguments for and against mixed-age grouping by posing the question "to mix or not to mix", offering apparent reasoning for each position. I extend my perspective on the future of mixed-age research, focusing on the need for thorough description and clear definition of all investigated mixed-age groups, and conclude by critically considering mixed-age grouping as a promising education reform.

Introduction

Student grouping is a foundational and hotly debated principle in education. The ambitious goals of providing "inclusive and equitable quality education" and "lifelong learning opportunities for all" call for efficient and effective organization of human resource (The Global Education 2030 Agenda, 2015, p.1). They also demand the continuous defining and redefining of "quality education" in order to meet the needs of a perpetually evolving society. Grouping structure has implications for both accessibility and quality of education, thus the question of whether to mix age groups in primary schools requires ongoing critical analysis. My professional experiences have allowed me to observe children of all ages in an array of contexts[1]. In homes, children typically live with siblings and family members of all ages. In after-school programs, children often span several age years. Public spaces of play and learning (e.g., parks, museums, etc.) welcome children of all ages. Beyond childhood, it is rare to find higher education or professional settings comprised of a single year group of people. Even within the primary school day, it is common practice for all students to have simultaneous break times. Mixed-age grouping is the norm in all these situations aside from one: inside school classrooms. Why is an unnaturally occurring grouping structure mainstream in primary schools? What other groupings are practiced? How do they differ? These questions led me to formally investigate mixed-age grouping in primary schools. In producing this work, I engaged critically with each study I reviewed, considering whether its methodological approach provided valid answers to its questions, whether its conclusions reflected the nature of its findings, and whether its inherent value justified its completion.

An overview of mixed-age literature

To identify key literature, I first searched the term "multiage" on the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database, yielding over six-hundred results. Bailey, Werth, Allen, & Sutherland (2016) (listed as the most relevant result) led me to Veenman's (1995) seminal best-evidence synthesis of findings on the effects of mixed-age grouping in primary schools. From this and several articles in the reference list, I constructed a list of search terms: mixed-age, multiage, multigrade, nongrade, combination class, or vertical group. A search yielded twenty-eight articles with at least one of these search terms in the title from within the last twenty years on the British Education Index (BEI). This literature review is based upon these articles (exclusive of five that examined early childhood or adult education), relevant items from their reference lists, and the exploration of a bit of grey literature (i.e., first several Google results of my aforementioned search terms). Though this is by no means an exhaustive review of literature on this topic, recurring tensions, concepts, authors, and a myriad of methodologies employed around the world seemed to indicate I was approaching saturation. Because I am ultimately interested in working in education in American schools, I limited my outcome-exploration to findings from North America, South America, Europe, and New Zealand. Examination of global mixed-age findings would undoubtedly offer a more complete portrayal

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[1] I began working with children in 2006, teaching private dance and piano lessons. I assistant taught at Grinnell College Laboratory Preschool, directed a weekly volunteer program for children ages five to twelve, and was a summer camp Counselor for five years. After receiving a Bachelor's in Psychology, I did community and school-based social work for several years. Most recently, I implemented a Positive Behaviour Intervention System and play-based learning program while substitute teaching at an elementary school in Oakland, California.

of the holistic mixed-age phenomenon, and is a topic of future interest to me. Notably, a search for the terms "single grade" or "monograde" in a study's title yielded only six results across both ERIC and BEI, all of which were articles comparing these structures to mixed-age grouping. In my search through databases, reference lists, and grey literature, I did not come across any pedagogical or empirical arguments for single-gradedness as an independent concept (i.e., not defined in relation to mixed-age alternatives). This supports Anderson and Pavan's (1993) assertion that "there is not, and there has not been, any philosophical or research-based support for continuation of graded structure" (p. xi) and suggests that this absence persists twenty-five years later.

I draw repeatedly from a few key pieces of literature. Slavin (1988) discusses grouping methods historically utilized in primary schools, considering the role of student grouping generally and synthesizing research findings on numerous alternative grouping methods. Slavin investigated mixed-age grouping throughout the 1990s and is frequently cited (Gutierrez & Slavin, 1988; Kallery & Loupidou, 2016; Kelly-Vance, Caster, & Ruane, 2000). Vincent (1999) edited a handbook written for rural educators originally by Bruce Miller, another frequently cited mixed-age researcher (Kelly-Vance et al., Little, 2001; Miller, 1991; Miller, 1993). This work overviews the American history of mixed-age and single-grade education, reviews comparative studies, and considers the role of rural educators. Angela Little, Professor Emerita at the University College London Institute of Education, investigates mixed-age grouping and education reform around the world. In her often-cited 2001 article, she considers mixed-age teaching in an international research and policy context (Aksoy, 2008; Hargreaves, 2001). After more than twenty years teaching and a PhD examining parent perceptions of mixed-age grouping, Linley Cornish became an Associate Professor at the University of New England where she has continued examining mixed-age grouping. Her 2015 article written for curious and concerned parents contemplates learning effects of mixed-age and single-grade classrooms. Recent mixed-age researchers consistently draw from her work (Bailey et al., 2016; Quail & Smyth, 2014; Smit & Engeli, 2015; Smit, Hyry-Bheihammer, & Raggl, 2015).

The generality of "mixed-age grouping" makes it difficult to establish a robust and meaningful terminology. There is a general consensus that in order to qualify as mixed-age (or any of the previously stated search terms) in primary school groupings, the group must include students from more than one grade-level. This simplistic operationalization, however, may conceal critical differences in mixed-age manifestations. It also serves to accentuate the mix of ages that exists within any given grade level. A single grade typically includes children up to a year apart, when even a three-month age difference between children, especially primary school-aged children, can lead to stark physical and developmental differences quite plain to a casual observer. Then again, sometimes a younger child can present as physically, socially, or academically "older" – in the sense in this case of "more mature". Some researchers bypass these nuances by acknowledging the multiplicity of terms and simply deciding on one to utilize. Stuart, Connor, Cady and Zweifel (2007) discuss the details of a particular "multiage" classroom's structure without making claims about broader uses of this term. Quail and Smyth (2014) refer exclusively to "multigrade" classes without providing more specificity than the fact that they are comprised of students from more than one grade-level. Huf and Raggl (2015, 2017) and Lindström and Lindahl (2011) state that their observations took place in "age-mixed" and "mixed-age" classes respectively without any insight into how or why these classes were formed. For the remainder of this review, I will refer to groups comprised of students from two or more grade-levels as mixed-age groupings and report

classroom formation and operation details whenever possible. Since Veenman (1995) distinguished between "multigrade" classes formed for "administrative and financial reasons" (p.319) and "multiage" classes formed for "pedagogical and didactic motives" (p.321), many researchers concur that a fundamental difference exists between classes that mix ages out of necessity and those that mix out of choice (Hargreaves, 2001; Huf & Raggl, 2015; Lindström & Lindahl, 2011; Little, 2001; Mason & Burns, 1996). Hargreaves (2001) gives just one example of how reasoning behind the grouping structure could have important implications, stating that in classrooms mixed by choice "there is less likely to be pressure on the teacher to cover a grade-related curriculum" (p.554). Within the context of mixed-age literature, this review aims to acknowledge and explicate the myriad factors, focusing on circumstances, outcomes, and perspectives, that affect the decision whether to mix ages in primary schools.

Circumstances

In an effort to conceptualize the vast mixed-age landscape, I distinguish four categories of mixed-age groups that simply and meaningfully reduce the many circumstances that lead to these groupings in primary schools. Generally speaking, mixed-age groupings are default options, by-products of grouping by another characteristic, mandates from the educational system, or preferences. I utilize the term "circumstance" – a derivative of the Latin *circumstare*, meaning "encircle" or "encompass" – intentionally to reflect the early stage of understanding mixed-age phenomenon. These circumstantial categories are overlapping, rather than rigid.

Default

If there are insufficient numbers of teachers or students, mixed-age grouping becomes the default option in order to ensure access to education. This is often the case in sparsely populated communities (McEwan, 2008; Seban, 2015; Vincent, 1999). Vincent (1999) points out that in rural schools, mixed-age grouping is an unavoidable reality based on economic and geographic necessity. Indeed, up until the rapid urbanization of the early 20th century, one-room schoolhouses were the prevailing school structure presumably for these reasons (Kelly-Vance, Caster, & Ruane, 2000). By the same token, schools or classes geared toward a smaller subset of the student population (e.g., special schools, special education classrooms, gifted programs) are often mixed-age by default (Slavin, 1988).

By-product

Age is but one of numerous characteristics that can be utilized to group students. In "ability-grouping", for example, children are divided by their perceived or measured ability, often within a particular subject, as in the Joplin Plan that groups students by reading level (Slavin, 1988). Though this important topic is beyond the scope of this review, it is worth noting that "ability-grouping" is steeped in controversy, referred to by Bradbury (2018) as a "necessary evil" (p.1) and by McGilligcuddy and Devine (2018) as "an act of symbolic violence" (p.1). In "departmentalization", the norm in higher education and an increasingly common practice in secondary education, students across age groups divide by subject or discipline (Slavin, 1988). Educators may also divide students by common interest, need for specific skill acquisition, or allow for student self-selection, though these divisions are

typically made within single-grade classrooms as means of creating small groups rather than to divide a school population into classrooms (Hoffman, 2002; Slavin, 1988; Stuart et al., 2007).

Mandate

In some cases, mandates within an educational system require classrooms to mix grade levels in single classrooms, as in Veenman's (1995) "multigrade" classrooms created for "administrative and financial reasons" (p.319). Requirements around class size, perhaps the most common mandated impetus for mixing age groups, might lead to the redistribution of single-grade students into more evenly sized mixed-age classrooms for example (Mason & Burns, 1996; Stuart et al., 2007; Veenman, 1995).

Preference

Mixed-age grouping may be instituted when it is the preferred grouping strategy, and this can manifest in a variety of ways. Nongraded programs, Montessori schools, and Veenman's "multiage" classrooms created for "pedagogical and didactic motives" (p.321) deliberately establish age heterogeneity inside primary classrooms for its perceived educational benefit (Di Lorenzo & Salter, 1965; Huf & Raggl, 2017; Slavin, 1988; Veenman, 1995).

Circumstantial context

Categorization by circumstance serves as a clarifying system with which to comprehend the necessity, prevalence, and intentionality behind mixed-age education. This framework is fluid and overlapping. For example, Anderson and Pavan (1993) describe the "nongraded" method as a comprehensive educational philosophy that requires the pedagogical buy-in of every player in the educational system. Obviously then, mixed-age grouping is a "mandate" of sorts in this structure, in addition to the preferred pedagogy. Though student or teacher numbers in sparsely populated areas may default schools to mixed-age grouping, teachers and administrators may very well believe it is the preferred structure. In fact, default and mandated mixed-age classrooms often decide to embrace mixed-age pedagogy, making virtue out of necessity (Veenman, 1995). This is in stark contrast to strictly mandated "multigrade" classrooms described by Mason and Burns (1996) where teachers must deliver "two different curricula to students of twice the age range" (p.313). These classrooms are "embedded in a graded system" where teachers without mixed-age training utilize single-grade teaching materials to prepare at least two grade-levels of students to go back into single-grade classrooms the following year (p.313). Understanding the circumstances that lead to mixed-age grouping provides insight into the level of systemic support behind the structure, which may affect availability of teacher training, teaching materials, and buy-in of both parents and educators, all critical components in an education paradigm (McEwan, 2008; Miller, 1991; Mulryan-Kyne, 2007). Circumstances that give rise to mixed-age grouping, then, have implications on its measured success.

Outcomes

One way to assess the effectiveness of a mixed-age program is by observing student outcomes. Numerous studies establish single-grade comparison groups in order to assess various effects of mixed-age grouping on students, but before presenting these findings, it is critical to problematize the use of student

outcomes to determine education practice. Firstly, two distinct groupings must be compared which, in the case of single-grade versus mixed-age grouping, implies numerous confounding variables (e.g., different teachers and classrooms). Rural students, for example, historically under-perform on outcome measures (Young, 1998). Secondly, what we use to measure outcomes is often related to curriculum content, as demonstrated by the use of standardized arithmetic and reading tests in the following studies. While these measures indicate the effect of our current education system and practices on student performance, they cannot offer insight into alternative practices that might, in fact, better promote accessible quality education. And finally, any conclusion of "better-ness" in education research implies "better for education" which is a weighty claim deserving of much justification. Why and how does performance on this particular measure indicate a quality education? Is the outcome measure reliable and valid across time and place? What behaviours and values more broadly are promoted and reflected by these research and education practices? These considerations will enable a more discerning illustration of the implications of presented studies.

Veenman (1995) consolidated evidence from over fifty studies on the cognitive and non-cognitive effects of "multigrade" classrooms – formed for "administrative and financial reasons." It is not always clear how Veenman determined these studies were "multigrade" (Mason & Burns, 1996), but it seems to include reviews of rural schools and classes that mixed age groups in order to meet class size requirements. These classrooms are primarily default mixed-age or mandated to be mixed-age, and it is unclear how counterfactuals were established (e.g., whether rural single grade classrooms were compared against rural mixed-age classrooms). Cognitive outcomes were measured primarily with standardized tests of maths and reading. Findings on both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes were mixed and effect sizes were small. The majority of studies identified no significant differences in mixed-age and single-grade student performance and about an equal number found either slight positive or negative significant results.

Veenman (1995) also examined eighteen studies on the cognitive and non-cognitive effects of "multiage" classrooms – formed for "pedagogical and didactic motives". These studies all focused on classrooms where mixed-age was the preferred grouping method, though this does not clarify the manner in which mixed-age pedagogy was implemented. Veenman describes one school where "the principal wanted to move to complete multi-age grouping in order to foster more individualized and better instruction in the future," but "the structure of the classroom and methods of instruction were left entirely up to the individual teachers" (Veenman, 1995, p.357). Other studies offered little detail on how or why mixed-age grouping was preferred, but there was presumably variability in the adoption of mixed-age methods across observed schools. Again, cognitive outcomes were measured primarily with standardized tests of maths and reading. In general, differences in cognitive outcomes did not reach significance. Non-cognitive outcomes indicated a slight positive effect of mixed-age grouping on "self-concept" and "attitudes toward school", though six of the seven studies indicated these results lacked "evidence of initial equality" between comparison groups (p.366).

Berry (2001) explored reading improvement over a three-year period in low, medium, and high achieving third- through fifth-graders in Turks and Caicos. The mixed-age schools were from the least populated areas of the country, formed by default due to low numbers of students and teachers. Mixed-age schools had lower teacher-to-student ratios as well as teachers with less training and these factors were not controlled in the quantitative analysis. Berry utilized the McLeod reading test, which is not developed for specific grade levels. Low-achievers in mixed-age schools had significantly improved

reading scores compared to their single-grade counterparts. One subset of older, high-achieving students in mixed-age schools showed significantly less reading improvement than their single-grade counterparts.

The *Escuela Nueva* mixed-age reform program in Colombia has persisted for over forty years and has been imitated by other rural Latin American schools (McEwan, 2008). Geography and demographics render mixed-age the default grouping, but *Escuela Nueva*'s longevity, governmental support, and adoption of mixed-age practices outlined by Anderson and Pavan (1993) (e.g., flexible promotion) indicate intentional systemic action to support mixed-age grouping. McEwan (2008) reviewed the history and findings of mixed-age reforms in Colombia, Chile, and Guatemala. Results from Colombia's *Escuela Nueva* were the most robust and the only ones with matched control schools. Data indicated higher Spanish and maths scores for mixed-age third-graders compared to single-grade students in similar geographic areas and across all rural schools in the Pacific region of Colombia. This effect was not found in fifth-graders. Mixed-age students exhibited significantly higher levels of civic behaviour while there was no observed effect on creativity or self-esteem. Additionally, the successful "implementation of mixed-age reform was positively associated with a measure of peaceful interactions among students, even after controlling for other student and school variables" (p.477).

