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Motivating English Language Learners by Integrating Their L1 and C1

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**Motivating English Language Learners
By Integrating Their First Language and Culture:
A Case Study of Tibetan Students Learning English**

Badequnzhu

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Teaching degree
at the SIT Graduate Institute,
Brattleboro, Vermont.

November 1, 2013

AYMAT Thesis Advisor: Professor Leslie Turpin

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Date: November 1st, 2013

Abstract

The subject of this research paper is the use of first language (L1) and culture (C1) of the learners in the process of learning English in an EFL classroom in a specific teaching context. The researcher used different teaching methods and approaches in a Tibetan secondary school context: the Silent Way, Desuggetopedia, Cooperative Learning, Way of Council and Total Physical Response. Implications of this action research can be used in the classroom to raise learners' motivation to lower affective filters allowing deeper and more profound input of the target language, thus to improve communication and comprehension of the target language for the learners.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Audiolingual Method

Bilingualism

Code Switching

Communicative Competence

Communicative Language Learning

Cultural Awareness

Curriculum Development

Four Skills

Motivation

Multilingualism

Plurilinguistic Pedagogy

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Introduction

My Life as a Teacher Before SIT¹

Come back every year and try one more time. One more dream. One more possibility. One more dreamer. What a wonderful way to make a living. – Sharon M. Draper²(2001, p.112)

Being a teacher has always been a dream since I was a little elementary schoolboy. The inspiration for this dream came from my eldest brother and elder sister who continue to be the kindest and most inspiring teachers in my life. Because of them, I was determined to be a teacher and majored in English in the Foreign Languages Department of Qinghai Normal University, which is a teacher's colleges in western nations. During summer and winter vacations, I worked as a voluntary teacher in my hometown, sometimes for a secondary school where I graduated, but mostly for an orphanage. I had a strong desire especially to teach the poor children there. Local schools were always in great need of teachers; I didn't have a teacher's certificate at that time but I could still teach classes. By teaching I mean I just imitated the teaching style of my own former EFL teachers. I had no training in pedagogy or teaching approaches involved then. However, I was certain that I wanted to teach, and I loved teaching.

In a family where both parents passed away before I reached adulthood, I learnt from a very young age to be grateful for what I had. As the youngest of the family, I was fortunate enough to have been raised up by my loving and wise brothers and sisters, who insisted on my receiving the best education possible despite the very challenging situation we had been through. I am deeply grateful for their insight and consider myself as a beneficiary of a truly proper education. Because of their guidance, I firmly believe in the value of education and wish to devote my lifetime to the cause of education.

¹ School for International Training Graduate Institute, a program of World Learning, Brattleboro, Vermont, U.S.A.

² Sharon M. Draper, the 1997 Teacher of the Year and author of *Teaching from the heart*, is an educator, a novelist, a motivational speaker and a poet. www.sharondraper.com

After my graduation from Qinghai Normal University, I chose to work as an English and Chinese teacher in our local high school. Teachers were still scarce in my area, so almost every teacher had no choice but to teach multiple classes and subjects. All teachers and students had to use big white tents as offices and classrooms since our school was heavily damaged by the Yushu earthquake that occurred on April 14, 2010. Although the teaching conditions were difficult for me, I still loved teaching and saw it as a great pleasure.

In my first year of teaching there, I taught English mostly with the Grammar Translation method, as this was the way my English teachers had taught me. At the end of the school year, I found out that my students were not interested in English, and their test scores were low. When the new semester started I decided to try different things in class. I planned more conversation time in class and also more games. I used to believe that if I had good command of a language then I could teach it and if the teacher-student relationship was close then I would succeed in teaching what I set out to teach. However, I gradually realized that I did not have a holistic pedagogical approach, a systematic teaching plan or the teaching skills that I needed. I felt very strongly at that point, that I needed teacher training and professional development.

Going abroad to seek further education became my goal. I remembered that one of my classmates was in the Philippines doing her MA in teaching. I got a lot of help from her and subsequently got an acceptance letter from the university to which I applied. Next, it was time to apply for a scholarship. T Foundation was the first to come to my mind since I heard so much about it giving grants to Tibetans who seek higher education. I applied, and after I went through all the procedures, I got the scholarship. Meanwhile, they asked me if I was interested in any graduate schools in the states. They kindly suggested SIT Graduate Institute because they had a few scholarship grantees there. Immediately, I remembered that one of the professors in my university had told me about the SIT

Graduate Institute, where he had also completed a masters degree. I consulted him about it and decided it was a great a place to get what I needed.

My Life as A Student at SIT



For the first-term of my studies at SIT, I took a set of core courses to gain theoretical knowledge and practical tools while preparing for my field practicum. This was followed up by a very meaningful and practical supervised teaching experience where I had the opportunity to test out the theories, tools and perspectives I acquired during my first-term of coursework. I received constructive criticism and extremely useful pieces of feedback, which were absolutely necessary for my continued professional development.

For the second-term, I delved more deeply into new course materials including: Applied Linguistics, Becoming a Teacher Educator, Intercultural Communication for Language Teachers, and Curriculum Design and Assessment, drawing from own experiences and insights gained in the field to benefit from the experiences and perspectives of my peers.

For the final project or teaching portfolio in CDA, I chose to do a classroom-based action research project at a Tibetan secondary school in my hometown. This research included both classroom field research and in depth investigation of how including learners' culture and language affect the learning of English in the context of my home town, Chindu County of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in a Tibetan secondary school.

The Purpose of This Paper

In this research context, a Tibetan secondary school, English is taught as a third language. In addition to language being used as a tool for communication, learning English signifies greater access to university, improved grades in all majors, and more future career options for Tibetan students. This paper will argue that it is vital for Tibetan students to have awareness of their own culture and native language in relation to themselves as Tibetans. Highlighting learners' first language, Tibetan, and cultural aspects in content that goes along with communicative learning can raise their motivation sustainably towards learning English and provide the opportunity for greater improvement of the four skills in English.

Methodology of This Research Paper

The research was conducted by the means of real action, which is classroom-based teaching, critical reflection, and the findings and analysis of the action. It is an Action Research (AR), a comparatively recent addition to the language of educational research. Brian Tomlinson and Hitomi Masuhara (2010) defined AR in detail.

Action Research is of a qualitative nature, in the sense that the reports or registers collected by the researcher are meant to describe that which, in her view, or better still, in her interpretation, is happening. The realities constructed by the researcher based on what naturally emerges from the context-of-practice are inherently intersubjective since they take into account diverse subjectivities in the triangulation of the data. The research is of a reflexive and critical nature, marked by a continuous cycle of reflection on actions, in which the attention of the researcher moves constantly between interpretation and evidence: evidence is given for a problem; the situation is analyzed and interventive actions are decided upon; the intervention is put into action, the data collected and studied; the reflections are

gradually sustained through conclusions, ideas, further readings on theory, other opinions; the initial plan is again examined and new objectives to be reached are identified; new plans of action are mobilized. (Chapter 14, Section 5, para. 1)

Later Allyson Sesay (2012) simply refers to AR as “When applied to the field of education, action research particularly, as noted earlier, is of significant importance in education because its primary focus or goal is to improve the researcher’s (usually the practitioner’s) practice” (Chapter 3, Section 9, para. 4).

Brief Introduction for Each Chapter

In **chapter one**, the teaching context will be described with the structure of “I THOU IT” (Hawkins, 1967). I as teachers, THOU as learners, and IT including the target language (English), learners’ first language (Tibetan), their culture (including the relationship between English and Tibetan), learners’ motivation, learning strategies, and learning in general.

In **chapter two**, I will bring the questions that I was trying to answer in my research and indicate how I decided to investigate these questions by merging what I learned at SIT with my teaching context. Different teaching approaches will be introduced throughout this chapter, along with journal entries of the lessons and activities I made during the classroom-based action research.

In **chapter three**, surveys and feedbacks from both teachers and students will be cited, some of them are translated to English from Tibetan and Chinese. They are collected by the means of questionnaire, class supervision, email interview and online conversation.

In **chapter four**, I step back and collect reflections of the different approaches. Detailed analysis is undertaken to examine issues raised during the research and possible solutions are presented.

In **chapter five**, ways and principles to enhance motivation integrating learners’ L1 and C1 through four skills are conceptualized in depth and in detail.

In **chapter six**, a summary of the main findings of this classroom-based research is provided. In addition, an explanation on how I conducted the research and organized my thesis using the Experiential Learning Cycle is also explored. Finally, possible future research projects and direction of my work will be introduced.

Chapter One: Teaching Context



The teaching context of this research is unique. It was a Tibetan public high school consisting of 7th grade to 12th grade. In the fall of 2012, it became a secondary school when the last 12th grade students graduated. The school has become the only and thus the largest secondary school in the county. All elementary graduates from all towns and villages under the administration of Chindu County¹ have to enter this school as required by the local education policy.

The school has a 32-year history. It is located in the uptown Chindu County of Yushu Tibetan Prefecture, which has a population of 48,500, 98% of which are Tibetan. This is an isolated rural area like many Tibetan towns. However, the school infrastructure and teaching facilities are well equipped and developed including projectors in each classroom and copy machines in teachers' office. The education quality is ranked number two in the whole prefecture which has 14 high schools in total. The method to rank the quality of the education in our area is to look at the college passing rate of the graduates of a school.

The teaching context will be analyzed with the structure of Hawkin's "I THOU IT" framework (Hawkin, 1967). I will stand for teachers like me; THOU will represent the learners; IT will represent not only the content and the target language but also things that are related in the process of learning in the teaching context, such as English teaching policies, language distance, culture of the learners, content of the textbook, learning environment, English curriculum, etc.

¹ "Chindu" is the name of my hometown, which is the closest pronunciation to the original Tibetan name; it also appears as "Chengduo" in Chinese Pinyin or "Khridu" in Tibetan Wylie transliteration.

I

Professional level

Many English teachers in Tibetan middle schools and high schools do not have a college diploma or certificate in English or English teaching. They are working as ELTs because they have studied English before and have a higher level of English than their students. At this research site, the English teachers had significantly more professional knowledge than this average, in terms of diplomas. There were five English teachers in 2012, including me, who majored in English at college. There was one English teacher whose major was history in college. None of them had ever studied English in English speaking countries nor had they received professional English teacher training. One reason for this is because the school is far away from developed cities. In addition, the importance of English teacher training has not been recognized by the school administration. As a result, English teachers were teaching 24 English classes; each teacher had 4 to 5 classes with 30 to 40 students in each class from 7th to 9th grade. English classes met three times a week and 45 minutes per class.

In 2013, two of the English teachers left and four new teachers were hired. Two of them have an elementary teacher certificate with a college diploma majoring in English and have two to three years of English teaching experience. The other two teachers have a secondary school teacher certificate with a bachelor degree in English. Both of them just graduated. None of the four new English teachers has ever received professional English teacher training.

I had conversations with all the current English teachers and completed my Survey A¹. Five out of six filled out the questionnaires. The answers showed that they didn't feel satisfied with their teaching skills and methods, nor did they feel content with students' English after two to three years of teaching them. Some questions are as follows:

¹ Survey A is a set of questionnaires answered and feedback given by the local English teachers. It will be attached as Appendix A in this paper.

- *How often do you have opportunities to go out and attend English teaching training programs?*
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. never
(Two said “rare” and three said “never”.)
- *How often do the local teaching and research staffs help and guide your English teaching?*
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. never
(One said “rare” and four said “never”.)
- *How often do you demonstrate English learning strategies and methods to your students?*
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. never
(Two said “sometimes” and three said “rare”.)
- *How often do you teach foreign customs, and cultural backgrounds in English class?*
A. very often B. often C. seldom D. never
(One said “often”, one said “seldom”, and three said “never”.)

Teaching Strategies

English teachers at the research site are accustomed to the Grammar Translation method and they admitted that in most of the English classes they follow this pattern: Translate the content, let students repeat after the teacher for the accuracy of the pronunciation and memorization of the vocabulary, copy the vocabulary and sentences for three to five times. Since their teaching strategies are plain and simple, students’ learning strategies are solely about memorization and exercise drillings.

Teachers’ attitudes

Their attitudes towards teaching English and the development of English teaching are very positive. All of them believe that English is very significant to the students, and they will give their best effort to contribute to the development of English teaching in their hometown. However, they expressed that the conditions and learning environment contained similar challenges to those that are expressed above, and will be explored in greater detail below.

- *The main difficulties of English teaching in secondary school are?*
- A. no support from executive branches*
 - B. no professional teachers*
 - C. lack of English learning environment*
 - D. no support from school*
 - E. students with no motivation and interest*
 - F. No support from students' parents (All of them chose D, E, and F.)*

THOU

The learners at the research site are not diverse in terms of cultural and linguistic background, but they are different and unique.

In 2013, when I conducted this research there were more than 800 students at No.1 Secondary School of Chindu County. Grade 9 just graduated and Grade 7 and 8 were left. There were ten classes for Grade 7 and ten for Grade 8.

Students come from seven different towns of the Chindu County. Triwon, Lab, Sherwoe, Damdah, Drenchin, Dzadup and Gadup (map attached).

Some of them were born in the town but many of them were born in the nomadic areas of these towns. I researched two Grade 8 classes that I taught during this summer. In terms of their family background, Grade 8 Class One has 40 students, 39 of whom were born into nomad and farm families. Grade 8 Class Two has 43 students, 41 of whom were born into nomad and farm families.



Learners' profile

Students' ages range from the youngest, 13 years old, to the eldest, 18 years old, in the two Grade 8 classes. The average age is around 15. There are 20 boys and 20 girls in Class One. There are 22 boys and 21 girls in Class Two. Therefore, there is a good balance in gender.

In 2012, we had senior high classes at our school. Students had no English courses at that time, as they were so busy preparing for the Chinese College Entrance Examination (CCEE). The education policy in high school states that students who are in 10th grade have the right to choose a language course, English or Tibetan, which will decide what subject they will take for CCEE. Since English is not a main subject in 7th to 9th grade, most Tibetan students are likely to choose Tibetan. Only one from the 2011 graduates took English and none from the 2012 graduates (the last generation of high school graduates at this school).

Learners' attitude towards English

According to Survey B¹, many students complained that they could not connect their real life with what they learn at school. They believe English is important and popular in big cities but not in the local area. They have very little motivation to study English. In addition, English homework and exams are usually about repetition and memorization which causes students to develop negative attitudes.

