ENHANCING CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION OF RURAL TRAINEE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH THROUGH USE OF ACTION RESEARCH: A REFLECTION FROM A CHINESE TEACHER TRAINER’S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
A common problem for Chinese teacher trainers is coping with a passive class with silent trainee learners, when trainees tend to be unresponsive and avoid interactions with the trainer. This is especially true when a trainer seeks interactions in the process of training, such as asking questions to the class as a whole or expecting at least one trainee to respond. This can be a frustrating experience for both sides. This action research explores this problem and has created an interactive trainer-to-trainee and trainee-to-trainee class atmosphere and improved the trainees’ participation in teaching Integrated English, which is shown here as a successful example.

KEY WORDS: Passive trainees; rural primary school teachers of English; action research

INTRODUCTION
In 2001, as a result of the global expansion of programs in English teaching to young learners, as well as China’s rapid social and economic change, the Ministry of Education of China (MOE) initiated a curriculum innovation: The promotion of English as a foreign language in primary schools from Year 3. In 2005, the MOE formulated Standards for Teachers of English in Primary Schools (STEPS), which set the objective to improve English education. It requires all primary teachers to transform their views on teaching; to develop students’ comprehensive language competency by making a learning process during which students develop language proficiency; to form positive attitudes, improve thinking skills;
increase cross-cultural awareness; and learn to use learning strategies so as to gradually become independent learners.

In this context, the rural primary school teachers of English have met a number of challenges in the implementation of STEPS. First, they require a reasonable degree of target language proficiency, they need to acquire a fair degree of autonomy in classroom decision-making, and also they need to cope with local constraints. Second, they are in a state of tension between the proposals for the apprenticeship model, where they learn their “new trade” and the traditional model, based on bettering their study of academic, educational theory alongside teaching practice. Third, they are not always able to meet the needs of their students as they wish; in essence their sense of professional self is under threat (Hayes, 2006, p. 160). In addition, geographic distances challenge them so much that they have to travel half a day or more to attend the training program held for STEPS.

The rural primary school teachers’ English level range from lower intermediate to lower advanced. With the implementation of the STEPS, they are required to complete 240-credit-hour teacher training program (hereafter the program), which includes such courses as Methodology, Concise Knowledge of Applied Linguistics, Integrated English, and Intercultural Communalization. The rural primary school trainee teachers (hereafter the trainees) teach in their own village schools four days each week, and have to attend the training program two days a week in a “central school”, which is also called a community key school. The program is designed to provide the trainees with (1) linguistics relevant to English language learning, (2) recent developments in the theory and practice of English language teaching for young learners, particularly “task-based language teaching” and the learner-centred classroom. It also aims (3) to raise participants’ English proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening, to develop their intercultural communicative competence, and their practical skills in areas such as classroom management and the design of syllabi and courses.

A common problem for the teacher trainer in the program is how they should deal/cope with a passive class with silent adult trainee learners when trainees tend to be unresponsive and avoid interactions with trainers. This is especially true when a trainer seeks interactions in the process of training, such as asking questions to the class as a whole or expecting at least one trainee to respond. This can be a frustrating experience for both sides. This action research attempts to explore this problem and seeks to create a more interactive trainer-to-trainee and trainee-to-trainee class atmosphere and improve the trainees’ participation in the Integrated English class.

**ACTION RESEARCH**

Action research, as its name suggests, is about research that impacts on, and focuses on, practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Meyer (2000) describes action research as a process that involves people and social situations that have the ultimate aim of changing an existing situation for the better. Action research accords power to those who are operating in those contexts, for they are both the engines of research and of practice (Cohen et al., 2007). Whether a person or society can become emancipated simply by the exercise of
action research is an empirical rather than a logical matter (Morrison, 1995; Wardekker & Miedama, 1997). Beaulieu (2013) insists that capturing the various stakeholders’ perspectives in action research can expose a broader view of the conditions that exist in a setting and offers opportunities for developing strategies that accommodate those different views. It also requires considerable improvising along the way, with each stage of the research informing the next one.