Gutierrez and Slavin (1992) conducted a comprehensive review of "nongraded" American schools, which examined both classrooms that mixed-age groups for preference and programs that resulted in age heterogeneity as a by-product of other grouping methods. Included studies utilized standardized tests to measure academic performance. A summary of findings on "Joplin-like nongraded programs" that created age heterogeneity by dividing students into reading ability groups across grade-levels revealed "substantial positive results in favour of the nongraded program" (p.348). Positive effects were amplified amongst programs that employed "flexibility in pupil grouping, with frequent assessment of mastery at each level, and increased amounts of teaching time for the homogeneous instructional groups" (p.348). Gutierrez and Slavin (1992) also evaluated findings on comprehensive nongraded programs that "emphasize continuous progress and flexible, multiage grouping" across all academic subjects (p.343). The majority of studies reviewed found significant positive results in favour of the mixed-age structure while none favoured the single-grade structure. The researchers conducted a separate evaluation of comprehensive nongraded programs that emphasized individualized instruction and individually guided education. Findings from these programs indicated no significant differences in student performance from single-grade structures.

Nye (1995) utilized standardized tests to measure academic performance in "nongraded" schools in Tennessee. She gives a lengthy explanation of what comprises a "nongraded" program, highlighting the importance of flexible grouping, but later states that the observed schools "had been validated as having the necessary components (to one degree or another) to generally be considered as nongraded" (p.10). This leaves considerable ambiguity in relation to particular techniques employed in the classrooms. Results showed that "nongraded" second-grade students significantly outperformed their single-grade counterparts in vocabulary, reading, language, and maths. First- and third-grade students scored significantly higher in vocabulary. Other results for first, second, and fourth grade students did not reach significance, but tended to favour the mixed-age structure. "Nongraded" third- and fourth-grade students scored significantly higher on a writing assessment test.

Two large-scale studies report outcomes of mixed-age groupings without reporting circumstance of grouping formation due to sheer number of schools and classrooms included in the investigation. Quail and Smyth (2014) conducted an extensive comparison of over 8,000 mixed-age and single-grade 9-year-olds from over 800 schools in Ireland. The researchers specify that urban, rural, and mixed schools were included and that they examined effects on students of being grouped with younger, older, or younger and older students. Using data collected from a national longitudinal survey, they were able to control for a variety of factors, including class size and teacher experience. Test results revealed no significant differences in reading or maths performance between mixed-age and single-grade classes, with and without controlling for extraneous variables. Investigation into gender effects revealed that girls tended to have more negative effects of mixed-age grouping than boys, exhibiting significantly lower reading and maths scores. Students in mixed-age classes self-reported significantly lower perceptions of their own behaviour, intellectual abilities, and popularity, and again, this effect was more pronounced amongst girls than boys. These negative perceptions were most extreme amongst girls grouped with older students.

Lindstrom and Lindahl (2011) utilized a national data set with information on more than 8,000 individuals to examine mixed-age versus single-grade classes in Sweden. Sixth-grade students, the eldest in their mixed-age classes, scored significantly lower on cognitive tests than their single-grade counterparts. By ninth-grade, however, there was no difference between mixed-age and single-grade students. Importantly, sixth-grade measures were results from a battery of tests, while ninth-grade results were averages of grades across different subjects in school which might reflect "students' diligence and behaviour" (p.132).

Perspectives

Smit et al. (2015) observed that ambiguous empirical evidence "can be interpreted as either a positive or negative, depending on the expectations or fears that are connected with multigrading" (p.99). The unclear evidence in relation to mixed-age outcomes leaves the decision to mix age groups particularly susceptible to influences of attitude. Perhaps surprisingly, a history of slight and somewhat neutral effects on student outcomes does not seem to be accompanied by neutral attitudes. Generally, it seems parents view mixed-age as inferior to single-grade grouping. They worry that young students "won't be able to keep up" and older students' "advanced needs won't be met" (Cornish, 2015, p.1). Wilkinson and Hamilton (2003) assessed various aspects of mixed-age grouping in New Zealand, where the majority of classrooms are mixed-age. Every mixed-age teacher reported that the most difficult aspect of their teaching was parent concerns about mixed-age grouping. Teachers also tend to hold negative attitudes toward mixed-age grouping, which may be explained by the widely acknowledged conviction that mixed-age grouping increases organizational and time demands on teachers (Mulryan-Kyne, 2007; Quail & Smyth, 2014; Seban, 2015; Smit & Engeli, 2015; Vincent, 1999). Teachers share parents' fears about accommodating the learning of a diverse age range of students and worry that aspects of basic curriculum might get lost without the use of traditional teaching materials (Vincent, 1999). Bailey et al. (2016) identified general dissatisfaction with a mixed-age classroom until the implementation of a mixed-age program, including various teaching methods and trainings. Parents of students who attended mixed-age classes for multiple years reported the most positive attitudes toward mixed-age grouping. Parents also reported that their children enjoyed school more and performed well in this mixed-age grouping. Researchers' conjectures and questions about mixed-age grouping reveal strong attitudes held amongst the academic community as

well. Huf and Raggl (2015) caution that mixed-age grouping is idealized by some after observing student interactions in their meta-ethnographic investigation of mixed-age classes. Hargreaves (2001) describes a lack of faith in multigrade pedagogy due to a pervasive belief that it is easier to teach students of the same age.

Discussion

The empirical evidence comparing mixed-age and single-grade outcomes is a veritable mixed bag, leading researchers to an array of contradictory conclusions. Veenman (1995) posits that mixed-age is "simply no better and no worse" than single-grade structures (p.367). Mason and Burns (1996) refute this conclusion pointing out that many educators purposefully funnel high-performing students and ex perienced teachers into mixed-aged classrooms to "ameliorate the difficulties and potential detriments involved" (p.312). They argue that, after accounting for this selection bias, neutral findings actually indicate at least a small negative effect. Other researchers assert that neutral findings suggest that the im pact of other variables such as teaching quality transcend the impact of grouping structure (Berry, 2001; Quail & Smyth, 2014; Smit & Engeli, 2015; Veenman, 1995). Some practitioners, though critical, come down in support of mixed-age grouping (Stuart et al., 2007; Vincent, 1999), citing theories around collaborative learning from Vygotsky, Piaget, and Dewey as lending philosophical support for this approach.

Keeping in mind the circumstances that give rise to mixed-age grouping, it appears to me that a trend emerges. Examinations of intentionally created mixed-age classrooms, born of preference and with access to systemic support tend exhibit more favourable outcomes. Reforms in Colombia and Tennessee and comprehensive "nongraded" programs that were accompanied with specific mixed-age training and materials indicated positive impacts of mixed-age grouping (Gutierrez & Slavin, 1992; McEwan, 2008; Nye, 1999). This is quite a reasonable notion: groups with enthusiastic and well-resourced educators behind them have more positive effects on students. The extra effort required to elicit positive outcomes from mixed-age grouping illustrates a repeatedly cited (Aksoy, 2008; Hargreaves, 2001; Huf & Raggl, 2017; McEwan, 2008) point made by Little (2001) that "monograde organization of schools remains the taken-for-granted assumption of most of those who research and advise on curriculum development in both developed and developing countries" (p.491). She contends that "the knowledge, orientation and attitude required for effective multigrade teaching are invisible" inside today's educational systems (p.490).

This widespread institutionalization of single-gradedness affects the validity of comparisons to mixed-age structures. One demonstration of this is the fact that the majority of researchers examining mixed-age outcomes utilized standardized tests created for specific grade levels to compare student performance (Gutierrez & Slavin, 1992; Lindstrom & Lindahl, 2011; Nye, 1995; Quail & Smyth, 2014; Veenman, 1995). With this in mind, I have to disagree with Mason and Burns's (1996) argument that the overall neutrality of empirical results indicates negative effects. Rather, this suggests the untapped potential of mixed-age grouping as a viable option for today's schools. Students in mixed-age classrooms generally perform as well on tests made specifically for their counterparts' grouping structure, and in fact, the cause of the selection bias to which Mason and Burns (1996) refer is an anticipation of mixed-age "difficulties" and "detriments" on the part of administrators, revealing the underlying bias against mixing ages. Mixed-age grouping can hold its own in comparison

to its highly institutionalized rival structure, which leads me to wonder if systemic acceptance and support of this grouping would have currently underestimated or entirely unforeseen impacts.

Many researchers contend that the impacts of grouping structure in itself are superseded by other factors, including quality of teaching. Teaching quality is inarguably paramount in the provision of quality education, but teachers and students are inextricably linked and perpetually influenced by one another within the educational system. Gutierrez and Slavin's (1992) analysis indicates that individualized instruction may in fact neutralize the positive effects of a mixed-age program, supporting the notion that teaching approach and quality is indeed a critical factor in the success of mixed-age grouping. This finding also illustrates the necessity of implementing teaching methods that are specific to the grouping method. In order to understand the maximum potential of mixed-age grouping, we need to understand the teaching methods that provide the highest quality of education to mixed-age students. The importance of this need is reflected in the focus on mixed-age teaching strategies in recent mixed-age literature (Mulryan-Kyne, 2004, 2007; Roberts & Eady, 2012; Smit & Engeli, 2015). Lindstrom and Lindahl (2011) note that "there is little consensus about what characterizes this [the mixed-age] teaching method" (p.123). Commonly cited mixed-age practices include looping (i.e., assigning students to the same teacher for at least two years), differentiated instruction, flexible promotion, flexible within-class grouping, time-tabling, and teacher collaboration (Anderson & Pavan, 1993; Bailey et al., 2016; Gutierrez & Slavin, 1992; Hargreaves, 2001; Hoffman, 2002; Little, 2001; Smit & Engeli, 2015). Smit and Engeli (2015) seek to synthesize these practices in their empirical model of mixed-age teaching based on observations from small rural schools in Austria and Switzerland. Mulryan-Kyne (2007) discusses the importance of implementing mixed-age classrooms in conjunction with effective teaching methods and argues that, rather than implementing supplemental or separate mixed-age training, all educators should be trained in methods that account for high levels of diversity and heterogeneity amongst students. Bailey et al. (2016) offer a unique perspective on the importance of modified teaching methods in the successful implementation of mixed-age grouping. The researchers examined two American schools that initially established mixed-age classrooms in response to mandates around class-size requirements.

> "The multigrade approach was disliked by staff and students due to its design which involved keeping the two grade levels separate within the classroom. This resulted in teachers who had to instruct one grade level while the other grade level worked independently…In addition, there was a deep concern for the amount of time wasted at the beginning of each year when a teacher had to spend much of the first month instructing the students in general classroom procedures as well as getting to know the individual learning capabilities of each student" (p.240).

In response to these difficulties, administration piloted a research-based mixed-age program that included teaching methods such as looping, differentiated instruction, and teacher collaboration. The school transitioned "all kindergarten through fifth grade classes to a multiage design" the following year (p.241). According to Stuart et al. (2007), teachers who implemented a mixed-age program in their classroom contend that they were able to develop this approach only because they had the freedom to choose a grouping method that aligned with their values and abilities. The successful implementation of mixed-age grouping requires much more than simply assigning a group of mixed-age students into a classroom that is structured as single-grade. It requires an alternative approach to teaching, and in order to realize its full potential, may require a new perspective on many aspects of education (e.g., school infrastructure, curriculum content, etc.). To summarize my review of mixed-age literature, I consider the most basic decision: to mix or not to mix.

To mix

Some primary schools mix age groups for practical reasons. When small enough numbers of students or teachers require it, schools will mix ages to create full classes. Other schools may mix age groups to maintain small and even class sizes. Some empirical evidence suggests positive outcomes, especially regarding social measures (Gutierrez & Slavin, 1992; Nye, 1995). Mixed-age grouping has been presented as a cost-saving structure due to its inherent flexibility, particularly in developing nations (Benveniste & McEwan, 2008; Berry, 2001; Lindstrom & Lindahl, 2011; Little, 2001). Theoretical arguments for mixed-age grouping abound. Huf and Raggl (2015) posit that in today's schools "the variety of social, familiar, cultural, and ethnic experiences children bring to school is huge…Against the background of a growing diversity of childhood experiences, age-mixed groups are rather considered as a catalyst for acknowledging this diversity" (p.232). Many other researchers share this notion that mixed-age grouping necessitates recognition of individual student identity (Hargreaves, 2001; Smit & Engeli, 2015). It is also suggested that mixed-age structures allow for collaborative and peer learning, crucial themes in the philosophies of both Vygotsky and Dewey (Benveniste & McEwan, 2008; Roberts & Eady, 2012). There is a lack of scholarly literature supporting the single-grade structure, and its implicit assumptions that age dictates how and what children should be learning is problematic (Anderson & Pavan, 1993; Vincent, 1999). Mixed-age groups are more reflective of the social groups that children will encounter throughout their lives.

Not to mix

Since the turn of the 20th century, single-gradedness has become the de facto standard of primary education (Aksoy, 2008; Little; 2001; Miller, 1993; Vincent, 1999). Its implementation surged with the rise of industrialization and accompanying increases in demand for equitable education access and well-trained teachers (Miller, 1993). Grouping students by age divides students along inarguable "pre-set, asymmetric roles" (Huf & Raggl, 2015, p.237), making education accessible to the masses while side-stepping debate on how to group students. Implementation of effective mixed-age grouping is expensive, demanding new resources and increased human labour (Anderson & Pavan, 1993; Little, 2001). There is a general consensus amongst researchers that other factors, like teaching quality, have greater impact on learning than grouping structure. Mixed-age teaching puts increased time-demands on teachers, necessitating more planning and organization. Implementing mixed-age structure requires different teacher training, teaching materials, and evaluation methods than those that are widely used today. The combination of slightly positive or negative but mostly neutral empirical findings and the apparent low impact of grouping method in itself simply does not justify the time and resources needed to replace single-graded education.

Future Directions

Whether mixed-age grouping is an unfavourable inevitability or an ethical obligation, circumstances ensure that it is here to stay in some capacity. In fact, many researchers predict that the prevalence of mixed-age grouping is likely to increase in the future (Huf & Raggl, 2017; Little, 2001; Mulryan-Kyne, 2007). Smit et al. (2015) reflect on the current condition of mixed-age research, stating that:

"research in the area of mixed-age education is still developing. One challenge is the present ambiguity in definitions of multi-grade education. Therefore, before research outcomes can reliably indicate the specific aspects of learning in mixed-age environments that are most beneficial, careful attention must be given to the definition and selection of multi-grade classrooms and detailed descriptions of teaching strategies should be provided" (p.102).

It is critical to observe and report the circumstances and methods of mixed-age classrooms in scholarly research. This will enable further examination and comparison to determine promising aspects of mixed-age grouping. It is also necessary to consider how to reliably and validly measure mixed-age phenomenon without relying on measures constructed within and for a single-grade system. Wilkinson and Hamilton (2003) utilized an ungraded reading test to examine the range of abilities in mixed-age and single-grade classes in New Zealand. They found no significant differences in the ranges of abilities within mixed-age and single-grade classrooms, perhaps supporting the idea that the assumed homogeneity in single-grade classrooms is an illusion that mixed-age grouping might work to dispel. The potential of mixed-age classrooms to make diversity evident is often cited as a reason to mix ages, but does this grouping actually have this effect? Does teacher acknowledgement of classroom diversity influence teaching strategies and subsequent student outcomes? Continued exploration of mixed-age teaching methods will help clarify how to maximize benefit of mixed-age grouping. Gutierrez & Slavin's (1992) analysis indicated that individualized education tampered positive effects of the mixed-age program, while Smit & Engeli's (2015) mixed-age teaching model is built upon the practice of differentiated education. How will teachers balance differentiated education with opportunities for collaborative learning? Mixed-age teachers face this and other dilemmas within the relatively uncharted territory of mixed-age grouping. So, if mixed-age classrooms are mandated, how will teachers be assigned to these potentially fraught mixed-age classrooms? Mason and Burns (1996) note that administrators often assign more experienced teachers to mixed-age classrooms, but Benveniste and McEwan (2000) observed that experienced teachers were less likely to adopt and practice new pedagogical techniques, which appear critical for successful mixed-age implementation.

