

## A PROJECT ZERO MODEL CLASSROOM IN A MALAYSIAN CULTURE

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### **Abstract:**

This paper is taken from a bigger study aimed at trialing a Western learning model in a Malaysian context where it is yet to be tested by previous research. The Visible Thinking (VT) Project of Project Zero research is used as benchmark for this study. A summary of selected PZ research projects presented in this paper highlights the learning benefits of establishing patterns of thinking within the classroom as projected by PZ studies of Harvard Graduate School of Education, the hallmark institution. Many aspects of classroom teaching have been shown by PZ research to enhance learning, this paper will focus on a Malaysian undergraduate classroom that has decided to trial this highly recommended model using a framework derived from PZ school settings. Part of the focus of the study was to check if the ideas and paradigms are transferable to a Higher Education ESL context of a culturally different setting in terms of the manifestations of classroom interactions, students' and teacher's perception of it as well as from the researcher's observation of this classroom in session. The literature on the findings of VT project, mainly the thinking routines employed, the importance of establishing thinking routines in the classroom and examples of instances where these routines were visible in the classroom contexts are the summarized in this paper. Most of PZ research was conducted in school classrooms in a Western setting. This study prides itself in taking PZ research to a whole new level to study undergraduate students in a Malaysian classroom setting.

**Keywords:** Project Zero research; The Visible Thinking Project; making thinking visible; thinking routines; classroom interactions.

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### INTRODUCTION

This study draws upon work developed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, University of Harvard, through the Project Zero (PZ) research initiatives. PZ which began in 1967, has conducted major research into the way people learn (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu>). One of the key research associates within PZ is Ron Ritchhart. Ritchhart's research has a particular focus on understanding, supporting, and aiming to enhance thoughtful learning environments in order to encourage powerful learning among students and teachers (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/Pls/RR.htm>). His work and that of Project Zero more generally draw upon social constructivist theory and its implications for classroom practice. Ritchhart's research specifically focuses on 'making thinking visible' within the classroom. One critical component of Ritchhart's considerations of class-room practice is the various manifestations of interaction (<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/VisibleThinking.html>).

My research in this area will contribute to providing data and recommendations to improve upon the present teaching methods employed in Malaysia, which is generally traditional in nature. Studies have shown that some of the consequences of conventional methods of teaching include low test scores, high dropout rates and low morale among teachers. This research will also help in understanding some of the issues within the Malaysian contexts as well as spur more research in this area of curriculum and pedagogy, as constructivism is a relatively new area of study in Malaysia. As the aim of this study is to consider learning within Malaysian classrooms, some of which is not directly observable, the notion of visible thinking is a main informant of the study design. Specifically, interaction is observed, described and analysed in the classroom practice. Interaction has been selected because:-

- i there are clear theoretical links with social constructivist theory
- ii it is one of the major visible thinking characteristics identified by Ritchhart
- iii given the study is within the contexts of ESL learning, interaction has particular importance.

It is hoped that education based on this concept which emphasizes communication and interaction, would help produce individuals who place more importance on establishing good learning relationships with one another. This would also enhance social skills and help develop the soft skills necessary to succeed, later on in life. Apart from this, good communication skills also lead to greater understanding of one another and greater appreciation of fellow human beings. Acquisition of the English language skills, one of the most important lingua franca in the modern world is of utmost importance if not an absolute necessity. As young people of today are leaders of tomorrow, I believe that being able to communicate effectively is a vital aspect, fundamental for establishing good ties between nations of the world, which in turn could help avoid many of the conflicts, the world is increasingly facing today. Sinclair (2004) in her study, talks about education being a prospective tool for peace building by means of designing education programmes that instil in young people values such as respect for human rights and responsibilities for local and global citizenship.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, the researcher is interested in finding out if the constructivist pedagogy that is desired by the Malaysian education authorities is reflected in the actual classroom practice of three ESL classrooms. The focus though is on classroom interaction, through which insights into classroom practice is gained and how this is perceived by the two most important players in education; students and teachers. Project Zero, through its many studies have identified certain classroom practices, known as best classroom practices that promote a culture of thinking. In this study, the researcher aims to make two findings:-

