



Language Teaching in China

语言  
教学

在中国

Enseñanza de  
idiomas  
en China

Creative Writing:

a way to nurture academic writing skills

Padlet:

an innovative and collaborative online tool

技术辅助的任务型教学在  
线上高级汉语综合课的应用

ISSUE 1

JUNE. 2022



**06** | **REFLECTION**  
*Creative Writing:  
a Way to Nurture Academic Writing skills*

**18** | **REFLECTION**  
*Unravel the Mystery of Teaching  
Speaking in EAP Classes*

**28** | **REFLECTION**  
*The Evolution of XJTLU's Pre-Sessional  
English Programme*

**40** | **REFLECTION**  
*How Can Teachers Improve Attendance  
for Low-Level Students and Keep Them  
Motivated in Class?*

**50** | **REFLECTION**  
*An Alternative Model of Online Learning  
and Teaching*

**56** | **RESEARCH**  
*Investigating Students'  
ESAP Course*

**74** | **RESEARCH**  
*The Speaking Zone: a R  
Practice Behind the Tra  
Its Potential in The EAP*

**90** | **RESEARCH**  
*技术辅助的任务型教学*

**98** | **RESEARCH**  
*国际中文教育分班测试*

**108** | **REVIEW**  
*Use Pear Deck to Crea  
the EAP classroom from*

**116** | **REVIEW**  
*Padlet: an Innovative a*

**124** | **REVIEW**  
*Teaching Essay Writing*

# IN THIS ISSUE



*Perceptions of Project-based Learning in an*

*Reappraisal and Reanalysis of the Theory and  
Additional 4-3-2 Activity, and a Consideration of  
Classroom From a Student Perspective.*

*在线上高级汉语综合课的应用*

*代现状调查报告*

*ate an Interactive PowerPoint Presentation in  
m a student perspective.*

*nd Collaborative Online Tool*

*using Goodnotes, a Note-taking App on iPad*

**W**ELCOME TO ISSUE 1 of Language Teaching in China (LTiC) magazine! Following on from the success of the Pilot Issue launched in September 2021, School of Languages (SoL) staff at Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University have worked hard to provide readers with inspiring and informative content within this issue. The articles and reviews included are a testament to how seriously SoL language lecturers take our mission to deliver excellence in student-centred teaching through innovative technology-enhanced language learning and tailored academic skills development. Whether it be trialling the use of creative writing in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom, utilizing approaches to teaching and educational technologies which aim to maximize student engagement, or tailoring our provision and pedagogical approaches to cater to the needs of individual learners, SoL language lecturers are always ready and willing to trial and reflect on new approaches in their day-to-day teaching such that they can be both innovative and inspiring language teachers. The many and varied contributions within this issue also demonstrate a commitment on behalf of SoL staff to disseminate best practice more widely in the hope that LTiC Magazine can inspire other EAP and Modern Languages practitioners both nationally and internationally. It is therefore our hope that this issue of LTiC, as well as future issues, will continue to provide a platform through which educators within the SoL, as well as at other institutions within China and beyond, can share their research and best practice so that we can continue to build a community of like-minded individuals.

— LTiC Editorial Team



REFLEC



CTION





**I**N ALL MY years teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to L2 English students in China, I have often wondered why creative writing isn't included in teaching curricula. Surely, anything which encourages these students to write in English should be welcome. All writing is writing, right? OK, so I am a bit biased - I love a good yarn. From the way Darth Vader is revealed to be Luke Skywalker's father in Star Wars, to the way Jane Austen, in 1815, subverted conventional perceptions of women with Emma. But it's not just me. Advances in Neuroscience have cemented what even kids know: stories are important. From as far back as 3000 BC, storytelling has played an important role in shaping society. Fiction has flourished and matured into a sophisticated art form and we are desperate for more – like a drop of water in the searing desert heat. Surely there's a way in which EAP teachers could tap into this primal thirst?

Well, writing stories can be expressive (Elbow, 1981) and could encourage students to practice writing without worrying about academic conventions. Sounds good, right? However, herein lies conflict: academic writing IS concerned with certain rules and conventions (Allison, 2004) and a resistance to creative writing is understandable. Alas, creative writing is not welcome at the academic party. Left, instead, to peer through the window with personal pronouns, idioms and the double-edged sword. I thought nothing of it until, one day, the proverbial lightbulb shone. I was enrolled on a creative writing course and happened to be learning about Narration, which is the way a story unfolds through sentences, paragraphs and chapters (Campbell, 2003). If done well, this leads to a satisfying, and justified, resolution. Is this so dissimilar to coherence in academic writing? Argumentative essays are supposed to unfold in a logical way and lead to a justified stance. I felt the floodgates open and decided to explore if EAP tutors could exploit students' innate affinity with stories to the betterment of their learning. This article will reflect on that journey: how creative writing could be used as a tool to improve academic writing in L2 English. I will specifically comment on a few tasks which suggest a connection between elements of creative and academic writing and show how creative writing could merit an invitation to the academic writing party.



# Creative Writing

*a Way to Nurture  
Academic Writing Skills*

**Parag Dandgey** is an English Language Lecturer at XJTLU. He is interested in encouraging students to write stories in order to sharpen their academic skills. His current research focus is on developing creative writing materials that hone critical thinking in the classroom.

[parag.dandgey@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:parag.dandgey@xjtlu.edu.cn)





# Conflict in Academic Writing

Before I advocate for creative writing, an important question should be asked: does the teaching of academic writing need any support? My experience has shown that some Chinese undergraduate students struggle to write academic essays in English. I invite you to think through the perspective of a student: you are Chinese with low L2 English proficiency and are studying at an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) university. All undergraduate courses are delivered in English and you are required to learn to write academic essays. How do you feel? You have to write in a language in which you lack proficiency, in a style with which you are unaccustomed and on topics with which you are unfamiliar. On top of this, you need to evaluate sources and think critically. It's hard enough to write a grammatically correct complex sentence when English is your second language, never mind writing a university level academic essay. It's my belief that creative writing could not only mitigate these stressful factors, but also encourage students to develop their higher order thinking.

## Ideas

OK, so how exactly can creative writing help? I'll start with ideas, which are usually the backbone of a story (Campbell, 2003). Authors are able to turn one idea into a litany of literature. The hugely popular Three Body Problem trilogy is centred on one simple notion: what if humans made contact with aliens? Similarly, the modest question 'What if we all lived in a computer simulation?' led to The Matrix. In order to find ideas, writers explore questions. Is this so different from what students do when embarking on an essay? Students need a chance to investigate a topic in order to generate ideas. Armed with this connection, I

Image. 1



- Describe the photo
- What?
- Who?
- When?
- Why?
- How?







created a task which allowed students to simply write in response to a prompt. A first prompt was a snippet of the song One More Time by Daft Punk. A second prompt was visual (Image. 1). I ran the task in four parts. Firstly, I ensured students had a pen, paper and had placed their phones, on silent, in their bags. Secondly, I told students that I would give them a prompt and that they had to write what they saw, heard, felt and imagined. In the next stage, I introduced the prompt and let the students write for around 10 minutes. In the final stage, students were asked to use ideas generated from the prompts to write free verse poetry. Free verse poetry lacks rigid rhyme schemes or sentence patterns; therefore, writers are afforded a great deal of freedom. It seemed a prudent choice for this activity.

OK, so before I reflect on the task, I would like to offer the theoretical grounding that informed my design. Freewriting (Elbow, 1981) is a writing exercise where individuals are asked to simply write without worrying about grammar, form or genre conventions. This has its roots in expressivist writing and allows individuals to gain insights into their writing. Such insights could include critical thinking. Basically, students pour the contents of their mind onto the page and through this engage in higher order functions.



Image 1: Writing prompt to generate ideas (Anonymous, 1810).

Image 2: Students expressing ideas based on a prompt

Image. 2



They don't have to focus on omitting personal pronouns, using a range of complex sentence structures or including topic sentences: the ideas are key. It is essentially a brainstorming activity, which you have probably all used, but with a creative tinge.

So, what did I observe? Well, it seemed that the freewriting opened the gates for a stream of consciousness, while the prompts unconsciously triggered deeper thinking. Students seemed to enjoy the freedom: I noticed smiles as they wrote! I had never seen students smile while writing before. I saw that students were able to draw on the ideas they wrote to create a poem. A few students suggested that the freewriting felt spontaneous. When asked about the poem, some students hinted that they were unrestrained by having to use a specific structure. Others implied that without the preceding task, they wouldn't have been able to write a poem. I believe this translates well to academic writing. This freewriting encourages students to focus their thoughts on a prompt without worrying about the end goal - such as an essay - whereas writing the poem allowed them to develop the ideas. I chose poetry because I did not want students to try and shoehorn their ideas into a given structure. I just wanted them to focus on developing ideas and practice unfiltered thinking. Such a task could help students formulate ideas in a more creative way before embarking on more academic topics. Of course, these findings are anecdotal, but they do hint at a future role for creative writing - which is the purpose of this article.

Furthermore, I was also surprised at the quality of student freewriting and poetry; I didn't

expect such insightful expression. There exists a fallacy whereby if a person manipulates English poorly, they must lack intelligence. Translated to academic writing, I believe we assume a student cannot think critically or write a coherent essay because their English is poor. We conflate poor English ability with poor intelligence. Students may think deeply, but could struggle to express this in English, and in an academic form. I mean, when have they really had an opportunity to use an expressivist form of writing in English? I would suggest that the writing they have had to do in English over the years has always had an academic focus. Perhaps these students just need a chance to breathe and explore writing in English without pressure. I, too, have fallen victim to this fallacy and judged my students harshly over the years. This task has shown me



Image 3. The Milk Tea problem (Iris, 2018).



that students are capable of a lot more than I gave them credit for: they just needed an opportunity. To continue with my metaphor, creative writing may deserve a spot on the waiting list to the academic party.

## Characterisation

OK, so that was ideas, now I'll explore Characterisation. This is where characters are developed in terms of personality, history and appearance. It also includes the way in which a character changes through a story (Mullen, 2006). For me, this is a form of critical thinking: to think through the perspectives of other characters in order to understand them. Isn't this what students do when using sources or

including perspectives of multiple stakeholders in an essay? I asked students to complete a character sheet. This task asked students to think deeply about a new character: basically, imagine they are the character. Some of the information students were asked to include were job, personality traits, hidden talents, deepest fears and greatest desire in life. Then I wanted the students to imagine a situation through the eyes of their character, so I gave them a problem to solve. I asked 'Imagine you (the character) really wanted a milk tea, but the queues outside the shop were massive. What would you do?'

Again, I would like to add some theory that underpins this task. Narrative Imagination is where a person tries to walk in the shoes of another person. More precisely, imagining oneself as another encourages deeper thinking (Nussbaum, 1996). The idea with this task is that students imagine themselves as another person or being which stimulates their critical thinking; this process, as we know, is an important component of academic writing.

I was impressed with the depth of engagement students had with this task. They thought out some pretty interesting characters. From a detective who struggles with immortality and just wants to be help people, to a young pop star who is famous for singing, but wants to be a doctor. The internal struggles of these characters were hinted at in the character sheets, but truly developed in the milk tea task. In one story, a detective offers to help the barista make more milk tea in an aim to help all the customers. The young pop star, afraid







Image 4. The Princess and the Bear prompt (Plotnikova, 2013).

Image 5. Students writing as a princess and

of being spotted, wears a mask and layers of winter clothing and politely waits at the back of the queue. That is until she is spotted and sprints to the comfort of her own home. These stories were in keeping with the traits noted in the character sheets. When asked about the task, students stated they enjoyed “being” another person and that the character sheet helped them think deeply.

I was so enamoured by the response to this task and its implications in promoting critical thinking that I devised another. I initially showed students a picture of a princess and a bear and asked students to write a short piece (Image 4). All my students wrote mainly in the first person as the princess: that she is sad, or lonely, or is escaping a horrible father. They

were instinctively drawn to the perspective of the princess. I then challenged my students to write a story in the third person which included both perspectives: princess and bear. The students laughed, but acquiesced. I found the results to be fascinating. Students were able to write a story in the third person and really flesh out both characters. This manifested itself as thoughts, and feelings, of both characters. One wrote about how the princess was out hunting, but fell in love with the bear. Another wrote about how the bear was trapped and going insane and that the princess was also trapped in a life she loathed. In this latter story the characters gave each other what they needed: hope and understanding. Burroway et al. (2019) stated that writing through the third person helps a writer really understand a character and





and a bear

appreciate their points of view. My students were certainly challenged to do this.

The Milk Tea and Princess and the Bear tasks encourage students to think as others: an opportunity they seldom get on an EAP course, but clearly benefit from. By using such Narrative Imagination (Nussbaum, 1996) while writing through other characters, students could stimulate their critical thinking. This could make students more adept at incorporating different stakeholder views in argumentative essays - a key aspect of critical thinking that in turn could help students evaluate sources for credibility, accuracy, reliability and bias.

It seems to me that creative writing is beginning to sound a bit more academic, so how about a

provisional invite to that academic party? Say a couple of weeks before students submit their summative writing coursework? Maybe this task could come in, strut its stuff and show students the importance of perspectives. Who knows - students may then include the perspectives of various stakeholders for a more critical essay. Something my students have always struggled with!

## Narration

So that's idea development and critical thinking covered. I will now talk about an area of creative writing which could benefit both: Narration. This is the way a story is told and develops through plot twists, character development and an ending. Vogler (1992) posited The Hero's Journey as an archetypal structure that humans intuitively relate to. In this model, a hero must venture away from their home due to a pressing need. The hero faces obstacles, but ultimately succeeds. The hero then returns home with a gift. Often this gift is simply character growth. Most stories follow this structure because it resonates with humans (Campbell, 2003). We see ourselves as the hero. The Hero's Journey can be applied to most stories through history. This includes the widely accepted first account of a written story Epic of Gilgamesh from the Mesopotamian era around 3000BC. Here's a challenge: imagine a Disney animated film or Marvel superhero film and see if you can map some of the Hero's Journey to the main character (Figure. 1).

Surprised? This is not an accident: it's science. We are charmed by heroes - and film producers



feed on this hunger. The way a film, or novel, unfolds in an unexpected way is rather thrilling. These plot twists engage the audience on a primal level as humans love conflict. There is a reason most stories are not about happy people. The Sherlock Holmes series and other detective stories are packed with twists: some more successful than others. Burroway et al. (2019) and Mullen (2006) explain that a story, and associated twists, must present in a believable way and should be based on all that has gone before. This is most true for the climax and resolution of a story. How many times have you gotten to the end of a story and thought 'That character wouldn't do that!' or 'This doesn't make sense!?' An ending is difficult to write. Ernest Hemingway once said he had thousands of unfinished stories because he couldn't find resolutions which satisfied him, let alone a reader. This is echoed with numerous writers. It is this resolution which interests me the most and could connect to academic writing because idea development and critical thinking are heavily employed.

This task involved a bit more input. I showed

students a couple of videos: one was a short Disney clip called For the Birds where a large bird encroaches on the home of a few smaller birds. I asked the students to imagine this clip as The Hero's Journey. In order to cement this intuitive structure, I asked the students to think of one of their favourite films and map it to The Hero's Journey. The students were amazed with the latter task. Two of the most well-articulated examples they gave were

Ant Man and Mermaid. To give you an idea of how these films draw our innate connection to stories and The Hero's Journey, I will explain their plots briefly. In Ant Man,

the main character is distant from his daughter. The hero is called to adventure: of being Ant Man and defeating a villain. He is initially sceptical, but crosses the threshold and joins the adventure. He encounters challenges

and eventually undergoes a transformation into a better man. In the end he defeats the enemy, atones for being an absent father and returns home. He receives the gift of his child's love. Stephen Chow's Mermaid is the story of mermaids who live in isolation from human society. In this film, the female protagonist is a mermaid who is often belittled. She is called to adventure when a rich business tycoon plans to develop the land beneath which the mermaids

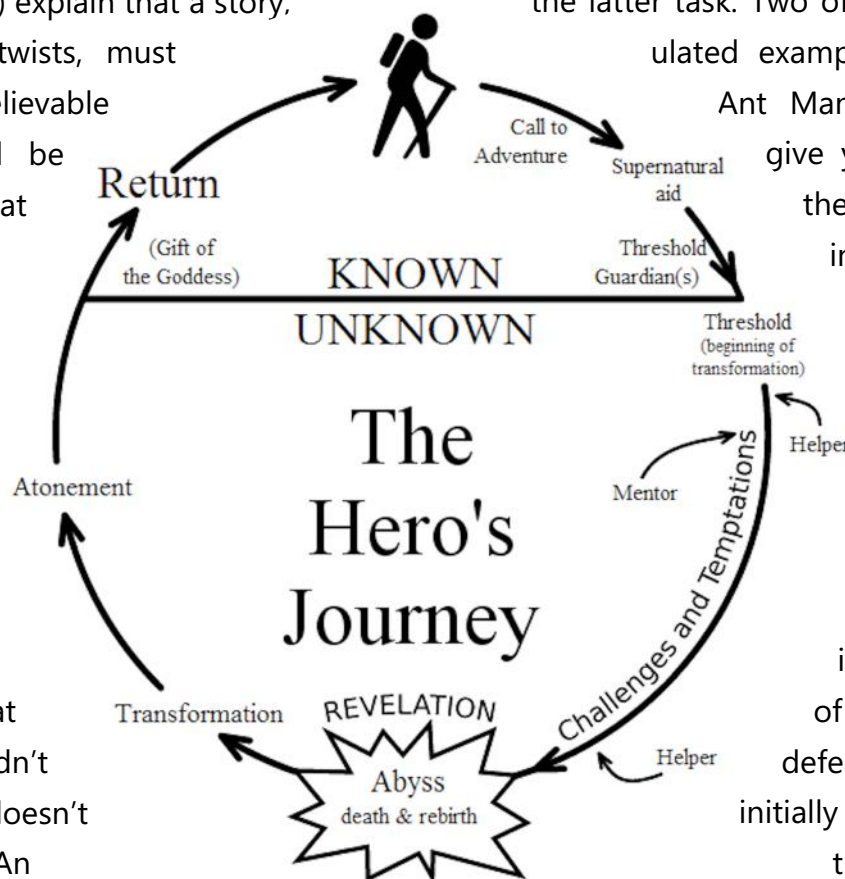


Figure 1. A visual representation of The Hero's Journey (Savage, 2017)



live. She reluctantly agrees to engage with the businessman and crosses the threshold into the human world. She faces temptation in the form of loving the businessman and undergoes a transformation: of thinking that humans are not that bad. In the end, she returns to her original world having convinced the businessman to cease his construction plans. The ending is based on the all that has gone before and is believable. The writer has developed the plot and justified the ending based on the information in the story.

Of all the tasks I piloted, the students seemed to enjoy this the most. They were genuinely flabbergasted after understanding the role of The Hero's Journey in storytelling and how they already seemed to know about it. This task seemed to empower the students. After students had created character sheets to flesh out at least one character, they used freewriting to jot down all the ideas they had in terms of a problem, plot, twists and character. The image of students frantically writing down all the ideas has stuck with me. Some students had written hundreds of words by way of notes in the space of fifteen minutes. Usually, my students are inconvenienced when asked to write in class: most will do it because they are required, and some will even enjoy it, but I have rarely seen joy in their production. With this task, students seemed to enjoy writing. After creating a character and freewriting ideas, they created a structure based on The Hero's Journey. Having to use such a structure made them think deeply about how a character develops and whether or not this is in keeping with the character traits. One student wrote about an assassin sent on a mission only to be drawn into a revolution against her employer.



Image 6. Students expressing themselves

The way this student connected moments in the story to the development of the character was exciting: from a disciplined employee to a free-thinking human engaging with her emotions. The conflict played well within the story. For the resolution, the assassin becomes fully immersed in her new role as member of the revolution. She returns to her original world and turns on her employers. The ending was believable and drew from character and plot development. Critical thinking stimulated by Narrative Imagination - the ability to think through the perspective of others - was evidenced. In another story, a student wrote about an animosity between pigs and humans. A pig named Yang is unwillingly transformed into a human by an evil wizard. Yang, in human form, is shunned by his pig friends and leaves the pig home. At first, Yang is resistant to such change and sets out to reverse the spell through the help of a mentor - a part of The Hero's Journey (Figure. 1). Through the journey, Yang encounters obstacles, and love, and appreciates the life of a human. The transformation is complete, and Yang accepts the gift of humanity and is returned to his pig form.



Yang returns home and convinces the other pigs of the value of humans. The animosity between pigs and humans ends. Again, the resolution made sense based on the story so far. Had Yang continued hating humans, the emotional growth of the character would have been overlooked and the resolution unjustified. Clearly, this student thought critically about this character and decided on the most believable resolution.

So, how could this task be useful? Firstly, it could assist idea development. Remember when I said that students are being asked to write in an academic structure on topics with which they are unfamiliar? No? I don't blame you. In essence, a task which focuses on The Hero's Journey could give students an opportunity to follow a structure they are intuitively familiar with. This could make it easier for them to follow an academic structure in future. It could also strengthen their grasp of idea development, coherence and cohesion because the story must connect. In terms of critical thinking, when students are writing an ending of a story, they have to harness information from characters and plot. They must make it believable. They are drawing from information in the story to achieve this ending. They are basically justifying their stance: a keen element of critical thinking in argumentative essays. This task clearly links to multiple aspects of academic writing. As such, writing stories could play a role in different parts of the writing curriculum. Perhaps when students struggle with dense materials, creative writing could come to the academic party and help out. Creative writing is clearly flexible, it

just needs to be asked. It wants to be asked.

## Resolution

I'll be the first to admit that the connections presented are inconclusive. This has not been action research, but rather an exploration into the way creative writing could be used within EAP and how it may support academic writing. It leans heavily on my own passion for stories, and the intrinsic affinity we, as humans, have with storytelling. It seems wasteful to not harness the innate power of storytelling to positively impact students' learning. By removing the pressure of academic conventions, if only for a few tasks, students can write freely and express themselves and thus concentrate on higher order skills. Students could sharpen these skills and apply them to future academic writing. I believe future research into this area is warranted. It would be interesting to run an intervention study which quantitatively assesses the impact of such creative writing tasks on summative essays. Although creative writing might currently be an under-appreciated potential guest at the academic party, I hope that one day it's not only welcome, but considered a guest of honour. Sometimes outsiders have the biggest impact on history.



# References

Allison, D. (2004). Creativity, students' academic writing, and EAP: exploring comments on writing in an English language degree programme. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 3(3), 191-209.

Anonymous. (1810). Snow Scene with a Chinese Family [Painting]. Retrieved from <https://faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/en/collections/6688/>

Burroway, J., Stuckey-French, E., & Stuckey-French, N. (2019). *Writing fiction: A guide to narrative craft*. University of Chicago Press

Campbell, J. (2003). *The hero's journey: Joseph Campbell on his life and work* (Vol. 7). New World Library.

Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing with power: techniques for mastering the writing process*. NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Iris. (2018). [Photograph of long queues outside Tiger Sugar]. Retrieved from <https://lacrucci.com/taiwanese-bubble-tea/>

Mullen, J. (2006). *How Novels Work*. Penguin.

Nussbaum, M. (1996). Compassion: The basic social emotion. *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 13(1), 27-58.

Plotnikova, K. (2013). [Photograph of a princess and a bear]. Retrieved from <https://500px.com/photo/138802439/-by-katerina-plotnikova>

Savage, J. (2017). *The Hero's Journey*. Retrieved from <https://jeremydavidsavage.com/the-heros-journey/>

Vogler, C. (1992). *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structures for Screenwriters and Storytellers*. M. Wiese Productions, Studio City, CA.





**Unravel the  
Mystery of Teaching  
Speaking  
in EAP Classes**





**Yuting Zha** is currently the Deputy Head of Division of Year 1 EAP Foundation, and the team leader of ELS (English Language Support) in CS. Yuting obtained her MA TESOL degree from King's College London and CELTA Certificate in 2018, and is now a fellow member of FHEA.

*Yuting.Zha@xjtlu.edu.cn*

## Introduction

**S**PEAKING AS ONE of the most important skills in second language learning and teaching, can often be overlooked in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classes. In XJTLU, EAP classes for Year 1 students usually focus on developing their general EAP knowledge, for example, writing academic paragraphs and short essays, and giving presentations. By applying a student-centered approach in classrooms, students are usually given a lot of time in class to discuss with their peers and talk to teachers. However, it is not uncommon for teachers to see disappointing results in speaking exams. One reason that cannot be neglected is that the methods used to teach speaking skills usually do not match students' problems in speaking. This article aims to explore the problems that exist in student speaking and teachers' strategies of teaching speaking in current EAP classrooms at XJTLU, and some possible methods to increase the effectiveness of teaching speaking so that students can improve their grades in speaking exams.

## Background Information and Context

As Kayi (2006) suggests, teaching speaking means that teachers should teach students to:

- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns.
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called fluency (Nunan, 2003). (Section 2, "What is 'Teaching Speaking'? ")

Most of the aspects mentioned are reflected in the speaking coursework descriptor that has been used in the English Language Center



at XJTLU. Taking the speaking coursework descriptor for EAP027 as an example, student performance is assessed based on five aspects: Task, Fluency and Coherence, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Pronunciation. To be more specific, 'Task' focuses mostly on the quality of the response. For instance, the response would be more meaningful if there were details, examples or explanations. Apart from 'Task', the other four aspects are related to 'Language'. To be more specific, 'Fluency and Coherence' focuses on whether students are able to speak at an even speed, and whether there is a natural use of signposting language; 'Vocabulary' emphasizes

the range and accuracy of students' vocabulary and if they can reformulate language without frequent repetition; 'Grammar' highlights the importance of avoiding simple grammar mistakes, the mixed-use of simple, compound and complex sentences, and mistakes not impeding communication. The last aspect, 'Pronunciation', raises students' awareness of pronouncing sounds correctly, and using prosodic features, which refers to intonation.

However, the problem that has been discovered in our EAP classrooms here at XJTLU is that students often do not get enough

## MINIMAL PAIRS

Listen to your teacher carefully. Which city do you finally arrive at?

### Individual Sounds: Pronunciation Journey!

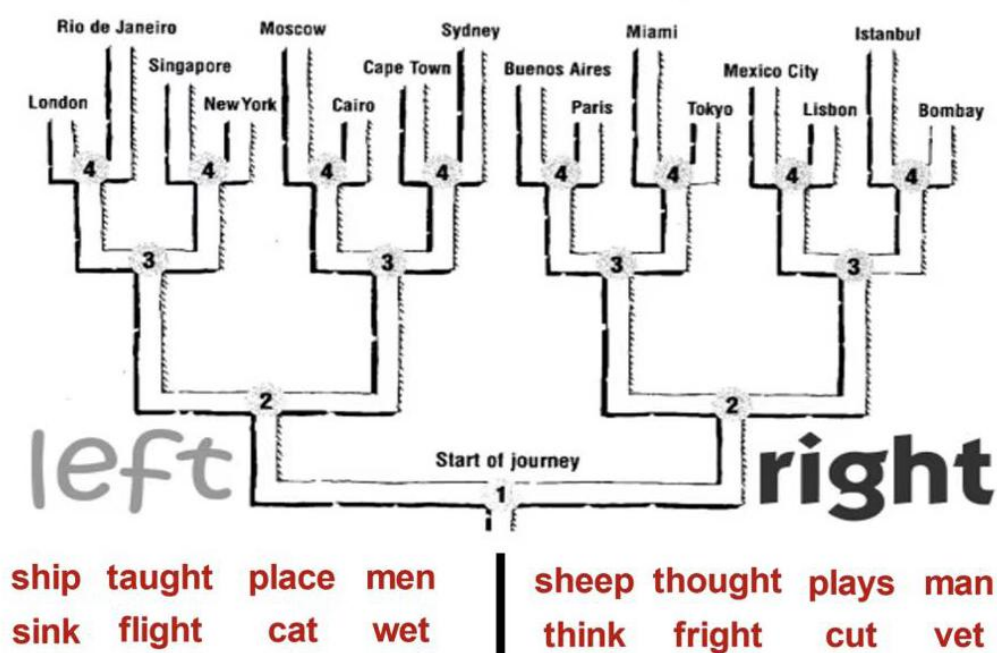


Image 1: Activities like this can help students identify the differences between similar sounds.



focused practice in terms of these five aspects. Additionally, it is believed that it is unfair if students are assessed based on the above five aspects without being properly taught them. It is also worth pointing out that, from my perspective, effective teaching strategies for speaking should aim at improving not only student communication skills, but also their exam performance. Therefore, the next section will discuss the problems and some possible teaching methods that can benefit both areas in detail.

## Student Problems and Possible Teaching Practices

This section will elaborate on some major problems regarding XJTLU students' speaking in the five aspects mentioned in the Speaking Coursework Descriptor and corresponding teaching methods to potentially address the issues.

### Task

In order to get high marks in 'Task', students have to produce highly relevant, or even insightful responses, and include detailed examples, explanations and/or opinions. To

be more specific, 'Task' assesses clarity, organisation (not about the use of cohesive devices here, but reference to the content per se) and depth of ideas. However, either in classroom practices or speaking exams, it is not difficult to discover that students sometimes struggle to produce meaningful examples or explanations. For example, when preparing for the speaking exam using practice questions, one of my students on EAP027 gave me the following response to the question: 'Describe your favourite teacher':

'My favourite teacher is my high school math teacher. He is humorous and he teaches me a lot. He helps me a lot in my study and my daily life. I like him very much. I also respect him because he is very knowledgeable. He is very patient. He answers our questions always very patiently. He is so nice and we all love him very much.'

This is a common response teachers can hear from their students. The problem of idea organisation is that different points are not organised in a clear and logical way, and details are often absent. It can be seen that students sometimes raise multiple meaningful points but lack in-depth explanation, which can make their argument weak. For instance, 'He is humorous and he teaches me a lot' can be separated into two different ideas with corresponding examples or explanations, instead of coming together in one sentence.

