

A Conceptual model of the Relationship between Storytelling Ability and English Learning Outcome of Junior College Students

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ABSTRACT: 5-year junior college students have higher learning motivation than high school students. How learning motivation affects English learning outcome is the concern of many 5-year junior college English teachers. Storytelling ability plays an important role in English learning. This study aimed to the influence of storytelling ability on English learning from a cognitive perspective. It is found that time, knowledge and attitude are three important factors in cultivating storytelling ability. In the process of English learning, the language produced is carrying knowledge, and knowledge will accumulate gradually with time, while good attitudes will emerge, which will improve English learning outcome. It is suggested that future research can be based on the results of this study to carry out empirical research to examine the model of this study.

KEYWORDS –storytelling, English learning outcome, junior college, Taiwanese students

I. INTRODUCTION

With the system of 12-year compulsory education in Taiwan, 5-year junior colleges are becoming less popular to junior high school students, who tend to choose vocational high schools or standard high schools. The reasons why they take high schools as the first priority could be three reasons. First, a 5-year junior college program is fixed to get a diploma only when the 5-year study is completed, and it is hard to change departments or transfer to other schools during the school time. Second, students are given a second chance to enter a better university after graduating from high school if they think the school they are studying at does not meet their expectations. Third and finally, they want a bachelor degree, and college is a good path to get a bachelor degree after studying at high school. In that way, the quotas of students at 5-year junior colleges that are allowed to be accepted have dramatically fallen.

The obstacles 5-year junior colleges have to face are not just about the quota of students, but include an existing dilemma that all higher education schools are struggling with: Taiwan's very low birth rate. Due to this low birth rate, there are usually more students than there are open spots at 5-year junior colleges. In addition, technology universities are being encouraged to run 5-year junior college programs by the Ministry of Education (MOE). In fact, MOE approved ten such universities to run this kind of program during the 2018 academic year, such as National Taipei University of Technology, and the quota of students is limited to 800. Therefore, under the impacts of 12-year compulsory education, low birth rate, and 5-year junior programs at technology universities, the issue of how the existing 5-year junior colleges can continue on their own path is worth focusing on.

A. The specialty of five-year junior college students

For 5-year junior college students, they have more knowledge and practice on the subjects they study versus high school students, and they supposedly have stronger engagement on what they are going to learn in schools. For company employers, graduates of vocational education are more compatible in office knowledge/skills with the needs of companies due to their internships in their last two years of schooling. It makes them more acceptable to employers. More and more firms realize that in this era of globalization, English ability has become the main competency in the workplace. It means that with a greater investigation on the professional English ability that a firm values, the more talented workforce a firm can connect with throughout

the world. However, there is a gap between what a company needs and what vocational education school students have, especially when it comes to English proficiency - the gap is bigger than other professions.

Look into this issue a bit deeper, it is found that most of 5-year junior college students were low achievers when they were in elementary schools and/or junior high school, and did not have any make-up time to improve. Thus, it seems harder to get them involved into filling this gap in higher education schools as they have taken English learning to be a dead-end, even though they are aware of the importance of English ability in the workplace. Motivating students on English learning is what English teachers work hard on, but there are not enough data or studies to help them until some researchers started to do needs analysis about junior college students in the 1990s (Tsao & Lin, 1998). For junior college English teachers, reading more studies about influencing junior college students' English learning outcome is a way to motivate their English learning efficiently and to make the teachers' own job lives easier.

There are many studies about learning motivation, but not many about learning engagement. Learning engagement is more crucial than motivation, because it is a mixture of time engagement, emotion engagement, behavior engagement, cognitive engagement, skills engagement, etc. Learning engagement is more practical to measure how a student gets involved into English learning. To measure how much an English learner engages in the learning atmosphere, one proper way is to observe his/her behavior. Narration is the process of telling a story that needs the selection and organization of certain events for a particular audience. In English learning, storytelling not only uses learned vocabularies and grammar points, but also utilizes paraphrasing skills. In doing so, learners have to recall what they learned and adopt spiral learning to achieve better performance.