Educators need not view mixed-age grouping as only classroom-level. Age heterogeneity can be instituted in primary schools at any time by simply enabling students to work in mixed-age groups for any duration, and indeed, flexible grouping practices are associated with positive outcomes in mixed-age research. A recent study by Kallery and Louipidou (2016) found that younger students' science learning improved as a result of weekly mixed-age, small group study sessions. Future research could assess effects of isolated mixed-age interventions during the school day. Some mixed-age literature explores the perspectives of parents and teachers, but the voices of students are noticeably absent. Indirect measures of academic and social factors (e.g., test scores, ratings of self-efficacy, popularity, etc.) offer limited insight children's experience inside a mixed-age classroom. Future inquiry could offer crucial understandings from the student perspective. Do they feel safe in mixed-age groups? Researchers and practitioners consistently report that effective collaboration across age groups takes time (Kallery & Loupidou, 2016; Roberts & Eady, 2012). Huf and Raggl (2015) document interactions between older and younger students in a mixed-age classroom, noting that older students seem to exercise power by giving directives and critical feedback. Does age heterogeneity reinforce hierarchies absent in a single-grade class or are these power differentials typical inside primary classrooms more generally? How are students' ideas about education and learning altered by mixed-age grouping? Berry and Little (2007) suggest looking into more longitudinal outcomes as a means of evaluation, such as how mixed-age students perform at subsequent schools. Retrospective views from former mixed-age students could

offer an interesting perspective on how mixed-age grouping might shape lives, relationships, careers, etc. Future research should aim to paint a more holistic picture of the formation and operation of mixed-age classrooms and their positioning within broader societal and geographic systems. The decision whether to mix ages in primary schools is contextualized and complex and affects both accessibility and quality of education. This decision is deserving of the utmost criticality and intentionality.

Conclusion

Straying from the traditional graded model raises questions not only about how to define and enact quality teaching, but also about how we as a society define and enact "quality education." At the heart of the scepticism toward mixed-age grouping is the fear of not measuring up to the expectations that a single-grade society has set as valid indicators of a good education (e.g., grades, standardized test results, certain social measures). Indeed, Lindstrom and Lindahl (2011) found that mixed-age teachers were significantly less likely to emphasize homework, basic knowledge, and formal testing. They were also significantly more likely to believe in students' influence over their own education. Mixed-age students were found to have more negative views of their own behaviour and believe themselves to be less popular (Quail & Smyth, 2014). Does this suggest inferiority of mixed-age grouping? Does a "quality education" lead students to believe that they are popular? Altering education practice feels high stakes. It ignites the concerns of teachers, parents, researchers, politicians. What will happen? What will change? And how will we know? Even in the case of mixed-age grouping, whose outcome effects are shown to be quite comparable, people bristle at the idea of education reformation. And yet, current practice is not necessarily the best practice for transferring quality education, and in order to see other options, we have to look out for them, measure them, establish some level of confidence that they might add value. Mixed-age literature hints at numerous uncommon education practices that appear promising. I argue in favour of further inquiry and considered application. When it comes down to it, we must organize the population in such a way to allow their education, and to ensure quality, we must continuously reflect upon society's goals and conduct critical research to incorporate these goals into practice.

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UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION AND UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AS A REFUGEE LEARNER SEEKING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: INSIGHTS FROM A PILOT STUDY

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This article presents findings from a PhD pilot study exploring access to higher education for students in a protracted refugee situation in Malaysia. The study seeks to understand access from the students' perspective through a consideration of the ways in which they understand education and how, in turn, they construct understandings about themselves. The study uses a socio-cultural approach of learner identity to explore the personal meanings students develop, focussing specifically on concepts of internal and external recognition and their interaction. Three students with refugee backgrounds currently enrolled on higher education programmes were interviewed and data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The analysis involved a model of co-production in which participants were consulted regarding the interpretation of the results prior to publication and had the opportunity to contribute to the meanings that emerge. The results show that education is central to students regaining a sense of self after having their learning trajectories abruptly severed upon seeking asylum. Considering processes of internal and external recognition reveals how a new socio-cultural context influences the understandings students develop about themselves in relation to education. This is manifest through their changing subject choice at the tertiary level and a renewed appreciation for the value of education. It also provides a means to understand how concealing their refugee status influences their relationships with other students on campus. These patterns of interaction are shaped through a dual layer of being perceived-to-be-perceived as they interpret others' actions to suggest they are being recognised as refugee students despite not having revealed their status.

Keywords: Learner identity, Recognition, Higher education, Protracted refugee situation, Malaysia

"In [my home country], education was all we knew, you know, like, our parents, they always just wanted us to study and, you know, get to universities and secure good jobs so, you know, that was the kind of mindset…that was the main goal, to get education, to be educated, so when that was taken away we were, like, we didn't know what else to do in life, so we felt like our future is gone."

– Sarah (pseudonym),
student with a refugee background in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Introduction

In this short extract, Sarah demonstrates the centrality of education in the ways that we come to understand ourselves, essentially asking, who am I if I am not educated? Without education she cannot see a clear pathway to the future she imagined and the sort of person she wanted to become. For most of us, education is a fundamental, albeit taken-for-granted, part of growing up. However, the educational futures of millions of youth around the world are jeopardised when they are forced to flee their home countries and seek asylum. This is especially true for those who find themselves in a protracted refugee situation (PRS), defined as a situation in which a person remains displaced for "five or more years after initial displacement, without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions[1]" (UNHCR, 2009, preamble). It was estimated that at the end of 2016 two thirds of the world's refugees lived in PRS (UNHCR, 2017), which includes refugee camps as well as urban areas, like in Malaysia, where those with refugee status are not formally recognised. This lack of recognition is a major barrier to accessing educational opportunities. Having the proverbial rug pulled from beneath them can be a jarring experience for youth in PRS that have dreams of pursuing higher education. This is reflected in Sarah's comment, which highlights the need for youth in PRS to negotiate new ways to understand themselves and their futures in the absence of education.

The increase in people claiming asylum in host nations in recent years is straining education systems around the world (McBrien, 2016) and more recent crises mark a shift in demand towards the tertiary sector. For example, of the half a million university-aged Syrians who have claimed asylum abroad, the Institute of International Education estimates 150,000 are qualified for university admission (Kiwan, 2017). Lack of formal recognition presents a barrier to accessing education at all levels with access falling at higher years of schooling. In 2016, 36% of the world's youth were enrolled in higher education institutions, however only about 1% of the youth in refugee populations is accounted for in this number (UNHCR, 2017). The striking disparity in post-secondary access highlights a need to understand the barriers to enrolment in higher education and explore ways to overcome these barriers so that individuals in PRS can participate equally in higher education. Previous research has suggested that youth with refugee backgrounds view higher education as an important means for restoring dignity, security and hope (Lenette, 2016). However, this observation does not tell us how youth with refugee backgrounds interact with barriers to higher education or how overcoming these barriers meaningfully restores dignity, security and hope. Therefore, we must first explore the understandings that youth with refugee backgrounds develop about education and in turn, what sorts of understanding this leads them to construct about themselves. We will then be in a better position to devise ways to improve access with truly emancipatory outcomes for marginalised youth, like Sarah.

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[1] Durable solutions sought by UNHCR are repatriation, local integration and resettlement.

This paper will present and explore the emerging themes from a PhD pilot project that seeks to understand perspectives about barriers to higher education from students in PRS using the concept of learner identity. The project was born out of my experience teaching in a refugee learning centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a diverse PRS hosting predominantly stateless people (e.g., Rohingya) as well as those from Myanmar (Burma), Yemen, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka and others. Many of these students aspire to attend university, consistent with Crea's assertion that "those at the margins are hungry for higher education" (2016, p. 21). For this paper, the terms "youth with refugee backgrounds" and "youth in PRS" will be used to describe those with in settled and protracted refugee situations respectively. This is to encompass a variety of statuses, including refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people with shared challenges in accessing higher education. The presentation of the early findings from this ongoing project will be structured as follows: firstly, an overview of theoretical and methodological considerations informing the research, followed by a brief background to the pilot study and participants. The results from the pilot interviews will then be presented alongside a discussion of the emerging themes to demonstrate how the theory and methods can be employed to extract deeper understanding of the student's experiences. Finally, the limitations and implications of the work will be considered and how these can inform the subsequent PhD research.

Literature Review

Wenger (1998) describes learning as an act of *experiencing* identity in various formal and informal settings. In addition, Coll and Falsafi claim that "the institutions of formal education are fundamental arenas for, not only construction of knowledge, but also the construction of a sense of self" (2010, p. 213). These writers highlight a fundamental connection between the process of learning and ways in which we construct understandings about ourselves or identity. The concept of *learner identity* has been used to interrogate this connection as well as the related ideas of *academic self-concept* (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2002; Whannell & Whannell, 2015) and *academic identity* (Hejazi, Lavasani, Amani, & Was, 2012). To avoid becoming entangled with semantics I will use the term learner identity to theorise a link between identity construction and processes of learning as it was more prevalent in the literature reviewed. Hatt defines learner identity as "the ways we come to understand ourselves within and in relation to the institution of schooling and how this independently shapes our own self-perceptions of efficacy, ability, and success in relation to academic potential, performance and achievement" (2012, p. 439), while Mercer as "the active and actionable representation of one's self-beliefs, which are defined through autobiographical self-narration to construct an internal representation of [oneself] as a learner" (2017, pp. 11–12). Each agrees that learner identity relates defining a sense of self as an individual to a context in which we fulfil the role of a learner. However, Hatt puts greater emphasis on how we perceive our performance in the role, whereas Mercer frames identity as an ongoing narrative through our lives. Separating learner identity as a specific form of identity implies other modes of identity that intersect and overlap, such as cultural, ethnic, nationality and gender. Although these could be explored in their own right, Osguthorpe (2006) argues that learner identity is a main identity around which others are oriented based on the centrality of learning in constructing knowledge of the self.

Gee (2000, p. 100) draws on several key strands of research regarding identity as a broader concept to provide a framework that conceives learner identity from four interconnected perspectives in education research:

• Nature identity – a state of being, e.g., as learners we are either born intelligent or not;

• Institution identity – a position or role we hold, e.g., leader in a group learning task;

• Discourse identity – dependent on meanings attributed to recognisable traits, e.g., an enthusiastic learner;

• Affinity identity – defined in connection to wider groups we encounter in society, e.g., a member of an academic reading group.

Either of these perspectives may be foregrounded in a given context but they can all exist simultaneously and complement one another. For example, understanding learning as a nature identity implies some of us are born as better learners (or smarter) than others, whereas as an affinity identity it means we adopt traits as a learner based on the group we associate with, for example "jock" or "nerd" (see Akerlof & Kranton, 2002, p. 1168). Similarly, *refugee* can be understood as an institutional identity because people who claim asylum must register as refugees or asylum seekers through host country governments or UNHCR. Yet at the same time the identity refugee can be constructed through discourse around what it means to be a refugee, for example images of helplessness and need (Hattam & Every, 2010). These two identities can then be looked at through the dynamics of intersection to make inferences about what it means for identity to be a learner from a refugee background.

The identities we adhere to, or the knowledge that we can construct about ourselves, depends on the combination of these four identity perspectives and understandings about each that have developed historically through different cultures in a given context. This leads to the emergence of socio-culturally situated identity profiles, recognisable through certain discursive practices, which are upheld by persuasion, consensus and complicity (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The act of recognition of a person as embodying a given identity type dictates the identities or personal understandings that we can legitimately construct about ourselves (Bernstein, 2000). Gee refers to these legitimate identity tropes as Discourses (with a capital 'D'), stating "Discourses are ways of being 'certain kinds of people'" (2000, p. 110). This idea has been theorised under different headings by other writers, such as *communities of practice* (Wenger, 1998), *activity systems* (Engeström, 1999), *practices* (Bourdieu, 1990) and *discourse* with a lower case 'd' (Foucault, 1980) to name a few. What each of these shares is the idea that within a community of people we make bids to be recognised in certain ways as embodying socio-culturally embedded identity types using different combinations of behaviours, or discursive practices, that we understand to be associated with that identity. These behaviours may result in us being recognised in different ways in different places and at different points in history (Lemke, 2000; Wortham, 2006).

In addition to these external acts of recognition into socio-culturally situated identity types there must also be an internal process of recognition for an individual to accept embodying that identity type. Burke and Reitzes (1991) propose a model based on a cybernetic control system to describe this kind of internal recognition. This is analogous to a thermostat, which measures the temperature of a room, compares it to an internal setting and then turns a heating system on or off to match the temperature to the setting. Similarly, we take in information from our environment, compare it to an internal identity standard and change our behaviour to achieve a match in our internal meaning and implications from the social interaction. In this way, we use our behaviour to achieve identity confirming input from the social environment. An example is given of a college student who structures their learner

identity around "academic responsibility" (1991,p. 242). When others disagree that the student is academically responsible, the student might abandon these relationships and seek friends that will recognise them the way they imagine. Alternatively, they might engage in behaviour to change their opinion, e.g., spend more time studying or use discursive strategies to convince them.

Coll and Falsafi (2010) develop this idea further with a model of identity construction at two different timeframes. This explains how we can keep a consistent internal sense of self whilst also developing through various interactions. The first is the *Learner Identity Process* or *LIP*, which occurs in short timescales and is spatio-temporally situated. The second, referred to as the *Learner Identity* or *LI*, occurs at a longer timescale and is cross-situational and can therefore carry self-meanings from situation to situation. These two aspects of Learner Identity are in constant interaction, and our subjective experiences of learning and how we make sense of ourselves in the long term cannot be separate from the experience of making sense in specific learning situations. The interaction provides a space for often imperceptible changes to our learner identity in terms of construction, reconstruction and confirmation of previously held understandings. Despite focussing on experience at different timescales, unlike Burke and Reitzes's (1991) cybernetic control model, both theories arrive at the same point: that for coherence we tend to participate in actions that lead to confirmation of previously held understandings about ourselves (or self-recognition) through behaviour that seeks external recognition of these understandings.

A small body of literature exists that uses the concept of learner identity for students with refugee backgrounds in their country of final settlement (Bal, 2014; Dumenden, 2011; Morrice, 2013; Tandon, 2016). However, the literature search performed here found no research that applied a theory of learner identity to students in PRS. Bal (2014) explored how the social and institutional discourses experienced by students with refugee backgrounds at a school in the US was key to development of their identities through recognition. Central to this investigation was a discourse built around the idea of "difference as deficit" (Ball, 2014, p. 278). For example, collaboration between the students with refugee backgrounds, while encouraged for some activities, was deemed to be cheating or disruptive when repeated in other class activities. As a result, the students were labelled ELL students and withdrawn from class to have additional language learning. This designation was made based on what was deemed to be poor behaviour in class rather than through a language assessment. Over time, the ELL class became populated with disruptive students from many backgrounds and thus became more like a SEN class rather than additional language support. The cultural and linguistic differences of the students with refugee backgrounds were constructed as learning problems intrinsic to the learner, which marked a positioning as "learning disabled" in the students' learning trajectories (Ball, 2014, p. 272). This example demonstrates firstly how recognition led to identification in different identity categories that had been constructed both through broader national discourses around what it means to be learning disabled, for example, that had been further developed at the local level of the classroom. Secondly, it shows how behaviour transplanted from one school culture can be recognised in different ways in a new context and have a profound impact on students' learning trajectories.