- i. Using Project Zero and other research with a focus on classroom practice as a reference to describe and

analyse the classroom interactions evident within three

Malaysian ESL classrooms. Project Zero in particular is being employed as a reference point because it is a well established classroom research model with interaction as a key element. By comparing and contrasting observations within Malaysia with findings from Project Zero research will allow an investigation of whether this model of classroom interaction derived from research conducted mostly in Western countries (USA, UK,

Australia etc) also has relevance for an Asian classroom setting, such as Malaysia.

ii. Whether the interactions that take place in the classroom help students in their learning from their perspective, as well as from their teacher's perspective (including their English language skills and confidence).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Project Zero

PZ research is a series of projects of a large magnitude undertaken by Harvard University, it is built on social constructivist theory which explores classroom interaction in detail. Research conducted under PZ, namely the Visible Thinking (VT) project is the main informant for the third layer of data analysis in chapter 6. The literature in this section is turned into a framework utilized in the data analysis to help arrive at an answer to the third research question. As such a substantial part of this chapter is dedicated to present detailed information on PZ research. Having looked at the many aspects of classroom teaching that have been shown by PZ research to enhance learning, a framework has been derived arising from these school settings. Part of the focus of my study is to check if the ideas and paradigms are transferable to a Higher Education ESL context in terms of the manifestations of classroom interactions.

### Visible Thinking (VT)

The findings of VT are used in this study to develop the framework of this study. VT is a teaching and learning approach that places importance in the use of thinking routines in classrooms and in documenting the thinking processes. Being exposed to the steps leading to the acquisition of a certain skill, be it art, dancing, sewing, writing or sport are all more important than being exposed to the end product whether in art work, novel, dance performance, sport event etc (Tishman and Palmer, 2006).

Too often, students are exposed to the final products of thought – the finished novel or painting, the established scientific theory etc. They rarely see the patterns of thinking that lead to these finished products, yet it is precisely these habits of mind that students need to develop (Tishman and Palmer, 2006, p.10).

The authors contend that, as thinking is very much invisible, sophisticated and powerful thinking only develops very slowly, the reason being learners are not able to see their own thinking process or of others (peers and teachers). "Making thinking visible in the classroom provides students with vivid models of what the process of good thinking looks like and shows them how their participation matters"(Tishman and Palmer, 2006, p.10). This is precisely the goal of the VT project. The focal theme of Visible Thinking is basically making thinking apparent or available to the learner and the teacher (Visible Thinking PZ, n.d.). It is a systematic approach based on considerable research, to integrate thinking skills and disposition into the subject content, by making explicit thinking a part of classroom routine, VT makes way for powerful learning and thinking to occur (Tishman and Palmer, 2006).

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Learning occurs best when learners can see and hear, which will then be suited and adapted to individual style and preference, thus scaffolding in the form of new knowledge or new skill built upon the existing ones takes place within the learner (Visible Thinking PZ, n.d.). For example, dancers need to watch other more professional dancers perform and athletes need to watch the moves of better players in action in order to learn and suit what they see and hear to their own individual styles in order to be able to become better performers of the art. However, for one important area of learning that is 'learning to think' (Visible Thinking PZ, n.d.), learners are expected to do it without a model to imitate. Visible Thinking has several proposals whereby students' thinking is made apparent to them, to others including peers and teacher so as to make them aware of their own thinking versus the thinking of others. The benefits when thinking is visible include:-

- i Greater meta cognitive awareness among students,
- ii School becomes a place for discovering new ideas rather than a place for inert learning,
- iii Teachers are aware of their students misconceptions, prior knowledge, mental ability, and understanding,
- iv All of which are important discoveries which could be used by the teacher to address challenges and build on students' thinking to a greater level

(Visible Thinking PZ, n.d)

A prerequisite to developing learning that engages everyday life is the interdependence between teachers, students and peers where the three must interact in order to share ideas and experiences and solve problems (John-Steiner & Mahn 1996; Moll 1990). Vygotsky (1978), in describing the zone of proximal development, encourages children to be challenged to undertake tasks that appear to be beyond their current level of development. These seemingly difficult tasks can be completed with assistance and guidance from teachers and peers and in time the necessary skills required to perform the tasks could be internalized, leading to the ability to carry out tasks independently (Vygotsky 1978). Here again, Vygotsky makes a clear emphasis of the role of social interaction in learning.