Tomal (2003) refers to the strength of action research as obtaining findings and understandings that are particularized to a specific teaching setting and less concerned with generalizing them from one setting to another. Clausen (2012) regards action research as “relegated to professional development for teachers.” Capobianco and Feldman (2007) promote collaborative action research among teachers about their own practices for their own purposes. Teachers create meaning of their practices through reflection (Capobianco, Lincoln, Canuel-Browne, & Trimarchi, 2006). Rogers et al. (2007) show that teachers conducting action research projects in their classrooms are able to cultivate a more personal and productive relationship with their students. Sagor (1992, 2000, 2005), Stringer (2008), Bruce & Pine (2010), Mertler (2008, 2011) and others conclude that teacher research is often associated with action research.

Action research is concerned with trying to bring about changes in classroom practices using empirical measurement by the trainer. It usually includes collecting data, developing a plan to bring about the desired change, acting on the plan, and then observing the effects of the plan in the classroom. Lewin (1946; 1948) codified the action research process into four main stages: Planning, acting, observing and reflecting. McKernan (1991, p. 17) suggests that Lewin’s model of action research is a series of spirals, each of which incorporates a cycle of analysis, reconnaissance, reconceptualization of the problem, planning of the intervention, implementation of the plan, evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention. Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 12) argue that action research should “consist of a number of phases which often recur in cycles: Planning, action, observation, reflection”. Zuber-Skerritt (1996, p. 84) sets emancipator (critical) action research into a cyclical process of: “strategic planning; implementing the plan (action); observation, evaluation and self-evaluation; and critical and self-critical reflection on the results of strategic planning–observation, evaluation and self-evaluation and making decisions for the next cycle of research”. Ebbutt (1985) regards action research as a systematic study that combines action and reflection with the intention of improving practice. Dewey (1938) contends that the learning cycle must be experiential in nature and must, perhaps most importantly, possess the necessary elements of reflection to be effective. This reflection is further facilitated through approaches such as interviews and other means of data gathering that comes with an action research project.

To sum up, action research has been shown to be effective and critical in a variety of ways for teachers in the classroom setting. It will develop a reflective habit of mind that is crucial for teachers to be effective in their classrooms and adaptive to the changing calls of their students, and allow for a greater degree of professional self-efficacy and satisfaction on the part of the teachers themselves. This study is based on the model of the Conceptual Model:
identifying problem, planning the intervention, assessment, collecting data, analyzing data and reflecting. It follows the model firmly, which works as a major guide for the whole action research. During the process we also develop and use a range of skills to achieve its aims, such as careful planning, sharpened observation, listening, evaluation, and writing critical reflection with the personal Journal (Chinese Journal). “Action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless’ and that the participatory nature of action research ‘makes it only possible with, for and by persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders both in the questioning and sense making that informs the research, and in the action which is its focus” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

Action research has been seen as a significant vehicle for empowering teachers. It is significantly a quest for my own classroom teaching, to understand my professional life and to create “living knowledge”, which is valid for trainee teachers with whom I work and also for me. According to Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Grundy (1987), such claims have been made for the power of action research to empower participants as researchers.

The Trainees’ Description
The training class sampled consisted of 80 rural primary school teachers of English who were in their 30s to 40s. Their schools are located in villages in Jiaxing, Zhejiang, China. Fifty female teachers were involved in the training session, 61% of whom had 5 or more years of teaching experience, along with 30 male teachers, 20% of whom had more than six years’ teaching experience (It is commonplace to talk about the imbalanced proportion between male and female teachers in primary schools in China). With the attrition rate in their schools between 40% and 50% during the past 5 years, it is a professional responsibility to equip them with the resources they need to obtain greater job satisfaction, which will result in less attrition.

This action research started with the collection of quantitative data through the questionnaire. The 100% response rate was achieved. Trainee interviews were carried out in both Chinese and English according to the language proficiency of the interviewees. Trainers’ journal (written in Chinese) was also referenced with thorough analyses in the research. Before the initiatives of the research, an informed consent form was ready for the participants to fill in. In the form (see Appendix A), the purpose of the research, the procedure of the research and types of information that will be collected, the voluntary nature of participation, and that non-participation or withdrawal will not be penalized in any way, the confidentiality of the their participation, contact information if they have questions about the research, any foreseeable risks and discomforts from either the participation process or the information that will be published, and any possible direct benefits of participating were explained to the participants.