In sum, five-year junior college students play an important role in the human resources of enterprises, and their English proficiency can be a connection between Taiwan and other countries in the world in a financial way. Learning motivation is a good start for acquiring knowledge and may be directed toward a good learning outcome, but how to avoid burnout can be done with storytelling competency. In addition, there is always room for English learners with weak motivation to achieve their goal of English learning through a storytelling strategy. Therefore, the relationship between storytelling and learning outcome is an issue among English learners of all types of motivation.

B. Meaningful learning for English

Individuals take part in society, and individual difference contributes to a society where all people have to converse in a certain language (e.g. English, Chinese, computer, sign, etc.). When it comes to English learning, it is believed that if learners perceive their English knowledge as meaningful or will become meaningful, then they will be eager to learn and/or achieve expected English learning outcomes. If the goal of English learning is to make one become more knowledgeable, more visible, more related to the society, and more confident, then a meaningful form of English learning makes sense. Thus, each individual has one's own position in the social context, and so storytelling could be a proper way to help individuals organize their own history of their lives that helps build up a relationship between individuals in order to inquire about the whole world. Storytelling is telling a story based on a well-organized structure along with more than two characters whose own stories are also connected. The purpose of telling a story should emphasize altruism. Altruism, developed by August Comte (1912), is to create others' happiness for better social benefits. It is a positive idealism that has a similar purpose of storytelling. Storytelling is also called narration, which applies to a variety of areas, such as medicine, therapy, teachers' lives, and curriculum development. Narrative medicine focuses on physicians' narrative ability and indicates the results of improving doctor-patient relationship, decreasing the pressure of patient from doctors, and explaining the diseases/symptoms precisely if they have good narrative skills. Narrative therapy tends to rebuild another good life story from a tragedy if the patient has mental problems to go over it.

White and Epston (1990) are known as the originators of narrative therapy. Their hypothesis is that an outer system builds up the meaning of a story so that a meaningful story could be rebuilt. The key therapeutic idea is to externalize the problem, meaning the person is not the problem, but the problem is the problem. To inquire about a teacher's life is to predict his/her students' possibilities. For teachers, their inside heart has particular visions about the individual students they are teaching, and mostly the images are able to reflect back to the teachers' childhoods. For students, teachers are their role models of learning, and they know about the teachers from the images they see, not the life stories the teachers tell. In fact, how the teachers anchor the position of the story is determined on the spot from the starting point of the story. Thus, narrative research studies about teachers' professional development are widely used to make their lives easier. The reason why narrative skills are also used in curriculum development is because the developers take the curriculum as a whole story, and the instructor is the storyteller to make sure the participants (students/audience) are attractive to

the meaningful story. Above all, storytelling comes with altruistic behaviors, a well-organized structure, a creative plot, and an unhurried attitude that make learning meaningful.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORYTELLING AND ENGLISH LEARNING

Storytelling ability is a key to success in English learning. It is the basis for almost everything in our society and the way people interact, create, live, or even conceal the truth. By learning and performing, a story, vocabulary, phrases, and story structure become part of the elements that organize a written story. Moreover, it is a popular belief that if a language learner cannot say it, then he/she cannot write it (Waite, 2017). To learn a new language other than one's mother tongue language, the educational purposes of storytelling are to help students to gain more vocabulary and to perform in a purposeful manner in both oral and written ways. On the one hand, vocabulary helps learners with language production due to oral proficiency, effective communication, and precise expressions (Hubbard, 1983; Cardenas, 2001). It is like an option that the user could decide how exact the expression will be. Without a wide range of learned words, the semantics are limited. On the other hand, Coskun (2016) claimed that speaking activities chosen by students provide more meaningful learning outcomes. He observed twenty-one first-year students from a 5-year university in Turkey who took one of five different out-of-class English speaking activities (Fantasy Role-Playing, Continuous Story, Debate, Radio Program, and Broadcasting on Periscope) and analyzed the perceived benefits from it during a six-week period, especially as the reasons for choosing a certain activity are meaningfully related to one's life experience. The students who chose Fantasy Role-Playing Activity benefited from problem-solving skills, while those who chose Continuous Story Activity and Radio Program Activity through joining the activities made their lives funner. The students who liked Debate Activity had a chance to talk about current events, while students who took Broadcasting on Periscope Activity considered it is the best idea to perform English well. In addition, according to Keshta (2013), using storytelling in English teaching is beneficial by providing a better learning environment, motivating students, positively affecting students' learning outcome, activating students' thinking process, helping students better understand the concepts, participating in class stories, and changing the difficult ideas into easy ones. Hence, having a strong storytelling ability can produce a better English learning outcome, and the learning outcome purposefully matches one's inner meaning.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORYTELLING AND ENGLISH LEARNING OUTCOME