The primacy of social interaction as the most important force leading to the cognitive development of an individual through internalization of everyday encounters in the sociocultural realm (Brufee, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) is at the core of social constructivism. Hence the connection between human being with society and culture. Cole and Engestrom (1993) and Engestrom (1999) express that the notion of mediation serves to pull apart the Cartesian wall which detaches the human mind from society and culture. Vygotsky gracefully summarizes this, "I only want to say...that without man (=operator) as a whole the activity of his apparatus (brain) cannot be explained, that man controls his brain and not the brain the man...that without man his behaviour cannot be explained" (Yaroshevsky, 1989, p. 230). By viewing man as the main driving force behind his actions, Vygotsky is said have transcended the dichotomous relationships of the mind and body (Lei, 2008).

In the original concept, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that in social interaction between an adult (teacher, parent) and child (learner), scaffolding takes place when the adult provides guidance to the child according to his or her needs (Storch, 2007). Storch (2007) adds that, however, scaffolding also occurs when learners interact with each other, either in pairs or groups, in a collaborative effort to resolve a language related problem. Definition of collaborative dialogue according to Swain (2000, p.102) is "dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building". However, not all group work results in collaboration (Storch, 2002, 2005; Donato, 1988, 1994, 2000), as the basis of scaffolding includes the existence of learning opportunities that enables the language learners to co-construct new knowledge (Storch, 2007).

Given the above scenario, the focus of my study which explores the role of collaborative learning in the ESL classroom sheds some light on how learning takes place against the backdrop of the Malaysian classroom culture. The result of the study aids in overcoming some of the problems we face in ESL learning in Malaysia resulting in the current lack of competence in the use of the English language among Malaysian graduates. The findings of this study also take SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research another step further in its long quest to capture what Brown (2007) calls the complex but exciting SLA phenomenon.

### Importance of classroom discourse

Similar to Project Zero research findings, Cazden (2001) too recommends various ways in which changes can be made to improve teaching and learning. She opines that changes in the nature of workplace and of the civil society have affected the way knowledge and learning is conceived. This has led to education today placing greater importance on the intellectual processes rather than the product, as such, teachers are urged to switch to classroom discussion in order to inspire and develop higher order thinking. This is a move away from the traditional classroom that practices the three-part pattern (Initiation/Response/Evaluation-IRE). The importance of language has been spoken about by many a researchers for a long time. Vygotsky simply puts it this way, 'Children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech as well as with their eyes and hands' (1978, p.26). Conversations with people in the surrounding have been observed by Bruner and other developmental psychologists to help form young children's personal growth (1990). Halliday (1993) establishes that for children, language learning lays the very foundation for all kinds of learning to occur. In his words, 'When children learn language...they are learning the foundations of learning itself' (pp. 93 – 116). Resonating this, Alexander (2006), argues that the case for pedagogical talk which he terms as 'pedagogical dialogue' is based on both research evidence and logic. According to him learning that involves learners' attention and captures their interest and has two way interactions rather than just one, is more likely to bring greater benefits to learners.

...dialogic pedagogy works better than a monologic one...for it touches on the nature of

brain and mind, on the relationship between language and thought and on the complex interweaving of the cognitive, social and cultural in human development and learning. (Alexander, 2006, p.4)

### METHODOLOGY

This study aims to consider one particular aspect of the constructivist pedagogy; that is to investigate the extent to which interaction plays a role in enhancing ESL learning within the Malaysian education context. It is hoped that the study will reveal some of the subtleties and nuances of different forms of interaction that take place in and out of the ESL classroom and the extent to which these interactions enhance ESL acquisition. This study is predominantly a qualitative inquiry. Denzin & Lincoln (2003) states that in qualitative research, researchers put great emphasis on the socially constructed nature of inquiry that is value-laden. They add that the richness of the data that emerges through such study of life experiences of the subjects cannot be experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency.