Learner identity could be a useful tool to explore how youth in PRS understand themselves in relation to education as it presents a way to think about how students construct personal meanings through the process of learning. This idea resonates particularly well for youth in PRS, as refugee learning centres are usually the first formal institutions where they have prolonged participation. It follows that refugee learning environments could be important arenas in which new learner identities are

constructed that will influence future learning trajectories of students with refugee backgrounds, such as access to higher education. Applying learner identity in this research differs to its previous application as it will seek to understand identity construction in the context of legislative exclusion from education and an abrupt cleavage in learning trajectories. Underlying the theory of learner identity outlined by Gee is the dual processes of internal and external recognition. Bal's example above demonstrates the importance of external recognition in influencing the earning trajectories of students with refugee backgrounds. It also highlights the problems that may arise when students are faced with new modes of recognition in a new socio-cultural setting. The additional challenge of applying a theory of learner identity to PRS is exploring how modes of recognition may play a role when students are faced with more extreme forms of exclusions from the host nation's education system. In addition to applying the theory in the context of PRS, this research will also contribute to extending knowledge in the field of refugee education by considering the internal mode of recognition as well as the external. To explore the issue of recognition and the impact on learner identity and trajectories, the following research questions are therefore posed:

1. How do processes of recognition, both internal and external, influence the way in which students construct learner identities in PRS?

2. How does the construction of learner identities in PRS influence students' learning trajectories?

The following section will outline the methodological approach taken to address these questions.

Methodological Considerations

A methodology grounded in phenomenology lends itself well to this research due to the focus on exploring personal understandings and student experiences. Phenomenology as a methodological approach was established through the work of Husserl, who argued that to understand the way individuals experience phenomena we need to go "back to the 'things themselves'" (Husserl, 2001). The *thing* in question is the content of the experience in the consciousness of an individual. Although influenced by the work of Husserl, Moustakas viewed phenomenology as a transcendental project, trying to understand the nature of consciousness and the value-free essence of experience itself (1994). This later approach to phenomenology embraces the hermeneutic element, acknowledging that our understanding of other's experience is influenced by interpretation and is therefore essentially perspectival. The specific approach adopted here is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), developed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), which is based on concepts drawn from hermeneutic phenomenology. IPA is also viewed as idiographic in its attendance to the experiences of particular people and contexts rather than being nomothetic. The hermeneutic flavour of IPA requires the researcher to reflect on their interpretation of the account being given by the participant as well as interpreting the account itself. This dual layer of participants making sense of their own experience, perhaps for the first time in an explicit sense, and the reciprocal interpretation of the researcher creates a double hermeneutic (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010).

Navigating layers of different, maybe contradictory, perspectives requires an interpretative process that assesses the relationship between how an interviewee understands the experience they are relaying and how the researcher perceives the way the interviewee constructs this understanding. This cyclical

process is known as the *hermeneutic circle*, which implies an iterative approach to analysis rather than a linear or step-wise process (Grondin, 2016). Through such a process phenomenology and hermeneutics work hand-in-hand, as Smith and colleagues argue, "[w]ithout phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 37). Achieving this through IPA requires managing the dual process of understanding what the interviewee reports in its own right, free from pre-conceived understandings (standing beside), and using previous theoretical insights to challenge what is reported and develop or shed new light on what was previously understood (standing opposite). When analysing the interview data, the researcher will then proceed in an iterative fashion through layers of interpretation using the hermeneutic circle to try to understand the interviewee's experience as closely as possible to how they understand that experience themselves.

Thinking about interpretation requires researchers to engage reflexively with different regimes of interpretation. The experiences reported by students in this research can be obscured by epistemological violence and the associated concept of hermeneutic injustice. Epistemological violence is a form of violence that is produced through the construction of knowledge. It does not derive from empirical data itself but the interpretation of that data that problematises the concept of an "Other" (Teo, 2010, p. 298). Spivak (1993) highlights structural dimensions that privilege Eurocentric views to research above indigenous knowledge, which gives rise to epistemological structures that are "non-mutual and hierarchical" (Griffiths, 2000, p. 165). Hermeneutic injustice arises when informants are treated merely as bearers of knowledge and are excluded from its interpretation (Fricker, 2007). Medina also contends there is a communicative aspect to hermeneutic injustice (Medina, 2012). This may be realised through misinterpretation of the researcher due to a lack of adequate interpretative responsiveness in the research or because an individual struggles to articulate their experience due to "structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource" (Fricker, 2007, p. 155). The result of these flawed interpretative practices is that the conclusions reported do not match the personal meanings of the knowledge bearers of the research and as such an act of violence has been committed against informants through marginalisation in the research.

Issues of epistemological violence and hermeneutical injustice are clearly important to PRS since the students exist in a state of exile as part of marginalised communities with very few rights. Medina calls for an "agential and interactive approach to hermeneutical injustice" (Medina, 2012, p. 216), which requires that we be reflexive about our role as researchers and how the process of research may uphold structural inequality. It also requires reflexivity about our communicative practice in interviews to ensure positions of privilege in the research context do not put words into participants' mouths or obscure their genuine meaning. In this research, a model of coproduction is used that involves the students in the process of interpretation rather than just as informants in unstructured interviews. This was achieved by first ensuring the co-researchers were aware of their rights in the research through a briefing and information sheet. The co-researchers were then allowed to ask any questions before starting the interviews. Attention was paid to hermeneutical gaps that could have opened within interviews by drawing on Smith et al. and their notion of standing opposite and standing beside the co-researcher to challenge and try to comprehend what they express (2009). Medina also states that "[n]othing short of … reversibility and reciprocity [in communicative relations] can guarantee the equality in communicative participation required by fair epistemic practices" (2012, p. 204). The interviews were therefore approached in an unstructured and conversational style and the students were encouraged to ask their own questions. The interviews

were then analysed, and the results were shared with the co-researchers so they could check and contribute to the understanding of emerging themes. This stage was fundamental in the process as each co-researcher in this study identified areas where interpretation had been misunderstood or was inaccurate. It also allowed for follow up and further development of themes according to what the co-researchers felt were most important.

Due to the increased vulnerability of refugee populations, a robust ethical framework is required when engaging such populations in research (Leaning, 2001). Literature related to the ethics of working with individuals from refugee backgrounds is sparse (Ellis, Kia-Keating, & Yusuf, 2007), however, Kia-Keating has developed a framework for this kind of research centred around three domains: values, power and rights (2012). It is argued here that universal frameworks, such as the one provided by the American Psychological Association (APA), are tied to western values and may overlook issues pertinent to ethics in non-western settings. To engage with this framework using an IPA approach reflexivity is essential. As Leaning notes, language, culture, educational background and social norms may be a barrier to engaging with research that comes from a western perspective (2001). The three domains framework provides a structure around which I will centre this reflexivity to ensure that any potential issues related to this can be discussed with co-researchers through discussion when seeking informed consent. Acknowledging potential differences in values and the power disparity based on my position as a western researcher engaging with non-western co-researchers will also be important in the analysis stages. Consulting the co-researchers meaningfully at this stage will ensure that the co-researchers have greater ownership of the information generated, helping to overcome mismatched values or a power imbalance. It is only by attending to these two points that the rights of the co-researchers beyond those laid out in international ethical frameworks can be guaranteed.

Background to the Pilot Study

The pilot study involved interviews with students known to the researcher about their experiences in accessing higher education, both pre and post access, via Skype. They were all born in the same developing country before seeking asylum in Malaysia and chose the pseudonyms Ahmad, Sarah and Jack. They are already enrolled in higher education programmes at International Higher Education Institutions that accept applications from students registered with UNHCR; Sarah and Jack in one institution and Ahmad in another. Targeting the post-access demographic allowed engagement with the IPA approach and reflection on the issues related to interpretation of qualitative data discussed above but also generated some themes for comparison with pre-access students that will be targeted in the full research project.

Despite the lack of legal recognition for students with refugee backgrounds in Malaysia, these research participants are three of the limited number of students with refugee backgrounds enrolled on post-secondary education courses in Malaysia thanks to MOUs signed by tertiary education partners with UNHCR (Bailey & Inanc, 2019; UNHCR, 2019). Prior to beginning their post-secondary programmes each student also completed a short higher education bridging course. This course provided information about post-secondary institutions that receive applications from students with refugee backgrounds and aided the development of soft skills related to the application process (see: Opening

Universities for Refugees (OUR), 2016). The following section will present the emerging themes from the pilot study in relation to the research questions outlined in the previous section.

Emerging Themes and Discussion

Losing and Regaining a Sense of Self

Although all the students described the move to Malaysia as being very abrupt, they were quite hopeful about living a life with more freedom. Ahmad stated that he felt he had, "came to, like, very high post… or very good place, there we can start our new life." This was related to the assumption that he no longer had to hide his religious status, however, he realised this wasn't the case, commenting, "I was like, okay, now here we can tell that we are [a religious minority], [but] my mum told, 'No it's still the Muslim country.'" He realised the difficulty of life seeking asylum: "I start feeling that my those feelings shattered, that those happiness shattered." He imagined a life with a higher status in society, but instead was faced with a potentially worse situation with greater challenges than he had faced before. Sarah also uses the verb *to shatter* to explain her disappointment at not being able to access tertiary studies upon arrival:

> "In [my home country] education was all we knew… that was the main goal, to get education, to be educated, so when that was taken away we were, like, we didn't know what else to do in life, so we felt like our future is gone… we will only be able to do, like, small jobs, like, you know, so it was quite shattering."

Here, Sarah refers to education in terms of a status; *being an educated person* therefore defines the type of person that you are in a social hierarchy. This is quite central to her identity since without education she considers her future to be gone and that there would not be anything for her to orient herself toward in the future. Describing the disillusionment as *shattering* emphasises the extent to which their imagined futures have been completely destroyed. For Ahmad, this is in not reaching a societal status in which he does not have to hide his religion and for Sarah, it is the prospect of a future without being educated.

Each of the students came from a context in which education was an important part of their everyday experience, however, the normality of education led to it being a taken-for-granted part of their everyday lives. This is reflected in Sarah's comment, "in [my home country] education is more often norm, you know, it's a very normal thing, you don't really, you know, pause and think that, oh, why I'm doing this?" However, upon claiming asylum, the sense of loss expressed by each student led to a renewed appreciation for the value of education, summarised by Jack:

> "Now we realize that how important is education and even though in [my home country] also our family always value education but in this particular situation we really, really now accept that without our education we really cannot do anything."

The increased awareness of what value education has in their lives then motivated the students to seek out opportunities and take independent action to study and reclaim what was lost, as Ahmad comments:

"When you don't have anything you will try to get the thing so… you don't have the teachers, and you don't have that much opportunities, that thing will make a desire inside you and make a motivation that you want to study. OK, you will achieve it independently."

Having a sudden educational barrier placed between them and the future they envisaged challenges the students' identities in terms of what sort of meanings they can construct about themselves. Sarah and Jack talk about this more explicitly in terms of how education is part of a construction of a sense of self. However, for each student participation in formal education becomes crucially important for orienting their identities and achieving a consistent sense of self. This is consistent with Osguthorpe's assertion that learner identity is the central one around which others are oriented (2006). The conflict between their identity and the reality they face could also be understood in terms having to recognise yourself in a dramatically different way. The source of this conflict could arise from the difficulty in achieving these new, perhaps less desirable, forms of self-recognition as the students seek to engage in activities that would confirm previously held understandings of themselves (see Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Coll & Falsafi, 2010). As learning is an important means through which we can build and reinforce these previously held understandings, it would seem logical that the students would engage in learning opportunities to recognise themselves and their futures in familiar ways. Jack and Sarah had to wait 4 years to finally attend university, however, during this time they were able to maintain some sense of self by taking steps and focussing on the possibility of education that lay ahead. Trying to maintain a consistent sense of self does not mean that their identities were not under construction during this time, since Coll and Falsafi suggest that imperceptible changes occur through the short time-frame identity process. For example, Ahmad reflected on his transformation from a "lazy" student in his home country to a student that took more agency in the process of learning, commenting, "I am very proud that I took that opportunity and I am still studying."

Changing Course

A more tangible example of the ways in which the students' learner identities developed during their time so far in Malaysia is their course choice. All three students changed their original subject choice when it came time to apply for tertiary study. Jack and Ahmad switched from Engineering to Business and Accountancy respectively and Sarah switched from Biotechnology to Communications and film. Sarah explains this transition:

"In [my home country]… [it's] understood, OK, if, you're a girl you are going to do something related to Bio, and if you're a guy you will do Engineering or something, and if you are not really good in studies you do Arts, so that's the, you know, mindset… but when we came to Malaysia, for me it's like, now I'm thinking what's the best of, you know, I like, I'm thinking in terms of my future, what I really want to do, what motivates me."

The new context opens-up a new space for the students to construct kinds of identities that were perhaps alien to them before. Previously, external processes of recognition organised the students into recognisable identity categories based on prevalent ideas about gender and learning or success measured in terms of a socio-culturally situated education system. Being away from this context allows learner identities to develop along a path of how the students feel they would best like to recognise themselves.

The new context, however, does not provide a blank cheque upon which the students can author new identities. Comments from Jack and Ahmad demonstrate how the new environment still directs what sort of choices they can make:

> **Jack:** "after moving to Malaysia there was something that attracted me the most was the economic shift, you know, compared to [my home country] and Malaysia, and all these things here were, you know, quite fascinating, the currency difference and, so, and I also see that Malaysia is the hub for business and all the international brands are here, so, all these things actually really motivated towards learning business."

> **Ahmad:** "since child we are told you can be either Engineer, you can be either Doctor. Here only, I came here and got to know there's something known as Accountancy, like, there is a subject as Accounts and Business…we never thought that we study business. I only thought that they only do business."

Both responded to the educational environment around them in directing their subject choice. Although they chose to study subjects they had never entertained before as options, they are still fairly typical course choices in the Malaysian context. They are therefore making choices within a system that directs students in different ways to the context they are familiar with. However, in facing these new socio-cultural pressures the students have demonstrated a degree of reflexivity in engaging with the unfamiliar education system to follow trajectories in which they can satisfactorily align their learner identities. These considerations potentially highlight the importance of agency in constructing learner identities; that is not dealt with explicitly here but is a theme that should be considered and elaborated upon in the main phase of the PhD research.

'Refugee' Identity on Campus

Issues related to external recognition of identity were manifest through experiences of being a refugee on campus. All of the students followed advice given by their respective higher education institutions and did not reveal their refugee status to other students and staff. Part of the reason for doing this was concern over potential negative reactions; as Jack comments, "it's never really safe because you don't know what kind of reaction you are, we are going to get from the local people." He also had concerns over the response that he would get from international students from his home country:

> "In our campus there are a lot of [my home country] students who are international students, so, if they find out that we are from [the same country] also and we are refugees, so, we might get some negative feedback from our own country people."

In addition to avoiding negative responses, Sarah viewed life on campus as an escape from a variety of connotations associated with refugees in the predominantly Christian community she interacted with at home:

> "[Campus] is, it's like an escape, you know, so here everybody knows you're refugee here, if it is some people would look down on you, some people would be nice, some people would pity you, so all those things, you know, I, its way from me to, you know, forget about it."

Being able to distance herself from these concerns allows her to get on with the business of being a student. However, concealing their status raises some difficulties in interactions on campus.

Jack and Ahmad discussed the awkwardness of interactions surrounding visa applications and such with international students and having to fake their way through such conversations to avoid having their status revealed. The students would generally refer to the idea of refugee as a status, rather than an identity. However, when discussing how she felt about concealing her refugee status from other students she had become close to on her campus, Sarah referred to this more in terms of an identity:

> "Sometimes it does make me feel bad, like, my really close friends, they don't really know who I, who I actually am. And sometimes I think, would it make any difference were they unfriend me or something, you know, if they come to know that I am a refugee or something?"

