
Instructors as Counselors

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to elaborate the convictions of the oriental or occidental educational philosophers. We argue that instructors can also become counselors dealing with students' cognitive and affective states in class simultaneously. Further, instruction of a given subject is a means, rather than an end, to students' cognitive, and affective growth. Examples of how instructors such as mathematics and language teachers may fulfill such an end are given.

Keywords: Multiple intelligence; Language teachers; Cognitive growth; Affective growth; Instructor; Counselor; Cognitive load

COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE INTERACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

A famous Chinese essayist and philosopher in Dan dynasty, Yue Han (768 ~824 AD) indicated that teachers were to firstly convey knowledge to students, next to provide them with professional skills, and then to enrich their problem solving competences. While at the moment global application of teaching and learning as solely conveying knowledge, students, whether superior in this aspect, tend to come across problems ranging from learning to emotional and daily adjustment. As Howard Gardner (1991) put it, most of the students in most of present schools, indeed many of the best students in the best schools, are not competent in exhibiting appreciable understandings. Such understandings of the course subjects are essential to successful learning, which may further facilitate students' professional life as well as daily problem solving. From Yue Han's point of view, conveying knowledge is only the first step, and should be followed by students' cognitive processes effectively arriving at the full understanding of the knowledge, through which students may experience inspiration or an emerging sense of appreciation of the knowledge, thus enabling them to transfer it to all humanity and their daily life. Therefore, as an instructor of a given course subject, the sole focus on its knowledge per se, while ignoring others, may eventually impede with students' full development and adjustment.

SUBJECT INSTRUCTION, A MEANS RATHER THAN AN END

As French educator Michel Eyguem De Montaigne (1533-1592) indicated that everything the child learned in school might be forgotten, but education remained. That is, a student may not remember any equation in mathematic courses, but he can approach every life event mathematically, and deal with each life problem logically; a student may not remember any syntactic rule of a language in class, but he might realize when and how to get his ideas across in a given social settings; a student may not remember any historical event such as holocaust in history class, but he can approach contemporary events from different perspectives, and analyze them in great depth with less bias; a student may not remember any principle in psychology in class, but he can approach every life problem with good sense. That is, in whatever course subjects of a classroom, the ultimate goal of instruction is to enable students to better cope with their life problems or professional adjustment through the acquisition of underlying genre in a given subject. Therefore, what an instructor does in class can no longer be confined to teaching of knowledge only. Rather students' individual life situations, their interests, their aligned ambitions should all be interwoven in the instruction design of a given course subject. Students' emotional problems in daily life may range from physical ailments, familial conflicts, interpersonal relationships, financial difficulties, to academic frustrations. All these

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problems do not show direct relationship with the knowledge of a given subject, but the underlying genre or mechanism might have much in common. Thus, instructors of different course subjects may, to consider the subject as a tool, integrate their instruction of the subject with these underlying mechanisms, which might facilitate students’ adjustment in different life situations. This does not mean that instructors need to spare some time during class session to touch on students’ emotional problems besides formal teaching of the subject, but rather, in the course of instruction, teachers may use different metaphors or analogies closely related to the course subject to explore the essence of both the knowledge of the subject per se and students’ life situations.

MULTIPLE REPRESENTATIONS THROUGH METAPHORS OR ANALOGIES

The use of multiple representations (musical, mathematical, spatial, kinesthetic, intra-personal, inter-personal, and verbal linguistic) of a given topic in a given subject does not only mean to help learners of different intelligences (based on Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence), but also mean to intensify and deepen understanding of the topic. In most cases, when a poem is taught in a language class, if instructed mathematically (quantified through equations regarding the content of the poem), students of mathematic intelligence may benefit a lot more, whilst learners of linguistic intelligence may also be inspired with the mathematic implication of that poem. Such a representation may also apply to any other course subject in terms of any other representations for students of any other intelligence. To put it further, these representations should be placed in life situation context to serve the purpose of instructors as counselors. Through such a connection, students do not only understand the topic of a subject more fully, but also gain insight on problems in life situations, thus facilitating their adjustment. I once observed an introduction of the topic “Blood Cells” in human body in a biology class where students were asked to represent (dramatize) the relationships or functions of white blood cells, germs, wounds of skin, and the platelets through multiple intelligence representations by groups of students. The scenario of the drama was something like:

Two students with two large sheet of unfolded newspaper (representing skin) showed up on the stage, suddenly, another student dressed in black (representing germs) rushed through the papers’ cut in the middle, then another student dressed in white (representing white cells) appeared and fought with the germs, and both were dead in a mess, and then, the platelets collected the mess and patched it on the cut of the skin. (There are different rhythms of music representing each different role of the drama respectively, and there was a background voice describing the episode of the scenario.)

Such multiple representations are multifaceted. First, the content knowledge of the topic can be fully understood, and what is more important, the lesson reflected in this drama (battle between germs and white cells, and the role of platelets) may offer some insight to the students with regard to their daily life adjustment. Thus, teaching the knowledge about blood cells is not the focus, but conveying the implication of life situations is the pivotal point.

