



Our Languages Clicked: Shakespeare in EFL Classes

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Bio Data

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Abstract

This research differs from the literature-based Shakespeare class for EFL students in two main ways. First, the researcher focuses on students' development of language awareness, culture awareness, text awareness and intertext awareness. Second, the researcher invites students to incorporate some elements of actor training, not for acting but for feeling and echoing the figurative language, especially the frequently cited quotes. The research concludes that if the students can collaboratively read-and-think-and-feel-aloud the texts with ease, Shakespeare's texts will stop being dead literary texts in black and white and become alive for EFL students.

Key Words: Shakespeare, language awareness, culture awareness, text awareness, intertextual awareness, thinking tools

Introduction

This paper describes a Shakespeare module for English majors in Taiwan employing participatory schemes with strong purposes to make the plays accessible for students and to help students overcome their fear of the language via the use of "thinking tools," concept maps and mind maps. A Shakespeare teacher may ask, "What is the purpose of studying Shakespeare at University in an EFL country?" The answer for the researcher is for language's sake first, then the literary knowledge's sake. For the teacher of literature, then, there can or should be no question of teaching for the university or graduate exams and letting the language art come later. The first time EFL students of Shakespeare confront the texts, they are confusing and hard to be literarily and culturally translated because of his word choices, the Elizabethan sentence wording order, puns, usage, and pronunciation.

Murray (1985) points out that “[a] teacher [might have fired] students’ enthusiasm to give them the energy to attack the biggest difficulty with Shakespeare for a newcomer: the language” (p. 46) and Crystal (2003) claims that by studying the texts of Shakespeare, students “learn how it is possible to explore and exploit the resource of language in original ways, displaying its range and variety in the service of the poetic imagination” (p.77). These two viewpoints framed the research model, “Read-and-Think-and-Feel-aloud Shakespeare” (please see *Fig. 1*).

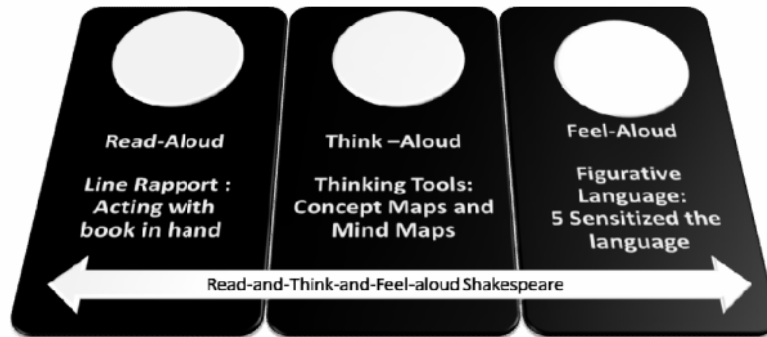


Figure 1 Research Model, “Read-and-Think-and-Feel-aloud Shakespeare”

It is important for students to understand that Shakespeare did indeed write in English, just a different version of what people consider to be modern. To arouse or extend the students’ interest in a great and widely-performed dramatist, to the extent that for the rest of their lives they will find pleasure and satisfaction in reading and seeing Shakespeare’s plays, are the results of breaking the language barrier.

Literature Review

Memory Techniques

Martin Tarr’s (2007) research on study memory has shown that, during the learning process, the human brain primarily remembers:

1. items from the beginning of the learning period,
2. items from the end of the learning period,
3. items that are associated with ideas or patterns already stored, or linked to other aspects of what is being learned,
4. items that are emphasized as being in some way outstanding or unique,

5. items that appeal particularly strongly to one of the five senses (or sometimes to the sense of humor), and
6. items that, for some reason, are of particular interest to the learner.

These findings are illustrated graphically in *Figure 2*. In this figure, A, B and C indicate the improved recall of items which are associated or linked, and O the even higher recall of something which is outstanding or unique.