From the collected consent forms which were sent to 80 trainees by emails, the focused cohort ensured that they were participating voluntarily and agreed to be involved in the questionnaire, interview and consultation being audio recorded. They agreed to the use of anonymous quotes in publications. The trainers’ feedback, Journal was reported with their
consent and approval. In writing up the action research report we were consistently cautious about the preservation. And further, to maintain the anonymity long after the research, both the interview transcripts and the audio-video disks were kept strictly for and only for the action research purpose.

Before obtaining access to the research site, a brief statement of the action research aims and questions, proposed methods of data generation and access to participants were discussed with an Education Research Ethics coordinator of this training institution. It was decided that pseudonyms would be applied to the participating institution and all staff.

The participation of trainee students were completely voluntary; they could withdraw freely from the research at any time without risk or prejudice; their dignity and interests as research participants were respected at all times; and they were assured that no harm would result from participating in the research. It was decided that all information both about and from participating staff would be handled in ways that addressed only issues relevant to this research.

PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED
1. The trainees are reluctant to answer questions. Therefore it is the trainer who has to do the work, explaining everything and talking for 99% of the class time. The trainer, in many instances, tries to change the style of teaching by explaining the text in less detail and giving the trainees a chance to speak and ask questions in class. However, their feedback is very disappointing and frustrating.

2. Although the trainer has reverted to the traditional way of teaching that the trainees feel very comfortable with, he still hopes to change, or at least, modify the way of teaching as it cannot change his trainees to be proficient readers. It is not enough for the trainees to study only a few texts and learn some new English words and expressions in the Integrated English class. They need to acquire reading skills so that they can read more effectively. Moreover, they are expected to apply these reading strategies and skills both in their own reading and in the teaching of their pupils for the purpose of improving the pupils’ reading comprehension abilities. In order to pave the way for the improvement, what the trainer needs to do is initiate their interests and motivate them. Then, the trainer can design a questionnaire to seek out their opinions on this course on how to modify the present teaching methods. The results are shown and analyzed in the following section.

Questionnaire 1
The questionnaire contains three parts. Part I focuses on the trainees’ opinions on the teaching method and the course materials. The result shows that although the trainees think that the trainer is enthusiastic about teaching and prepares the teaching materials carefully, they generally feel that the class is boring, and that both the texts and trainer’s style of presentation are not appealing. In addition, they admit that they need training especially in speed-reading skills.

In Part II and Part III, the trainees are asked to explain the reason why they are not active in
class. They are required to offer suggestions on how to make the class more interesting. The reasons for the trainees’ being passive in class are:

- As husband of wife, they are too busy with classroom teaching and feel tired when they go back home;
- They cannot follow the trainer because of the quick pace of teaching;
- The texts are boring and they lack a link with their real lives;
- The activities are not interesting.

To improve the teaching of Integrated English, the trainees gave the following suggestions:

- The trainer should explain the text in more detail and give more examples on how each of the new words can be used;
- The trainer should organize some interesting activities to stimulate the trainees’ interests in learning, and to encourage trainees to learn to use English in class;
- The trainer should bring some up-to-date articles for trainees instead of the texts in the course.

**Planned Actions**
The following action plans are designed for dealing/coping with the problems listed above.

Firstly, the traditional trainer-centered way of teaching should be changed into learner-centered way of learning. In order to help the trainees carry out the learner-centered way of learning, some theories of speed-reading and the critical reading strategies/skills are introduced for them. Hopefully, the trainees will practice these strategies/skills inside and outside of the classroom. The concrete steps are:

1. Acquainting the trainees with such theories of reading as the bottom-up model/the top-down model, and the scaffolding model with the introduction of the basic theory of schema.

2. The reading strategies and skills are ready to be introduced to the trainees covering the skills of: Previewing, Contextualizing, Topic sentence finding, Coherence words/phrase finding and analyzing, Questioning to understand, Outlining and summarizing, Evaluating an argument, Comparing and contrasting related readings.

Secondly, use pair work and group activities to guide the trainees to learn cooperatively.

And thirdly, organize task-based activities for trainees’ participation in classroom teaching and learning. For instance,

1. Break each text into smaller sections and ask each group to prepare for only one section of the text, so that they could be immersed in the learning.

2. Design more guiding questions about the texts and lead trainees to do more discussions in class.
3. Set aside the first 15 minutes once each week for an activity named “News of the Week”, during which each group will take turns to report to the class important national or international news from the previous week. The purpose of this activity is to stimulate their interest in reading or listening to the English news and especially to practice their oral English and increase their vocabulary.

