# APPLICATIONS OF THE *I-THOU-IT* FRAMEWORK TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MACEDONIA

For my family


And in memory of my father

Dimitrija Naum Srbinoski

(1925-1991)


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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on David Hawkins' framework of the I-*Thou-It* with an expanded and personalized interpretation.  It aims at defining more

precisely the roles of the *I*, the *Thou*, and the *It* in the author's classroom. The paper also cites research related to this framework and compares the findings, differences and similarities of author's research with those of other researchers. The paper examines each of the roles and the interplay that takes place between and among them.

The paper explains the advantages of the subject-centered classroom, i.e. dominance of the *It*. Thus, the emphasis of the paper is on the *It* in the learning triangle and the role it plays, as well as possible ways of achieving the optimal *It*-angle in the triangle. The use of $L_1$ is presented as part of the *I*. The affective domain of the student (i.e. anxiety and self-esteem), announcement of the exam results, are parts of the *Thou*, as well as the effects of sitting in a circle and eliciting student feedback. Textbooks and culture are presented as parts of the *It*. The author concludes by describing what she has learned from her research and the direction she has taken in her teaching as a result.

ERIC Descriptors:

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|---|---|
| Teacher Role | Teacher Attitudes |
| Second Language Instruction | Language Teachers |
| Cultural Awareness | Realia |
| Student Developed Materials | Teacher Developed Materials |

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to describe and analyze David Hawkins' *I-Thou-It* framework (1967) of the essence of the teaching act: the teacher, the student, and the subject matter. It also describes my personal assumptions, suppositions and views of the "triangle" in relation to the above framework elicited from my classroom practice and experiences as well as insights that came out of this research.

I put the emphasis on the *It*, namely, the importance of the subject matter in the *I-Thou-It* framework, especially in the Cambridge Certificate preparation classes that I teach.

To me, understanding the *I-Thou-It* framework is extremely important because the three indispensable factors in teaching and learning are in an interplay which determines the relationship in the triangle of the *I-Thou-It*. In this triangle the *I* is the teacher, the *Thou* is the learner or student and the *It* is the subject of study or it is the instructional material. With the focus being on the *It* most of the time students are engaged and the *It* or instructional materials are the "bond," as Hawkins calls it, which ties the teacher and student because without the *It* there is a "vacuum" in the relationship. I strongly believe in the importance of the *It* or the third corner of the triangle as the "bonding" element.

I became inspired to research and write a paper on this topic when I was attending classes the first summer during my SMAT program. In my Approaches class I read Hawkins' essay entitled *I-Thou-It*[1], for the first time. Afterwards, I read Parker Palmer's book *The Courage to Teach*[2] and found many similar aspects in it regarding the role of the teacher, the student, and the instructional material. Such similar aspects include the emphasis of the *It* or instructional material in the *I-Thou-It* triangle and the issue of respect and love towards our students. At the end of that summer I wrote about *I-Thou-It* and their interplay as one of my teaching goals for the academic year. I worked on it but felt there was much more beneath the surface as I wrote in my synthesis paper. I was thrilled with the magic of the interplay which takes place in the triangle of the *I-Thou-It*. I already knew about the concept of the student-centered classroom and the teacher-centered classroom but it was the concept of a subject-centered classroom which was new for me.

In this paper I will describe and analyze the interplay, interdependency and the mystery of the *I-Thou-It*. I picture the triangle to have very flexible junctures. This image of the triangle that I give is new because I have not found research that gives the triangle characteristics of a living organism. I also explain the dynamic interplay among these three key elements, which can change every few minutes during an instructional hour or the teaching/learning process. I show how every several minutes of instruction these junctures move slightly. They move because one of the three (either *I, Thou,* or *It*) has emitted energy. My picture of the triangle is that each one possesses energy. All three are living organisms. They change, develop and interact. *It* also changes and develops because the other two do. In particular, I focus on the *It*

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[1] Hawkins, David, *The Informed Vision on Learning and Human Nature*, Agathon Press, 1967, pgs. 48-62

or the subject of study and the various ways that teachers and learners have facilitated accomplishment for the maximum focus on the *It*. The reason for this focus is my conviction that once the maximum or optimal *It* is achieved, learning is enhanced. This happens because *It* is the linking element between the teacher and the learner or student, without which teachers and students would not have a reason to communicate or be together.

Certain teaching practices enhance the focus on the *It* in the EFL classroom. These include use of students' $L_1$, inquiry into students' thoughts and feelings, the use of student feedback, the circle as a seating arrangement, the presentation of culture and the role of textbooks. I explain and discuss these practices in Chapter Three.

My teaching context is in South-Eastern Europe, Macedonia. I teach at a private school called Clover School of English in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia. It was established in 1995 and it has over 300 students. The students range from six-to seven-year olds to adults in their late fifties and sixties. Students are divided into classes of eight to sixteen students according to their age and/or language proficiency. The popularity of foreign recognized language certificates and diplomas has been on the rise in Macedonia since its independence in 1991. Besides high interest in TOEFL[3] and IELTS[4] preparation classes, there has been interest in the Cambridge Certificates as well. (The UCLES[5] has developed a series of examinations with similar characteristics, which now span five levels). This is due to the fact that many people in Macedonia, especially young people want to study

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[2] Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach - Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life,* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1998

[3] TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language is a test to evaluate the English proficiency of people whose native language is not English.

[4] IELTS, International English Language Testing System, provides an assessment of whether candidates are ready to study or train in the medium of English.

[5] UCLES, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, was established as a department of the University of Cambridge in 1858 in order to set a standard of efficiency for schools in England.

abroad, do business with other countries or trade.  In order to do either one of the mentioned activities abroad they are usually required to provide proof of language proficiency by the foreign institution.  For the past several years I have mainly concentrated on preparing students for the Cambridge Certificates.

I have been teaching English as a foreign language for 20 years.  I have taught all levels, from very young children six or seven years of age all the way up to adults. I have taught both in the public and private sector.  However, due to a high demand for foreign recognised certificates in foreign language mastery/level, for the past five years I have concentrated on preparing students for the UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate) certificates (PET - Preliminary English test, FCE - First Certificate in English, CAE - Certificate in Advanced English).  The exams are administered by authorised UCLES teachers in the capital of the country or the local school if a required minimum of students take the exam.

My students have all, with the exception of one or two high school students, had English as a foreign language for the past five to eight years on a twice or three times per week basis.  They are all locals and the majority excel at school.  They register for the official exam at the beginning of March .

Teachers who prepare students for Cambridge certificates as well as other teachers and students will primarily benefit from this research paper.  Knowing the importance of the *It* or the subject of study, as the focus of the teaching/learning is of benefit to every teacher of any subject because learning is optimal when the focus among the teacher-student-subject of study is on the subject of study or *It*.

The reader will better understand the interplay of the teacher-student-instructional material and the importance of the *It* or instructional material in this triangle.  They will understand why without the *It* in the triangle, there will be a

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"vacuum" and no "bonding" will take place, thus no learning will occur either. In other words, in the teaching/learning environment the focus can be on the teacher, on the student or on the subject of study. In realistic circumstances the focus shifts frequently. However, teachers and students strive to focus most of the lesson is on the subject of study, then maximum learning is bound to occur.

The paper is organized in three chapters. In the first chapter called "The Learning Triangle" I describe the *I-Thou-It* framework from the originator's perspective, David Hawkins[6]. In addition, I provide evidence and interpretations of the framework by other researchers in the field. By describing the originator's perspective and other researchers' perspectives I intend to facilitate readers' understanding of my own interpretations and beliefs on the "I, Thou, and It" triangle. In the second chapter named "An Obtuse Triangle" I explain how I interpret the *I-Thou-It* framework. Namely, I concentrate on each element separately and provide my own definitions, comparing them with D. Hawkins. By comparing and contrasting Hawkins' and other researchers' assumptions with my own, I supply a clear foundation for later explanations in the paper, i.e. practices performed by the teacher and students in order to achieve optimal focus on the subject of study. I conclude with the third chapter, Practices for Achieving Optimal *It* Angle, where I focus on my teaching practices and how I had tried to optimize the *It* angle of the triangle. In addition, I focus on practices performed by the *Thou*, i.e. students or

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[6] David Hawkins, *The Informed Vision on Learning and Human Nature*, Agathon Press, 1967, pgs. 48-62.

learners, and how they have contributed to focusing class time on the subject of study or the *It*.

Finally, I have included sample lesson plans with an *I-Thou-It* analyses in the Appendix.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**THE LEARNING TRIANGLE**

This chapter has two parts. First, I discuss the *I*, the *Thou*, and the *It* (the teacher, the student, and the instructional material) and their interplay from the perspective of the originator, David Hawkins. I also describe the framework and its interpretations in the field. Second, I analyse the research regarding the elements of the learning triangle (teacher, student and subject matter) as discussed in the works of Rebecca Oxford and Robin Scarcella, Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, and Parker Palmer.

I-Thou-It

The essay *I, Thou, and It* by David Hawkins is about the interplay of the teacher or *I,* the student or the *Thou,* and the subject matter or the *It*. David Hawkins wrote this essay in order to criticize the situation in the educational institutions at that time which was "sterile and formal." In this essay D. Hawkins argued that educational institutions ought to give more focus to the subject matter in the teaching/learning process. Hawkins talks about the "relationship between the teacher and the child and the third thing in the picture which has to be there and which

completes the triangle."[7]  For Hawkins,having the teacher and the student as partners

in learning is not sufficient  unless the subject of study or the instructional material is

present as well.  More precisely, he puts the focus is on the subject of study, making

the link among the three (the teacher, the learner, and the subject) very firm.  There

are cases where in the process of teaching/learning, the relationship between teachers

and students, is viewed

zas the crucial component, whereas the subject of study is marginalized.  In contrast,

for Hawkins the subject of study is empasized.  This emphasis is due to the fact that

the subject of study connects the two, i.e. connects the teacher and the student or

learner.  The weaker the focus on the subject, the weaker the link is between the

teacher and the learner.  Thus, there is a "void."   The relationship is not complete and

learning is hindered.

Hawkins defines the *It* or the subject matter as the "third thing in the picture

which completes the triangle of my title." [8]  The *It* is the outside world for Hawkins

and at the end of his essay he explains it nicely by saying "we are all in *it* together."[9]

By the outside world, Hawkins means anything other than the teacher or student,

which engages teacher and students in meaningful and purposeful interaction.  The *It*

can be a person or persons, or a thing or things.  An example from real life which

Hawkins gives us is a situation in a hospital when he and his wife go in to get a

neighbor who's had her third child.  The new mother's two other children are with

them and the father is ill.  When the nurse announces that the children cannot

continue from a certain point onwards and Hawkins is left alone with the two children

he suddenly feels the principle of the triangle.  He suddenly feels he needs something

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[7] Ibid, p. 49
[8] Ibid, p. 48
[9] Ibid, p. 62

besides himself and the children which will give them a focus or reason for real interaction.  At the edge of panic in the empty hospital corridor he spots a collection of photographs on the wall.  The minute he tells the children "Look" and focuses their attention on the photographs the third thing of the triangle becomes present and engagement takes place.  The simple triangle principle worked.  The significance lies in the emphasis and importance of the subject matter or the subject of study.  The interaction between the teacher and student will be smoother and bonding will take place.

One of the premises Hawkins believes in is respect, not love toward our students.  He argues that "love without respect can blind and bind whereas respect is implicit in all moral relations with others." [10]  Love for the students is more of a motherly act and not something teachers should feel for their students.  It is natural for a mother to feel love for her child but inappropriate for the teacher to feel the same for the students.  The feeling of love can and will lead the teacher-student relationship into a different direction than the desired one, i.e. the direction of respect for each other, and thus hinder successful engagement in the teacher-student-subject triangle. It is respect for the students that the teachers ought to have in order to provide the adequate environment for the learning to take place.  He further argues that "to have respect for children is more than recognizing their potentialities in the abstract, it is also to seek out and value their accomplishments - however small these may appear by normal standards of adults."[11]  By this Hawkins means that as teachers we need to support our students, provide advice and guidance.  Moreover, according to Hawkins' framework teachers should  recognize students' achievements (e.g. when a student pronounces a word in a foreign language correctly for the first time), that should be

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[10] Ibid, p. 53

given recognition.  By recognizing students' small achievements, we as teachers

provide space for future greater achievements and successes.  Their small

achievements may only be small if and when judged by the standards of adults.