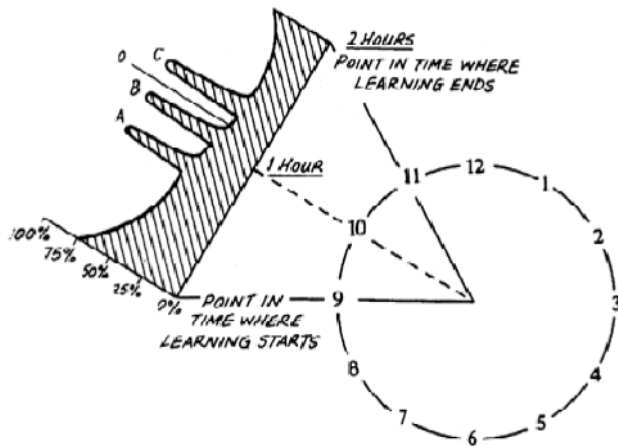


Figure 2 Graph predicting the high and low points of recall during a learning period

In cognitive psychology, *memory* is usually divided into three storage systems: sensory, short-term, and long-term (Costa-Mattioli et al, 2007). The sensory memories act as buffers for stimuli received through the senses. Information is passed from sensory memory into short-term memory by attention, which acts as a scratch-pad for temporary recall of the information under process. Long-term memory is intended for storage of information over a long time via different memory activities. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1991, p. 271) have identified eight guidelines for improving memorization using conscious strategies:

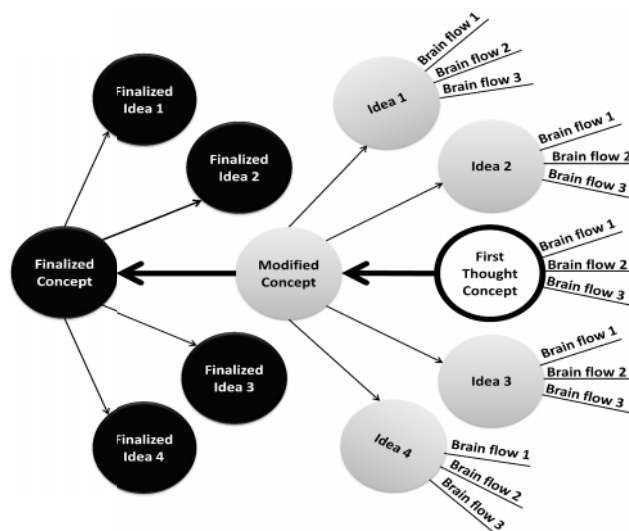
1. Increase attention
2. Promote external memory such as in using a student calendar
3. Enhance meaningfulness (make it personal)
4. Use pictures
5. Minimize interference
6. Promote active manipulation

7. Promote active reasoning (ask questions), and
8. Increase the amount of practice

Therefore, concept mapping and mind mapping were chosen in this research to help carry out the research model. The primary application of memory processing with concept mapping and mind mapping were the verbal learning settings.

Concept Maps and Mind Maps

“Concept mapping” was developed at Cornell University in the 1970s, but the version that spread all over the world was invented in the 1980s. Novak and Gowin (1984) made it very popular among science educators. They point out that the characteristic of concept maps is that they are represented in a hierarchical fashion with the most general concepts at the top of a map and the more specific, less general concepts arranged hierarchically below (1984, pp.14, 22, 52). Visual learning is a proven method by which concepts, data and information are associated with images and represented graphically (Bellanca, 1990; Bromley, 1996; Jonassen, 1996; Tarquin & Walker, 1997; Thornburg, 1998). The same scheme is used for many different types of graphic knowledge representation techniques. Concept mapping is used in this module to help students create graphic organizers as they brainstorm ideas, organize plots and identify connections in reading Shakespeare’s plays (please see *Fig. 3*).