In order to guide students to generate a more



effective answer, the first aspect is making them aware of what has been mentioned above – the messy organisation of ideas. Next, giving students clues to add examples or explanations can help them realize what kind of details teachers expect. Teachers can simply guide students by asking questions such as ‘Why do you think he is humorous? What did he do?’, or ‘Why did you say he helped you a lot in study and life? What did he do?’ Then, teachers can ask students to generate another response based on the feedback received. After that, reflection is needed to help them identify the differences between their previous answer and the new one. Or teachers can show students a possible structure to take notes while thinking about the question, i.e., What, Where, When, How, Who, Why. Adding some details to each aspect would be helpful for organising answers. Please see image 2 for a slide used in my classroom to illustrate how this structure can help students organise their responses (see image 2).

## Fluency & Coherence

Students who achieve high marks in this section need to speak at length at an even speed or without noticeable effort. Natural cohesive devices should also be used in speech. It seems that fluency cannot be taught in the classroom, but can only be achieved through much practice. However, some activities can still help with developing student fluency in classrooms, for instance, the 3-2-1 activity. In this activity,

### Part 1: Describe Questions – Ex

**Q:** Describe your favourite food.

**What** – Hot pot

**Where** – I first had it in.../You can find it in

**When** – The first time I had it.../Last time I

**How** – My roommate from Chongqing took

**Who** – We had hot pot together/with family

**Why** – I am a big fan of spicy food/The dipp

**Other** – It is said that Emperor Qianlong of t  
the same taste in food!

Image 2: Showing students possible ways of organizing responses.

students are given one topic and will talk about it for three times. For the first time, students speak for 3 minutes to another student. The second time, students speak the same content for 2 minutes to a new partner. The last time, students only have 1 minute to talk and to another classmate again. The point of this activity is to let students talk within a gradually reduced time, so students are more familiar with what they want to say as the activity goes on; they need to be selective with what they say in order to finish their speech in the final minute.

Another possible activity is group discussion, which is also perhaps one of the most popular classroom activities where a student-centered approach is applied. As Kayi (2006) suggests, successful speaking activities should involve every student, and teachers should try to create an environment in which students can work



## Example note-taking

a lot of countries  
had it...

me to a hot pot place  
y or friends/...

ing sauce is amazing

the Qing Dynasty loved hot pot. We share



collaboratively, and use authentic materials and shared knowledge to exchange ideas in the target language. Therefore, to make group discussions more successful, teachers can set goals for each group and each individual student within a group to motivate them during the discussion. For instance, teachers can ask each group to give 2-3 ideas after the discussion, or give each student within a group a different role, i.e. Student A can be a notetaker who writes down all the ideas, Student B & C could be idea-contributors who provide ideas only by talking instead of writing, Student D can be a researcher who does research on the Internet about the discussion topic. By allocating tasks to individuals, students participate in the discussion with a purpose that allows them to be more focused during the discussion. Otherwise, students can easily lose interest or concentration in the discussion, especially in a relatively

bigger group discussion.

Kayi (2006) also mentions several activities that can be used to teach speaking more effectively. It is believed that story completion could be an enjoyable activity to improve fluency. Teachers can start the story by narrating a few sentences and then stop. Each student has to give 2-4 sentences from the point where the previous one stopped. The reason why the activity can improve fluency is that students need to react quickly or at least within a relatively short time when the previous student stops, and this is a skill many students need urgently. With the ability to think and react quickly, they should be able to avoid long silences in speaking exams and thus improve fluency.

Apart from fluency, another aspect that students will be assessed on is the use of cohesive devices. The overemphasis on academic writing seems to prevent students from understanding the differences in the use of language in writing and speaking. Consequently, students tend to use formal linking words that they often use in academic writing in speaking, which is not ideal. Giving students alternative linkers that work better in speaking can illustrate the differences between formal and informal signposting language. For example, formal linkers like 'in addition to', 'furthermore' are seldom heard in spoken language, but 'also', 'as well as', 'another aspect is...' are very commonly used in speaking.



## Vocabulary

Vocabulary is often deemed as an essential part of language learning because no message can be communicated without vocabulary. Here at XJTLU, 'Chinglish expressions' - which are usually considered unnatural and unidiomatic - can often be heard in students' speech, as the majority of students are from mainland China. Some examples of typical Chinglish expressions are:

- 'He is playing his cell phone.' (He is on his phone.)
- 'I exercise my English every day.' (I practice my English every day.)
- 'What's your problem?' (Do you have any questions?)
- 'My father is good at drinking.' (My father can hold his liquor.)
- 'I'll leave first/I'm gonna go first.' (I'm heading out/I've gotta go/I'm leaving.)
- 'Teacher, can I go to your office when you are convenient?' (Teacher, can I go to your office when you are free/available?)

One reason that results in the above issue is the over-use of Chinese-English dictionaries. One popular Chinese-English dictionary among Chinese students, Youdao dictionary, can sometimes provide students with inaccurate information. For example, the dictionary tells the users that 'play cell phone' is the correct way of saying 'on someone's phone', which is not true. Although Youdao dictionary is easy to use and can give students the Chinese

definition of a word immediately, the misleading search results can be problematic. To solve the problem, teachers can encourage students to use both a Chinese-English dictionary and an English-English dictionary, so one can complement the other. Teachers can ask students to search for the same word in a Chinese-English dictionary and an English-English dictionary and see what different information they can get from the two different dictionaries. In this way, students should be able to see the value of using an English-English dictionary because it can provide users with a more accurate English definition, as well as some example phrases and sentences to show how the word can be used in different contexts. Another useful tool that can help students better use words and collocations is Bing International. Students can search for the collocation they are not sure about and see if there are any results. If there are only a few results, it probably indicates that the collocation is not frequently used, which means that students can judge whether the expression is natural or not by looking at how many results the search engine shows.

Another problem is that a large number of students rely on verbatim translation when they speak English, while some expressions cannot be translated accurately to another language. Students have to develop the ability to think and speak in English instead of thinking in Chinese and then translating those ideas into English. However, it is relatively normal for second language learners to forget or not know the word in the target language. As a result, being able to 'paraphrase' what they want to say



appears to be necessary. 'Paraphrasing' is often emphasized in the teaching of academic writing because students need to demonstrate their understanding of original texts. Nevertheless, 'paraphrasing' can also be especially useful in speaking, if teachers can make students aware of the fact that they do not have to know every word in English in order to communicate their ideas smoothly. One way teachers can do this is to guide students to say things that they may not have the vocabulary for. For example, once in my class, students had a discussion about things people do that they do not understand, and some students intended to say that they do not understand those who indulge in star chasing. However, some of them did not know the proper expression for the word. Instead, they easily gave up and started to speak Chinese so that other students understood what they wanted to express. Obviously, this may have little positive impact on their English language proficiency. One technique that I applied in my classroom was to ask students relevant questions to encourage them to think and help them express themselves, and sometimes questions can be formed from easier to more difficult ones. For example, to guide students to talk about 'star chasing' without necessarily having to mention this phrase, I asked them questions including 'What do these people usually do? Do they spend a lot of money? What are their parents' possible attitudes to it? Why do you think they do this? Do you think it is totally good or bad? Do you think everybody has the right to do this? Do teenagers need to be careful about this?.....' Through this process, students in that class finally generated a very

comprehensive description of star chasers without mentioning the word 'star-chasing' or anything similar. This method was originally inspired by the avoidance behaviour in second language learners described by Schachter (1974) and Kleinmann (1977, 1978). In fact, Laufer and Eliasson (2008) mention that the avoidance behaviour can be caused by the differences and similarities between the two languages, and the complexity of the second language features, which can be considered as negative. However, applying avoidance behaviour can benefit L2 learners. It was often found that to avoid difficult words or structures, some L2 learners use simpler expressions instead which can facilitate communication. In short, being able to avoid the complex use of language and use simpler expressions instead can make a more competitive second language learner, and this is worth introducing and teaching in classrooms.

## Grammar

Grammar is probably the one that receives the least attention in teaching speaking when the importance of developing communicative skills has long been emphasized. People have to admit that grammar mistakes are common in both non-native and native speakers' speech, and they can exist as long as they do not impede communication. This belief is also held by a number of teachers at the English Language Centre at XJTLU based on my observation and discussion with colleagues, which caused some teachers to pay little attention to simple grammar mistakes in student speech in class.



However, at XJTLU, where grammar is one of the criteria that teachers use to assess student speaking, it seems unfair for teachers not to pay attention to grammar mistakes in student speech at all. From my classroom observation, most students make only a few simple grammar mistakes when they write, but when they speak, they forget everything about grammar. In speaking exams, many students struggle to achieve a higher band on grammar, mainly because simple grammar mistakes occur too frequently, including subject-verb agreement, past tense use, and comparatives and superlatives, arguably due to their limited chance to speak outside of the classroom. Thus, creating a context in which they can use the target grammar point in speaking seems extremely necessary. For example, if a lesson's focus is on past tense, activities designed for that class should involve sufficient speaking practice which would allow students to use the past tense. It is also suggested that students are given some input before they start practicing the past tense in speaking.

## Pronunciation

A great number of students struggle to pronounce individual sounds and word stress successfully, and speak with intonation and emotion. Some sounds that are typically difficult for Chinese learners, such as /eɪ/, /æ/ and /e/, can be practiced by giving students minimal pairs to pronounce - see image 1, p20. Additionally, sentence stress and intonation can be practiced through activities like role plays. If

the topic of the lesson is shopping language, for example, teachers can play students a conversation between a shop assistant and a customer. Then with a transcript, students can imitate the intonation and practice acting the conversation out with a partner naturally rather than robot-like. Students usually enjoy these unconventional and engaging activities.

## Conclusion

This article has considered some issues that currently exist in teaching speaking in EAP classrooms at XJTLU and provided some possible ideas for teaching speaking more effectively. All the methods have been applied in my own classroom and they turned out to be successful and popular among students - students have reported some positive feedback about the methods mentioned earlier, and it has also been noticed that their responses become more logical and meaningful after trying out the above strategies. However, due to the limited contact hours per week and the amount of information teachers need to cover in class, it might be difficult to teach all five aspects in a systematic way. One possible method is that, instead of using a couple of lessons to teach all these techniques or skills, teachers can embed the teaching of speaking into everyday teaching. For instance, after a discussion activity, teachers can write some common pronunciation or grammar mistakes on the board and let students correct them. As a result, students can hopefully improve their speaking skills in a steady and sustainable way.



# References

Kayi, H. (2006) 'Teaching Speaking: Activities to promote speaking in a second language', The Internet TESL Journal, 12(11). Available at: <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kayi-TeachingSpeaking.html> (Accessed: 13 December 2022)

Kleinmann, H.H. (1977) 'Avoidance behavior in adult second language acquisition', Language Learning, 27(1), pp. 93-107. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1977.tb00294.x> (Accessed: 22 January 2022)

Kleinmann, H.H. (1978) 'The strategy of avoidance in adult second language acquisition', In Ritchie, W. C. (ed.), Second language acquisition research. New York: Academic, pp. 157-174.

Laufer, B. and Eliasson, S. (1993) 'What Causes Avoidance in L2 Learning: L1-L2 Difference, L1-L2 Similarity, or L2 Complexity?', Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15(1), pp. 35-48. doi: 10.1017/S0272263100011657.

Nunan, D. (2003) Practical English Language Teaching. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Schachter, J. (1974) 'An error in error analysis', Language Learning, 24(2), pp. 205-214. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1974.tb00502.x> (Accessed: 22 January 2022)



# The Evolution of XJTLU's Pre-Sessional English Programme



**Sam Evans** is the Head of Pre-Sessional English and the Module Convenor of in-sessional academic speaking at Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University in Suzhou, China.

[sam.evans@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:sam.evans@xjtlu.edu.cn)



# Introduction

**M**Y FIRST TASTE of pre-sessional EAP was back in the summer of 2008 at Cardiff University. Looking back, I didn't have a clear idea of what EAP meant at that time, let alone what pre-sessional English (or PSE) meant. Up until that point in my career, July and August had been my time for fun – choosing whichever general English summer school I fancied and teaching mixed-nationality classes of highly motivated teenagers from all around the world. Games were the order of the day in lessons, where content was decided based on enjoyment rather than meeting any specific student needs. Sports in the afternoons, entertainment in the evenings, and trips to places of local interest at weekends. It never felt like work at all. Why was I giving all this up to spend my summer stuck in a dusty university classroom repeating dry strategies of how to write reference lists, structure paragraphs, and evaluate sources (or whatever it was that EAP meant)? Apparently, there were real stakes too. Previously, my only concern was whether students were having fun, whereas now students who failed my course wouldn't be able to enter their chosen degree programme. Why did I need this stress? The answer, of course, was money – 2008 was the year of the global financial crisis after all – and the prospect of a 'serious' job with a 'proper salary' was too good to pass up. In the UK, pre-sessionals have long been seen as the gateway to getting a permanent EAP position, and so it proved for me as by the end of the summer I'd agreed to stay on as a permanent fixture of Cardiff University's EAP division. Little did I know back then that by 2022 I would be about to begin my fifteenth consecutive summer working on a pre-sessional course! Over the last decade and a half, I might have completely forgotten what a summer holiday looks like (cue the tiny violins), but instead I've been lucky enough to work with some truly excellent pre-sessional managers and teachers at each of the four different universities I've taught at (Cardiff University, Durham University, Newcastle University, and now Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University), and it's on their collective expertise and wisdom that I attempt to draw while leading the pre-sessional programme at XJTLU.





Sam's first ever PSE classes, 2008. With overhead projector in the corner for period detail.



## A Brief History of PSE

For those who haven't spent the major part of their adult life working on them, what are pre-sessionals anyway? Gillette (2021) defines pre-sessional as "...an EAP course held before the students start their academic study, ... normally held during the summer and vary[ing] in length from 12 to 4 weeks ... They can be general or specific, but the best ones will focus on the courses that the students hope to study." In other words, a PSE provides a bridge for students who already have an offer to study a particular degree programme, but do not yet meet the required standard of English for direct entry. Such courses therefore focus on

improving, in an intensive period, the specific aspects of students' academic language and skills that will be most necessary for them to survive on their academic courses. Different PSEs may cater to students who plan to study a bachelor's, master's, or PhD (or a combination thereof), and the content may prioritise general or subject-specific academic English; however, all are highly needs-driven.

Pre-sessional EAP provision first emerged in the early 1970s in the UK, with Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, and Newcastle universities responding to the needs of their growing international student body. Over the next two decades, pre-sessionals became a common feature throughout the UK HE industry, with more universities offering such courses and formal accreditation of PSEs by the British Council beginning in the early 1990s. The thirty

year  
in t  
a la  
tha  
allo  
poc  
stu  
the  
fro  
mo  
inte  
Chi  
nat  
  
Uns  
wor  
fro  
wat  
TV  
ma





Years since then has seen a massive explosion in the number of students studying overseas, to a large extent enabled by pre-sessional courses that reduce the obstacle of language proficiency, allowing universities to recruit from a far wider pool. This unprecedented rise in international student numbers has of course coincided with the considerable growth of China's economy from the end of the 20th Century, giving many more Chinese students the opportunity for an international education; in fact, by 2009/10 China had become the largest exporter of international students around the world (Lu, 2018).

Surprisingly, the early pre-sessionals I started working on from 2008 looked rather different from today. All teaching took place onsite, watching a video would involve wheeling a TV and VCR into the classroom, and listening materials were still copied onto cassettes. The

makeup of the typical class looked different too. When I think back to that 2008 pre-sessional, I had small groups (6-10 students) from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, South America, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as from China, all with differing needs but all sharing the ambition of gaining what they saw as a prestigious degree from a British university. Of course, most were also excited at the prospect of living in a new country and experiencing a new culture. Our job wasn't only to introduce these students to the academic language and skills they needed, but also to help them adjust to the cultural challenges of living in the UK and make the most of all the language-learning opportunities on offer. With the number of international students continuing to grow, pre-sessional class sizes crept up; twelve per class soon became the norm, then fourteen, and beyond. The makeup of the average pre-sessional group changed too. As the UK HE market adapted to cater to the rapidly increasing portion of the Chinese middle class reaching university age, cohorts began to be dominated by Chinese students until, by the summer of my final UK PSE course in 2018, I had taught several groups composed of 20+ Chinese students. But the irresistible pull of studying in a UK university remained a constant.

About the same time that I was starting my EAP journey in the UK, a new solution to cater to the demands of this expanding market was emerging. In 2004, The University of Nottingham-Ningbo became the first Sino-foreign partnership university in China. Now students could pursue their dream of achieving a degree from a prestigious UK university while remaining in China and engaging



in a mode of learning that combined the best of Chinese and western educational traditions. When XJTLU opened its doors two years later, the concept of transnational education (TNE) pre-sessionals was clearly catching on, with Hyland (2006, p.4) referring to pre-sessionals as pathway courses “either in [students’] home or in an overseas country...designed to improve students’ academic communication skills in English to the level required for entry into an English medium university”. The pre-sessional *modus operandi* remained the same, but the setting had widened to English medium institutions, rather than just universities based in English-speaking countries. XJTLU began awarding master’s degrees in 2010 and, to cope with the growing postgraduate demand, introduced a pre-sessional in 2016 to enable master’s courses to recruit students with lower English proficiency levels.

## History of PSE at XJTLU

If someone had told me back in 2008 that by 2022 I would be managing a “flipped learning pre-sessional in a transnational institution combining asynchronous self-study organised though the course VLE with synchronous delivery via the BBB online platform”, I would have been entirely discombobulated. Indeed, “pre-sessional” is just about the only word I would have recognised! However, that is the current

state of the XJTLU PSE programme, reflecting the evolution of the industry in general as well as the evolution of XJTLU’s pre-sessional since its inception in 2016, some mutations owing to design and others to circumstance.

A look back at the first iteration of the XJTLU PSE in 2016 reveals two short courses (4 weeks and 6 weeks) comprising 119 students, a figure that grew to 190 students in 2017 (Figure 1). By 2018, the PSE had grown to 247 students, with 98% from China. The course length was extended too, with one 5-week course and one 8-week course, giving time to properly address the needs of students who were 0.5 or 1.0 IELTS bands respectively below their course entry requirements. Certain other essential characteristics of a PSE course were introduced that summer too, including a pre-course teacher induction and a student social programme, changes that were consolidated in 2019.

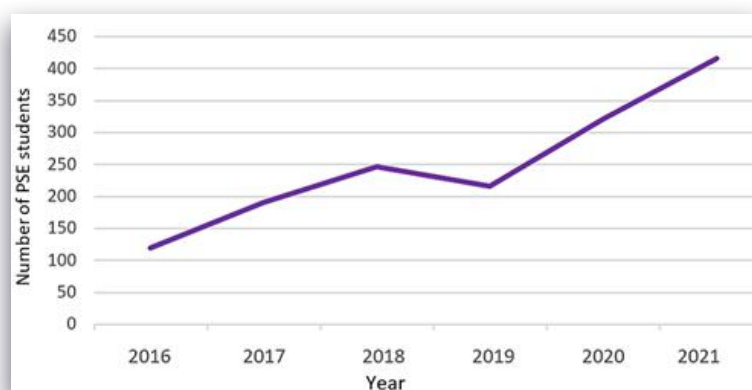


Figure 1. Increase in XJTLU’s PSE student numbers 2016-21

At the time I came on board as the 8-week PSE Deputy Head in 2020, a major overhaul was needed, and this time it was due to external factors entirely out of anyone’s control. The



Covid-19 virus that emerged around the turn of the year had thrown the entire education industry, along with the rest of the world, into a state of flux. XJTLU, along with educational establishments around the globe, scrambled to arrange alternative forms of learning, combining synchronous tuition through online videoconferencing platforms with greater amounts of asynchronous self-study. With relatively little prior warning or expertise in online learning, adapting to this new mode of delivery was a massive challenge for teachers and students alike, a challenge I fought, with often frustrating results, throughout the second semester of 2019/20. By the spring of 2020, when decisions around PSE course delivery had to be made, two things were clear. One: Covid wasn't going away any time soon and the pre-sessional would need to be completely reorganised for online delivery, and two: we'd be welcoming by far the largest cohort of PSE students yet, a figure that eventually reached 322 students.

## Switch to Online Delivery

While necessity may be the mother of invention, there is certainly an argument that, rather than online and blended delivery being embraced solely in response to Covid, the pandemic merely hastened changes that were already inevitable. Take lectures for example.

In my early days of PSE courses, several times per week, groups of students were marched out of the classroom to convene in a lecture theatre (those TV and VCR sets I mentioned were few and far between) to watch a guest professor deliver a subject lecture to give students 'authentic' academic listening and note-taking practice. The problem was that topic was rarely on a subject relevant to students' academic discipline and few had the attention span to sit for two hours feigning interest in content that went completely over their heads. When we now have the option of custom-made recorded lectures targeted at students' academic interests, which they can pause and rewind as necessary and simultaneously answer questions to promote engagement, will it ever be desirable to return to several hundred students sitting together in one lecture theatre for several hours, even if it is once again safe to do so?

This is to say that some combination of synchronous taught sessions with asynchronous worksheets, quizzes, videos, and other online activities already seemed like the future. It was just that those synchronous sessions would need to be taught online, via the videoconferencing platform Big Blue Button (BBB). A range of new asynchronous materials were designed to promote student engagement outside of the classroom, shared through the university's virtual learning environment (VLE), ICE. In place of the antiquated mass public lectures for listening practice, tailored lecture and seminar videos were written, recorded, and integrated within the syllabus, each designed to reinforce ideas around the week's topic and to model



a particular aspect of functional language for seminars or presentations. These videos were also made in accordance with the requirements of the end-of-course seminar and presentation assessments and therefore what was expected of students in assessments was reinforced week by week. A flipped classroom approach was adopted, with asynchronous materials directly feeding into synchronous sessions. The syllabus indicated which videos should be watched and activities completed prior to each synchronous session, motivating students to engage with these materials as they knew that the skills and language covered would enable them to better participate in their upcoming online classes, where time was freed up to focus on higher-level thinking skills and to give students more chance to talk. A video guide was created to raise students' awareness of the expectations for online learning in synchronous sessions and foster consistent levels of engagement.

## Refining the Curriculum

However, changes to the 2020 PSE didn't only relate to the enforced switch to online delivery. The 2019 teacher feedback had reflected some concern with a lack of clear connection between the learning objectives, materials, assessment requirements and marking criteria. Therefore, the curriculum and assessments were redesigned to achieve greater constructive

alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011). The Reading to Writing strand of the syllabus was designed to combine the benefits of 'process writing' and 'product writing' approaches and was underpinned by a comprehensive formative feedback process, with a series of one-to-one tutorials and peer feedback sessions, as well as reflective forums in which students reflected on a particular aspect of their writing process each week.

The criteria used to mark the assessments were also rewritten, with new descriptors banded according to master's levels. This was partly to ensure alignment with learning objectives and lesson content and partly based on evidence that the criteria used in previous years had led to inflated grades which would give students a false impression of their level heading into their master's studies. The new criteria were introduced to students and lecturers from the beginning of the course and supported by an online video guide. Familiarity with the marking criteria was enhanced through dedicated synchronous sessions for students and teachers to engage in standardisation of sample scripts. These sessions helped students to see the relevance of what they had been learning and how to demonstrate taught skills and language in their own assessments.

This redesign of the PSE was generally well-received. In his external review of XJTLU's English Language Centre, Alex Barthel (2020) singled out the pre-session course design for particular praise, commenting that it was clear to students "what is expected of them and



how to achieve it...relat[ing] detailed marking criteria quite specifically to assessment tasks", with the curriculum reflecting "a good example of well-integrated academic English strategies into a five or eight-week programme" (p.35).

## 2021 PSE

Perhaps victims of our own success, it was decided that the 2021 PSE would again be held online. With students that summer set to exceed 400, there was insufficient accommodation to house such ever-increasing numbers for 8 weeks (the 5-week option having been subsumed into a single longer course). While an ideal world would have seen the synchronous aspects of the PSE return onsite, I was confident that with a few changes, the second iteration of a fully online PSE could still be a success.

Arguably the biggest change from the teachers' perspective was that staff would now be paid an increment on their salary to work on the pre-sessional (for days that they took annual leave). Rather than just being placed (sometimes, no doubt, begrudgingly) on the PSE as a 'summer assignment', expressions of interest were sought throughout the School of Languages' English Language Centre, meaning that the teachers who would be teaching PSE had a genuine motivation to do so and were rewarded for their hard work on a such an intensive course. An additional change was to

return the staff orientation to onsite delivery (which had been the case before 2020), with a 2-day (paid) induction convening the full teaching team in place before the course started.

However, teacher development opportunities were not confined to the course induction. I felt it was important that teachers saw the benefit of applying to work on the PSE as not just financial but also professional. To this end, a PSE Community of Practice was set up, overseen by a newly created role of PSE Teaching Development Coordinator. The PSE CoP kicked off with a dedicated strand at the SoL symposium prior to the course, followed by eight weekly development sessions, led by a different PSE teacher each time. These were recorded and follow-up discussions among staff were encouraged through online forums. Additionally, teachers were supported to conduct action research projects during the PSE where these supported student needs, with data gathered on several excellent projects ranging from students' use of translation software to willingness to communicate in online discussions to honing critical thinking skills through creative writing.

Regarding learning content, the 2021 PSE's major change was the introduction of subject-specific self-study materials. XJTLU's PSE had originally been designed to focus entirely on English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), a focus shared by most pre-sessionals. Students' need for greater discipline specificity was addressed to some extent by the 2019 course, which grouped students according to broad 'clusters'



(Science & Engineering, Business, Humanities & Social Sciences, and Maths & Computing) and differentiated assessment topics based on cluster, though students in all clusters still received the same general academic learning content. The 2021 course went further still by contacting the Programme Directors of all XJTLU's 39 different master's programmes to request recommended materials they would want their prospective students to engage with before beginning their courses. These resources were organised and distributed on Learning Mall (the new course VLE), with the syllabus allocating 1-2 hours per day to be spent working independently on these.

are truly meeting students' needs. One improvement from last year's PSE is that the course length will be reduced from eight weeks to seven, which will allow the pay arrangement to be retained while enabling each group to keep the same teachers throughout the course. With an experienced and enthusiastic teaching team already in place for the 2022 course, I am greatly looking forward to guiding the further evolution of XJTLU's pre-sessionals for future cohorts of master's students – I can't think of any other way I'd want to spend my summers.

## 2022 PSE

Looking back over the last fourteen PSE-dominated summers of my life, it is clear that pre-sessionals courses have changed beyond all recognition. Here at XJTLU, within just six annual iterations, the PSE programme has already been through several major stages of evolution and no doubt will continue to evolve further as I look towards my fifteenth go-around with the same excitement as if it were my first. Future changes to the course will be informed by a major needs assessment project currently being undertaken by myself and the SoL postgraduate team. So far, we have gathered over 50 questionnaires from postgraduate lecturers, Module Leaders, and Programme Directors, and over 200 questionnaires from current master's students, with follow-up interviews ongoing. This project is intended as a comprehensive analysis of the skills and language requirements for different XJTLU master's programmes to ensure our pre-sessionals and in-sessionals offerings



**David Collett** has been a Teacher, Deputy Director and Director of Pre-Sessional English for four consecutive years. He has worked in TEFL and TEAP for 28 years in five different countries. He has recently published in the International Journal of English for Academic Purposes on the topic of Peer Review.

[david.collett@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:david.collett@xjtlu.edu.cn)

**Dave's**

**B** of English learners' approach to student



## Lessons we've learned for developing a PSE course

In their personal journeys from teaching on pre-sessional courses in the UK, to developing and running pre-sessional courses in a TNE context in China, David and Qing have learnt several valuable lessons to share with other PSE course managers and teachers.

### Qingyang's PSE Journey

**M**Y JOURNEY TO EAP was not easy, and it seems like serendipity now. I worked in the trading industry when I came out of my undergraduate study, as there were few career options for me. Doing an MA in the UK opened up a whole new world, and that was when I first came across EAP. I was surprised that there is so much more to learn – apart from being fluent in English – as a non-native speaker trying to complete degree courses in English. I truly enjoyed the EAP courses as a student, and later took the opportunity to teach pre-sessional courses during my PhD study at the University of York. What I liked was the attention I could give to each individual student (it was a small class of 15). For such an intensive course during the summer, this individual support that I was able to offer was certainly a luxury compared to EAP teaching in some other contexts. I was also impressed by how the rather dry EAP knowledge (paragraph structure, hedging, reading skills etc.) was made engaging, interactive, and fun by our creative team of teachers. These were invaluable experiences that I took on board when I joined XJTLU and began a new journey of EAP.



#### **Dr. Qingyang Sun**

has been a Deputy Head of Pre-Sessional English and the Module Convenor of in-sessional academic reading and writing. She has published widely on topics in EAP.

*qingyang.sun@xjtlu.edu.cn*

### PSE Journey

BEFORE 2012, I taught English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) for 24 years at the British Council in four countries. After my MA TESOL in 2015, I decided to move into EAP, teaching on PSE courses in UK universities. The first question I was asked in my first interview was: “What are the differences between TEFL and TEAP?” I began by flipping the abbreviation EAP to APE: ‘Academic Purposes’. This allowed me to frame my response around not only language but the importance of developing academic skills to help them succeed in their chosen degree. For the teacher, this requires taking a holistic approach by ensuring that taught academic skills are transferable to the learners’ discipline and made transparent throughout lessons. Speaking about these key principles of ‘transferability’ and ‘transparency’ probably



got me the job! I later moved to XJTLU, where I have worked on PSE courses for four successive years as Deputy Director and Director – and I have been fortunate to be involved in shaping our PSE courses around these same principles. Regarding transferability, learners are grouped and given assessments according to their chosen discipline, and teachers are allocated classes according to their interests. This interest-driven approach to the PSE allows teachers and learners to learn more from each other, making the teaching and learning more easily transferable. Regarding transparency, the curriculum clearly organises each week according to a theme, through which academic skills are built and cohesively developed, and marking descriptors are provided throughout the course.

### **Tips for PSE course managers**

- In moving towards greater subject specificity, design the same generic assessment for all students, with the topic focus of these assessments to students' specific programmes, ideally giving students some freedom to choose assessment topics in line with their academic area of interest.
- Group students according to different discipline-related clusters and allocate teachers to teach the clusters they are most interested in. This encourages students and teachers to learn from each other.
- Organise the curriculum around weekly themes and choose input materials (listening and reading materials) that develop the skills and language you want students to learn.
- Widely involve teachers on the PSE team in material development and adaptation. Get to know their strengths and assign them tasks that they are most interested in.
- Adopt a flipped learning approach when using these input materials. This means the syllabus needs to be designed around these materials.
- To reduce students' cognitive load, use the same input materials for different skills and language.
- Design each lesson around specific tasks related to these input materials.
- Hold regular team meetings or Communities of Practice as opportunities for teachers to share their experiences.

