

Smart Phones and Teaching/Learning English:

*Bring in “Smart Phones and Social Networking” to English
classroom as an effective teaching/ learning device and approach*

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❧ Abstract ❧

There's almost no way to take away smart phones from students as most of them are either on the verge of addicting to it or feeling the need to connect with their friends through social networking all the time. Smart phones have long been a big and very troublesome issue for parents, school administrators and teachers ever since they became a “necessity” for students. Therefore, instead of cracking brains to forbid, restrain or outwit students from using smart phones during the class, there might be a better way to solve this problem and, even better off, to make the best use of this smart device and social networking platform by turning them into a helpful assistant in teaching and learning English.

The objective of this action research is to share my personal experience of utilizing smart phones and social networking, especially “LINE” and “YouTube”, to be good tools for both teachers and students. With more than three years' experiment, I have found smart phones and social networking platform definitely easy and handy helpers for me in the aspects of enriching my teaching, monitoring students' learning progress, and enhancing students' learning interest. And without doubt, once my teaching efficiency is raised and students' learning interest is aroused, students' overall English ability will be fortified as well.

This paper will be presented in the following format:

- I. What smart phones and social networking platform can do for English teachers and learners. The strategies and procedures.
- II. Theories that support my idea of “Teaching with the assistance of smart phones and social networking”.
- III. Evaluation and reflection on this idea of bring in smart phones and social networking into English class.

Key words: smart phones, social networking, meaningful output

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I. What smart phones can do for English teachers and learners.

1. preview the textbook or English magazine, the two major reading materials in most of the current English classroom.

Ideally, teachers would expect students to preview the focused/ target text before the real teaching begins. Yet, usually, students at high school level don't do "preview" at all. They either have no time for it because they have too much homework or too many tests to prepare for the next day or don't have the habit doing it yet.

We probably all agree upon the idea that, in leaning, previewing the target text material helps students locate what they don't know or are confused about before the real teaching begins, and therefore they know when to be more attentive while the teacher is going through what they feel unfamiliar with.

Traditionally, teachers might give students a written or oral quiz on the content to check if students do the "preview". Now, we have a much fun way to do so by using smart phones or social networking. And it not only makes everyone actually preview the text but also helps students know the merit of previewing. Then, gradually they would cultivate a habit of doing it. And, eventually, it boosts students' overall English ability.

The procedure of doing this is: first, group students, usually 3-4 students as a group, and ask them to try their best to finish the specially designed pre-teaching activity handout (see pic. 1-1-1, 1-1-2, 1-1-3, 1-1-4). To accomplish this task, students are required to understand the content as much as possible. During the process, they need to ask, discuss with the group members or answer the questions through the cooperative learning strategy.

Usually, the most frequent problem students come across is the new

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words and terms while reading or dealing with the puzzles on the handouts during the pre-teaching activity. Yet, the build-in dictionary of their smart phones make it an easy task.

In addition to checking up the unfamiliar words, smart phones are convenient when students need to turn to “google” for help for further scaffolding while answering the extensive questions (see pic. 1-2-1).

Those questions students can't solve during the preview phase send very valuable information for teachers. They indicate where their students get stocked. And, therefore, it helps teachers teach only what students really need. And, not surprisingly, it helps raise the level of both the teaching and learning efficiency.

To prevent students from misusing smart phones for non-task related activities, students are asked to finish the task in a limited time set. With time limitation, every minute counts, and they need to use time smartly. In other words, they really don't have time to waste but seize their time and opportunity of using smart phones in class. (see pic. 1-3-1,1-3-2,1-3-3,1-3-4)

The advantages of this method include (1) students could make the best use of the phones for looking up the unknown words and searching for the background information of the text; (2) students are trained to form the habit of doing preview before class; (3) students gradually learn not to rely on teachers for reading comprehension; (4) last but not least, students are then exposed to more or extra authentic English texts while looking up the information on the internet.

By using smart phones as a teaching technique to guide students to preview before the class, the benefits are actually beyond what I have expected. It arouses students' learning interest, raises the teaching and learning efficiency, and boosts students' reading comprehension.