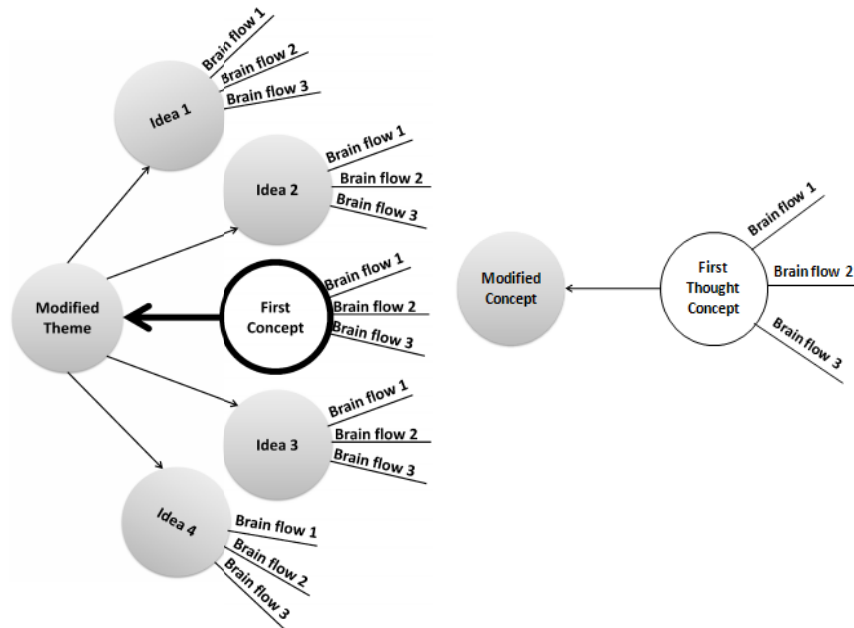


Figure 3 Concept Map from Draft to Finalized

Developed by Tony Buzan (2000) in the early 1970s, “mind maps” are used as a way to help students make notes with key words and images. This visually-oriented knowledge management technique is non-linear and reflects the nature of mind maps because memory is naturally associative, not linear. This skill is used in this module as a visual knowledge management tool that enables students to structure, organize, arrange, brainstorm, learn and memorize information in a highly organized way and also to help students provoke logic and inspiration for skilled thinking practices involving the 5 “wh” and 1 “h” questions (please see Fig. 4).

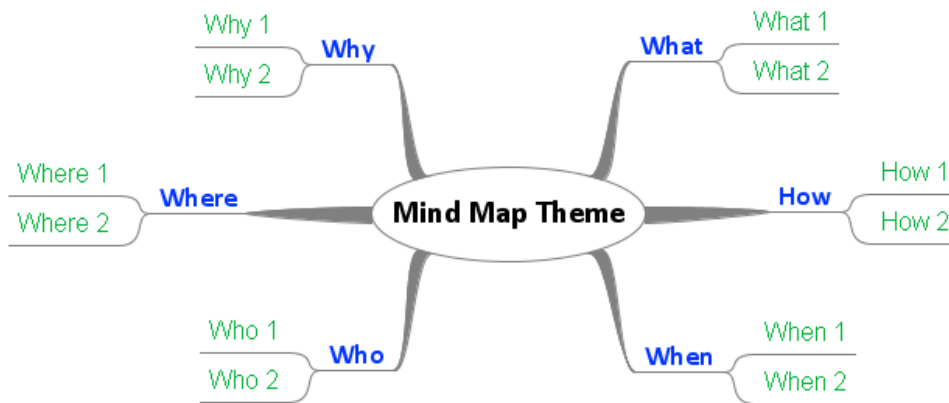


Figure 4 Mind Map Sample

Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality is important for understanding the difference between the notions of “meaning potential” and “referential meaning” in language. According to Irwin’s study (2004) on literature and philosophy, Kristeva’s coinage of “intertextuality” represents an attempt to synthesise De Saussure’s structuralist semiotics with Bakhtin’s dialogism. De Saussure’s structuralist semiotics studies how signs derive their meaning within the structure of a text, while Bakhtin’s dialogism examines the multiple meanings, or “heteroglossia,” in each text (especially novels) and each word (p. 228). This intertextual view of a text, as shown in Barthes’ (1977) “Death of the Author”, supports the concept that the meaning of a text does not reside in itself, but within its viewers. Thus, the words “text” and “reader” can be used in a broader sense to refer to all kinds of teaching materials and the learners using them, all of which imply the figurative language or the meaning potential intertwined in a text.