### **Tips for PSE teachers**

- Take a holistic approach to understanding the PSE course before you teach it. This means looking at the course learning outcomes and assessments.
- Notice how the syllabus builds on the skills and language each week and may use the same input materials.
- Appoint a class representative who can ensure that students are informed about the flipped materials.
- Feed in aspects from the marking descriptors in lessons to help students understand how the lessons are assessed.
- Focus on the main aim of each lesson and choose tasks for each lesson that help to achieve that aim.
- Feel free to adapt given tasks according to your knowledge of your own group. For example, with listening exercises, or a mixture of these?
- Responding to students' needs in lessons is more important than covering all the materials.



# References

Barthel, A. (2000). Review of the XJTLU ELC course provision.

Biggs, J. B. and Tang, C. K. C. (2011). Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

Gillett, A. (2021). Using English for Academic Purposes for Students in Higher Education. Available at: <https://www.uefap.com> [Accessed: 20/01/2022].

Hyland, K. (2006) English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book. Routledge.

Lu, X. (2018). Transnational education: Sino-Foreign cooperative universities in China. World Education News and Reviews. Available at: <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/08/sino-foreign-cooperative-universities> [Accessed: 20/01/2022].

ers as a teacher,  
course around  
rding to their  
dimension of  
ning processes  
ng to a specific  
e made visible

ts but adjust the  
freedom to choose

ne group they are

t texts) that reflect

ow each teacher's

ds to clearly indicate the materials that students will need to have engaged with before their next class.  
in later weeks of the course.

their positive experiences as well as issues they encountered.

g through the curriculum to notice how the learning materials develop students' ability to achieve the

t materials for different purposes.

erials that need to be covered before their next lesson.

ons link to their assessments.

im.

ould your students learn better via interactive activities, fancy high-tech tools, traditional language



# How Can Teachers Improve Attendance For Low-Level Students And Keep Them Motivated In Class



**Shuangxin Zhang** is an EAP teacher at XJTLU University. She has taught English for 7 years and is always willing to help students to gain improvements in English.

[Shuangxin.Zhang@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:Shuangxin.Zhang@xjtlu.edu.cn)



# Introduction

Attendance and motivation seem to be ongoing topics of discussion in relation to university students. Some lecturers may complain that college students, especially low-level students, always lack motivation towards learning and are more likely to skip class. However, it's not the same story for every student, so lecturers should think and reflect in depth on how to tackle these situations. As we are trying to cultivate creativity and imagination among students, we'd better not stick to teaching approaches that are stagnant and unchangeable. Based on my teaching and course-designing experience, hopefully, this article can provide some ideas that resonate with you about motivating students and increasing attendance.

**X**I'AN JIAOTONG-LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY (XJTLU) is a university using English as the medium of instruction (EMI). Starting from the academic year 2021-2022, a new programme called ELS (English Language Support), was founded at XJTLU under the CS Division (Continuing Support). This programme aimed to provide pastoral care and support to low-level students in their first year of study, whose placement test scores were graded as A1 (A1, A2 or B2 mentioned in this article refer to CEFR levels) at the beginning of the semester. I was luckily selected as one of the four teachers to teach on this programme. The teaching mode of this course was mainly seminars where a lecturer delivered lessons to 8 groups of 20 students for 14 weeks, and each student had only one lesson each week. Another important point that needs to be mentioned is that the student groups were not fixed, which was quite challenging because theoretically, every teacher had the chance to see all 600 students showing up in their classes throughout the semester.

One characteristic of ELS is that this is not a credit-bearing course, and students won't have any exams at the end of the semester. Therefore, students usually lack enthusiasm towards joining ELS classes, and attendance has been a problem for this course throughout the past



semester. However, these low-level students, together with all the other students (A2 or higher), are expected to achieve the same English language exit level of B2 at the end of Year One. Based on our teaching experience, most of us may agree that students who attend more classes normally have higher assessment results, which is in line with the conclusions found in a number of studies which identified a correlation between regular attendance and better learning outcomes (Pinter et al., 2020). Therefore, a logical conclusion can be reached that if these low-level students would like to improve their English level, they should attend more classes.

However, the attendance rate wasn't what tutors and managers had hoped for in this programme. After the first five weeks - during which full attendance (20 out of 20) was the norm with only a few cases of absence - the attendance rate dropped to around 11 out of 20. We know that students' willingness to attend classes and engage in learning is linked with their learning motivation, so the secret to increasing the attendance rate seems to be increasing their motivation for learning. In the past semester, I designed lessons for eight weeks and taught for all 14 weeks, and the attendance of my classes was generally higher than the average for this module. Therefore, in this article, several tips and reflections will be provided regarding how to increase students' learning motivation to improve attendance.

According to Malcolm (2011), motivation can be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic motivation referring to the learners' inherent motivation, such as learning for one's own interest, whereas extrinsic motivation comes from sources outside of the learner, like studying to pass an exam or to get rewards. It's easy for teachers to stimulate students' extrinsic motivation; for example, we can reward students with good performance in class or provide them with useful skills to pass exams. However, intrinsic motivation is mostly generated by the learners themselves, which may be difficult for teachers to provoke directly. However, as stated by Oletić and Ilić (2014), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can work together to motivate students to learn, and external motivation can be transformed into intrinsic motivation. For example, though quality and useful speaking lessons can stimulate students' extrinsic motivation, such motivation can be converted to intrinsic motivation. This is because, for students who find learning English boring, if they become more interested in it after attending such lessons, their intrinsic motivation will be provoked.

I always provided students with a friendly and relaxed learning environment and tried to remember every student's name to be respectful, which was difficult to achieve considering that I may teach different students every lesson. In week 8, a student who always refused to answer my questions by saying "no" started to utter some phrases and even long sentences in class. He even brought three friends to my class



in week 11, who were also low-level students but had never shown up in my class, which astonished not only me but also all the other students. When I asked what caused his positive change, he answered in a low voice, "You are a good teacher. You know our names and encourage us to learn. I just want my friends also to try your lessons." From this example, I learned that if a teacher cares for students in class, students will be motivated to learn, and such external motivation can be converted to internal motivation, which will influence the learner over the long haul.

In the remainder of this article, other strategies for motivating students in and out of the classroom will be illustrated in detail. First, let's start with four strategies teachers can adopt in class.

## The Power of "Future Self"

According to Dörnyei (2009), students will be motivated by their visions of the "ideal L2 (second language) self" in the future, which is to say if students have clearer visions of themselves as English users in the future, they can have more motivation towards learning English.

I once borrowed the context of XJTLU for such stimulation. This is because most students

studying at XJTLU plan to study abroad someday in the future or work in an international company because they have the advantages of learning at an EMI university. In week 6, when most students in my class were reluctant to speak any English, and some even spoke Chinese with me, I used the power of the "future L2 self". I asked them to imagine they are in 2025 studying at a university in the UK and speaking English all the time. Then I asked them, "How do you feel when you cannot express your ideas to me in English?" and "What could you do from now on?" Then many students provided some positive answers like "Practice English from now," "Speak more English," and "Stop always using Chinese." Another simpler attempt was that, in week 13 (the end of 2021), which is almost the end of the semester, some students didn't want to practice listening even though their listening capabilities were far from the required B1-B2 level. I said to them, "Welcome to my class! It's semester 1 in 2022 now. The reason why you are here is that you guys failed the final test and resit in 2021 as you didn't want to practice listening in class!" Students laughed and started to take notes, and I saw some of them were a little anxious and started to take some action to try to prevent them from having to retake the course. In conclusion, teachers can utilise the power of students' imaginative future-self to encourage intrinsic motivation for learning from students. If they have some goals which they want to achieve or if they want to avoid unpleasant results in the future, this method can stimulate their intrinsic motivation if teachers can guide them to think properly in advance.



# Teacher's Feedback

As teachers, if we can give students critical and valuable feedback, they can also be attracted to our classes. One possible illustration for critical and valuable feedback is that the feedback should be individualised, which means the feedback for each student should be tailored to their performance (Brown, 2016). When my ELS students spoke in my class, I always seized the opportunity to provide useful feedback for them as class time is limited. When giving feedback, I didn't always provide more positive feedback than negative, although I knew it was against the famous feedback sandwich theory, which suggests a positive-negative-positive sequence when providing feedback, and is considered very effective (Brinko, 1993).

Two reasons accounted for why I didn't intentionally give students more positive feedback but rather tried to provide more genuine feedback. The first one was that my students' levels were normally lower than the mainstream students, while all of them needed to attend the same final exam. Therefore, they needed to know what their true levels were and work harder to close the gap. The second was that I believed in the argument of Molloy, Noble, and Ajjawi (2019) that negative, or say corrective feedback, doesn't necessarily lead to negative emotions, and vice versa. The reason I held

this belief was that in one of my classes at 9 am on Friday, a female student answered my question by speaking for almost 1 minute. I was surprised to see that she stood out to a great extent and seemed so motivated in a Friday morning class, so I gave her feedback with only positive information. However, she doubted my evaluation by responding to me disappointingly: "I don't think my speaking is as good as you said. Give me some suggestions, please." I reflected on my feedback and then realised that although this girl's answer was longer than her classmates', it still had many grammar mistakes and was not very logical, so it couldn't meet the requirement for passing the final exam with a satisfactory score. Therefore, from that day, I required myself to provide neutral and genuine feedback to students based on their performance which didn't aim to please students but instead focussed on helping them to improve.

Another effective approach was that I viewed feedback as an ongoing project. I share the same viewpoint with Brown (2016) that if teachers utilise most or all the activities to provide students with some feedback continuously, students' motivation can be increased. I also added one more step, which was memorising each student's weaknesses and problems. It's easier to memorise each student's inadequacies in reading and listening as students' problems about these skills are relatively similar, but it's difficult to remember their weaknesses in speaking and writing because these problems are more individualised and can vary a lot among



different students. I always took a notebook with me when teaching and noted down their problems in speaking and writing. I still remember when I told a student, "Your answer here is kind of illogical as it lacks explanations. Just like the answer you provided last week, you didn't provide proper reasons for why you like eating hot pot." She was astonished and asked me why I could still remember her answer from the previous week. I told her I took some notes, and because of this, she was very moved and was motivated to learn how to give answers in a more logical way that day.

In conclusion, if we provide true and individualised feedback to students, remember their performance, and provide feedback in a continuous way, students are more likely to value our feedback more and be motivated to learn to a greater extent.

## Ways to Design Lessons

When it comes to how to design lessons, one method I took is the communicative language teaching method, which is a student-centred teaching style where students can be given more opportunities to practice the target language. Cook (2013) believes that this method gives students more chances to use the language they have learned to communicate with others

in different contexts, which will be useful not only in but also outside of class. Imagine if we design our lessons in a traditional grammar-translation teaching style, which puts more emphasis on academic knowledge instead of preparing students for communication outside of the classroom (Cook, 2013), students may be demotivated to attend classes.

Another thing I did was taking students' feedback seriously and incorporating their ideas into my lessons. Universities usually distribute questionnaires at the end of each semester to get students' feedback on their modules. Warfvinge (2003, as cited in Roxå & Mårtensson, 2011) suggests that student feedback can be obtained for operational purposes (to improve teaching during the semester) and reporting purposes (to evaluate course quality at the end of the semester). Therefore, feedback can be frequently collected from students both during and at the end of the semester through questionnaires, conversations in class or private chats after class.

ELS distributed three module-level questionnaires in total throughout last semester. Apart from these, I sent additional questionnaires to students in weeks 6 and 12 through using Socrative and Sojump (Wenjuanxing), which were designed to collect students' levels of satisfaction towards teaching and learning and their suggestions for improvement. The differences between the module's questionnaire and mine were that I looked for students' detailed opinions. For example, in week 12, in



addition to letting students rate how appealing the ELS classes were in general, I let them choose the lesson they liked the most and the least, followed by their comments. In doing so, I understood better which types of activities were more attractive to students and adapted my following teaching activities correspondingly. Also, in my questionnaires, I gave them the freedom to express what other activities they would like to see embedded in class. For example, in week 6, I received some answers to this question like role-playing, games, and activities using audio and visual materials. I then adopted the idea of role-playing in week 10, designed a game in week 14, and included at least two videos in every upcoming session. I also shared my action plans with my students in advance to let them know their opinions were valued and embedded into forthcoming teaching. In this way, students' levels of satisfaction were increased, their learning motivation was stimulated, and their attendance was thereby improved.

## Friendly Learning Environment

Being friendly and positive is also a necessary approach if teachers would like to improve attendance and engage students in class. Liu and Jackson (2011) suggest that students have less anxiety if their teacher is friendly

and supportive and if they are in a welcoming learning environment. Teachers can support students more by giving them more encouragement and attention, and teachers themselves need to be positive and hold optimistic opinions towards life and work. If teachers are pessimistic, students can feel it and won't be interested in sharing their questions or innermost thoughts with you. For example, when a low-level student, who probably knows around 3000 words, asks you, "How could I build up my vocabulary to around 5000 words within three months?", if your answer is "It's impossible," it will discourage them for sure. Hence, guiding the student to set realistic goals and suggesting an action plan are the more preferred ways, comparatively.

Chatting with students before the lessons get started and being approachable after class also helps build a friendly learning environment in class (Morton, 2008). Offering students some time for small talk at the beginning of each lesson can effectively build rapport among students. Teachers can arrive several minutes early to class and utilise the valuable time to warm up, even if students only say a few English words or phrases. It might be easier to start with the more active students, which may make the quieter students feel less embarrassed. Unfortunately, after class, it is often the case that most students do not bother to go to teachers' offices to ask questions. So, an alternative way is to provide a 5-min Q&A session for students at the end of each class. The topic can be about anything ranging from the lesson content to their daily lives. Based on my experience,



students always raise a few questions despite having confirmed that they understood the points when you checked their understanding in class. So, providing a chance to raise questions at the end of each class is necessary.

Teachers can also use some strategies to motivate students outside the classroom, some of which are shared below:

1. Use office hours smartly: Allocate time slots for students with urgent needs to go to your office. Be open to answering any questions about and beyond academic study.
2. Use apps effectively: Send students a short introduction of the main teaching content via email, the school's learning platform, or social media, like WeChat Official Account, to keep them interested in advance.
3. Contact students with low attendance: Write them emails or send them messages via social media to let them know you want to help them.
4. Offer students help on their homework or coursework (without breaking the principle of fairness). If necessary, write them an action plan or encourage them to write it themselves.

## Reflection & Conclusion

Reflecting on the methods I used in the past semester, some were not as successful and required further improvement. For example, I once tried using the game Pictionary in class, which let students guess words from pictures drawn by another player. After that class, I asked several students about their feelings towards this activity. Though most of them liked it, two students, with generally higher language proficiency, expressed their disappointment because they liked games requiring more advanced language skills. Therefore, a lesson that can be learned is that we should consider designing teaching activities with different language levels in mind to suit students' diverse needs.

Another thing I didn't do well was that I occasionally used material incentives in the first few weeks. Our module bought some flashcards for teaching purposes, and I used them as prizes for those who answered questions actively. However, after I had done so for four weeks, a student told me privately after class that she felt it was unnecessary to give students rewards as it's their responsibility to perform actively in class. Brooks et al. (2008) also evaluated the effect of using financial incentives to stimulate students' motivation in attending more classes, which



was surprisingly negative as rewarding students for their performance would reduce their intrinsic motivation. Reflecting on my student's feedback, the possible interpretation for this result is that students who can already be active in class would be embarrassed if the teacher keeps rewarding them as other students may alienate them. Therefore, using financial and material rewards should be carefully considered.

In conclusion, this article summarises some practical methods teachers can adopt in their teaching to motivate students and promote higher attendance. It discusses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and shares some strategies and methods teachers can adopt in class. It's every teacher's desire to motivate students to attend more classes, so we should keep thinking and reflecting on our approaches. In the future, I will keep exploring and reflecting on different methods used in my teaching to promote higher attendance and facilitate better learning outcomes.

## References

Brinko, K. T. (1993). The practice of giving teaching: What is effective?. *The Journal* 64(5), 574-593.

Brooks, G., Burton, M., Cole, P., Miles, J., Torg D. (2008). Randomised controlled trial of attendance at adult literacy classes. *Oxford* 34(5), 493-504.

Brown, J. D. (2016). Assessment in ELT: The sound pedagogical choices. *English Language* 67-82. Springer, Cham.

Cook, V. (2013). *Second language learning* Routledge.



g feedback to improve  
of Higher Education,

erson, C., & Torgerson,  
incentives to improve  
d review of education,

neoretical options and  
uage Teaching Today,

and language teaching.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 Motivational Self System. *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 9-42. Multilingual Matters.

Liu, M., & Jackson, J. (2011). Reticence and anxiety in oral English lessons: a case study in China. *Researching Chinese Learners*, 119-137.

Malcolm, D. (2011). 'Failing' to Achieve Autonomy in English for Medical Purposes. *Identity, Motivation and Autonomy in Language Learning (Second Language Acquisition)*, 195-211.

Molloy, E., Noble, C., & Ajjawi, R. (2019). Attending to emotion in feedback. *The impact of feedback in higher education*, 83-105. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Morton, A. (2008). Lecturing to large groups. *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education*, 76-89. Routledge.

Oletić, A., & Ilić, N. (2014). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning English as a foreign language. *ELTA Journal*, 2(2), 23-38.

Pinter, R., Čisar, S. M., Balogh, Z., & Manojlović, H. (2020). Enhancing higher education student class Attendance through gamification. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 17(2), 13-33.

Roxå, T., & Mårtensson, K. (2011). Improving university teaching through student feedback: a critical investigation. *Student Feedback*, 61-79. Chandos Publishing.



# An Alternative Model of Online Learning and Teaching



**Nick Merwitzer** is a Senior Language Language Lecturer at XJTLU who previously worked as a musician and taught music technology and performing arts at UK universities. He is interested in research that practically improves the experience of students and teaching staff.

*Nick.Merwitzer@xjtlu.edu.cn*





**F**OR STUDENTS AND teachers alike, online learning and teaching during the pandemic is likely to have been a disappointing experience. However, while the virtual classroom can never compete with a campus experience, better decisions can be made as to how online classes are delivered.

Online provision during the pandemic exemplifies what is termed 'Emergency Remote Teaching' (ERT). Research (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020) asserts that ERT should be viewed as clearly distinct from planned online courses, but the two are often conflated to the detriment of the learner. Students in ERT scenarios are greatly in need of empathy and a sense of connection with their teacher and peers, and the literature suggests that a 'pedagogy of care' should take precedent over preconceived learning outcomes.

Unfortunately, the use of 'large-group' video conferencing platforms such as Big Blue Button and Zoom to teach online classes is counter-productive for facilitating connection and building community. Due to the inability of institutions' networks to handle the use of multiple microphones and cameras, students in online classes often go unseen and unheard, and their communication is reduced to writing messages in a text-box. This leads to a degradation in the learning experience from one that should be participatory and collaborative to a primarily transmissive, teacher-led lecture.

This scenario can have a negative impact on learning, and in the case of new students, if their prior educational experience is in teacher-centred learning environments, it can also arrest their effective transition to a student-centred culture, which can have a negative effect on their studies even beyond their return to campus. More importantly, large-group online provision in an ERT scenario can leave students feeling increasingly isolated and disconnected from their peers and teachers at a time when they are in greatest need of emotional connection.

Teachers share their students' sense of disappointment. We are acutely aware that learners are being short-changed, and our own experience in the virtual classroom is equally dissatisfying. Our disheartening teaching experiences during times of crisis may also be compounded by a myriad of external pressures and the feeling that our needs have not been adequately considered by our employers. All of these factors can contribute to an erosion of trust and good feeling between faculty and management which can ultimately contribute to resignations and a shortage of teaching staff, which then leads to further pressure on those who remain in post.

More periods of unplanned online learning are highly probable in the future, but this cycle is not inevitable. My own research has shown that a different approach is possible and can be highly effective.



In the first semester of the pandemic, I experimented with a teaching model based on the provision of daily asynchronous learning material followed-up with a sequence of synchronous 20-minute 'seminars' with groups of five students via Zoom or WeChat group video call. In these sessions, cameras and microphones were fully functional, and video windows were large enough for participants to recognize and respond to facial expressions, which is invaluable in building empathetic connections. The students also experienced 'large-group' online classes in my own and other modules in both the first and second online semesters. At the end of semester two, I conducted research to investigate the students' thoughts and feelings about their experiences.

The research participants unanimously found the small-group model to be more useful than large-group online classes in a range of areas related to learning. In the areas of participation and engagement, teacher access, and relationship-building with peers and teacher, respondents found the small-groups significantly more useful. In the areas of assessment preparation, collaboration with peers, and functionality of technology, they found the small-groups more useful. None of the research participants reported that they would choose large-group online learning over small-group online learning in the future.

The most obvious disadvantage of the small-group model is the reduced amount of synchronous class-time, but the idea that

a two-hour large-group class offers students greater value than a 20-minute small-group class is simply inaccurate. Whilst some students are active participants in a large-group online class, the majority are passive; by contrast, in a 20-minute small-group class, all five students are guaranteed to speak for three or four minutes each. Perhaps the most significant data that my research produced was that every participant reported having more talking time in the small-group class than they did in the large-group.

This is not to say that participants found the large-group classes to be useless. The respondents greatly valued the ability to review BBB classes recorded to LMO. However, if a synchronous class is experienced by the majority of students as mostly a one-way lecture, that content may as well be provided asynchronously. Meanwhile, timetabled synchronous interaction time can be reserved for a mode that allows for quality communication uninhibited by technical problems.

If further periods of unplanned Emergency Remote Teaching become necessary in the future, I would urge managers to rethink the default large-group synchronous teaching model. If they can focus on the quality of interaction rather than the quantity, and resist the temptation to offer two hours of daily synchronous provision – a false promise akin to an 'all you can eat' buffet lacking in nourishment, then the experience of online learning and teaching may be greatly improved for all concerned.



# References

Bozkurt, A. & Sharma, R.C., 2020. Emergency remote teaching in a time of global crisis due to Corona Virus Pandemic. Asian Journal of Distance Education. [Online], 15(1). Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341043562\\_Emergency\\_remote\\_teaching\\_in\\_a\\_time\\_of\\_global\\_crisis\\_due\\_to\\_CoronaVirus\\_pandemic#fullTextFileContent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341043562_Emergency_remote_teaching_in_a_time_of_global_crisis_due_to_CoronaVirus_pandemic#fullTextFileContent)

Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T. & Bond, M., 2020. The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning [Online]. Available from: <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/104648/facdev-article.pdf?sequence=1>





RESEAI



RCH



# Investigating Students' Perceptions of Project-based Learning in an ESAP Course



**Yunyan Zhang** is currently working as a senior language lecturer at the English Language Center, Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University. She is also the Head of the Postgraduate Division. She has a PhD degree in Foreign and Second Language Education.

*Yunyan.Zhang@xjtlu.edu.cn*



**Shu Deng** received her MA in Lifelong Learning from the Institute of Education, UCL. She is currently the Head of the Design Division at the English Language Centre, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. Her research interests include learning community and learner autonomy.

*Shu.Deng@xjtlu.edu.cn*



**Wei Zhang** is currently working as a senior language lecturer at the English Language Center, Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University. Her main research interests include language attitudes and ideologies, multilingualism and sociolinguistics.

*Wei.Zhang2@xjtlu.edu.cn*



## Abstract

**This paper aims to explore the benefits of integrating Project-based Language Learning (PBL) into an ESAP module for undergraduate Built Environment students by reflecting on students' perceptions related to the design and implementation of a Building Conversion Project. It explains how PBL was actually applied in the course, and reflects on its effectiveness by reporting the results of a survey collected from 152 students who took the course. Implications for best practices in ESAP course design are also discussed.**

## Background

### Defining Project-based Learning & Project-based Language Learning

Project-based Language Learning (PBL) is considered as "a foundation for alternative thoughts for second language studies and second language education" (Beckett, Slater & Mohan, 2020, p. 4). Since its introduction to the field in the 1960s and 1970s as a way to overcome the perceived inadequacies of the traditional teacher-centered approach (Beckett & Slater, 2018, as cited in Beckett, Slater & Mohan, 2020, p. 4), PBL has been explored through various theoretical lens, including Swain's Comprehensive Output Hypothesis, socio-cultural perspectives on language acquisition, sociolinguistic functional view, and language socialization theory to name just a few (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Gibbes & Carson, 2013; Grant, 2017; Li & Wang, 2018; Beckett, Slater & Mohan, 2020).

PBL has its origin in Project-based Learning (PBL), which is defined as "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks" (Markham, Larmer, & Ravitz, 2003, p.4). As a learner-centered approach which can be traced back to Dewey's experiential learning philosophy, PBL focuses on both the processes and the products of learning (Poonpon, 2017).



The benefits of PBL have been well documented in the literature indicating that it can:

- Improve learner motivation and engagement (Mejang, 2008; Grant, 2017);
- Increase learner autonomy, independence, self-initiation and willingness to take responsibility for their own learning (Stoller, 2006);
- Assist in developing metacognitive skills, such as self-regulation and self-monitoring (Chen & Yang, 2019)
- Improve lifelong learning and transferrable skills, or such 21st century skills as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, decision-making, collaborative work, and interpersonal skills (Grant, 2017).

Recently, PBLL has attracted increasing interest and has been adopted as an optimal EAP (English for Academic Purposes) pedagogy. Researchers and teachers have focused on its potential to not only develop discrete language skills as it provides a meaningful context for authentic language use (Grant, 2017), but also to facilitate “simultaneous learning of language, skills and content” (Stoller, 2006, p. 25) and disciplinary socialization (Li & Wang, 2018). Addressing the latter goals, Beckett (1999)’s definition of PBLL particularly pertains to EAP teaching:

“a series of individual or group activities that involve language/content learning through planning, researching (empirical and/or document), analyzing and synthesizing data, and reflecting on the process and product orally and/or in writing by comparing, contrasting, and justifying alternatives” (as cited in Beckett, Slater & Mohan, 2020, p. 5).

According to this definition, PBLL is advantageous for the development of advanced research skills and academic literacies while also promoting integrated language learning. As Beckett, Slater & Mohan (2020) states, it “offers numerous affordances for language learning and development as it requires learners to speak, read, listen, and write for their projects as well as revise and improve their language for accuracy (explicit focus-on-form), logic, arguments, and completeness” (p. 4).



## Empirical Studies of PBL in China

As pointed out by Li & Wang (2018), although PBL is not a new idea for EAP courses, “it has seldom been mentioned in the literature of EAP” (p. 292). The small number of empirical studies conducted in EAP classrooms speak to the need for more research to investigate the implementation of PBL pedagogy and to justify its efficacy in various contexts, especially in China where EAP education has risen to a more prominent place in the tertiary level ELT curriculum in alignment with the Chinese government’s efforts to internationalize higher education (Cheng, 2016, p. 97). The authors of this article were able to find only three empirical studies (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2012; Grant, 2017; Li & Wang, 2018) conducted in Chinese EAP contexts (Hong Kong, Macau, Shanghai respectively) which had been published in international journals.

Although the findings of these studies have shown that utilizing a PBL approach can provide a number of affordances and benefits for EAP teaching, such as improved general English skills (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2012), enhanced academic English skills and discipline knowledge (Li & Wang, 2018) as well as enhanced student autonomy (Grant 2017) and teamwork skills (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2012; Li & Wang, 2018), more case studies are still needed to explore projects that integrate PBL into ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purpose) courses, which should be treated differently from EGAP (English for General Academic Purpose) courses according to Jordan’s model for the categories of ESP (Jordan, 1997). See Figure 1.

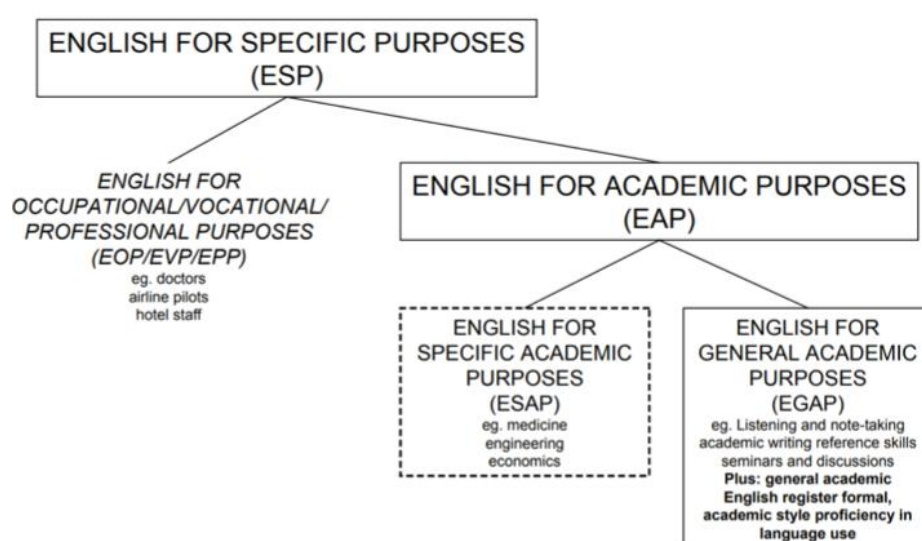


Figure 1 Jordan's Model of the Categories of ESP



To address the identified research gap, the present study aims to explore how PBL pedagogy is implemented in a joint-venture EMI university in China. More particularly, a Building Conversion Project (BCP) designed for Year 1 Built Environment students was investigated for its effectiveness based on students' perceptions. The following research questions were formulated:

- How did the BCP facilitate the students' development of academic language skills?
- How did the BCP meet the students' specific learning needs in their disciplines?
- How can the BCP be improved?

# Introduction of the Building Conversion Project

## Context

The Building Conversion Project (BCP) was integrated into a Year 1 ESAP course for Built Environment students at a Sino-British joint-venture university where English is used as the medium for instruction. The students who took the course during the second semester came from three departments: architecture, civil engineering and urban planning.