Learners' motivation

Motivation can be categorized into Intrinsic Motivation and External Motivation. If a student is intrinsically motivated he/she will make efforts to achieve something "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes" as Mark Lepper (1988) indicated (as cited in Lumsden, 2009). In the case of my students in this research, they are intrinsically motivated because English is a new language, and they admire people who can speak

¹ Survey B is a set of questionnaires answered and feedback given by the students. It will be attached as Appendix B in this paper.

this language. Some of them even want to go abroad to those English-speaking countries, to travel or study in the future. However, their intrinsic motivation begins to decrease when they move from considering the theoretical value of studying English to experiencing the way that English is taught in their classrooms. Most of them admit that they are confronting difficult grammars and endless vocabulary, tedious repetition and drilling exercises in every class. In addition, no reward or credit is given for one's efforts, no encouragement is given either for students who are deserving of praise or for students who are in need of extra help, and no reflective feedback is given to the students.

If a student is extrinsically motivated he/she works "in order to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself," such as awards, prizes, grades, passing a test or teacher's praise as Mark Lepper (1988) illustrates (as cited in Lumsden, 2009). For my students, their greatest extrinsic motivation in taking English was passing the Chinese College Entrance Examination. Their secondary motivation was often to build a solid foundation for passing English at colleges in which it is a required course. When the intrinsic motivation is low or absent, it is helpful when students are extrinsically motivated in diverse ways; this may act to build their intrinsic motivation, which is the main focus of my research.

IT

The target language

English, as a lingua franca has become very popular for commercial trade and academic study in China. As a result, a policy that requires English as a mandatory course has been applied to secondary schools all over the nation. Even in small towns like my hometown, Chindu County, where this research was conducted, a mandatory English course has been offered since 2001. The purpose for creating this course is that English has become a worldwide language, and previously students who graduated from

this school had difficulty learning Advanced English, which is a required subject for the vast majority of majors in colleges in China.

English teaching policies

The administrators of the local education bureau and the school are aware of the importance of learning this foreign language, but they have no explicit mind-map about English curriculum design and assessment from within the framework of the Tibetan context. There is no specific policy towards English teaching so far from the local government, and the quality of English teaching and learning still remains at a very low level compared to other secondary schools in the inner cities of China.

Linguists and ESL teachers are searching for applicable teaching approaches and principles for students in China, and consequently, a great number of teaching materials are being developed and applied to the public school system nationwide. However, since China is a nation consisting of 56 ethnic groups with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, major consideration needs to be given to learners' ethnic identities during the process of ELL materials and teaching approaches development.

Language distance

When it comes to ELT, we can not neglect students' first language: Tibetan. Nor can we ignore their second: Chinese. All three languages are totally different from each other in terms of alphabets, phonetics and writing form, even though Tibetan and Chinese are classified by linguists into the Sino-Tibetan language family, ranking the second to Indo-European among the language-stocks of the world (Benedict, 1972). Tibetan is written in a very conservative syllable script based on the writing system of the ancient Sanskrit language of India but constructed in its own form. A brief example can be ཨོ or ॐ in Sanskrit and ཨོ in Tibetan. In terms of these three languages (Chinese, Tibetan and English), an example of the written differences among them can be manifested this way: ཨོ་མ་ཌི་པ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ in Tibetan, *Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hum* in the Latin Alphabet, and 唵嘛呢叭咪吽 in Chinese. Although they have similar

pronunciations and usually appear as the transcription of each other, they are greatly different. When students are studying English they have to go through a “Three-Step Decoding English Learning Process” as Figure 1.1 shows. For instance, the students will learn a word “mother” in English. The students’ textbook will give the translation as “母亲” in Chinese according to my learning experience and my Survey B and the teacher will mostly use Chinese as instruction or supporting language. However, cognitively students are translating Chinese into Tibetan as their mother tongue, not Chinese. So, “mother” must first become “母亲” in their second language (Chinese) before it can become “མ་མེད།” in their first language (Tibetan).



Figure 1.1

Culture of the learners

These students were all raised and grew with both Tibetan culture and Chinese culture as well. In Tibetan culture, singing and dancing are considered irreplaceable. Being eloquent and humorous when one speaks is highly respected. However, in the ELL classroom, English teachers expect students to be good at listening and writing, in quiet obedience, taking notes and passing exams only.

The value of being modest and maintaining a good self-image is largely a result of the influence of Chinese culture. As a result, now even Tibetan students have difficulties venturing out of their safe

zones because of their concerns about “face saving” or “losing face.” Some English teachers may try new approaches and force students to speak out, stand out, explore, challenge and feel comfortable with making a lot of mistakes. There are, however, important questions that must be asked in this process. Are students mentally and psychologically prepared for this kind of teaching? Or, do they need step-by-step adjustment to work towards it?

From the time that these students started their first grade in the elementary schools, they were taught in a teacher-centered way. They then grew up studying individually and competitively. However, if English is still taught and studied this way the chance of them learning and acquiring is not sufficient enough either for them to pass the Chinese College Entrance Examination or for them to meet minimum requirements for English courses in the colleges all around China.

The content of the textbook

The content and ideology of the textbooks that students used in my research site, and in many other ethnic group areas, is mostly comprised of urbanized and technology-based themes. These materials did not take the distinctions of Tibetan culture and language into account. The first language of these students is Tibetan, and the surrounding language environment is also Tibetan, but the study materials are all in Chinese. Students have difficulties thinking about or imagining the things showing in the textbooks, which makes it even harder for them to understand and memorize the vocabulary. As a result they felt foreign, and at a distance from the English language. Therefore, their affective filters were raised (Krashen, 1982), such that their anxiety of learning a new language and encountering a new culture was maximized, resulting in low motivation or interest, and negative attitudes, as hindrances of their English learning process.

Learning environment

The town where the research site took place is 866 kilometers away from the nearest big city.

Chindu (Khridu in Wylie Tibetan transliteration) County of Yushu Tibetan Prefecture has a population of 48,500 and 98% of which are Tibetan. This is an isolated rural area like most Tibetan towns.

Therefore, in TL-removed Context “where target language needs are deferred, unclear or non-existent, and target language discourse communities seemingly unavailable...”(Graves, 2008, p. 155), students have less access to target language both at school and home.

Parents’ support in learning English

It is significant that students are able to receive parents’ support in learning English.

What is the view of your parents considering your English?

- A. Attach great importance
- B. Concerned about it but don’t know how to help me
- C. Don’t care at all.

How about the ability of your parents guidance in your English?

- A. They don’t know English at all
- B. Knows a little English, but could not help me
- C. Knows English and tutors me

However, based on the Survey B of the research, out of 83 students, only 21 students agreed that they have parents’ support to learn English well. Only five of them said that their parents attach great importance to English. The main reason for this result is that 81 out of 83 students said their parents have never studied English as they were born and grew up as a nomad or a farmer.

With the big picture of I THOU IT framework of this teaching context in my mind, I began to explore and raise my research questions to the classroom where I actually taught for four weeks. “How could I apply approaches I learned from my graduate school into this specific teaching context?” “How does the significance and efficiency of the use of learners’ mother tongue and culture in English classroom reveal itself in my teaching context?”

Chapter Two: Approaches Applied in English Classroom

At the research site, the school administration gave me permission to teach Grade 8, Class One and Class Two. Class One has forty students and Class Two has forty-three students. According to their former English teachers, their English level is still Novice Low although they studied English as a non-main subject¹ for one and a half years. The administration also asked me to teach the textbook as it was the end of the summer semester and their teaching agenda had to be fulfilled. I was allowed to add my own teaching materials upon this condition.

I read the textbook my students were using and realized that it is a Grade-7 textbook. I consulted with other English teachers who told me that they could not finish the whole book within the school-scheduled class time. As for the content, I realized that I could conduct classroom research as I had planned. The table of contents of the textbook is as follows:

Pre-units

Unit 1 Good morning

Unit 2 What's this in English?

Unit 3 What color is it?

Formal units

Unit 1 My name's Gina.

Unit 2 Is this your pencil?

Unit 3 This is my sister.

Unit 4 Where's my backpack?

Unit 5 Do you have a soccer ball?

Unit 6 Do you like bananas?

Review of units 1-6

Unit 7 How much are these pants?

Unit 8 When is your birthday?

Unit 9 Do you want to go to a movie?

Unit 10 Can you play the guitar?

Unit 11 What time do you go to school?

Unit 12 My favorite subject is science. Review of units 7-12

¹ Non-main subject refers to a subject that has only three classes a week, whereas other subjects have five or more classes a week.

《英语(新目标)》学生用书 (预备篇) 目录

Unit	Title	Topic	Functions	Letters and Structures	Target Language	Vocabulary	Recycling	Learning Strategies
1 Page 1	Good morning!	Meeting friends	Greet people	Letters A - H Pronunciation of letters A, E	Good morning, Alice! Good morning, Cindy! Hello, Frank! Hi, Cindy! How are you? I'm fine, thanks. Good afternoon, Eric! Good evening, Alice!	Aa, Bb, Cc, Dd, Ee, Ff, Gg, Hh hi, hello, good, morning, afternoon, evening, fine, OK, thanks		Listening for key words Using what you know
2 Page 7	What's this in English?	Things around you	Identify things Spell words	Letters I - R Pronunciation of letters A, E, I, O What questions	What's this in English? It's a key. Spell it, please. K-E-Y.	I, J, Kk, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo, Pp, Qq, Rr jacket, key, map, orange, pen, quilt, ruler	Letters A - H Pronunciation of letters A, E	Practicing Memorizing
3 Page 13	What color is it?	Colors	Identify colors	Letters S - Z Pronunciation of letters A, E, I, O, U Review of the alphabet What questions	What's this? It's V. What color is it? It's red.	Ss, Tt, Uu, Vv, Ww, Xx, Yy, Zz blue, green, red, yellow, black, white, color	Letters A - R Pronunciation of letters A, E, I, O What's this in English? It's a key. Spell it, please. K-E-Y.	Role-playing Summarizing Self-evaluating
Page 19 Words and Expressions in Each Unit								

《英语(新目标)》学生用书 (正式篇) 目录

Unit	Title	Topic	Functions	Structures	Target Language	Vocabulary	Recycling	Learning Strategies
1 Page 1	My name's Gina.	Making new friends	Introduce yourself Greet people Ask for and give telephone numbers	Present tense <i>to be</i> What questions Possessive adjectives <i>my, your, his, her</i>	What's your name? My name is Gina. I'm Gina. Nice to meet you! What's your phone number? It's 284-2942.	numbers 0-9 phone number first name, last name hi, hello		Practicing Listening for specific information
2 Page 7	Is this your pencil?	Things in the classroom	Identify ownership	Demonstratives <i>this, that</i> What questions Yes/No questions and short answers <i>How do you spell it? (formulaic)</i>	Is this your pencil? Yes, it is. / No, it isn't. What's this in English? It's a pen. How do you spell it? P-E-N.	pencil, pen, book, eraser, ruler, pencil case, dictionary, backpack, baseball, watch, key, computer game, notebook, ring	your, his, her names numbers 0-9	Using context Guessing
3 Page 13	This is my sister.	The family	Introduce people Identify people	Demonstratives <i>this, these, that, those</i> Subject pronouns <i>I, he, she</i> Yes/No questions and short answers Plural nouns	This is my brother. Is she your sister? Yes, she is. / No, she isn't.	mother, father, parent, sister, brother, cousin, grandmother, grandfather, grandparent, uncle, aunt, friend	Hello! Hi! Nice to meet you! personal names Is this your ...? Yes, it is. Is that your ...? No, it isn't.	Personalizing Memorizing
4 Page 19	Where's my backpack?	Things around the house	Talk about where things are	Where questions Yes/No questions and short answers Prepositions <i>on, in, under</i> Subject pronoun <i>they</i>	Where's my backpack? It's under the bed. Are my books on the chair? No, they're not. I don't know.	table, bed, dresser, bookcase, sofa, chair, drawer, CD, plant, alarm clock, math book, video tape, hat	keys, books, baseball, computer game, pencil case, ruler, notebook, pen, pencil, ID card Is it ...? Yes, it is. / No, it isn't.	Listening for key words Inferring vocabulary

Figure 2.1 a sample of the table of contents from the textbook

Goals of My English Class for This Research Period:

- ❖ Students will be able to write a self-introduction.
- ❖ Students will be able to give a self-introduction presentation.
- ❖ Students will be able to introduce their family to others in English.
- ❖ Students will be motivated to learn more and speak more English.

In the following section I will illustrate how I applied to this teaching context approaches that I learned from SIT Graduate Institute, using my daily journal entries which describe the moment-to-

moment decisions I made in order to truly communicate with my students and guide their learning to a higher level by increasing their motivation towards learning English. In addition, I have inserted my thoughts and ideas as parenthetical expressions in italics to further explain my decisions in class.

Tibetan Version of Hacky Sack

The first day began with Class Two. The whole class was so excited to see me since they heard that I went abroad to study, and they expected many interesting things from me, including a new way of teaching English, news of the things I saw in the States, and new perspectives I had towards education.

When the class started, I told them that I would use Tibetan for instruction and explanation and that the students would be allowed to use Tibetan and Chinese when they could not express themselves or answer in English.

T: “Good morning, class!”

S: “Good morning, teacher!”

Then I used a Tibetan Singing bowl cushion as a Hacky Sack (HS) as figure 2.2 shows, to encourage students to talk individually. I told them in Tibetan that when I threw it to someone that student must have a conversation with me. We would throw it back and forth during the conversation. Then I modeled with a student.



Figure 2.2

T: “How are you?”(throw HS)

S: “ I’m fine, and you?”(catch it and throw it back)

T: “I’m great, thank you.”(hold it)

Because of the large number of students, I could not greet every single one. I threw the HS randomly to students. It was a very simple and easy conversation in English, but the students felt nervous and were not willing to speak that much. Since they were not accustomed to speaking in

English, they seemed to prefer to take notes on whatever the teacher wrote on the board. (*Teaching style influences learning style, but I could tell they really liked the hacky sack.*)

To scaffold the activity I had to write down on the blackboard the short conversation and let students perform it. As a result, students felt confident in speaking while using the notes as a visual aid. (*Different learners have different learning styles, and visual learners prefer to have more visuals in class.*)

Ice-breaker

Next, I wanted to do an ice-breaker activity to introduce myself using drawings I brought. Although they knew my name, they didn't know other things about me. I let them guess what the drawings meant and try to explain their ideas in English. I drew a yak-wool tent representing where I was born; a Tibetan expression “Tashi Delek” representing that I am Tibetan and I speak Tibetan; a soccer ball representing that I like the sport; a number 25 representing my age; a man holding a piece of chalk in front of a blackboard representing that I am a teacher.

My students were not ready to speak in English. In fact, they were silent. So I allowed them to use Tibetan or Chinese before trying to speak in English. The result was acceptable as a few students could speak in English. I let them write on the board whatever they know in English trying to create a Community Board¹ (Silverman, 2012). Again it turned out their spelling was bad. Therefore, I corrected and pronounced them one by one.