(pic 1-1-1)
Pre-teaching handout

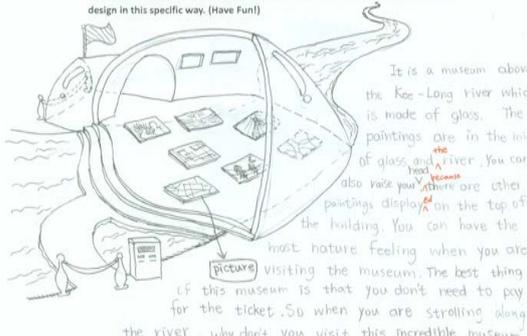
Lesson 6 The Guggenheim

Class 208 Group _____ Name 張璽 李敏中 王詩霽

According to the text, Frank Lloyd Wright likes his architectural design to be harmonized with the surroundings, and that is why he designed the Guggenheim museums in Spain with metal wall looking like fish scales.

If you were Frank Lloyd Wright, how would you design a museum located in Da-Zhi area and make it harmonized with the surroundings of Da-Zhi?

Please draw the picture of your design, and explain why you, as Frank Lloyd Wright, design in this specific way. (Have Fun!)



It is a museum above the Kee-Long river which is made of glass. The paintings are in the middle of glass and river. You can also raise your head because there are other paintings display on the top of the building. You can have the most nature feeling when you are visiting the museum. The best thing of this museum is that you don't need to pay for the ticket. So when you are strolling along the river, why don't you visit this incredible museum!!

A very creative idea!

(pic 1-1-2)

Lung-teng B4 L8: Freud and the Meanings of Dreams

Class 205 Group _____ Names & No 11 蔡慈 14 李維 17 歐陽 18 吳靜

1. Freud mentioned a few mechanisms of dreams in his book "The Interpretation of Dreams". One is condensation, and another is replacement. Do you have any examples to support his theory? Ask your group members, and try to interpret your dreams!

There were some people wanting to drink pearl milk tea. So they went to the shop.

Everyone asked for a cup of pearl milk tea. And they were looking forward to their drinkings.

I want a cup of pearl milk tea.

But the cups were shaped in a way that they tried to make the cups stay still, but she couldn't.

STAY STILL!

We think that they could dig a hole on the table so the cups can stay still.

To conclude, she must felt that having geometry was very depressing. And she wanted to drink pearl milk tea. Drinking pearl milk tea symbolized her desire for?

That means what she had to do and she wanted to do something but she failed to keep them in balance.

Am interesting interpretation and association!

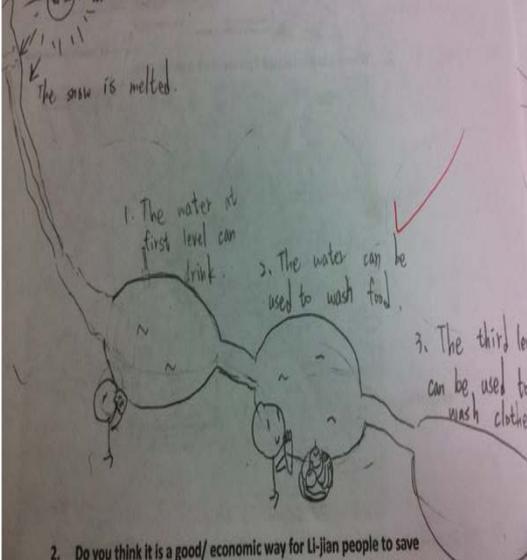
put down a hole

(pic 1-1-3)

Questions in the Text (50%)

Please draw the three-eyed well, and tell me what its individual function is?

The snow is melted.



1. The water at first level can drink.

2. The water can be used to wash food.

3. The third level can be used to wash clothes.

2. Do you think it is a good/ economic way for Li-jian people to save water resources? Why or why not?

The water can be used more than one times.

(pic 1-1-4)

2. Do you think it is a good/ economic way for Li-jian people to save water resources? Why or why not?

I think it is a good and economic way for Li-jian people to save water resources, because water was used again and again at different levels. Every drop of water have been well used. Besides, the water came from nature; it's clean and free. This is a brilliant idea a masterpiece of the ancients.

