Promoting a Learner-Centeredness Classroom by Adopting the Su Ji Pu Li Principle into CALL for Thailand Tertiary Level Students

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of the use of the Buddhist doctrine of Su Ji Pu Li in the field of ELT through CALL (computer-assisted language learning) to promote a learner-centeredness classroom. Traditionally, teachers teach with the traditional medium like chalk and blackboard. Nowadays, with the arrival of the computer age, teachers' role is changing to cope with the fast paced up to the minute technological devices. The move from teacher-centered to student-centered is unavoidable, and one way of promoting it is to try the Buddhist-Oriental wisdom of Su Ji Pu Li.

Keyword: learner-centeredness, Su Ji Pu Li, ELT, CALL

Introduction

Like all other countries entering the twenty first century, Thailand not only opens its new chapter in the new millennium in globalization but also in its social structure. As a universal piece of fact, the most fundamental part of every country's social pattern lies on the educational system. During the past decade, Thailand has been facing with a colossal change in this area. Every stakeholder has to undergo series of adaptation in a certain way. Educators have been prompted to become more active in every aspect ranging from an active learner, active teacher to active researcher. They have been in the transitional period of adapting themselves from a classroom dictator to a classroom manager who oversee and help students. Students are also on the road of transition. From being passive learners most of time, they have to step into the age of "interactive" and even better as autonomous learners. Curriculum has to be adjusted as well. From the teacher oriented scheme, it has been put into a more student oriented one. All factors of the educational ring have to come to not just a transitional period. Rather, they are on a turn-around point where no one has seen before. Every unit of the society works hard in order to achieve the pre-set goals which are segmented into several classes and categories. The Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment –ONESQA (Public Organization) was officially set up in November 2000 to monitor the nation's educational standards. Its missions are to be implemented by evaluating how well educational institutes manage the schooling system in relation to the objectives designated by ONESQA. Those objectives are split into two main educational levels of fundamental and tertiary. Currently, the nation is under its third cycle of evaluation (2011-2015). However, during the first round of evaluation (2001-2005) two of the predestined goals for the fundamental level institutions to meet are standards number 18 which is educational institution related specifying that "the educational institutions have managed activities and teaching-learning methods with a reference to learners" and number 22 which is teacher related stating that "teachers have the ability to manage the teaching-learning method efficiently with an emphasis on learners". Standard number 18 pinpoints that educational institutes should find their way to bring about extracurricular activities for students to experience. Standard number 22 has ten sub-objectives of which the second one is an incorporation of the Buddhist doctrine of Su Ji Pu Li.

Application and Problems

Su Ji Pu Li is the timeless wisdom of a learning principle embedded in Buddhism.   Lord Buddha envisions that those who learn a lot are considered a sage.   By becoming a sage, they have to embrace this four principles of learning.   The preaching of this element is called Bhahusujja (พาหุสัจจะ) which comprises a step by step four strands of learning, and they must be practiced orderly.   Naturally, logically and scientifically, learners learn from a perception stage (listening-reading) and gradually ascend to a judgmental stage.   So, the first in line is Su.   Su is Suttamayapanya which means the art of learning through listening-reading in other words a receptive skill.   After substantial listening-reading, Ji is the second step to follow.   Ji or Jittamayapanya means the art of learning through thinking both analytically and creatively.   The third step to practice is Pu.   Pu is Pujja which means the art of learning through asking.   Should there be a question after appropriate listening or reading and contemplating, learners should ask for clarification from their teachers for information verification.   Lastly, Li is the final step to apply.   Li is Likit which means the art of learning through writing or note taking (and as far as computer database according to HRH Princess Sirindhorn).   Li helps learners learn as it is an act of producing after all the three steps earlier are practiced.   If one can adopt this principle into practice regularly, Buddhism says it is very beneficial for the learner itself.   This is due to the systematic and rational nature of the practice.   To be functional, however, teachers, learners and the environment must enhance one another.   Yet, Thailand is not equipped with the environment to incorporate these four strands to enhance learners' autonomy.   In her book HRH Sirindhorn comments one interesting aspect towards the Thai educational system that academic institutions in Thailand are loaded with children, so making those schools student-centered is quite difficult.   It has been widely accepted during the past few decades that making our classroom more student-centered is more than welcome in this era since it is more fruitful for students to take the stage.   We should therefore try to implement the student autonomy atmosphere. ONESQA pulls these four strands of Su Ji Pu Li into the effectiveness of the study leading to the state of student-centered classroom in six major subjects which are Thai, mathematics, science, social science, English, and computer.   On top of that, ONESQA mandates the effectiveness of these two standards by having teachers measure the ability of learners after administering the four principles.   It is evident that ONESQA sees the feasibility of the two thousand year old philosophy as something not too obsolete to be put into modern classroom.   Beyond that the six subjects administered the principles include one as