4. Ask each group to prepare at least one English article that they are interested in, and present the article to the class. The purpose of doing this is to have trainees take an active part in learning as well as to bring more reading materials that they feel like reading to class.

5. Ask each group to compile an English dictionary of their own during the next semester. By doing this, trainees are expected to become active in learning English vocabulary.

6. Finally, change the rule of grading so that the participation and performance in the above-mentioned activities will be counted 40% of their final grade, and the other 60% will be their final exam results.

All the above-mentioned activities are implemented over a 10-week period, planned as follows:

**A 10-week plan on improving trainees’ participation for Integrated English**

- **Week 1**: Introduce reading theories, strategies and skills to the trainees.
- **Week 2**: Divide the class into groups of 3-4, and explain the initial action plan and the activities in the plan: ‘News’, ‘Article’, ‘My Dictionary’. Suggestions are also offered on how each group will prepare for the text.
- **Week 3**: Start the ‘News of the Week’ activity and learn the text in the new way: Each group tries to explain a part of the text assigned to them.
- **Week 4**: With the ‘News’ and the text, the trainers give the trainees examples, such as how to build their own dictionary, or how to do the ‘Article’ activity.
- **Week 5**: With the ‘News’ and the text, the trainers check the ‘Dictionary’ built by them.
- **Week 6**: With the ‘News’ and the text, the trainees start the ‘Article’ activity.
- **Week 7**: The trainers summarize what has been done and revise the initial action plan.
- **Week 8**: The trainers carry out the revised action plan.
- **Week 9**: The trainers carry out the revised action plan.
- **Week 10**: The trainers summarize again and make modifications to the revised action plan.

With the traditional teaching method, the trainer would normally read the text thoroughly and then teach the trainees with what he has learned. Thus, the trainees’ own ability to learn has been handicapped. When they become accustomed to this way of learning, they will expect the trainer to tell them everything without being able to learn and think by themselves. Therefore, the first step in this action research is to change the traditional teaching method, the trainer-centered bottom-up way of teaching reading, by introducing to them the relevant reading theories, strategies and skills. The purpose of the second step
is to bridge the gap between the trainees within a group and the competition among different groups so as to make the cohort participate actively in assigned reading activities. In the second step, activities and tasks are designed to train trainees to master both bottom-up and top-down reading skills. The last step announced at the very beginning of the semester is the new way of assessment which emphasizes their performance in the course of learning and hence encourages them to take an active part in the activity designed.

**Report on the Implementation of the 10-Week Plan**

The trainer has formed the habit of writing journals as a teaching report, which reflects his own training sessions, especially focusing on his pros and cons in classroom instructions.

**The first week**

*The trainer’s journal:* According to the 10-week plan, I first introduced the three psycholinguistic models of reading, namely the bottom-up model, the top-down model and the scaffolding model, and the theory of schema to the trainees. Since it is the first time for most of the trainees to learn about the models and access the process of reading in English, they appeared to be very excited, and felt that they should learn this earlier at the very beginning of this course. Then I explained to them some reading strategies and skills, such as how to preview a text, how to relate a text to its context and to the readers’ own experience, how to summarize and how to evaluate a text, and how to compare and contrast related readings. They felt these strategies were very useful and said that they would attempt to apply them in their reading later.

I now feel very gratified that my introduction of the reading theories and strategies was well-received by the trainees. However, I also realized that this introduction should have been given at the beginning of this course. Better late than never, I have made an effective start.

**The second week**

*The trainer’s journal:* In this week, the class was divided into 11 groups of 3 to 5 trainees. I then explained how each group should prepare their part of the text and how they should participate in the three activities: ‘News of the Week’, ‘An Article a Day’ and ‘My Dictionary’. I then divided the text which we were about to learn into 11 sections in proportion to the size of the groups, and assigned each group a section to prepare. I amounted that, in the next week, Group 1 would be the first group to explain the text followed by Group 2, 3, 4, etc., and that ‘News of the Week’ would start from Group 5 from the next week, and ‘An Article A Day’ from Group 8 starting in the 6th week.