Talking about *who she really is* frames her status as a refugee, or experience living with this label, as being part of her identity. These examples of interactions with other students on campus reveal a conflict in the ways in which the students recognise themselves internally and the external recognition they experience in their adopted roles as *international students*.

Although Ahmad has not revealed his status as a refugee and has had it confirmed that those that worked in admissions have not shared this with his lectures and other staff, he is suspicious that some of the Malaysians on campus speculate this to be the case. He stated that, "I think there is something in their behaviour that will make me feel these things," and further elaborating, "first thing is they don't want me to be part, to be the part of the conversation, maybe, and the second thing I avoided because of this behaviour." He refers to times when he felt excluded from the group of local students in his class as they went to lunch together and did not invite him. When asked why he thinks that to be the case he suggested, "I think that, I am poor, and they think they are rich, and I cannot afford the things they do." He feels that the assumption is based on his nationality and the assumption that most of the students at his institution from his home country have refugee status. This example demonstrates a double layer in recognition; Ahmad's perception of how he thinks he is being perceived by others. The exclusion he feels when he is not included in daily social activities is similar to the exclusion he feels based on his refugee status, and conflating these experiences shapes the way he interacts with the other students.

The students differ in their association with other refugees on campus. Jack and Sarah are friendly, but generally avoid spending too much time with other refugee students due to their concern with being identified as refugees through association. Ahmad interacts with other refugees more freely, but these interactions are limited due to differing timetables. Jack and Sarah's case demonstrates the ways that they avoid being recognised in a certain way through association, which is consistent with the suggestion that we use our behaviour in bids to be recognised as certain sorts of people. Ahmad feels a level of solidarity with the other refugee students and feels more comfortable socialising with them. He says, "when you feel [there is] someone who also know[s] that he's [at] your level-. Actually, not level, [other students] only made the level that we are low level." Here he challenges an idea that he feels is imposed upon him from the local students that his refugee status gives him a lower status. This suggests an internal struggle between how he recognises himself and the external recognition he perceives. Even if the other students do not really suspect he has refugee status, it seems that despite resisting the internalisation of being lower status as part of his identity, he faces difficulty in achieving the external recognition at the same social or academic level as the other students.

Conclusion and Final Reflections

The themes that have emerged from this pilot study suggest that processes of recognition, both internal and external, shape the way students understand themselves in relation to education through realignment of learning goals and behaviours to reclaim a consistent sense of self. Achieving this consistency is manifest through pursuing learning trajectories along different subject lines that have been shaped by socio-cultural expectations of the new learning environment. Maintaining consistency in sense of self requires the students to be reflexive in negotiating between the internal and external forms of recognition, e.g., perceiving yourself to be on a path towards being an educated person but realised through a different academic field. The dual layers of being perceived-to-be-perceived also show how issues of recognition can drive students' interactions with others. The students' perception of themselves in relation to education is therefore influenced by how they perceive external recognition to be operating, creating tension in their learner identity where this is mismatched with their internal recognition. The discussion here has demonstrated that IPA can be applied fruitfully to explore the concept of recognition as it pertains to learner identity for students in PRS, which has given an insight into the ways these students understand themselves and their education. Although beyond the scope of this paper, interpreting instances of recognition causes us to think about agency in the construction of identities. To what extent can we influence the ways in which we are recognised in a given socio-cultural context and how is this manifest in PRS? Agency could therefore be an important concept to be considered moving forward with the main phase of the research and could provide a deeper understanding of the kinds of learner identities students in PRS develop.

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BECOMING A LEADER? A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE ADMINISTRATOR OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN HONG KONG

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This paper presents a narrative inquiry into an English Language Centre Administrator of a higher education institution in Hong Kong, China. The participant of this narrative inquiry, Angel, was invited to take up a new role of the Department of English. Using narrative inquiry as a research method and intersecting the narrative analysis by drawing on Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership, the author evaluated Angel's role as an English Language Centre Administrator and made meaning of her perceptions and contested her assumed responsibilities and the responsibilities she has been assuming. Among the three leadership dimensions suggested by Bush – influence, values and vision, it was perceived that from the participant's personal practical experience, the three dimensions were not of equal weighting or did not emerge in a linear sequence. Values and vision may be the driving force of the participant's leadership practice whereas influence may or may not be intentional. It is hoped that the findings will facilitate readers to generate a new understanding of educational leadership, management and administration and gain an insight into the reconceptualisation of leadership. By bringing forth the participant's first-hand accounts, it is also hoped that this paper may have useful implications for those who are taking up a new role of an organisation, be it fledging or well-established, to excel themselves.

Introduction

There is a growing controversy about the similarities and differences among leadership, management and administration. This paper is a personalised account of an English Language Centre Administrator of the Department of English of a higher education institution who makes meaning of her leadership practice. The paper starts by offering a brief overview of the definitions of leadership, management and administration. Their similarities and differences are compared and contrasted. It is followed by the report of the narrative interviews with the English Language Centre Administrator of a higher education institution. Drawing on Bush's (2010) leadership dimensions, the author examined the participant's leadership practice in relation to her job title and actual job responsibilities and discussed how the participant saw her own position. The paper ends with a discussion on the leadership qualities of the participant and it is hoped that her leadership style can add knowledge and interesting insights into the discussion of leadership, management and administration in higher education.

Leadership vs. management vs. administration

A lot of discussions have been made on the distinctions among leadership, management and administration (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010; Bush & Glover, 2003; Yukl, 2010). By means of leadership, Yukl (2010) offers a full list of definitions, of which the following is found to be distinctive: "Leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which *things* [emphasis added] can be accomplished" (p. 3). According to Yukl, leadership is resonated with the articulation of visions and values; and creating a favourable environment for staff which is conducive to making contributions and progress; and accomplishing personal and organisational goals (things).

Another useful definition offered by Yukl (2010) is: "Leadership is a process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed" (p. 3). By this definition leadership is taken as people-oriented and related to mobilising people to produce a synergy effect.

Apart from the above, Yukl also emphasises "influence": "Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisation" (Yukl, 2010, p. 3). This definition reflects the importance of influence and change on people, which echoes Spillane's (2006) definition: "Leaders are agents of change ... Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group" (p. 10). Similar contentions that leadership involves influence and change are further substantiated by Bush and Glover (2003). Spillane (2006) added that leadership is taken as a relationship of social influence.

All the above cited definitions are by no means exhaustive. However, there are some common key points – leaders aim at instilling visions and values in organisation, creating an ideal environment, influencing people and initiating change. Management, however, is viewed as a maintenance activity. As stated by Cuban (1988):

"Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change." (cited in Bush & Glover, 2003, p. 9)

It was suggested that managers are expected of maintaining current situations and putting organisational arrangements in an orderly manner. However, they are not always expected to make changes.

As for administration, it is, in fact, defined as "the work of managing the affairs of an organisation" (Longman English Dictionary Online). By this definition, we realise that administrators, like managers, are expected of managing the present situations in a manageable manner. The cruel fact is that it is seldom given any significance in literature as most authors are concerned about leadership and management, which are believed to be higher-order. Dimmock (1999) gives the following distinctions among the three roles:

"Schools leaders experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration)." (cited in Bush & Glover, 2003, p. 9)

Yukl (2010) made similar claims, he contends that "Managers value stability, order and efficiency, and they are impersonal, risk adverse and focus on short-term results. Leaders value flexibility, innovation, and adaptation; they care about people as well as economic outcomes, and they have a longer term perspective with regard to objectives and strategies" (p. 7). Although the distinctions are rather arbitrary, we can come to see authors' favouritism towards leadership and their bias against management, not to mention administration.

Based on the above body of literature, the following table showing the differences among the three roles is formulated:

Table 1: Differences between leadership, management and administration

	Leadership	**Management**	**Administration**
Status	High	Medium	Low
Accountability	High	Medium	Low
Task requirements	High-order	Medium-order	Low-order
Scope of influence	Wide	Medium	Narrow
Level of change expected	High	Low	Not applicable
People motivation	High	Medium	Not applicable
Responsible domain	Vision	Implementation	Support
	Values	Technical issues	
	Quality		

Regarding the similarities, all the three roles involve certain management skills, but at different levels. Bush (2008b) suggests that managers would exhibit leadership skills and administrators demonstrate both management and leadership skills but he has not specified clearly to what extent these skills might be shown.

Rationale for the study

Even though the term "administration" is more common in North America and Australia (Bush, 2010, p. 8), and the upper case "Administration" of a country, especially that of the United States, is its government (Collins Cobuild Advanced Learners English Dictionary), "administration" has not enjoyed much standing. Many authors even explore a paradigm shift from educational administration to educational management, and then to educational leadership (Bolam, 1999; Bush, 2010; Gunter, 2004), implying that administration is pitched at a lowest level and considered to be of lower order than management or leadership. Bush (2010, p. 8) even uses a word "evolve" to show the different levels, of which "administration" connotes a bottom level among the three.

Based on this proclaimed perception, I wanted to explore how an administrator makes meaning of the given and self-ascribed title. I am also curious about whether a person's leadership practice will be circumscribed by a job title. The research question guiding this narrative inquiry is as follows: How does an administrator make meanings of her leadership practice?

Literature review

Whitchurch (2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2010) has contributed a great deal to research into the field of leadership, management and administration in higher education, Whitchurch (2008a) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing 35 senior and middle-level administrators and managers in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Using a theoretical frame of "soft" and "hard" administration versus "soft" and "hard" management, Whitchurch gained a new understanding into how her participants' professional identities change through their voices. Whitchurch (2008a) suggests that soft administration points to the one-to-one approach to staff. It emphasises care for the individuals. Hard administration focuses on the system, which is formal, contractual and standard-driven. Soft management, on the other hand, serves the institution. It looks at the broader issues such as policy-making and resource allocation. It allows negotiation and compromise. Hard management, however, is concerned about the market, income generation and competition. Distance between managers and the managed is observed. In another study, Whitchurch (2008b) carried out empirical research into the changing roles and identities of professional staff in higher education in the United Kingdom. The study drew on the narratives of twenty-four interviewees illustrating the shifting identities by means of a conceptual framework in which three categories emerged – bounded, cross-boundary and unbounded professionals. According to Whitchurch (2008b), bounded professionals refer to people who locate themselves within the boundaries of an organisation that they have either constructed for themselves or that have been imposed on them. They act on what have been prescribed. Cross-boundary professionals "actively use boundaries to build strategic advantage and institutional capacity" (p. 377). They are ready to extend their scope of responsibilities and interact with the external environment. Unbounded professionals, however, are those who do not take boundaries into consideration. They take an open-ended and exploratory approach towards broadly-based projects. Whitchurch (2008c) extended the scale of her study by interviewing 54 professional managers in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. Drawing on the framework of bounded professionals, cross-boundary professionals, and unbounded professionals, Whitchurch additionally introduced blended professionals – a blurred boundary

known as the third space between professional and academic domains. These studies are relevant and useful references to me as they offer an insight into how professional identities change according to the lateral movement of staff members, but they have not explained any changes in response to a vertical movement. Indeed, in the course of reviewing this literature, I discovered that the issue of job title in relation to leadership practice in higher education, had been under-researched, hence the originality of my study.

Neary (2014) looked into how the job title has had an impact on people's professional identities in her paper *Professional Identity: What I Call Myself Defines Who I Am*. It was found that for many the use of job title was an important factor in defining who they are professionally. "Those defining themselves through a job title often felt they had a stronger professional identity than those whose job title was perceived to lack clarity" (p. 14). Another factor contributing to professional identity rested with the engagement in continuing professional development. The findings are interesting but would have been more interesting if Neary had presented the discrepancies between the social identity (one's perceptions on their "selves" in relation to others) and the role identity (job title, job nature and responsibilities). I also wanted to understand whether my participant's leadership practice is determined by his job title and therefore Neary's study was useful to me, in spite of the limitations that I identified earlier.

A study conducted by Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) into the construction of academic identities in the changing context of Finnish higher education can be considered to be the closest research to mine. They collected nine narratives of academics and explored how they made sense of the transformations of higher education. Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) divided the nine narratives into three storylines – regressive storyline, stability storyline and progressive storyline. The regressive storyline reports on deterioration of work, while the progressive storyline tells about improvement and movement towards a promising direction. The stability storyline describes a state in between the two opposites. It was reported that the identity constructions embedded in the nine narratives presented in the study include "polarised notions of academic roles, duties, commitments and status" (p. 1147). Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) claimed that being a rebel, a loser or a member of the precariat is totally different from being a winner, or a change agent and the identity constructions as a loser and a winner are "mutually exclusive" (p. 1147). However, I am puzzled by Ylijoki and Ursin's (2013) conclusion:

> "Identities are not fixed and stable with clear-cut boundaries, but instead constantly rebuilt, reshaped and renegotiated in social interaction. Not all narrative combinations, however, are available for academics" (p. 1147).

With this understanding, are certain identity constructions really "mutually exclusive" as Ylijoki and Ursin claimed? Besides, if there are no clear-cut boundaries, are there any blurred boundaries, blended-boundaries, or cross-boundaries proposed by Whitchurch? These are the very areas that informed my present narrative inquiry.

In reviewing this body of literature, I noted that there appeared to be an omission in the narrative research on how job title is understood in relation to leadership practice in higher education. My present study thus contributes to the literature, adding to our knowledge of what it means to be self-ascribed and contingent titles in higher education in relation to leadership, management and administration.

The study

Context of study

The study context was an English Language Centre of the Department of English at a self-financed higher education institution in Hong Kong (henceforth the Institution) that offered degree programmes. The Institution's Department of English offers a Bachelor of Arts in English programme and an English Language Teaching (ELT) Unit. The ELT Unit provides a wide range of credit-bearing English courses for the whole Institution, such as General English, Academic English and Business English. In collaboration with the English Language Centre, it also runs non-credit-bearing courses such as English Enhancement Course, English Summer Course and IELTS Preparation Course.

The English Language Centre was established in 2013. It works under the Department of English and runs regular English-related workshops such as grammar workshops and IELTS study groups, activities such as Conversation Cafes and English Lunches. It also holds competitions, for example, Short Story Writing and Dramatic Duologue.

Participant

The participant in this study, Angel (pseudonym), is an English Language Centre Administrator of the Institution under study. Angel joined the Centre at its inception in 2013. At the time of the study, Angel had been taking up the role for five years. In accordance with the Institution's job descriptions provided by Angel, she was responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

> 1. Administer the English Language Centre;
>
> 2. Lead and organise English-related activities, such as competitions, workshops, short courses, consultations and so on;
>
> 3. Explore the acquisition of external funding; and
>
> 4. Conduct an annual self-evaluation and planning exercise, and provide evidence of quality performance.

Angel was considered an ideal research participant for this study as she is literally in charge of the English Language Centre of a higher education institution. However, the job title conferred to her – English Language Centre Administrator – was, according to what Table 1 indicates, rather basic. This dichotomy has formed a very strong research background for me. I am interested in collecting my participant's practical personal experience and understand how she made meaning of her given and self-ascribed job responsibilities, and whether a job title forms an impact on people's leadership practice.

Methodology

I sought to explore the practical lived experiences of Angel, an English Language Centre Administrator, and to understand how she made meaning of her job responsibilities in relation to her job title and leadership demonstration, if any, and connected these meanings with the social world around her. When

collecting data from Angel, I also sought to gain not only her lived experience but also to observe the study context to collect useful information.

Narrative inquiry was adopted as a research method. Narrative inquiry, nested under qualitative research, is defined as the study of experience as story (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). However, I define narrative inquiry as "the study of experience *through experience* as story" (Yu, 2017, p. 60, original emphasis). "In narrative inquiry, experience, rather than theoretically informed research questions … tends to be the starting point" (Trahar, 2011, p. 48). This explains why I put strong emphasis on first-hand personal experience but I did not form very explicit research questions at the onset of the paper. Narrative inquiry is usually appropriate when studying a small number of participants, as it allows the researcher to study the participant up close and personal (Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003), and pay more attention to subtleties and nuances. This research methodology also enables the researcher to form "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) – sensuous detailing of real-life events occurring in natural settings, portraying in a vivid way so as to leave a strong impact on readers. It also offers the readers a feeling of "verisimilitude" (Webster & Mertova, 2007) and a sense of "being there" (Geertz, 1988). I, however, did not set out this study to make generalisable claims from Angel's first-hand data.