Students' accomplishments, especially those of young students, must be valued

because they need our feedback on their progress and performance.  In support of his

explanation for the teacher-student relationship, Hawkins argues that the relationship

between the teacher and the child is something quite unique that isn't exactly

paralleled by any other kind of human relationship.  In other words, the relationship

of the teacher and the student is incomparable with any other relationship among

humans, friend to friend, mother to child, spouse to spouse, etc.  It is a unique

relationship with the three main role-players being the teacher, the student and the

subject of study.

In his essay Hawkins concentrates on the *It* or "the third corner of the triangle"

as he refers to it, and how this third corner affects the relations between the other two

corners, the corner of the *I*, the teacher, and the corner of the *Thou*, the student, and

in particular how the *It* enters into the pattern of mutual interest and exchange.

**HAWKINS' TRIANGLE**

IT

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[11] Ibid, p. 48

I                                THOU
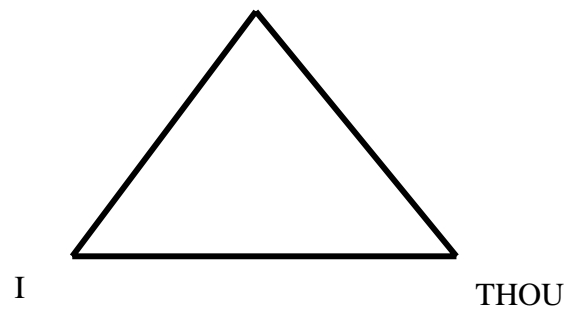
When Hawkins talks about teachers or students he claims that in order to see them

objectively we need to look at their connectedness with the outside world.  For

Hawkins, any human being is a "localized physical body" (p. 50) and it is impossible

to analyse this person in isolation, i.e. without his/her relationships with people

around him/her.  Once we analyse a person in this larger world around him/her, we

can say we have a clear and objective picture of that person.  He further explains:

> A human being is localized physical body, but you can't see him as a *person*
> unless you see him in his working relationships with the world around him. The
> more you cut off these working relationships, the more you put him in a box (p.
> 50,51).

"Without a *Thou*, there is no *I* evolving. Without an *It*, there is no content for the

context, no figure and no heat, but only an affair of mirrors confronting each other."

[12]   Hawkins talks in favor of the *It* as being the crucial element in the relationship.  In

other words, without the *It* the *I-Thou* relationship is non-existent or it is as he states

"only an affair of mirrors confronting each other."[13]

According to Hawkins the teacher makes the relation between the child or

student and *It* possible even if this is just having *It* in the room.  By doing this, thus,

they have a common theme for discussion, and they are involved together in the

world.  Hawkins concludes that the absence of the *It* from the triangle creates a

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[12] Ibid, p. 52
[13] Ibid, p. 52

vacuum.  Only with the introduction of the *It* or the subject of study, can a possible

stable bond of communication of shared interest be established.

In conclusion, Hawkins defines the *It* as the outside world both animate and

inanimate.  He supports this by saying that children are interested in objects in the

same manner they are interested in people.  According to Hawkins, children's interest

in things or objects has been depreciated by educators and emphasis has instead been

put on children's interest in people.  This interest, he claims, needs to be of equal

value for both people and things.

Other Research on *I-Thou-It*

I have found Hawkins' *I-Thou-It* framework applicable to the work of many

educators, linguists, and EFL/ESL specialists.  Even though they do not specifically

cite his work, I contend that  the elements are present.  In this section I analyse the

writings of the following educators:  Parker Palmer, Rebecca Oxford, Jack C.

Richards, and Theodore S. Rodgers.

Parker Palmer in his book *The Courage to Teach* describes  the *I-Thou-It* interplay

like this:

> Good teaching comes in myriad forms, but good teachers share one trait: they
> "are truly present in the classroom, deeply engaged with their students and their
> subject." They "are able to weave a complex web of connections among
> themselves, their subjects, and their students, so that students can learn to
> weave a world for themselves. The connections made by good teachers are held
> not in their methods but in their hearts - the place where intellect and emotion
> and spirit and will converge in the human self.[14]

Here  Palmer describes  good teaching  and makes reference to the *I-Thou-It*

without referring to Hawkins' work.  Although he uses the same terms for teacher *I*,

and subject matter *I*, Palmer does not directly mention the triangle.  However,

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[14] Parker J. Palmer*, The Courage to Teach - Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*.
(Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1998), from front book flap

throughout his work he talks about the interdependency of the teacher-student-subject matter triangle.  He also mentions the, "complex web of connections that the teachers weave among themselves, their subjects and their students."[15]

He explicitly states that the connections the good teachers make are in their hearts, not in their methods.  Here a similarity between Hawkins and Palmer can be observed where Hawkins talks about respect and not love.  Moreover, Palmer considers the heart the place where, "the intellect and emotion and spirit converge in the human self."[16]  For Palmer the heart is the focus and source of the complex human characteristics such as intellect, emotion and spirit.  If we take into account Hawkins' advocacy for respect instead of love for our students we may partially rely on the heart as the source of respect and not just love.  If love is an emotion and respect is more of an intellectual and social characteristic or phenomenon, then we can find similarities between Hawkins and Palmer.  Opening up the space and connecting the students with the subject of study, each other, and with the teacher is a formula for a successful learning environment.  The teacher  provides the possibilities for such connections and links.  Once these links are established, they need to be tightened and tied together and through such circumstances a genuine teaching and/or learning atmosphere is established.  Without these links or connectors the three role-players of the *I-Thou-It* learning triangle will not establish a community and their words will be empty speech bubbles floating in midair, and their deeds will be futile, will have no purpose or carry any meaning.

Other teachers and researchers discuss the *I-Thou-It* in a rather isolated manner. Namely, they analyse the roles of *I, Thou*, and *It* separately or in isolation. None of the cited researchers mention the triangle or offer deeper analyses of the

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[15] Ibid,. front book flap

interplay of the *I-Thou-It*. Such an example is evident in the work of Rebecca L. Oxford[17] , where she describes the *I*'s or the teacher's roles in isolation from the roles of the student and the roles of the subject of study. The teachers' roles vary depending on the context in which they teach . Thus, the roles can be:

> Information gatherer, decision-maker, motivator, facilitator of group dynamics, provider of large quantities of authentic English input and opportunities to use this input, counselor and friend, provider of feedback and promoter of a multicultural perspective.[18]

According to the same authors the teacher is also "caring" and "professional" (Ibid. p. 4). "Caring for students involves stepping out of one's personal frame of reference and considering the students' needs and expectations." Oxford and Scracella argue that " teachers are viewed as professionals involved in reflecting upon their own teaching as well as the behaviors of their learners." (Ibid, p. 4)

Others see teacher roles as it was expressed:

> "She was confident and in great control, she just stood up and looked like a teacher, she was relaxed, she knew what she wanted to do and what was expected of the students, she has good voice projection, her instructions are good. Very clear, she looks more confident than us, she looks comfortable and as if she's enjoying it, she is very good at getting classroom control, the students know that she is the teacher."[19]

In this definition and explanation of the teachers' roles it is easily noticed that one element from the triangle is missing. While learners are mentioned several times, the mention of the subject matter is evidently absent.

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[16] Ibid, front book flap

[17] Rebecca L. Oxford and Robin C. Scarcella*, The Tapestry of Language Learning - The Individual in the Communicative Classroom*, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, pp. 4-5, 1992

[18] Rebecca L. Oxford and Robin C. Scarcella*, The Tapestry of Language Learning - The Individual in the Communicative Classroom*, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, pp. 4-5, 1992

[19] Jack C. Richards, Belinda Ho, and Karen Giblin*, Learning how to teach in the RSA Cert*, (chapter 11) from *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching* by Donald Freeman and Jack C. Richards, Cambridge University Press, 1996

I interpret this as a separate analysis of the *Thou* or the learner. According to Oxford and Scracella, "learners are active and have considerable control over their own learning, and they help select the specific themes and tasks of instruction "[20]. In addition, they "provide teachers with valuable details about their learning processes."[21] Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, claim that

> The learners' contribution to the learning process is seen in the types of activities learners carry out, the degree of control learners have over the content of learning, the patterns of learner groupings adopted, the degree to which learners influence the learning of others, and the view of the learner as processor, performer, initiator, problem solver.[22]

In my opinion, this is another typical isolated analysis of the *It* or the instructional material as part of the triangle. According to J.C. Richards and T. S. Rodgers, the roles that the instructional material or *It* play vary. Such roles can be:

> to allow learners to progress at their own rates of learning, to allow for different styles of learning, to provide opportunities for independent study and use and to provide opportunities for self-evaluation and progress in learning. (Ibid. p. 79)

In this isolated analysis a link between the instructional material and the student is evident where learners are explicitly mentioned since the choice of instructional material has direct impact on the speed of progress and learning styles of students. The third element of the triangle, i.e. the teacher is not mentioned here. I thus understand this to be a limited analysis of the *I-Thou-It* interplay.

There is yet another isolated analysis of the *It* or the instructional material. According to Oxford and Scarcella, instructional materials:

> Provide opportunities for communicative and authentic language use through thematic, task-based instruction, accord with individual learners' differences,

[20] Rebecca L. Oxford and Robin C. Scarcella, *The Tapestry of Language Learning - The Individual in the Communicative Classroom*, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, pp. 4-5, 1992

[21] Ibid, p. 5

[22] Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* , Cambridge University Press, p. 23, 1998

including proficiency levels, learning styles and strategies, cultures, needs, interests, and goals, integrate language skills, provide learners with extensive exposure to authentic language and numerous opportunities to use this language, provide learners with a variety of supports that help students understand and use authentic language, stimulate learner-centered (as opposed to teacher-centered) activity, promote learner self-direction and are highly motivating.[23]

Again, in this example we can observe the two element analysis of the triangle. The instructional material is being analysed in connection with the students and the impact it makes on students. Teachers are not mentioned in this analysis.

In this chapter I have explained Hawkins' views and other educators' applications of this framework. I can summarize by saying that David Hawkins put emphasis on the *It* and argued for the *It* as being the bonding substance for the *I* or the teacher and the *Thou* or the student. Having *It* in the learning triangle is inevitable if learning is to occur according to Hawkins. Moreover, having respect for our students instead of love will definitely lead into the direction of true learning. On the other hand, other researchers tend to analyse the elements of the triangle one by one, in isolation, without giving an explanation of their interdependency. In my research, I have found that Palmer does elaborate on the learning triangle in detail and presents the interdependence among the elements of the triangle. With such understanding of the framework I hope the reader will understand my views of the relationships in the learning triangle in the next chapter.

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[23] Rebecca L. Oxford and Robin C. Scarcella*, The Tapestry of Language Learning - The Individual in the Communicative Classroom*, Heinle & Heinle Publishers, pp. 4-5, 1992

# CHAPTER TWO

## AN OBTUSE TRIANGLE

In this chapter I explain the theory, the principles, assumptions and beliefs which I have derived from Hawkins' *I-Thou-It* theory. I also state explicitly how my interpretations are similar or different to Hawkins' framework. First, I give a summary of my interpretations of Hawkins' framework. Then, I define the *I*, *Thou* and *It* as I understand these terms. Afterwards I discuss the *It* from both Hawkins' perspective and my own perspective. I continue with specific analyses of *It* and its characteristics in the learning triangle. In that light I talk about the triangle and its characteristics as a living organism. This includes energy and radiation of energy. I provide a picture of the triangle as an obtuse triangle with seven different applications or relationships. At the end of the chapter I discuss the significance of my interpretations especially in regard to my teaching.