An ethnographic approach was used in this study as the main aim of the study is to discover and describe aspects of the culture of a group of people. The particular group or groups of people under study were undergraduate students of one ESL classroom and their teacher in a particular university in Malaysia. The manner in which they interacted with each other in the classroom, both verbal and non-verbal interaction and how its role is perceived by students and teachers, was considered in detail in this micro culture. The ethnographic approach is appropriate for this study as the purpose was to describe and interpret how a cultural group, in this case a group of Malaysian ESL undergraduate learners and their teachers work (Creswell, 2007). The focus activity in this study was the patterns of interaction taking place within the Malaysian ESL undergraduate classroom, e.g. what members of this



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culture did as a group, what they made and used as artifacts (including non-verbal interaction) and say (verbal-interaction).

The researcher then analysed the data gathered from the many sources to provide a description of the culture-sharing group, to find emerging themes from the group and interpret them (Wolcott, 1994), against the research questions guiding the study. The primary purpose of this study was to gather qualitative data through videoing lessons, interviews and observation that were used to explore the interaction in terms of types of interaction and classroom activity that took place within the ESL classroom in an undergraduate setting of a Malaysian university. The data were then used to look for any patterns of activities and interactions that have elements of constructivist pedagogy embedded in them. To learn how students of different proficiency levels in English language interacted and took part in classroom activities, a pre proficiency test results of students was collected together with discussion with class teacher to determine proficiency levels. These were then compared with exam results for verification purpose.

For the purpose of this study, the following criteria in selecting participants were applied:-

- i. Students who were currently undergoing ESL classes in the selected tertiary setting.
- ii. Students were drawn from the following categories:-
  - a. students with high level proficiency in the English language (an IELTS score of band 7.5 and above).
  - b. students with average level proficiency in the English language (an IELTS score of band 6.5 to 7).
  - c. students with low level proficiency in the English language (an IELTS score of band 6 and below).

This group of participants had twenty eight students out of which eighteen were participants in this study. They were Mass Communication and Media Studies students in their second year of study, majoring in the discipline of Broadcasting. This is a three year course consisting of 6 semesters, participants were in their 3rd semester of the course. Upon completion, they would be awarded a Bachelors degree in Mass Communication (Broadcasting).

The lecturer of the class is a highly qualified English teacher, who has over twenty four years of experience teaching English language. She hails from the Science University of Malaysia with a Bachelor of Arts degree (majoring in English) obtained in 1985, she continued her studies in Ohio University, USA where she graduated in 1995 with a Masters degree in Education.

Both teacher and students were interviewed at the beginning of the semester, in a pre-interview session to gauge the teacher's intentions and objectives for this course, as well as students' expectations of this course and their perception of their preferred learning styles. The three lessons conducted by this teacher in a particular class was followed over a three month period to arrive at answers at the research questions set out at the beginning of this research. The methods of data collection include classroom observation while lessons were in progress; interview with teacher and students once before lessons began and after the end of each lesson called the pre and post interviews were conducted; and analysis of university education policy documents.