Data collection

I explained the objectives of the narrative inquiry to Angel face to face. She expressed her interest in the study as she was very excited about the idea that her story would be made known to a wider community. Soon I sent her a formal invitation listing the tentative research title, objectives and details of the interviews. To observe the research ethical issues, Angel was assured that she would be given a pseudonym and some sensitive information would be either removed or masked. She was also informed of my adherence to research ethics. Her anonymity and confidentiality and her freedom to withdraw from the study would be protected throughout and after the research. Angel signed an informed consent form afterwards.

I conducted two formal one-on-one face-to-face interviews with Angel at her workplace with six on-site visits and small talk before and after the interviews. Each interview lasted for around two hours. The interviews were audio-recorded. They were in the form of narrative interviewing. Narrative interviews are unstructured in-depth "open-ended" interviews (Punch, 2014, p. 147) with specific features (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000), seeking "*to understand* rather than *to explain*" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 706, original emphases). The merit of this approach is that it does not impose an "a priori categorisation which might limit the field of inquiry" (Punch, 2014, p. 147). I did not prepare many questions to ask or seek to elicit certain answers. At times, I just listened attentively to Angel's stories and sought to re-present as many rich and valuable stories as possible.

Data analysis

Riessman's (2008) dialogic/performance analysis was used to present, or re-present to be more precise, the co-constructed stories. Our dialogue was presented in a conversational format. When conducting dialogic/performance analysis, I played an important role in the interview process and became an active presence in the text. Whilst many researchers claim to be objective, I honoured my own subjectivity in this narrative inquiry.

Data analysis is carried out by drawing on Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership to evaluate Angel's role as an English Language Centre Administrator and the corresponding scope of responsibilities in relation to her given and self-ascribed job title and examine whether she complied with the central elements of leadership. Bush's definitions on leadership are in accord with the ones I wrote in the first part of this paper, and also substantiated by many authors such as Dimmock (1999),Spillane (2006), Yukl (2010), and so on. They are, in short, "Leadership as Influence", "Leadership and Values" and "Leadership and Vision". In the following section, I will discuss them one by one.

Findings

Leadership as influence

As contended by Bush (2008a, 2008b, 2010) and supported by Cuban (1988) and Yukl (2010), leadership involves a social influence but devoid of authority whereby the influence process is intentional and it may be exercised by groups as well as individuals. When examining Angel's work, she was in line with some aspects of the above notions.

> **Angel:** It was in April when I was interviewed … signed the contract in May … I remembered in June when I was working on my Ph.D. thesis … I was invited to be the ELC Administrator … I would be responsible for the ELC … I know the Centre was just open in March … I asked myself, "Do they want me to run the Centre? Do I have this duty?"

To Angel, she was not looking at the literal meaning of the title, or perhaps the official job responsibilities stated on the contract, but the perceived responsibilities she was going to take on. In accordance with Bush (2008b), the central concept of leadership is "*influence* rather than *authority*" (p. 277, original emphases). Bush believes that although both influence and authority are dimensions of power, authority is concerned with formal positions whereas influence can be exercised by anyone in an organisation. Bush further explains that "leadership is independent of positional authority while management is linked directly to it" (p. 277). Bush's interpretations may not be widely accepted, but it echoed Angel's perceptions in terms of her job position:

> **Angel:** I have not thought about what meaning the title has brought about … I have not thought about authority … I only thought that I should be responsible for a new Centre … later I realised that I should also be responsible for staff deployment … I should make the Centre as successful as possible …

When Angel was told to be the Centre Administrator, she was rather confused. She studied the given job descriptions but not sure how much she should do, or if the title or the job responsibilities are major. However, she came to realise that the post was a major position when she received the following response from her doctoral supervisor:

> **Angel:** I told my thesis supervisor about the new job and the title … my supervisor then said "I am proud of you"… then at the viva… my supervisor told everybody "My student has found a job… and also take up the ELC Administrator"… another professor at the viva said, "Really? So proud of you!" … I was embarrassed…

If identity is defined as "who am I?", this interview extract led me to think that identity indeed implicates "who am I in relation to others?" because self and society are inextricably intertwined – "self mirrors society" (Pratt & Kraatz, 2009, p. 389). Angel's identity is ascertained when her supervisor congratulated her on the new title. Her identity is further enhanced when the new job title is associated with the pride offered by another professor.

Lasky (2005) defined teacher professional identity as "how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others" (p. 901). To Angel, it may mean that her professional identity is defined by her self-ascribed job title and the recognition from others.

In the first departmental meeting, Angel presented her draft ELC framework in front of all the departmental members. The Centre was to support English language learning of the Institution and the work would be revolving around three broad domains – language, cultures and careers. Angel formulated clear vision, mission and goals for the Centre and a long-term plan which fit into the framework. After rounds of deliberations at departmental meetings, the framework was eventually finalised. For quality assurance, she assigned experienced teachers to pair up with new teachers. She conducted visits to workshops to ensure that the workshops are in line with the Centre framework. She also designed the online peer visit form. To Angel, her job duties exceeded regular administration work. At the interview, she confessed that she had not expected to have an influence on staff deployment:

> **Angel:** I remember, after the meeting, a teacher came to ask me what he should do for the Centre. I was confused … I was thinking why he asked me … he seems to be more senior than I am … I didn't understand why he asked me … I am still thinking whether I was too high profile as a new member …

This thought is suggestive of Angel's internal conflict between her given job title and her self-ascribed responsibilities. It is also a conflict between her awareness of being a new and young member of the Department and her leadership practice as a Centre Administrator.

Leadership and values

In accordance with Bush (2010), "leadership is increasingly linked with values" (p. 6). By values, they can mean personal or professional values, "self-awareness and emotional and moral capability" and "values are asserted, chosen, imposed, or believed" (ibid.). This idea contained much truth when I examined Angel's existing role.

In the interview with Angel, she repeatedly mentioned that she is serious about her work.

> **Angel:** I am serious about work … I have been very serious about work since my master's degree course … all my course mates were serious about work… they will reprint out the paper even there was a punctuation error … all people I met were serious…

Angel's seriousness about work can be exhibited from the way that she took a proactive role as a Centre Administrator. Before she took up the new role, she started to analyse the Centre position in the Department and the Institution and developed a clearly-defined Centre framework to ensure that all the activities fall into the Department and Institution's long-term plans.

Angel did not only work hard, she also worked smart. Understanding that there is a good mix of staff in the Department, she instilled a sharing culture into the Department.

> **Angel:** Some are go-getters but rather impetuous; some are proactive but pushy; some are creative but seem to work well on their own; some are conservative who always play safe and refuse to go beyond their comfort zone …

She understood that it will benefit the Department if a channel is provided to draw out their strengths since "collective learning is more than the sum of individual learning" (Leithwood et al., 1999, p.167). In this respect, a "Sharing Session" was always put on the agenda item of the Centre meetings to serve as a platform for professional exchange and to develop a culture of sharing expertise. Good practices were shared and communicated to the teachers. Many teachers remarked that they enjoyed the sharing sessions as they were free to express their ideas no matter how airy-fairy they were and they enjoyed listening to people's ideas, many of which were intellectually challenging and, most importantly, attainable and feasible. In addition, she particularly honoured initiatives where members were highly encouraged to take risks and try out innovations (Harris, 2008).

A number of initiatives were put forward by Angel, as the engineer of many new projects and events. First and foremost, she submitted the first proposal to the Hong Kong Education Bureau to apply for a language enhancement grant worth Hong Kong $2 million (equivalent to £200,000), aiming to enhance the facilities of the newly-established English Language Centre and to appoint a full-time Centre Officer to assist in enriching students' language learning experiences. The first proposal failed to capture funding but failure, however, was taken as "a learning experience" (Yukl, 2010, p. 467). Angel understood that "much of the skill essential for effective leadership is learned from experience rather than from formal training programmes" (ibid.). In the following year, a taskforce was formed and based on the experience gained from the write-up of the first proposal, they improved and enriched the content and wrote a more impressive proposal. The team managed to earn the funding in the second submission.

Angel values initiatives but her approach is practical. She added the following: "I am a serious person… but my approach is down to earth… I don't insist on change for the sake of change…" She managed to mobilise and motivate her colleagues, and produced a synergy effect within the Centre. Her personal and professional values are vivid, be they "asserted, chosen, imposed, or believed" (Bush, 2010, p. 6). If Bush is right in suggesting that values is an important element for leadership, Angel has exhibited her leadership through the core values she believes.

Leadership and vision

Many authors point to the relationship between leadership and vision (Bush, 2008a, 2010; Harris, 2003; Leithwood, et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010). Though some authors, such as Fullan (2001), are critical of visionary leadership, vision is "increasingly regarded as an essential component of effective leadership" (Bush, 2008a, p. 3). Yukl (2010) gives a thorough idea of vision:

> "A clear vision ... helps people understand the purpose, objectives, and priorities of the organisation. It gives the work meaning, serves as a source of self-esteem, and fosters a sense of common purpose … The vision should be communicated at every opportunity and in a variety of ways." (Yukl, 2010, p. 289)

The crucial element of vision is that it helps portray "a better future" and more importantly, it links up "past events and present strategies to a vivid image of a better future for the organisation" (Yukl, 2010, p. 310). In this regard, it is important that a clear vision will take people to work according to a longer foreseeable path and timeframe – from the past to the present and then to the future – and the path is made known to all members clearly. At the interview, Angel explained that the vision statement of the English Language Centre has been spelt out as "To be one of the widely-acclaimed English language service centres in Hong Kong and be a centre for self-directed English learning".

> **Angel:** I wanted to turn the Centre into a self-learning hub… when students think about English self-regulated learning, they think about our Centre…

This vision has been communicated to the departmental members very clearly in almost every meeting. To work towards this vision, the Centre provides self-access learning materials on various learning items. Hard copies are provided at the Centre and online versions are available on the Centre website. The development of massive online open course on grammar practices is in the pipeline. To ensure the services offered are comparable to the ones offered by other universities in Hong Kong, Angel benchmarked against the service natures and scopes of activities in other universities' English language centres.

Angel did not only articulate vision for the Centre, she also connected the vision of the Centre with the Institution's vision. The Institution has always put students' English language proficiency as the prime concern. To further accomplish the broad vision, a new policy on language exit requirement has been in place at the Institution in which students are required to attain at least Band 6 in International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test upon graduation. It is hoped that the new language policy can prove the students' English language competence to the wider community. Foreseeing a surge in students' language needs, Angel has started offering an IELTS Preparation Course to students on a non-credit-bearing basis since the Centre inception. The development of the online self-access learning programmes as additional language support is fully in line with this broad vision. The newly-established Help Desk in the English Language Centre is another add-on service to offer face-to-face assistance to students. In addition, she also arranged IELTS training course for new teachers and refresher course for experienced teachers. What is more, an IELTS pre-test has been offered to the students free of charge. Students who take part in it are offered a preliminary band score so that they can have a better understanding about their strengths and weaknesses and better prepare themselves for the IELTS test before graduation. Angel tried not only to articulate an appealing vision, but also to translate the vision into feasible and attainable strategies. Most importantly, the vision is in line with a broader vision spelt out by the Institution.

Discussion

Bush (2010) suggests three dimensions of leadership: leadership as influence, leadership and values, leadership and vision. The three dimensions are the cornerstones of any leadership practice or leader practice (Spillane, 2006). However, Bush has not specified whether the three elements are of equal weighting, or whether which element would come as a prerequisite to others. In this respect, the three dimensions can emerge as follows:
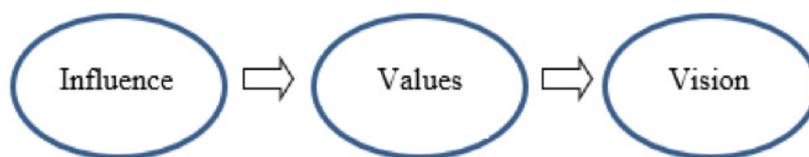
Figure 1. Linear representation of Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership.

Since the sequence and the inter-relationship of the three dimensions are not specified by Bush (2010), they could go hand in hand in an inter-connected manner with one element affecting the others as follows:
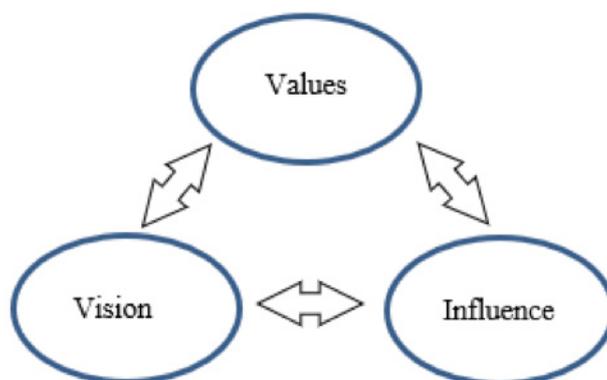

Figure 2. Interconnected representation of Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership.

Besides, certain element can appear to be more dominating than others and therefore it engulfs the other elements, as displayed in the following figure:
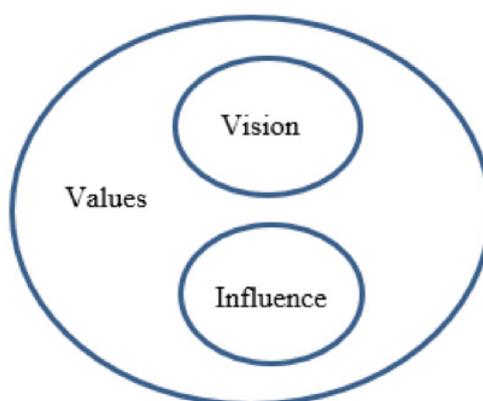

Figure 3. Inclusive representation of Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership

In addition, the three elements can also be displayed in a way that certain dimension appears to be an outcome of the team-up of the other two dimensions, which can be displayed in the following representation:
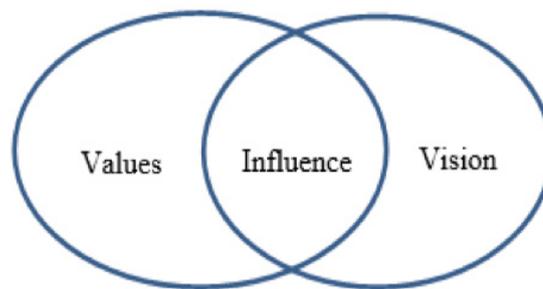
Figure 4. Mutually-inclusive representation of Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership.

When examining Angel's role as an English Language Centre Administrator, I started to think that the three dimensions are not in a form of linear line as stated in Figure 1. To Angel, her values, her seriousness about her work, her abiding love of her job, and her unwavering belief in initiatives and risk-taking came first and has become the driving force of her work. She is determined to articulate the core values to all members, gain the collective wisdom of members and form togetherness. Her core values help her move forward towards a big picture – the vision for the Centre – turning the Centre into a self-directed learning hub for English. She wanted to bring the past success of the Centre to a more successful future and to create "a better future" (Yukl, 2010, p. 310). This better-future journey lays a fountain for Angel's work. All the work done for the Centre revolves around the shared values and clearly-defined broad vision. In this case, her leadership practice could be understood by Figure 3 – inclusiveness dimensions.