(pic1-2-1) google for information or answer

Lesson 5 Jane Goodall

Class _____ No _____ Name _____

1. Look at the pictures below, and answer the following questions:



- (A) (B)
- a.) Which one is chimpanzee? (A) or (B)? 10%
- b.) Which kind of primate this statement refers to, chimpanzee or gorilla? 30%
- "Their habitat includes tropical to subtropical forests. Adult males are called silver backs, and they are 1.5 – 1.8 meters tall, weigh between 140 and 200 kilograms. An adult female is about half of the size of a male one."
- (please check:
<http://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-gorilla-and-vs-chimpanzee/>)

2. Read the following paragraph, and answer or do the following tasks:
- "Dame Jane Morris Goodall, born in 1934, is a British primatologist, ethnologist, anthropologist, and UN Messenger of Peace. Considered to be the world's foremost expert on chimpanzees, Goodall is best known for her 55-year study of social and family interactions of wild chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park, Tanzania. She is the founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and the Roots & Shoots program, and she has worked extensively on conservation and animal welfare issues. She has served on the board of the Nonhuman Rights Project since its founding in 1996."
- A) Which of the following statements is not correct? 20%
- Jane Goodall is a primatologist, ethnologist and an anthropologist.
 - She is an expert on every primate.
 - She founded an institute.
 - She works on the conservation of animal welfare. 40%
- B) Write a little paragraph to summarize what you know about 5 facts about Jane Goodall. Read your summary to at least 2 of your partners. And then

(pic 1-2-2)

B1 L11 Saving sight worldwide

Pre-teaching activity with a DI approach.

CLASS _____ NO _____ NAME _____

- I. 寫下每段的重點 ("run run" group 寫中文, "good job" group 寫中文再翻成英文, "better than better" group please
- Write a summary of L11
 - Watch TED TALK: how to improve the world before 30. Please see this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAGSbWLY7x0>

*檢視所選重點有無符合文章結構與邏輯

- II. Questions for TED talk watchers:
- What things this girl has done to help the world? List three of them.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - What do you think you can do to help the world before 30?
 - _____
 - _____
 - What are the words and phrases you've learned from this video?
 - _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
 - _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____
 - Going-beyond-your-limit task: make a short recording (less than 2 mins) about your feeling and thoughts after watching this video. And upload it on LINE group. Before the end of today.

(pic 1-3-1) using smart phones in class



(pic 1-3-2)



(pic 1-3-3)



(pic 1-3-4)



2. Sharpen up students' listening and speaking abilities

Besides reading, smart phones and social networking platform are very helpful and handy for teachers to help students sharpen up their listening and speaking skills, just by assigning listening and speaking tasks based on either textbook or English magazine, two major reading material required for term exams. Or, if possible, make use of the resource from YouTube.

(1)

There are various ways to do this. For instance, ask students to “summarize” a reading or an audio text. Then, they read out loud their summary to their classmates as many times as possible in the jigsaw puzzle activity. After the activity, they are supposed to have been very familiar with the content of their summary to the degree that they can even memorize or talk about it without the script. And, then, they are required to record their summary by their phones, and then post their

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recordings onto the class LINE group before the class is over. This task requires students to read, write, listen and speak. Hence, it is a very powerful teaching and learning skill in terms of teaching or learning a new language.