For Kristeva (1980), “the notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity” (p. 66) when readers realise that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, “codes” imparted to the writer and reader by other texts. Whitehead (1929) says “[i]magination is a contagious disease. It cannot be measured by the yard, or weighed by the pound, and then delivered to the students by members of the faculty. It can only be communicated by a faculty whose members themselves wear their learning with imagination” (p. 145). This implies “a move towards interpretative space” and, at the same time, “an immediate and vital necessity for text awareness” (McRae, 1996, p. 20).

Research Methodology

Research Question and Hypothesis

The research took place at National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan. It involved 15 English majors from Year 4 who took the module of Shakespeare over a semester beginning in September 2009 and ending in January 2010. The body of participants is complicated because the members were trained to be English teachers for their first three years in the university. They had comparatively less literature knowledge than regular English majors. A Shakespeare study for them is just like Shakespeare in an EFL classroom instead of Shakespeare for English Majors. Therefore, the researcher initiated this project with three objectives: 1) Students will develop the skills necessary to read and understand selected plays of Shakespeare via collaborative reading with thinking tools, concept maps and mind maps; 2) Students will be able

to use appropriate modes of inquiry, including identifying and framing problems, investigating and supplying evidence, and conceptualizing via collaborative reading with thinking tools, concept maps and mind maps; and 3) Students will know the contents, categories, and boundaries of the Shakespeare canon via collaborative reading with thinking tools, concept maps and mind maps.

That is, the module objectives were to build up students' awareness of language, culture, text and intertext with the integration of teaching methods of read-aloud, think-aloud and feel-aloud via collaborative reading with thinking tools, concept maps and mind maps. Assuming students' emotional responses can inform literary analysis, this research featured a scaffolding intervention that involved modeling both cognitive and affective reading processes through the research model with thinking tools. However, are the students willing to team up? The research question is how to maximize the heuristic potentials of the research model in scaffolding students' skills in reading-and-thinking-and-feeling-aloud Shakespeare's plays via collaborative reading with thinking tools, concept maps and mind maps. The research is to test if the students would have more confidence in reading Shakespeare's language with the research model in a collaborative way. The research variables used in this study included (1) the subject's learning styles (N=15), (2) pedagogy of collaborative read-aloud, think-aloud, and feel-aloud, and (3) the subjects' learning performance and satisfaction.

Research Process

The hypothesis in this research aims to test whether taking Shakespeare's plays as representational materials at a university level will be accepted more in reality than in theory with the treatment of the research model. Various experiments were described which attempt to engage students immediately with the plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, a modern play entitled *When Shakespeare's Ladies Meet* and *Shakespeare Retold* filmed by BBC. A series of core exercises in basic emotions ran through the semester like a backbone. The students were asked to incorporate some elements of actor training into the class, not for acting but for echoing the emotions in frequently cited quotes in order to think-and-feel aloud the literary value of the plays.

Stage 1 Reword Shakespeare

Modern people commonly use the subject-verb-object (SVO) order in sentences as Standard

English, whereas Shakespeare employed the object-subject-verb (OSV) order as Standard English in Elizabethan time (see *Table 1*). Students were asked to resentence the OSV to SVO order and to create other simple sentences or phrases and change the word order in groups, then discuss the changes in inference. For this reason, translation from Elizabethan English into modern English and “rewording” Shakespeare’s words into a modern and more understandable way are practiced (see *Table 2*).

Table 1 Worksheet Excerpt of OSV to SVO Practice

From object-subject-verb (OSV) to subject-verb-object (SVO) order	
“Angelina walked her Barbie!”	Barbie Angelina walked!
“My mother will water the flowers.”	The Flowers my mother will water.
“I bought a nice dress.”	A nice dress I bought.