However, when referring to Bush's (2010) three dimensions of leadership closely, Bush proposed that the influence process is intentional. From the interviews, it was understood that Angel did not set out to influence people in the first place. She was not too eager to influence people, not to mention exercising her authority, if any. She even felt that it was inappropriate to impose her ideas on others. She was confused when an experienced member approached her to ask her for job assignments. She kept on asking herself if she was "too high profile". The process of influence seemed to come as a natural process, or in Angel's case, as an outcome, when the core values and broad vision are articulated clearly, and above all, agreed upon members. In this regard, contrary to Bush's (2010) notion, the process of influence in Angel's situation is unintentional rather than intentional. Influence may emerge as an outcome of the joint venture of values and vision. It led me to think that Angel's practice could be more appropriately represented by Figure 4 – mutually-inclusiveness dimensions.

Title wise, Angel is an Administrator, but when examining her actual responsibilities, she is literally a leader with leadership practice involving values and vision. The influence on people and/or the Institution may appear as a perk in Angel's practice. We understand that title inflation exists in many organisations, for instance, the current titles Vice-President and President of certain commercial firms were formerly known as Manager or Senior Manager. However, title deflation is practised in Angel's situation. If "leadership is thought of as a behaviour rather than as a role or position in a hierarchy" (Morrison, 2002, p. 72), it is fine to consider what Angel has performed to be "leadership practice" but not "leader practice" (Spillane, 2006, p.14). It is also fair to regard Angel as an administrator with leadership style.

Limitations and further study

The narrative inquiry studied only one participant, Angel, in one higher education institution in Hong Kong. Due to this small number of sample size, I did not seek to make generalisable claims. I did not wish to oversimplify the interplay between factors either. Some factors affecting leadership practice such as personal traits, education background and institutional policies could be taken into account. Future research concerning exploration of leadership styles could be carried out by interviewing the participant's colleagues to gain various perspectives from different parties.

Conclusion

In this paper, a narrative inquiry into an English Language Centre Administrator of a higher education institution in Hong Kong was conducted. The Centre Administrator's assumed responsibilities and the responsibilities she has been assuming were compared and contrasted. By drawing on Bush's (2010) three dimensions, there is evidence to suggest that the participant has displayed leadership in many contexts – she instilled positive values such as a sense of responsibility and a sharing culture into the Department and articulated the Centre vision to members. Consequently, she saw changes and innovations from her; and she saw herself, the departmental members and the Department collectively thrive. She did not only receive orders and execute them, or just maintain the status quo. If Tony Bush was right in saying "Administration should be regarded as a function that supports, not supplants, the educational purposes of the school" (Bush, 2008a, p. 41), the title "Administrator" might not have done my participant justice. In this regard, her actual job responsibilities and her performance are not commensurate with the title and general expectations. Leaders are not all about "what your title is", but more about "you are who you see you are".

This paper also explored Bush's three dimensions of leadership through a narrative inquiry into Angel's first-hand accounts as an English Language Centre Administrator. It argued that the three elements may not be of equal weighting or exhibited in a linear sequence, if there is concept of weighting or a sequence in Bush's leadership dimensions. Values and vision may be the driving force of leadership whereas influence may or may not be intentional.

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A HOLE IN MY STOCKING: DISRUPTING POWER THROUGH PLAY IN THE KICKSTARTER CREATIVE ARTS PROJECT

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This article focuses on the importance of play as a necessary and developmental tool for creating democratic spaces in rural South African Primary schools through examples in the Kickstarter Creative Arts pilot project case study (The KS project). The KS project is an Educational teacher empowerment and artist in residency programme, designed as a case study to assess the impact of the Creative Arts at the Intermediate level (Grade 4, 5 and 6). The project illustrates how play, as supported by Winnicott and Vygotsky, is developmental and can be a mechanism for greater humanization in the classroom. The metaphor of a stocking is employed to advocate for experience, as per the work of John Dewey. As the methodology of the Kickstarter project is experiential, it encourages personal artistic growth for teachers, allowing play and creating shifts in the power dynamics and relationship between teachers and pupils within the classroom. As teachers engage with a democratic approach, they find learners more willing, more empathetic and more engaged. It is proposed that the KS project become aligned with the Basic Department of Education and rolled out nationwide in South Africa for the "Arts as method" approach to all subjects.

Keywords: Play, Power, South Africa, Rural Primary Schools, Kickstarter Creative Arts Project

Introduction

Stockings are a vivid memory from my childhood. I remember running to my mother's knees and pulling the transparent garment away from her legs, thinking it was her peachy satin "skin", watching it first billow and then sink back and cling tightly to her limbs again – like an astounding feat of magic. Stockings were fascinating and to a child's touch the texture was like nothing felt before: stretchy and sinew-thin, like the silky strands of a spider web. I delighted in pulling them over my hands and pushing my fingers through the membranous elastic sheen, delighting in my new emergence as a webbed creature.

This preoccupation was altered a few years later with the reality of having to wear stockings every day as part of a prescribed school uniform. The stretchy sinew-like material became scratchy and uncomfortable, the spider strands tore into ladders, and the tightly clinging close fit felt restricting and suffocating (this is not to mention the complexity of even trying to get them on in the morning, which regularly involved contorting, manoeuvring and much pulling, yanking, tearing and frustration).

This stocking metaphor becomes a lens to observe the South African classroom with its preoccupation with STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and strict, disciplinarian tradition. As the practise of donning a stocking, the education system has been criticized of limiting, squeezing and restricting, rather than nurturing learners into curious, creative and productive adults (Goetze, 2016).

However, the South African Basic Department of Education (BDE) is acknowledging that the Arts have a vital role to play, with regard to creativity and critical thinking. In her recent address of the Education Sector during a media briefing update, the minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, spoke of the "Integration of the Arts into the Mathematics, Science and Technology (STEAM)" (DBE, n.d.). Unfortunately, the minister's words appear to be lip-service in the context of the reality: many teachers lack the necessary skills to teach the Arts and have themselves had little exposure to professional artistic experiences (Andrew, 2012). The danger of policy being enforced by the BDE decision makers is that the content may not manifest in the process and that a watered-down version may be implemented, further weakening arts practice in the classroom. What is lacking is an authentic integration of democratic arts practice which engages participation in the classroom. The education project pilot, the Kickstarter Creative Arts project (KS) 2015-2016, which I project managed[1], allowed for moments of child-led exploration and creativity, driven by the Arts subjects, yet grounded within the current South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The project, like a snugly-fitted stocking, was seamlessly embedded within the school day, covering the curriculum thoroughly. In the monitoring and evaluation of the project teachers reported better relationships with their learners and that this created a better learning environment (ASSITEJ SA, 2017).

Throughout this essay the notion of 'better relationships' between teachers and learners will be explored, alongside the fact that play can disrupt the teacher-dominant structure within the classroom – as it is a catalyst for authentic engagement. A thorough and comprehensive implementation of the Arts policy, and that play offers children the chance to pursue imaginative process

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[1] During the pilot of the KS project I was the lead project manager, responsible for all logistics, training, communications and curriculum development - as well as stakeholder relationship management.

and experience, will be argued for. The work of Vygotsky and Winnicott will be discussed to define and support the concept of play as necessary and developmental. I strongly advocate that the Arts are the best vehicle for humanisation and the creation of democratic spaces, as per the writing of John Dewey, and as witnessed in the classrooms of nine-to-twelve-year olds in the Kickstarter Creative Arts project. Through memory and personal anecdotes, the metaphor of a stocking, to underpin my arguments, will be used.

Child-centred approaches

As learning should be an exploration of the world through experience (as my playful exploration of my mother's stockings was), I am drawn to current methodologies of child-centred pedagogy. For the purposes of this essay these methodologies will be referred to as "progressive" to distinguish them from the more conventional South African practice. In many South African classrooms children "learn" by sitting still, listening and repeating, and lack play as formal learning (Rule & Land, 2017). Progressive schools, by contrast, focus on the individual and the links between experience and learning ("Reggio Emilia Approach," n.d.). I advocate for experience as, not unlike a stocking, it transforms and takes shape, allowing for malleability in the approach to learning.

Philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey's ideas of Consummatory Experience resonate with my own as progressive education focuses on present experience that is "learning by doing", including an emphasis on critical thinking, life-long learning and problem solving to enhance developmental skills (Dewey, 1998, p. 96) .

Dewey urged that learning aroused an active quest for information and was constructed from the daily experiences of one's life – moving through the world one gains skills which are then transferable to new situations. Learning was therefore a life-long process (Dewey, 1998). Experience creates relevancy and personal purpose within the classroom as learners are able to locate themselves and their lives within their education.

South African classrooms do not consider the needs and capabilities of individual learners which prepares them for uniformity in an industrial working world (Robinson, 2006). Akin to the experience of pulling on a stocking, the traditional system has strangled creativity and curiosity rather than nourishing learners into eager, responsive and imaginative adults (Goetze, 2016). Even the structure of most traditional classrooms places restrictions on learner's behaviours, freedoms and interactions:

> "The limitation which was put upon outward action by the fixed arrangements of the typical school classroom, with its fixed rows of desks and its military regimen of pupils who were permitted to move only at fixed signals, put a great restriction upon intellectual and moral freedom" (Dewey, 1998, p. 70).

Dewey does, however, caution about the polarising effects of tradition vs. progressive education. He says that educational theory is no exception in creating *"Either-Ors"* and there is danger in building a new curriculum purely in negation of the traditional (Dewey, 1998). Although I concur with many aspects of child-centred pedagogy, the potential flaw is that it minimises the importance of the content, which is a vital component in the Kickstarter Creative Arts project.

Background of the Kickstarter Creative Arts project

One cannot observe education in South Africa without acknowledging the country's complex socio-political and colonial past. Almost three decades on the legacy of Apartheid and the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (later renamed the Black Education Act of 1953 – a segregation law which enforced racially separated educational facilities) lingers in many South African classrooms (Aldridge, Fraser, & Ntuli, 2009). It is a daunting task to adequately address the histories of Arts Education in South Africa and this article does not allow for an in-depth study. However, it is important to frame that rural schools in South Africa exist in conditions of dire poverty, with stark socio-economic inequalities resulting in violent communities (Murris, 2016). The historically exclusionary system impacted the teachers within the project, as exposure to formal Arts training during their own pre-service education would have been culturally questionable, notably limited or non-existent (Andrew, 2012). In this fractured landscape, there was a need for an Art Education initiative which could adequately train teachers and equip them with the skills to deliver high quality Arts lessons for their schools.

The Kickstarter Creative Arts project (KS) is an Educational teacher empowerment and artist-in-residency programme, designed as a case study to assess the impact of the Creative Arts at the Intermediate level (Grades 4, 5 and 6) in peri-urban and rural primary Schools in South Africa (ASSITEJ SA, 2017). The project is implemented and managed by ASSITEJ SA, the South African arm of the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (originally entitled in French as Association Internationale du Théâtre de l'Enfance et la Jeunesse- ASSITEJ). This organisation was originally established in 1965 as an international alliance of experts involved in theatre for children and young people (ASSITEJ International n.d.). The KS project is sponsored by Rand Merchant Bank and is the first of its kind in South Africa. It was originally implemented as a case study to assess programme outcomes for both target and beneficiary groups, that is, creative arts teachers and their pupils, across 20 different schools (ASSITEJ SA, 2017).

The aim of the project (piloted in 2015-2016) was to assess the impact that a solid, well-delivered Arts intervention can generate in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS - The National Curriculum policy in South Africa) curriculum Intermediate phase. The South African policy statement includes the Arts (Music, Dance, Dramatic Arts and Visual Arts) as a compulsory subject in the curriculum (Creative Arts) from the foundation phase all the way till Grade 12. This spans the totality of the curriculum as a mandatory subject till Grade 9, as Creative Arts, and can then be taken as optional subjects (Dramatic Arts, Visual Arts, Music and Dance) to the final year of high school.

The methodology of the project is experiential, which supports aspects of child-centred pedagogy ("Empower Education," n.d.). The Artist Facilitators (AFs) and teachers receive training which guides them through a step-by-step process of physically making artworks and performances themselves. The result is that the teaching and delivering of the Creative Arts (CA) material in the manual is understood and experienced by the AFs and teachers, allowing for a greater embodiment of knowledge. This approach is pivotal given that training for the subject has not been adequate in the past[2] (ASSITEJ SA, 2017).

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[2] In 2015, during our initial baseline assessments of the schools within the project, we found that up to 89% of teachers teaching the subject had not received formal training in Arts subjects (ASSITEJ SA, 2017). Those who had received training report that it was a mundane reading out of the policy document and included no practical workshops or training on how to implement the subject in the classroom.

ASSITEJ SA aims for the Kickstarter Creative Arts project to become a national project to encourage further engagement with Arts and play in classrooms throughout the country. In most South African primary schools, play is common place (like the stockings worn as part of a uniform). However, it is restricted to the playground and is not welcome in the formal classroom space (Aronstam & Braund, 2015). Through varying definitions of play we will find why it is of vital importance to create more effective learning environments within the classroom.

Play

> *"To Play is to be in the world. To Play is to be Human."*
>
> (Sicart, 2014, p. 1)

Play is often defined as an act of recreation or enjoyment, mostly performed by or associated with children. ("play | Definition of play in English by Oxford Dictionaries," n.d.) However, play is more radical than what this definition suggests as evident in the work of Perry Else, where he describes play as an exploratory mode of discovery: "playing is a process not a product; playing is a way of doing things not an end in itself" (Else, 2009, p. 30). He goes on to mention the numerous undertakings where play is significant, such as identity, using one's body in different ways, when creating Art and interacting with others and the world.

Play is also developmental as noted by Russian psychologist and polymath Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, 1896-1934, who explores play as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do unaided and what they cannot. Most children will follow an adult's example and will moderately develop the capacity to take on greater tasks (Holzman & Newman, 1993). Vygotsky believed that through play the child is always exploring possibilities beyond themselves. "Play gives a child new forms of desires (rules). It teaches her to desire by relating her desires to a fictitious 'I' to her role in the game and its rules. In this way, a child's greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that tomorrow will become her basic level of real action and morality" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). A child's role playing of various situations results in them deepening their capacity to take on and understand greater tasks. Vygotsky claims that in play a child is always striving to behave beyond their development capacity: "in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.102). Therefore, play can be viewed as the process by which humans make sense of the world around them which is meaningful to each individual (Else, 2009).

Play is therefore developmental, significant and important. Donald Woods Winnicott, 1897-1971, a paediatrician and psychoanalyst, renowned for his contribution to the study of children's well-being, considered play as the key to emotional and psychological welfare. He observed not only the ways that children play, but also the way adults "play" through making art, engaging in sports, hobbies, humour and meaningful conversations. He saw play as vitally important to the development of authentic selfhood. Therefore, play becomes an active undertaking which is key in a number of human pursuits.

At this juncture, it is important to define play as both a concept and, as how it is practically utilised in South African schools, in order to argue why it is of significance in the KS project. In early childhood, it is widely understood that play is the dominant role of engagement within the nursery school or

creche[3] where children are predominantly instructed through the use of play, games and creative arts (such as painting, movement, music and story reading) in order to support cognitive development (Overstreet, 2018). Engagement takes place on mats on the floor or seated in circles, with the teacher seated amongst the children, at their level, in an unthreatening manner. Research on play in early childhood development (ECD) reveals it is a vital element of learning and the area in which literacy skills are best developed. As Overstreet claims in her article, citing Nitecki and Chung, play is "a powerful vehicle to refine social, cognitive, physical and language skills" (Overstreet, 2018, p. 217).

However, as learners mature and move into "big" school (more formal, traditional institutes educating learners from roughly five or six years and up), many of these vital elements are forgotten in favour of more "typical" classroom practice. These include the adoption of formal school uniforms, sitting on chairs at desks in rows and a single dominant teacher figure who is at the front of the class, usually standing, to instruct the lesson (Dewey, 1998). These environments offer less freedom and call for uniformity and the playful way in which the learners used to be engaged is lost (Robinson, 2006). A recent study found that there is little grasp of the pedagogy of play in South African classrooms and that teachers have not received adequate training in this area (Aronstam & Braund, 2015).