Summary of my interpretations of Hawkins' framework

There are three inevitable components of the learning triangle. They are the teacher or the *I,* the student or the *Thou*, and the subject matter or the *It*. The most important component is the *It* (the subject matter) because it actually bonds the other two, i.e. the teacher and the student. In other words, the teacher and the student would actually have no reason to be together if it wasn't for the (subject matter) or *It*.

However, the bonding of the teacher and student via the *It* (subject matter) is made possible by the teacher. The teacher is the one who plans class activities so that optimal bonding with the teacher and student via the subject matter is achieved.

Sometimes it is the student who makes the bonding possible. Even then, the bonding is made possible because the teacher has given clear instructions and procedures. Thus, the teacher carries the key responsibility for enabling optimal bonding to take place. Without clear instructions all three elements may be present and yet, no bonding may take place.

I have incorporated the *I-Thou-It* framework in the following ways.

First, like Hawkins I stress the importance of *It* in the *I-Thou-It* triangle. Namely, I see the entire triangle with the focus on the *It*. In other words, without the *It* there is a vacuum. Moreover, whatever the *I* or *Thou* do should focus on the *It*, because *It* is like mortar, the bonding substance. I believe that learning can only take place if and when the focus in the triangle is on the *It*, or the subject of learning. If the focus is either on the *I* (the teacher), or the *Thou* (the student), learning will be inhibited. One simple and clear example of a teacher-focused activity is when the teacher talks about himself/herself without reference to the *It*. Such example is when the teacher talks about his/her vacation. All the focus then is on the teacher.

The second adoption of Hawkins' framework that I have made is that the *It* can both be animate or inanimate. *It* can be a living being or an organism or an object. When *It* is a living being it can be a guest speaker in the classroom or somebody's voice on the tape. In both cases the focus of both *I* or the teacher, and *Thou* or the student, is placed on the *It*. The *It* here bonds the two, the *I* , that is the teacher, and the *Thou*, the student, so they have a common theme for discussion .

Another aspect I have adopted from Hawkins is that teachers really need to respect and not to love the students. Love for me is something too intimate which can inhibit the process of learning. If emotions toward students overpower the *I* or the teacher, the focus from the *It*, i.e. the subject of learning is diverted toward the *Thou* or the student. Having the student as the focus of attention will distract and inhibit true learning.

I also understand the *I-Thou-It* triangle as a living whole or organism. It radiates energy in the field enclosed by the triangle. By energy here I mean heat, or physical energy. This energy is characteristic of every living being as well as every object. Each element in the triangle, the *I*, the *Thou*, and the *It* individually radiate energy. I believe that only in the case when the *It* radiates the most energy, i.e. the energy field of the *It* is the strongest, the process of learning is smooth. The energy from the *It* derives from the fact that all three elements of the triangle are animate, i.e. they have animate features. The energy from an object influences the teacher's and the student's perceptions and thus initiates the teacher and/or the student to respond. For example, if the *It* in the classroom is an object, e.g. an orange, and the teacher puts it on her table, or on the floor for everyone to see. The task is to have students come up with adjectives to describe the orange by looking at it. They will come up with words such as orange, round, juicy, ripe etc. This orange can be said to have radiated energy and thus helped students produce these adjectives.

My interpretation of the *I-Thou-It* framework is that it is a triangle with seven relationships depending on the initiator. Thus, in the triangle the seven possible relationships are as follows:

1. *I-Thou* = (Teacher – Student)
2. *Thou-It* = (Student – Subject matter)

3. *It-I* = (Subject matter – Teacher)

4. *Thou-I* = (Student – Teacher)

5. *I-It* = (Teacher – Subject matter)

6. *It-Thou* = (Subject matter – Student)

7. *Thou-Thou* (or other *Thous*) = (Student – Student, or Student – Other students)

I will show examples of each of these relationships later in the chapter.

Since each of these radiate energy, in my opinion, there is a field energized in the nearby area of each of the three elements of the triangle. During the course of instruction there is always time when one of the three dominates. At that time the angle of the dominant one is the largest. Sometimes it is the *I*, sometimes it is the *It* and sometimes it is the *Thou* that dominates. The relative balance of the three is also an interesting phenomenon. In the teacher-centered classroom we find the dominance of the *I*. In the student-centered classroom it is the dominance of the *Thou*, and in the subject-centered classroom it is the dominance of the *It*. We have seen the advantages and the pitfalls of the first two. I believe it is the *It*-centered classroom we are striving to achieve now.

My picture of this triangle is as follows:
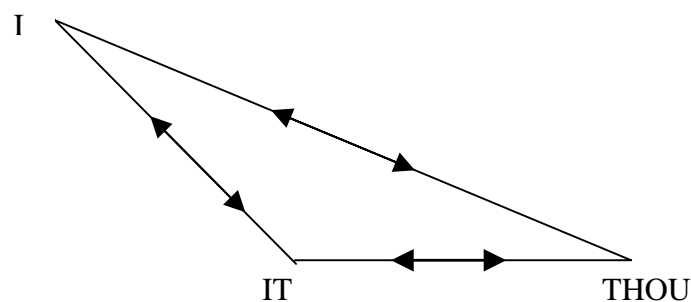


The triangle has an obtuse angle, which is the angle of the *It*. Focus should be for most of the time on the *It*. We are striving to achieve subject-centered learning. The subject of learning engages both the *I* and the *Thou*. The *It* can be manifested in

various ways.  Sometimes it is simply a piece of classroom realia brought into the classroom and sometimes it is a word written on the board, a question the *I* poses, a picture, or a photograph.  Any of these will serve the purpose if they help focus the *I*'s and the *Thou*'s attention on the *It* i.e. the teacher's and the students' attention on the subject matter.

<u>DEFINING *I-THOU-IT*</u>

<u>Defining *I*</u>

"Good teachers replicate the process of knowing by engaging students in the dynamics of the community of truth."[24]

Like all teachers, I, myself, have often wondered whether I am a good teacher.  The answer to this question has varied to extreme ends.  In this section I explain some of my beliefs about the teacher and her role in the classroom.

*I* is the teacher.  The teacher is one of the three main factors influencing and defining the interplay of the *I-Thou-It*.  The teacher can take on different roles starting from the domineering, mentoring or guiding.  In this paper *I* is myself, and I will be describing the *I* i.e. myself, as seen from the somewhat detached position of video tapes of my own classes and also of notes from my teaching journals.  I was very concerned with the *I*, i.e. myself and what I did in class with my students, and how I had affected them and influenced them.  Many questions arose in my head such as whether I give my students enough time to think, to express themselves, whether the use of  $L_1$  is positive or negative for my students, and whether I can teach them any culture along with the language.  All these questions will be addressed later in Chapter Three.

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[24] Parker J. Palmer, 1998, *The Courage to Teach*, Jossey-Bass Publishers  p.115

Here I will describe my picture of physical and behavioral characteristics of good teachers. I have always viewed teachers as people who knew what they want, looked more confident than students and also carried themselves like teachers. This includes a clean appearance, casual clothing, with matching colors and a hair style that matched his/her face. A good teacher always can "control" a class in the sense that he/she addresses students' needs, questions and comments, and still can lead the class in the right direction, toward the class objectives. Moreover, good teachers enjoy their work, which is very obvious from their facial expressions as well as from their behavior. They do not behave like teaching is a burden for them. That can be seen with teachers full of energy and their tone of voice is positive. Their comments between instructions or phases of the lesson are positive in that they praise students, or make general comments about the students' future or future professions.

Defining *Thou*

In this section I explain my interpretation of the *Thou* and its role in the *I-Thou-It* interplay.

*Thou* is the learner or student. In my educational background (which is basically public and traditional South-Eastern European) teachers and students have been on two different levels. Teachers are the commanding, ruling party, and students are the obedient party who listen to the instructions. This concept has been gradually changing for the benefit of the student, although it still remains deeply instilled in our culture that teachers are superior and students are inferior. Teachers are in the classroom to teach and students are there to learn. Since learning is for students they need to get into a inferior position by listening and obeying their teachers. This situation can easily be evidenced in many classrooms in Macedonia where students seldom get a chance to say what they think, let alone what they feel.

This does not discredit those teachers in this country who are very sensitive, are more on a person-to-person level with the students and address their needs more than other teachers. In most classes in the country students are passive and receiving sufferers and do not have much say in the way a lesson is organized. This is predominantly the case in the public school sector, whereas the classes are of much better quality in the private sector. Firstly, it is the number of students which is about a third the size of a public school class (which is 30-35 on average). Also, English teachers in the country are considered the most progressive in the sense that they have imported some foreign methods and approaches which are new to other teachers. These English teachers have been exposed to other influences and were trained by native English speaking instructors at University level.

Defining *It*

In this section I try to define the *It* and its role in the *I-Thou-It* interplay. *It* is the subject matter studied. It can also be materialised through the instructional materials. It is the most vital part of the *I-Thou-It* triangle. A lot has been written and researched on the topic of *I* or *Thou*. However, very little has been written on the topic of *It*, especially where the *It* is the focus.

II *IT* AS THE KEY ELEMENT

As stated previously, I believe that the *It* or the subject matter is the key element in the learning triangle. The subject matter has to be linked to the student or *Thou* in order for the learning process to take place. Later in this chapter I explain how optimal learning is achieveable. The seven different applications or

relationships of the framework are the basis for analysing what actually happens in the teaching/learning process.

To me, there are three kinds of materials: text-based, task-based, and realia. Their primary role is to promote communicative language use, influence the quality of classroom interaction and language use. The instructional materials are teacher oriented (according to the audio-lingual method). They can be used to present content, to practice content, they can be major or minor source of input.

My personal interpretation of the *It*

I have always wondered whether instructional material and the subject matter are the same or have something in common. They are synonymous in many ways. Very often when we say "instructional material" it could mean the textbook students are using and also the subject matter in the broader sense could mean the subject, that is English as a subject to be studied or geography or any other subject for that matter. There is also a slight difference between the two. The subject is a broader term in my opinion, materialized or represented through the instructional material.

The subject matter needs to be the focus when we want learning to occur. Unfortunately, besides the many traditional teacher-centered classrooms and the more modern approaches which promote a learner-centered classroom, I have found few linguists and researchers who promote a subject-centered classroom. Besides the fact that a lot of literature has been written on the subject matter solely in the form of curricula, textbooks, etc, I have found little emphasis on subject matter-centered teaching in EFL in Macedonia.

III  *I-THOU-IT* AS A LIVING ORGANISM

In my view, the *I-Thou-It* triangle has all the characteristics of a living organism. Given this view, I therefore assume that the learning triangle is governed

by the laws of  biology, chemistry and physics.  As with all living organisms the most important characteristic is that the triangle changes all the time.  It never stays the same for a long period of time.  All three elements in the triangle, influence each other and thus change the shape of the learning triangle.  One simple example is when the *I*, or the teacher gives instructions to the students.  The students follow the instructions or do the task and by doing the task they provoke changes which take place in the triangle.

Another example is when the teacher gives instructions to the students and models how to do an exercise by doing the first sentence herself.   While giving instructions and modelling the triangle would have one shape, e.g. it would be a triangle where the teacher's angle would be the largest.  However, once the students start doing the exercise themselves the triangle would take another shape.  The shape would then be an obtuse triangle only with the largest angle being at the *It* angle.  Thus, this continuous change of the shape of the triangle is a perpetual phenomenon during the hour of instruction.