The course, aiming to bring students to CEFR low B2 level of English proficiency, had the following learning objectives (Table 1):

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Produce appropriately organized writing on topics related to their field of study with an acceptable level of accuracy and appropriateness in grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation.</li> <li>B. Select appropriate reference sources and read with a large degree of independence.</li> <li>C. Give a clear, prepared presentation on a topic related to their field of study and take follow-up questions with a degree of fluency and spontaneity.</li> <li>D. Participate actively in a formal interview or discussion.</li> <li>E. Follow and take notes on the main points of academic lectures which are propositionally and linguistically complex.</li> <li>F. Organize time and resources appropriately to respond to complex academic tasks.</li> <li>G. Produce work that contains no elements of plagiarism, collusion or data embellishment.</li> </ul> |
|--|

Table 1 Learning Objectives



Although the learning objectives were identical for all the equivalent ESAP courses for students from different departments (e.g., Business, Math, Science, Industrial Design, Humanities and Social Science), the BCP was designed to cater to the specific learning needs of Built Environment students, who “require effective communication and interdisciplinary team working to be successful throughout their career which is often overlooked during formal undergraduate education” (Keenahan & McCrum, 2020, p. 575).

By the time when the present study was conducted, the BCP had been implemented for four years, with modifications made after each iteration (once a year) on the basis of feedback from students who had experienced the project process. Each year we changed the sites for conversion, and for the present study, the five building sites covered a range of functions.

**Site 1:** A gym

**Site 2:** A women’s clothing shop

**Site 3:** Two neighboring restaurants in a shopping mall

**Site 4:** A Starbucks café

**Site 5:** A deserted youth hostel in one of the best-preserved historical blocks in the city

## Project Design

The project built upon a widely acknowledged belief that a well-designed project needs to focus on real-world authentic issues of particular interest to students. In the ESAP course, this translates into pertaining to students’ subject areas (Kucherenko, Shcherbakova, & Varlamov, 2014), i.e., architectural design, civil engineering and urban planning.

Following Stoller (2006) and Grant (2017)’s suggestions to use multiple tasks spanning a long timeframe to ensure a variety of meaningful language interactions were undertaken by students, we divided the project into six clearly-defined stages spanning 12 weeks (see Table 2) in correspondence to Stoller’s (2006) recommendation to include at least four stages, i.e., information collecting, processing, reporting, and evaluating, into a project (see Table 3). These six stages were integrated into an



overall project following a clear sequence (Grant, 2017):

### **Stage 1: Site Visit**

Students are put into groups of 4-5. Each group is assigned a site. They need to visit their site together and decide what changes to make to the building and decide what its new function will be.

### **Stage 2: Building Conversion Proposal**

Students write a project proposal to outline their preliminary ideas for converting the site.

### **Stage 3: Questionnaire design**

Students design a survey to elicit feedback from the class (or the greater Built Environment Departments) on their conversion project proposal.

### **Stage 4: Proposal presentation & data collection**

Students (in groups) present their proposal to the class and conduct the survey afterwards.

### **Stage 5: Report writing**

Students (individually) write a BCP report based on the data collected which includes the following sections: Background, Research Methodology, Results, Discussions, and Suggestions. The report will then be submitted as the writing assessment.

### **Stage 6: Final presentation & reflection**

Each student gives an individual presentation about the survey results and gives recommendations to improve the proposal as a part of the speaking assessments. The presentation is followed by 5-minute Q&A with the teacher where students reflect on the implementation of the project and evaluate their learning.

Table 3 shows the connections between the BCP project design and recommendations from previous studies.



Week 1	Groups visit building sites and select a site to convert. Learn about building conversion and building design; start to search for relevant academic sources
Week 2	Groups decide how to convert the site and write a proposal. Groups meet with the teacher to discuss the project proposal and make improvement Prepare group Presentation 1 and PPT.
Week 3	Design Questionnaire
Week 4	Finalize the Questionnaire based on teacher's feedback Give a group presentation to full class; conduct Survey after presentation to collect feedback
Week 5	Organize data from Survey in Excel. Analyse data and create graphs.
Weeks 6-7	Plan and write the 1 <sup>st</sup> draft of the BCP Report
Week 8	Submit the 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft
Week 10	Receive feedback from tutor on the 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft; discuss feedback with tutor
Week 11	Submit the final Draft Prepare to give a final individual presentation on BCP
Week 12	Speaking Exam: Presentation + Q&A

Table 2 The BCP Procedure

Research Insights <sup>↵</sup>	A good language/content project needs to: <sup>↵</sup>	Stage(s) <sup>↵</sup>
1. Language/content integration <sup>↵</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strike a balance between language learning and study of discipline-related content and knowledge (Poonpon, 2017; Li &amp; Wang, 2018). <sup>↵</sup></li> <li>simulate intellectual challenges of content courses by using content-based activities and preparing students to learn content materials from a variety of information sources (Symon, 2017)<sup>↵</sup></li> </ul>	1-5 <sup>↵</sup>
2. Deliberate practice of language and skills <sup>↵</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides students with opportunities to engage in deliberate practice of the skills and language required for the successful completion of each stage of the project (Stoller, 2006)<sup>↵</sup></li> </ul>	2-6 <sup>↵</sup>
3. Student autonomy <sup>↵</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>give students real choices and the chance to negotiate aspects of the project, e.g., goals, themes, outcomes, procedures, individual roles, and group responsibilities, no matter whether they are structured by the instructor, semi-structured or unstructured (Stoller, 2006)<sup>↵</sup></li> </ul>	1-5 <sup>↵</sup>
4. Student group work <sup>↵</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>balance both student collaboration and independent work (Grant, 2017). Student work groups should be formed to make full use of the strengths of group members (Stoller, 2006)<sup>↵</sup></li> </ul>	1-5 <sup>↵</sup>
5. Opportunities for revision and feedback <sup>↵</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide opportunities for students to use feedback from both the teachers and classmates to improve their products and reflect on the learning process (Chen &amp; Yang, 2019). This requires teachers to give students ongoing feedback in the form of formative and summative assessments to help students evaluate their own learning, <u>progress</u> and goal-achievement (Stoller, 2006).<sup>↵</sup></li> </ul>	2-6 <sup>↵</sup>

Table 3 Connections between Project Design &amp; Research Insights



# Research Method

## Instrument

Students' perceptions of the BCP were measured using a questionnaire which included both quantitative and qualitative items. The questionnaire was designed in a way to elicit students' perceptions regarding the three research questions. It was also meant as a tool for students to reflect on their own learning and goal achievements at the end of the project. The collected responses were analyzed following the standard approaches to quantitative and qualitative analyses (see Table 4).

	Corresponding RQs	Question types	Data analysis
<b>Part 1</b>	N/A	Demographic questions: department, gender, nationality	Descriptive statistics: frequency counts, means percentages
<b>Part 2</b>	RQ 1 & RQ 2	RQ 1: 6 5-point Likert-scale questions RQ 2: 2 5-point Likert-scale questions	Descriptive statistics: frequency counts, means percentages
<b>Part 3</b>	RQ 2	1 yes/no question, 1 open-ended question	Qualitative analysis: theme coding
<b>Part 4</b>	RQs 3 & 4	RQ 3: 2 yes/no questions + 2 open- ended questions RQ 4: 1 open-ended question	Qualitative analysis: theme coding

Table 4 The Questionnaire

## Participants

All the students who took the course were invited to fill out a paper questionnaire during the last week of the project. Altogether 152 students (75 male students and 77 female students) completed the questionnaire, among whom 76 were architecture students, 50 were urban planning students, and 26 were civil engineering students. Except for 2 international students, the other 150 students were all Chinese. The average age of the students was 18.



# Results

## Research Question 1: How did the BCP facilitate the students' development of academic language skills?

Based on students' responses to the 6 5-point Likert-scale questions, the vast majority of students believed that their academic (language) skills were enhanced. Figures 2&3 present the means of each item (skill area) and the percentages of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the question "to what extent do you agree or disagree that the following skills have been improved as a result of the conversion project". It was observed that Item 3 (presentation skills) received the highest mean rating score, followed by academic writing skills, discussion skills and teamwork skills - see Figures 2 and 3.

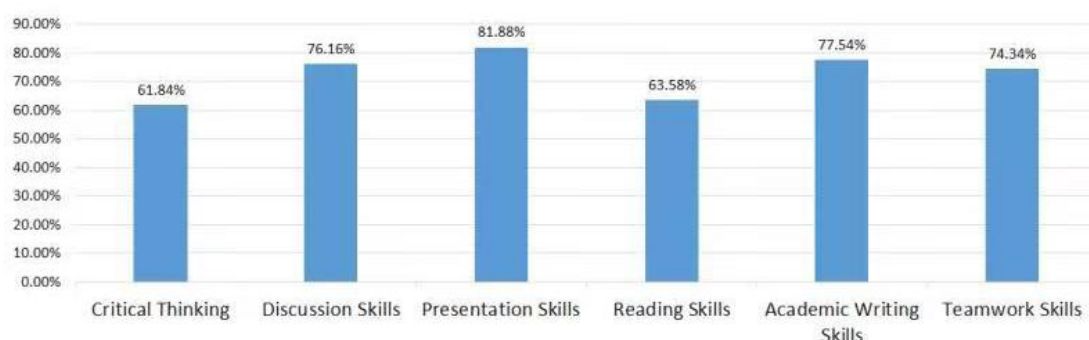


Figure 2 Improvement of Academic Skills (Percentage of "Strongly Agree" + "Agree")

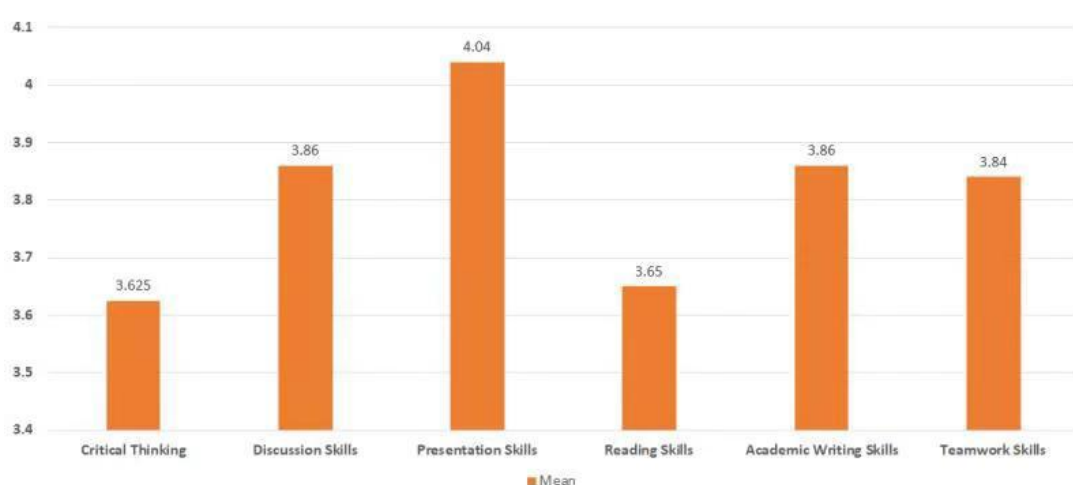


Figure 3 Improvement of Academic Skills (Mean Score)



## Research Question 2: How did the BCP meet the students' specific learning needs in their disciplines?

Two Likert-scale questions were used to elicit students' perceptions of improvement in knowledge and skills relating to their subject areas. Approximately 65% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their content area vocabulary, knowledge and skills had improved after completing the BCP (see Figure 4).

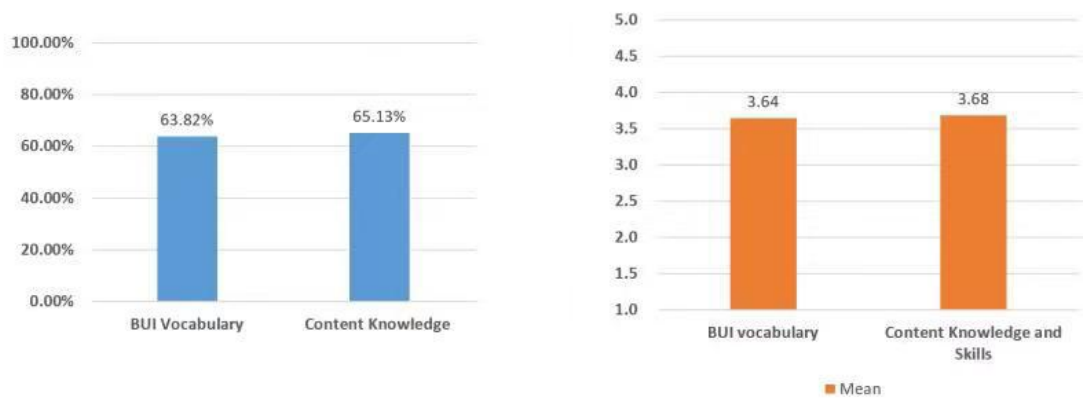


Figure 4 Improvement in Content Knowledge and Skills

In response to the question "do you think the BCP has helped you learn subject knowledge in the department?", 109 students (over 72%) said "yes". Their follow-up explanations to specify "how and why" revealed 5 major themes relating to how the BCP had met the students' specific learning needs in their disciplines (also see Table 5 for example student responses):

- Enhanced knowledge about the subject area via searching for sources, reading, and practicing (e.g., principles of building conversion, building design, building materials, functions of buildings, role of architecture for people, etc.);
- Opportunities to connect subject knowledge/theories with hands-on practice of skills;
- Improved academic language skills (e.g., teamwork, presentation skills, discussion skills, academic writing, critical thinking, research skills, data analysis);
- Acquisition of subject-specific vocabulary;
- A beneficial project for study in the major.



Themes	Student responses
Enhanced subject knowledge	In the process of converting our site, I had to consider lots of factors. This required me to look for materials to get theoretical support, thus I learned lots of knowledge about my major.
Hands-on practice	During the process of making the report, we need to figure out and analyze the layout and structure of the original site, which can strengthen our understanding of the building.
Improved academic skills	The two things can be <b>cooperating with group mates</b> to finish the building conversion project and presentation. When we worked on our project, each one <b>expressed own opinion</b> , we had <b>debates</b> and kept improving to explore the best project. So it was a very good process. Additionally, prepare for <b>presentations</b> also improve my English speaking skills.
Subject-specific vocabulary	The reading list helps me know more about vocabulary.
Connection with the major	The project improved my understanding of space design and conversion, This will help to broaden my mind and have reference value when designing in my major classes.

Table 5 Improvement in BUI Knowledge and Skills

However, there were still 40 respondents who disagreed that the BCP had contributed to learning subject knowledge, among whom 7 respondents provided the reasons which uniformly criticized the design of the project as being “a language project” rather than “a real architecture project”. As one of the respondents commented, “In this project, we focus on the English but not something related to the architecture”. Another student said, “it is too general, not very professional or specific”.

### Research Question 3: How can the BCP be improved?

Table 6 shows the students’ opinions regarding how the BCP could be improved to better meet their learning needs. They first asked for more flexibility with choice of site, which is not surprising given that the site was assigned to students and thus there is a possibility that some students were stuck with a building site that they disliked for 12 weeks. Additionally, some students asked for more guidance and help from the teachers at each stage of the project. “Connection with the major” is another theme worth considering as it echoed a few students’ opinions who felt that doing the BCP had not really helped them learn subject knowledge because they perceived the project to be a language project rather than a disciplinary-based project.



Themes	Student response examples
More flexibility w/ choice of site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maybe you can give more options with different areas, locations and styles to choose from.</li> <li>• Students should have the right to choose their own site.</li> </ul>
More guidance/help from the teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More guidance for the site visit</li> <li>• More suggestions about designing and conducting survey, to help us get more useful data.</li> </ul>
Connection with the major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let the teachers in the department involved so that this project will cover more major information.</li> <li>• to have more connections between the major module and this project</li> </ul>
Teamwork	We can choose teammate by ourselves because some of teammates actually did nothing during the teamwork.

Table 6 How can the BCP be Improved?

## Discussion

The current study was conducted with an aim to investigate students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the project to support both academic language learning and study of subject-related knowledge. Based on the questionnaire results, a few important findings were evident relating to the research questions.

Firstly, analyses of the students' perceptions have indicated improved academic language skills as a result of the project, particularly communicative (presentation skills, discussion skills) and teamwork skills and academic writing skills. These findings corroborated those of previous studies conducted in various Chinese contexts (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2012; Grant, 2017; Li & Wang, 2018). Well-designed projects provide abundant academic English input and output opportunities (Li & Wang, 2018) and lend themselves naturally to integrated language learning (Stoller, 2006). In the BCP, authentic speaking tasks- role plays, debates, presentations, and group discussions- were frequently utilized class activities. For instance, one of the class activities asked the student to role play representatives from two competing companies who bid for redesigning the ground floor of a business hotel; another activity called for the students to put themselves in the shoes of an architect, a civil engineer and an urban planner when working as a team to convert a rundown library building into different functions. Additionally, students were engaged in a series of scaffolded writing tasks in and out of class supported by constant teacher feedback and tutorials - writing a project proposal, drafting questionnaire, making a synthesis chart of reading



sources, practicing graph description, outlining, writing each part of a research report - which culminated with a 1200-1500-word long report. In the process, the students were also engaged in activities to hone their information literacy and research skills (Saliba et al., 2017) as they were coached by the teachers to utilize the university digital library, critically evaluate sources, and analyze collected data.

Worthy of attention, which is also a unique contribution of the current study, is the finding related to the study and practice of the subject-related knowledge and skills. We have noticed that the affordances of the BCP led to students not only acquiring Built Environment vocabulary but also learning knowledge about building design, which was achieved through various opportunities for students to (1) study together the concepts and principles of building conversion and adaptive reuse in class by reading, listening to, and discussing authentic teaching materials carefully prepared by the teachers, (2) gather information from multiple sources to support their conversion proposal, and (3) apply and “struggle with the central concepts and principles of a discipline” (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2017, p. 185) through hands-on practices of the knowledge and skills required for the successful completion of each stage of the project. This finding attests to Stoller’s (2016) argument that project work that involves language and content learning and deliberate practice of skills has the potential to lead to increased student expertise. She states that “the very nature of project work assists students in applying, developing and extending subject-matter knowledge, adding to their growing expertise” (p. 31).

Although the majority of students were positive about the BCP, some of their comments relating to the third research question pointed to some potential areas for improving the project design and implementation, for example greater student choice (of site and groupmates), more guidance and help from the teachers, better connection with the major, and authenticity of the project. A close look at the students’ negative comments reveals a conflict between teacher control of the project and students’ needs for more chances to negotiate aspects of the project (Stoller, 2006). The fact that the students were assigned a site for conversion and groupmates without having much choice led to feelings of frustration for some students. Although scholars have recommended semi-structured or unstructured projects to encourage students’ self-initiation and taking responsibility for their learning (Stoller, 2006), the BCP was designed as a structured project considering that it accounted for 30% of the final mark of a mandatory credit-bearing EAP



module. The high-stakes nature of the project assessment appeared to be incompatible with the need for a low-stakes project to permit enough flexibility for learners. This finding also echoes theories of learner motivation, according to which “a sense of student control over processes and outcomes” (Grant, 2017, p. 3) is one of the important motivating factors in class activities.

Another issue worth mentioning is the authenticity of the project pointed out by a couple of students who believed that the project was a language project rather than a disciplinary-based project. One student even suggested “(letting) the teachers in the department involved so that this project will cover more major information”. These comments seem to confirm another challenge of PBL pedagogy induced by the need to integrate content and language in a project which have been reported by other researchers. For instance, the two teachers in Li & Wang’s (2018) study in a Chinese university in Shanghai reported “not having enough specific disciplinary knowledge” (p. 301). Although “cooperation, collaboration, and team teaching between subject teachers and language teachers” have long been advocated to address “discipline specificity” in EAP teaching (p. 301), getting departmental academic staff members involved in the design and implementation of a content-based project is still a challenge faced by many English language teachers in China’s higher education contexts.

## Conclusion

The PBL ESAP course reported in the current study has added to the previous empirical studies (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2012; Grant, 2017; Li & Wang, 2018) to fill a gap in integrating ESAP into EAP teaching in tertiary education in China. In the present study, a Building Conversion Project designed for the specific learning needs of Built Environment students formed the “backbone” of the course so that it was “central” rather than “peripheral” to the curriculum (Miller, Hafner & Fun, 2012). Additionally, both theoretical insights gleaned from PBL literature and students’ and teachers’ feedback collected after each iteration led to constant improvement in the project design and implementation over the years.



The current study has demonstrated highly positive outcomes with PBL in an ESAP course of an English medium university, which appears to further prove that PBL pedagogy is a promising approach to EAP teaching in China. However, challenges still exist for EAP teachers/practitioners to negotiate with at tertiary level in China. The current study highlighted two major limitations of the project: the need to strike a balance between teacher control, teacher guidance and learner autonomy within a high-stakes course, and EAP teachers' lack of disciplinary knowledge.

It is worth mentioning that the findings of the current study did not reveal some of the challenges or limitations encountered by teachers in other studies including the lack of access to authentic teacher resources (including native speakers) (Guo, 2006), students' preference for more teacher-led and traditional learning methods (Beckett, 2005), and students having fewer experiences of collaborative learning in the classroom (Chen & Yang, 2019). Like the students in Grant's (2017) study, the students in the current study seemed to be able to "take a more self-directed role in the learning process" (p. 9). Admittedly, the shift in the English language education landscape in China since Beckett (2005) and Guo's (2006) studies as well as the local context and affordances of the Sino-British EMI university where the current study was conducted seem to contribute to the success of the Building Conversion Project. However, more research still needs to be conducted in other Chinese universities to further explore different possibilities of utilizing PBL pedagogy in teaching EAP in China.



# References

- Beckett, G. (2005). Academic language and literacy socialization through project-based instruction ESL student perspectives and issues. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 15(1), 191–206. doi: 10.1075/japc.15.1.12bec
- Beckett, G. & Slater, T. (2005). The Project Framework: a tool for language, content, and skills integration. *ELT Journal*, 59(2), 108–116. Retrieved from: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.128.6618&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Beckett, G., Slater, T. & Mohan, B. (2020). Philosophical foundation, theoretical approaches, and gaps in the literature. In G. Beckett & T. Slater (Eds.) *Global perspectives on project-based language learning, teaching, and assessment: key approaches, technology tools, and framework* (pp. 3–22). NY: Routledge.
- Chen, C. & Yang, Y (2019). Revisiting the effects of project-based learning on students' academic achievement: a meta-analysis investigating moderators. *Educational Research Review*, 26, 71–81. doi: 10.1016/j.edurev.2018.11.001
- Cheng, A. (2016). EAP at the tertiary level in China: challenges and possibilities. In K. Hyland & P. Shaw (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 97–108). NY: Routledge.
- Gibbes, M. & Carson, L. (2014). Project-based language learning: an activity theory analysis. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(2), 171–189. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marina-Gibbes/publication/257227146\\_Project-based\\_language\\_learning\\_An\\_activity\\_theory\\_analysis/links/552b7cca0cf29b22c9c1b2f9/Project-based-language-learning-An-activity-theory-analysis.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marina-Gibbes/publication/257227146_Project-based_language_learning_An_activity_theory_analysis/links/552b7cca0cf29b22c9c1b2f9/Project-based-language-learning-An-activity-theory-analysis.pdf)
- Grant, S. (2017). Implementing project-based language teaching in an Asian context: a university EAP writing course case study from Macau. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 2(4), 1–13. Retrieved from: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s40862-017-0027-x.pdf>
- Guo, Y. (2006). Project-based English as a foreign language education in China: Perspectives and issues. In G. Beckett & P. Miller (Eds.), *Project-based second and foreign language education: Past, present and future* (pp. 143–158). Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.
- Jordan, R. (1997). *English for Academic Purposes: A guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keenahan, J. & McCrum, D. (2020). Developing interdisciplinary understanding and dialogue between engineering and architectural students: design and evaluation of a problem-based learning module. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 46(4), 575–603. Retrieved from: <https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/bitstream/10197/11616/2/Repository%20-%20ped%20paper.pdf>



Kucherenko, S., Shcherbakova, I., & Varlamov, J. (2014). A project-based ESAP course: key features, benefits and challenges. *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 2(4), 671–677. Retrieved from: <http://espeap.junis.ni.ac.rs/index.php/espeap/article/viewFile/184/120>.

Li, Y & Wang, L. (2018). An ethnographic exploration of adopting project-based learning in teaching English for academic purposes. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 15(2), 290–303. Retrieved from: <https://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/li-1.pdf>

Markham, T., Larmer, J., & Ravitz, J. (2003). *Project based learning handbook: a guide to standards-focused project-based learning for middle and high school teachers*. (2nd ed.). Novato, CA: Buck Institute for Education.

Mejang, A. (2008). Integrating project-based learning in an English for Academic Purposes course: a case study of Thai medical students. *Suranaree Journal of Social Science*, 2(2), 1-18. Retrieved from: <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/sjss/article/view/23981/20411>

Miller, L., Hafner, C., & Fun, C. (2012). Project-based learning in a technologically enhanced learning environment for second language learners: students' perceptions. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 9(2), 183-195. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2304/elea.2012.9.2.183>

Poonpon, K. (2017). Enhancing English skills through project-based learning. *The English Teacher*, XL, 1-10. Retrieved from: [https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/40243665/1\\_10\\_Kornwipa\\_2011-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1642744741&Signature=aBFQHatGKXV9BujdNi5es-3OIc3nKJD2yvF-CgE8RvAe9PyvQ6LOV4VvVt7W8oijV~PkSGVI1Ca3wu7NO47-I2BrrYSerXKPhAM9Y62VVXv39fIm-sWN0vXfet7-nY8YSyIN5fNK567q~NE9IOH5j~-yAYGLI0VrkIKuV0LTHZqm8Ms1r5DoiUKdxyKi-JniHPuMvT75aIt8A2N~p6mjkpm456hBr5Uq82FsSn8ovr18CmZdSm2~zmCJz09nCdxwfVk5Mk-GxkW1iSAqhnHBP-2R0d3sZVvu3k8QcguEcBBpSudwy4z9Ia1GAY0~ggJ6cNg3641Wmuyg03-kCxC1ef-fUQ\\_\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/40243665/1_10_Kornwipa_2011-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1642744741&Signature=aBFQHatGKXV9BujdNi5es-3OIc3nKJD2yvF-CgE8RvAe9PyvQ6LOV4VvVt7W8oijV~PkSGVI1Ca3wu7NO47-I2BrrYSerXKPhAM9Y62VVXv39fIm-sWN0vXfet7-nY8YSyIN5fNK567q~NE9IOH5j~-yAYGLI0VrkIKuV0LTHZqm8Ms1r5DoiUKdxyKi-JniHPuMvT75aIt8A2N~p6mjkpm456hBr5Uq82FsSn8ovr18CmZdSm2~zmCJz09nCdxwfVk5Mk-GxkW1iSAqhnHBP-2R0d3sZVvu3k8QcguEcBBpSudwy4z9Ia1GAY0~ggJ6cNg3641Wmuyg03-kCxC1ef-fUQ__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)

Saliba, R., Mussleman, P., Fernandes, M., & Bendriss, R. (2017). Promoting information literacy of pre-medical students through project-based learning: a pilot study. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 5(4), 1-15. Retrieved from: <http://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/IJELS/article/viewFile/3890/3118>

Stoller, F. (2006). Establishing a theoretical foundation for project-based learning. In G. Beckett & P. Miller (Eds.), *Project-based second and foreign language education: Past, present and future* (pp. 18–40). Greenwich: Information Age Publishing.

Symon, M. (2017). Reevaluating the roles of the stakeholders in language education: how student autonomy is promoted through projects in English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) courses. In R. Breeze & C. S. Guinda (Eds.) *Essential Competencies for English-medium University Teaching* (pp. 169-181). Springer.



# The Speaking Zone:

**A reappraisal and reanalysis of  
the theory and practice  
behind the traditional  
4-3-2 activity,  
and a consideration of its potential  
in the EAP classroom  
from a student perspective**



**Andy McIntosh** hails from Scotland and has been involved in English language education for over 25 years. He is currently a Senior Language Lecturer with the PG Division at XJTLU, with research interests including Student Communication and Machine Translation.

*Andrew.Mcintosh@xjtlu.edu.cn*



# Abstract

**Encouraging students to engage in face-to-face communications during EAP classes is often seen as an essential element of a successful learning session. However, the perceptions and attitudes towards the speaking process of students at a transnational university in China were observed to cause challenges to in-class communication in English, and limit students' performances in terms of spoken fluency. To investigate these issues, the literature concerning an established speaking practice activity (the '4/3/2 Activity') was researched and an updated activity (the 'Speaking Zone') was explored in the EAP classroom. Eighty-eight year 2 business students were surveyed on their feelings towards the Speaking Zone with results generally supporting its usage.**

## Introduction

Spoken English is an integral part of the EAP curriculum on virtually all modules, and therefore a required element of the assessment process. In the environment of an oral examination, many students seem to find the production of 'fluent' English to be a stressful process, and this would seem to be linked to both a lack of confidence in their own abilities and the limited opportunities to practise speaking in English. Therefore, it is essential that tutors facilitate tasks that encourage fluency through spoken communication in order to help students to not only prepare for their speaking tests, but also to build their general oral competence.

This is true of Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University (XJTLU) where all students at the institution are required to take a speaking examination as an essential element of their credit-bearing EAP modules. The current research focuses on how best to prepare students for such a test by updating and enhancing a proven activity (the '4/3/2 Activity') to meet the needs of the EAP classroom.

The '4/3/2 Technique' was adapted and used for speaking practice to prepare approximately 200 Chinese students for Year 2 speaking exams, in both first and second semesters of AY 2017/18. Students were then surveyed to gain greater understanding of their attitudes towards the activities themselves and their perceptions on the extent to which they helped improve their spoken performance.

This article will provide an appraisal and analysis of the theory and practice behind the 4-3-2 activity, through a review of four published papers. These papers support the pedagogical usage of such classroom activities but provide little information of student perceptions. Guidance to how the author developed and integrated an evolved form of the activity named 'the Speaking Zone' into the EAP classroom will be given, along with the findings of a survey into student attitudes towards this activity.