The trainees seemed to be excited about the group work and the three activities, but some of them complained to me that this would become too much of a burden. Although all the trainees agreed to make an attempt to this new way of learning, I still worried whether this plan could be smoothly carried out.
The third week

The trainer’s journal: This is the first week for the activity of ‘News of the Week’. There are 3 trainees in group 5, who will broadcast news to the class. At the beginning, they were too shy to come to the front and face the whole class. With my encouragement, the first trainee came to the front and rushed through the news she selected from China Daily, and then ran back to her seat without staying to answer questions from the class. I then encouraged the class to ask her questions about the news which she just read. Since only one raised a question, I had to ask some other questions to clarify some points in the news. The other two trainees’ demonstration and presentation were almost the same as the first one; they came to the front, read out the news from the newspaper, and then hurried back to their seats. Seeing their ‘panic’ behavior in front of the class, you would not believe that these trainees are all middle school trainers of English. So I confirm that this sort of activity is really necessary because on the one hand, it can ‘force’ the trainees to participate in the class activity; on the other hand, it can also promote the trainees to talk more freely in front of a large audience.

Then it was time for learning and teaching the text. Altogether four groups took their turns in explaining the part of the text assigned to them. I first asked them to summarize the main idea of their part of the text, and they analyzed the meaning and usage of some difficult words and sentences, and then they also raised some questions. During the process, I encouraged them to try to answer these questions. As a result, a lot of discussions were generated. By the end of group work, I just summarized what we had discussed and further pointed out those important points that the groups failed to explain.

Although this new style of ‘group learning’ would get the trainees more involved in the study of the text, some of them kept complaining to me that they could not find enough time to do the preparation.

The fourth week

The trainer’s journal: This week, the trainees in Group 6 were more relaxed than Group 5, but they read the news and gave no explanation for it. I then encouraged the other trainees to ask questions, I also asked some trainees to retell the news just read by the trainees in Group 6, and the whole class seemed to participate in this activity.

After the NEWS activity, I spent 10 minutes explaining how they should build up their own dictionary. As for the group learning, only Group 5 prepared their part of the text very well, Group 6 made no preparation because “they had to prepare for the NEWS”. Group 7 and 8 did poorly because of various reasons. I had to take over their work. I felt disappointed to some extent and decided to interview some trainees about this after class.

From the interview of three trainees, I learned that although they all felt group learning very interesting and useful, there were, however, two main obstacles for them to make preparations for the text: First, they were really very busy with their work; and second, they found the text was too difficult to prepare. They suggested that we give up the group learning, and that I resume the traditional way of teaching for this teaching and learning.
They also told me that they had no time to do the other two activities: 'My Dictionary' and 'An Article a Week'. I decided to let the whole class take a vote on these activities in the next week.

The fifth week

The trainer's journal: In the beginning of class this week, I proposed a vote on the fate of the four activities put forward by me. As a result, only the activity of 'News of the Week' was voted in, while all the other three activities were voted out. However, with my insistence, a compromise was made that the group learning should be given up after finishing the lesson which we were studying.

Although I felt very sad and frustrated and even stressful about the result, I still thought it was progress compared to the last semester that now the trainees were more involved in the study through the 'News of the Week'. In addition, I have decided to prepare more questions about the texts for the trainees to answer in class, which I hope would result in more trainees' involvement in class.

The action research plan for the next 5 weeks has to be revised according to the result of this vote.

The Revised Plan on Improving Trainees' Participation for Integrated English

- **Week 6**: Demonstrate a revised version of the activity of 'News of the Week' and start a new text.
- **Week 7**: Continue with 'News of the Week' and the text.
- **Week 8**: Continue with 'News of the Week' and the text.
- **Week 9**: Continue with 'News of the Week' and the text; interview some trainees about their opinions on the developed action research.
- **Week 10**: Continue with 'News of the Week' and the text; summarize the 10-week plan with the class, and collect the trainees' reactions through a questionnaire.

The sixth week

The trainer's journal: Since we agreed to do only one activity, 'News of the Week', at the beginning of the class I indicated that the trainees should put more effort in this activity. I demonstrated the three steps of the revised version of this activity: First, read or retell the new story; second, answer questions from other trainees; and finally, explain some useful expressions in the news. I then asked Group 7 to report their news to the class following the three steps. Although they still felt nervous during the second step of answering questions, in general, they did a better job than the previous groups.