Energy

Now, let us look at the science of physics.  Another typical characteristic of living organisms is their possession of energy.  "Physicists classify energy into several types: kinetic, potential, heat, sound, radiant energy (light, for example), and electrical, chemical and nuclear energy."[25]   By energy here I mean heat, the waves that are emitted from all of the three roleplayers, the teacher, students and the subject matter.   Energy is heat which is typical of the *I*, i.e. the teacher, the *Thou*, i.e. the student and of *It*.  In the classroom all these kinds of energy are present, except for the

nuclear energy.  I believe that energy is typical for the subject matter in the same fashion it is typical or part of the teacher and student.  This can be supported with this scientific fact: "An object possesses heat or thermal energy by virtue of its temperature."[26]   And also, "heat is a form of energy that is possessed by all material things."[27]   This is the case regardless of the fact whether the *It* is animate or inanimate.  One example of an animate *It* or subject matter is the guest speaker in the classroom.

However, when the subject matter is of an inanimate nature then it also possesses energy and radiates it.  It is a scientifically proven fact that "heat energy can also be transferred between objects that are not making contact."[28]  This is because heat energy can radiate through space.  One example of an inanimate subject matter is classroom realia.  Classroom realia can be samples of real fruit, e.g. an orange. An orange has energy because it was and still is alive.  While it was on the tree it soaked in the energy from the sun.  It also possesses energy like all objects.  This energy can then be transformed and transferred to other objects in its immediate vicinity.

Radiation of energy

All realia possess energy because these objects receive energy from the environment.  They receive the energy from people who hold them, touch them, or if these objects are placed in the classroom they receive energy from the teacher and/or the students who emit this energy.  The energy from the teacher and/or students is transferred to the inanimate object, e.g. a vase.  Thus, objects of inanimate nature possess energy as well and have the capacity to pass it on to other teachers or

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[25] Physics Today, Volume 2, *The World Book Encyclopedia of Science*, World Book, Inc., a Scott Fetzer company, 1989, p. 52
[26] Ibid. p. 58
[27] Ibid, pgs. 58, 62
[28] Ibid, p. 59

students.  This is a scientific fact because "As an object loses or gains one type of energy, so another kind is correspondingly gained or lost….The total amount of energy possessed by an object remains the same."[29]  This phenomenon is the principle of conservation of energy, which states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but only converted into other forms.  Radiation of energy in the classroom is best felt when students sit in a circle with the teacher. In my opinion, this form of circular seating arrangement or *The Way of Council*[30]  assumes that the energy in the classroom stays inside.  Judging from my video-taped classes and notes from the teaching journal, I can conclude that those classes where the students sat in the circular seating arrangement, they felt more intimate and stayed focused for longer time.  Students also cooperated more easily and more willingly, thus the energy was passed from one student to another.  I shall write more about my classroom practices with this circular arrangement in Chapter Three.

IV Seven Different Applications of the Framework

The way I interpret Hawkins' framework implies the existence of seven different applications or relationships in the framework depending on the initiator of the relationship.  Looking at the picture of the *I-Thou-It* framework we can see that the *It* angle is obtuse because conscious effort should be made by the teacher so that the focus is on the *It* for most  of the lesson.  This implies largest space for the *It*. Thus, if we want to achieve optimal *It* angle, hence ensuring optimal learning conditions, we as teachers need to be aware of the *It* being not only present but as dominant in the *I-Thou-It* learning triangle.

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[29] Ibid, p. 62
[30] Zimmerman Jack in collaboration with Virginia Coyle, *The Way of Council*, Bramble Co; March 1997

Understanding the seven different relationships of the framework is of crucial importance for successful engagement of students with the subject matter. Having said this, I want to emphasize to the reader that teachers need to understand all seven relationships in order to realize the benefits and values of the *Thou-It* relationship. The readers may also want to implement the framework by planning more activities that engage students with the subject. "Engage" here is the key word.

Looking at all seven relationships, we observe three relationships in the clockwise direction and three relationships in the counterclockwise direction. The seventh relationship lies in the *Thou* angle where *Thou* is of pluralistic nature and thus can engage in two different relationships. One relationship is when students engage between each other individually, and the other relationship is when one student enters a relationship with two or more other students. I describe in more detail the pluralistic nature of the *Thou* in a separate section of this chapter.

Seven Different Applications of the Framework

1. *It – I*  (Subject Matter – Teacher)

2. *I – Thou* (Teacher – Student)

3. *Thou – It* (Student – Subject Matter)

4. *It – Thou* (Subject Matter – Student)

5. *Thou – I* (Student – Teacher)

6. *I – It* (Teacher – Subject Matter)

7. *Thou – Thou* (or *Thou - other Thous*)

I

THOU
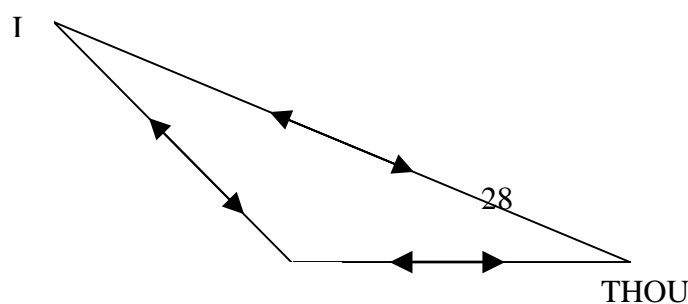
Detailed examples and applications of these relationships can be found in Chapter

Three.  If we observe the seven relationships we can conclude that four out of seven

include the *It*.  They are relationships 1, 3, 4 and 6 above.  Two out of these four have

*It* as the initiator in the relationship.  They are 1 and 4.

The First Relationship: *It – I* or Subject Matter – Teacher Relationship

This is a relationship initiated by the subject matter.  There are numerous

examples of this relationship.  Examples where *It* is the initiator are observable in

situations when the teacher is drawing or writing on the board.  She is creating and

actually communicating with the *It* on the board.  The drawing or the written piece is

the *It*.

The *It – I* relationship can be observed with the native informant in the classroom, in

which case the *It* is the native informant.  In the situation when the native informant

addresses the teacher we have an *It – I* relationship.

The Second Relationship:  *I – Thou* or Teacher – Student Relationship

The  *I – Thou* relationship is the most obvious relationship in the framework.

It is the teacher initiating relationship with the student.  Addressing the student by

his/her name is one example of *I – Thou* relationship.  Another example is when the

teacher is explaining, modelling, etc. to the students.  All these are examples of *I –*

*Thou* relationships.

The Third and Fourth Relationship: *Thou – It* and

*It – Thou* or Student – Subject Matter & Subject Matter – Student Relationship

I discuss the *Thou – It* and the *It – Thou* relationships together because I

consider these two relationships to be pivotal in the learning triangle.  When saying

this I imply that teachers need to become aware of the need of as much as possible for

these two relationships to take place during the hour of instruction.  By becoming

aware of these two crucial relationships and thus providing for such activities of

engagement of students with the subject matter teachers will become more successful

in their teaching.  These two relationships are the basis for analysing the practices and

their effectiveness in Chapter Three.

*Thou – It* and *It – Thou* are the most important relationships in the learning

triangle. This relationship is a two-way relationship, *Thou – It* or *It – Thou*

relationship.  In the picture of the triangle these relationships go from the student to

subject and from subject to student.  These two relationships are the third and fourth

relationships in the triangle.  They also focus around the obtuse angle which is

especially important.  Their importance lies in the fact that in this relationship

engagement between the student and the subject matter takes place.  Engagement

between students and the subject matter is an ultimate goal for every teacher to

achieve in every class.  As teachers we are aware that if we manage to engage our

students with the subject matter learning is inevitably going to take place.

This relationship can be observed in an exercise where students sitting in a

circle write and then keep passing their writing to the person sitting to their right until

they get their own writing.  In this activity students change the *It* (which is their piece

of writing) and play with the *It*.  They engage with the *It* because it is materialized

now.  It is a piece of writing with content.  This supports my theory that *It* has to be

materialized  in order for a more complete engagement between the student and subject matter to take place.  The *It* must become a material thing, an object, or anything which can be touched, written onto, passed around, added to, seen, etc.

The Fifth Relationship: *Thou – I* or the Student – Teacher Relationship

The *Thou – I* relationship is also a very typical relationship of student-teacher communication.  When a student addresses the teacher, asks a question, makes a comment, answers teacher's question, etc. we can say we have a *Thou – I* or Student – Teacher relationship.  All these are examples of the fifth relationship in the triangle.

The Sixth relationship : *I – It* or the Teacher – Subject matter Relationship

The *I – It* relationship is a relationship between the teacher and the subject matter.  If we persume that the *It* can be represented through classroom realia, textbooks, or any other material brought into the classroom, or a native informant, then it is easy to understand that any manipulation, such as handling, holding, and addressing of the *It* by the teacher would be the *I – It* relationship.  Here are some more examples of *I – It* relationship. The *I – It* relationship can be observed in a situation where the *I* brings in books with cultural topics and engages students with tasks from those books.  Or, inviting a native informant (guest speaker) is another example of an  *I – It* relationship.  The *I* enters a relationship with the *It* by bringing in authentic materials or sources of books for the class activities.  The relationship between the teacher and the subject matter is evident through the teacher's attitude towards the *It*.  This attitude is overtly expressed in teacher's talking about the "thing or things" she has brought into the classroom.  For example: a teacher holding a piece of authentic material in her hands would be one example of *I – It* relationship.

The Seventh relationship : *Thou – Thou* (or *Thou - * other *Thous*) or Student – Student (or Student -  other Students Relationship)

Pluralistic Nature of the *Thou*

The classroom setting is such that we normally encounter one teacher, one or more representations or examples of subject matter, and more than one student. Thus, we can say that *Thou* has pluralistic nature. This implies that we are dealing with more than one student when we teach. This in return has many other implications among which the possible relationships with the *It* are *It – Thou*, *Thou – It*, but also, *Thou – Thou* and *Thou – Thous*. If we replace *Thou* with the word student it may seem simplified and read: subject matter – student, student – subject matter, student – student, student – other students. It would be easier for the reader to look at the picture of an obtuse triangle on page 36. Besides getting into relationships with the *I* and *It*, *Thou* also gets into relationships with another *Thou* or other *Thous*.

A transparent example of *Thou – Thou* (or *Thou - other Thous*) relationship can be seen in pair and group activities. Pair activities are a typical example of *Thou – Thou* relationship. Such example is analysed in Chapter Three in the sitting in the circle writing activity. In an activity when students pass their writing to the person to their right, the *Thou – Thou* relationship is observable.

However, *Thou – other Thous* relationship, or a relationship where one student initiates relationship and addresses two or more other students at the same time, is typical for group activities. Such example is analysed in Chapter Three, in the video-taped class Holidays, when students in small groups have to negotiate meaning, and they individually contribute ideas, while others listen. This is a very clear example of *Thou – other Thous* relationship.

V Significance of My Interpretations

Understanding Hawkins' framework in the way I propose with the seven different applications is extremely important because each relationship is analysed

separately and benefits are easily recognized. If true learning is to take place teachers need to be aware that they need to make room for maximum *Thou – It* relationships during the class. In other words, students need to be engaged with the *It* for most of the time during the period of instruction. The teacher can make such engagement possible. Every teacher who learns and understands the seven different applications of the framework will be able to plan her classes allowing optimal time for the *Thou – It* relationship.

Other possible relationships with the *It* include:

1. *It – Thou* (Subject matter – Student)

2. *I – It* (Teacher – Subject matter)

3. *It – I* (Subject matter – Teacher)

These three relationships have advantages over *Thou – I* and *I – Thou* relationships. If we want our students to engage with the *It*, then it is obvious that we must provide the right circumstances and plan successful engagement activities for the *Thou – It* relationship.

The way I see the significance of my applications especially for EFL/ESL teaching/learning is the awareness of the importance of the *It* or the subject matter in the *I-Thou-It* learning triangle. Keeping that in mind every teacher should do her best to engage students with the *It*.