I wrote all the sentences with their help. Time limitations and the students' poor spelling prevented them from writing the sentences themselves. Then I invited the students to say the sentences

¹ Community Board is a concept introduced in the MAT program Professor Alex Silverman at the SIT Graduate Institute. In CB, students write ideas and thoughts about a topic on a big board in order to create a holistic view for the whole group and encourage further discussion.

aloud and their pronunciation was good. I led them to repeat the sentences, correcting their minor mistakes in pronunciation.

Before the class ended, I asked students to brainstorm class norms that everyone could agree with (attached as appendix C with translation in English). As homework, I asked them to write their own self-introduction in a notebook, and choose a new word to learn by themselves for that day and to keep it in their vocabulary notebook. (*I believe that learners are motivated to learn better and internalize it faster when they can choose what they like to explore and learn.*)

Cuisenaire Rods and Tibetan Hacky Sack

For Class One, I changed some of my teaching approaches based on my experience from Class Two. I went to the classroom ten minutes before the class was scheduled to begin. My students expected that they would do the same things as the other class had done. They even asked me to talk about what I saw and experienced in the States. Due to the limited time, I told them I would like to share my US experience with them as time allowed.

I still used the Tibetan Hacky Sack activity to start the class but this time I did not ask the English monitor student to respond. This student usually is very good in English and helps the teacher to collect homework from the class. (*Students are so accustomed to see many teachers paying attention to a few students who do well. This is a big issue because this particular teaching behavior destroys students' interest and motivation in the subject itself.*) Therefore, I just asked for a volunteer to model the simple conversation with me. The whole class recommended one for me. They told me this student likes English and sings English songs often. The conversation between us went like this:

T: Good morning, how are you today? (Hold HS, throw it to S)

S: I OK, you? (Catch it and throw back)

T: I'm great. What day is today? (Catch it and throw back)

S: Hmm... (Hold it)

The class laughed when the student couldn't answer my question. I felt sorry for the student, and I was not happy with their behavior. I praised the student's good pronunciation, good flow, and confidence in speaking English. What he had done was exactly what I expect my students to do with the Hacky Sack: to have good pronunciation; speaking with an accent is fine; good flow; more fluency instead of slowing down for accuracy; to speak with confidence and not be afraid to pronounce a word incorrectly.

I also asked the whole class to respect each other. I decided to teach them how to apologize in English. I wrote it down on the board "I'm sorry, ...(name)" "No problem!" The whole class said it to the student, and he replied in English. (*I believe students can learn a foreign language very fast when they attach real emotion to it.*)

Then I asked another student to model the conversation and explained to the class that "what day is today is asking for weekdays."

I let the student speak first.

S: How are you today?

T: Great! How about you?

S: I'm OK. What day today?

T: It is Tuesday.

By this time, I asked the class to do the conversation in pairs with the Cuisenaire rods I provided. (*I believe this way I can save a lot of time as students are doing the conversation at the same time and I can supervise my students by listening to their conversation while walking around.*)

I noticed that they enjoyed throwing the rod to each other while not slowing down to use perfect grammar. The sense of playfulness allowed students to express themselves in English without caring too much about the accuracy of their grammar.

Then I introduced myself using drawings. The result was better than in Class Two. It was obvious the English level in Class One is higher. The students wrote “Tibetan, Soccer, birthday, tent, teacher” using different spellings. I selected the correct spellings with the help of students. *(I did not ask who wrote the correct spellings and who wrote the wrong ones which many teachers in my school do. I believe this behavior discourages students who make mistakes from coming up to the board in future English classes.)* I praised them all for coming to the board and sharing their answers with the class.

Then I told them to make sentences using the vocabulary on the board. I suggested they could add more words if they wanted to write a short self-introduction. *(I did not ask them to guess the meaning of my drawings and say it in English since Class Two had had a difficult time to do it. In addition, I do not want them to imitate my sentence structure. Their own sentence structure can be varied and interesting.)* Meanwhile, I told them to I would help them if they needed it.

After ten minutes, I read my self-introduction pointing to the drawings. But only a few of them finished writing and I asked them to read to the class, write on the board and explain any new word they used. It took six minutes for three students to finish their self-introduction. They gave good examples which encouraged others to try. *(I wish more students with different English levels would share their work to encourage others to try in future classes.)*

As homework, I invited them to write their own self-introduction and the new daily vocabulary word in a notebook as Class Two did.

Using Silent Way Approach Principles

T: Good morning, Class!

Ss: Good morning, Teacher!

T: How are you today?

Ss: I'm fine, and you?

T: I'm fine, too, thank you. How is the weather today?

T: How is the weather today?

Ss: It's good... (Most of the students kept silent, as they didn't know what I asked. I thought they would know the answer in my lesson plan.)

I decided to draw the Sun, cloud, rain and wind on the board (my drawings were not good) and let students respond in English. With the help of my theatrical performance on the stage they guessed correctly. Only a few of my students could answer it in English and only two could write the answer on the board without spelling mistakes.

Then I tried Silent Way to teach the pronunciation for them. A Silent Way teacher must fully respect the autonomy of the students and believe that teaching should be subordinated to learning (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). The Silent Way teacher has to make a well-prepared lesson plan since each step and technique that the teacher applies is very significant. To me, the role of the teacher, "I", is as an assistant for learners when help is required and as a balancer who knows when to step in when the learners need to be pushed to an edge of certain challenge, and when to step out when they are performing and producing on their own. As "Thou", the learners, are the active initiators and explorers of learning process. They are encouraged to take challenges, and make mistakes, and correct the mistakes themselves or with the help of peers. As for "IT" in Silent Way, I think it is the teacher-student interaction which seems to be silent. Communication is through body language and eye contact. The student-student interaction happens a lot during class by the means of discussion, voluntary action and

peer correction. The students can learn from each other, support each other and reach their own goals and achievements.

I started by pointing at each of these words and inviting the students to pronounce them. At first, there was a silence as they expected me to speak. I used hand gestures to encourage them to try. (*I tried to give them confidence in pronouncing words without the help of a teacher. Self-reliance is very lacking in students in general.*) They pronounced Sun and Rain correctly but not Cloud and Wind. Then I pronounced Cloud and Wind without them repeating after me. Some students are accustomed to repeating whatever their English teacher says, so I had to try again asking them to not repeat aloud, but to repeat in their heads silently. Then I let them try to say the words aloud; this time they all pronounced Cloud and Wind correctly.

Next, I tried to teach them words to describe different weather conditions. The four words Sun, Wind, Cloud and Rain were on the board already. I asked my students to guess a letter or two at the end of each word to make it into an adjective. Students guessed “e” “s” “es” “y”, etc. I asked them to give reasons. Some of the explanations were “I saw a lot of English words have e at the end”, “s and es” can make the nouns plurals and it may become an adjective to describe a certain kind of weather”, “there are a lot of words that have y in the end”, and etc. (*I believe students can remember better when they play with words to get the answers rather than the teacher just providing the answers right away.*) Therefore, after they guessed and laughed, I gave them the answers and reasons behind them. When I asked the question “How is the weather today?” they answered, “It’s Sunny!!!” loud and clearly.

As the main part of the lesson, I started to talk about self-introduction. First, I let students check their homework in pairs for six minutes (three for each). (*They can help each other understand what they are trying to say.*) Then I asked for volunteers to read their self-introductions for the class. Again, only three in the whole class raised their hands. I asked the reason why the rest of the students were not

willing to read it aloud. They answered that they knew how to write but were not confident enough to read it out. (*I told them without trying to speak this language you can never learn it and feel the beauty of it.*) I invited the three students who had volunteered to read first, and then encouraged others to speak.

Meanwhile, I was making mental notes of the mistakes the students made. A few more students tried to read aloud. I praised them and encouraged others to do the same in the future. I wrote down on the board some pronunciation and grammar mistakes in their sentences. Then I asked the class to correct them together. (*I believe that good study habits, self-check and curiosity, help students learning a new language.*)

Here are some words that I taught which attracted great attention and interest.

- “Tibetan”. The source of this word is Tibetan word “བུ་བོད་ /tbueid/” and the history of that word, why we call ourselves “Tibetan” in English but not the same sound as we call ourselves “བོད་ /bueid/” in Tibetan nowadays (I gave a brief Tibetan history lesson to them).
- “Football” and “basketball”. “Ball” in this word is actually borrowed in Tibetan and we call the similar sound of word “སྐོ་ལོ” for “ball” in Tibetan.
- “Yak-wool tent” where most nomad students were born, is more accurate than “black tent” for, as “black tent” is translated from Chinese. Chinese scholars think the tent is black, but Tibetans do not say it that way because the original word in Tibetan means yak-wool tent.
- As for Tibetan names, we should not use Chinese Pinyin, as it is not pronounced as the same sound as Tibetan names. I told the students I would teach them the Wylie transliteration scheme, which is a method for transliterating Tibetan script using only the letters available on a typical English language typewriter. For instance, “Cairen Zhaxi” is how we use Chinese Pinyin to write Tibetan, while the real pronunciation is “Tsering Tashi” as Wylie transliteration.

Again, I used SW techniques to teach all these vocabulary words, using a pointer and inviting the students to come to the front to teach each other. Students loved this session of the class. I could tell that I greatly aroused their curiosity in this new language as I explained in ways new to them.

Self- discovery: Exploring Question Forms

I explained to my students that there were two basic forms of verbs in English: To-be Verb and Other Verb. I gave examples for both verbs and invited students to come to the board to write sentences using the verb. Here are some samples they wrote:

To-be Verb

I am Tibetan.

My name is Tashi.

You are teacher. (mistake)

Other Verb

I like football.

I like yak. (mistake)

I study Tibetan.

(Later I had students to correct those mistakes, and asked them to write in third person.)

He is a Tibetan.

She name is Dorma. (mistake)

He like football. (mistake)

He study Tibetan. (mistake)

(It really fascinated me when my students came up with these sentences that were showing their own identities as Tibetans. I believe when learners start to express their own identity through another language, it is a sign that they have gradually realized the ownership of this language and they are building a bond with this language. Thus their motivation can be maintained as high or even higher.)

Then I introduced the two basic question forms: Yes/No Question and Wh~ Question. To find out the form for Yes/No question, I assigned this task to students, which they had never done in English classes before. Their eyes were wide open with a mixture of excitement and panic on their faces.

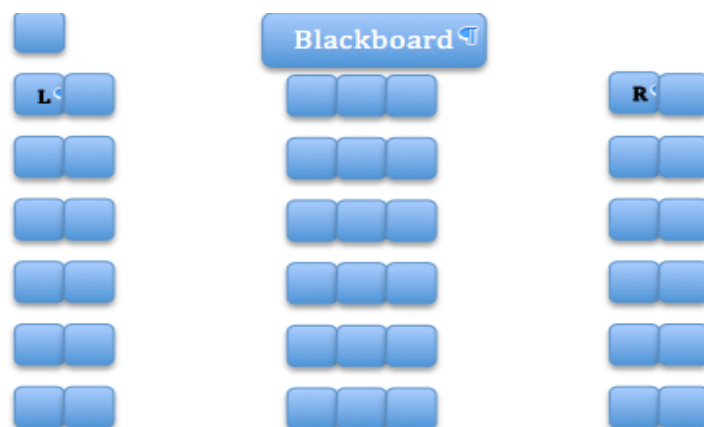


Figure 2.3 Seating arrangement of my class

I asked the students to sit in a group of 6, which means the first row students had to turn around. The third and fifth row had to turn around too. This worked perfectly for the middle group but not for the left and right group. So two students in the third row had to join the first group and two students in the fourth row join the second group. (*Small circles and many group activities including games for ESL classes do not work in this teaching context due to the limit of class space and a large number of students.*)

There was no butcher paper available, so I handed out a piece of plain white paper to each group and asked them to write down the forms, making examples for 15 minutes and then presenting them to the class as a group within 3 minutes. Each group was required to have team spirit, a group leader and to make sure everyone participated and contributed to the group work. Textbook use was allowed because there was no specific grammar information in it. While I was observing the class, I was surprised to notice how some students, who were generally quiet and considered to have lower English levels compared to others, were active in discussion. Some of them asked me how to pronounce some vocabulary.

Their final products were very creative and interesting. They were happy to analyze and conclude English grammar by themselves and they were eager to know who got the right forms. I was surprised by how much they could discover and learn without me teaching them this and that. All of them

got the form of To-be Verb for Y/N question correctly, but the forms differed when it came to the Other Verb. There were two main forms the class came up with:

⇒ “Do + I/you/he/she/they/we/it + Other Verb + ...?”

⇒ “Do + I/you/we/they + Other Verb + Noun?” “Do + he/she + Other verb(s) + Noun?”(The whole class did not get a form for “does”, but they tried their best.)

Although none of them got the correct form, I was totally astonished by their presentation. Each group went to the front and one of them presented as a group leader. Others helped to write the forms on the board or nodded when they agreed with what their group leader said. As their first group presentation ever, they did far beyond my expectation and I saw the capability of them to learn so efficiently and productively. After all the presentations, I praised how wonderful their performances were. I could see through their eyes and confident smiles on their faces that they felt a great achievement.

Later I summarized the correct forms for Yes/No question and my students were surprised to see how close they were, and they made all the efforts without my help. As follow-up lessons, I had my students change sentences from their self-introduction into Y/N questions and Wh~ questions. Thus, I covered a lot of the content from the textbook.

Using Desuggestopedia Approach Elements

Among many teaching approaches Desuggestopedia is one of the approaches that focuses on the attitude and emotion of the learners, and affordance of the learning process.

According to Lozanov and others, we may be using only five to ten percent of our mental capacity. In order to make better use of our reserve capacity, the limitations we think we have need to be desuggested. Desuggestopedia, the application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy, has been developed to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be

successful and/or the negative association they may have toward studying and thus to help them overcome the barriers to learning. (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 71)

I brought my laptop and put on some light music before the class started. Students seemed to enjoy it while they were preparing for the class or writing/reading something during the recess. Some of them even asked me for some English pop songs. So I put on some pop songs and they sang along. Even though they could not understand the meaning, their pronunciation was good. I was really glad they asked that because it not only created a relaxing learning environment but also set the language to welcome students before the class started.

T: Good afternoon, class!

S: Good afternoon, teacher!

T: Do you like this music? (pointing to my laptop)

S1: Yes, I like.

S2: Yes, I do.

T: (gestures to ask me the same question)

S: Do you like this music?

T: Yes, I do. (Slow and clear to get their attention)

T: Do you like this music? S: Yes, I do.