We started a new text after the 'News'. The trainees were not required to prepare the text in groups before class. Instead, I designed more questions about the text for them to answer, and they were encouraged to work in groups in class from time to time. I found that the trainees were more responsive now than in the last semester.
The seventh week
The trainer’s journal: The trainees in Group 8 performed much better in the ‘News’ activity than the previous ones. The whole class became fascinated with this activity. However, when it came to the text, I still felt that the class was not as dynamic as I expected. Some trainees told me that the text, Argentia Bay, was too long—20 pages (containing 8 pictures), and the content was too irrelevant to them—it was about the Atlantic Conference between the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill and American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The eighth week
The trainer’s journal: The trainees in Group 9 did extremely well today in the news activity. I thought it was all because the trainees were now very attracted in this activity, so they would like to devote their time and efforts in it. This was probably what a sage has stated--‘interest is the best trainer’.

The ninth week
The trainer’s journal: The ‘News’ activity went smoothly this week. During the break, I interviewed three trainees about their opinions on what has been done until today in my course. They all agreed that we should continue with the ‘News’ activity, which they thought could help improve both their vocabulary and skills in oral presentations. Trainee A said that the other three activities were also very positive, and that most of the trainees felt very sorry that we had to give them up because they could not afford the time and energy to carry them out. Trainee B suggested that I replace the long and difficult texts in the textbook with some easier and more interesting ones that relate to their real life. Trainee C hoped that I could spend more time in class in helping them distinguish words with similar meanings. I thanked them for their suggestions and reinforced that I would re-modify my way of teaching after the next week’s questionnaire survey on the whole class.

The tenth week
The trainer’s journal: In order to know the trainees’ reactions to the 10-week action plan, Questionnaire 2 was designed and distributed to the trainees before the end of this week’s class. Part I of Questionnaire 2 is the same with the Part I of Questionnaire 1.

Satisfying effects caused by the changing method
Eighty questionnaires were distributed to the trainees. Fortunately all of them were collected. The average points for each statement in Part I of Questionnaire 1 (Q1) and Questionnaire 2 (Q2) are displayed in Figure 1:
From Figure 1, we find that the average points of statements 1-11 in Q2 are all in the positive side of the scale, above 5.0, and are all higher than that in Q1, especially between statement 1, 3, 7, 10 and 11. This result shows that the implementation of the 10-week action plan leads to the following results:

1. They found the class more intellectually challenging and stimulating;
2. They felt they had learned something more valuable;
3. They had more interest in English reading;
4. They had learned and understood the subject materials of this course better;
5. The trainer was more enthusiastic about teaching the class;
6. The trainer was more dynamic and energetic in conducting the class;
7. The trainer's style of presentation was more attractive;
8. The trainer's explanations were clearer;
9. Class materials were prepared and explained more carefully;
10. Trainees were encouraged to participate more in class discussions.
11. Trainees were encouraged to express their own ideas and/or question the lecture.
12. The average points in Q2 for statement 12 and 13 remained unchanged, which shows that the trainees still think that the texts they are learning are difficult and not very interesting.

The average points in Q2 for statement 14 and 15 become lower than that in Q1 and are around the neutral point in the scale, which means that the trainees think the supplementary materials are more helpful and more reading strategies and skills are taught during the implementation of the 10-week action plan.

Part II of Q2 are formed in five open questions. The trainees’ answers to these questions are summarized as follows:
Which of the above-mentioned improvements do you like best? Why?
Sixty-three out of the 80 respondents choose the “News of the Week” as their favorite activity, and the main reason is that they can learn more useful and authentic expressions.

What are the reasons for not being able to carry through the activity of “group learning”?
The reasons offered include three points: First, they have no time to prepare for the text; second, the texts are too difficult and monotonous; and third, the group members cannot meet each other after school.

What other improvements do you think should be made on the course of intensive reading?
Thirty of the trainees think that the trainer should explain the texts in more detail so that they can understand them better; ten of the trainees suggest that the trainer should provide more examples of how the new words in the text can be used in the word-study step; eleven of the trainees suggested that I should bring more supplementary materials to the class.

What is your general impression of this course in the past ten weeks?
Only 20 trainees answered this question; thirteen of them feel that the current way of teaching has greatly improved. However the texts are too difficult. The other trainees think that the supplementary materials are very supportive and the teaching and learning of Integrated English should be made more interactive and attractive.