# Literature Review

The '4/3/2 Technique' was devised by Maurice in 1983, and thereafter researched and championed by Paul Nation of the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He gives the following description of the activity (Nation, 2013, p.142): Learners work in pairs with one acting as the speaker and the other as the listener. The speaker talks for four minutes on a topic while the listener listens. Then the pairs change with each speaker giving the same information to a new partner in three minutes, followed by a further change and a two-minute talk.

The topics were classified as 'familiar' and could be the learners' own experiences or common interest topics; such topics "might encourage a better performance in that the speaker has a particular reason for speaking and feels confident about it" (Arevart and Nation, 1991, p.87). It is also important to understand that the learners were given "a few minutes" to prepare their talks before the first delivery, but without making notes (Nation, 1989, p.378).

The three distinct features of the technique – repetition, decreasing time and new listeners – all contribute to the development of fluency, according to Nation (1989, pp.378-9) and Arevart and Nation (1991, P. 84):

- Delivering the talk to a new partner will focus attention on "communicating the message" rather than adding new information.
- Repetition will develop confidence as it will increase learner familiarity with the form and content of their talk improving the ease of access to the language required.
- The reduced time aspect will encourage fluency by promoting a faster speaker rate and limit both need and opportunity to fashion new information.
- Analysis of the recorded speech of 6 advanced adult learners (Nation, 1989) and 29 mixed-nationality intermediate to low-advanced English students (Arevart and Nation, 1991) was conducted and the 4/3/2 Technique was shown to have positive effects on "fluency, grammatical accuracy and control of content" (Nation, 1989, p.379).



While improvements in fluency have been further investigated and confirmed by other researchers, the positive effects on grammatical accuracy and control of content from Nation (1989) are less clear. A 2012 study found no “beneficial effects of task repetition and time pressure on the syntactic complexity of monologues” (Boers, 2014, p.223). To examine the question in more detail, a study of 20 Vietnamese EFL students found no evidence for improvements in accuracy and complexity. Since more attention was given to fluency, students’ “output with respect to syntactic complexity and accuracy appeared compromised” (Thai and Boers, 2016, 386). Despite these caveats, it is worth reviewing the research and findings of more recent studies to aid understanding of how the 4/3/2 activity can be adapted to fit the needs of the EAP classroom.

The studies of Nation (1989) and Arevart and Nation (1991) considered the short-term effects of the 4/3/2 Technique, while de Jong and Perfetti (2011) investigated the longer-term evidence of proceduralization, measured by length of fluent runs, length of pauses and the phonation to time ratio. They also considered the significance of the repetition factor in fluency improvement. Their study involved testing 24 students of high intermediate level using the 4/3/2 Technique; however, these students delivered their talks to a computer, rather than a listening peer. The main focus of the research was on the importance of repetition and, to that end, two participant groups were required to talk on the same topic three times with the one-minute reductions in time, as per the original studies. The third ‘No Repetition’ group was given new topics for both the second and third deliveries. While all three groups showed improvements in fluency during the 4/3/2 process, this improvement was only transferred to a post-test new topic talk for the Repetition groups, who repeated their topics during every delivery. The authors conclude that “speech repetition in 4/3/2 may cause changes in underlying cognitive mechanisms, resulting in a long-term and transferrable effect on performance fluency”. The improvements in fluency caused by the repetitive practice could become entrenched into the students’ deliveries and, therefore, transferred to more general speaking skills (de Jong and Perfetti, 2011, p.563).

The necessity of reducing the time from four to three and then down to two minutes was investigated by Boers (2014). A hypothesis was that fluency



could improve without the pressure of the 'shrinking time window', and the key question for his research was "whether the element of repetition in the 4/3/2 activity can override the trade-off between fluency and accuracy" (Boers, 2014, pp.222-223). Ten adult intermediate to advanced students from four countries participated and were divided into two groups. One 'shrinking time' group followed the 'traditional' 4/3/2 routine of repetition with time reducing, while the other 'constant time' group repeated the speaking task three times but with a constant time factor of three minutes. Boers (2014, p.221) found that while fluency levels improved for both groups, "improvements in accuracy appeared to be compromised by the increasing time pressure". In fact, the 'constant time' of 3/3/3 produced the best gains in the fluency indicator of speech rate in the second of the three deliveries. Boers (2014, p.230-231) concludes that allocating equal time over two deliveries of the talk may be of practical relevance to teachers, although post-task interviews with students provided a lack of clear consensus on the preferred format; repetition could be 'boring', while the reducing time added a 'game' like element.

The final paper to be considered looked specifically at the suitability of using the 4/3/2 activity with Chinese learners, and drew positive qualitative results from both 302 Chinese high school students (aged 16-18 years old) and 35 local teachers. Yang (2014) provides a review of Communicative Language Theory development and principles, before commenting on the issues with the implementation of CLT practices in China, and focussing on the importance of practising fluency activities in the classroom. In the study, local teachers were trained to administer the 4/3/2 activity as per Nation's 1989 paper. Feedback was generally positive with the activity being "warmly welcomed by most EFL students and teachers", and students' improved motivation being observed (Yang, 2014, p.204). In addition to observing an "overall" increase in speaking fluency, Yang (2014, p.205) enthusiastically details a variety of connected benefits including improved vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, more logical structures and coherence of expressions. Importantly, Yang (2004, pp. 204-205) also reported that student feedback indicated improved confidence and that students enjoyed the activity and found the experience motivational.

In summary, the existing literature has explored the 4/3/2 activity from a number of perspectives considering variables including short and long term proceduralization, and the time reduction aspect. All papers reviewed report positive results



on learner speaking abilities, but only Yang (2014) briefly mentions the attitudes of the students who took part. In order to further understand the usefulness of the activity, this study first devised a new version of 4/3/2 called Speaking Zone. The aim of Speaking Zone, which has a more academic focus, was to help year 2 business students improve their spoken fluency and confidence while preparing for end of semester speaking exams. In order to explore student perceptions of the revised activity, the following research questions were explored:

- To what extent do students enjoy taking part in the activity?
- How beneficial do students find the activity in helping them prepare for the exam?
- Which speaking factors do students recognise as being improved through the activity?
- To what extent do students believe the reduced time element was beneficial?

## Research Context

In order to facilitate speaking practice in class time and encourage students to practise in their free time, Speaking Zone activities were used in class for the weeks leading up to the speaking exams. A Speaking Zone area of two rows of chairs facing each other was set up on one side of the classroom and students were directed to it, where they practiced for 20-30 minutes towards the end of the lessons. Although the classes had 23-25 members, attendance was normally between 16 and 20; while nearly all the students took the speaking exam, not all students used the Speaking Zone.

The following basic procedure was used: students were moved from the traditional classroom group set up to sit in two rows (labelled A & B) facing each other. An academic style question was displayed on the board and student A was required to answer while student B listened; then another question was displayed and the students reversed speaker/listener roles. Next, students from one side were required to move one place to face a new partner and the speaking activity was repeated.

One element that would seem to be of fundamental importance to the commu-



nicative aspect of the activity, is that students are seated face-to-face as this encourages them to focus on communicating with their partner through both spoken and non-verbal language (e.g. eye contact) with less possibility of distractions (e.g. other students, notes, or the ubiquitous phones). Yang (2014, p.200) specifies that “the class should be with an even number in face-to-face sitting”; however, there was no other mention of this requirement in the other papers reviewed. An email query was therefore sent to the authors (Nation, Boers and de Jong), all of whom responded that the clear preference was for a face-to-face set up.

Based on the exam requirements and the studies, the following adaptations were implemented for the Speaking Zone:

**a. Topic.** All of the previous studies used topics that were intended to be familiar to the participants, often with the choice being made by the individual learner. The rationale is that such topics should help the speaker to feel comfortable and confident, and provoke a desire to speak on the topic (Arevart and Nation, 1991, p.87). However, to better simulate the exam procedure, the EAP students were presented with questions designed to be highly similar to those in the exam. While some of the topics were very general (e.g. ‘What is your favourite part of university life?’), topic-specific questions relating to subjects taught in the module (e.g. ‘How can a company benefit from incorporating CSR strategies?’) were also used.

**b. Preparation Time.** All the studies allowed about three minutes for the participants to consider and plan what they would say. Boers (2014, p.224) explains this period as “strategic pre-task planning time”. Nation (1989, p.378) specifies that learners should not make notes, while de Jong and Perfetti (2011, p.543) actively encouraged note taking, in the form of “a few keywords”, and these notes were displayed on the computer screen during the talk. The interview style used in the speaking exam does not permit any preparation time as it is designed to emulate a real conversation in which both spontaneity of response and the ability to use discourse markers (e.g. “well, let me see...” ) to ‘buy time’ are desirable. However, as it can be difficult for Chinese students to deal with these requirements, a very limited amount (20



seconds) of preparation time was given during the first sessions in the Speaking Zone; this was then reduced to 10 seconds in subsequent practices, before the requirement to reply to the question immediately with no preparation time was imposed in the final sessions just before the speaking exam.

**c. Change Partner.** Nation (1989, p.378) explains that speaking to a different audience each time is essential to the process so that attention will be devoted to “communicating the message”, rather than adding new information or increasing the “formal features” to maintain the interest of an unchanged partner. Although EAP students are encouraged to work and speak together in English, there is often a limited amount of communication in the target language observed, and students generally wish to only talk to their preferred classmates, frequently of the same gender. In order to push students out of this comfort zone, students changed partners after both (A and B) had taken a speaking turn. This encouraged interactions between different elements of the entire class and should also have added to the entertainment quality of the activity.

**d. Delivery Time.** Clearly the original activity required the reduction from four to three minutes, and then to two minutes. Nation (1989, p.379) states this, in tandem with the repetition, will encourage fluency by requiring the speaker to reuse their content but to speak with less hesitation and fewer errors. As noted previously, Boers (2014) questioned this assumption and found that the constant time of three minutes delivered the best improvements. The time guidelines for the EAP exam suggest that students should speak for one minute on more familiar topics and two minutes on more module specific themes. To engage the time reduction aspect of the activity, initial practice sessions had an initial speaking time of three minutes, reducing to two and a half minutes for the repetition. Later sessions allowed two and a half minutes for the first delivery and two minutes for the repeat talk. In the final pre-exam practice, a full exam was simulated with the real timings (2\*1 minute plus 2\*2 minutes) and no repetition.

**e. Repetition of Topic.** The notion that repetition can assist in language learning is widely accepted: parents repeat words to infants to encourage first language acquisition, while repetitive drilling is found in many EFL classrooms.



The positive effects of repetition on speaking fluency are linked to earlier research (Goldman-Eisler, 1968 and Hieke, 1981 in Arevart and Nation, 1991, p.85), while Thai and Boers (2016, pp.371-373) detail various studies (e.g. Bygate (1996/2001), Lynch and Maclean (2000), Wang (2014)) that “provide evidence of positive effects of task repetition on speech fluency, accuracy and complexity”. For the 4/3/2 activity, Nation (1989, p. 378-379) explains that repeating the same talk will develop confidence in ability and reduce the difficulty in accessing the language required. Boers (2014) found that the second deliverance showed the greatest fluency gains and, as the module exam has no repetition, it was decided to have two topic repetitions in initial practice sessions but then change to no repetition to better prepare students for the exam. It should be noted that the exam had specific lists of topic questions and, therefore, it was hoped that the practice would encourage greater familiarity with the exam topics and hence, there would be proceduralization, as found by de Jong and Perfetti (2011), particularly with regard to the use of discourse markers and development strategies.

**f. Reflection / Feedback.** The original activity had neither self-reflection nor feedback; Nation (1989, p.378) states explicitly “the listener’s job is just to listen”, and Yang (2014, p.200) mentions the importance of “quickly switching” the speaker/listener role with “no interruption”. Thai and Boers (2016, pp.386-387) criticize this absence of “opportunities for interlanguage adjustments” connected to the immediate nature of the task repetition, suggesting that learners are unlikely to self-correct or improve if they are not given the opportunity to focus on their utterances or verbal requirements – a recommendation is that time is allowed for learners to reflect and modify or receive corrective teacher feedback. EAP students are encouraged to become more reflective learners and to value the usefulness of peer feedback. In the first speaking zone session, the grading criteria for the speaking exam was explained in detail and after each subsequent deliverance, time was given for the listener to provide feedback on what had been done well and what needed improvement, while speakers were encouraged to orally reflect on their own deliveries.

The similarities and differences between the different activities are presented



below in Table 1:

Paper	Topics	Preparation Time	Change Partner	Delivery Time	Repetition of Topic	Reflection	Peer Feedback
Nation (1989)	Familiar	'a few minutes'	Y	4/3/2 minutes	*3	N	N
de Jong & Perfetti (2011)	General interest	3-5 minutes for 'note-taking'	N (computer based study)	2004/3/2	*3	Y	N
'3/3/3' Boers (2014)	Comfortable	'about 3 minutes'	Y	2003/3/3	*3 (best results on 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	N	N
'Speaking Zone'	General university to module specific	From 20 seconds to no preparation time.	Y	3/2.5 2.5/2 1	*2 - no	Y	Y

Table 1: A comparison of different approaches to the 4/3/2 activity.

## Survey

In order to better understand student attitudes towards the practice elements and the effectiveness of the Speaking Zone activity, students were surveyed by paper questionnaire in week 14. The tutor provided a brief recap of the Speaking Zone, an explanation of the questions (dichotomous and Likert scale) and assurances that participation was voluntary and anonymous. In total 88 students (43 from semester one, 35 from semester two) completed the survey and the results were manually compiled.

An important distinction was made between the general Speaking Zone activity (speaking with partners sitting face-to-face) and the 'Reduced Time' element that involved the repetition of a talk topic with a shrinking time allowance. As stated previously, the 'Reduced Time' element was gradually phased out to better simulate exam conditions. It is useful to compare student preferences of these two factors to better understand how to encourage more in-class speaking practice.



# Results & Discussion

Questions (1) and (5) asked students how they felt about, respectively, the Speaking Zone and the Reduced Time activity, to investigate the first research question - see Table 2.

Activity	<i>Strong Dislike</i>	<i>Dislike</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Like</i>	<i>Strong Like</i>
<b>Speaking Zone</b>	0%	1.30%	16.70%	56.40%	25.60%
<b>Reduced Time</b>	1.30%	1.30%	38.50%	50%	9%

Table 2: Student enjoyment in taking part in Speaking Zone & Reduced Time activity.

While both activities received very positive feedback, it is clear that the Speaking Zone had a higher proportion of positive responses: a total of 82% compared to 59%, for the Reduced Time activity. Nevertheless, the responses indicate overall satisfaction with the activity in answer to the first research question.

To assess research question 2, participants were then asked to what extent they thought that the activities had helped in the Speaking Assessment .

Activity	<i>No help</i>	<i>A Little Help</i>	<i>Help</i>	<i>A lot of help</i>
<b>Speaking Zone</b>	1.30%	9%	65.40%	24.40%
<b>Reduced Time</b>	1.30%	16.90%	71.40%	10.40%

Table 3: Benefits of Speaking Zone & Reduced Time activity for exam preparation.

Again, we see a highly positive response from the majority of participants with another stronger result for the Speaking Zone, in which 89.7% of students signalled that it helped or helped a lot, with the Reduced Time activity at 81.8%. Given the results to question (5), it would appear that some participants feel that the Reduced Time activity helped them but they did not rate the activity as so likeable. This is an interesting quirk that suggests that some students recognise the value of the activity but are honest enough to admit they do not actually enjoy it.



To consider the third research question, participants were next asked to grade the amount of improvement that they felt the Speaking Zone or Reduced Time activity had caused in the following eight factors:

- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Confidence    | (e) Grammar           |
| (b) Fluency       | (f) Vocabulary        |
| (c) Pronunciation | (g) Discourse Markers |
| (d) Development   | (h) Eye Contact       |

The grading scale for improvement gave four options:

1. No improvement	2. Little improvement	3. Some improvement	4. A lot of improvement
-------------------	-----------------------	---------------------	-------------------------

A 'balance' figure was calculated for each of the eight factors, by subtracting the negative options (1 and 2) from the positive (3 and 4), and these figures were used to compare the results. All eight factors showed a positive balance but with considerable variety:

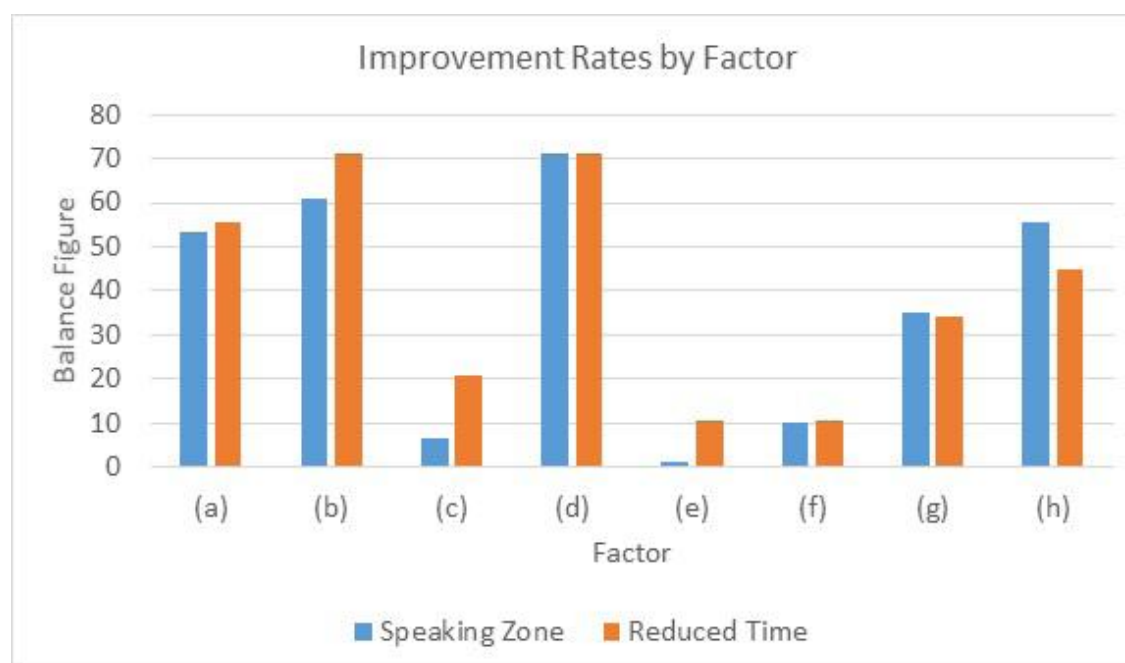


Chart 1: Improvement rates by speaking factors.



The factor that participants felt both activities improved the most was (d) Development, explained during the survey as the ability to build and link logical ideas to provide a full and detailed answer to an exam question. Both the Speaking Zone and the Reduced Time activity saw a positive balance of 71%.

Factor (b) Fluency was the second most improved, according to the results, although with a difference of 10 points in favour of the Reduced Time activity. This could support Nation's (1989) claim that the three elements of repetition, decreasing time and new listeners are necessary to increase spoken fluency.

It is unsurprising that (a) Confidence is also recognised as being strongly improved by the activities; the connection between spoken practice, fluency and confidence would seem to be self-evident. However, the ratings for (a) are considerably lower than (b): 8 points for Speaking Zone and 15 points for Reduced Time. This would seem to suggest that allotting time in class to practise speaking has a more positive effect on fluency than confidence although further research into how students classify these two elements is required.

Interestingly, (h) Eye contact showed similar positive results to (a) Confidence, with a significantly higher response for this element in the Speaking Zone (56 to 45 points). It was hoped that seating students face-to-face and directing the listeners to pay close attention to the speakers, would result in improved non-verbal communication, as well as speaking skills. The ability to maintain eye contact while speaking is generally recognised as having a positive effect on the listener, as it can indicate a more focussed and confident speaker. The rationale behind the drop in the eye contact results for the Reduced Time activity is not clear. It could simply be that participants were not as aware of their eye contact during the second session as it had become more standard during the second delivery.



The use of discourse markers was another factor that students were encouraged to use in order to fill silence with 'natural' expressions, and to direct the conversation. Results for element (g) Discourse Markers were consistently positive with roughly 35 points, indicating modest improvement. It was hypothesized that results would be higher for the Reduced Time activity as the repetition of content should make it easier to insert meaningful discourse markers; however, results do not support this. Possibly the shrinking time allowance encourages more content in the second talk.

Although factor (c) Pronunciation was only ranked in sixth position, it shows a dramatic increase from 6.5 points for the Speaking Zone to 21 points for the Reduced Time activity –proportionally the largest increase over all eight factors. The lowest rated factor, (e) Grammar, also shows a significant improvement from a virtually neutral 1.3 points in the Speaking Zone to ten times that in the Reduced Time activity. It is proposed that the reduction in the requirement to search for the vocabulary in the second delivery frees up more attentive power to focus on the elements of pronunciation and grammar, which are accordingly rated higher. This theory could also explain why the rating for (f) Vocabulary remains virtually constant at just over 10 points. It may be that vocabulary is selected for the first delivery and changing it is not subsequently given priority.

## Conclusions

The eighty-eight students who participated in the study generally responded with highly positive views of the 'Speaking Zone' activity but were slightly less favourable towards the Reduced Time element. Results generally support the use of the Speaking Zone activity in the class as participants generally enjoy taking part and find such practice beneficial in terms of exam preparation; providing positive responses for research questions one and two. In terms of the third research question, the recognition of improvements in spoken confidence, fluency and development broadly supports the literature and particularly the claims of



Nation (1989). Equally, the low ratings given for perceived grammatical and lexical improvement would seem to justify the concerns of Boers (2014) and Thai and Boers (2016), suggesting that the activity can help with spoken fluency but is of questionable benefit to accuracy. Finally with regard to research question four, participants recognised the benefits of the reduced time element of the activity. However, the lower ratings compared to the Speaking Zone are broadly in line with the findings of Boers (2014) and suggest that time consistency may be a better choice.

This study has reassessed and redesigned a popular speaking activity for use in the EAP classroom. Students generally responded favourably both in terms of enjoyment and in recognizing the benefits of the activity, and it is recommended that further research be conducted into adapting different frameworks of repetition and time to meet specific module requirements.



# References

- Arevart, S. and Nation, P. (1991) Fluency Improvement in a Second Language. *RELC Journal*, 22 (1), pp. 84-94. Available at <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/paul-nations-resources/paul-nations-publications/publications/documents/1991-Arevart-Fluency.pdf> (Accessed: 10th March, 2022).
- Boers, F. (2014) A Reappraisal of the 4/3/2 Activity. *RELC Journal*, 45 (3), pp. 221-235. doi: 10.1177/0033688214546964
- de Jong, N. and Perfetti, C. A. (2011) Fluency Training in the ESL Classroom: An Experimental Study of Fluency Development and Proceduralization. *Language Learning*, 61 (2), pp. 533-568. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9922.2010.00620.x
- Nation, P. (1989) Improving Speaking Fluency. *System*, 17 (3), pp. 377-384. doi: 10.1016/0346-251X(89)90010-9
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013) *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. 2nd Ed. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Thai, C. and Boers, F. (2016) Repeating a Monologue Under Increasing Time Pressure: Effects on Fluency, Complexity, and Accuracy. *Tesol Quarterly*. 50 (2), pp. 369-393. doi: 10.1002/tesq.232
- Yang, Y.I.J. (2014) The Implementation of Speaking Fluency in CLT: An Observation of Adopting the 4/3/2 Activity in High Schools in China. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 2 (1), pp. 193-211. doi:10.5296/ijelev2i1.5136



# The Practice of Technology Assisted **Task-based Teaching** in an Online Advanced Chinese Course

技术辅助的  
**任务型教学**

在线上高级汉语综合课的应用



**Ting Wen** joined XJTLU in 2018 and currently is the coordinator of HSK Centre and Practical Chinese Programme. Her research interests are Chinese grammar, Business Chinese and Task-based Learning and Teaching.

*Ting.Wen@xjtlu.edu.cn*



# Abstract

TBLT plays a significant role in second language acquisition and language teaching. The development of educational technology makes language teachers rethink how to design task-based teaching activities. Taking the advanced Chinese comprehensive online course of Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University as an example, this article expounds the practice of technology-assisted task-based teaching activities, and reflects and analyzes the teaching activities of each stage in the light of SMAR model. On this basis, this article discusses a solution applied in Chinese language teaching under the background of technology enhanced learning and teaching.

## 摘要

任务型教学在当前第二语言习得和语言教学法中占有重要地位。教育技术的发展使得第二语言教师重新思考如何设计任务型教学活动。本文以西交利物浦大学线上高级汉语综合课为例，阐述了技术辅助的任务型教学活动的实践，并根据SMAR模型对各阶段教学活动进行分析，探讨信息化时代背景下线上汉语教学的解决方案。

## 一、背景

自2019年底新冠病毒爆发以来，大部分来华留学生无法返回校园。西交利物浦大学的汉语课突然从线下教学变成线上教学，已经持续了四个学期。技术辅助学习从渗透到课程中的一个想法，一夜之间变成了一种全面实施的教学模式。教师也从单一地完成教学任务到不断调整、寻找技术辅助教学的最佳方式。技术在提高学习和教学效率的同时，也提高了学生的学习体验 (Kirkwood, 2006)。本文将以此校高级汉语综合课 CLT109 为例，对技术辅助的任务型教学实践进行反思，探讨信息化时代背景下线上汉语教学的解决方案。

西交利物浦大学高级汉语综合课主要面向国际商务、国际关系大二到大四的留学生。课程时长两个学期，每周学时五小时。课程目标对标欧洲共同语言框架B2+，从听、说、读、写四个方面都对学生提出了较高的要求。教学内容主要选自《体验汉语高级教程2》、《纵横商务汉语高级综合教程1》、《纵横商务汉语跨文化交际案例教程》，课文内容的长度在1000到2000字左右，包含丰富的词汇和语法结构。时间紧，任务重，也有学者指出“网速等技术原因造成了学生体验不佳”（林秀琴，吴琳琳，2020）。如何保证学习效率成为了线上教学最大的挑战之一。得益于本校线上教学平台 Learning Mall（下文简称为LM）的技术支持，经过四个学期的探索、反思和改进，技术辅助的任务型教学在高级阶段的汉语综合课上充分应用，既能高效完成教学任务，又能促进师生、学生之间的互动。

## 二、技术辅助的任务型教学实践

一般来说，任务型教学包含三个阶段：任务前、任务中、任务后（吴中伟，2018）。线上教学中，技术对任务型教学的有效开展发挥着重要作用，特别是在学习资料的呈现、学习效果的测试、动机的激发等方面。下文将详细阐述不同阶段的教学实践以及现代化教育技术的应用。

### 第一阶段：任务前

第一阶段是任务有效开展的前提条件，在这个阶段主要需要激发学生对完成任务的兴趣，明确任务的目标和内容，在初次尝试后发现现有语言能力和完成任务的差距，进一步激发学习的兴趣。图片和短视频是使用频率最高的手段，能高效地将学生引入真实任务相关的典型情境。



短视频可以通过在LM添加链接轻松实现。除此之外，LM的论坛常用来记录、保存任务前阶段学生产出的内容，以便与任务后阶段产出的内容进行比较，使学生能自测学习目标完成的程度。

## 第二阶段：任务中

第二阶段主要是以学生为中心，开展各类输入和输出型任务。传统语言教学PPP模式中的展示环节（presentation）在线上学习时主要转变为直播课前的预习和直播课上重点、难点词汇及语法的讲解。学生通过预习带有详细定义和例子，与任务紧密相关的词汇列表（如图1所示）来阅读指定章节。课文通过PDF Annotation呈现（如图2所示）。与普通的PDF文件相比，PDF Annotation提供了标记、评论功能，学生可以在预习课文时提出问题，教师在直播课上及时解答。为了检验预习结果，教师可以在LM上设计测验以检查学生对于课文主要内容、核心词汇和语法结构的理解程度。题型包括判断、选择、填空、排序等，图片、音频、视频都可以插入问题中。LM自动生成的答题分析可以帮助教师快速聚焦学生的问题，在课堂上针对学生的常见问题进行解答或者提供进一步的解释、操练。

3. 图的（就）是（个）+adj.：用来引出希望得到的结果【口】  
 买辆车代步，图的是个方便。  
 请朋友们一起喝酒，图的就是高兴。  
 河南人把油饼或者包子泡在胡辣汤里一起吃，图的就是个痛快。
4. 哪怕……，S也要……：用于假设，哪怕引出一个不利的情況/条件，第二分句表示不受前面情况的影响，结果是不会改变的。  
 哪怕今天没有一个观众，我也要把这歌唱好。  
 哪怕别人都不看好我，我也不在乎。  
 哪怕到了中国要隔离28天，我也要回西浦上学。
5. 一落千丈 zhàng：成语，动词，指价格、数量、成绩等快速下降、减少  
 今年樱桃的价格一落千丈。  
 受疫情影响，来华留学生的数量一落千丈。  
 自从父母离婚以后，查理的成绩就一落千丈。
6. 无人问津 jīn：形容词，形容没有人关心，不被需要  
 招聘会上名牌大学的毕业生大受欢迎，一些普通高校的毕业生则无人问津。  
 电动汽车最近几年发展迅速，市场不断扩大，刚上市的时候也曾无人问津。  
 刚死的鱼虾价格一落千丈也无人问津。

图1：词汇列表





图2：学生利用PDF Annotation 预习

在解决完生词、语法结构并对课文有初步理解的基础上在直播课上开展更多的输入型任务，以意义和内容为中心，在典型情境中让学生通过听和读接触真实的语言。这个阶段使用频度高、同时高度依赖于技术的任务主要有三种。第一，利用LM的Etherpad进行头脑风暴，这是一种支持多人实时编辑并且即时展现结果的软件（如图3所示）。学生在使用这个软件时参与度很高，他们认为通过Etherpad能够看到“其他同学的想法，也会促使自己产生新的点子”。第二，口头的分组任务。首先，每人会被分配到不同的阅读内容及相关问题，这些内容可以通过LM的消息功能快速发送至单人或者多人，在组员之间形成信息差。接着同组学生进入瞩目会议室的分组房间，按照问题列表互相提问，组合出完成任务的全部信息。教师可以在不同的分组房间切换，了解任务完成情况并解答问题。第三，利用Mentimeter开展实时调查或者投票。Mentimeter是一个交互式的实时演示平台，学生可以通过输入文字或者选择答案等来和老师进行互动，调查结果可以一键显示于页面，简洁的界面设计和音效可以很快调动学生的积极性（如图4所示）。在上述输入型任务中，学生进一步感知、练习完成任务所需的新的语言知识。