Table 2 Worksheet Excerpt of Reword Shakespeare

Reword Shakespeare: How do we speak English? (<i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i>)	
Elizabethan Standard English	Modern Standard English
Prince: A glooming peace this morning with it brings. (<u>Romeo and Juliet</u> , V.iii, 315)	
Othello: That handkerchief/Did an Egyptian to my mother give. (<u>Othello</u> , III.iv, 56-7)	
Prospero: Thy shape invisible retain thou still. (<u>The Tempest</u> , IV.i, 200)	

Stage 2 Reveal the Emotions Piece by Piece

Read-aloud either by the teacher or the students was necessary in class. This provided chances for students to “play” with the emotions and employ their speaking styles when reading-aloud the lines first, then the often cited quotations and finally the soliloquies. Students were asked to tell the difference between “surface and hidden emotions” and make a list under these two headings. Before taking this exercise, students needed to sensitize their levels of perception. Students were asked to read aloud the soliloquies many times, stressing a different sense each time. What might the character smell/see/hear/touch/taste from the soliloquy? (please see *Table 3*). Concept mapping was introduced for students to present the relationships among a set of connected emotions they proposed with the concepts and ideas Shakespeare might seem to put forward in the plays.

Table 3 Worksheet Excerpt of Five-Sense the “Lines”

Five-Sense the “Lines” (<i>Othello</i>)			
Five-sense the lines wherever the emotions exist: Sight/Sound/Smell/Taste/Touch from “the least” to “the most”			
#1 OTHELLO IN SOLILOQUY This fellow's of exceeding honesty, And knows all qualities with a learned spirit Of human dealings. (III.iii, 288-290).	5 senses	#2 IAGO IN SOLILOQUY Trifles light as air Are to the jealous, confirmations strong As proofs of holy writ. “Othello”. (III.iii, 358-360)	5 senses
Emotion Collage and Relay (<i>Othello</i>)			
COLLAGE		RELAY	
List	Favorite lines with emotions	Do	Recreate a version by combining selected lines
Must	Spontaneous arrangement of emotions	Think	How will I act in the real life?

Stage 3 Figurative Language Now and Then

Shakespeare wrote in a formal manner with his poetic, metaphoric and imagery-filled language by comparing something to other things or personifications and allusions. The class, further, guided students to understand figurative meanings via the use of context clues and making inferences through concept mapping after they found a similar use in today’s language (please see *Table 4*). It is a tangible way to display how students’ minds saw a particular expression or allegory; they needed to organize a final group version. By constructing a concept map, students reflected upon what they knew and what they did not know between lines.

Table 4 Worksheet Excerpt of Symphony of Meanings

What Did He Say? And What Do I Say? (<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>)		
Shakespeare’s language	Meaning via concept mapping	My language
#4 BENEDICK: What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living? (<i>I.i, 81</i>)		
#10 BENEDICK: Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher. (<i>I.i, 94</i>)		
#13 BEATRICE: You always end with a jade’s trick: I know you of old. (<i>I.i, 98</i>)		

Since students had gained some knowledge of figurative language in their other modules (personification, alliteration, metaphors, imageries, similes, ironies, puns, idioms, onomatopoeias or hyperboles), students could somehow comprehend the texts that contain metaphorical and lexical meanings. This also aroused students’ sensibility of intertextually because Shakespeare’s plays were informed by other texts which the students had read, taught by the teacher or even drawn from their own cultural context. The simplest approach to involve students in the intertextuality of Shakespeare’s plays is to read the footnotes that indicate source materials to which a given text is alluding, or which are known to have influenced Shakespeare.

Encouraging students to create tableaux or concept maps to figure out the possible meanings of the lines (please see *Table 5*) prepared students to familiarize the texts and study literary analysis. “Picture the Lines” was practiced all through the semester in order to help students clarify themes and motifs. After the work of concept maps, a mind-mapping technique for literary analysis was introduced. Haverkamp (1993) says, “there is no better ‘souvenir,’ it seems, than the self-made photographic picture, which is meant to preserve individual memories from individual moments of an individual life” (258). Parallel to this idea of class note-taking and literary analysis, the universal success of this literary analysis, memory-storing activity has, in the manner of a supplement, supplanted what it is supposed to subserve, memory as well as its content, knowledge learned. This correlates to Costa-Mattioli’s theory on sensory, short-term, and long-term memories, and Mastropieri and Scruggs’s guidelines for improving memorization using conscious strategies.