### ANALYSIS/ DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data set that was obtained was subjected to three levels of analysis. The first of the multilayered analysis, outlined an ethnographic data analysis focusing on what happened in each of the lessons under investigation. Here is an excerpt from an analysis of this type. Participant Nora was an exemplar of many ESL students who was neither able to speak up in the class nor contribute towards group discussion owing to her inability and lack of confidence

to converse in the English language. This student reiterated what many others had said by bringing to the fore the role of language proficiency and confidence, her concerns were real and her fears explained vividly. Nora disclosed that in an English classroom, she would seek help from the teacher if friends couldn't help solve a problem but would do so personally because she was not confident of her language. She was required to use only English when speaking to her English teacher, therefore she chose to speak in private so that, "...saya kena cakap dengan dia, saya ada tersalah bahasa ke apake, dia akan betulkan dan saya tak akan malu dengan kawan-kawan... (...I have to speak in English to her, if I make a mistake or what, she could correct me and I would not feel embarrassed in front of my friends)". But in a class where she was allowed to use Malay language, she had no problems asking questions aloud in class. Nora would do homework individually as she faced less problems in writing compared to speaking, but would consult friends if she encountered problems with it. The second layer of analysis was done across the three lessons to look at the similarities and differences in the interactions of the three lessons. The purpose of this type of analysis is to gain greater insight into how interactive pedagogies are being interpreted and received within this context. To do this, particularly focus is given on the impact the various aspects of the three learning environments such as nature of task, the physical organisation of a classroom, the role played by teacher and student have on the perceived learning outcome of students. Here is an excerpt from an analysis on the nature of the task. The teacher assigned a collaborative task in which groups were required to prepare a notice and an agenda for a meeting followed by a meeting discussion within their groups. As the series of lessons unfolded the teacher although started with a collaborative approach moved away from it into more individual or whole

class pedagogical focus but did return to a more collaborative format in the last class. In terms of the physical arrangement of the classroom, analysis showed that the lessons were not designed for group interaction. In carrying out group activity, groups were found to be very close to each other, acting as a barrier for comfortable discussion. The teacher did move around from group to group listening to their discussions, but her movements were very much restricted by the confined space. Overall, the classroom was not totally physically compatible for collaborative learning strategies, rather the physical arrangement of the classroom was designed for transmission learning pedagogy.

The third layer analysed how the pedagogy in the three lessons compare to constructivist theory enacted in a Western setting. In order to conduct an analysis of this type, a framework for comparative analysis was derived from key sources. In this study, the way the framework was developed using literature on discourse in constructivist pedagogy driven classrooms, as its foundation is presented (for sample of the resultant framework see Table 1.0).

Excerpt from an analysis of the table reveals the following. Students generally preferred a classroom climate that was interactive and relaxed, where they could exchange ideas with peers and the teacher. They appreciated the teacher walking around the classroom to approach students and making an effort to get to know them. Research suggests that teachers should display an effort to link curriculum, make clear the intention of the lesson and promote metacognitive dimensions, all of which may take the following forms. Teacher should lay down the ground rules that formal language is used for oral as well as written communication and explain the learning value of participating in conversations of various kinds and its reasons. Students need help to set the rules for 'Exploratory Talk' so that group members would be encouraged to talk, give opinions due consideration, disputes should be allowed and all members should be involved in the final decision making.

In terms of clarity of tasks, priorities and intentions, students responded that the teacher generally began by giving instructions on task accomplishment and group formations at class level. This was normally followed by group level instruction after which each group was assigned a situation to work on. Teacher then prioritized aspects of the task and its requirements such as use of language, formal or informal, group formation and roles played by different committee members. However explanation of reasons why they should be involved or the value of being a role player within the group discussion was not made explicit to students in any of these classes studied. Goals set were made clear whereby, the teacher claimed that the purpose of the lesson to conduct a meeting was achieved

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it was better for dominant students but less so for the quieter ones. The aim of the course was to expose them to the though processes of conducting a meeting, to grasp the idea of writing notices, agendas and minutes of meetings.