Learn vocabulary from picture activity

With the light background music I started an activity that was culturally related to my students. I told my students that it would be very interesting and every one in the class can fully participate in it without worrying about their English levels. Then I told them that I had a picture of a Tibetan living room. I let my students guess and name things in the Tibetan living room. When they got the right ones I wrote them down on the board in Tibetan. I could tell that students were excited to share and guess something they were familiar with.

After I had all the vocabulary I needed, I asked them whether anyone could name it in English. There were a few vocabulary words the students could say, such as TV, table, chair and bed. Then I

listed all the vocabulary in English on one side and asked students to write the words down in their notes. In pairs, then guessed and matched with the Tibetan words for 5 minutes. (*I believe students can have better memory when they play with the words rather than memorize them plainly. In addition, with a time limit the activity can inspire their game spirits to ensure their full participation.*)

Chest	མ་སྒོམ་
Carpet	གཤམ་
Tibetan choshom	མཚོ་མཚོ་གཤམ་
Tibetan bookshelf	དཔེ་སྒོམ་
Tibetan table	ཚལ་བཞུགས་
Tibetan cabinet	དཀར་སྒོམ་
Tibetan teapot	མིག་མེད་
Incense box	སྒོམ་སྒོམ་
Television	བརྒྱུ་འཕྲིན་
Tea Bowl	ཇ་མོར་
Handcarved Tibetan Bowl	ཅན་ལེ་
Tibetan stove	ལྷགས་ཐབ་
Tibetan sofa	གཤམ་མི་



Figure 2.4 Tibetan living room

After that, I matched those words on the board and taught the pronunciations, meanwhile students were checking their own answers with excitement.

Next, I put my laptop on the front desk with a big box as a base because I wanted students in the back rows to see. I made the picture of a Tibetan living room into full screen for students to see clearly as figure 2.3 (I wish the school had a projector).

I wrote on the board, “There is a _____. ” As I pointed to the TV on the screen, students answered, “There is a television.” However, only a few of them pronounced correctly, so I asked them to repeat until all of them got the correct pronunciation. The same procedure went on with all the other vocabulary on the board.

My students loved this vocabulary lesson since they could relate themselves to what they learned. They even remembered these words not only by the means of memorization but with interest and imagination. The results were very clear when I had the next class with them and many of the students remembered most of the vocabulary we learned that day.

Total Physical Response

As follow-up lessons, I had a vocabulary activity using Total Physical Response. Teachers who use Total Physical Response (TPR) should believe in its principles to reduce the stress learners feel when they are trying to speak in a foreign language. This encourages the learners that they can make progress and participate in the activities, since there are more nonverbal instructions and performances in the class (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011).

I divided the class into seven groups of six and asked the students to name their own group. Each group sent two students to the front. They had to work in pairs. One of them sat in a chair facing the class preparing to give answers and one stood in front of her to act out the item when I pointed to one on my laptop screen (where the student who sat couldn't see it). If they succeeded, they wrote down the

words they got on the board. Other classmates could help them only if they were stuck. They earned one point for each word and each point added to the group points. Students were in a game mood and they were very active and competitive. The whole class participated and I took the role of a facilitator rather than their leader. They kept all the words on the board and in the end I lead them to read those words one by one to refresh their memory.

It was an effective vocabulary review session for my students. Students were very excited and interested during the whole game, which they thought it was. But in fact, it was the real learning process. TPR is an approach that can reduce the usage of L1 in the classroom but the content can be flexible, thus I chose the Tibetan living room to raise the motivation of my students.

Using Way Of Council Approach

This is a noisy era. I believe the volume is directly related to our need to be listened to. ... We can do our part to begin lowering the volume by our own willingness to listen.

--Margaret J. Wheatley (2002, p.90)

I totally agree with this saying that being a good listener can bring you closer to the speaker and that's when true communication occurs, which is rare in this noisy era. One cannot join a Circle and become a part of a Circle without full awareness of people's need to be listened to. By listening to others, you open a door of your own world, to welcome the stories of others and embrace the wisdom of others. I am determined to bring the energy and spirit of councils to schools, to the youth. I can relate it to my own experience of real life listening in teaching while I was conducting my classroom research during this summer.

Before I talk about how I did way of council with my students I would like to give you an introduction for the journey of Council. It is very important to know the structural elements of Circles (Kay Pranis, 2005).

Set a scene according to the size of the Circle and shape the Circle fully to prevent the leak of energy loss.

Hold opening and closing ceremonies to honor and embrace the place where a council is held and the group that forms the Circle. Opening ceremony can take people away from their ordinary life styles and bring them to the Circle with tranquility and relaxation by the means of creating a transition like meditation, deep breaths and singing. Closing ceremony can acknowledge the efforts and cherish the togetherness of the Circle.

Choosing a talking piece is simple but meaningful, it can be a gift that members of the Circle bring which has rich stories behind it. A special talking piece can trigger imagination and memories of the group weaving people's stories together as a whole. I remember in one of the council groups in SIT, we had a beautiful mineral stone as our talking piece which was found on the land of barren and cold Ukraine. When I held the stone I could feel the coldness as well as a related meaningful and memorable life that our Circle member shared with us.

A council needs guidelines and norms that members of the Circle reach consensus with. Among them there are four intentions that a Circle has to follow (Zimmerman, 2009).

“Speaking from the heart.” This means that Circle members have to be honest and authentic but the speaker has to be comfortable as well. This takes time and the more council in the Circle the easier it is for the speaker to open their heart and talk.

“Listening from heart.” This means everyone in the Circle has to be present at that moment and pay full attention to others and listen without thinking about response to a certain prompt. It is hard not to be distracted or not to come up with a response ahead of one's turn during a council but the more Circles one joins the better one's listening skill becomes.

“Being of lean expression.” This means to keep a story or a response brief and clear without being redundant and taking others’ time into consideration.

“Be spontaneous.” This means to say what you want to say without rehearsing in one’s head. We also need confidentiality agreement, whatever is shared in the Circle stays in the Circle, and try to make your voice serving for yourself, for the Circle and for the greater good.

As the council starts, the role of the leader or leadership appears to be very significant in a Circle. Based on a few council experiences with my friends and school mates, I can draw a conclusion that when the leader is good at setting the scene (which other members of the Circle can create as well), observing every member of that Circle, controlling a theme and keeping the energy of the Circle through the whole council, the Circle members feel more comfortable, confident and relaxed to stay and trust the safety of the Circle. Since the leader has a lot of responsibilities for the Circle of a council, co-leadership should be introduced and it works more efficiently in many cases. “Having a man and woman simultaneously in leadership roles offers additional opportunities for gender balancing within the partnership model” (Zimmerman, 2009, p. 91). I feel that it is applicable and more productive in Tibetan area, especially in school programs like the county schools where I worked.” Teachers there are eager to know stories and ideas of their students and ready to help them whenever it’s possible. Gender issues still exist in my hometown area so the teachers can educate the students by the joined leadership of a council and the circle.

Way of council for feedback and getting to know students in my class

I could not use my whole lesson time for feedback and reflection session, since there are only three classes a week. Therefore I let them write down “reflective letter” in class for five to ten minutes on Saturdays, as it was the end of a weekly class.

As for a council time, I decided to find a recess time for it and I chose a lunch break because they have two spare hours before afternoon class. Since the first week was so busy for the students, I chose the second Friday lunch break for our council. The whole process was done in Tibetan. *(I believe that especially for beginners it is important to allow them to use their first language sometimes to lower their anxiety. In addition, we all share the same common language, our mother tongue, Tibetan. So our communication will be more effective in Tibetan because I was more interested in what they really thought than how they could express themselves in English.)*

I found a less noisy spot in a corner of our school playground. Since we had almost 40 students, we needed a larger place than the classroom full of desks and chairs. I set a sacred center with a Mani Stone (a stone carved with Buddhist mantras), a small prayer wheel rotated by solar power and a singing bowl on a Tibetan rug. I told my students to sit in a circle around it. Since it was their first time in council, they were filled with curiosity. After telling them the meaning, elements and intentions of a council, I started our first council playing a deep and clear Tibetan singing bowl. It was very useful to let us calm down and be present at that moment with our full attention.

My first prompt was sharing happy thoughts with the whole class voluntarily. Holding our talking piece, a small delicate Mani stone, I started with saying that “I am so happy that my sister is getting married in this coming week.” I passed the stone to the student who raised hand. He said, “I am happy that my family found a lot of caterpillar fungus during this vacation.” “I am happy that my mom is getting better.” “I am happy that I got a poppy” “this nice weather makes me happy.” “I am happy to have you as our English teacher.” “...” It continued for almost five minutes as many of the students shared their happy thoughts.

The next prompt was “English and I.” I started by saying, “when I first studied English in my secondary school, I liked it but eventually I hated the subject as it required so many tedious rote

memorization. But my high school English teacher changed my attitude towards English. He made the learning as a journey full of fun and meanings.” This time I passed to my right side as the sun direction and asked for everyone’s participation. However, if the student was not ready he/she could pass the stone and come back to him/her in the end. I remembered students saying, “I really want to learn English but I don’t know how.” “I have studied English for two years but I am still a lower beginner. I want teachers’ help and I want to improve my English.” “I don’t have much interest in English to be honest, but teacher you give me different view now.” “I just started my English course this semester, but I don’t think we have a huge gap between those who have studied for a year or more. I don’t know why?” “My parents want me to take English test in High School Entrance Examination, but my English is so poor and the test is just a year away.” “I learned English when I was in Grade five but so far I feel I only know how to simply greet people in English, that’s why my hope for English is vague.” “Friends may laugh at me if I say my dream is to be an English teacher and study abroad like you teacher, it is true but with my English level I feel my dream is just a dream.” “I always wonder why I can’t remember most of the vocabulary that I memorized so hard in the first year. So keep losing hope for English.” “...”

Students mostly shared how and when they started English learning and expectations along with frustrations. It took almost twenty minutes.

The last prompt was “how do you feel after attending my English classes?” I ask them to pick up the talking piece from the center and talk freely. But there was a silence and nobody moved. (*The modesty and politeness in our culture makes them feel uncomfortable to say anything about me as their teacher.*) So I picked it up and told them that “ I am here as your friend in this circle, so you don’t have to fear or worry about what you say about me. Your honest comments are more than welcome as they can help all of us improve together.” I passed to my right again and this time they were bit shy and didn’t share much. They simply said, “Your class is interesting.” “I like your class.” “I think my English

is improving.” “I like English songs.” “...” I had to jump in and say that it can be negative as well. However, only a few did, “please slow down your pace thus all of us can improve together.” “I know it is not your fault but some of us are totally new to English so I hope you can teach us from basics.” “...” It took ten to fifteen minutes.

I commented last saying “thank you all for giving your full attention and heart into this circle, although this council ends today but this circle remains and we are here for each other, we are not alone!” We closed our council by singing a traditional Buddhist chanting transcript, which we found very touching and felt the deep calling from a mysterious spiritual world.

These teenage boys and girls need to be listened to and they need to realize their voice is heard. We, as teachers and educators, should bring the soul to the classroom and believe that those young adults have souls, hearts and minds shining upon the people around them. (Kessler, 2000)

All these different teaching approaches were adjusted into my teaching context. What did my students think about these lessons? Did they truly learn something? What did my colleagues think about these lessons? In the next chapter, I will present their genuine feedback as a reference and a great resource for my research.

Chapter Three: Feedback from Learners and Teachers

After all the lessons I taught, I sought feedback as a significant part of my research. In the following section, I will extract the feedback that I collected from both English teachers and students.

Feedback from Students

At the beginning, I tried to collect feedback from my students by the means of having them answer structured questions in Tibetan, and I translated them as follows:

- 1) *What did I learn?*
- 2) *What did I learn about my learning so far?*
- 3) *What helped/ hindered my learning?*

However, students did not like to give feedback within structured questions. They thought it was similar to writing an essay in which they were not able to fully and honestly express feelings and share opinions. Therefore, I asked them to write in a free style as short letters to me. All the feedback was in Tibetan and Chinese. Some were short, and some were long, and I translated them one by one in English. Due to the limited time and class for each week, I could only manage to collect feedback once a week. I collected them in a free-style manner during breaks. In addition, I categorized the feedback in different themes by the means of spreading all the letters or feedback on the floor first, and then putting them into different categories. Some of the feedback could be overlapped into several categories. However, I felt they should belong to one theme, which is the motivation in learning the target language.

From dislike English to like English

“To be honest, I never liked English from Grade 7 because teachers always let us memorize vocabulary. So I play toys in English class or take a nap, or gossiping with desk mate. But from the first day you taught us, you gave me a different feeling. We could study vocabulary on class with interesting stories and explanation. I think I learned some vocabulary without tedious memorization which is very interesting for me.”

“My Chinese level is really low and other English teachers tend to teach in Chinese more, which made me very difficult to learn English. Thus I lost my interest in English. But the way you teach English in Tibetan gave me a hope, I finally could understand what we are studying in class.”

“I had no interest in English before. All I know is the 26 letters and few greeting words like ‘good morning’. Now, I think I am starting to like English.”

“English is so difficult. I usually got lost or confused what the teacher is teaching in most English classes I had before. Thus I have no interest in English. The words I can read I don’t know the meaning; all I know now as a Grade 8 student is how to say ‘Hi and how are you?’ easy greetings in English. You gave me confidence in English and your way of teaching is helpful for us.”

“You give a feeling that other teachers could not, that is your passion in teaching and you are enjoying teaching us. You created an atmosphere in class that learning English is not boring at all. ”

Encouragement from the teacher

“At first, I thought you are a very strict teacher, but it turned out that you are a teacher who knows how to think from student’s view, to encourage students and care about students life. I will not let you down and work hard on my English. I wish you all the best.”

“You always come to class with full of spirit and energy, which encourages and influences me to focus on class.”

“You always review things we learned which is really good for me. You said we need self-confidence to learn English. I think I become more and more confident to speak English in class.”

“Your concentration and energy you show in class encourages me to focus and learn more, which I didn’t in other English class before.”

“Your way of looking at us gives me a feeling that you care about what we are doing, how much we understand, whether we are all together on the same page or not. Your body movement and clear voice is very attractive.”

“You gave me a big confidence in myself, especially when you praise us whether our answer is right or wrong.”

“I am not a confident girl, so when teachers ask questions, I could not raise my hand. But you made the answering section in a very relaxed way with humor and whether its right or wrong, you ask us the reasons behind our answers, I really like that and now I raise my hand to answer questions.”

“I like a class when the teacher is humorous.”

“I used to take notes whatever teachers are writing on the board, but most of them I don’t know the meaning and pronunciation. You gave us more chance to listen and speak, and you encourage us to speak whatever answer we have in mind. I think if I keep learning this way, my English level will improve a lot.”