The different ways of achieving successful engagement with the *It* can range from teaching culture in a EFL/ESL classroom, the use of $L_1$ by the teacher, coping with anxiety and self-esteem, sitting in a circle and eliciting student feedback. All these have proved positive and beneficial for the student engagement with the *It*.

I have always thought that the use of $L_1$ by the teacher impacts the students' feelings. Students in my classes had been given orientation at the beginning of the

course that all instructions are in English. I also feel that I needn't be so rigid especially that my students and myself share a common language. I also felt that the use of $L_1$ would actually impact their affect and feelings before the exams when they become stressed out. I firmly believe that occasional use of $L_1$ by me would only sound as a non-threatening and friendly voice of the mother language. Moreover, I feared that my consistent use of $L_1$ would only shut students off and they would stop receiving my instructions. In my opinion, the use of $L_1$ in my Cambridge preparation classes is not detrimental as some researchers might think. On the contrary, I believe that it can ease students' tension especially before the exam. This holds even more true for contexts where teacher and students have a mutual $L_1$ which can have a bonding effect and arouse feelings of belonging to a community. The use of $L_1$ by the teacher is beneficial because it focuses students' on the *It*. Namely, when the students are working on a task, and the teacher in the middle of the task interrupts in $L_1$ can only bring students to reality and focus them on the task more firmly. I used this technique of interruption whenever I noticed the students were not focused on the task.

Sitting in a circle is something I had learned at SIT. Whenever we sat in a circle I had felt a strong belonging to the group. That feeling helped me focus on the learning more because I knew there were other people who were going through the similar process. I felt we shared the burden of learning. I knew that this technique would work with my students. They would accept it and enjoy it. I thus decided to experiment with the circular seating arrangement. I also thought that perhaps I would introduce it with the most resisted area of study, writing.

Sitting in a circle or *The Way of Council* is also another beneficial application of focusing on the *It* or subject matter. When students sit in a circle together with the

teacher the energy stays inside and the feeling of both security and responsibility is very strong.  Students also feel equal because they can all see each other.  By sitting in a circle it is easier to keep the focus on the subject matter.

Using student feedback is something I became interested in during my IYTP Interim Year Teaching Practicum).  I believed in the fact that communicating with students about my teaching would give me true picture on how I was doing with my teaching.  I thought students would tell me things I had never expected to hear from them.  Things I never thought were true.

The benefits of using student feedback are palpable when the teacher adjusts her teaching to suit students' needs and style.  I have elicited student feedback in four different ways.  All four are useful and when the teacher adjusts her teaching to suit student learning needs and style she then can help focus on the *It* much better.

We can conclude that the *It* needs to be the focus if true learning is to take place.  Moreover, teachers need to make effort to materialize the *It* and then find ways and design activities to engage students with the *It*.

This chapter has presented my personal understanding of Hawkins' framework.  I begin by giving a summary of my interpretations of the framework.  In addition, I individually define the *I*, the *Thou* and the *It*.  I discuss the *It* as the key element in the framework.  The *I-Thou-It* framework has characteristics of a living organism, such as possession of energy and radiation of energy.  In the chapter I also discuss the seven different applications of Hawkins' framework.  I briefly explain each one and emphasize the Thou-It as the most crucial relationship in the framework. I end by explaining the significance of my interpretations for my teaching practice.

# CHAPTER THREE

## SOME PRACTICES FOR ACHIEVING OPTIMAL *IT* ANGLE

In this chapter I discuss various aspects of the *I-Thou-It* scheme and how *I* and *Thou* can help focus on the *It*. Namely, I look into using L$_1$ as an application of the *I*, then move to aspects of *Thou* and discuss the affective domain of the students, their anxiety and self-esteem, their reaction to the reports of their exam results. From there, I discuss my experiences when students sit in a circle. I want the reader to understand that the analyses are based on the Seven Different Applications of the Framework presented in the previous chapter. Finally, I describe students as feedback givers and how eliciting feedback can help teachers plan their classes and better focus on the *It* or the subject matter. In the *It* section I look at ways of introducing culture to students, and also discuss the culturally biased textbooks I have used and ways I have compensated for them.

<u>The  *I*</u>

The way I see *I* and its role is that *I* can facilitate the student's learning process by educating herself/himself about the importance of the *Thou-It* or *It-Thou* relationship. Namely, teachers need to learn about the seven different relationships in the learning triangle and recognize the crucial importance of the student-subject matter or vice versa relationship.

In this chapter I point to some practices which have been employed by the *I*, in the direction of engaging the students with the subject. Thus, the *I* has a crucial role in the sense that it is up to the teacher to plan activities which will successfully engage her students with the subject of study. The instruments I have used are four video-taped classes shot consecutively every month, and a teaching journal. From the video-tapes it is evident that students' genuine engagement with the subject matter derives from focused *Thou-It* or *It-Thou* relationships in the learning triangle. In other words, the more material the *It* is, the more successful the engagement is. When the *It* is made material, students can touch it, play with it, write on it, pass it to other students, etc. In some activities the materialized *It* is a piece of writing which students produce, in others it is students' writings on large poster paper using fruit-scented markers, charts on colored paper which students had to fill in, etc.

The *Thou*

The *Thou*'s role is also of great importance for the *Thou-It* engagement. Although the students needn't be educated about the seven different applications of the framework, they can facilitate the engagement process with the subject matter.

In this chapter I discuss various practices where students have taken active part in engaging with the subject of study. Such engagement techniques can be bringing in authentic material to the culture class. The authentic material can be from the Internet for Valentine's and Halloween, or love songs on tapes for Valentine's day. The importance of students bringing in authentic material on different topics supports the idea of students searching what they consider as relevant to a certain topic. In that light I strongly encourage students to collect materials on cultural topics and to bring them to class. This has three benefits:

1) The teacher learns immediately what is relevant to students concerning cultural issues;

2) The relevance factor will contribute to enhancing learning;

3) The teacher is freed of the responsibility of choosing the kind of authentic material to bring to class when teaching a cultural component.

## The *It*

*It* is the crucial element in the learning triangle. For that reason the angle where the *It* stands is an obtuse angle. We need the most focus on the *It* during the class period. More precisely, the students need to engage with the subject matter in order for learning to be enhanced.

Moreover, the *It* needs to be materialized, made as palpable as possible. It should be a true representation of the subject matter. A good indicator of a successful materialization of the subject matter or *It* is whether students can employ all five senses, i.e. smell, touch, taste, hearing, and sight.

In this chapter I have given examples of practices for possible materialization of the *It*. Such examples are: students' audio tapes, students' material from the Internet, charts on colored paper, realia, large sheets of paper written with fruit-scented markers. The materialization of the *It* combined with sitting in a circle strengthens the learning process.

## Some aspects of *I* or How has *I* helped focus on the *It*?

II. APPLICATIONS OF *I*

Use of $L_1$

I will explain now how I used $L_1$ in order to focus students and myself on the *It*. This practice is an example of the *I-Thou* relationship or the second and most transparent relationship in the learning triangle, where *I* is the initiator of the relationship with the student or students.

The use of $L_1$ instead of the target language in language instruction can be seen as both positive and negative. In my experience it has proved to be positive. I will now explain how I had used $L_1$ with my students. In my classes which are known to be all in English, I sometimes switched back and forth from $L_2$ to $L_1$, thus using both languages, even in one utterance, to convey meaning. I must emphasize that the majority of the students enrols either in PET, FCE or CAE classes because they know or have heard that my classes are conducted entirely in English. It would be interesting to note the students' reaction because they are used to listening to English from me all the time. However, the very few times I have used $L_1$ were special situations. They were situations when students needed consolation and someone to calm them when they were under stress because of the exam. When I noticed that they were anxious, I would automatically switch and give a few words of advice in $L_1$. These pieces of advice would be nothing more than just saying that everything is going to be all right, that by practising everything is going to be doable and that there is nothing to worry about. What I felt, however, at the moment is that this use of the native language was much more effective and would really calm the students where using $L_2$ would not have the same effect. In this way obviously the students' anxiety level was lowered and students felt much more relaxed and focused on the subject.

What is worth noting are the students' comments after hearing me using $L_1$. They usually were of the sort: "We've never heard you speak Macedonian before". Or: "When you speak Macedonian you sound strange." Because of quickly switching from one language to another the accents get retained and transferred from $L_2$ to $L_1$. So, students say it sounds funny. I normally did not comment on these remarks.

Yet, on other occasions my students have noticed me using $L_1$ when as they put it, "you are angry", i.e. I want to scold them, or give them advice in an emphatic way. A typical example is when students were unruly and I suddenly said in $L_1$ : "So, is this the way that most of you want to study abroad? You need to know that such misbehavior will not be tolerated in most foreign schools." (It is worth noting here that the stereotypical picture of at least American schools is that they are academically inferior to European schools, and students can do whatever they want. This image comes from watching movies on TV and typical American series or soap operas such as *Beverly Hills* and others.)

The third case of using $L_1$ was a deliberate wish to sound humorous, so I'd say to a student who forgot to bring the textbook "You left it for your *baba*," where *baba* would be the word for "grandmother" in students' $L_1$. This also lowered students' anxiety level and thus helped students focus on the subject of study. Laughter and humor helped the students forget at least for a moment the stress which the exam brings.

The fourth case when I used $L_1$ was when we were on the topic of *Food and Drinks*. While we were on this thematic unit there would often be no translation for a word, usually a culinary term or a dish such as *ajvar,* a red pepper vegetable spread. It is typical in Macedonia and the region and I did not have the word in English. Using the word in its original form made the students laugh or took them by surprise.

This helped them relax a bit and thus enhance their learning without the stress of the "the test is coming soon" and they were able to focus on the subject of study.

One of my students was excellent in noticing that sometimes I use $L_1$ because I want to get their attention. I thus used $L_1$ as an attention-getter. We would be using the target language and in the middle of an activity, I would try to make a comment or give additional clarification or instruction. By using $L_1$, I helped students focus on the *It*. I noticed that students are so immersed in what they were doing I need to surprise them in order to get their attention. They certainly were surprised hearing me speak in $L_1$, and would look up at me as if looking at a miracle. By speaking in $L_1$ I achieved my goal in getting the students' attention. It played an important role in the *I-Thou-It* scheme where the *I* dominated and had control. The time was then used for further instruction or explanation by the *I* or to pose a question that the *I* addressed to the *Thou*.

Thus, I can conclude that in my case the use of $L_1$ was beneficial for the students and to a great extent helped lower the students' anxiety level in my Cambridge Certificates preparation classes. Lowering students' anxiety level helped them focus their attention on the subject of study.

III. APPLICATIONS OF *THOU*

In this section I look into some aspects of *Thou* or practices emloyed by the student which helped them focus more sharply on the *It*. More precisely, I take into consideration the Seven Different Applications of the Framework (explained in the

previous chapter) as the basis for my analysis. Moreover, I look closer at possible

*Thou – It* relationships for optimal engagement of the student and the subject matter.

I explain my experiences regarding the affective domain of the *Thou* such as anxiety

and self-esteem, students' reactions when announcing their results, how sitting in a

circle affects the students and their learning, and how students can be used as

excellent feedback-givers which in turn helps them focus on the subject of study.

Affective Domain of the *Thou*

I decided to write about the affective domain of the *Thou*, because I noticed

that students' feelings and attitudes played an extremely important role in the PET,

FCE, and CAE preparation classes. Namely, I had noticed that especially during the

second semester, students would become more tense and worried about the coming

exam and start asking questions like: "Is it really difficult to pass that exam?" or

"Have there ever been any students that fail?" With time these questions are not so

frequent but the tension remains. Throughout the second semester, especially after

they officially register for the exam at the end of February, we start explaining the test

format and practising tests during class time and as homework assignments. Since all

students are not the same, that is, some are more anxious than others, some get really

stressed and later blame their anxiety for failing the test.