Table 1.0: Summary of Categories Classroom Interaction

<b>A. Classroom organisation/environment(incorporates VT routines/physical environment):</b>	
Teacher characteristics	
- class B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher should speak in a loud and clear voice (&gt; 2 stdnts) and repeat some of the information (2 stdnts).</li> <li>- teacher should change her way o f talking to make the lesson more attractive to students.</li> </ul>
- class B3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher is not friendly, students afraid of her (2 stdnts)</li> <li>- Student likes an i nteractive l ession with t eacher, says teacher should give a summary of the lesson at the start.</li> </ul>
- class C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- environment created by teacher is important (1 stdnt).</li> <li>- teacher should focuses on one group's presentation per week having all groups discuss at the same time made the class very noisy (1 stdnt).</li> </ul>
- class C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lecturers should use her experience or write in front of the students s ince t his is m ore easy f or s tudent t o understand instead of just referring to text book (1 stdnt).</li> <li>- the way teacher taught is not interesting (1 stdnt).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher admits she has to improve on classroom mgmt (1 stdnt) .</li> <li>- lecturer should interact well and be close to students.(1 stdnt).</li> <li>- students' opinion is accepted i f teacher is n ot b iased towards them.(1 stdnt)</li> <li>- factors that a ffect the thinking t ime given by t eacher a re availability of time, subject and the lecturer himself (1 stdnt).</li> </ul>

The key research questions driving this study were:-

1. How does the initial attempt to establish social constructivist practices manifest itself within a class where it had not been trialled (on as big a scale as this) before? Overall the students liked it, felt it made a positive contribution to their learning and clearly indicated their desire for more of it. Teacher held a belief in its value but felt she did not have the context and skills to successfully implement it.

Issues arising from the Malaysian ESL classroom data fell into clear categories as follows:

Nature of task – the tasks in all the three lessons allowed for collaboration and interaction though at the level of implementation, the organisation, type and degree of interaction differed from teacher to teacher and from class to class. This is because the teacher needed to modify the lesson in view of the resources available to them at a given



time, for example class time available for activities, preparation time for the lesson, classroom space and design. The resulting nature of the task was a product of how the teacher utilised his/her skills to the best of his/her ability, given the above circumstances.

Physical Arrangement – the size of the classrooms were not similar but the arrangement of the classrooms were, because they were all designed for a transmission model of learning. As such, the class was not suited for interactive learning and this had a detrimental impact on the teacher's ability to enact an interactive approach as she would have liked.

Role of the teacher - Teacher stated her belief in employing social learning pedagogy but in practice she found that she could not retain its use in all of the three lessons. This led her to revert from the learning facilitator role she just assumed to the transmission model which she had used all along in her teaching career. She suggested constraints such as time, students' behaviour and the syllabus content were the key reasons for doing so.

Role of the students - In this interactive learning model, students played an active role in their learning while teacher's role was backgrounded. For the first time, students were presented with opportunities for learning in the form of shared learning, negotiated meaning and collaborating with peers to arrive at a consensus. This role shift which required students to become autonomous learners was a move welcomed by most, who indicated that the prospect of taking charge of their own learning resulted in more effective learning for them. Although some literature suggests that students from cultural backgrounds such as those in the study would be reluctant to take on highly interactive roles in the classroom, this did not prove to be the case for this group. Not only did they willingly adopt interactive and independent learner roles, but many wished they could experience more of it.

Role of communication/language – teacher generally used language and communication to facilitate task completion for example giving out instructions on group formation or to provide explanations of the task. Communication initially began on a formal note during class level address, but later on in the lesson became more informal when facilitating group discussions.

Students used communication for various reasons for example to facilitate group discussions for task completion, practice their language skills in formal and informal situations and to exchange ideas pertaining to task accomplishment. The role assumed by language differed for students of different language abilities. Higher language proficiency students used language to provide input and lead group discussions while for those with lower language ability, communication was an input provider of information and peer model for good language use.

## 2. How does the teacher and students respond to this relatively new pedagogical

approach both in terms of classroom behaviours and attitudes to learning? The teacher and students responded similarly in support of the interactive pedagogy during the interviews. The teacher generally believed in the value of this pedagogy for students' learning while the students favoured this form of learning compared to the teacher centred learning they were accustomed to. Though she was less comfortable with it but she did not give up trialling, she used it in two of the three lessons. As mentioned by Smith (2001) in her article, that the challenge of making a shift from theory to participatory classroom practice is a big one.