How to perform storytelling is a technique that could be presented in different ways such as in a printed or spoken manner. It is commonly supported by three main factors: time, knowledge, and attitude. First, from the time perspective, it is easy to think of the length of time a story teller uses in narrating. The longer the time is, the more detailed the story is. This does not seem to be true for some philosophers who have an argument on the existence of time (McTaggart, 1908; Augustin, 1912; Kant, 1998). However, if time does not exist, then any time measurements do not count. There is a better scope to understand how time works in storytelling than just knowing the quantity of used time. The scope is quality. The quality of used time is like the rope a cowboy uses, which can lasso a cow for certain purposes. Generally, a cowboy uses as less tries as possible is among the best. Thus, the outcome of lassoing is a technique about its quality and not its quantity. There must be a purpose to use the rope, and there must be an object within the rope. Referring to storytelling, there must be a story to bring up, and the teller has to use a technique to tell the story. In doing so, the time of quality of using the technique of storytelling has a greater chance to succeed. Learning engagement helps English learners with having a good time. As long as English learners have emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of engagement, it is assumed that they are able to achieve a good learning outcome (Han & Hyland, 2015). Källkvist (2013) also claimed that training students on translating languages is a complicated cognitive development, but the value each task offers could deepen learners' engagement. In other words, the quality time of learning engagement allows English learners to produce meaningful contexts, which are probably the skeleton of their stories structured by utilizing the technique of narrating.

Second, from the perspective of knowledge, it is said that knowledge is the power as it refers to universal appeal. When it comes to storytelling, the spirit of storytelling is revealed. The spirit is altruism. No matter whether the altruistic behaviors are metaphors or similes, the given stories have existed on the spot, and they will spread out or be revised forever since the moment they are created. The impact of those existing contexts contains someone's knowledge with his/her philosophy, which is a social relationship connecting people, communities, nations, races, and the world. Storytelling has a universal appeal, so that knowledge is important to it. Knowledge is something others cannot take away from a person, because the result of its progress provides basic human needs like autonomy, competency, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985) in which it becomes a part of a person's mind and heart. If that is true, then it is an assumption that the philosophy of a story is the

knowledge created by individuals that cannot be dislodged. Through knowledge, each individual is allowed to pass on or revise the stories, or even gaining more knowledge from them. Regarding English storytelling competency, knowledge is the threshold. Without knowledge, English users are not able to talk or write the correct English language. However, there is still controversy about the definition of correct English. Under the circumstances, the correct English language refers to the correct usage of English that the particular receivers are expecting. Therefore, for English learners, it is necessary to learn the language from a broad scope beyond mere vocabulary and grammar, but also the history and culture. Through cross-culture awareness and individual differences awareness, learners could thus properly paraphrase for a good story. Manyak & Bauer (2009) claimed that English learners' reading comprehension is associated with their familiarity with vocabulary and the awareness of cognates, while Ray (2018) found that grammar teaching helps undergraduate students in India with the thinking process as well as the improvement of their English learning outcomes in TBLT (Tasks Based Language Teaching). In addition, cross-culture awareness has been identified among variables related to the learning outcome (Oxford & Leaver, 1996), whereas there is evidence to suggest that L1/L2 differences may affect L2 acquisition (Navarra, Sebastián-Gallés, & Soto-Faraco, 2005; van Boxtel, Bongaerts, & Coppen, 2003). Hence, knowledge is not only the component, but also could be a threshold regarding English storytelling competency.