Table 5 Worksheet Excerpt of Picture the Lines

<i>Picture the Lines: Say it in a different way! (Romeo and Juliet)</i>		
Shakespeare’s way	My way	Picture the Lines (Mind Maps)
#1 Romeo It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope’s ear (I.iv, 162-3)		
#2 Romeo My bounty is as boundless as the sea,/My love as deep; the more I give to thee The more I have, for both are infinite (II.i, 185-7)		

Shakespeare’s tragedies convey dialogues with strong anger not only to advance the immediate scenes, but also to advance the themes and continue to unfold characters. An exercise of approaching characters’ anguish language was carried out. The students were asked to translate the selected lines of the plays in two ways: 1) Shakespeare’s English into a literal version of Modern English; and 2) a gossip version as if the students were saying this to their friends (please see *Table 6*).

Table 6 Excerpt of Who Needs Manners Worksheet

Who Needs Manners: Will you insult people this way? (<i>King Lear</i>)	
Shakespeare's way	My way
#2 KING LEAR (<i>King Lear</i>) How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is/To have a thankless child! (I.iv, 236-7)	
Let Me Tell You This..... (Translate into Modern English)	
#3 KING LEAR (<i>King Lear</i>) Th'untented woundings of a father's course/Pierce every sense about thee! (I.iv, 8-10)	

The intertextuality in this class included the social and cultural context which included the reading, seeing, speaking, writing, thinking, concept mapping and, indeed, Shakespeare's language itself. The intertextual space is not limited in Elizabethan time; instead, it includes infinite and communicable sources for the interpretive communities. Culler says (2001)

for a discussion to be significant it must stand in a relationship to a body of discourse, an enterprise, which is already in place, other projects and thoughts which it implicitly or explicitly takes up, prolongs, cites, refutes, transforms -- the presuppositions of a piece of writing. (pp. 100-101)

A new differently intertextual text was established via the excise of translations of selected lines. The students read the translations and gossips aloud in groups first and selected the best 10 to share in class. When they finished reading, the students started to have an insult conversation in their style and later in Shakespeare's style.

In order to help students produce modern translation, BBC's productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Macbeth* were played before they started working on the "mental image" translations. Since media images are perceived before accompanying text, it is necessary to focus on the adequacy and suitability of media images in relation to the original text. In the context of text analysis prior to translation, it is therefore important to include image analysis as an important issue regarding the adequacy of an image in terms of a catalyst of the function and focus of Shakespeare's plays. Furthermore, as students' eyes meet the visual information before the textual one, processing information through motion picture input might well condition the later understanding of the meaning and information contained in the text. Metaphoric and figurative mappings have been recognized as central to Shakespearean text analysis, not only as

a means to make cryptic concepts accessible to the non-expert in Shakespeare, but, most importantly, as a resource to conceptualize new Shakespearean textual realities.

Research Results

Grasha and Reichmann developed the Grasha-Reichmann Learning Style Scales in 1974 to affect college students' classroom participation. The Grasha-Reichmann model focuses on student attitudes toward learning, classroom activities, teachers, and peers rather than studying the relationships among methods, student style, and achievement. In addition, a teacher who clearly understands the prospects and limits of his or her teaching style can make more consistent judgments about how best to use this medium (Grasha, 1996). Failure to do so may result in less learning, which conflicts with the objectives for both the teacher and the student. Instructors are advised to be aware of learning differences and to use a variety of teaching strategies to reach a cross-section of the classes (Filbeck and Webb, 2000.)

The starting point of the research echoes the purpose on learning and teaching styles mentioned above. This is the first research variable that needs to be taken care of when setting a collaborative framework for a literature class in order not to frustrate both teacher and students (please see *Fig. 5*).