### 课堂任务：给男生/女生的恋爱建议

1. 在这里写下你的一条恋爱建议，1-3句话
2. 修改后把你的建议拍成视频发到微信群，注意横屏拍摄



图3：利用Etherpad进行头脑风暴





图4：利用Mentimeter开展实时调查

之后，学生进一步使用新的语言知识完成输出型任务。例如有一篇跨文化交际案例的课文是关于北京的韩国城——望京的，在学习这篇课文时设计的两个基于真实情境的输出型任务让学生觉得十分有趣。学生以生活在望京的中国人或韩国人的身份，利用LM的论坛功能，模拟在社区论坛上发帖，对生活中遇到的邻里关系问题发表自己的看法。进行口头内容产出时，利用瞩目会议室的分组房间召开业主大会，学生分别扮演各国居民代表和社区工作者，居民代表需要阐述生活中的问题，社区工作者需要调解居民之间的纠纷，最后共同商讨形成社区公约（如图5所示）。在这一阶段，语言习得效果得到了巩固和强化。

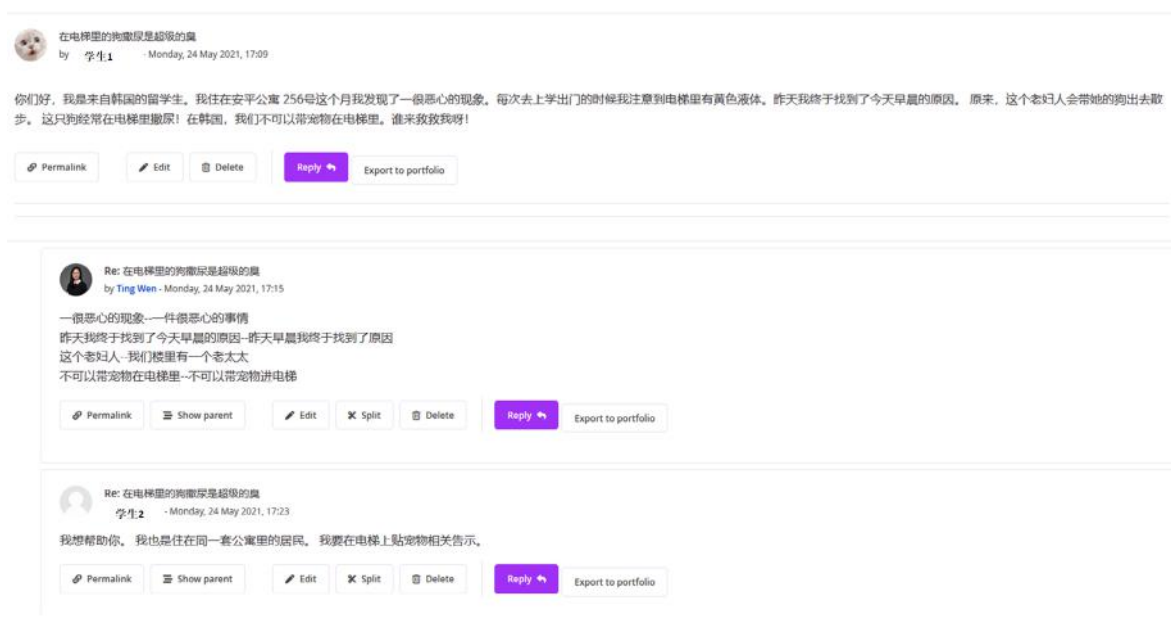


图 5：在虚拟论坛发帖



### 第三阶段：任务后

这一阶段主要通过课后任务和教师的反馈让学生自觉地聚焦语言形式。课后任务分成两部分，词汇语法练习和交际性任务。词汇语法练习除了可以通过LM上的quiz实现，还可以利用Quizlet完成。Quizlet是一个卡片类学习软件，学生可以自制字词卡片，也可以加入老师设计好的学习集，简明的页面设计和附加的游戏记忆方式更吸引学生。最重要的是学生可以实现随时随地，利用碎片时间进行学习。交际性任务可以通过LM的播客、论坛、assignment提交，教师的反馈也可以通过LM以文字、语音、视频等形式发送给学生。

上述三个阶段构成了任务型教学的基本流程（如图6所示），从准备到展开再到反馈，从输入到输出，教师的作用不再是将大部分精力放在讲解上，而是引导学生在完成任务的过程中自然地领会语言规则，不断修正和完善。

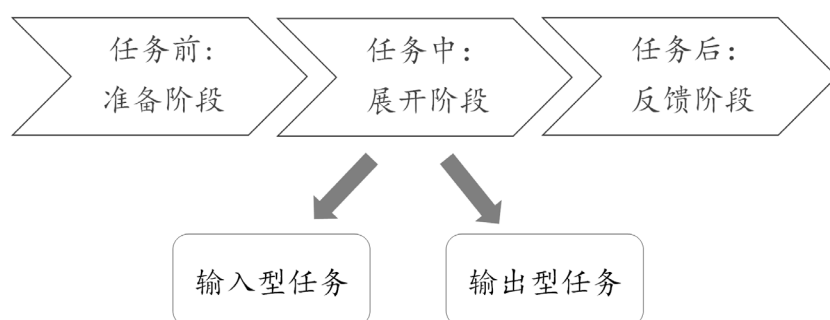


图6：任务型教学基本流程

## 三、技术对任务型教学活动设计的影响

任务型教学是自上世纪九十年代以来在二语习得领域和国际汉语教学领域使用最普遍的教学方法之一（曾妙芬，2019）。技术辅助学习几乎在同时期开始逐渐应用于高等教育（Kirkwood & Linda, 2014）。技术辅助的任务型教学与传统的教学有何区别，下文将根据Puentedura（2013）提出的SMAR模型对上文列举的教学活动进行分析。SMAR模型将基于移动设备的教学活动分为四个层次：替代（Substitution）、扩充（Augmentation）、修改（Modification）和重新定义（Redefinition）。Puentedura认为前两个层次有助于提升学习效果，后两个层次则意味着学习发生了转化（Puentedura, 2006）。

在线上教学的过程中，使用技术来展示和保存学习材料，包括PDF文档、PowerPoint幻灯片、补充材料、直播课视频等，只是传统教学活动的替代形式。



依托LM的Etherpad, quiz等用于巩固新知识的教学活动属于第二层次：对传统教学活动的扩充。这些教学活动设计提高了教学、学习的效率，同时一定程度上提升了学生的参与度。

最重要的转变在于技术的加入使得教师可以重新思考如何设计线上的任务型教学活动。Rod (2003) 认为，语言习得是在真实的交流中进行的。根据学习目标和内容“量身定制”的任务可以让学生将注意力从词汇和语法转移到解决真实生活的问题上。背后的逻辑是将关键的语言功能应用于典型的生活情境中。得益于技术的辅助，在设计上文提到的跨文化交际案例相关的任务时才能既做到“情境真实”，又做到“互动真实”。“情境真实”的任务，比如利用瞩目会议室的分组房间召开“业主大会”，是对真实生活中典型交际活动的演习 (Rod, 2003)。而在LM模拟的“社区论坛上发帖、互相回帖”有效地促进了学生之间的互动。学生在完成这些任务的过程中既可以掌握评论、协商、说服等语言功能的常用表达方式，又可以提升跨文化交际能力。上述教学活动如果没有技术的参与就无法在线上展开。技术辅助的任务型教学在保证教学效率的同时，使学生的参与度有了显著提升。学生在课程质量问卷中表示他们最喜欢的就是课堂上的互动，以及在学习语言的同时可以了解当代中国的国情。

## 四、结语

本文介绍了技术辅助的任务型教学在线上高级汉语综合课的应用。新技术的层出不穷为教学设计提供了新思路、新方法。技术服务于内容，内容重于技术。虽然技术的加入能够提升学习效率、创造碎片化学习机会、为交际任务提供虚拟情境，但是技术始终是为内容服务的。同时，语言学习的效果也不是由技术决定的，而是取决于教师如何根据学习者的学习动机、目标、学习风格来利用技术设计教学活动。在实际教学过程中，还需要以达到“情境真实”、“互动真实”为标准，合理地利用技术来重新设计任务型教学活动。



## 参考文献

Kirkwood, A. , & Price, L. (2014). Technology-enhanced learning and teaching in higher education: what is 'enhanced' and how do we know? a critical literature review. *Learning Media & Technology*, 39(1), 6-36.

Kirkwood, A. (2006). Going outside the box: skills development, cultural change and the use of on-line resources. *Computers & Education*, 47(3), 316-331.

Miao-fen Tseng. (2019). Creating a task-based language course in Mandarin Chinese. In Chris Shei, Monica Zikpi, and Der-Lin Chao (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Language Teaching*, (pp. 118-133). Routledge.

PuenteDura, R. R. (2006, November 28). Transformation, technology, and education in the state of Maine [Web log post]. Retrieved from [http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog/archives/2006\\_11.html](http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog/archives/2006_11.html)

PuenteDura, R. R. (2013, May 29). SAMR: Moving from enhancement to transformation [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog/archives/000095.html>

Rod, E. (2003). *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

林秀琴, 吴琳琳. (2020). 关于线上国际中文教学的调查与思考. *国际汉语教学研究*. 28(4), 39-46.

吴中伟. (2018). 任务型教学的几个基本问题. *辽宁师范大学学报*. 41(4), 24-30.



# Report on the Current Situation of Placement Tests of International Chinese Language Education

国际中文教育

分班测试现状

调查报告



**Jia Yu** is a Language Lecturer in Chinese at the Modern Languages Centre. Her research interests are computer assisted language learning and innovative teaching methods.

*Jia.Yu@xjtlu.edu.cn*



**Haiyun Zeng** is a Chinese language teacher at the Modern Languages Centre. Her research interests are assessments, grade-appropriate reading and teacher development.

*Haiyun.Zeng@xjtlu.edu.cn*



**Xiaowen Zou** is an Associate Language Lecturer in Chinese at XJTLU, China. Her research interests are task-based language teaching and technology-enhanced learning and teaching.

*Xiaowen.Zou@xjtlu.edu.cn*



**Xuanying Shen** is from the Chinese Division, MLC. She has been teaching Chinese language for over 16 years and her recent research interests are Computer Adaptive Test and AI speech analysis in Chinese testing.

*Xuanying.Shen@xjtlu.edu.cn*



# Abstract

**High-quality placement tests benefit second language learning and teaching. There is a lack of systematic and effective placement tools in terms of international Chinese language education. Our research group conducted a literature review and investigated the placement tests in ten universities, and summarized them in this report. The report's goal is to assist researchers in understanding the current situation of Chinese placement tests used in domestic universities. It can also be used as a reference tool for developing an intelligent placement testing system, which our research group is working on.**

## 摘要

高质量的分班是顺利开展国际中文教学的重要前提，而目前仍然缺少成熟有效的中文分班工具。研究组进行了文献研究，对国内十所高校进行调研，并撰写了此报告。本报告总结了目前国内分班测试的研究成果和实际运用情况，可帮助研究者了解目前中文分班测试现状，并可作为下一步开发智能化分班测试系统的背景调查和需求调查。

## 一、引言

分班测试(Placement test)，也称安置测验或分级测验，其目的是预估学生现有的语言水平并据此将学生编入合适的课程之中(王佑旻，2010)。分班测试是确保中文国际教学活动顺利开展的重要前提，准确且高效的分级对进一步开展教学、提高教学效率起到关键作用。然而目前国际中文教育业内仍缺乏便捷有效的分班测试系统。为解决此问题，笔者团队致力于开发一套适用于我校，乃至更大范围的计算机自适应测试(Computerized Adaptive Test, CAT)系统，用于评估学生中文水平。在开发工作起始阶段，笔者对国内中文分班测试现状进行了文献研究和实际情况调研，并撰写了此报告。

## 二、研究现状

目前国内中文分班测试的研究主要侧重于以下三个方面：一是试卷的开发与设计；二是对现有试题的信度和效度研究；三是分班依据的研究。在试卷的开发与设计方面，中文分班测试的试题内容大多参考的是教学大纲和HSK测试的试题(郭修敏，2017)。当然也有一些不同的尝试，如任春燕(2007)根据学生语法习得的顺序，设计了一套以句式为内容的简化试卷。大部分的中文分班测试运用一张试卷来测试所有学生，但赵秀娟(2012)提出要针对不同水平的学生设计不同的试卷。对于初中级水平的学生，重在考察他的中文基础语法；而对于中高级水平学生，重在考察他的语法和词汇的使用以及阅读理解的能力。在试题的信度、效度研究方面，伍秋萍，洪炜和邓淑兰(2017)通过研究证实了汉字认读测试在分班测试中的有效性。罗莲(2012)的研究表明听力和语法的测试能更有效地区分学生水平；但是词汇、阅读理解和完形填空这三种题型的效度还需进一步考察。辛平(2007)通过研究提出作文在对于高水平学生的区分上具有不可替代的作用。在中文分班的依据方面，郭修敏(2018)提出了构建基于多元化信息参照的国际中文教学分级测试体系。要对具有不同中文水平、具备各种学习者特征、拥有各自学习需求的中文学习者进行合理的分级和安置，不能只依靠语言能力测试的分数。鹿士义和苗芳馨(2014)也提倡在分班和教学的过程中注意学生间的具体区别，实行差异化编班和教学。柴省三(2011)提出采用多元等级聚类分析法对具有相似综合语言能力和单项语言能力的学生进行分班，以提高标准的有效性和教学的针对性。



随着网络和信息技术的发展, 计算机辅助语言测试也受到了广泛的关注(张艳, 张俊, 2017)。其中基于项目反应理论的计算机自适应性语言测试也成为研究热点。然而, 关于汉语计算机自适应性语言测试的开发仅停留在理论研究阶段(柴省三, 2013, 2014)。本文通过对国内高校中文国际教育分班测试情况的调查, 提出了构建基于Moodle平台的汉语自适应性分班测试的可能性。

### 三、国内高校中文国际教育分班测试情况调查

为了解国内各高校针对留学生的中文分班测试情况, 以及对国际中文教育教师们对不同形式分班测试的看法, 研究组以线上访谈为主, 结合部分调查数据进行说明。

#### 3.1 研究对象

本文选取了曾参与过或者熟知留学生中文分班测试的10名教师作为研究对象, 他们分别来自10所高校, 包括7所国内传统高校、2所中外合作办学高校以及1所港台高校。

#### 3.2 研究工具

本文所运用的访谈提纲主要包括四个方面: 关于高校分班测试的基本信息、现状和事实(包含分班测试的操作、设备、师资投入等)、对一些典型事件和典型问题的深究(包括疫情对分班测试的影响、科技辅助分班测试)以及受访者对相关问题的看法(包括对分班测试的看法、对测试方式的倾向性、对于分班测试的建议等)。

#### 3.3 结果与分析

##### 3.3.1 高校留学生中文分班测试的基本情况与现状

参与访谈的10名教师各自介绍了其高校留学生和中文分班测试的基本情况, 其中2所高校的留学生数量超过1000名, 2所高校的留学生超过400名, 6所高校的留学生数量在100名到200名之间。

为表述方便, 10所大学分别用U1, U2, …, U10来指称, 而各个大学的代表教师则用T1, T2, …, T10来指称。表格按照参加分班测试的人数从大到小排序, 其中U10的留学生参与分班测试人数不详, 故置于表格最后。从访谈的内容可以初步得出以下基本信息。

##### (1) 分班测试的形式

分班测试的形式主要有标准化语言水平测试(HSK)、大学自编试题笔试(检测字音、词语、语法等的测试题)、教师面试或者口语测试(通常为一对一的形式、通过问答检



学校	分班测试人数	测试形式	测试时长（每人）
U1	2000-3000 人	报名填基本信息 HSK 测试 看教材 口试	根据不同水平，测试时间不等，但均少于 100 分钟
U2	1600-1800 人	自编试题笔试 口试	笔试 60 分钟 口试 15 分钟
U3	600-800 人	自编试题笔试 口试	笔试 2 小时 面试 15 分钟左右
U4	400 人	笔试 口试	笔试 2 小时 口试 5-10 分钟
U5	150 人	学习背景调查 面试 看教材	面试 5-10 分钟
U6	多于 120 人	基本信息填写 自编试题笔试	至少需要 30 分钟
U7	多于 50 人	线下笔试 口试 看不同水平的教材	笔试：1 小时 口试：20 分钟
U8	少于 50 人	HSK 三级试卷 学生水平及意愿调查	90 分钟
U9	少于 100	HSK 试卷 语言学习经历书面描述 部分学生面试	少于 1 小时
U10	/	背景调查表 笔试 面试	笔试：1 小时

表1. 高校留学生中文分班测试的基本情况表

测学生的口语水平）、学生语言水平自我评价（包括学习背景调查和教材查看检测），且在疫情爆发前笔试均为线下测试。若不采取笔试，则将会有不同形式的测试。

如教师T5所言：“首先，留学生填写一份问卷，问卷的内容主要是留学生的学习背景，比如学了多久中文，在哪儿学的，有没有参加过什么测试或者取得过任何证书。然后，学生会收到一封预约面试的邮件。老师会跟学生进行一对一的面试。面试中，老师会根据学生的问卷，再具体地询问一些背景问题；老师会给学生看教材；最后老师会给学生推荐适合他的中文课。”



### （2）分班测试的时间

各个高校采用的分班测试形式各有不同，除了U5，只有面试，测试时间在5-10分钟，其他高校均涉及到笔试，且测试时间基本上在1个小时以上。访谈中一半以上的教师觉得笔试的耗时较长。教师T9说：“我觉得书面测试没有必要，interview就可以，学生也觉得分班测试时间太长。”

### （3）分班测试之后的班级调整

根据访谈结果，七成以上教师表示比例不明，一是接受访谈时教师没有获得该校的换班比例数据，二是每个学期的换班比例均有所不同。总体来说，教师们认为分班测试的结果大致上是准确的，但是换班的情况仍然存在；学生换班原因较为复杂，但是学生所被分配到的班级水平偏高或偏低是其中一个重要的原因。教师T2认为：“分班测试以后，学生觉得班级不太合适的可以提出申请，在教师也同意的情况下可以换班，每个学期的换班比例都不太一样，有的时候跟口语老师测试标准有关系，学生被分到的班级水平不大合适。”

## 3.3.2 受疫情影响下的中文分班测试

截至2020年12月20日，我国的国际中文教育仍然受到新型冠状病毒疫情的影响，高校留学生的中文分班测试也相应产生了一些变化。

### （1）参与测试的人数较往年有所下降

参加访谈的10所高校教师均表明由于受到疫情的影响，本校本年度的留学生人数下降了，同时参与分班测试的人数也相应下降。

### （2）测试形式积极寻求变革

在疫情的影响下，线下教学已成难题，线下分班测试更是如此，于是各个高校都在寻求分班测试的变革，有的学校改用一对一视频的方式对学生进行分班测试，有的学校使用问卷法对学生进行词汇和语法的检测，也有的学校使用了网上分班系统。但是对于分班测试的变革只在形式上，内容上并没有多大更改，只是将以前的试题重新编辑成在线题库，或者直接将之前的题目扫描让学生下载作答再上传，然后老师进行人工阅卷。

### （3）科技辅助分班测试的需求增大

基本上每位受采访对象都提到科技辅助分班测试的必要性，比如可以解决短时间内参与分班测试的人数众多的问题；解决学生所处的不同时空的问题；解决对大量的师资需求问题等。目前各大高校在进行线上分班测试操作时遇到的首要问题就是技术方面的。且有教师谈到网上测试平台的局限性，需要新技术。如教师U4认为“运用网上测试平台减轻了分班



测试的负担。但是目前为止题型只能是词汇、语法、阅读等客观题。有时候需要老师根据班级和人数进行调整。”

### 3.3.3 高校的中文国际教育教师们对不同形式的分班测试的看法

从分班测试形式来谈，部分教师表明传统的纸笔测试加口试的方式比较适合于学生人数少的情况，而且应该根据高校的具体情况可再增加一个环节——翻阅教材，可让学生阅读段落、回答相关问题，并结合学生自我评估来考察学生对教材的适应度。

另外，线下分班耗费较大人力、物力。在学期伊始，大量的留学生进行分班测试的需求使得大量的师资、学校硬件设施需要被投入。纸笔测试加口试的测试时间较长。由于每个学校都设置了一对一口试的环节，分班测试的时间通常较长。不仅教师，有的学生也对过长的分班测试时间表示不满。个别教师认为可只保留一种测试形式，或只笔试，或只口试。

从分班测试结果而言，总的来说比较准确，但是对进行分班测试检测的老师要求较高，特别是口试部分的结果，跟口语老师测试标准有很大关系。由于分班测试属于低风险测试，各高校对测试结果的处理灵活性都比较大，后期都会开放等级调整。大部分老师认为分班测试需要对本校课程具有针对性。

在改进建议方面，几位教师认为应当增加科技辅助分班测试，以减轻人工压力，提高效率。需要扩大分班测试题库，并提高试题质量。分班测试的标准需要一致化，特别是主观题部分，需要在测试前确立评分标准，并不断检测、加强。

## 四、结语

中文国际教育正迅速向着网络化、信息化、智慧化发展。然而通过文献研究和访谈可以发现国内分班测试基本还停留在传统纸笔测试阶段，即使使用计算机测试，也依旧只是线性呈现的方式，存在许多不足。分班测试亟需科技辅助。参考英语分班测试的现状，笔者认为计算机自适应测试是解决一系列问题、实现国际中文分班测试向智慧化转变的有效途径。CAT可根据被试答题情况调整后续出题，具有个性化、高效率的优点，考生回答数量更少的题目就能达到传统测试的测量精度(涂冬波，2017)。在技术支持下，笔者团队基于Moodle平台开发了一套用于我校分班的CAT系统，并进行了小范围预测试，获得了较为满意的结果。

目前，该测试系统仍处于开发初始阶段。我们真诚地希望与各位同仁更深入、广泛地探讨，为打造中文国际教育的“智慧学习(Smart Learning)”共同努力。



## 参考文献

柴省三. (2011). 关于留学生汉语入学分班测试决策效度的思考. 中国考试, 10, 31 – 37.

柴省三. (2013). 中国汉语水平考试(HSK)远程CAT阅读测试模式研究. 中国远程教育 (综合版), 6, 81 – 87.

柴省三. (2014). 计算机自适应性语言测试的智能选题方法研究. 中国教育信息化: 基础教育, 4, 81-85.

郭修敏. (2017). 面向tcs1的分级测试客观卷开发实证研究. 世界汉语教学, 31(2), 242-252.

郭修敏. (2018). 基于多元化信息参照的汉语教学分级测试体系构建. 语言教学与研究, 194(06), 4-13.

李海燕, 蔡云凌, & 刘颂浩. (2003). 口语分班测试题型研究. 世界汉语教学, 4, 79-89.

鹿士义, & 苗芳馨. (2014). 分班测验中阅读理解测验的诊断性评价研究. 国际汉语教学研究, 2, 70-75.

任春艳. (2007). 关于简化分班测试的实验研究. 语言教学与研究, 6, 45-50.

涂冬波. (2017). 计算机化自适应测验理论与方法. 北京: 北京师范大学出版社

王佶旻. (2010). 语言测试概论. 北京: 北京语言大学出版社.

伍秋萍, 洪炜, & 邓淑兰. (2017). 汉字认读在汉语二语者入学分班测试中的应用——建构简易汉语能力鉴别指标的实证研究简. 世界汉语教学, 31(3), 395-411.

辛平. (2007). 安置性测试的跟踪研究. 汉语学习, 6, 76-81.

张艳, & 张俊. (2017). 我国计算机辅助语言测试研究现状. 中国考试, 5, 47-53.

赵秀娟. (2012). 来华留学生分班测试的笔试试卷建构研究. 语言文字应用, 1, 117-124.



# 附件:访谈提纲

## 1. 基本信息

- 1) 贵校每年的留学生数量大概有多少?
- 2) 每年/学期有多少留学生参加分班考试?

## 2. 现状和事实

- 1) 往年的分班考试是怎么操作的?
- 2) 机考的话需要学校提供电脑教室吗? 需要多少教室? 纸笔考试的话需要多少教室?
- 3) 整个分班考试需要多长时间? 程度高的学生所需的时间与程度一般的学生差别大吗?
- 4) 多少老师参与到分班考试中?
- 5) 多长时间学生可以知道自己的分班考试信息?
- 6) 通过什么样的方式学生可以知道自己的分班情况?
- 7) 对于短期交换的学生, 或者迟报道的学生怎么进行分班考试呢?
- 8) 分班考试以后有学生申请换班吗? 大概比例是多少您知道吗?
- 9) 其他

## 3. 对一些典型事件、典型问题的深究

- 1) 今年情况很特殊, 由于新冠肺炎的爆发, 我们对留学生的汉语教学只能采取线上教学, 那么对于疫情这种特殊情况下的分班考试有什么变化呢? (或者: 疫情有没有影响到贵校的汉语分班考试?)
- 2) 现在科技的发展日新月异, 请问贵校有没有使用科技辅助汉语的分班考试呢?
- 3) 其他

## 4. 受访者以及相关者对相关议题的看法

- 1) 请问您觉得贵校的这样的分班考试有什么看法?
- 2) 请问您更倾向于机考/网考/在线考还是纸笔考+面试? 为什么
- 3) 您对疫情这种特殊情况下的分班考试有没有什么建议呢? (可与上述问题交叉提问)
- 4) 您觉得哪些科技手段可以运用到汉语的分班考试中来? (可与上述问题交叉提问)
- 5) 其他



**REVIEW**



**N**



# Use Pear Deck to Create an Interactive Point Presentation

## 利用 Pear Deck 增加 PPT 的互动性



**Haixia Wang** currently works as the deputy director of IBWL programme at XJTU. She was awarded "Arkansas Traveler" by U.S. Arkansas State Board of Education and the Best International Teacher of the year 2016 by the University of Helsinki.

[haixia.wang@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:haixia.wang@xjtlu.edu.cn)



# Background / 背景介绍

TODAY POWERPOINT HAS become the leading technology tool used for teaching in academia (Inoue-Smith, 2016). However, the contribution of PowerPoint to active learning and teaching is continuously debated (Savoy et al., 2009). Berk (2012) argues that in an era of student-centered teaching, PowerPoint presentations seem less engaging and interactive. How to increase the interactivity in the classroom remains a question to be answered. Some teachers embrace technology in teaching and hope it will be the answer. Interactive presentations add dynamics to the classroom and make the learning process more informative and engaging (Stoykova, 2014). Several tech tools, e.g., Mentimeter, Polleverywhere, Wooclap, etc., can be embedded or applied, so teachers can check students' understanding or seek their opinions. However, these tech tools share the same limitation, which is that they are separate platforms from PowerPoint. Teachers have to embed the QR code to their PowerPoint, and open other webpages. They can't integrate the survey templates into the ready-made PowerPoint slides directly. It can be time-consuming if teachers have to make new presentation contents from scratch.

如今幻灯片已经成为教育领域使用最为广泛的技术工具之一 (Inoue-Smith, 2016)。然而，幻灯片对于有效教学究竟有多少作用，这还有待探讨 (Savoy et al., 2009)。Berk (2012) 认为，以学生为中心的教学中，幻灯片这种形式缺乏互动性和吸引力。Stoykova (2014) 进一步阐释了互动性演示的好处，它有助于创建多元课堂，有效提供信息，更好地让学生参与进来。那么，我们该如何提高课堂互动性呢？很多老师寄希望于科技。教师可以在幻灯片中使用或者插入一些技术工具，例如Mentimeter, Polleverywhere, Wooclap等，来检测学生学习水平，采集学生意见。然而，这些工具有一些共同的局限性。它们大都是独立的平台，只能通过二维码或网址链接的形式，插入到幻灯片中。因此，幻灯片和网站都需要打开。这些技术工具都不支持在网站上直接上传已有幻灯片，而在网站上做新的幻灯片极为耗时，性价比不高。

That's why I turn my attention to Pear Deck. Like other interactive presentation platforms, Pear Deck can be used to add interactive questions and show students' responses on the screen in real-time. Unlike other platforms though, teachers can create or just simply upload their PowerPoints, convert the PowerPoints to Google slides and add questions directly using add-ons.