Affect refers to emotion or feeling. During the second semester I noticed that

students' emotions or feelings are extremely important and I need to do something in

order to help my students pass the exam. Here are some aspects I have noticed in my

classes.

Anxiety and Self-esteem

During the second semester when students officially enroll for the exam, I

noticed in my preparation classes for Cambridge Certificates that the anxiety level

rises and other personality factors come into play. In my journals I wrote: "Students are scared. Their anxiety level is pretty high. I need to explain the marking system….." "Elena S. did not want to enroll for the FCE exam because she failed the PET exam. It is a standardized test. How do I help my students pass this test? Since it is a standardized test, the more they practice, i.e. the more they do sample tests, their chance of passing it is going to be higher. It sounds very much like the audio-lingual method, where students overdrill some of the exercises and thus learn in that fashion. However, I cannot avoid showing samples and giving them samples of tests until they feel they are ready to take the test. Also, their scores must not be lower than 60% of the total 100% possible points in order to pass. "

I also wrote in my journals that when students did the first Reading Paper as their practice, their reaction upon seeing the test was: "This is difficult, too much to read, too many words which are not familiar." I think that their reaction was such because students are not used to extended reading. They think they need to understand every word and keep asking for meaning. Skimming and scanning are techniques they were introduced to last year. However, these techniques are not frequently utilised in the Macedonian educational system, where students are taught they must know everything. Thus, these are relatively new techniques and mostly used only by English teachers. So, I had to remind students of this technique.

Breaking the news

When it is time to inform students of their test results, which is usually about six to eight weeks after the exam, it is very difficult for me as their teacher to break the news to those who did not pass the exam. This academic year, 2000/2001, there were two PET students and three FCE students who did not pass their exams. The failing of the exam can be with two different grades : "Narrow Fail" or just "Fail."

In order to lower students' anxiety level and not put too much pressure on them, the school has established a practice so that the "failing" students are first called on the phone to come to the school at a certain day and time. Then I, their teacher, look at the Statements of Results for each student and explain those. This is a stressful situation, because different students react differently to their failing result. Some act as if they had expected that result, but some are surprised and ask for a "clerical check to be done." [31]

In talking to the students who had failed the exam, I noted some reactions by some students. The student A. T. said that she had "in a way expected to fail" because she had never taken even a similar test before and also she said that she was very nervous, and that she is usually very nervous before a test at school as well. Although we had prepared well in advance, she said that the very day of the exam is the worst for her. She was so nervous on that day that she could not do anything to become calmer.

Moreover, what contributed to the stress and fear among students was the desk arrangement which was different on the day of the exam. Students sat one behind the other, which is quite different from the usual U-shaped or circular arrangement. This made me, the teacher, think that maybe in the future when we practice for the exam in class we should make the desk arrangement the same as for the exam. We have to simulate the real test as much as possible and this would help students focus on the subject of study. By simulating a real-life situation, we will help students lower their anxiety level and by doing that, we shall help them focus more sharply on the exam itself, or on the *It*.

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[31] Since the Cambridge tests are administered by the British Council Office in my country, it is through the British Council that the "clerical check" needs to be made. The British Council in the capital city requires the candidate name and reference number in order to perform the "clerical check".

<u>Sitting in a circle or The Way of Council</u>[32]

    I shall now talk about sitting in a circle and how it helped students and the teacher focus more sharply on the subject of study.  I first learned about council when I was at SIT.  I decided then that I would like to try it with my students.  When we start the council for the first time with a new group of students I then explain some basics about the council.  I usually tell them the following:

    Council uses four simple intentions that provide the basis for interaction in the council circle.  An "intention" is a direction that we want to move in to the best of our ability, despite any difficulties we might encounter.

    The first intention is to "speak from the heart" when you have the talking piece.  This means to speak not only with your head and your ideas, but with your feelings as well. It means to tell your own story as honestly as you can trust in the moment.  You have countless important and meaningful experiences.  When you speak about them truthfully, you are speaking from the heart.

    The second intention is "to listen from the heart" when another person has the talking piece.  This means to listen without judgement, to listen with an open mind, even if you disagree with what this person is saying.  Listen not just with your mind, but with your heart as well.

    The third intention is to "speak spontaneously."  This means that we try to wait before the talking piece comes to us before we decide what we want to say. There are good reasons for this.  First, if you are thinking about what you are going to say, then you are not listening completely to the person who is speaking.  Second, when you don't preplan what you are going to say, you will often be surprised what comes to you when it is your turn.

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[32] Zimmerman, Jack and Virginia Coyle, *The Way of Council*,  Bramble Co; March 1997

The last intention is to "speak leanly." Something that is "lean" doesn't have anything extra on it. When you speak, keep in mind that many others would like a chance to speak, and that there is so much time. Use only those words necessary to get your point or story across. Please remember that no one is required to speak. These four intentions provide the foundation for all council practice.

The seating arrangement in my classroom is a semi-circle most of the time. However, for group work or pair work we adopt a different arrangement. Sharing with the large group and sitting in a circle is something I found exceptionally useful when we did story-telling. In my journal of February 17, I wrote: "Sitting in a circle with a small group for story-telling is great. It helps students to start speaking and telling stories. If we had the semi-circle or other chair arrangement, I would not be able to elicit from them that much. In a circle they feel much safer than in an open space. I really am satisfied with the chair arrangement in a circle. Students' responses are much better. Their anxiety level is lower, the embarrassment of telling a story in front of their peers and physical closeness, all contribute to better involvement. I can state the case with the student Kate I. in the class of story telling. She had an accident when she was three years old. A dog bit her on the face and she has this scar. I am sure she is very much aware of the scar, and being a teenager, it probably causes her a lot of worries. However, when we sat in the circle and did story telling of real events that had happened to us, she opened up and told us the story with all the details and all the feelings she has had and still has towards the accident. It was evident that she was not embarrassed to tell this story which I am sure none of her peers have heard the details of before. I had a feeling that sitting in a circle was the major facilitator in the students opening up and feeling free to talk. Moreover, I myself was one of them telling them, a personal story from my early childhood. The

story is about a real life event which happened when my older brother, my youngest

sister, and myself were playing the game called "An Old Man Goes to the Mosque."

My brother and I were the "old man" and the mosque was our tiny old-fashioned

wardrobe which has a key on its door.  When my brother and I went inside my sister

turned the key and locked us up  and we could not unlock the door.  We were inside

for several hours until my Mom  returned from the market place and saved us from

certain suffocation.

I also noticed that when I model first or take a part in a role first and also do

all the other tasks along with the students (as if I were the student), it helps students

engage more successfully."  I learned this at SIT as well.  Teacher involvement in

doing classroom tasks is an immense help in encouraging students to take you

seriously and decide to engage.  My conclusion is that part of the engagement

technique is to work along with the students and thus eliminate the teacher-student

barrier in the process of learning.  I think that by doing the task together with students

helps focusing on the *It*.

My students sat in a circle when we had writing as a focus of the lesson.

Students had to write a paragraph and then pass it to the person to their right several

times until they got their own writing again.  This counter clockwise circular activity

was very successful because of the circular arrangement of the chairs.  In this activity

where students saw other students' writing and at the same time were aware that their

writing was seen by their peers helped them lessen their inhibition by making

everyone's writing open to everyone and yet nobody was embarrassed or criticized by

anyone.  This proved to be a very useful learning experience.  Students' writing  was

a materialized *It* in this classs.  They all had a chance to hold it, see it, read it and later

process it. (see attached Lesson plan and *I, Thou*, and *It*  table).

Sitting in a circle was very useful in the culture class (Halloween and St. Valentine's Day) when students took turns reading passages out loud from the book *American Holidays* by B. Klebanow and Sara Fisher (see Lesson plan and *I*, *Thou, It* table).

When students sit in a circle, several different relationships from the learning triangle can take place. In my classes I had noticed the following relationships take place most frequently : the *I – Thou* (*Teacher – Student*), *Thou – It* (*Student – Subject matter*) and *It – Thou* (*Subject matter – Student*). The activities done in a circular arrangement provided for optimal *Thou – It* and *It – Thou* relationship. These relationships are the relationships of the student with the subject matter and vice versa. One example is when students pass the paragraph which they had written to each other. In this activity students actually communicate with the *It*. The *It* here is the piece of paper with their paragraph written on it. The communication consists of reading the *It* or the paragraph, holding the *It*, passing it to the peer sitting to their right, thinking about it, etc.

This is what I had written after the video-taped class :

*SITTING IN A CIRCLE (Journal excerpt)*

…I think that the lesson went smoothly and students really liked it. They liked the variety of activities and an unusual "circular activity" they were exposed to. In the activity they were able to read each other's writing. The objective for doing the activity this way was to give students more exposure from each other, thus providing them with abundant resources upon which they will be able to shape their own writing style.

I think that sitting in a circle is very important. That way the *It,* i.e. the subject matter studied stays inside the circle and is exposed to everyone. Also, the energy stays within the circle. I have noticed that with other classes also when we sit in a

circle somehow students' attention/focus stays on the subject longer and a sense of community is established. Sitting in a circle puts everyone in the same position, everyone is equal and physically has equal access to the *I* and the *It*. The *I* sits in the circle with the other *Thous* and the *It* circulates around from *Thou* to *Thou*. We did it during this class with the paragraph that everyone wrote. To conclude, with everyone sitting in a circle, writing in this activity, and then afterwards reading each other's writing helped students feel a part of the "learning community" where everyone is striving towards the same goal: to write a paragraph in English about a wishful experience with a famous person.

Copying the paragraph onto a large sheet of paper using fruit-scented markers was also interesting for students. They then took the *It*, i.e. their writing, out of the circle, but only after it was exposed to every *Thou* and was thus changed, modified and adopted to serve its purpose. What could have been a shy and fearful experience turned into a much more relaxed and fun way to learn.

Eliciting student-feedback

I shall now talk about ways of eliciting feedback from students who helped me, as the teacher, and themselves, focus on the *It*. Through eliciting student feedback, I learned that the most frequent relationships are the *Thou – It* and the *It – Thou* relationships. This speaks in support of the most important relationship in the learning triangle that of the student with the subject matter and conversely, the subject matter with the student.

I worked on eliciting feedback from students in order to improve my teaching. It later turned out to be an excellent way to lower students' anxiety and thus focus their attention on the *It*. I collected feedback from students in four different ways. The first way was by asking students "what worked" and "what did not work" or what

they liked or did not like at the end of the class.  Students usually came up with comments like "we liked it because everyone was able to say something" or "we did not like it when everyone was not listening, it is better when we are disciplined!" Other student feedback was  "we liked the listening activity because we adjust to the English language. It helps us to communicate."  Some of the feedback was like this: "The first task should have been done individually because we did not work in pairs!" - despite the instructions to work with a partner!   They liked: "sitting in a circle, the light, the working atmosphere, the fact that there were fewer people!"

The second way of getting feedback from my students is giving them an option of which activity to do first.  For example, if I had planned a speaking and listening activity.  I sometimes asked them which one they would like to do first. They were usually very responsive and immediately told me.  What has happened though is that as a class, they did not always agree.  In that case we voted, and whichever activity the majority voted for we did first.  By giving students a chance to decide which activity to do first, they felt in charge and thus their anxiety level was way down during classes when they were asked to decide the priority of the activities which were to be considered.  This helped students focus on the subject of study all the time.

The third way of getting feedback from my students was asking them to brainstorm on a piece of paper what worked for them and what did not work.  I then collected these pieces of paper.  What I have noticed here is that not all students wanted to give feedback in a written form.  Of course I did not insist.

The fourth way to get feedback from students was by asking them to prepare a short presentation on some already familiar grammatical item.  I decided to do this with students for two reasons: first, I noticed they find grammar boring, and second,

most of the grammatical categories we deal with are the categories they are familiar with from their regular school classes. By giving a presentation, students at the same time express their attitudes towards learning and the topic. For example, if they use drawings and engage other students, that means the presenters are interested in the topic. However, if the presenters just "stand there and present" that usually expressed their indifference in the topic. Moreover, when students presented a lesson on grammar, thus increasing their participation, i.e. involvement and ownership, they were more relaxed and felt more in charge. I think these student presentations are going to be a part of an ongoing process. In these presentations the *It* is the focus of attention for both the teacher and the student. And with the presentations the mutual link between the teacher and student is established.