Interested in the content

“My interest in learning English is growing day by day now. I am learning many vocabulary words and other knowledge as well. I like your way of teaching but I can understand and learn more when you slow down the pace.”

“You raised my interest in learning English.”

“I really admire a teacher who teaches what is useful to students, not just stick to the textbook always, because to me our textbook is very difficult.”

“Never had a teacher teaching us English combining Tibetan language and culture. I have a great interest in Tibetan; and now I am starting to like English.”

“I wish you could teach us from Grade 7 to 9. I really didn’t like English before but somehow I am starting to like English when you teach. I think I really like it when I got to know about Tibetan culture through English. ”

“I never thought that I could learn all kinds of knowledge in a language class like English. Your compassion towards us, and your passion in teaching inspires me to learn more. And you gave me a feeling that learning can be fun and enjoyable.”

“I hope we can learn more English songs in class to raise our interest in English.”

“You have a clear and high volume voice, and the way you explain vocabulary in Tibetan with some background or related knowledge always keeps my mind staying in class because in most English classes before you came to teach, it’s hard for me to concentrate.”

“With your help, I finally can introduce myself, the real me, in English, not to imitate what the textbook told me, because the vocabulary in textbook cannot describe the real me.”

“I really like the way you explain vocabulary. It’s interesting and we can learn more than a word. But I hope you can teach us pronunciations more because I forget how to pronounce them after class.”

“My English is very weak. But I enjoyed so much from the game when we tried to sort out the right grammar forms without you teaching us. I was thinking so deeply and actively during the game. Some of my classmates who are better than me in English couldn’t come up with good ideas like mine. I am so proud, and I will never forget that class.”

“Your teaching makes me get more interested in English. I think I can have a big improvement if you can keep teaching in this way. Also I really like the homework you assigned, they are very fundamental and basic, and mostly we learned it in class. ”

“I really like the way you teach us. I think I will study English harder than before. I just hope we will have more activities like the one we figured out the grammar forms by ourselves and let us compete between groups, award points. It would be very exciting and helpful for me to learn English.”

Some changes the teacher should make

“Your teaching style is totally different from our previous English teachers, to be honest I am not used to it. So I am still on my way to get used to it.”

“My foundation for English is really weak, so I hope you could slow down the pace in class, I got lost in class many times.”

“I don’t know English, so I hope you can teach us from very easy and basic vocabulary.”

“Some of our classmates have just transferred from another school due to the educational policy in our town, we never learned English before so we just know 26 letters. I hope you can slow down and teach less amount of things in one class.”

“I am just an English beginner; sometimes you write cursives on the board which will make me totally confused.”

“I hope you could teach us from the basics, I am a slow learner. What you are teaching is too many and too fast.”

“I hope you can teach more vocabulary than sentences. I cannot remember the meaning of the sentences, but if I know the individual words I would understand the sentences better.”

“I hope you can always keep that smile on your face when you teach us. I personally get inspired by it, and I am more willing to study the subject when the teacher is nice to us.”

“I hope you can ask us more questions in class.”

“You assign too much homework that I was not able to finish.”

“I don’t know how to take notes for English class and I wrote down all the sentences and different vocabulary together which is big mess, so I hope you can teach me how to take notes first.”

Interests in giving feedback

“There are only a few teachers who ask us for feedback, but you are different, you always ask us for feedback through writing or during normal conversations. So I always give honest opinions, because you will take it seriously.”

“At first, I was afraid to say something I wanted say to you on my short letter. But after you collected a few times and found out you appreciate those who give genuine feedback on your teaching. I enjoy writing to you now.”

“When you say some of us asked you to do this and that, or did not like this or that, I feel you really read them and take them into your consideration. You mentioned one of my feedback last time and I like it although I am still nervous inside.”

Simple feedback

Simple feedback were the ones when students wrote one or two lines on a small piece of paper which I received multiple times from students.

“I like your English class.”

“Keep doing what are you doing, you are really good teacher and I have no opinion about your class.”

“I think I will study English more.”

“I like you to be our teacher.”

Feedback from Teachers

There are feedbacks from two English teachers after observing the lesson in which I applied Silent Way Approach. I have put teacher feedback in a different font to help distinguish it from students’ feedback.

Feedback one (I translated his feedback in English.)

首先要感谢你邀请我听课。

- 1) 你的英语发音让我很羡慕。
- 2) 你的英语课堂气氛活跃，紧紧抓住了学生的注意力，大多数学生在积极发言。
- 3) 课堂内容结合了我们藏族的文化 有没有脱离学校的教学要求，与学生的日常生活联系密切。所学单词能够即学即用，容易让学生吸收。
- 4) 在课堂管理方面你有新的方法让注意力分散的学生认真听课。你会叫他周围的学生回答问题来引起他的注意。你的这个做法可能是不想直接指出而让学生的自尊心受到伤害。

仁青

"At first, I want to thank you for inviting me to your class.

- 1) I really like your English pronunciation.*
- 2) The learning atmosphere of your class is very active and full of energy. You grabbed students' attention and most of the students participated actively.*
- 3) The content of your lesson was creatively integrated with Tibetan culture and history. It was related and close to students' real life experience. Students were also able to apply the vocabulary they learned into their daily life, which made it easier for students to truly internalize.*
- 4) As for the classroom management, I noticed you have a new way of letting students to concentrate. You called those students who were next to or around the one whose mind was away in order to get his/her attention. In this way, you don't have to point out the student and hurt his/her self-esteem and 'face'."*

Feedback two (translated by the observing teacher himself from Tibetan notes)

"Interaction is a very effective approach to get students involved in the lesson and actually enjoy the class. Starting the lesson with some daily greeting conversation with students also accelerates the speed of the students getting into the linguistic environment.

For the matter of students not being confident, it would be a good to idea to have them read their self-introduction to each other multiple times. In this way, it would help them to get familiar with their expressions and build confidence in themselves to speak about themselves in public.

I really like when you integrate Tibetan culture into the content of this lesson, I can tell students were very interested in your lesson.

I also noticed that you used Tibetan language as instruction most of the time, I thought and expected that you, as a teacher who went abroad, would use more English. However, I understand students' level is very low for a lesson that is full of English.

From Dorje"

Feedback Three (from local English teachers from my questionnaire)

There were five teachers who helped to complete my questionnaire and the last question was an open one as follows:

What do you suggest to develop English Teaching in Tibetan secondary schools?

Teacher 1:

"After years of teaching English, I began to realize that English teaching has to be student and culture oriented. The exclusion of culture in English education will only cause alienation and sense of awkwardness. Students in the secondary schools are pro-active and have passion for study different language and English teaching has to take the advantage of this character to optimize the learning experience for students. I will highly suggest that 75% of an English class has to be constant interactions and 25% of instruction of the textbook. Here are couple key points on implementing the changes: 1) teaching approaches adapted to the students' needs in order to promote academic success, 2) creation of an empowering class and social culture that the students will be motivated to utilize the material they learnt."

Teacher 2:

"1) Schools here need good English teaching method to learn English.

2) English subject at schools doesn't set as a main subject, so the students' English level is low and maintains low after a few years of school.

3) In terms of teaching material, I think our students need a textbook that is less difficult and less grammar focused. Students like to speak English and play games, but they are tired of memorizing vocabulary and do the exercises from the textbook all the time.

4) We also hope this subject, English, receives support from both school and students parents."

Teacher 3:

"As an EFL context, learning a foreign language could be hard for the learners, thus the teacher should not only be a language teacher, but also an advisor, facilitator, and friend that help the learners learning the language in a stress free environment. The teacher is not only teaching the language but also helping the learners acquire the language so that they can use it in any situation. And moreover the teacher should guide the learners to the culture of the target language, let the learners fully understand the target culture, and then learners are able to use the language communicatively and effectively."

Teacher 4:

"学校应加大师资力量，改变陈旧的教学方法。由于九年义务教育，初中的在校学生数目庞大而英语教师严重不足。虽然国家要求实行素质教育，但在民族地区难以实现，英语教学还是“以教师为中心”，实行“填鸭式”、“满堂灌”的单一陈旧的教学模式。教师对学生的评价方式不科学不全面。导致了学生努力学习英英语的动机 从而有偏科厌科的严重现象。"(I translated this feedback in English.)

"Our school needs more English teachers and we need to learn new and applicable teaching methods and approaches. Due to the Nine Year Compulsory education policy in China, the number of

secondary school students is exceeded compared to the number of English teachers. Our nation and education department requires the school to develop 'quality-orientated education' instead of 'test-orientated', but those remote and ethnic areas could not meet that goal. Teachers are still teaching in a teacher-centered way, which is very deductive. The assessment and evaluation system is solely focused on test scores and overlooks the overall performance of the students. All these factors lead students to lose the motivation toward learning English and even build negative attitudes."

Teacher 5:

"To me I feel the situation of English teaching in our school will still remain the same if all the English teachers works individually and follows the school's curriculum and requirements. We, teachers, have to sit and talk about our teaching, and find out better ways to benefit students teaching English instead of giving heavy burdens they don't want. Plus, it will be easier if all teachers are working together and make some change from the high level as school curriculum and requirements for English down to students' assignment. To be honest, I am a bit tired of teaching alphabets and simple greetings, then hundreds of vocabulary for a whole semester over and over."

All the feedbacks are seriously taken into consideration and they will lead to my analysis and reflection of my teaching, my principles, and most of all, my belief in raising learners' motivation by using their first language and culture in the English classroom. In addition, I will provide some solutions for dealing with the current English teaching situation in Tibetan secondary schools in later chapters.

Chapter Four: Reflection and Analysis

Reflection on The Research

This was an action research in which the task was completed as planned and expectations were met. Now it is time to analyze the results with critical reflection: What happened? What worked and what didn't? What have we learned? And how might we do things differently next time?

I

In re-reading my own journal entries with the daily reflection notes, I noticed that I was keeping my spirits up to give my students confidence that I was well-prepared and full of energy for the class; I was sharing my burning passion and love of teaching; and I was holding onto my belief in the students' enormous capability for learning, as well as my own ability to make a difference to the English teaching in my school. The following are the changes introduced during the period of this research:

The central focus of the class changed from the textbook and the teaching itself, as used to be the case, to a focus on the learners and learning instead.

Traditional ways of teaching English, such as the Grammar Translation and Audio Lingual methods, were no longer used, but instead approaches such as the Silent Way, Desuggestopedia, Cooperative Learning, Way of Council and Total Physical Response were applied.

Tedious repetition and memorization were eliminated, and, instead, interesting and engaging activities were introduced to the class.

A positive atmosphere and active learning environment were cultivated as the class moved along day by day.

An image of the teacher respecting and being interested in the learners was formed.

The concept of both the culture of the target language and that of the learners was introduced to the learners.

THOU

The results and evaluation of my teaching during my classroom-based action research can be drawn from the feedback of my students.

The motivation and interest level of the students towards learning English was greatly increased during the teaching period.

The habit of paying more attention to listening skills instead of taking notes without understanding the meaning was formed.

Self-introductions, which accurately described the learners' real identities, were formulated and practiced.

An attitude of valuing all the learners' answers, whether they were right or wrong, was developed in order to encourage the learners' full participation.

The confidence to be able to express themselves in English, and the courage to speak up and to ask questions, was increased among many of the learners, regardless of their English level.

IT

During this action research, the main theme that came out of my teaching was raising the learners' motivation by using their first language and culture in the English classroom.

The first language, or L1, of the learners was consistently and frequently used for instructions and explanations. This helped the learners to feel comfortable and raised their level of comprehension in the class. It provided many functions, such as an opportunity for the learners to clarify the meaning of what the teacher had said, discussion of the requirements of a task, and how it might be tackled, and a social function, in terms of creating a sense of group cohesion and reducing students' anxiety (Eldridge, 1996).

The culture of the learners, or C1, was integrated into the content of the English class. This helped the learners to be more confident and interested in delivering information about their own culture in the target language, English. Thus, the integration of C1 into the classroom, with a clear pedagogical purpose, was able to make a positive contribution to the learning process.

Learning and Findings of this Action Research

The role of the learners' first language or L1 in the English classroom

A first language, also known as a native language or mother tongue, is the language a person grows up speaking and it can denote the language of one's ethnic group as well. The term first language makes one think that there is only one native language being spoken; however, many people in the world are born to multi-lingual families and thus they may have multiple native languages and may be bi- or even trilingual.

Many people around the world assume that Tibetans are natively bilingual and that they speak both Tibetan and Chinese at home because of geographical and political circumstances. The fact is, however, that Tibetans are not natively bilingual. Tibetans only start learning Chinese as their second language in the elementary school classroom. English, therefore, is their third language. At a certain point in the school curriculum English and Chinese are being taught at the same time. In some elementary schools, Tibetan students have to start studying English from the fourth grade on. Thus, it is very challenging for teachers to teach, and for students to learn English, while Chinese is being taught and learned as the primary language and subject. The two languages have very different structures and systems, from their writing systems, to their grammar and vocabulary.

The current situation for teaching and learning English in the Tibetan school settings and context is problematic for many reasons. Due to China's "Two Basics" education policy, designed to make education compulsory until grade nine and eliminate illiteracy for school-age children in Tibetan areas,

Tibetan families have a growing awareness of the importance of schooling. Therefore, the enrollment rate at town elementary and secondary schools is increasing at a rapid rate. Meanwhile, though, the results of English language learning have not improved and have remained at a very low level for years. Furthermore, at prefectural- and county-level schools, with more professional teachers, better facilities, and study resources for teachers and students, the results of foreign language learning are still not promising.

Investigating the source of this problem leads us to look at the input the Tibetan schools are providing for their students, including: the syllabus, teaching materials, textbooks, and curriculum. These materials were all designed in the Chinese language, a fact that may mean many minority languages will only survive as second languages in the future (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). The materials used throughout China are the same as those used in most of the Tibetan area. These materials were specifically designed with Chinese students in mind, without taking into consideration Tibet's distinct culture and language. The first language of these students is Tibetan, and the language in the surrounding environment is also Tibetan, but the study materials are all in Chinese. Therefore, teachers must first translate the written instructions from Chinese into Tibetan verbally, and then into English -- a three-step decoding process. This complicates both the teaching and the learning of English because three languages must be used in the instruction process, putting it far beyond the understanding of the students. Therefore, the students' affective filter (Krashen, 1982), the anxiety of learning a new language and encountering a new culture, the lower level of motivation and interest in learning it, are such that the language learning process is greatly hindered.

The needs for the use of L1 are enormous in the ESL or EFL classroom: "lead-ins (exploiting the L1 to check that the students have understood the situation, eliciting language -- getting language from the students), giving instructions (especially useful to clarify the written instruction on a worksheet or in

a book), checking comprehension (whether or not students understand a word or a phrase) (Atkinson, 1993)” as cited in Bal Krishna Sharma (2006, p. 81). Considering the importance of the role of the learners’ first language or L1, it is necessary to plan a new language curriculum designed specifically for Tibetan students using their L1 as an aid to learning.