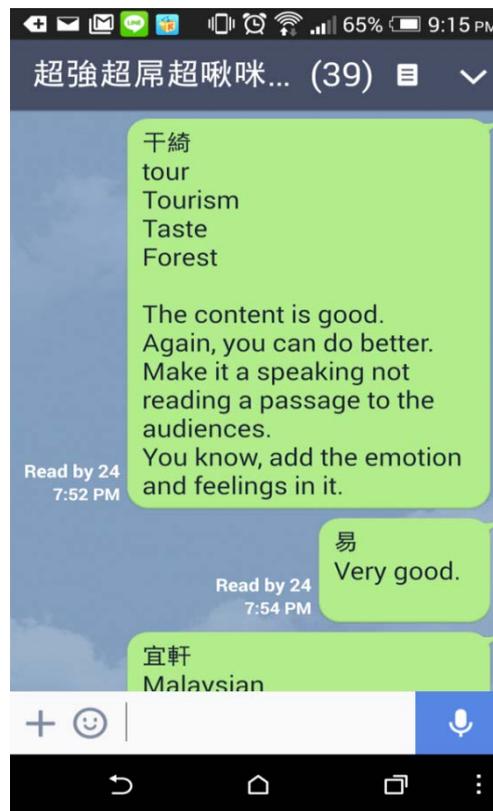
When applying it to teaching English magazine, students are assigned two reading texts before the class, and are encouraged to preview both the texts because they won't know which article they need to do the summary and recording task until the class begins. And, since there's strict time limit, students also need to make their summaries as concise and perfect as possible; therefore, they'd better preview both texts thoroughly the night before so that they could make the job done not only fast but well and meet their expectation—to score high.

Posting their works on the social networking platform makes students really care about how well they can do because their works are available to the public, at least to their classmates. Their performance becomes something not only about their grades but also about their sense of achievement or even about dignity issue. Furthermore, lifting up the grading percentage of this task also helps increase students' ambition to make it perfect. And once students read, write and speak about the content of the English magazine on daily or weekly basis, it is no doubt that they can improve their overall English ability in a very short time.

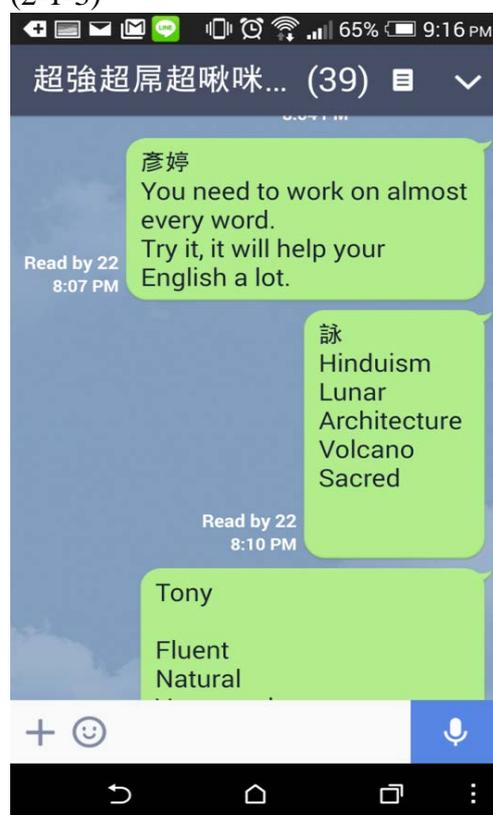
Post speaking work on LINE (2-1-1)



(2-1-2)



(2-1-3)



(2-1-4)



Jigsaw puzzle activity (2-1-5)



(2-1-6)



Video posted on YouTube

1. Jigsaw puzzle activity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNFtlxp70Mw>

2. students' performance after jigsaw puzzle activity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNFtlxp70Mw>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXbKZW_xsqq

3. Students use cell phone to verify the pronunciation of words

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp_Y9GbyIqE&feature=youtu.be

4. students practice their summary before recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfJc1SboYJo>

5. students' actual recording after practice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmyIbUrqCd4>

(2)

Another very efficient way to sharpen up students' listening and speaking ability is to assign different videos tasks (usually 1 to 2 mins in length) of lesson related topics and of different levels from YouTube. To finish this task, students need to watch and listen, and then jot down the script. Then, with practice through the jigsaw activity, they do their best to lip synchronize with the speaker of the video, record their work, and

upload it onto LINE or YouTube.

To make their performance perfect, students need to listen with their group members very closely to the video for words and meaning. They might need help from the built-in voice recognition function of smartphones, and spend a lot of time and efforts making a very good lip synchronizing video of their own! And once they accomplish it, the tremendous sense of achievement is definitely beyond words.