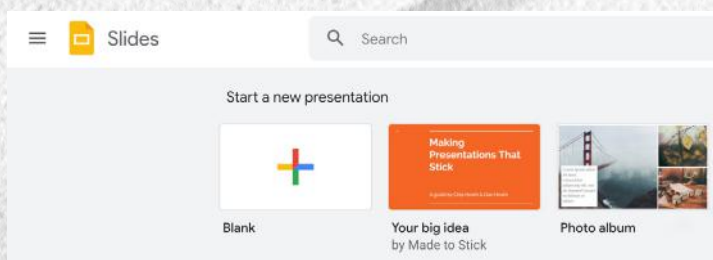
这是我倾向于使用Peck Deck的原因。跟其他互动演示平台一样，Pear Deck允许老师添加互动问题，学生的回答能实时自动地显示在主屏幕上。不一样的是，Pear Deck 允许老师简单上传已有的幻灯片，把问题直接嵌入到已有幻灯片中。



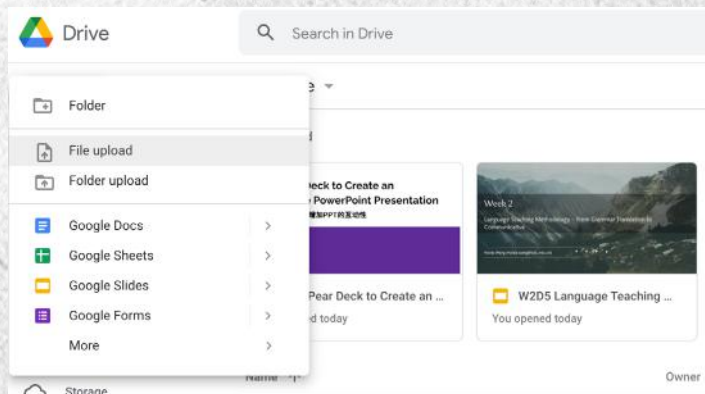
# How to Use Pear Deck Pear Deck 操作指南

## Step 1 第一步:

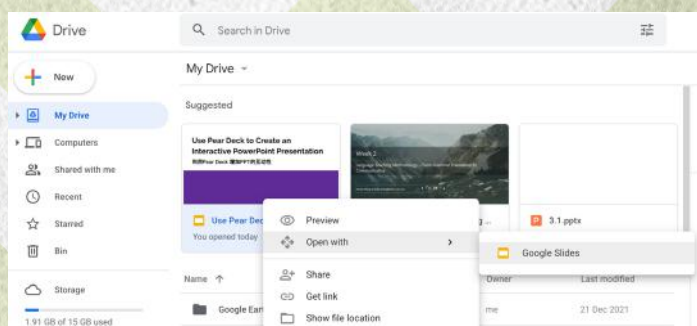
Convert PPT into Google Slides  
把PPT转为谷歌幻灯片



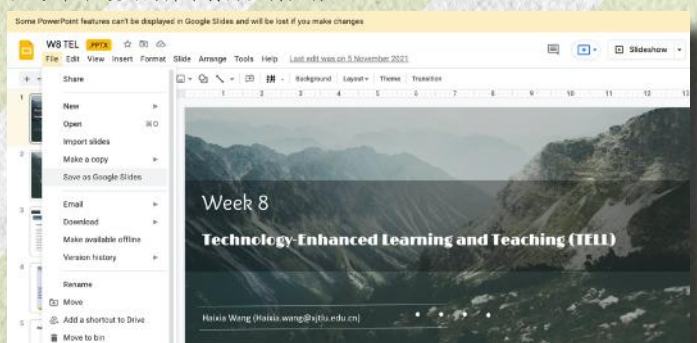
Pic 1. Start a new presentation using Google Slides  
图1: 新增谷歌幻灯片



Pic 2. Upload a ready-made PowerPoint slides  
图2: 上传已有幻灯片



Pic 3. Open the uploaded file with Google Slides  
图3: 在谷歌幻灯片中打开上传文件



Pic 4. Save the file as Google Slide to activate Add-on menu  
图4: 转存为谷歌幻灯片以激活插件菜单

If you want to start a new presentation, go to google slides (<https://www.google.com/slides/about/>) . Sign in or register for an account. Start a new presentation.

如果你想创建新的幻灯片，你需要打开谷歌幻灯片 (<https://www.google.com/slides/about/>) 注册并登录账号，创建新的幻灯片。

If you want to upload your ready-made slides, go to google drive (<https://drive.google.com/>), upload your slides by clicking new-file upload, and then right click to open the file with google slides. 如果你想上传已有的幻灯片，你可以登录谷歌网盘(<https://drive.google.com/>), 点击“新建”，再点击“上传文件”，选择你想要上传的文件并上传。上传完毕后，用“谷歌幻灯片”的形式打开该文件。

The “Add-ons” button in the menu bar may be invisible for uploaded slides. In this case you need to click “File”, and then “Save as google slides”. 在打开的幻灯片中，可能找不到“加载项”菜单。这种情况下，只需要点击“文件”，把文件“另存为”谷歌幻灯片即可。

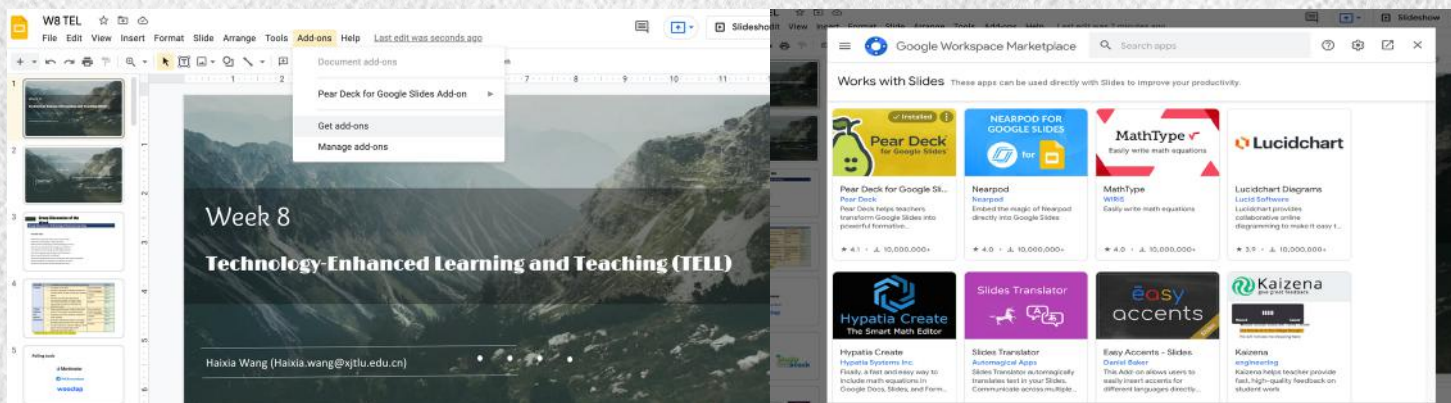


## 指南

## Step 2 第二步:

Install Pear Deck Add-on

安装Pear deck 插件



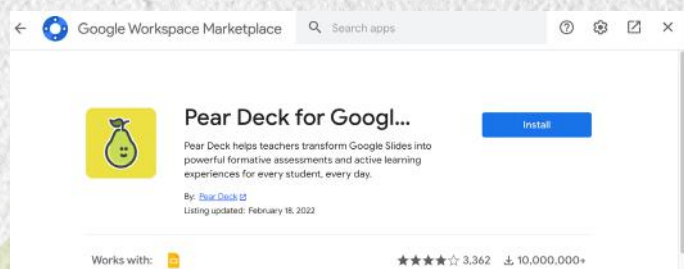
Pic 5. Install Pear Deck Add-on

图5: 安装Pear Deck插件

Once you can see "Add-ons" in your menu bar, click "Get add-ons", search pear deck, and install the add-on.

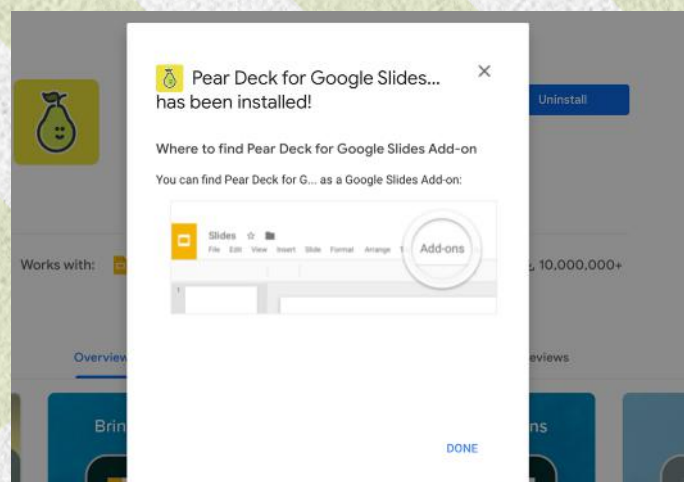
如果窗口中有“加载项”，点击“获取加载项”，搜索Pear Deck并安装。

You will be asked to grant permission to install Pear Deck. Once installed, you can start your journey and interact more with your students! 你会收到请求安装的信息，安装完毕后，你就可以开始你的Pear Deck互动之旅了！



Pic 6. Grant permission to install Pear Deck

图6: 允许安装Pear Deck



Pic 7. Pear Deck has been installed

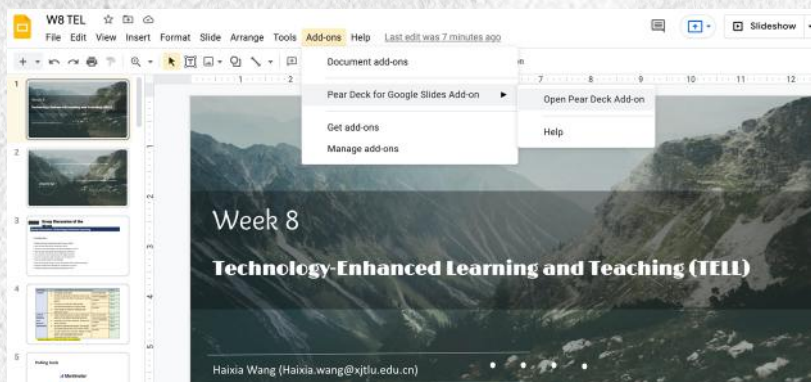
图7: Pear Deck 安装完毕



## Step 3 第三步:

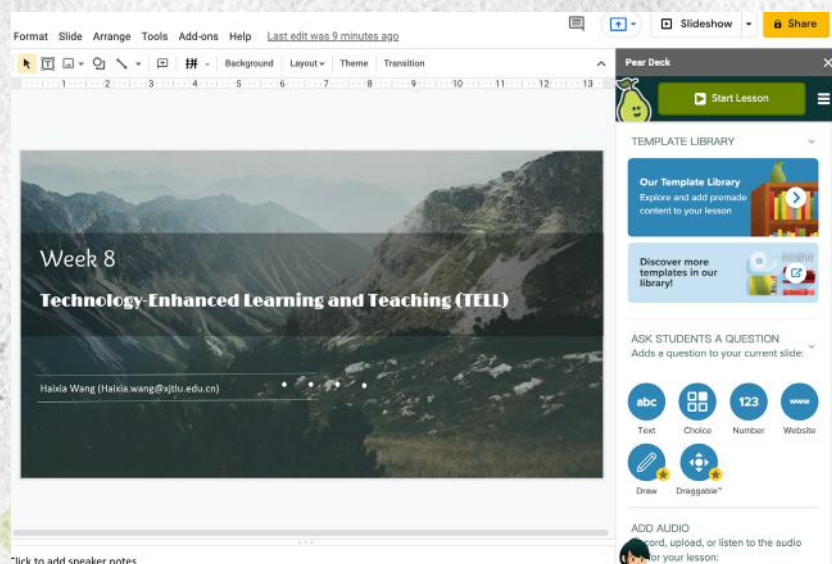
Play with Pear Deck

玩转 Pear Deck



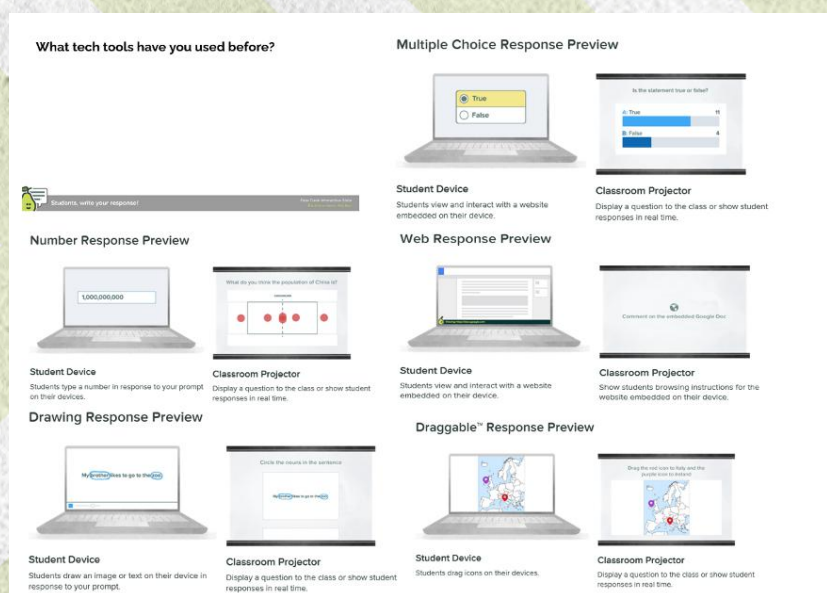
Pic 8. Open Pear Deck Add-on

图8: 打开 Pear Deck 插件



Pic 9. Pear Deck Add-on Menu

图9: Pear Deck 菜单



Pic 10. Pear Deck Add-on Question Types

图10: Pear Deck 问题类型

Click "Add-ons"—"Pear Deck for Google Slides Add-on" - "Open Pear Deck Add-on".

点击“加载项” - “谷歌 Pear Deck 加载项” - “打开 Pear Deck 加载项”。

You will then find a menu to the right where you can add questions or use templates of Pear Deck.

你会发现右边出现了 Pear Deck 操作菜单，你可以选择模板，也可以添加问题或者语音。

There are six typical questions that can be added to your slides. Those questions can help you check students' understanding, provide students with extra information, or collect students' ideas during the classes.

Pear Deck 共有六种问题类型可以进行添加。这些问题可以帮助你上课过程中检测学生的理解程度，给学生提供更多信息，收集学生意见等。

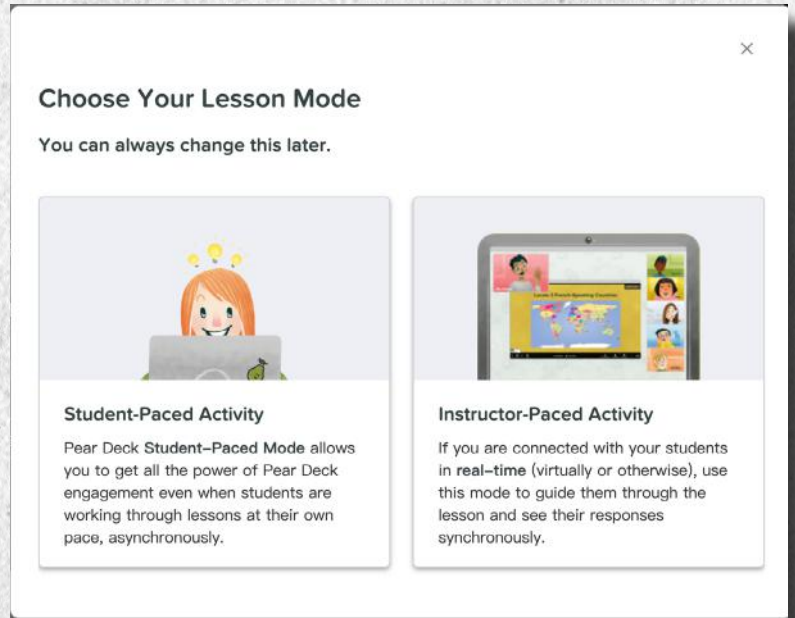


Once you have edited all the questions, you can click "Start Lesson" on the top left. It will ask you to choose from two lesson modes. If you want to grant your students with access to all of your slides, you can choose "Student-Paced Activity". But normally I choose "Instructor-Paced Activity" so I can guide students step by step.

编辑好所有问题后，你可以点击左上角的“开始上课”。网站提供两种课堂模式。如果你想要学生有权翻看上一页或下一页幻灯片，自己控制学习进度，可以选择“学生控制模式”。通常我会选择“教师控制模式”，以便一步步引导学生学习。

How can students join the deck? Just click "Give Students a Link" and send the link to students. If it is not possible to send the link to all your audience, then you can use a QR generator (e.g., <https://goqr.me/>), and ask your students to scan the QR code generated.

学生怎么加入Pear Deck 呢？选择好模式后，会出现下面的界面。你可以发给学生链接。如果不方便发链接，也可以通过“QR生成器”，把网页链接转为二维码，让学生扫码加入。很多QR生成器网站可以满足这一需求，例如Go QR (<https://goqr.me/>)。



Pic 11. Two lesson modes for presentation  
图11：两种演示模式



Pic 12. Share deck link with students  
图12：与学生分享Pear Deck 链接



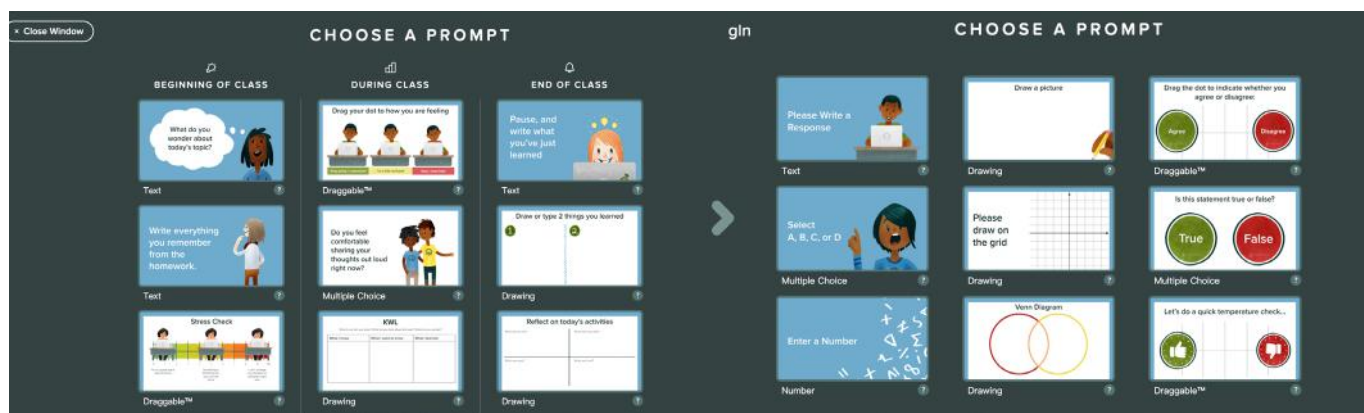
# Feedback 师生反馈

Pear Deck is warmly welcomed in my classroom. Students use lots of positive words to describe the tool, such as "interesting", "engaging", "interactive", "fun", etc. Some students point out that it is a good way to check their understanding constantly. They feel ready to move to the next step after checking. It allows opportunities for introverted learners to participate since they don't have to speak up. It grants students with the opportunity to control their learning pace by themselves. Students don't have to scan the QR code again and again during class time. It is also very easy for them to review their responses and get teacher's feedback after class.

Pear Deck 在我的课堂中深受学生喜欢。学生使用了很多积极正面的词汇来描述这个工具，比如“有趣”“有意思”“吸引人”“互动性强”等。有的学生指出，课堂中不断检测学生的理解程度，是个很好的学习方法。他们觉得检测完毕后再进入下一个阶段的学习，很有安全感。另外，因为不需要开口讲话，内向的学生也有机会发言。Pear Deck还让学生有机会掌握自己的学习节奏。即使课堂设计中有多次测试或调查，学生也只需要扫描一次二维码。课下复习时，除了课程内容，也可以通过Pear Deck反思自己当时的回答以及老师的反馈意见。

I have also shared this platform with several colleagues, who think it saves time by uploading the ready-made slides and adding questions directly and easily. It won't interrupt the flow of the class since only one platform is used. Teachers can choose from the templates and add prompt questions during the presentation when they feel it is necessary. The slides are automatically saved on Clouds, which can be accessed anytime online.

教师对Pear Deck的看法是，因为可以有效利用已有幻灯片，直接添加互动问题，大大节省了备课时间。上课过程中不需要打开几个网站，不会打断课堂节奏。互动问题容易添加。如有必要，课上可随时选择对应模版，添加问题。幻灯片直接存在云端，只需要有网络就可以获取。



Pic 13. Add prompt questions during the presentation  
图13：课上随时添加问题



# Limitations 局限性

The use of any electronic devices in the classroom, including Pear Deck, has its drawbacks e.g., extra distractions for students, network instability, less direct social interaction, etc. Besides these, there are some other limitations of Pear Deck. Firstly, it can be costly. Although you can have a Premium Trial for 30 days, you will have to pay around 150 dollars a year to subscribe after the trial. Secondly, there are only six question types to choose from when building the decks - draggable questions, drawing questions, free response questions, multiple-choice questions, website sharing and typing a number. The last two are not as interactive or applicable for a language classroom. Other question types such as match up, group sort, missing words, etc. are not available. Finally, the questions embedded can rarely benefit students' listening and speaking skills, because they just need to type or make a choice using their electronic devices.

课堂中使用任何电子设备都存在一定的弊端，包括Pear Deck。例如，干扰学生注意力，网络不稳定，减少了直接的社交互动等。除此之外，Pear Deck还有一些其他的局限性。首先，它是付费使用的平台。虽然有30天免费使用，但后续需要每年大约150美元的费用，并不便宜。其次，问题类型只有六种：拖拽、画画、开放问题、多选题、网页共享和数字猜测。后两种问题类型互动性不强，也不太适用于语言课堂。其他的问题类型，例如配对、分组、填空等，都不能实现。最后，Pear Deck的互动问题对学生的听说技能并没有特别大的帮助。他们只需要选择或者打字。

Overall, I think Pear Deck is a tool that is worth trying. It enhances engagement of both teachers and students and allows teachers to increase learner interactivity.

总的来说，Pear Deck还是非常值得尝试的工具。它拓宽了师生的交互边界，带来了更好的交互体验。

**Rating 评分: 4/5**

# References 参考文献

Berk, R. A. (2012). Top 10 evidence-based, best practices for PowerPoint in the classroom. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, 5, 1-7.

Inoue-Smith, Y.(2016). College-based case studies in using PowerPoint effectively. *Cogent Education*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2015.1127745>

Savoy, A., Proctor, R. W., & Salvendy, G. (2009). Information retention from PowerPoint and traditional lectures. *Computers & Education*, 52, 858-867.

Stoykova, V. (2014). Evaluation of the application of interactive presentation systems in higher education. *Applied Researchers in Technics, Technologies and Education*, 2, 286-299.



# Padlet

## an Innovative and Collaborative Online

## Padlet, 一个在线协作创新工具

*Have you ever tried to do a “sticky notes” activity to enhance student engagement or a “poster” activity to facilitate group collaboration in class? Now you can take a step further and work some magic to include images, videos, and links on those “Post-it notes” using a handy Web 2.0 application tool, Padlet.*

相信很多老师都有尝试过用“便签贴”的教学活动来加强学生的课堂参与度，或者用“创作海报”的活动来促进团队合作。现在，一个便利的网络2.0工具能够在“便签贴”上加入图片，视频和链接，使得你的课堂教学活动更加生动，它就是Padlet。



**Rui Xu** is the manager of VR Language Learning Lab and an EAP tutor of Languages. The VRLLL seeks to enhance the language learning at XJTU by exploring innovative uses of XR technologies.

[rui.xu@xjtlu.edu.cn](mailto:rui.xu@xjtlu.edu.cn)

Padlet is a free and easy-to-use online virtual bulletin board where users can create, collaborate and share images, documents, videos, and links of their own. This multi-functional digital wall allows users to collaborate, and interact in a relatively secure environment.

Padlet是一个免费的、易于使用的在线虚拟公告板，它帮助用户分享图片、文档、视频和音频等内容。这个多功能的数字墙允许用户在一个相对安全的环境中协作和互动。它为教学和学习活动提供了更有效的支持。

One does not need to be tech-savvy to use Padlet, and it is suitable for various teaching and learning activities. No prior training is required to use it. Users can log in or create an account to post on it. Padlet is accessible on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. It can be accessed via an invitation or simply via a QR code. A variety of aesthetic themes (grid, stream, map, and timeline) and personalization settings are available for teaching activities.

使用Padlet不需要事先培训，学生甚至不需要登录或创建账户即可使用，包括台式机、笔记本电脑、平板电脑和移动电话。它可以方便地通过邀请或简单地通过QR码进行分享。多种美观的布局(墙、网格、书架、流、地图、时间线)和个性化设置提供了更多的可能性。



# Online Tool

## Intro to Padlet 入门简介

board that helps teachers and students to  
os, audio, and any other contents of their  
create, organize, upload, chat, comment,

助教师和学生创建、协作和共享图像、文档、视  
全的环境中创建、组织、上传、聊天、评论和评

offers more effective support to teaching  
se Padlet, and students do not even need  
ccessible on any device, including desktop  
uld be easily shared by a link, an email  
etically pleasing layouts (wall, grid, shelf,  
options could provide more possibilities

一个帐户在墙上发帖。Padlet可以在任何设备上  
通过链接、电子邮件邀请或简单地生成二维码来  
个性化设置选项为教学活动提

tor from School  
g experience at

## Innovative Use in EAP Classrooms 在EAP课堂中的创新 应用

I'm a frequent user of Padlet, and I have used it in EAP  
teaching for pre-class, in-class, and post-class activities.

我是Padlet的忠实用户，曾在课前、课内和课后的EAP教学中  
使用过它。

## Pre-class Preparation 课前准备

Padlet could be assigned before the class in preparation  
for the upcoming class. For example, students could be  
asked to do background research on the topic or respond  
to the questions teachers assigned on the wall to preview  
the teaching content. Alternatively, it could play a role  
in a flipped classroom where students watch classroom  
lectures or finish required lesson materials prior to the  
class, which may help to promote active and student-cen-  
tered learning.

我们可以在上课前通过Padlet布置作业，为接下来的课做准  
备。例如，可以要求学生对主题进行背景研究，或回答老师布置在  
墙上的问题，以预览教学内容。另外，它也可以在翻转课堂中发挥  
作用，学生可以在课堂上通过padlet观看讲座或在上课前完成其他  
课程材料，有助于促进以学生为中心的主动学习。



Pic.1 Pre-class background research  
图1: 课前背景研究



## In-class Activities

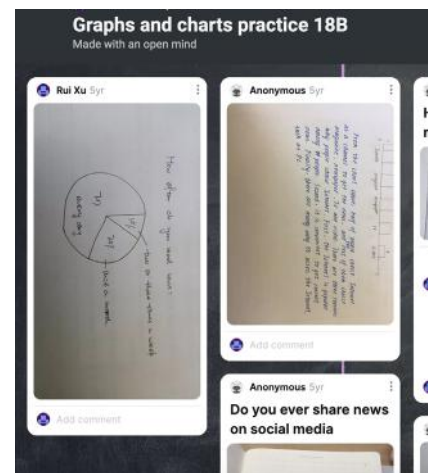
### 课堂活动

Padlet could be an innovative tool to engage students and probe their understanding of the class contents. For example, it could act as an interactive whiteboard to facilitate in-class free discussion on the assigned topics or questions. According to my students' feedback, they are more willing to participate in this "non-verbal" approach because it helps to reduce the anxiety often caused by public speaking. Fisher (2017) suggests that Padlet provides an alternative avenue to participate for students who are reluctant to contribute verbally in class for various reasons.

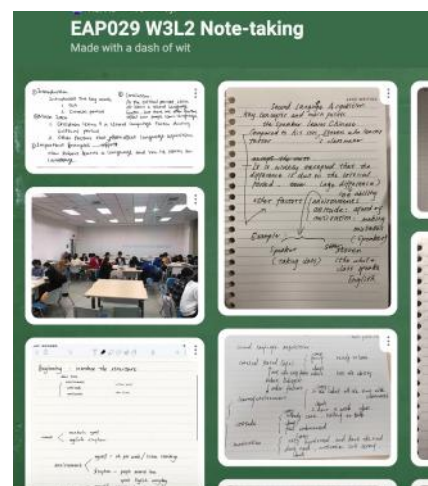
Padlet可以成为一个创新的工具, 让学生参与进来, 探索他们对课程内容的理解。例如, 它可以作为一个交互式白板, 方便课堂上对指定的主题或问题进行自由讨论。根据学生的反馈, 他们更愿意用这种“非语言”的方式参与课堂活动, 因为它有助于减轻课堂发言的焦虑。Fisher(2017)认为, Padlet为那些因各种原因不愿在课堂上口头发言的学生提供了另一种学习途径。

Another fascinating application of this interactive online canvas is peer review for in-class writing tasks. Traditionally, students would swap their writing in pairs or in groups to conduct peer review. However, the effectiveness of in-class peer review is sometimes questionable because students may resist critiquing each other's work, especially when doing it face to face. By typing their work directly on the posts or snapping pictures of their hand-writing and posting on the walls, students have the option of commenting and rating anonymously. Students have commented that this significantly reduces the embarrassment of giving or receiving negative feedback. Thus, the effectiveness of peer review could be improved.