Please make your free comment on the trainer’s work or on this course.
Sixty-one trainees who answered this question were very satisfied with the teaching style change. They said that no other trainers would be so critical with their teaching, and no other trainers would spend so much time on the preparation of the lesson. They acknowledged that they had learned not only a lot of new words and valuable information, but also the work ethic of a responsible trainer.

Conclusion
As the trainer in the program, I strongly feel that the trainees and the trainer now understand each other better after the implementation of the 10-week action research. Before carrying out this action research, I tended to think that the trainees were too lazy to study in the training session, but now I have come to know that they can learn a lot from the trainer after the trainer changed their approaches of teaching and learning, all thanks to the action research which helps to bring about all the changes in the training class. Rather than the end of the 10-week action research, this is the real beginning of the next cycle of an action research in which we will explore further the ways of how to facilitate trainees in learning more efficiently and effectively.

There are some areas where the results of this action research are not as successful as we hoped. For instance, the trainees need to be prompted with eye contact and a repeated question from the trainer to answer a question, and when they do not understand the teaching or have a puzzle, they still do not interrupt the trainer with a question. To this
point, we agree with Banner (2003) “...not to forget that the student, who is sitting quiet in your classroom, not making eye contact, not venturing opinions, might well be exhibiting the positive characteristics of an excellent student in his or her culture. Make sure in your teaching that you take into account the needs of the quiet students as well as the noisy, demanding, responsive one.” But the potential reason may be found from a cultural point of view. According to Wang (2010), there are two major reasons that Chinese students do not engage in interactive learning. The primary reason is due to their high authority, hierarchical society in which lower status students are the passive recipients of one-way communication from higher status lecturers or professors. A closely related secondary reason is that in the Chinese culture, questions or challenges from students may possibly cause a loss of face, for instance, if the professor does not know the answer or else can appear too direct and confrontational, risking the harmony of the group (Deng & Liu, 1999).

Yet some progress has been definitely made, especially when the brief span of observations is considered. The trainees do interact with the trainer by nodding, some do answer the instructor’s questions, and two, on their own initiative, even ask questions before the class. The unanticipated side-effect of the trainer becoming more concerned with the interaction is a welcome surprise and contributes to the improvement. There seems to have been some success in instructing and reminding and then expecting the trainees to become more interactive with the trainer.

REFERENCES


Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

The purpose of this form is to provide a clear explanation of the nature of this research. The necessary procedures are described below. If, after reading this form, you have any questions or concerns, please discuss them with me. Ping Wang can be reached by phone at any time prior to, during, or after your participation is completed. Once you are entirely satisfied with this explanation and freely choose to participate in the research, you are free to end your participation in the research at any time.

This research seeks to determine the factors which influence the classroom participation, and also seeks to bridge the gap between the traditional primary school English teacher


training methodology and the methodology required by the Standards for Teachers of English in Primary Schools.

Firstly you are asked to answer the questionnaire, which contains three parts. Part I focuses on the trainees’ opinions on the teaching method and the course materials. In Part II and Part III, you are asked to explain the reasons why you are not active in class. And you are also required to offer suggestions on how to make the class interesting. The interview will be audio recorded and will start after you complete the questionnaire. In the third step some of the anonymous quotes may be used in possible coming publications. Lastly, you are asked to look through the trainers’ feedback and journals to ensure their validity and reliability.

There is no risk to answering the questionnaires, participating in interviews and being involved in other activities in the whole research. However, participants may become more aware of their own feelings and beliefs by answering questions. If you do not wish to participate in the study after it has started, please tell me. There is no penalty imposed if you decide to end your participation early. You will be provided a free lunch ticket for your participation in the research.

I understand that the procedures involved in this study involve no risks. With this in mind and with the above description of the research, I voluntarily agree to take part in the study. I have received a copy of this consent form to keep for myself and have read and understand all of it. The trainer explained anything I did not understand. Therefore, I agree to participate in the research.

_______________________________________ (Signature)
_______________________________________ (Date)
_______________________________________ (Researcher’s signature)

**Biographical note:**

Wang Ping has been an Associate Professor at the College of Foreign Languages at Jiaxing University since 2007. He was awarded the Confucius Institute Chinese Director by the Confucius Institute Headquarters in 2009. His research fields are TEFL and TCFL. In the past five years he has had 25 papers published, among which two were indexed by SSCI.

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