In most EFL classrooms the students are not encouraged to speak their first languages because teachers usually believe there may be interference from their L1 in their L_n acquisition and learning. Also, such teachers claim that any time spent using any other language, even for better peer-negotiation or clarification, takes away time from using the target language. Therefore, many EFL classrooms tend to have an English-only rule in class and all the teaching and study materials are also only in English. However, in the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classroom, teachers may overlook the value of using students’ L1 in the English classroom in social or cultural contexts.

Kathleen Graves (2008, p. 159) strongly believes that there is a great need to “shift from an emphasis on a syllabus describing the content of lessons (the WHAT) and the methods of teaching (the HOW) to an understanding of the capacities and contributions of the learners and teacher, the range and implications of the purposes for learning a second language and the role of the context in shaping those purposes”. If this were the case in Tibet, the main purpose for Tibetan students to learn English in secondary schools would be to conduct simple interactions in English and gain a basic knowledge of the four skills in English as a solid foundation for the high school English course they may choose to study, and for the college English course required for many majors. Syllabus design plays a key role in language teaching and learning, and so using a syllabus which teaches the basic English applicable to the students’ daily lives at school and home would be far more relevant to them than using the same teaching materials used widely for Chinese students outside of the Tibetan areas. Students are most

likely to be motivated to learn if there is schema building that is context and situation-based, and it can relate to students prior knowledge (Piaget, 1954).

The role of the learners' culture or C1 in the English classroom

Teaching and learning have to be context-specific to best maximize results. At this research site, a Tibetan secondary school, Tibetan cultural elements cannot be neglected in the educational environment, as they play a key role in the learners' lives, both inside and outside of the school.

Designing an English language syllabus within the setting of the Tibetan cultural context, a syllabus which recognizes the importance of the students' own cultural identity and values as well as their first language, and one where there is a sense of responsibility on the part of the educator for preserving the culture, would greatly raise the students' level of motivation for learning English. This is the concept of plurilinguistic pedagogy, where cross-linguistic and cross-cultural comparisons are made all the time, and the students' L1 or Ln and C1 or Cn are celebrated and honored. Local linguistic and cultural resources are studied and used as plurilingual pedagogical tools to enhance students' learning in English classrooms (Abiria, Early, & Kendrick, 2013).

According to Kathleen Graves, in order to realize the goals of an English syllabus in a non-native English context, a needs analysis is significant. As she stated, "Where target language needs are deferred, unclear or non-existent, and target language discourse communities seemingly unavailable, needs analysis [must] focus on the needs of learners within the classroom itself as a discourse community" (Graves, 2008, p. 164). In this case, teaching materials and textbooks for both the Chinese and English language curricula and syllabi, designed specifically for Tibetan students, are much needed. Participation in a new language is not just about taking part in a new cultural setting, but more about a struggle of reconstructing the self and perceiving oneself to have a new identity (Lantolf, 2000).

It is vital to use the students' own cultural contexts to motivate them to learn English, for example using English translations of traditional Tibetan myths and folktales as teaching materials would be valuable. These would provide a language experience more relevant to the lives of these students than the Chinese textbooks. Ignoring the students' cultural identity and the role of the Tibetan language does not help foster their interest and motivation in learning a foreign language. Students feel linguistically isolated and their identities are threatened by the new languages. This negatively affects their learning from the very beginning.

Combination of L1 and C1 in the English classroom = motivation

As motivation is a very significant factor in the learning process, certain preconditions should be met to help generate motivation. These include: appropriate teacher behavior and good teacher-student rapport; a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere; and a cohesive learner-group, characterized by appropriate group norms. In addition, the learners' level of motivation has to be maintained and sustained in order to prevent any loss of interest in the subject, the class, or the group of learners. In particular, the content of each lesson and the teaching approaches used are key resources in generating and supporting sustainable motivation in the learners.

The integration of C1 and L1 into the English language classroom can be a great source of learner motivation. In considering the classroom as the context for interaction and language learning environment, using L1 for instruction and clarification can be very helpful, and integrating C1 into the content of the lessons is essential as a valuable classroom resource. Classrooms are special social environments and learning communities for both teachers and students (Larsen-Freeman, 2008).

Teachers can provide affordances and opportunities in the classroom for meaningful and useful activities, which can, in turn, motivate learners to participate out of interest and passion. By using their

L1 in the language classroom, students tend to understand more easily a greater quantity of the language, thus decreasing their anxiety level and increasing their interest in learning the new language.

Classroom experience will be one of the influential determinants for the quality of learners' learning experience, which in turn will affect their motivation. The teacher is the prime source of the new language, in contrast with the natural setting where exposure is often genuinely situational. Indeed, the teacher is a complex and key figure who influences the motivational quality of learning (Dörnyei, 2001), and plays a pivotal role in mediating the growth of motivation (Ushioda, 2003). (Tanaka, 2005, p. 52)

When learning additional languages, promotion of L1 and C1 in the classroom is beneficial not only for an individual, but also a prerequisite for the cultural diversity of ethnic groups (Baker, 2006). In addition, for those language teachers and educators who are interested in helping students to raise their consciousness about the identity and role of languages, interpreting the specific heritage language and its culture accurately and compassionately within the classroom is a must.

In conclusion, the classroom-based teaching and research proved conclusively my hypothesis that integrating the learners' first language and culture into the English classroom in a specific teaching context can greatly motivate them to learn English with interest, confidence, and persistence. However, the question remains: how can we use the integration of the learners' L1 and C1 to generate a sustainable level of motivation in each English lesson, through the practice of all four skills?

Chapter Five: How Motivation Is Enhanced Through the Four Skills

As the action research that was conducted at the Tibetan secondary school indicates, integrating learners' L1 and C1 in the English classroom is a very efficient way to raise the learners' motivation toward the target language. In the following section, I will describe how the inclusion of the learners' L1 and C1 can enhance the four skills best practices. While incorporating the learners' C1 can help raise their levels of motivation and comprehension through content in the areas of listening, reading, writing and speaking, the role of L1 is to clarify the instructions of all the activities and to scaffold the content to ensure the learners' full participation with an efficiency of time and effort.

Listening Skills

During this teaching period, I did not prepare any lessons focused particularly on listening comprehension. However, with the help of the learners' first language, I tried to help my students to become confident listeners of English. As John Field (2005) said:

Our true aim is not simply to provide practice, but to produce better and more confident listeners. Some of the limitations of our present approach are that we still tend to test listening rather than teach it; we do not practice the kind of listening that takes place in real life; and listening work is often limited in scope and isolating in effect. (p. 246-247)

Thinking back to my experience as an EFL teacher before I went to graduate school, I realize that most of the time I also used to test the results of the listening comprehension sections rather than try to find out how the students reacted or thought about the listening process. In this case I was so focused on "I" and "IT", but I overlooked "THOU", my students. I realize now that it is hard for them to have a perfect understanding of the listening material since it requires demands a high level of vocabulary and grammar, as well as an ability to make accurate inferences.

Making guesses while listening, based on an understanding of words and sentences, is totally acceptable, and there are many things teachers can do to help enhance their students' listening skills (Field, 2005). Firstly, it is necessary for teachers to choose a theme or topic that may benefit students either in academic scope or in real life, and which incorporates the learners' C1 into the content to raise their motivation to listen. Secondly, pre-listening preparation should be short but interesting to attract their attention to the listening activity. Thirdly, during the listening activity, teachers should give students additional chances to listen to the material, to discuss in pairs and in groups, and to let them revise their inferences on their own, instead of always deciding for them what is right and what is wrong. Last but not least, for the post-listening segment, teachers should design further activities and multiple tasks related to the listening material, incorporating the learners' C1, to teach integrated and multiple skills instead of focusing only on the standard exercises.

As for the role of listening in English language teaching, I understand now that, for EFL learners, listening is not a receptive skill, but a productive one, requiring they engage their minds actively in the processes of brainstorming and comprehension. "According to Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis, for the language learning to occur, it is necessary for the learner to understand input language which contains linguistic items that are slightly beyond the learner's present linguistic competence. Learners understand such language using cues in the situation. (Richards, et al., 1985)" (as cited in Helgesen, 2003, p. 26). Therefore, when teachers choose listening materials, a consideration of the difficulty of the text and authenticity of the task are very necessary. The level of difficulty of the listening text should not be either too low, where students can get the answers but will not improve, or too high, where students may be disappointed by their results or lose confidence in their listening skills. Ideally, the level should be little higher than their actual level because then the teachers can help the students to reach the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). "It is that distance between actual developmental level as determined

by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygostky, 1978, p. 33).

Meanwhile, task authenticity is viewed as crucial in the EFL teaching process as students should be able to comprehend the material and communicate about it even though English is not the main language of communication in their real life.

Reading Skills

For an EFL educator, teaching reading skills to learners is an important task and one that cannot be neglected. During this research-teaching period, I taught reading in one class and the findings that emerged were helpful for my research. The reading passage that I used for one class is shown below:

My name is Tashi. I am a Tibetan. I am fourteen years old. I have a big family. There are my mother, two sisters, two brothers and me.

I study at Jekgu Secondary School. It is a boarding school. My favorite subject is Tibetan. I like Geography too. I want to speak English well.

In summer vacation, I live in a yak-wool tent with my mother and sisters. I herd yaks. I like to sing songs on mountains and grassland.

I love myself and I love my family. (unpublished handout, July 21, 2013)

I prepared a Pre-Reading, During, and Post-Reading (PDP) lesson plan before the class. In the pre-reading stage, it is important to activate schema, motivate students, provide background knowledge, and introduce key vocabulary to the students. During the reading stage, it is necessary to let the students read the passage through several times. First, they will skim and read for the gist, and then they will read for specific information and for a deeper understanding. In the post-reading stage, the teacher should make sure that the students’ understanding of the text is reinforced and expanded through the inclusion of other language skills, and by personalizing the topic.

Furthermore, I would like to introduce the following additional techniques, designed to improve learners’ reading skills, to my students when their English level is sufficiently high.

KWL chart. In this technique a chart is divided into three columns, which are labeled “What do I already know?” “What do I want to know?”, and “What have I learned?” (Ogle, 1986, p. 565). The students list their answers to the first question prior to reading the text. The students can also return to the chart during the reading if they encounter additional familiar information. It is important for the teacher to return the students’ attention to the chart throughout the reading process so that they realize how much they are learning, and also, what they still need to learn.

Reciprocal teaching. This is a technique whereby reading comprehension is tested by the learners themselves. It is also one that can help improve writing skills. There are several stages to this reading practice. The first stage is to make a prediction. Before the students begin to read the selection, they will look at the title or cover of the book, scan the pages to read the major headings, and look at any illustrations. They will then write down their predictions and supporting ideas, like “Based on... I predict that...” Second, as they finish reading each paragraph or key section of the text, they will identify the main idea of that paragraph or section. For each main idea listed, they will write down at least one teacher-type question, covering who, what, when, where, why, and how. Thirdly, they will copy down any words, phrases, or sentences from the passage that are unclear, and explain how they clarified their understanding. Lastly, they will write a brief summary of what they have read (Klinger & Vaughn, 1996, p. 276).

Jig saw reading. This is a cooperative learning strategy that requires each student in a group to focus on just one aspect of a topic, or one section of a reading. The teacher informs the students of all the steps beforehand. Next, the teacher divides up the articles and shares them out among the groups. The teacher then assigns each group member one segment to read. The group members are given a certain amount of time, such as a day, to read their segments of the articles, being sure to take notes. The students are then formed into “expert groups” and each student discusses the main points of their

segment with the group. Next, the participants move back into their jigsaw groups and present their segments while other members of the group ask clarifying questions. Finally, each group presents their article to the whole class, discusses their findings, and answers any clarifying questions. I find this technique particularly practical for intermediate- and advanced-level classes. It is also a good way to push the lower-level students in the group to their limit since they become the expert on their material and the others have to listen to them.

Reading is a powerful activity that confers knowledge, insight, and perspectives on readers (Aebersold, Ann, & Field, 2001). Thus I have tried to develop reading materials that will benefit and motivate the students greatly by integrating their C1, instead of solely following the reading exercises in a textbook that may be mostly about foreign cultures.

Writing Skills

I had taught beginning-level English in the same Tibetan high school for two years before this action research was conducted. However, I had not taught my students how to write a passage or a short essay in English as I had thought they were not able to do so. I focused, instead, on improving their speaking skills. Now I look back and think that I may have underestimated their learning ability and overlooked the importance of writing in learning a language. I had believed that speaking, listening, and reading skills should be structured and reinforced first, and then comes writing as the last step in the process of any language acquisition and learning.

Now I have a different insight into writing. I now believe that students can improve and increase the speed of language learning when they make mistakes, which are then corrected by others or, by themselves. In fact, writing provides a more appropriate setting for the teacher to help students correct their errors in English than communicative speech. We can write our ideas, then look at them, reflect, monitor, make changes, add, delete, and edit (Raimes, 1991). As Professor Elizabeth Tannenbaum

(2012) of the SIT Graduate Institute commented on one of my reflective essays, “When the teacher changes the focus from ‘learning to write’ to ‘writing to learn’ students’ attitude toward writing will change. And beginners can benefit as much as advanced students if the lessons are structured and scaffolded.”

Inspiring students to commit to writing is a big challenge but this is a fast way for them to improve their English writing skills. ESL students should write regularly in order to develop fluent and clear writing language. There are many writing activities to motivate students to write in the target language. For instance, students can select quotes from a reading that interested them and write about personal reactions to them (Heyden, 2007). For Tibetan students, choosing a quotation translated from a Tibetan folktale or folklore can lower their anxiety about understanding the foreign context, and it may also trigger pleasant memories, or enhance comprehension of the specific quotation in their own cultural context. As another example, at the beginning of this research teaching period, I asked my students to write a self-introduction, a writing topic that empowers learners to value their cultural and self-identities.

Besides these activities, I think that the concept of writing has to be clear in the students' minds whether they choose to write more in the process of learning a language, or not. “Write your first draft with your heart, then rewrite it with your head. The first key of writing is to write, not to think.” This line is from a movie named *Finding Forrester* (Sant, 2000) when the main character, William Forrester, an award-winning novelist, decides to mentor a teenager, who has the potential and talent to become a great writer. It makes us question whether it is true that one should begin to write by brainstorming ideas, listing topics, and outlining possible directions for a piece, or use a different approach. Learning from my own writing experience, I do not want my students to feel that writing is tedious and difficult, as I did. I would rather promote Forrester's way of thinking to my students, and even to myself. I want

them to write, and to enjoy writing. And this makes a good argument for Elbow's focus on first order thinking which is about intuitive and creative ideas instead of controls and directions (Elbow, 1986).