In all four different ways I have elicited feedback from students, the *Thou – It* and the *It – Thou* relationships are obvious. In the first way of eliciting feedback, it is the student talking about the *It* or subject matter. The student talks about his/her feelings and thoughts about the subject. In the second way of eliciting feedback, it is again students deciding on the order of *It*, i.e. in which order they will be doing the exercises. In the third way of eliciting feedback, which is brainstorming on a piece of paper what they felt about the class, students communicate with the piece of paper representing the *It* with their thoughts and feelings written on it. In the fourth way of eliciting feedback, which is asking students to do presentations on a topic of their choice, they had the freedom to prepare the topic using various materials. The presentation itself represented the *It*.

IV. APPLICATIONS OF *IT*

Culture in the classroom

Studying a foreign culture is part of studying a foreign language. The two cannot be separated. If they are, we shall have a very artificial product which lacks an indispensable and vital part. If we only study language without the culture, we shall be trapped in everyday situations and not now how to deal with those situations. However, if we focus more on the culture and pay less attention to the language, we shall sound uneducated and will not function properly in various circumstances due to our linguistic incompetence. Both language and culture carry an equal weight in studying a foreign language. I found that students are extremely interested in foreign cultures and I used the opportunity to focus their interest on the subject of study by engaging them in culture in four different ways.

I will now explain how *I*, helped introduce the culture and thus helped focus students' attention onto the *It*.

The *I* often plays the role of a culture instructor in the classroom. How is that achieved? One way I had introduced culture was by bringing books into the classroom or extracts to read and then having students discuss related cultural topics. Such cases were with my culture class for Halloween and for St. Valentine's day. On both days I brought into the class Barbara Klebanow and Sara Fisher's book *American holidays*.[33] Students had the opportunity to read about the historical background of the holiday. They also did the vocabulary exercises from the book. It is important to note that this class was done in a circle. Students took turns when reading their suggested answers and also when reading paragraphs out loud. This helped keep the energy within the circle and provided an opportunity for the *Thou – It* (Student – Subject matter) relationship. This relationship between the student and the subject matter took place when students wrote on the *It*, i.e. on their handouts. The

relationship took place in the culture class on St.Valentine's Day when students worked on a project by drawing and writing what they thought St Valentine's Day was about. In order for the students to experience all the five senses, I provided fruit scented markers which students adored. By working on a project, students established a relationship with the *It*. In this case it was their project. They gave it shape, held it, drew on it, negotiated among themselves what to write and draw and finally put up their finished *It* on the classroom wall.

Another way I had introduced culture into the classroom was by asking students to bring in any material that they could find related to these holidays. What they brought was: Internet materials, tapes of love songs (for St. Valentine's Day) and excerpts from the Bible. All these materials the students brought in surprised me as their teacher. I would have never expected any of my students to bring in excerpts from the Bible. However, one of my students happened to be a priest's son and was very familiar with the Bible.

In both classes I felt like a real culture instructor. Students had some previous knowledge about both holidays, however, their knowledge was very limited. This is due to the fact that each year there are more and more foreign cultural elements imported to Macedonia which then become slightly changed, (i.e. St. Valentine's Day). One such example is that for Halloween. More and more students of English dress up and wear different masks, and walk around town. This was not the case only a few years ago.

Students used St Valentine's Day to compare our local holiday called St Trifun's Day which is, in many ways, similar and carries the same symbolic meaning of love and new beginning. Students were engaged in comparing the two holidays

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[33] Barbara Klebanow and Sara Fisher, *American Holidays: Exploring Traditions, Customs and*

and thus learned more about both their own and the target culture. This process of comparing the local with the foreign culture helped students learn more and thus demystify the unknown or foreign custom or holiday. By comparing and contrasting, students felt more at home after having learned that our culture shares some similarities with the foreign, although distant culture. They focused on the subject of study and learning was enhanced.

The third way I introduced the target culture into the classroom was by inviting a native speaker or informant into the classroom as a guest speaker. We have a Peace Corps volunteer in our town. Her name is Jessica Brown. I invited her to some of the classes where students asked her questions about the related holidays and customs. I think that this proved more powerful and authentic than telling students about the target culture. Students came close to a real native speaker thus, she was the "knower and experiencer" of the customs and traditions we were trying to learn about. Hearing the guest speaker's experiences first hand helped students to strengthen their knowledge of the customs and holidays in the target culture and at the same time helped them feel close to the source of the knower of that culture. By feeling close students felt more relaxed and at home in the classroom and open to learning. The native speaker in this class was the *It* and students' optimal attention was on this native speaker. Moreover, the *It* or the guest speaker, sat in the circle with other students and myself, being part of that circle. She did not stand out but became part of the learning community, the students, and the teacher. This was at the same time also a nice opportunity for me not to be the only presenter. I decided to invite a guest speaker because I personally agree with Oxford that "students learn

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*Backgrounds*, pro Lingua Associates, 1986

more culture from each other and from a variety of native informants than they can possibly learn from the ESL teacher alone."[34]

In this activity the third and the fourth relationships of the learning triangle can be observed. These relationships are: *Thou – It* and *It – Thou* or, translated into more everyday language, it is the Student – Subject matter and the Subject matter – Student relationship. In this case the native informant is the *It* or the subject matter.

The fourth way I had introduced culture into the classroom was, according to my students, "the way I dressed," as they had expressed it. My way of dressing was more casual and it helped students feel more relaxed. It also helped students have a picture of all teachers in England and America as being very casual and friendly with students. When they compared me with their chemistry teacher and other teachers at school, they said these teachers at school were "more formal, and just by the way they dressed they could not feel close to the teachers and even hesitated to ask a question." The way of dress definitely played an important role for my students. They preferred more casual dress and more casual also meant more English for them. When asked how they knew it was more English, they said it was from films they have seen on television. All these different ways of introducing the target culture in the classroom helped focus the students' attention on the *It*.

All these above mentioned activities of engaging the students with the *It* have proved very successful. Students enjoyed not only the foreign authentic material, but also having a native informant in the classroom. Using these techniques I have achieved the optimal *It* angle in the learning triangle.

Textbooks

When *It* is culturally biased

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[34] Oxford Rebecca and Robin Scarcella, *The Tapestry of Language Learning - The Individual in the*

Textbooks are a material representation of the *It*. Nowadays, there are a variety of textbooks and other supplementary materials on the market. It is usually up to the teacher to decide which textbook matches her teaching demands and context.

The use of textbooks and other supplementary materials are a transparent example of the sixth relationship in the learning triangle. This relationship is the relationship of the teacher and the subject matter. However, when students use textbooks it is the third and fourth relationship in the triangle. It then represents Student – Subject matter and Subject matter – Student relationship.

Using the textbooks for my various classes, I noticed that there is little or no American culture represented in the books. There were examples of Australian, Irish and British cultures, but examples from American culture were not represented. I cannot state whether that is a deliberate intention of the authors or the authors assume that students throughout Europe receive plenty of American exposure. This exposure comes from TV, cinema, movies, and computer games. There is truth in that, but I think classroom exposure is different in a way that it is conscious learning and much less of an acquisition.

The way I compensated for this void was by including American books on culture such as the book *American Holidays* by B. Klebanow and S. Fisher. Students read entire passages on St. Valentine's Day and on Halloween and did the exercises which basically recycled ten key vocabulary items. By doing such activities the students had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with some aspects of American culture.

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*Communicative Classroom,* Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1992 , p. 4

For my PET classes I used the textbook *Focus on PET*.[35]  The textbook is divided

into ten thematic units (*People and Places, Homes, Food and Drink, Health and*

*Lifestyles, Holidays and Travel, Education, Entertainment, Work, Sports, Hobbies*

*and Practice Test).*  However, I used other supplementary materials such as *PET*

*Teachers' Resource Book*.[36] For the FCE I also used a textbook, *FCE Masterclass*.[37]

Here I would like to comment on the use of photocopies of the materials that students

used.  It is worth noting that for the first time, the student texts this academic year

were ordered late (mid-September) from the distributor.  Due to this late ordering

only six students (out of 22) had an original copy of the textbook and the others used

a photocopied version.  This had a very negative impact on classroom use of these

textbooks, especially when it came to describing a picture which in the photocopied

version was deprived of color and even some details.  I can say that using

photocopied versions was detrimental.  In a way, students did not consider it as

authentic either. The term which they used was "original" and would ask a peer to

look at his/her book because his/her was not "original".  Textbooks are printed abroad

and that is enough foreign for students to consider such material authentic.

"Imported" or "foreign" for them are synonyms for "authentic."  When we described

pictures in class (which sometimes I must admit I avoided using for the

aforementioned reasons), students with "original" copies shared the textbooks with

the students who had photocopied ones.

In sum, very often in real life situations we are unable to find the best

textbooks that would perfectly match our course design.  It is up to us, the teachers, to

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[35]  Diana L. Fried-Booth, *Focus on PET*, Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1996
[36] Bartram Mark and Richard Walton, *PET Teacher's Resource Book*, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1988
[37] Simon Haines and Barbara Stewart, *FCE Masterclass*, , OUP, 1996

make changes and additions to the already existing textbooks or other course
materials.

How Hawkins' framework has changed my teaching

When I first read Hawkins' essay I was influenced immensely.  I thought
about the truth of the triangle and the importance of the *It*.  Consequently, I started
analysing each element separately and studying literature which discussed the roles of
teachers, students, and instructional material.  The literature offered deeper insight
into the subject of *I-Thou-It.*  Some of the literature was more impressive than others.
The most impressive writing I had come across was the book *The Courage to Teach*
by Parker Palmer.  He offered the closest explanation of the interplay that resonated
with me.  What is most important is that he talks about the interplay among the three
components of the learning triangle.

First, I learned about the importance of the *It* in the triangle.  I had never heard
before of a subject-centered classroom.  I had known of the existence and values of
the teacher-centered and student-centered classroom, but not of the subject-centered
classroom.  I liked the idea behind the subject-centered classroom.  I now believe all
teachers should strive to achieve this kind of a classroom simply because the teachers
and students communicate via the subject.  If it weren't for the subject matter teachers
and students would not communicate.

Second, I have learned that in order to have a subject-centered classroom, the teacher is responsible for setting the tasks and planning the class so that students and teacher engage with the *It*. "Engage" here is the key word. In different classes different engagement techniques may be appropriate. In my classes, which were preparation classes for Cambridge certificates, I have found several ways of engaging students with the *It*.

One way I have helped students focus more sharply on the *It* was the use of $L_1$. This application was limited to specific situations such as before the test, students' unruliness, etc.

The third way I have engaged students was when students sat in a circle. I have found this seating arrangement to be extremely beneficial and helpful for students' engagement with the subject matter. When students sat in a circle, they focused more and felt more responsible, which was visible from their increased participation. Moreover, the feeling of a belonging to a community was very strong. The circular arrangement also helped diminish the traditionally domineering position of the teacher. All this contributed to successful engagement of students with the subject matter, which then resulted in successful learning. I have also learned that eliciting student feedback can help students focus on the *It* and engage with the subject matter more fully. I have elicited feedback from students in four different ways. All proved to be beneficial and gave me guidelines of where to direct my teaching.

Paying conscious attention to introducing foreign culture in the classroom via different means also proved to be a method of engaging students and teachers with the subject matter. One way culture can be taught explicitly is by bringing in a native informant. This has proved very exciting for students and the teacher as well.