Finally, it is generally believed that attitude is a mental entity that characterizes a person. Attitude toward product purchase, choice, job satisfaction, romantic relationships, culture shock, schooling, self-regulation, etc., are all insolvable problems, and the attitude toward these problems depends on the subjective opinions of the individuals. Hence, the solution is determined by one's attitude. Sometimes, benign neglect is better than collaborating a negative attitude in storytelling. It does not mean that a negative attitude is not important, but there is a better way to let it go. Human beings are meant to pursue happiness until the end of their lives. When it comes to English learning, there is an intention behind it and a purpose to achieve. Perhaps English learners are motivated to study in English-speaking countries or get better grades to avoid punishment, and so they work hard to perform well. In doing so, the negative attitude of learners is spontaneously gone when learning actions are undertaken. Thus, attitude is about by which angle individuals look at the world and what the picture the learning outcome will be. Park, Sung & Joo (2018) proposed that Korean college students' attitude toward mobile phone use as an in-class learning tool can increase their English learning ability due to change in the young generation's learning behavior. In Saudi Arabia, behavior beliefs and culture on the attitude toward the CLT (Communication Language Teaching) approach benefits English learners in their language process and outcome (Albahri, Yang & Moustakim, 2018). It reminds English teachers and learners to emphasize on learners' subjectivity rather than on creating a new teaching approach or learning strategy since the word "originality" comes from the etymon "origin", referring to human nature.

For English learning, learning outcome means the result of English learning. For language learning, it takes longer practice time to gain English proficiency in non-English-speaking countries, or getting involved in an English-speaking environment has a more effective learning outcome. On one hand, Spady (1986) claimed that learning outcome includes skill, knowledge, and attitude, which refers to the goal of learning, and its meaning is consistent with the word goal. His statement is consistent with the concept of storytelling, and it helps instructors with evaluating learners' ability at the end of the course, since maintaining the quality of learning process is a kind of skill. Hence, to develop a learner's storytelling ability is to improve his/her learning outcome. On the other hand, King and Evans (1991) mentioned that learning outcome takes the result as an important part of outcome-based education. It is said that learning outcome is not only about how much students learn from the content or how well the textbook has been used in the process, but also about transferring its educational abstract concept to a concrete curriculum-based course in order to focus more on learning outcome as an educational hot spot. Bloom (1956) brought up three domains, which are cognitive domain, affective domain, and psychomotor domain, with different categories. Among the categories, knowledge is included in the cognitive domain, and it is the basis of one's cognitiveness to memorize, distinguish, and recall what to learn. Hence, learning outcome is easier to measure than a learning goal, and its purpose is for learners to tell how much they have acquired from the learning activities. In education, however, it is not practical to track learners' learning outcomes over the long term. Instead, an academic result of learning outcome is a common way for teachers to know students' learning outcome. It is usually presented by a mark associated with a number from one to one hundred or an alphabet letter such as A, B, C, D, or F, which should be comparable from country to country.

In sum, a good storyteller is able to describe the whole picture based on quality, knowledge, and attitude. In English learning, memorizing vocabulary, practicing grammar points, and organizing paragraphs are

important to perform English well. By doing those activities, storytelling ability is built up, and it is assumed to relate to the English learning outcome.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Regarding the relationship between storytelling and English learning outcome, there are three important elements in English storytelling: quality, knowledge, and attitude. The proposed model is given as Figure 1.

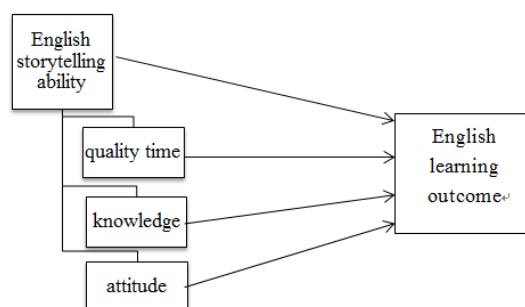


Figure 1 A proposed model of the relationship between English storytelling ability and English learning outcome.

Quality time refers to the depth of English learning, instead of the length of time measurement. It is an alternative way to describe the period of time that students contribute to English learning. Knowledge is in a cognitive domain that widely enhances the needs of learning. The knowledge of English learning is the story to tell and to be told as long as learners have altruism. Attitude is the most important element in English learning as well as English learning outcome. With a correct attitude, it is easier for English learners to start and finish a learning process with an expected learning outcome. Therefore, quality, knowledge, and attitude are proposed herein to describe English storytelling ability in the relationship between it and English learning outcome.

It is crucial that cognition is hidden, and the proposed model theorizes that English learning outcome is based on a storytelling ability to promote students' English proficiency. Thus, future empirical studies should also examine other factors that determine students' other possible elements in the cognitive domain when using storytelling ability to acquire English knowledge in the learning process.

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