The value of the students' own cultures, C1, when they write in their L2 or Ln is crucial to motivate them to write, and to empower the writing itself. Henry David Thoreau (1851) indicated that "how vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live". It is so true and meaningful for students to write about their cultures, worldviews, and lives, things they know about, are familiar with, and are willing to explore. A profound feedback comment from Professor Elizabeth Tannenbaum (2012) on one of my papers went like this: "Think about ways they (learners) can write about their own experiences in any topic area. They are not 'blank slates' but people with complex and interesting lives and although they may not know how to spell or form a paragraph, they can 'free-write' their ideas on relevant topics and then later work on editing these ideas into a composition. Let them use a few words in their L1 as they free-write and see if this helps free them to want to write more."

I believe that reading and writing cannot be separated in a language and that, to know more and go deeper, one has to read more and have more life experiences. Therefore, by selecting and assigning a wide range of genre readings, such as narrative, exposition, or argumentation, the teacher can motivate students to read and write more in the target language. Meanwhile, this activity can also promote the learners' noticing of how particular grammar structures and contextualized vocabulary are employed in authentic written texts and discourse.

After students have written something, it is essential for the teacher to respond and to give feedback in a constructive way. In my own case, the feedback I received on my writing, from elementary school until undergraduate college, neither encouraged nor motivated me to write more. The reason for this was that the teachers' response and feedback commented only on the grammar and mechanics of my essays without any true communication between the teacher as a reader and me as a

writer. In commenting on the writing of my own students, I plan to apply and adapt some of the following ideas of Jessica Williams (2005) about teacher response to guide me when I read their marvelous work.

Explain your feedback practices to students. Model the feedback process. Demonstrate the benefits of feedback on revision. Read the whole text through before making any comments. Be clear in your suggestions. Offer advice that students can act on. Be consistent. Be positive. Focus on the communication of the writer's intent. Tie your comments to work done in class. Make comments that take into account students' increasing autonomy. Respond to changes in task and genre. Reflect on your understanding of the draft back to the student. Develop a system of accountability for the use of teacher's feedback. (p. 107)

I believe my students will be willing to write more and be able to communicate better with their readers with the help of such constructive responses to their writing.

Speaking Skills

In the ESOL field, there are currently three major theories of language learning that are relevant to the teaching of speaking: the behaviorist, the cognitivist, and the sociocultural theories (Thornbury, 2005, p. 38). Of these three theories, the behaviorist theory is the least popular and least sustainable in many teaching contexts, including at my own research site.

behaviourist theory	cognitivist theory	sociocultural theory
presentation, modelling	awareness-raising	other-regulation
practice	proceduralization, restructuring	appropriation
production	automaticity, autonomy	self-regulation

Figure 4.1 The relation between different elements of each model (Thornbury, 2005, p.39).

The Audiolingual method, as shown below in Figure 4.2, was popularized by behaviorists, and consisted of presentation and modeling through repetition drills which were designed to familiarize

students with the sounds and structural patterns of the target language, English in this case (Bailey, 2005). This particular method has now been abandoned in many ESOL teaching contexts. However, at my research site, the Tibetan secondary school, English teachers still tend to use this method to teach speaking skills through all the grades and levels.

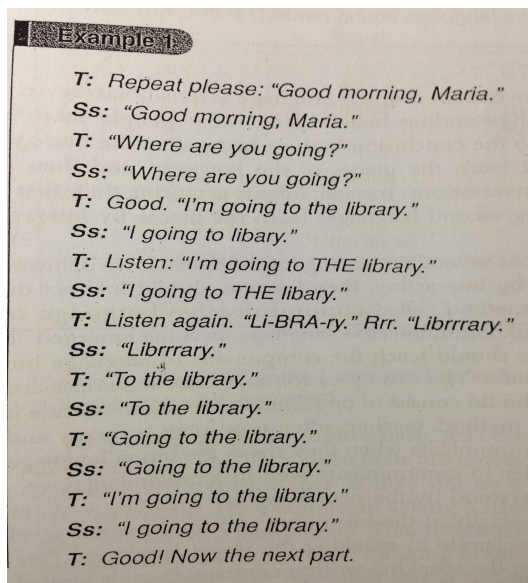


Figure 4.2 An example of a teacher using the Audiolingual method (Bailey, 2005, p. 49)

During the late twentieth century, another method for teaching speaking skills arose in which “teachers downplay accuracy but emphasize how students learn through interaction and communication in the target the language”. This was called Communicative Language Teaching (Bailey, 2005, p. 50). In a second language context, where the target language (TL) is a language of communication used in the surrounding society, such as Chinese in Tibetan areas, learning to speak the TL is less challenging as the learner benefits from interaction in the environment. However, in a foreign language context, where the TL is not the language of communication in the society, such English in Tibetan areas, learning to speak the TL is very challenging due to the lack of language exposure in the environment as well as other factors. Given the challenges of this teaching context, I have tried to provide my students with fluency-building practice based on CLT, in which the students “use the TL quickly and confidently with

few hesitations or unnatural pauses, false starts, and word searches” (Bailey, 2005, p. 55). It was approved during my teaching that when the students were asked about topics they were familiar with, such as their daily lives and cultural backgrounds, they tended to speak more in the target language.

In such a foreign language context, students are neither accustomed to speaking in English for interaction inside the classroom nor for social purposes outside of the classroom. However, the mastery of speaking skills in the language is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners of English. “Consequently, learners often evaluate their own language learning, as well as the effectiveness of their English course, on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency” (Richards, 2008, p.19).

Traditional classroom speaking practice often takes the form of drills in which one person asks a question and another gives the answer. The question and the answer are structured and predictable, and often there is only one correct, predetermined answer. In contrast, the purpose of real-life communication is usually to accomplish some task, such as conveying a telephone message, obtaining information, or expressing an opinion. In real-life communication, participants must manage uncertainty about what the other person will say. Authentic communication involves an information gap; each participant has information that the other does not have. In addition, to achieve their purpose, participants may have to clarify their meaning, or ask for confirmation of their own understanding. (National Capital Language Resource Center, 2003-2004)

In order to set up an environment for my students to speak English with confidence in terms of the lexicon and phrases they would use, and with familiarity for the content, I incorporated authentic materials, including C1 themes, into classroom activities. Textbook-based exercises might have included conversations and topics that were not appropriate to this specific context, while the materials I provided

as the teacher, could genuinely relate to realistic communication activities in order to create truly authentic communication in the classroom. The main reason I encouraged my students to reflect their own identities and stories when they spoke in English, was because when they are confident and able to participate in a conversation that is authentic and genuine, they will tend to speak more in the target language, which is a good start for learning a foreign language.

Chapter Six: Summary and Future Research

In this research paper, we have examined two main factors, learners' L1 and C1, and looked at how these can be used to contribute to the motivation of the learners toward learning the target language in a context-specific teaching situation. The purpose of this action research was to bridge theory and classroom practice so that the foreign language learners could have more meaningful and fruitful learning experiences.

A summary of this research in motivation can be analyzed by means of using Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984), a model that shows how "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (p. 38)", which in turn is used as a guide for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (as figure 6.1 shows) has four stages: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). In this model, reflection and feedback form the basis for evaluating the consequences of an action, and decisions about any new action.

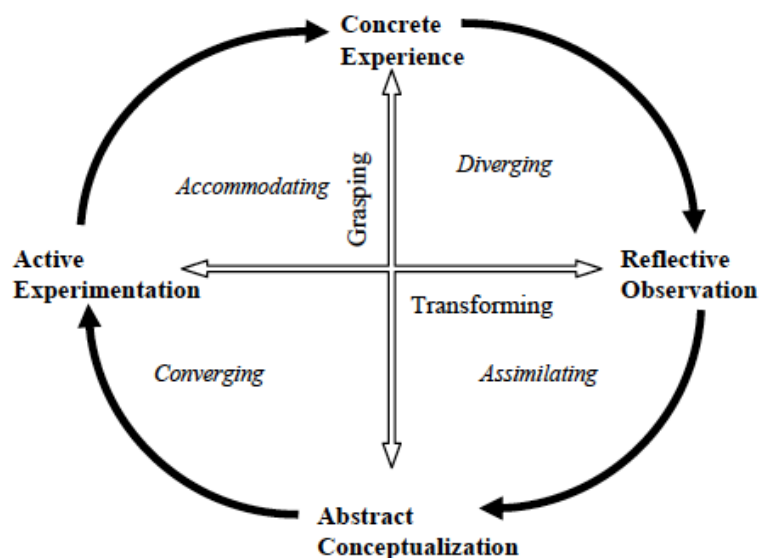


Figure 6.1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

The Concrete Experience stage is where the learner is directly engaged in experiencing an activity. For me, this concrete experience was gained while teaching English in a Tibetan secondary school during the classroom-based research. Before starting, it was important to examine the teaching context through the I-THOU-IT triangle in terms of both the teaching and the learning process, to ensure a meaningful and authentic teaching and learning experience. Teaching a regular class within the school curriculum and schedule, instead of in a specialized and separate program, was the best way to experience a real-life teaching situation, and to find out how the motivation of the learners can be raised through different methods.

The Reflective Observation stage, where the learner is consciously reflecting on the concrete experience, happened when I, as both the researcher and the practitioner, looked back at my own teaching. I wrote reflective journal entries after every class as a way to examine my teaching in depth on a daily basis. These entries included detailed, step-by-step teaching procedures, as well as the moment-to-moment decisions I made, along with a description of the teaching principles being applied. The process of reflection also included collecting feedback from the students as well as from other teachers. The feedback from my students was honest, and they openly shared their likes and dislikes of this language course as well as of my teaching. The feedback from teachers was very insightful, and pinpointed my strengths and weaknesses as well as any concerns they had about the English teaching in general.

Abstract Conceptualization, is the stage where the learner is being presented with, or trying to conceptualize, a theory or model in relation to what has been observed. This third stage occurred in the process of examining the findings and formulating an analysis of my teaching practice and research. As I summarized my findings, I analyzed them, based on the reflection on my teaching, and feedback from both the local teachers and my students, in relation to the I-THOU-IT triangle. In addition, I highlighted

the role of L1 and C1 in the foreign language classroom and in this teaching context, to conceptualize how motivation might be enhanced through integrating the learners' L1 and C1 into the four skills in the English classroom. After that, I formulated conclusions about this action research and the case study in relation to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.

In the final stage, Active Experimentation, the learner is making plans about how to handle future similar situations based on the previous experience. For me, this represented the problem-solving process and figuring out the future direction my teaching and research should take, which I plan to implement in the coming session.

In order to help make a difference and improve the quality of English teaching overall in this and similar teaching contexts, and to find ways to raise the fundamental level of the learners' motivation, everyone involved in English education, at every level, needs to participate in the process of problem-solving.

The Local Government and Educational Bureau

An educational policy from the local government and educational bureau in support of English language teaching can be a great boost for the schools where this teaching is being done. Such a policy should include: first, the request for final-term English examinations¹ since there is no such requirement for students in all grades of secondary and high schools; second, the hiring of more English teachers at local schools; and third, the invitation to native-English-speakers to travel to the local schools for educational purposes and cultural exchange. In the long run, the future direction of English testing needs to shift to a multi-task- and multi-intelligence-focused system.

Attempts by the administration to organize training programs for English teachers could lead to fruitful results. Training for teachers could be offered both on a short-term basis, such as during summer

¹ Testing would serve the purpose of making the teachers, students, and their parents aware that English has become an important subject, which needs to be evaluated every year.

and winter vacations, as well as on a longer-term basis, such as over the course of a semester, to enable teachers to participate fully and, at the same time, learn about other schools and institutions in the area. We could also bring resources to our own school site, for example, by inviting English teaching professionals from other schools, or from both larger and smaller cities and towns, to give presentations, workshops, or training sessions to the local teachers.

Another idea, and one, which would increase our students' exposure to the English language outside of the classroom, would be to show English language broadcasts and other media in English locally. This might include showing advertisements or short video clips in English on the local TV channels, or displaying big posters in English in public places. The value of these would be to attract the students' attention to the relevance of English, and also to challenge those who are studying English to try to figure out the meaning.

Above all, the research office of each educational bureau should design a context-specific English curriculum and textbook to fit the teaching syllabus, teaching content, teaching aims and focus of the Tibetan secondary school setting. They could do this with the help of the local English teachers and with advice from professional educators.

The School

The English curriculum of a school influences the direction English teaching will take, whether it is grammar-translation-centered, task-based, communicative, or so on. In the same way, the emphasis the school's administration puts on the importance of the English course can greatly support the quality of English teaching in that school. Policies, which denote English as a main subject, provide English with the same amount of class-time as other social science subjects, and give permission to the teachers to add their own teaching materials to the textbook, or adjust the content or the sequence of the units in the textbook, all serve to make the learning process more effective for the students.

Teachers of English at the schools are central to the quality of the English teaching program. Their knowledge of teaching principles, approaches, strategies, and skills will define what the English course is all about, and these are what most directly influence the learners' motivation and attitudes toward the course. Thus, teachers in the field of EFL have to be aware of the importance of their profession, its requirements and needs, and the continued learning and exploration expected of them, for their own benefit, as well as for that of their EFL learners.

In order to test the result of any new English curriculum, or new teaching approaches and methods, an experimental, pilot class could be set up. At the same time, this class would require support from the school, as well as from the parents, as it is always hard to begin on a new path in education without the support of the whole community.

Investment in teaching equipment and facilities can also contribute greatly to the motivation of both teachers and students. Modern teaching methods and strategies are hard to realize with only chalk and a blackboard. With multimedia facilities in the classroom, teachers can provide slide shows, video clips, and Power Point (PPT) lessons in English, which will raise the interest level of the students tremendously in English and make teaching an enjoyable process for the teachers as well.

Various competitive activities in English should be arranged regularly to motivate the students to learn English. These could include an English speech contest, an English singing and talent show, an English play contest, an English writing contest, and an English calligraphy contest. Students may be motivated to participate when they know they can receive awards in those contests. Social events, which include singing, dancing, and acting in plays, is a part of the local Tibetan culture in which the students are being raised, so they would tend to enjoy doing these same activities in English in school, and their parents and local community would also notice and see the importance of English for their children.

Finally, online distant English teacher training, English class observations, and educational lectures about teaching English could be arranged for the teachers from time to time to raise the local teachers' awareness about current English teaching methods and skills for working with various teaching principles. Thus, English teachers can have access to opportunities to absorb the latest ideas and adapt them to their current teaching context.