Students' lip synchronizing videos posted on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g99LQ0Y3J7s&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRknccfS97k&app=desktop>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbMw61oai2o&feature=youtu.be>

3. Quiz

(1)

I always ask students if they were teachers, how or what they would do to design a simple quiz on a certain text or important grammatical concept we are working on. Then they set off to make a test sheet, and upload it on LINE, and after that, students are asked to answer the questions and explain what they know to the class.

From the questions designed by students, teachers are virtually informed whether or not students notice or spot certain important grammatical points. Similarly, when answering the questions, if students could explain grammar very logically and well, teachers can assure

themselves that students have fully learned what they need to know. If not, teachers still get the hint what to teach for further clarification.

While students are designing questions, students will naturally become very vigilant and conscious of every detail in the text so that they won't get trapped easily by some complicated questions designed by other groups because they have read the text thoroughly and probably have designed the similar questions, too!

(2)

Sometimes I have pop up quizzes in class based on how the class goes. If having some quiz works to cool down an agitated class, students will be informed of the coming of a quiz after teaching. Thus, they had better pay attention to whatever I am going to teach. Usually, under this circumstance, I won't have enough time to prepare a paper-based test for each student. So, I'll either take a picture of what I have written on a piece of paper or type some quick important questions in the dialogue box on LINE and let students do the quiz accordingly. Again, students need their smart phones and the social networking platform --- LINE.

(3)

Every now and then, I will have a vocabulary contest for students especially before every term exam or other occasions. Again, to save paper, I'll take a picture of those words and then upload it on LINE. Then I can save at least 140 pieces of paper because currently I teach 4 classes. (see pic 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4)

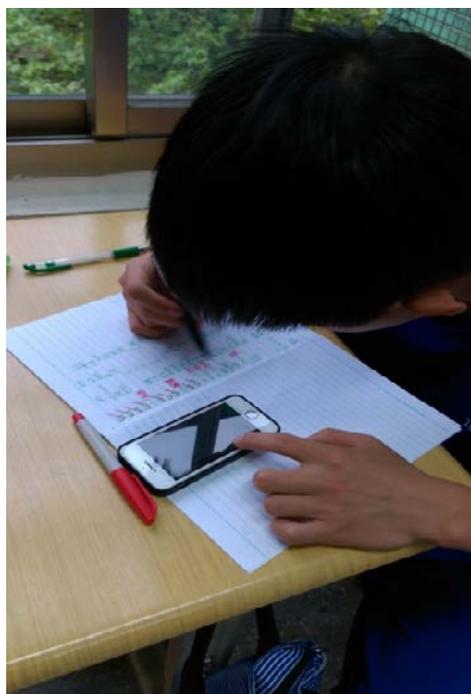
Test questions in mobiles (pic 3-1)



(pic 3-2)



(pic 3-3)



(pic 3-4)



Video (3-1)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zcjl1xp7OkQ>

4. Looking for scaffolding from the web

Teaching and learning could happen everywhere. It should never be limited to the conventional classroom. we have a lot of chances to come across some words, phrases, terms, expressions or grammar written or being used somewhere in our daily life.

I would post pictures taken while traveling, or website links where there is something they have just learned, or some good sentences, or even the latest news ... etc on LINE for students to either learn something extra or review what they have learned.

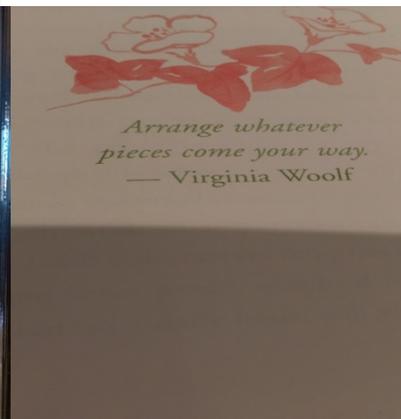
Sometimes after reading the post, students would start asking questions, and some topics are always easier to trigger avid discussion. Normally, I would just observe their discussion and won't give any assistance or comment until students' discussion is over. It is so much fun and exciting to witness or validate that "learning" really happens.