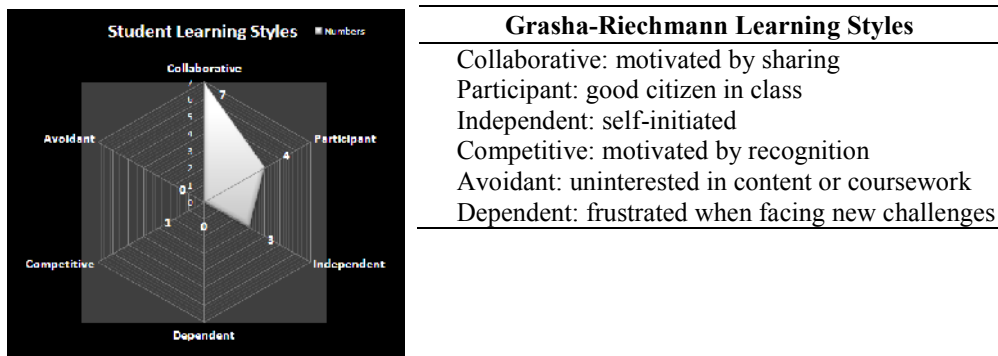
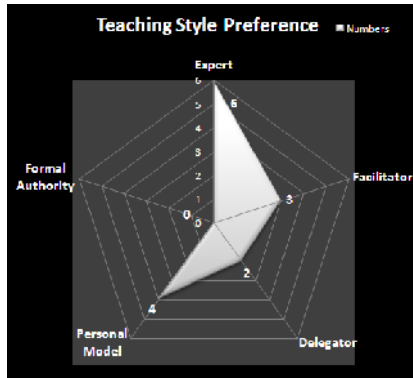


Figure 5 Student Styles (Results of Grasha-Reichmann Learning Styles Scales)

The results of Grasha-Reichmann Learning Style Scales showed that most participants were collaborative and participant learners (scaled 7 and 4 respectively). The collaborative learning was theoretically workable for this class. However, the research hypothesis was further confronted by the results of Grasha-Reichmann Teaching Style Scales. Participants' preferred teaching styles ranked from expert, personal model, facilitator and delegator (please see *Fig. 6*).



Grasha-Riechmann Teaching Styles

Expert: transmits information

Personal Model: teaches by example

Facilitator: consults, questions, encourages

Delegator: help when called

Formal Authority: provides structure for learning

Figure 6 Teaching Styles (Results of Grasha-Riechmann Teaching Styles Scales)

One third of the students might be willing to work with peers for rewards and recognition and become frustrated when facing new challenges. However, this does not alter the research hypothesis because their preferred learning styles are facilitator and delegator (both scaled 3 and 2). It implies that though the participants are instructor-oriented, they are open to be learner-oriented as well. Thus, Daniel's (1994) literature circles and Aronson et al's (1978) jigsaw classroom were chosen for the teaching strategies in preparation for their mind mapping activities.

The participants were assessed through the semester for evidence of improved understanding, recall of information and quantity and quality of concept maps and mind maps produced. The ability to apply the awareness acquired in one context of the plays to a series of different concepts is an important ingredient for creativity. Student interpretations were very different which led to a discussion about how students approached Shakespeare's figurative language. They would even quote while they talked either in Chinese or in English. And of course, they would not ask, "Why didn't Shakespeare use plain English?" any more because the students also speak his language. A read-aloud activity of *When Shakespeare's Ladies Meet* ended up the class with a lot of fun. Students figured out puns of this modern play without any help. This play reading turned to a more specific focus of language, text and culture awareness.

This confirms that if the students can read-and-think-and-feel-aloud the texts with ease, Shakespeare's texts will stop being dead literary texts in black and white and become alive. The research hypothesis was proved significant before the semester ended. The model helped students release doubts and fears about Shakespeare's language and build up confidence in

reading it. The data from their writing log and discussion forum suggests that students improved in the areas identified. These are:

- improved language focus in the texts;
- more concentration on academic tasks with their team members;
- improved questioning and answering during class discussions on concept maps and mind maps;
- more self-reliance regarding resources; and
- improved thinking independence.

These evaluations indicate that apart from the language, text and culture awareness development, the intertextual awareness helped students build an understanding of the many dimensions (emotional, philosophical, aesthetic, etc.) of human experience which led students to work on other pieces of literature with this research model. The most remarkable success is that students applied various strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts with confidence. They drew on their prior experience, their interactions with other classmates, their knowledge of word meanings nowadays and of that in Shakespeare's time, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features. The developed awareness does not make students Shakespeare experts, but allows them to participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

Although not central to this research, students' official end-of-semester evaluations from the university scored 4.6 (5 is the maximum). It showed that the teacher recognized that there were a variety of preferred learning styles among students in the class. The language of Shakespeare is not the only core issue for the teacher to solve. Teaching strategies are also of central importance. The data suggested that the teacher was more likely to reach even the most unenthusiastic student after employing the teaching treatments of DVDs, visual aids via PPTs, mind mapping and thinking tools, discussions, e-Learning platforms, cooperative learning activities and creative activities (please see *Figs. 7 and 8*).