fashionable as computer. It is very much interesting to see the combination of the old and the new and also the Oriental and the Occidental floating side by side in an educational context. As a country where people are on high alert of technology, Thailand is unavoidable to come up with computerized teaching and learning aids. An English language class is one that also incorporates the benefits of computer. CALL or computer-assisted language learning has come into contact with Thai classrooms for some time since the late twentieth century. Kern, Ware and Warschauer (2008) define CALL as "a wide range of applications (e.g., tutorials, drills, simulations, instructional games, tests, concordancers, etc.)" However, when CALL was first introduced into the country, it was much of a teacher-centered classroom. In other words, it was controlled by teachers and students were passive learners. According to Okonkwo (2011) "The focus of CALL is learning, and not teaching. It is a student-centered learning material, which promotes self-paced learning.... The philosophy of CALL is that the lessons should allow the learners to learn on their own using structured and/or unstructured interactive lessons." The intersection of computer and Su Ji Pu Li is observed after ONESQA's introduction as one of its four standards as mentioned earlier. One piece of evidence can be seen from Intrachandra (พระเจตน์สฤษฏ์ อินทร์จันทร์ 2012), who mentions in his findings that the overall result after applying Su Ji Pu Li in an e learning activity for novices in a dhamma class is at a good level. However, there is still no visible piece of evidence found between the cross of Su Ji Pu Li and CALL among college students. The reason behind this may be due to the fact that ONESQA has different sets of standards in evaluating the fundamental and tertiary level educational institutions. Surprisingly, ONESQA does not incorporate the application of Su Ji Pu Li into any of the tertiary level strands. However, ONESQA's goal in monitoring college students' achievement is in line with that of the fundamental level. Of all the six fundamental aspects totaling 15 indicators, the first strand indicates the quality of the graduates. Nevertheless, two of the entire standards demand that students must be able to search for knowledge through reading and technological information devices while institutions place students as the center of learning. This means that ONESQA recognizes the strength of learned centeredness aspect and this is also how tertiary level students and teachers come into contact with CALL . Jebakirubai (2012) points out that "computer can play an important role in enhancing the efficiency of the language teaching process, making students more creative and providing them with an individualized learning environment." She continues to note what is in line with the ONESQA requests for both fundamental and tertiary level institutions that

We envision technology as a teacher's liberator to help reestablish the role and value of the individual classroom teacher. To do so, two things must happen. First, the perspective of the classroom must change to become learner centered. Second, students and teachers must enter into collaboration or partnership with technology in order to create a "community" that nurtures, encourages, and supports the learning process.

Wang and Hemsley (2008) also see the importance of the technology for language learning. They mention that "…by applying the net-based language-learning mode, especially in relation to college English study. Learners can study either from the campus intranet or the Internet. In turn, this promotes learner autonomy in language study. They continue "Since autonomous learning is emphasized today, the net-based autonomy has become a critical issue in college English study." Nevertheless, one should not be too overwhelmed with the virtues of the computer based teaching device too much since in it, there also lies some pitfalls. Jiang (2008) contradicts that "CALL design and implementation should match the users' needs, since CALL is not always better than traditional language learning and teaching method." She places the importance of teacher as "Language learning and teaching is a two-way communication. Traditionally, it needs fixed places and large amounts of papers and chalks." However, the reality is that "Traditional language teaching and learning is teacher centered, it is not flexible and students don't have their own autonomy." What teachers and students really need is the balance between them. Moving from the teacher-centered classroom to learner-centered can be eased by employing CALL into action as Kern, Ware and Warschauer (2008) points out "By adopting the same habits of mind that we seek to inspire in our students—autonomous learning; inventive thinking; and critical perspectives on the intersection of language, technology, and culture—teachers and researchers can help ensure that the impressive potential of network-based teaching to transform language learning is achieved." Ganesan (2011) agrees on the role of CALL in terms of learner orientation that "The teacher can use the latest technologies, which have the potential to transform the students from passive recipients of information into active participants." He claims in his conclusion that "The modern tools are in addition to the inputs given by the teachers in the classrooms. The magic is real in that it helps the students to enhance their language learning in a fruitful way." What we as a language teacher have to do is to try to transport what we have been trained either during the stage of pre-service or in-

service into our class and make it visible to witnesses that we expect our learners to be independent. Sadly, research is this area is not much explored ,at least at the in depth inspection level, as Van Lier (in Dornyei 2011) points out that "an area which is currently much in need of case study research is the role of technology in SLA, for example CALL." Beyond that Egbert, Paulus and Nakamichi (2002) state that "…few studies explore transfer from the practical content of teacher education technology courses to the classroom. There is also a gap in the literature specific to the relatively new area of computer-assisted language learning." as they pointed out "In order to help language teachers learn about and use technology effectively, we need to know more about the transfer of CALL coursework to the classroom."

Conclusion

Having stated all of the scenarios above, it is believed that the incorporation of Su Ji Pu Li with CALL to enhance the state of learner centeredness among college students in Thailand is particularly promising though staggering. It is hoped that all stakeholders will gain more insight into how the practice of the Oriental belief affects the Occidental language area through the use of technology.

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