This is really helpful for boosting the learning English consciousness among students. They will thus know English is not some useless subject that they would never have the chance to see or use it other than on test sheets. They would know English is actually around them. (see pic 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4)

Scaffolding (pic 4-1)



(pic 4-2)



(pic 4-3)



(pic 4-4)

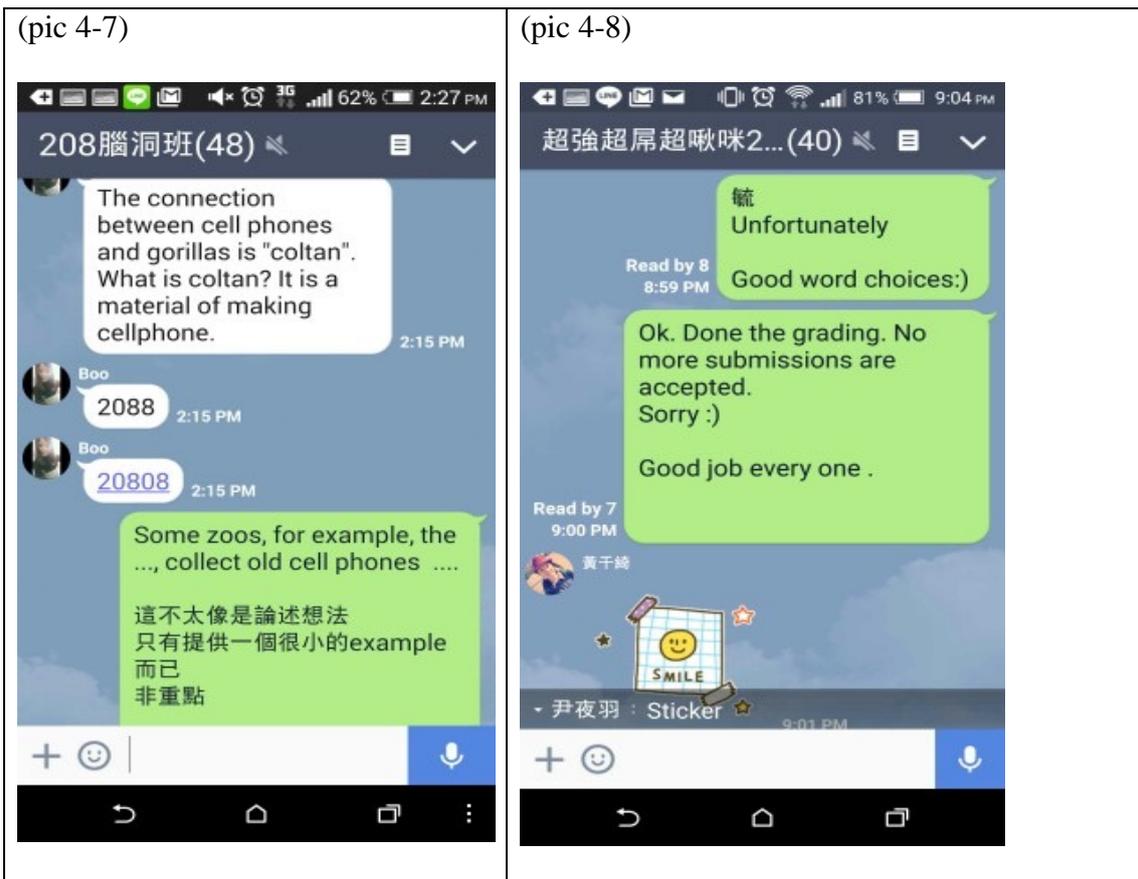


(pic 4-5)



(pic 4-6)





II. Theory applied:

In the article “On Learning and (therefore) Teaching” Clarke M. invited all teachers to probe into the question “whether students are learning what we teach, or whether we are teaching what students learn (Clarke, 2007, p.34).” To untangle the puzzle, Clarke suggests all teachers should know how students learn, and then adjust their teachings.