The Parents

The parents' awareness of the importance of learning English in today's world is essential so that their children receive direct support and encouragement in the home as well as in the school. Teacher-parent meetings could emphasize the impact of learning English on the future of the students' academic and daily life. Given that most parents of the students at my research site have never studied or had access to English, they can at least support their children in learning English instead of discouraging them.

The Teachers

In addition to professional development opportunities for teachers, focusing on teaching methods and skills, and teaching theories and practices, there are a number of other ways teachers can work together to make a difference to the quality of English teaching.

A harmonious teacher-student relationship within a learner-centered environment greatly contributes to the motivation and encouragement of the students to study English. Teachers should also try to lower the learner's anxiety level towards learning English and raise the motivation and interest by any means and a few simple ideas can help achieve this. In addition to the integration of the learners' L1 and C1 into the class content, games and music should be introduced into the English classroom regularly. Role-play is another way to immerse the students successfully into a specific conversational setting. Another idea would be to keep a calendar listing holidays in English-speaking countries and, on

the same day, celebrate them in the classroom with the help of a few decorations. A slide show of pictures related to this holiday could also be shown if a projector is available, to give students access to the target language culture. Finally the teacher could arrange an English movie night once a month for the students, with careful selection of a movie in terms of the content, language level, grammar points and vocabulary.

Teachers can also benefit from using the dialogue method among themselves, to sit down and share their concerns, success stories, teaching strategies, and skills, their new findings and reflections, and to give feedback, and so on. When real communication among the local English teachers happens, it can benefit the whole English teaching environment at the school. The English teaching and learning sphere can be enlarged when an organized and consistent teacher-to-teacher dialogue develops. An online forum could be created to provide opportunities for a wider discussion, and sharing about different perspectives on teaching methods and skills, involving other English teachers who are working in similar teaching contexts throughout the wider area.

Conclusion

Since the main concentration of this research was on the integration of the learners' L1 and C1 into the English classroom and how this can greatly increase their motivation level towards learning English, I was not able to analyze other factors that influence learner motivation in depth and in detail at this time. Hence, further research incorporating both the teachers' and learners' perspectives on motivation and attitudes in the foreign language learning process is needed.

I will conclude my thesis with dialogue notes from my friend and colleague, Yongzom:

Integrating L1 in the Classroom

First class is very important. Students' first impression of the language shapes their perception of learning the language and as a result it affects their learning attitude in the long run. Positive learning experience tends to get better performances. Technically speaking, integrating the [students'] L1 in the classroom lowers affective filter and anxiety and thereby motivating the [students] which most applies to

beginning learners.

Integrating L1 into the classroom is to say it's not prioritizing or valuing one over the other which is empowering for suppressed learners because it breaks the idea that English as a language killer. English is international language but not dominating language, therefore their mother tongue has a place to shine! They have the choice!

In terms of teaching content, it is more convincing and motivating to the student if the teacher could break down the English chunks, such as pronunciation, sentence rhythm, grammar, writing style by comparing with those of [students'] L1. The similarities and distinctions between the two will be more fascinating than mere English. They would later become the building blocks.

Integrating C1 into English classroom

Action is more powerful than the word. As a teacher from western culture, an expression of willingness in an attempt to learn [students'] L1 shows equal respect toward the [students'] L1 and C1. On another level, this kind of attitude sets the best model for the learners!

When you are teaching a language, you are not merely teaching the language alone. There is the risk of putting stigma, stereotypes, and ideology into the head of another person without you realizing it. It is like suffocating them with food that their stomach resists digesting.

So when the teachers are using materials 80 percent are written by westerners and taught by western teachers, we are unconsciously numbing the learning process. It is like asking the students to use western theosophy, western concepts and measurement to interpret their reality, which is to dislocate them from their C1. An idea is never a theory only when it is put into practice.

Evolution teaches us self. If we don't know the existence of self how could we know others. Self is fundamental and essential if we are to learn about others. Self in another word is identity and if we are to learn who we really are than I believe culture holds the answer to it. Thus, I think personifying the learning content is what matters to the learners. (Yongzom, unpublished dialogue notes, August 30, 2013)

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Appendix A - Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear Teachers,

First of all, let me express my sincere gratitude and respect for your hard work.

Thank you for your contribution of English teaching in our town and community. Your effort ensures the English teaching process progresses effectively. Your point of view is very important to the understanding and research of the situations of English teaching in our prefecture. The questionnaire will be filed out anonymously and for research only. As each person's situation is different, awareness of the issues and answers to the questions should be different too. There is no "right or wrong", or "good or bad" for your answers, but we do require the truth as it will directly influence the reliability of the final data. Therefore, I hope you could take this questionnaire seriously.

Thanks for your cooperation and I wish you health and soundness.

Community /town		Gender		Position	
First degree (Major and School)					
More degree (Major and School)					
Grade you are teaching		Number of classes		Number of students	
Class per week		Teaching period			
Professional English teacher	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Holding English Teaching Certificate			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
English training	Provincial level:	Prefectural level:		County level:	

Please take “√” for the option you think appropriate, or write down the answer after questions if you are doing online.

1. How much does your school pay attention to teaching English?
A. It's very important B. not as a main subject C. hardly important
2. Is your school equipped with language lab?
A. yes B. no
3. Does your school provide supplementary materials for English teaching, such as journals, wall charts, cards, etc.
A. yes, a lot B. only a few C. not at all
4. How often do you have opportunities to go out and attend English teaching training programs?
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. no
5. How often do the local teaching and research staff help and guide your English teaching?
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. no
6. In addition to daily lessons, does your school arrange morning reading or extracurricular activities in English?
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. no
7. The time your school designed for English class is
A. 60 minutes B. 45 minutes C. 20 minutes
8. Are you well aware of the purpose and requirements of English teaching at secondary schools?
A. very well B. fairly C. vague D. no
9. Will you establish a good teacher-student relationship to improve language learning efficiency?
A. definitely B. willing to try C. uncertain D. no
10. How often do you demonstrate learning strategies and methods to your students?
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. never
11. Do you teach foreign customs, and cultural backgrounds in English class?
A. very often B. often C. seldom D. no
12. What is the greatest difficulty for students learning English?
A. not interested in it
B. can not memorize words
C. poor imitation skill
D. the lack of learning environment
13. How many students have participated in after-school English classes?
A. There are many B. some C. none D. not clear
14. Do you think students need to take after-school English classes?
A. Only top students
B. only students with learning difficulties
C. necessary to all students
D. no need to
15. Do English teachers in your school make any comment on students' homework?
A. All of us do B. Some of us do C. I do. D. I don't E. We all don't
16. What kind of English test does your school have?
A. writing and listening, no oral test
B. writing, no oral and listening test
C. writing and oral, no listening test
D. writing, oral, and listening test

17. Does the higher education sector of your town or community have a unified test in English?
A. yes B. No
18. In addition to recording devices, do you use any other multimedia teaching methods?
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rarely D. no
19. The extent of your control over multimedia computer aided teaching techniques is:
A. Good B. more skilled C. less skilled D. never used before
20. The ratio of your use of English in English class is:
A. more than 90% B. 80-90% C. 60-70 % D. 40 -50% E. 20% -30% F. less than 20%
21. Which language do you use as an auxiliary language in class?
A. Tibetan B. Chinese (Mandarin)
22. The ratio of your use of another language in English classroom?
A. Tibetan <50% B. Tibetan> 50% C. Chinese <50% D. Chinese> 50%
23. Who has given you the largest help in English language teaching?
A. teaching and research staff of education bureau B. colleagues C. various training programs D. online resources
24. What are you lacking in English teaching?
A. knowledge of English teaching B. knowledge of educational psychology
C. Oral English proficiency D. singing or dancing ability E. Drawing skill
25. Do you pay attention to the newest information about English language teaching?
A. frequently B. sometimes C. rare D. never
26. Do you think use learners' first language and culture in English class can raise their motivation to learn English?
A. yes, I do. B. no, I don't. C. I don't know.
27. The main difficulty faced by your personal development in English teaching is?
A. no support from the executive branch
B. not a favorable social atmosphere
C. limited support from school
D. no opportunities for professional education and training
28. The main difficulty of English teaching in high school is?
A. no professional teachers
B. lack of English learning environment
C. no support from school
D. students with no motivation and interest
E. No support from students' parents
29. Any suggestion for English teaching in Tibetan secondary school?

Appendix B Questionnaire for Students

Dear students,

This is a questionnaire about your experience and attitudes in learning English, it will be filed out anonymously and for research only. There is no “right or wrong”, or “good or bad” for your answers, but we do require the truth as it will directly influence the reliability of the final data. Therefore, we hope you could take this questionnaire seriously.

Please take “√” for the option you think appropriate. Thank you for your participation and wish you good luck in your study.

1. Do you like English class?
A. Yes, I do B. It's OK. C. I'm afraid of it. D. I hate it.
2. Why do you like English class?
A. It is interesting. B. I have a good teacher. C. I want to major in English.
D. I want to speak English well. E. I want to go abroad
3. Why do you dislike English class?
A. I don't like the teacher B. Hard to memorize new words. C. Grammar is difficult. D. No learning environment.
4. Why some students learn English well?
A. Diligence B. Good teachers C. Self-discipline D. Hiring tutors.
5. Do you go to after-school English class?
A. Yes, often B. Yes, rare C. No, never
6. In your opinion, learning English is for:
A. College Entrance Examination B. Useful in social life. C. Going abroad D. Preserving and our cultural heritage.
7. Is it worthwhile to spend time on learning English?
A. Yes, it is. B. No, it is. C. I don't know.
8. Do you think English is easier than other courses?
A. Yes, I do. B. No, I don't.
10. Can you apply English in your daily life?
A. Yes, I can. B. No, I can't.
11. Do you actively participate in groupworks in English class?
A. Yes, I do. B. No, I don't.
12. Do you take the initiative to ask questions to teachers in English class?
A. Yes, I do. B. No, I don't.
13. Have you ever had games and interesting activities in English class?
A. Yes, I have. B. No, I haven't.
15. Do you understand the English instructions that your teacher uses in class?
A. Yes, I do B. No, I don't. C. My teacher doesn't use English instructions
16. Can you read simple English by yourself?
A. Yes, I can. B. No, I can't.
17. Do you feel shy and timid when your teacher let you answer to a question in class?
A. Yes, I do. B. No, I don't.

18. How often does your teacher try to help you to overcome shyness and anxiety?
A. Always B. Rarely C. Not once
19. What kind of English class do you usually have?
A. Lively B. Relaxed C. Happy D. Boring
20. When you encounter difficulties in learning English you will choose
A. Overcome difficulties, and move on B. Stuck there. C. Does not matter, muddling along
21. How much does your school pay attention to teaching English?
A. It's very important B. Not as a main subject C. Hardly important
22. How much does your teacher pay attention to teaching English?
A. It's very important B. Not as a main subject C. Hardly important
23. Have you ever used any English learning device?
A. Yes, I have B. No, I haven't.
24. In addition to English textbooks, do you use any other extra-curricular English materials?
A. Yes, I do. B. No, I don't.
25. Your attitudes toward your English assignment:
A. Serious and meticulous B. Want to work within the shortest time possible to complete it
C. Just copy from others D. Can not complete it E. Don't want to do it
26. What is the view of your parents considering your English?
A. Attach great importance
B. Concerned about it but don't know how to help me
C. Don't care at all.
27. How about the ability of your parents' guidance in your English?
A. They don't know English B. Knows English, but no help. C. Knows English and tutors me.
28. If you choose the subjects you are most interested in, you will choose
A. Tibetan B. Chinese C. English D. Other
29. Do you sing any English songs?
A. 5-10 B. 1-5 C. 0
30. Please estimate your English vocabulary level approximately:
A. Less than 50 B. 50-100 C. 100-150 D. 150-200 E. 200-250 F. 250-300
31. Do you think your English homework is too heavy?
A. Heavy B. Just right C. Too light
32. Do you think studying English adds burdens to learning Tibetan and Chinese well?
A. Yes B. No
33. Do you prefer Chinese or Tibetan as supportive language to learn English?
A. Chinese B. Tibetan
34. Do you have to choose English or Tibetan when you enter high school?
A. Yes B. No
35. Anything you want to tell your English teacher:

Appendix C English Class Norms དབྱིན་ཇིའི་འཛིན་གྲུབ་སྒྲིག་ལམ།

1. Respect each other by all means.
སློབ་མ་ཕན་ཚུན་བར་བརྩི་མཐོང་ལེགས་མོ་བྱ་དགོས།
2. Always get well prepared before class starts.
དུས་ཉམས་ཏུ་སློབ་ཁྲིད་སློབ་དུ་ག་སྒྲིག་ཞིབ་མོ་བྱ་དགོས།
3. It is not allowed to talk when a student or the teacher is speaking for your attention.
སློབ་མ་དང་དགེ་ཚུན་སྤྱད་ཆ་སྤྱད་སློབ་མ་གཞན་གྱིས་གོས་མོས་བྱེད་མི་ཚོག
4. It is not allowed to laugh at anyone who is speaking.
སློབ་མ་སྤྱད་ཆ་དེ་ལན་སྤྱད་བའི་སློབ་གྲོགས་འཕྲ་དམོད་བྱེད་མི་ཚོག
5. Everyone must participate in group work and activities.
སློབ་མ་ཡོད་ཚད་མཉམ་ལས་སློབ་སྦྱོང་བྱ་འགྲུར་དང་བྱེད་སློལ་འཇུགས་དགོས།
6. Use English when working in groups.
མཉམ་ལས་སློབ་སྦྱོང་བྱ་འགྲུར་བཙོ་དུས་དབྱིན་སྐད་བེད་སྦྱོང་བྱེད་དགོས།
7. It is allowed to ask questions whenever you have in and out of the class.
སློབ་མས་སློབ་ཁྲིད་ལྱི་ནང་དབྱེ་མེད་ངང་དགེ་ཚུན་ལ་དེ་བའི་ཚོག
8. Do homework by yourself and hand in on time.
རང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ལས་བྱ་ངས་བར་དུ་རང་གིས་སྐབས་བའ་མ་ཟད། དུས་ཉམས་དགེ་ཚུན་ལ་སྦྱོང་དགོས།
9. No cheating in any kind of evaluations.
སློབ་ཚད་བརྟག་དཔྱད་བྱེད་དུས་སྤྱི་བེད་ཀྱི་བྱ་ཐབས་བྱེད་མི་ཚོག
10. Teacher has to make teaching and learning a fun and interesting.
དགེ་ཚུན་གྱིས་དགའ་ཞིང་སློབ་མའི་སློབ་སྦྱོང་དང་སློབ་ཁྲིད་ཀྱི་འཚལ་བ་བྲེལ་དགོས།