WHAT A MATHEMATIC TEACHER CAN DO

We can easily spot the scenario in a math classroom in which the math teacher demonstrates the math equations (such as Summative Equations, First item + Last item x number of items/2, say summate from 1 to 10 and makes 55) through simply introduction of the meaning of the equations, or the logical processes based on constructivism, or discovery learning mode, and the like. Though all these approaches may be essential since they may all serve the purpose of helping students understand more about the equations, yet there are still gaps between the equation and their emotional life. A math teacher in a supplementary school in Hill Mountain, Taiwan, may offer a rather inspiring example: He used analogy of persons of both sex for the equation. The digital natural numbers on the right from the middle represents female persons (i.e., the chunk: $\langle 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10 \rangle$ as in the summation of: $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 + 10$), and the digital natural numbers on the left from the middle represents male persons. According the solution by the German mathematician, Gauss, students’ are taught to solve the summation by calculating it with $1+10$, $2+8$, $3+7$, $4+6$, and $5+5$. That is, try to match each male with each female successively. Then, the teacher shows to the students’ by the analogy below:

In a male or a female’s tone, I (male) walk a step toward you (female), as you also walk a step toward me, and each of our combined (summed) steps remain the same with any other steps...With our

coordinate steps, we reach the most effective combinations.... Our each combined steps make the optimal of what we are, no more and no less....

For one thing, such a poem like representation may arouse the interest of students with more verbal intelligence, and provide students more access to the understanding of the equation. For those students with music intelligence, the instructor may also encourage students to make rhythmic tone in coordination with each digital number, and produce a unique tone reflecting the equation accompanied by the verbatim (poem) attached to the rhythm, and students can fully grasp and appreciate this mathematic equation through the, so-called, equation song. Also, there could be a drama which clearly reflects such rationale behind the equation. Through the analogy along with the underlying male-female relationship on a given task, students may have opportunities to retrospect or ruminate regarding their emotional problems with reference to the analogy. All these poetic, musical, drama-like representations of mathematic equation contribute to students' emotional balance.

WHAT A LANGUAGE TEACHER CAN DO

For non-native learners of English, dealing with English syntax is a challenge for both students and instructors. To take clausal structures for example, most instructors would focus on the knowledge aspect (the definitions, functions, and locations of each clausal structure) through various conventional approaches (such as communicative approach, or audio-lingual approach, etc.) Yet, the most difficult part is the cultural context of English syntax, which is often ignored and cannot be taught, but should be experienced. Multiple representations can, to some extent, be readily applied to meet with such a demand. But what seems to be more constructive is the integration of daily life events (such as interpersonal interactions) into the whole process. See the scenario of the classroom for such a topic below:

To represent the three individual clauses, namely, nominal clauses, adjectival clauses, and adverbial clauses through verbal linguistic form, instructors get three students (with each represent one of the three clauses respectively), and ask them to make a monologue, describing the nature of clause, preferably in a poetic style)

To represent each clausal structure through musical form, another group of students of musical intelligence might be asked to produce a music rhyme for each clause based on the nature of each clause, and as long as each clause appears, its corresponding music is played.

To represent each clausal structure through logical or mathematic form, another group of students of mathematic intelligence are asked to draw any logical rule or formula that fit the nature of each clause, and share with others the rationale in the course of production.

To offer perspectives on daily life situations (say, interpersonal adjustment), another group of students of interpersonal intelligence are asked to work out a drama in which three different characters that all the students might come across, since three individual clauses may be incarnated as three different characters.

Again, in the course of instruction, the topic in a given subject is a means rather an end to help students understand the knowledge aspect and acquire more perspectives on daily life events. This is exactly what Reigeluth' (1983) 'apply genre skills' is all about. In Reigeluth' framework, knowledge (memorize information), understand relationship, and apply skills are the forefront of applying genre skills in the course of instruction. In this paper, we believe instructors can be counselors because the genre behind the subject matter in any given course is identical by nature with the genre behind students' daily life events or problems.

INSTRUCTOR AS COUNSELOR ORIENTED INSTRUCTION

As an old Chinese idiom indicates, there must be one teacher in a group of three people. To put it in a broader sense, the instructor, like his students, can always benefit and learn in the course of instruction. A successful teaching job does not mean the successful teaching of any given subject (this is just a starting point of teaching, and should be considered to be a means to the ultimate goal of successful living and growing), but the ability to learn, and the ability to survive in daily adjustment. Though this task is challenging, and often deemed tedious, what can be of more value than students have acquired the ability of learning how to learn, and the ability of handling their life

problems independently? What is more, through such an instructor-as-counselor oriented instruction, both teachers and students can benefit cognitively and mentally. About three thousand years ago, when Aristotle and Plato sat around the rock under the tree, conversing with each other through dialogues, they were not just talking about philosophy, but also about the art of living.

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