John Anderson, a cognitive psychologist from Harvard and Yale University, posts his view that language acquisition is no different from learning any other knowledge because learning is learning, and it is all about “input, processing, and output (Saville-Troike, p.73).” Topping on this view, Stephen Krashen issues his “comprehensible input and meaningful output” theory, indicating that learning only happens when students receive comprehensible input and have meaningful output

(Krashen, 1999). This makes teaching a language a more concrete and wholesome picture to me. It really dawns on me how important it is to make my class “comprehensible” to students, and how necessary it is to create a “meaningful” output in my class. And this is really what the famous “i+1” is all about.

To achieve the effect of “i+1”, I found professor Cummins’ four quadrants theory very helpful for teachers. Professor J. Cummins, a world authority on bilingual education and language acquisition, develops a theory relating to how a language learner progresses from stage A, the beginner level, to stage D, an advanced or a fully independent learner. And how a language educator could do to help learners from different stages.

According to his theory, our students fall on the category of the quadrant B, and accordingly teachers of high school level should ensure their students “receive instruction in cognitively demanding grade level tasks, and still have the scaffolding from specially designed instruction encompassing context clues and cognitive demanding task. This is the best scaffolding to push learners to achieve the ultimate goal of language proficiency (Cummins 2005, Chamot 2005).”

These theories are the major reason I strongly believe a well planned and successful teaching should always take these as standard practice: taking students’ cognitive level into consideration, providing scaffoldings, giving a little more demanding tasks to students to push them up to a higher level.

Another teaching concept that posts a great influence on me is “the importance of reading in learning a language”. According to a research done by Stephen Krashen, when comparing three different teaching/ learning approaches: grammar instruction approach (GI), comprehensible input-based approach (CI) and frequent voluntary approach (FVR), the best approaches which bring out far better outcomes on grammar test and communicative performance test are individually CI and FVR.

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	grammar test	less communicative test	communicative test (oral presentation, listening test, writing)
Grammar Instruction approach			
Comprehensible Input based approach	better	much better	much better
Frequent Voluntary Reading approach	much better	better	better

The rationale behind this result is when it comes to learning a new or foreign language, the quality and quantity of the exposure to the authentic target language environment does play a crucial role. Actually, it has long been recognized as the best and the most efficient contributor to the mastery of a target language. However, most of the language learners do not have the access to staying in the authentic language environment long enough till they really master it. Therefore, various kinds of reading material become one of the best options a language learner has.

Compared to other learning accesses, reading material is really an easier, cheaper and more authentic environment for a learner. In the reading world, they literally acquire the authentic usage of the language, and immerse themselves in the comparatively more authentic language environment than any other forms of language resources. The reason is, first of all, English reading material is everywhere, and, second of all, when reading, learners are actually obtaining the knowledge as to how a native language user deploys the language. This is somewhat similar to the authentic language environment. If this is the case, the only problem now is how to get learners befriended with reading texts or books.

When a language learner is engaged in reading, he or she would definitely accumulate a wide range of vocabulary and the techniques of expression of the target language. When a learner is equipped with such knowledge, he or she is close to “mastering” the language. With a little extra assistance, the learner would be able to

employ the target language as fluently as a native speaker does.

The little assistance I refer to here includes some reading techniques such as sounding it out when reading, paraphrasing the content and retelling the content. To me, reading, writing, listening and speaking ability could be built up at the same time. They are like 4 machine gear wheels. They move along with one another, and affect one another. It is easy to comprehend for once a learner knows how to “express” whatever they want to describe in written form, he or she will be able to “say” it as well. And once knowing how to express things by voicing it out, the learner will pick up their listening ability very quickly because they would recognize the sound of those words or expression they know when people use them. Namely, when a language learner could read, they know how to write; when they know how to write, they know how to speak the language. And likewise when they know how to speak, they understand when people talk. In a word, when it comes to learning a language, reading is a very powerful and efficient tool. Thus, leading a language learner to the reading world is the most important task for an EFL teacher of any non-English speaking countries. This is also why I let students read every text before teaching. I want them to be independent readers.