Students generally responded in favour of this approach across different lessons, where the prospect of mingling with peers and teacher appealed to both high and low language proficiency users alike. Apart from a minority of students who found that the teacher centred learning was still the preferred mode of learning for them, greater learning benefits including higher level learning for example perceived application for the future, learning

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through role play and the value of peer modelling were reported by a majority.

3. Do the predominantly 'Western' theories and pedagogical models that relate to social constructivist learning (including Project Zero visible thinking models) match what is observed in a particular Malaysian context, and if not where do they differ?

This study which attempted to put a 'Western' learning model to test in an Asian setting found both matches and mismatches at the level of implementation as these methodologies crossed cultural borders.

The Western theories and pedagogical models related to social constructivist learning have been and are at present continuously being tested and tried in many Western settings. Similarly, many other learning models that existed in the past have had education theories and approaches arbitrarily transferred across cultures. The overall perception of the teachers and students of the interactive pedagogy are positive, this is a strong indication that this model has a future in this new cultural context. Teachers view it as a beneficial alternative approach to learning while students have been able to pinpoint exact ways on how this new pedagogy had contributed to their learning. At the level of implementation, there were differences in many aspects from what is recommended by the constructivist literature, with considerable variations amongst teachers in the way the pedagogy was interpreted and carried out.

The mismatches came in a number of forms, one of which was the cultural variation in the classroom climate that presented itself during interaction. For example, there were obvious differences in the number of questions posed by students when the teacher went to the table or by approaching teacher personally either during or after lesson compared to the number of questions posed openly at class level. As Ron Ritchhart mentioned in his personal interview (p. 53) above, the classroom culture determines to a large extent the willingness of students to display their lack of understanding within the classroom. Teacher and students were not motivated to take learning beyond grade achievement for they see little meaning in achieving higher level learning, the effect of being in a highly exam oriented system. Infrastructure/ physical environment of the classroom was designed for the transmission model, thus provides little support for this new learning approach.

### CONCLUSION

Project Zero research studies conducted by HGSE are reconsidered the modern day resemblance of Vygotskian classroom as they are heavily grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. They have shown the relevance of this pedagogy in the twenty first century classrooms. This study attempted to extend PZ studies to Malaysia which is an unexplored cultural setting by this hallmark institution.

The overall conclusion for this lesson is, the changed pedagogy from the behaviourist/ transmission to the more constructivist model was appreciated by a clear majority of the students. There was widespread support for the interactive approach which allowed greater communication and negotiation between the teacher and students and amongst peers. Students generally reported having achieved greater learning benefits in line with claims of social constructivist theory such as greater meta cognitive awareness in terms of affective learning benefits achieved, its link to future use and reflections on how the course could be modified to further enhance learning. Many of the suggestions made by students were in line with the conditions that are claimed to foster constructivist learning (such as the prospect of cognitive apprenticeship which opened the path for scaffolded learning). They also described elements of situated learning embedded within the lesson, structuring positive goal and role interdependence among peers, heterogeneity among group members, and appropriate allocation of tasks. Many students indicated that two of the major challenges they encountered were issues with confidence and language. In all of the three lessons, one feature that was clear was the presence of elements of peer modelling. In her lessons, the teacher had attempted to foster modelling techniques on a regular basis, with instances of the teacher providing guided practice and corrective, on the spot, feedback and peer modelling using more advanced group members.

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that this pedagogical approach is welcomed by both students and teacher under this study. Some of the reasons for its wide appeal in a culture far from where this theory originated are the values embedded in the particular classroom pedagogy. Central to the social constructivist theory is a teaching approach that focuses on creating a learning environment that encourages learners to participate in learning through interaction with peers and teacher. In order to create this sort of environment, several universal values need to be upheld in the classroom such as mutual respect, understanding, trust, equal opportunity, support etc. Therefore, this study concludes that learning will be successful and relevant to all cultures in the world regardless of the place the theory originates from. if the environment in which the learning takes place is one that nurtures human values and gives prominence to upholding them.

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