This chapter has presented various aspects of the *I-Thou-It* scheme and the implications they all have upon teaching/learning processes.  I have selected only certain aspects which help focus on the subject of learning.  Namely, I analyse different practices employed by the teacher, student, or the subject of study.  The analyses are done with the Seven Different Applications in mind elaborated in Chapter Two.  I can conclude that the most successful practices done in the classroom are those which engaged the student with the subject matter (the *Thou- It* or *It – Thou* relationship).

The materialization of the *It* and the energy factor are also analysed in this chapter.  In other words, the success of student – subject matter engagement is based on the materialization of the subject matter.  Also, keeping the energy in the classroom by means of the circular seating arrangement is also discussed.  I also state some of the steps taken in order to improve the quality of teaching and facilitate learning.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A: LESSON PLAN - video-taped class #1

**Teacher: Zora Busovska**          **Class: FCE**          Unit: Rich and Famous  **Date:Nov. 28, 2000**

| Learning Objectives- stated as student outcomes | Time | Skill Area | List of Activities | Instructional arrangement | Materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <ul><li>Sts. will learn to express their opinion in writing;</li><li>sts. will learn to write a descriptive paragraph;</li><li>sts. will practice describing a famous person;</li><li>sts. will practice the use of future simple tense;</li></ul> | **45 min**. | **S/L**<br><br>**S/L**<br><br>**R/L**<br><br>**W**<br><br>**R**<br><br>**S/L**<br><br>**W/R** | <ul><li>Warm-up; T. introduces topic by asking sts. to look at decorated classroom walls with pictures of famous people;</li><li>Sts. elicit response by identifying persons on pictures on walls;</li><li>Sts. read instructions in the textbook p. 37</li><li>T. reads model paragraph</li><li>Sts. spend 7-8 minutes writing the paragraph</li><li>T. also writes a paragraph</li><li>Sts. do the "circular" activity and pass their writing to the person sitting to their right</li><li>T. asks how sts felt reading everybody's work and everybody reading their work</li><li>Sts. correct/edit their writing and copy it on large sheets of paper</li><li>Sts. put up their writing on the classroom walls</li></ul> | whole group<br><br><br><br>individual | pictures of famous people from magazines large sheets of paper; blue tack; markers; |

# APPENDIX B

Objective: students learn how to write a descriptive paragraph;

**Unit topic: Rich and Famous**

## *ROLES OF I-THOU-IT*

| I | THOU | IT (instructional material, subject) |
|---|---|---|
| • asks questions; <br> • gives instructions; <br> • reminds; <br> • brings in magazines for prompting warm-up discussion; <br> • writes on board; <br> • uses textbook; <br> • asks st. to read instructions; <br> • reads model article; <br> • lends a pen to student; <br> • sets time-frame for task; <br> • writes along with sts.; <br> • reads out-loud sample; <br> • gives answers; <br> • spells a word; <br> • acts as spell-checker; <br> • wraps-up class; <br> • asks: What did we do today? <br> • reminds sts. about next class absence; | • answers questions; <br> • guesses who famous people are from pictures on the walls; <br> • uses textbook; <br> • asks for writing equipment; <br> • writes an article; <br> • sits in a circle; | • magazines; <br> • textbook; <br> • sample article; <br> • colored paper; <br> • various fruit-scented markers; <br> • blue tack; <br> • large sheets of paper; <br> • notebooks; |

# APPENDIX C: LESSON PLAN - video-taped class #2

**Teacher: Zora Busovska**          **Class: PET (Preliminary English Test)**          Unit: Food and Drink

**Date: Dec. 21, 2000**

| Learning Objectives- stated as student outcomes | Time | Skill Area | List of Activities | Instructional arrangement | Materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • sts. will learn to how to order food/drink in an authentic restaurant; <br> • sts. will learn to recognize food items written on authentic menus <br> • sts. will get acquainted with foreign cuisine; <br> • sts. will practice using polite expressions when ordering in a restaurant; | **45 min**. | **S/L** <br><br> **S/L** <br><br> **W/R** <br><br> **S/L** <br><br> **W/R** <br><br><br> **S/L** | • Warm-up; T. introduces topic ; <br><br> • T. distributes authentic menus; <br><br> • Sts. Read menus (5 minutes); <br><br> • Sts. In groups decide what to eat and drink (same for one table); (5 min.) <br><br> • Sts. Write down the order; <br><br> • T. models first; <br><br> • Role-play/waiter, one student volunteers; (10 min.) <br><br> • T. wraps up lesson | whole group <br><br><br><br> small group | • audio tape with Italian music in the background; <br> • authentic menus of Italian restaurant; <br> • pen/pencil; <br> • markers; |

# APPENDIX D

**Objective:  students learn how to order food in a restaurant using authentic menus;**

**Unit topic: Food and Drink**

## *ROLES OF  I-THOU-IT*

| I | THOU | IT (instructional material, subject) |
|---|---|---|
| • introduces topic; <br> • writes on board; <br> • helps brainstorm; <br> • asks concrete questions; <br> • sets a scenario; <br> • checks understanding; <br> • sets time-frame; <br> • monitors; <br> • checks task progress; <br> • uses English only; <br> • gives answers; <br> • demonstrates role-play; <br> • wraps-up class; | • brainstorm words/ideas; <br> • works in a group; <br> • negotiates within the group (what to order from the menu); <br> • interprets meaning from authentic menu; <br> • reports for the group; <br> • role-plays; <br> • looks at authentic menu; <br> • reads an original menu; <br> • decides on what to eat/drink; <br> • copy items from the menu; <br> • takes on a role of a waiter; <br> • takes an order; <br> • orders food/drink; | • chalk; <br> • original authentic menus; <br> • markers; <br> • Italian music in background; <br> • audio-tape; |

# APPENDIX E: LESSON PLAN - video-taped class #3

**Teacher: Zora Busovska**     **Class: PET (Preliminary English Test)**     Unit:Health and Lifestyles

**Date: Jan. 27, 2001**

| <u>**Learning Objectives-** stated as Student outcomes</u> | <u>**Time**</u> | <u>**Skill Area**</u> | <u>**List of Activities**</u> | Instructional arrangement | Materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • sts. will learn to ask questions concerning health and lifestyles;<br>• sts. will learn to summarize an interview;<br>• sts. will practice asking questions;<br>• sts. will learn about their classmates' eating/living habits; | <u>**45 min**</u>. | <u>S/L</u><br><br><u>S/L</u><br><br><u>W/R</u><br><br><u>S/L</u><br><br><u>W/R</u><br><br><u>S/L</u><br><br><u>W/R</u><br><br><br><u>S/L</u> | • Warm-up; T. introduces topic by brainstorming (spider web on the board);<br>• T. elicits Q-s from students about health (5 minutes);<br>• T. writes Q-s on the board (8 minutes);<br>• T. distributes charts/tables;<br>• Sts. Choose 4 Q-s in the tables;<br>• Sts. Interview 5 other students (10 minutes);<br>• Sts. Write down answers;<br>• Sts. Summarize interview (7 minutes)<br>• Sts. Report in front of the whole group (7 minutes) | whole group<br><br><br>pair work<br><br><br>individual | • board;<br>• chalk;<br>• paper/ pen;<br>• chart/ table; |

# APPENDIX F

**Objective: students learn to ask questions about health and lifestyles; students learn to summarize interview;**
**Unit topic: Health and Lifestyles**

## *ROLES OF I-THOU-IT*

| I | THOU | IT (instructional material, subject) |
|---|---|---|
| • explains instructions; <br> • writes on board; <br> • helps brainstorm; <br> • asks concrete questions; <br> • distributes table/chart; <br> • checks understanding; <br> • sets time-frame; <br> • exemplifies; <br> • checks task progress; <br> • role plays; <br> • does task alongside with students; <br> • demonstrates role-play; <br> • monitors task progress; <br> • announces shift of focus; <br> • supplies synonyms; <br> • paraphrases; <br> • initiates activity <br> • asks for feedback at the end of class; <br> • wraps-up class; | • brainstorms words/ideas; <br> • chooses 4 out of 8 questions; <br> • copies/writes; <br> • chooses people to interview; <br> • moves around; <br> • asks questions; <br> • gives answers; <br> • writes down answers; <br> • chews gum; <br> • follows instructions; <br> • reads questions; <br> • paraphrases; <br> • summarizes interview results; | • chalk; <br> • board; <br> • tables/charts; <br> • pen/pencil; <br> • paper; |

# APPENDIX G: LESSON PLAN - video-taped class #4

**Teacher: Zora Busovska**          **Class: PET (Preliminary English Test)**          Unit:Culture class - St. Valentine's day

**Date: February 15, 2001**

| Learning Objectives- stated as student outcomes | Time | Skill Area | List of Activities | Instructional arrangement | Materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • sts. will learn key vocabulary terms connected with St. Valentine's day; <br> • sts. will compare native with target culture; <br> • sts. will get acquainted with foreign culture; | **45 min**. | **S/L** <br><br> **S/L** <br><br> **W/R** <br> **S/L** <br><br> **W/R** <br><br><br> **L/S** | • Warm-up; T. introduces topic by inviting sts. to a discussion about St. Valentine's day; <br> • Sts. draw/write what they know about St. Valentine's day; <br> • Sts. take turns in reading out loud; <br> • T. clarifies meaning together with sts. <br> • Sts. do a matching exercise; <br> • Sts. do other exercises from the book recycling the key vocabulary; <br> • Sts. write/draw key word/expression/drawing showing what they have learned; <br> • T. wraps-up saying what she has learned; | whole group <br><br><br> individual | • audio tapes (music with love songs in the background <br> • copied materials from the book *American Holidays* by B. Klebanow and S. Fisher ; |

# APPENDIX H

**Objective: students learn about St. Valentines day; students learn key words/expressions connected with St. Valentine's Day; students compare native with target culture;**
**Unit topic: Culture class - St. Valentines day**

## *ROLES OF I-THOU-IT*

| I | THOU | IT (instructional material, subject) |
|---|---|---|
| <ul><li>introduces topic;</li><li>gestures to facilitate understanding;</li><li>gives instructions;</li><li>does task along with students;</li><li>asks concrete questions;</li><li>asks for more ideas/comments;</li><li>brings in supplementary materials (*American Holidays* by B.K. and S. F.);</li><li>asks students "how are you doing" to check progress of task;</li><li>confirmas accuracy of answer by nodding her head;</li><li>checks timing by saying: "Shall we check now?";</li><li>corrects pronunciation of "merchant";</li><li>supplies a synonym: spouse=husband, wife;</li><li>facilitates understanding by paraphrasing;</li><li>asks students to interpret instructions;</li><li>focuses students' attention;</li><li>helps with spelling;</li><li>explains meaning;</li></ul> | <ul><li>Responds to a Q-n;</li><li>brings in authentic material; (tapes with love songs);</li><li>talks about own culture</li><li>asks for correct spelling;</li><li>draws;</li><li>expresses cultural attitude ("Catholic" holiday);</li><li>takes turns in reading;</li><li>uses handouts;</li><li>uses L1;</li><li>interprets instructions;</li><li>reads synonyms;</li><li>distributes handouts;</li><li>takes turns in answering;</li><li>volunteers to read;</li><li>says/writes in one word/phrase what he/she has learned that day;</li><li>asks for pronunciation of *jewelry*;</li><li>asks a concrete question: "Teacher, what is anger?"</li><li>checks answer with partner;</li><li>negotiates answer with partner;</li></ul> | <ul><li>audio tapes (music with love songs in the background for suggestopedic elements);</li><li>large sheets of paper;</li><li>markers;</li><li>handouts with activities from the book "American Holidays' by B. Klebanow and Sara Fisher</li></ul> |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • uses books;<br>• translates word;<br>• asks for translation of a single word;<br>• checks understanding by asking sts. "Do you understand?";<br>• distributes handouts;<br>• asks for a volunteer;<br>• wraps-up class;<br>• asks: "What did you learn?"<br>• tells students what she has learned. | | |

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