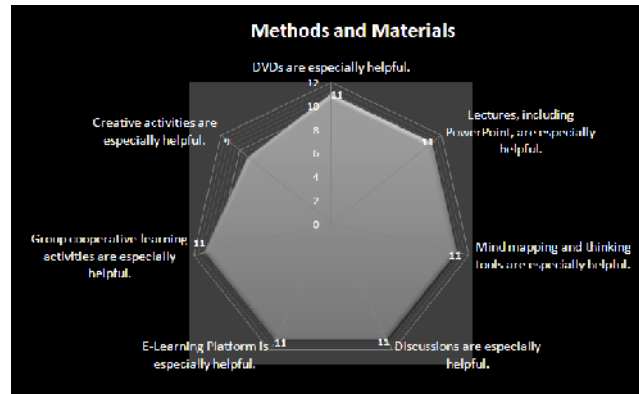


Figure 7 Teaching Treatments (Methods and Materials)

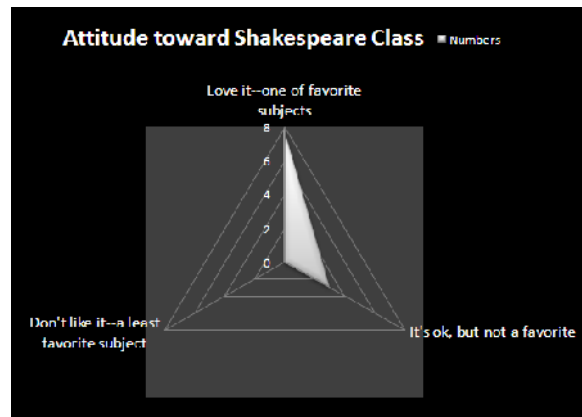


Figure 8 Attitude toward Shakespeare

Limitations and Recommendations

Final evaluations indicate that the experimental elements, however, change the tone of the class of Shakespeare. There seems to be a general feeling that, given the opportunity, the greater use of Shakespeare's language is desirable for students (please see *Fig. 8*). The research sample size is rather small; furthermore, the study may not be long enough to shed light on how this model could help students deal with insights of Shakespeare's works. However, it is speculated that, because of the limited research on literature teaching of EFL students, the result of the research is at present sufficient as a prior study. The investigation also influences the researcher's module design. This research argues that teaching an EFL Shakespeare module calls not only for different syllabuses from those used in other forms of teaching but also for a modification of the

concepts of syllabus. A key recommendation on this issue is to increase the investment in strategies that enhance awareness of language, text, culture and intertext.

Conclusion

Teaching Shakespeare to EFL students in Taiwan raises the issues of “what to teach” and “how to teach,” and, in fact, these are the most complex and problematic debates going on within EFL countries. This paper focuses on the students’ enjoyment in understanding Shakespeare’s language art from a contemporary point of view. Barthes (1977) declares that “it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is... to reach the point where only language acts, ‘performs’, and not ‘me’” (p. 143) and that “a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination” (p. 148). In order to make sense of this idea, this class is developed to make students understand that texts provide contexts within which other texts may be created and interpreted.

The students were involved in an interaction with each other and with the text. All texts are necessarily figurative and intertextualized because, wittingly or unwittingly, they all allow multiple interpretations, discussion, reflection and consideration of meaning. Being able to use newly learned tools to interpret and understand Shakespeare’s language might even seem like learning a secret language code. Indeed, the interplay of codes in the class is particularly revealing of representational meanings which allow the students to deconstruct the text from different angles. By learning about some of the word meanings of Shakespeare’s sentence structure, figurative language, and puns, students are able to appreciate and enjoy the genius and humour in Shakespeare’s work and relate these to their own lives.

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