Play is developmental, significant and vital in South African classrooms. It is a flexible and adaptable process which can be described and done in a multitude of different ways. My "using" of my mother's stockings in different, adaptable ways, may have taught me more than the actual wearing of them, i.e. more than the purposes they were originally designed and intended for. In both the work of Vygotsky and Winnicott play is seen as a necessary developmental process which is both educational and self-affirming and therefore it must be included as a vital component of curriculum at all phases.

Play in the Kickstarter Creative Arts project

Play is vital to growth and human evolution and is used in many ways in the KS project. One aspect of this is the use of games, especially at the outset of every KS lesson, to warm up and prepare the learners. The type of game depends on the genre and the lesson. For example, a physical warm up game may be needed for dance, a free drawing exercise for art, etc. The rules of these games may vary too. Sometimes they are competitive; sometimes they are explorations; sometimes they are simply used to warm up the body, stretch their muscles and get the learners moving in the space. Not only do these games allow play and freedom but they are also opportunities for the learners to take risks, as they exist in a space which is free from consequence. For example, a learner could get something wrong which may result in them being out in the game, but this failure is not catastrophic to their lives. In this way, the classroom can become a space for failure which is self-contained and manageable. Learners could work through issues of failure and defeat without the stakes being detrimental, therefore allowing experience and the learning to build resilience

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[3] Terms widely used in South Africa to describe the phase of childhood education from ages 2-5, often also interestingly referred to as 'play school'.

applicable in later life. In an undemocratic classroom there would be no room for failure, nor any space to practise being wrong.

As previously mentioned, the methodology of the project is experiential, i.e. one cannot make a dance without dancing. The learners are actively engaged in the making, the doing, and the creativity of the lesson. Most often the learners work in groups, collaboratively deciding how they should create/complete the task at hand. A facilitator or teacher may give an instruction or set a creative task but will then allow the group to explore the ways and means in which they choose to create or complete the task. The learners may explore various movements (in a dance lesson) or act out various scenarios (in a drama lesson) in order to unpack the task and come to a decision about what to use in the final product. These are essentially various explorative "acts of play" (with various task-dependant tools utilised: the body, voices, space, or instruments) with the aim of producing a product, i.e. a dance, a song, a painting or a play. Miguel Sicart speaks of play as "a way of engaging with the world – not as an activity of consumption but as an activity of production" (Sicart, 2014, p. 5). Exploration and play are vital components in choice and creation.

In most South African classrooms teaching practise takes the form of prescribed knowledge being dictated in facts to the learner (Goetze, 2016). Often these facts are rooted in the past and deemed relevant or important by external bodies who are not in direct contact with learners or have little knowledge about their culture, languages and lives (Andrew, 2012). Learners are therefore rendered powerless in the process of their education and are subject to a system which doesn't allow freedom, both in the scope of the curriculum and in the classroom space.

Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of elders. Moreover, that which is taught is thought of as essentially static. It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes which will surely occur in the future. It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule, not the exception (Dewey, 1998, p. 5).

This is the case with the learners in the Kickstarter project. Their lives are constantly in flux, with very little consistency or safety, due to the socio-economic situations and communities in which they live (Murris, 2016). Therefore, much of the prescribed curriculum is irrelevant, nor does it assist them in dealing with the traumatic experiences they face every day. A consummatory curriculum, one which speaks to the lives of the learners, where "schooling is to become a means of personal fulfilment, to provide a context in which individuals discover and develop unique identities" and "with many dimensions for personal development" (Eisner & Vallance, 1974, p. 105) is quintessential to these communities.

Although the learners in the KS project are instructed in the steps of the lesson, what shape that task takes, what dance the children choose to create with the tools they have been given and what characters or theme the play will have, is dependent upon the learners' decisions in that moment. Therefore, those creative choices provide the learners with their own autonomy within the class. They are the ones dictating how the creation will unfold. This provides learners with a degree of freedom not available in their other subjects where most often the facts are dictated. Play is therefore an essential element of the Kickstarter Creative project as it allows

for failure and defeat, as well as autonomy, growth, creativity and curiosity of the learner, and the making of tangible products through those very interactions.

Play and Power

> *"Play is what I do when everyone else stops telling me what to do"*
>
> (Else, 2009, p. 6)

Power is a complex, pervasive construct that requires more in-depth analysis than this article allows. I draw briefly on Foucalt's theories and my experiences in educational settings for the purpose of this article. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucalt outlines the historical development of systems of rank, order, hierarchies of knowledge or ability, classification and surveillance in the penal system and the evolution of educational structure (Foucault, 1975). He notes how the development of punishment, from torture as public spectacle to an economy of suspended rights is also evident in educational organisation (Foucault, 1975). Schools are compared to penal institutions in the management and control of attendees' movement and access through timetabling, prescribed breaks, designated spaces and surveillance (Foucault, 1975). This is significant in the South African context as the Apartheid system limited equal access to quality education for the majority of South Africans which, in turn, impacts not only knowledge and content, but also the teaching practise, methodology and general understanding of the Arts (Andrew, 2012).

Power dynamics are not only evident in the historical systems of educational structure – the classroom mimics these systems of control. Power is asserted in the physical arrangement of space and the relationship between teachers and learners in a classroom. In a traditional South African setting, the roles are clear: the teacher is the one asking the questions and the students must answer in the "correct" ways. Donnelly et al. refer to this as the *Didactic Contract*, stating that it is the dominant mode students and teachers conform to daily in most classrooms. "These routines dictate certain roles and limitations where students and teachers alike negotiate the most expedient approach to arrive at the desired answer" (Donnelly et al., 2014). This study observed the possible power shifts in inquiry-based processes in the classroom but found that the entrenched roles of hierarchy between teachers and students are still dominant and problematic. This contract is not an explicit one but is based on implicit teacher and learner expectation of classroom behaviour and how they should interact (Donnelly et al., 2014).

The teacher's domineering physical standing position is significant as they are positioned above the seated learner and appear as a foreboding figure of authority. Viewed in this context, the classroom becomes a complex setting with undercurrents of power and control (Donnelly et al., 2014). The prescribed stocking is a metaphor for this and is emblematic of the prescriptive limitations and restrictions that become imposed as learners are instructed on how to behave, when to ask questions and even how and when to learn.

One could argue that these systems provide structure. Just as the stocking enhances shape and support for the leg, one could argue that the desks and chairs, the dominant teacher, and the other apparatuses of the system supply structure and discipline (Ball, 2013). My concern with the dictatorial classroom is that power and punishment are often synonymous. Dominance can be problematic if it is limiting

the learner's growth (be that fear of expression, individualism or fear of punishment). In many cases, teachers inflate their own sense of control through the mechanism of punishment. A more humane approach, one which offers a neutralising of these power structures, is advocated for by Dewey (1998):

> "One may assume, I suppose, that one thing which has recommended the progressive movement is that it seems in accord with the democratic ideal to which our people is committed than do the procedures of the traditional school, since the latter have so much of the autocratic about them" (Dewey, 1998, p. 24).

Teachers who had been trained in institutions which, openly, or at least tacitly, entrenched apartheid systems of education perpetuate control – as it is the only system they can operate within (Andrew, 2012) and there is evidence of this during the KS project. In the first year of the pilot, there were reports of teacher resistance to the "creative noise" the lessons produced. Teachers tried to control or reduce the learners' immersion in the creative process if it got too loud or seemed out of control. The facilitators were frustrated by the teachers' attempts to squash this experience as they (the AFs) saw the "creative noise" as productive, akin to a musical "jam" session where the learners were just "getting going" and being excited and enthralled by the creative process. The teachers' fears relate back to the *Didactic Contract* and structures of power (Donnelly et al., 2014). In a traditional classroom, the learners are silent, passive vessels; if the class becomes noisy the assumption is the teacher has lost control. The KS process challenged the teachers' fear of this contract being breached by the learners' rising volume, as the noise was productive in these instances. Vygotsky speaks of the action of play allowing freedom, "in that it is a novel form of behavior liberating the child from constraints" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 96). Once the teachers in the KS project came to understand that the "creative noise" and play was productive (and even neccessary to) the process, they were more open to allowing it in their classrooms (ASSITEJ SA, 2017).

The Kickstarter project allowed learners to include their everyday experiences in the classroom. Children were frequently observed acting out scenes of alcohol abuse or violence in the drama lessons which are clearly enactments from their socio-political backgrounds in the rural context of South Africa (Murris, 2016). "Quite often the playful mode is when children feel they are free to make their own choices without intervention from others" (Else, 2009, p. 33). Just as I used to stretch and contort my mother's stockings to explore and understand them so, too, are the learners expanding their realities and stories in an attempt at meaning making and must be allowed the space to explore relevant difficult topics in order to reconcile their interpretations of them.

Another example of a democratic approach to learning was evident in a classroom in Zamdela, just outside of Sasolberg in the Northern Free State Province of South Africa. Sasolberg is an industrial town divided into three main areas: the CBD, the Vaal Park residential suburb and the "township" of Zamdela. Vaal Park is an affluent area, whilst Zamdela is the area formerly reserved for black people during South Africa's past of racial segregation. Even though the school is under-resourced and has very little in the way of Arts materials the teachers we had trained on the project were highly-motivated individuals. Upon arrival at the school and visiting the teacher's classroom, all the desks and chairs had been moved out of the usual configuration and stacked against the walls, allowing for an open, neutral space in the room. This subversion of the original classroom set up (desks and chairs in rows, with the teacher standing in the front of the classroom to assert command) is what Scott G. Eberle refers to as "imagination and pleasurable expectation" (Eberle, 2014, p. 223) because anticipation, paradoxically, gives way to surprise. This anticipated surprise occurs because "memory

and prediction share a neural substrate . . . [thus] players in a state of anticipation may be remembering a future pleasure" (Eberle, 2014, p. 223). The learners stepping into a changed space, with no desks and chairs to sit on in the predictable routine, would be curious, surprised and possibly even in anticipation of a "known pleasurable expectation" (Eberle, 2014, p. 223).

During the aforementioned visit, the learners were both excited and receptive as they formed a circle to begin. Then, as part of a movement-based and focused drama exercise, the learners formed pairs, faced each other and enacted a mirroring task, where one partner closely followed the other's movements in silence. As the last small giggles died down and the learners began to focus and really hone into the exercise, the teacher noticed that one learner did not have a partner due to the uneven numbers in the class. "Come," she called out to him, "we will be partners," and proceeded not only to join the general group in the game but allowed the learner to initiate the movement.

This was a startling, willing act of vulnerability. That a teacher should so readily relinquish her dominant status and move from authority to participant, speaks to the humanising impact of the Arts and a shift in the teacher practice throughout the process. Her current receptiveness links back to the earlier frustration of the facilitators, when the teachers were unwilling to invest in the creative process nor enact the vulnerability necessary to support the learning. A distinct change is witnessed in the choice to support the learner by directly involving herself in the task and place that learner's need above her dominance. By moving into direct action with the group she undermined her position of power and interacted with the learner on the same level.

Whether the teacher's choice in that moment was motivated by her humane need to include the child or by her own decision to join the game for her own enjoyment is not relevant. What is important is that she was open and willing to engage and shift the dominant narrative of hierarchy in the traditional classroom, knowingly or not (Donnelly et al., 2014).

Her readiness to leap in also speaks to her trust in the process of play and that the other learners were so invested in the task that they did not require an authority figure to watch over them, rather that they were entirely absorbed in their own concentrations centring around the paired-task at hand. This example is what Misty Ferguson would refer to as a "new authentic mutual humanity" (Ferguson, 2018, p. 45). The shift in power structure through play and laughter invites a new, deepened humanity into the classroom.

Garfath, a teacher exploring play in his classroom, speaks of the shift in his own practice, confessing that he spent years "denying his own playfulness as a means of bringing the will of the children into accordance with his own will" (Garfath, 2015, p. 113). "Garfath soon realized that the greatest opposition to play and playfulness was his own ego, his own need for absolute control" (Ferguson, 2018, p. 45). These shifts in perception regarding dominance and power can be likened to the laddering of a stocking, changing its materiality through material failure – similar to the acceptance that "creative noise" equals a productive, "healthy" Arts classroom. Garfath's realisation is one of personal awareness but indicates how play can neutralise autocratic struggles in the classroom:

> "As the power struggle is lessened a new authentic mutual humanity emerges, as do new possibilities for learning in conjunction with the development of individual and collective voices expressing this freedom from imposed oppositionality in the classroom" (Ferguson, 2018, p. 45).

This is further articulated by a teacher in the Kickstarter project:

> "The workshop opened my eyes. I enjoy now being able to reach all my learners and seeing them blossom and grow more confident. I used to speak at them. I used to stand in front of the class and just talk. But now I understand that we are partners. They too must contribute their thoughts and ideas. This has been a beautiful relationship. Teacher, Free State school" (ASSITEJ SA, 2017).

As the learners witness their teacher playing and laughing, it allows them to connect on a level which is greater than the traditional, superficial pupil-teacher interaction. The learners witness the teacher as someone: a human with emotions and expressive capacity and not just as a figure of authority. This, in turn, shapes the child's view of actual learning in that it can be pleasurable and fun.

This humanity is further reflected in the data gathering during the Kickstarter Pilot which took place at the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017. Over 40 teachers from the 20 schools participating in the project were asked the question "Have you observed a change in your relationship with the learners and do you think this creates a better/more effective learning environment?" A staggering 100% of the teachers responded favourably. They went on to say that their relationship with the learners was better and that the learners now trusted and confided in them (ASSITEJ SA, 2017). Authentic play cultivates tenderness, and this nurtures closeness between teachers and learners, fostering understanding, compassion and greater independence as trust grows. I full-heartedly agree with Garfarth when he states that play is an invitation to "communicate something forcefully genuine and to discover something equally genuine in me" (Garfath, 2015, p. 118).

Conclusion

My experience with stockings was originally sensory: scrunching and stretching, manipulating and twisting the elastic nylon layers. Experience is paramount to understanding (as supported by Dewey) and my engagement with the stocking, both physically as a child and in the unravelling of this essay, was playful and imbued with curiosity to discover more. This approach is crucial to child-centred pedagogy, with its focus on individual progress and discovery through play. As play is developmental and assists in the expansion of a child's growth, the play practice within the KS project is educational and rooted in experience.

Play shifts the traditional South African classroom power structures through extensive Arts-based group work and the creation of original works together. Teachers become less autocratic as they readily involve themselves in the play and warm-up games throughout the sessions and grow with the learners. As teachers engage with a deeper democratic approach (as outlined by Garfarth, Ferguson and other examples), they find learners more willing, more empathetic and more engaged in their classrooms. Play exposes joy and laughter which allows for deeper human interaction and connection. This creates intimacy both between learners and their teachers and builds autonomy which allows for trust. Play is therefore a mighty means to disrupt power and nurture greater humanisation and compassion within classrooms globally, as evidenced in the Kickstarter Creative Arts project. We need to support play as an approach of nurturing curiosity in children if we wish to see critical thinking and classrooms of productive learning in the future. The project has also allowed for greater teacher

understanding of artistic process and stresses the importance of thorough implementation and practical Arts training for all those involved.

The next step for the KS project would be to become aligned with the BDE and roll out nationwide training not only in the Arts subjects but for the *"Arts as method"* approach to all subjects: how to teach Maths, Science and technology with Arts-based practice and methodologies. This would considerably and authentically integrate the Arts within the South African education landscape.

I propose that this approach is adopted nationwide in South Africa as not only does it offer radical learning but increases empathy and understanding, all of which are vital components currently lacking in our fractured, violent and unequal society.

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CORERJ would like to acknowledge the generous support of the following colleges during 2019:
Clare Hall, Homerton College, and Wolfson College