Another important discovery this research finds out is when conducting either CI (comprehensible based input) or FVR (frequent voluntary reading) approach, letting students “summarize” or “write report or an essay” about what they have learned counts a lot more than the effect a paper test can ever achieve. This is because it requires more abilities for students to either summarize or write a report or an essay. Therefore, to finish the more demanding tasks (a summary, report or an essay), students need to pay more attention and to really get what they are learning. And interestingly, this adds up the degree of challenges of the task, and therefore it makes the task more “meaningful”, “fun”, and consequently makes the teaching or learning more “effective”.

	read only	summary	essay
easy test	7.6	6.4	7.4
more demanding / harder test	3.7	6.3	11.8

According to the above theory mentioned raised by Stephen Krashen, a “meaningful” output is critical to any kind of learning. The so called “meaningful” output here means an output that connects with learners, and that provides a chance for learners to practically use, apply or practice what they have learned. To me, a summary, report or an essay is very close to the idea of “meaningful” output in the light of the fact that students get to re-present what they have known.

This research result sheds some lights on the current seemingly murky English education, and brings a revolutionary inspiration to the present EFL teachers and learners that reading and meaningful output are indeed the two very important approaches that have long been neglected, at least at the middle school level, in English teaching and learning in Taiwan.

And with these two concept in mind, “reading and meaningful output”, I would like to flip my classroom by means of letting students read more, do more summary, and have more “meaningful” output tasks in class.

III. Reflection and evaluation on this approach

There are a lot of advantages of this teaching or learning technique. For one, before students record the summary and post it on LINE, they have previewed the text and applied what they have learned and known to their summary. That’s a very meaningful output, and any meaningful output helps increase the learning efficiency.

Another benefit of using smart phones and social networking platform is this also helps lower the burden of teachers when grading and correcting students’ works

mainly because during the process, students have tried their best to make their works perfect. And that truly saves teachers a lot of time and energy.

In addition, from grading students' works, teachers are able to know if students get the gist of the most important information of the text, or if they need further assistance on certain learning targets. This is a valuable information for teachers to increase their teaching efficiency. And, vice versa, it is also quite beneficial for students since they would know and learn from exactly where they need, not from the very beginning of every text.

Moreover, when listening to students' recording, teachers obtain a great opportunity to find out students' grammatical problems, word usage problems, and pronunciation issue. That is to say, this task helps teachers better understand students' general English ability. And this is a very valuable indicator or reference for teachers when deciding whether or not they need to adjust their teaching approaches or if they should give small lessons to particular students accordingly.

There are drawbacks adopting this approach. To teachers, there are two. For one, it inevitably adds some extra load to teachers. Since the evaluation tool is no longer a test sheet, teachers might need to spend more time or efforts evaluating students' unconventional performance. The other potential problem teachers might have to face is it requires a stable WIFI access and smart phones. If it is currently not accessible to WIFI in classroom, hot spot sharing is the only feasible solution. Yet in the long run, asking for the accessibility of WIFI from school is a must. And as to smart phones, it is comparatively an easier problem. Students could always share or borrow one from friends from other classes. If not, it will be an infeasible approach.

To students, grouping might be a problem. When taking tasks that requires community learning / cooperative learning approach, some students might face problems such as being ignored or excluded in the group discussion because they are unpopular in class. Problems like class management or peer pressure is hard to deal with. Yet, teachers might be able to solve this problem for them by helping those

not-so-welcomed students engage themselves in more actively, and encourage students to be more understanding.

Another problem is some students might have presumptuous opinion about the so called “unconventional” teaching approaches. Those students have long been trained to believe only the traditional cramming teaching approach is solid and practical. All the rest are just a game, so it is time wasting. And they would choose to not cooperate or not get involved in the activity.

To solve the above problems, I would strongly advice teachers have a full communication with students before “flipping” their classroom with mobile phones and social networking. Let students know the rationale behind this approach, let them know it is an effective way of learning English. Let them know it really helps to improve their overall English ability, and it matters even more after they join the work force.

Despite the fact that there are disadvantages adopting this teaching and learning approach, it has always been an enjoyable experience of conducting a teaching with the assistance of mobile phones and social networking. Students are apparently having fun and gaining confidence in using English, and I am happy to notice the progress students have made during the process.

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