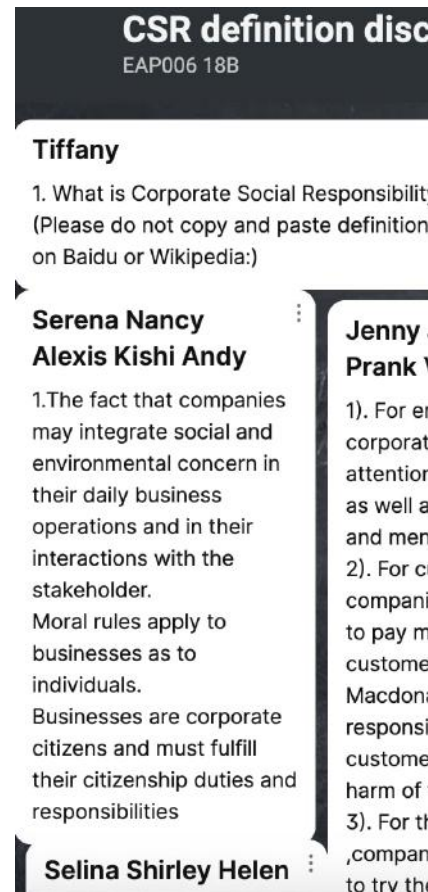
这种交互式在线画布的另一个有趣的应用是对课堂写作任务的同行评议。在传统的写作评测任务中, 学生们会成对交换他们的作品或团体进行面对面的同行评审。而通过在帖子上直接输入他们的文字或拍



Pic.2 In-class writing practice/peer feedback



Pic.4 In-class practice/peer feedback



Pic.6 In-class brainstorming/discussion



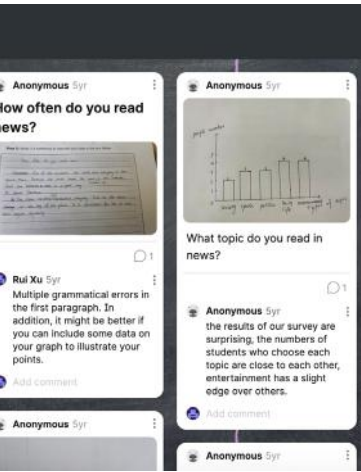
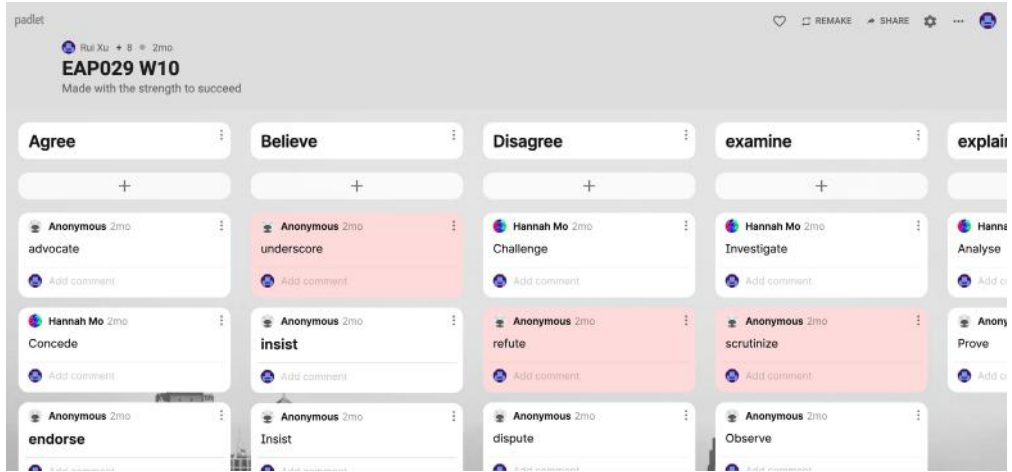
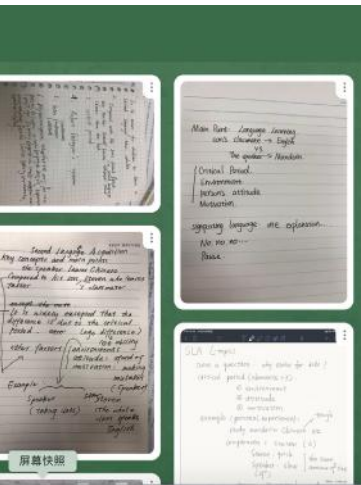


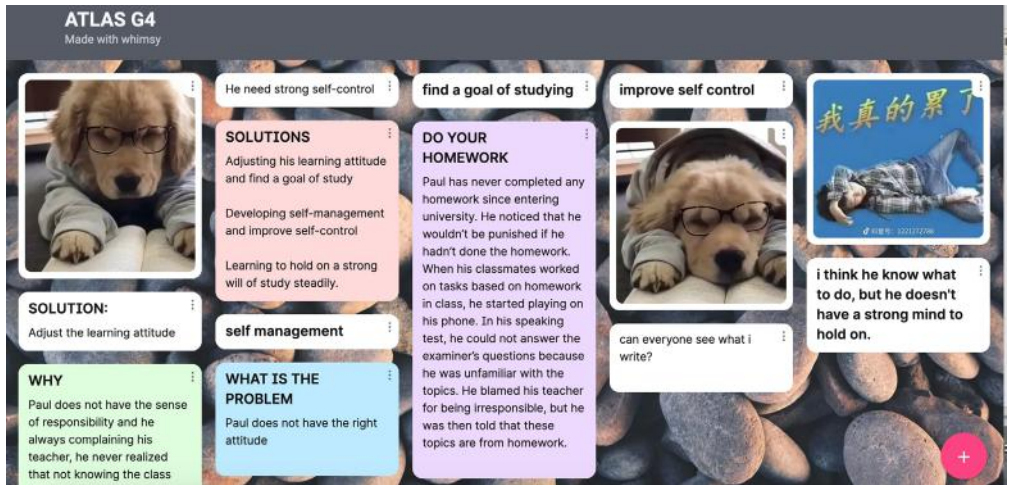
图2: 课堂写作练习与同行评议



Pic.3 In-class vocabulary activity 图3: 课堂单词练习

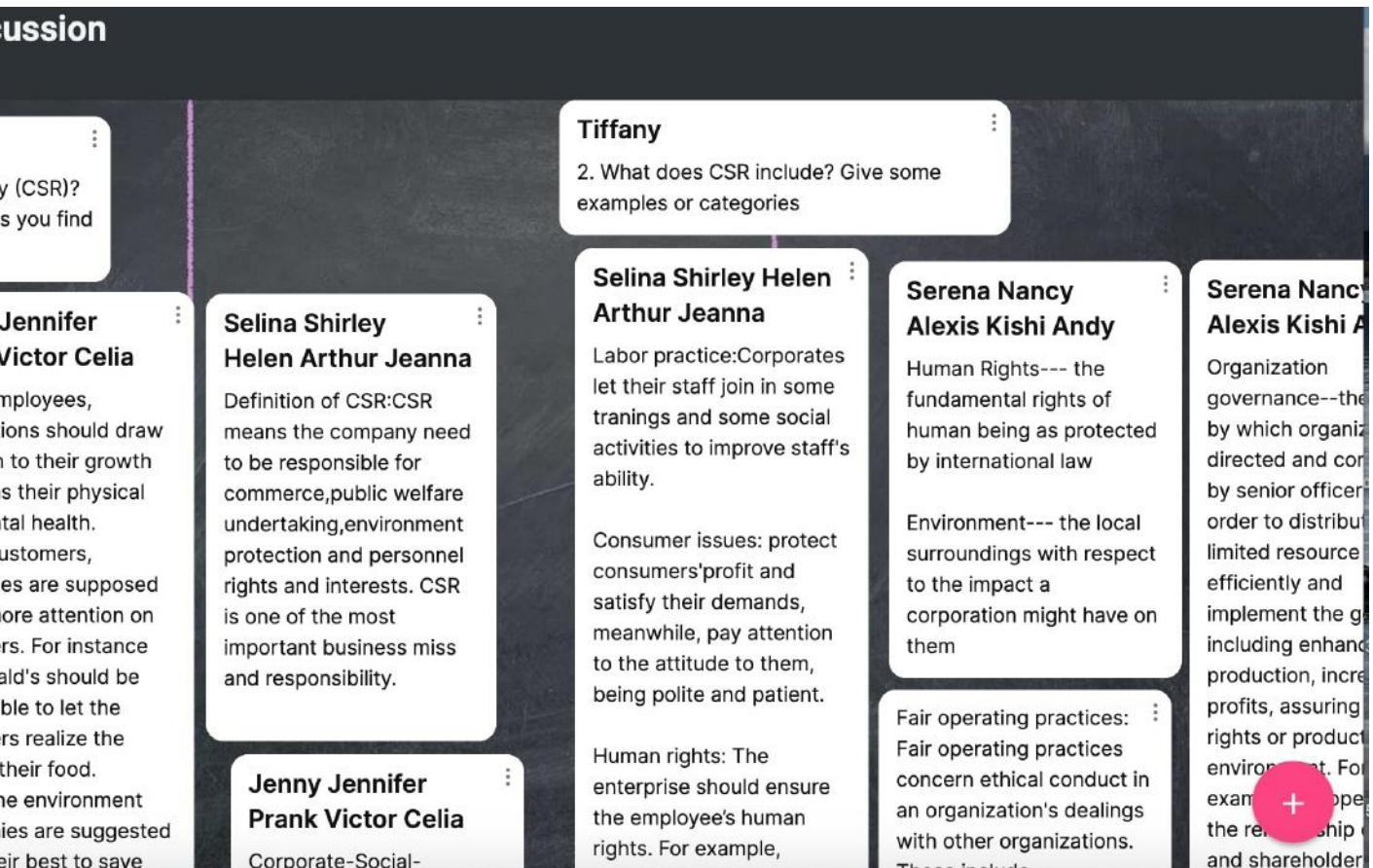


课堂练习与同行评议



Pic.5 In-class group presentation poster 图5: 课堂小组展示海报

## Discussion



课堂头脑风暴与讨论



摄他们手写的文章或者段落并张贴在墙上，学生可以访问班上所有人的作品。学生还可以选择匿名评论和评分。根据学生反馈，这样的参与方式大大避免了给予或接受负面评论的尴尬，从而提高同行评议的有效性。

Instructors can be creative in designing lesson activities using Padlet. For example, students in my EAP groups enjoyed creating a Padlet as a visual aid for their informal group presentation practices. I have also used it as an “exit ticket” at the end of the class to summarize key points. For instance, students were asked to input reporting verbs they learned or memorized on Padlet to briefly recap what had been covered in class.

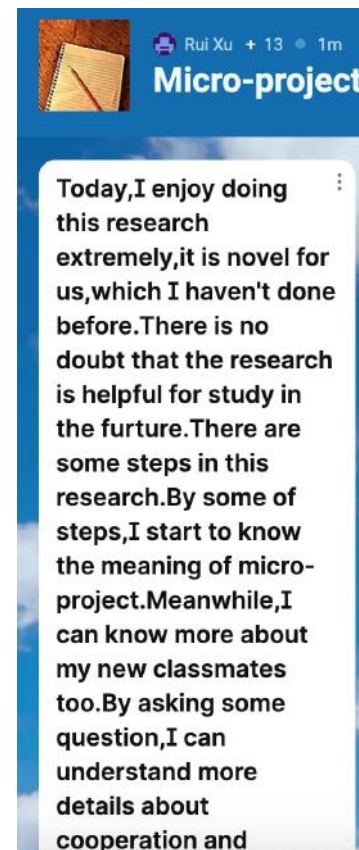
另外，教师可以创造性地使用Padlet设计课程活动。例如，我的EAP小组中的学生喜欢创建一个电子海报，作为他们非正式小组演示实践的视觉辅助。我也用它作为下课前总结要点的“退场票”。例如，老师可以让学生在了一节课的最后十分钟在墙上输入reporting verbs来简要地回顾一下这节课所学内容。

## Post-class Consolidation

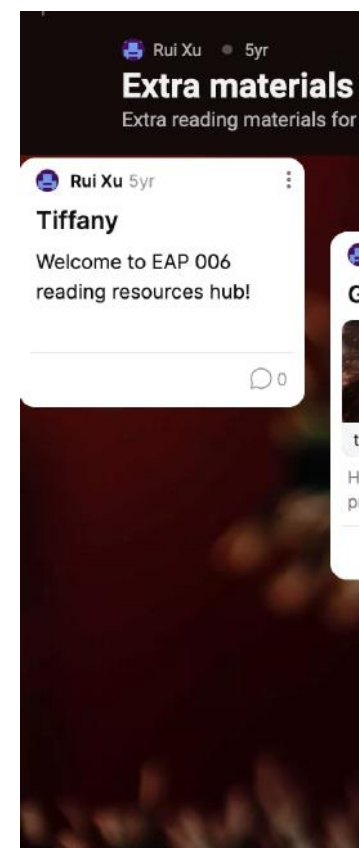
### 课后整合

Padlet allows for both synchronous and asynchronous collaboration, so it could serve to keep a lasting record of questions, comments, or feedback after class. I usually create several Padlets for my EAP groups on different themes throughout the semester. These “resource hubs” could be an “idea bin” to include extensive reading materials, topic-related videos/audio, and any other contents that students would like to share with the whole class, potentially providing opportunities for collaboration and autonomous learning. Additionally, students could be encouraged to post lesson reflections on the walls to organize their thoughts and ideas. In addition to summaries, students may produce mind-maps to connect the dots of learning on the walls during the reflective thinking process.

Padlet允许同步和异步协作，因此它可以在课后对问题、评论或反馈进行持久的记录。我通常在整個学期为我的EAP小组创建几个不同主题的故事墙。这些“资源中心”可能包括广泛的阅读材料，相关话题的视频和音频，以及其他相关内容。学生与全班同学分享，可以提供合作和自主学习的机会。此外，



Pic.7 Post-class reflection 图7: 课后回



Pic.8 Post-class resource hub 图8: 课



## reflection 15 B

Yiwen.Liu

Firstly,I enjoy doing this research.Because I learned a lot from the research. I want to express myself clearly in order to let others understand what I am talking about.Therefore I put my questions in the fewest words to understand. Because of the exprence, my ability of speaking and listening have improved. Secondly,if I could do the micro-project again,I would do deferently in the question writing. Finally,if I have more time,I would write deferent questions.Because every question should have their meaning,I

Tiffany

Please post your reflection here!

Alic

Q1,yes,I enjoyed doing this research.I think this micro-project is very interesting and it is very significant for our professional courses, business and it is very helpful to us to finish our assignment. At the same time, it can help us communicate with other new students and know about them when we were talking and sharing our opinions. Q3,because I think these extra parts can help us to analyse collection datas efficiently and it is important

Alice and Amber

Doing this research is an interesting experience.My partner and I worked together and knew better about each other. We observed other classmates and put questions to them and answered their questions, which gave us chances to talk to other classmates. We did not read the background, write the report and so on. The extra parts are obviously important. Reading the background helps us understand the topic and broaden our horizons and writing the report is the display of the whole research. The connection between field work and hypothesis making is obvious. We make the obser

Carol

I am happy to have this research. By doing this research I think I can search something in a clear way so that the conclusion of my research can be more accurate in the future. I do not do background reading. In my opinion, background reading may help students have a deep understand about the relationship between the colour and psychology about people. Fieldwork contains observe and organise some information from the object we need. I think the hypothesis should base the data from the

顾

## for B04 & B18

EAP 006

Rui Xu 5yr

Gender stereotype



hedissolve.com  
hollywood's "female stuff"  
problem

0

Rui Xu 5yr

Inspiration from Sir Ken Robinson

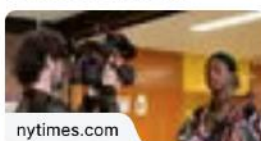


ted  
Sir Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity?

0

Rui Xu 5yr

media sensationalism



nytimes.com  
YouTube Channels Seek Advertisers and Audiences

0

Rui Xu 5yr

Further reading for "internet filter bubble"



theguardian.com  
Seymour Hersh on Obama, NSA and the 'pathetic' American media

0

Rui Xu 5yr

Julian Treasure: How to make people want to listen to you



后资源中心



还可以鼓励学生课后在墙上进行反思。除了总结之外，学生在反思的过程中，还可以制作思维导图，将相关的知识要点连接整合起来。

## Weaknesses and Possible Solutions: 缺点及可能的解决方案

Similar to other technological tools, certain limitations do exist when employing Padlet in teaching. Firstly, what can be done with a free account is significantly less than with the upgraded premium plan as the free version only offers three Padlet walls and allows one to upload up to 25 MB of local video. However, tutors can recycle three Padlets for different activities by simply clicking on the “clearing all posts” button in the setting menu.

与其他技术工具一样，Padlet在教学中的应用也存在一定的局限性。与升级后的pro计划相比，免费账户可以实现的功能要少得多，因为免费版只提供三个padlets，最多可以上传25 MB的本地视频。当然，导师可以通过简单地点击设置菜单中的“清空所有帖子”按钮来回收利用这三个padlets。

Secondly, students' participation may not meet pedagogical expectations without careful planning and scaffolding. For instance, in pre-class research, sometimes students may post contents that are less relevant to the topic because they are not capable of or do not care enough about evaluating the quality of the information or resource. To deal with this issue, I would recommend that teachers provide clear guidelines and instructions, cultivate a classroom culture encouraging high-quality posts and offer feedback to reward good practice.

此外，如果没有精心的课前规划和知识，无法达到教学预期目标。例如，在课前背景研究与主题不太相关的内容，因为他们没有能力去或者仅仅是并不在意。为了解决这个问题，我质量参与的课堂文化，并提供教师反馈，以奖

Thirdly, Padlet does not show which post is by which student unless the student has a profile. Therefore, tutors cannot easily monitor or track individual contributions during the learning process. In addition, some students were generally more active and thus more visible, while others who failed to participate which in turn contributed towards these free-riders. This problem can be solved by encouraging students to log in or create a profile when posting.

第三，Padlet不能显示哪个帖子是由哪一位学生发布的。可以在设置中显示贡献者的姓名，但这只存在于付费计划中。因此，导师无法在学习过程中监控或跟踪学生的贡献。主动的学生通常抱怨自己的贡献被其他人“白嫖”，鼓励学生登录或加入他们的名字来解决。

Lastly, some concerns were raised regarding the layout - when disorganized - discourages students from using the post-class “resource hub.” Specifically, students pointed out that though multiple Padlet layouts are provided, it can be difficult to locate specific resources if they were bombarded by the number of posts on the wall. Naturally, some students may never make full use of the resources. To address this, I recommend to adopt a more organized template or use shelves or grids.

最后，由于布局的问题，一些学生不愿使用“资源中心”。具体来说，学生们指出，虽然Padlet提供了多种布局，但他们发现自己很难专注于目标信息，因为他们被墙上的帖子轰炸。当然，一些学生可能会失去兴趣，所以建议采用更有组织的格式，如格或网格。



搭建，学生的参与可能无中，有时学生可能会发布评估信息或资源的质量，建议教师培养一种鼓励高励良好的实践。

post is attributable to an account. Therefore, individual performance n, motivated students ore likely to complain ized by other students can create resentment n might be addressed e include their names

个学生发布的。虽然导师 学生有账户的情况下才有 个人的表现。此外，积极 嫖”。这个问题可以通过

ding the layout, which dents from re-visiting ally, students pointed out templates were information because r of disordered posts ight lose interest and herefore, it is advised n Padlet walls, such as

意重复利用课后的“资源 提供了多个布局模板，但 们在墙上被大量的帖子轰 有充分利用资源。因此，

## Conclusion 结论

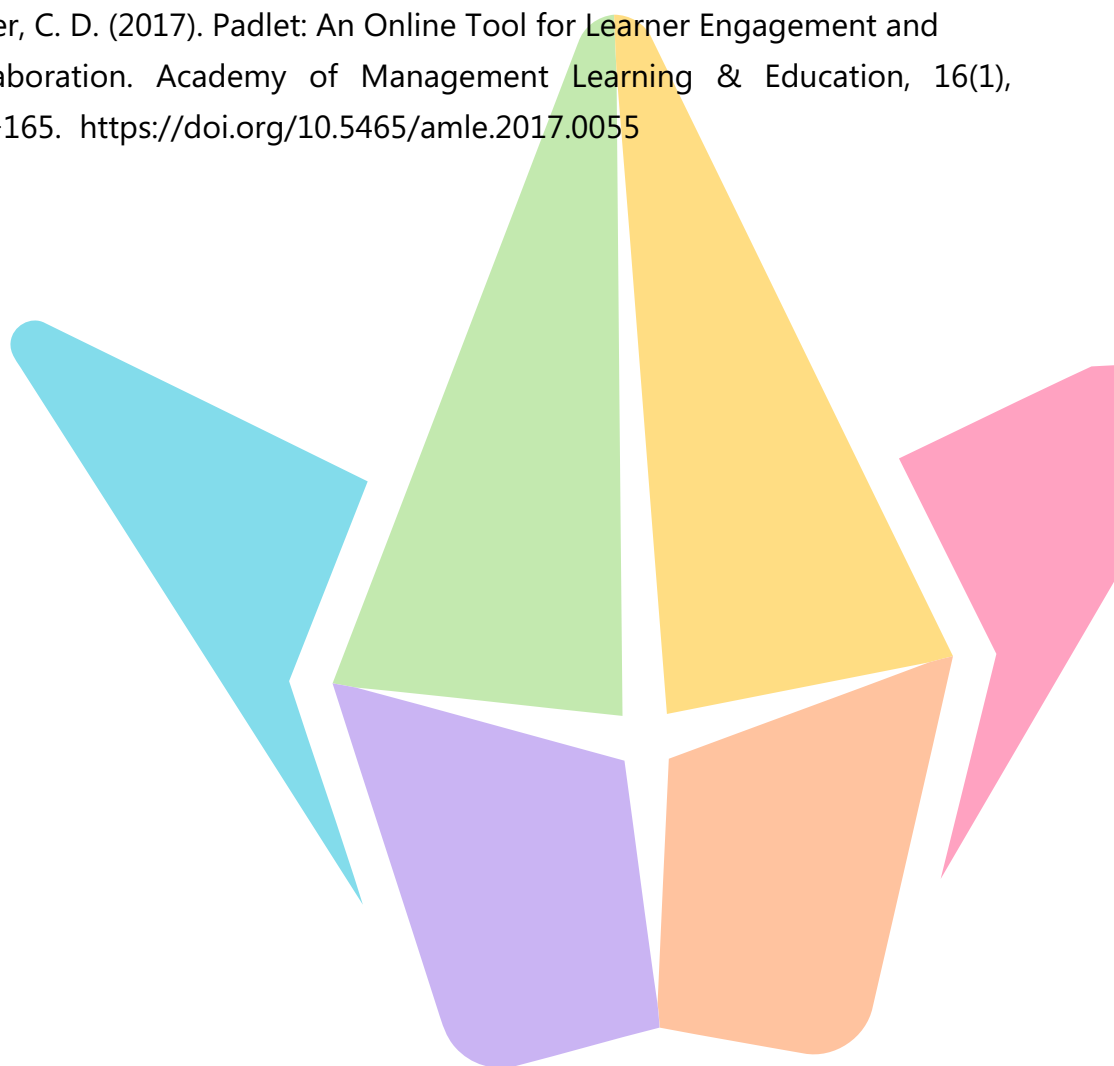
By using Padlet to support teaching and learning, students become both content creators and collaborators, which enhances students' motivation, facilitates self-oriented learning, and promotes effective collaboration.

通过使用Padlet支持教学和学习，让学生成为内容创造者和合作者，这增强了学生的学习动机，促进了自我导向的学习和有效的合作。

**Rating 评分: 3.5/5**

## References 参考文献

Fisher, C. D. (2017). Padlet: An Online Tool for Learner Engagement and Collaboration. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 16(1), 163-165. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2017.0055>





# Teaching Essay Writing using Goodnotes

## a Note-taking App on iPad

### 运用笔记软件 Goodnotes 辅助学术论文写作教学



**Ling (Angela) Xia** is a Principal Language Lecturer at XJTLU. Her research interests include language assessment, EAP and EMI, and technology-enhanced language teaching. Her recent publications include the development of an in-house EAP placement test and the application of a Moodle plugin to gamify the academic vocabulary learning process.

*Ling.Xia@xjtlu.edu.cn*



# Background 背景介绍

In recent years, the increasing popularity of interactive and digital whiteboards has been observed in educational settings around the world (Haldane, 2007). In Higher Education (HE) environments in particular, educators constantly face the challenge of competing for students' attention during class time. That's why they find pieces of educational technology, such as interactive and digital whiteboards, helpful to foster students' engagement and improve students' learning experiences (Campbell et al., 2019). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, researchers have also found that interactive and digital whiteboards can be used in many ways to support interaction and conversation with students, present new linguistic and cultural elements, and to teach various skills (Al-Saleem, 2012).

近年来，在世界各地的教育环境中，交互式数字白板越来越受欢迎 (Haldane, 2007)。在高等教育 (HE) 领域内，教育工作者尤其面临着在课堂内与电子设备争抢学生注意力的挑战。正因如此，他们发现交互式数字白板等教育技术能极大促进学生的参与程度和改善学生的学习体验 (Campbell et al., 2019)。在英语作为外语 (EFL) 的课堂中，研究人员还发现教师可以通过交互式数字白板以多种方式来支持与学生的互动和对话，展示语言和文化元素，并教授多种语言技能 (Al-Saleem, 2012)。

Unfortunately, the high purchase, installation and maintenance costs of interactive and digital whiteboards mean that the wide adoption of such devices will not be practical any time soon. Furthermore, the global pandemic requires educators to become even more creative when transitioning to new online teaching and hybrid teaching modes. GoodNotes, a note-taking and PDF markup IOS application ideally used on an iPad with an Apple Pencil, has proven itself to be an effective alternative to interactive whiteboards during online teaching periods (Reguera & Lopez, 2021; Sales-Lerida et al., 2020). By its very nature, GoodNotes aims to enable its users to lead a paperless life by allowing them to take handwritten notes in digital notebooks and annotate imported PDF documents. In addition to the handwritten notes, users can also highlight and type text, and add images and screenshots to any note pages. Although the app was probably not designed with teaching needs in mind initially, its rich features allow language teachers to easily demonstrate complicated writing and revising processes in a visually appealing way. Additionally, the fact that students are able to watch how teachers handwrite and annotate on a digital page also makes the learning process more engaging than certain teaching aids like PPT slides. In my own teaching, I've found GoodNotes (on the iPad) to be an effective tool in teaching essay writing to college students, both in virtual classrooms as well as traditional face-to-face classrooms.



遗憾的是，交互式数字白板的高昂购买价格及相关安装和维护成本意味着在短期内实现这种设备的广泛应用并不具备可行性。此外，当前的全球疫情要求教育工作者在过渡到新的在线教学和混合教学模式时变得更有创造性。作为一款笔记及 PDF 标记的 IOS 应用程序App，GoodNotes已被证明是在线教学期间交互式白板的有效替代方案 (Reguera & Lopez, 2021; Sales-Lerida et al., 2020)。就其本质而言，GoodNotes 旨在使其用户可以进行无纸化工作，用户可以通过该款App在电子平板上做手写笔记，并可以对导入的 PDF 文件进行注释。除了手写笔记之外，用户还可以灵活运用该款App的多种功能，包括高亮，键入文本，并在任何笔记页面上添加图片和屏幕截图。尽管Goodnotes在推出之初可能没有考虑到教学需要，但其丰富的功能使语言教师在进行学术写作教学时，能直观并轻松地展示复杂的写作和修改过程。此外，学生能够实时观看教师如何在数字页面上手写和批注，这也使得学习过程比某些教学辅助工具更有吸引力，比如PPT幻灯片。在我本人的教学中，我发现无论是在虚拟教室还是在传统的面对面的教室中，搭配了Apple Pencil使用的GoodNotes都是向大学生教授学术论文写作的有效工具，

# The setup for teaching with GoodNotes

## 如何运用 GoodNotes 开展教学

### Virtual Classrooms

In addition to the app itself, the GoodNotes website (GoodNotes, 2020) recommends two other apps for an ideal setup for teaching virtual classes:

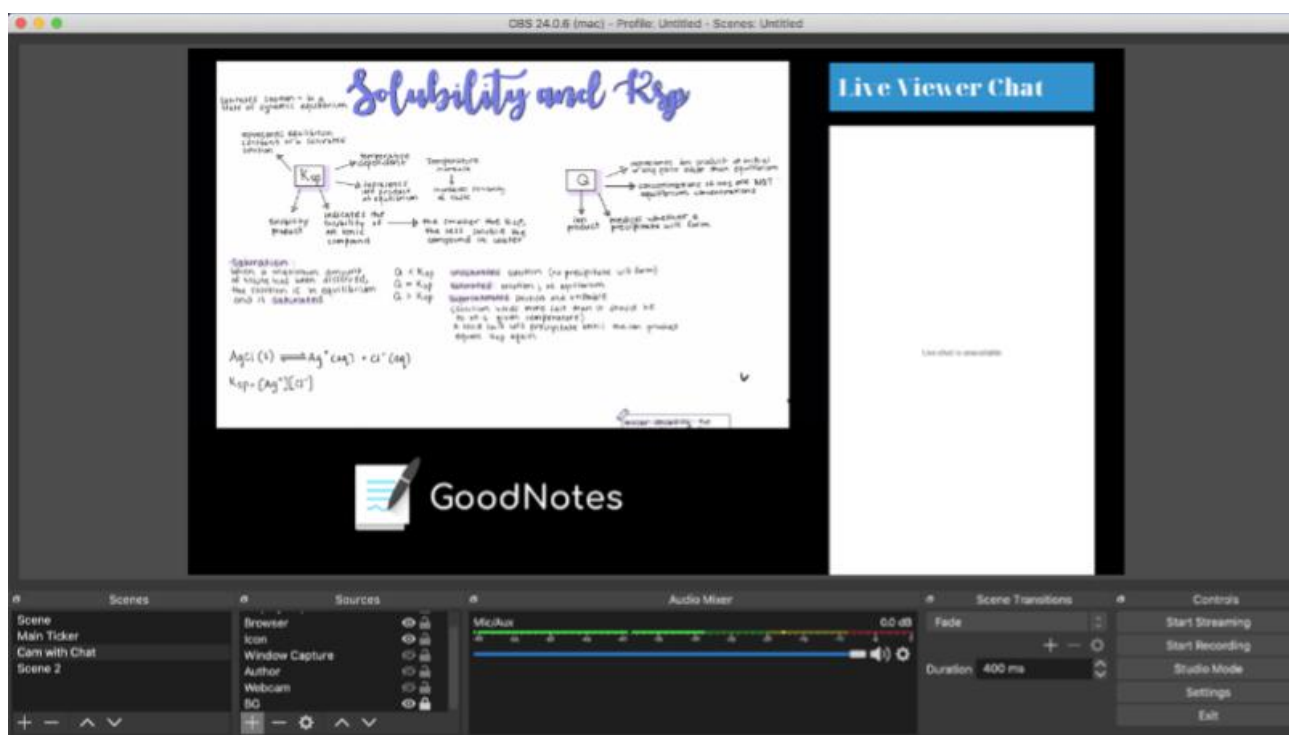
- 1) An app like Zoom, which allows you to share your screen with a large group of people.
- 2) If you'd prefer to teach on your laptop, an app like Reflector 3, which allows you to mirror your iPad screen to your computer.

### 虚拟教室

除了该应用程序本身，GoodNotes 的官网 (GoodNotes, 2020) 还推荐了另外两个应用程序，以实现虚拟课堂教学的理想设置：

- 1) 像 Zoom 这样的会议应用程序，可以让你与其他观众分享你的屏幕。
- 2) 如果你更喜欢在你的笔记本电脑上授课，可以使用像 Reflector 3 这样的应用程序，它可以将你的 iPad 屏幕镜像投放到你的电脑上。





Pic 1: Live-streaming GoodNotes example (Goodnotes, 2020)

图1: 使用GoodNotes直播示例

## Traditional Face-to-face Classrooms (with a computer and a projector)

You will need a USB cable or adaptor to directly connect your iPad with a Windows PC or a Mac.

## 传统的面对面的教室（有一台电脑和一台投影仪）

你将需要一条 USB传输线或者适配器来直接连接你的 iPad 与 Windows PC 或 Mac 电脑。

# Teaching Activity Ideas

## 教学活动设计

In both teaching environments mentioned above, GoodNotes can turn iPads into digital wall paper to allow teachers to write notes and annotations over teaching materials, use presentation tools, collect students' work and provide feedback during class time, all of which can be particularly valuable when it comes to teaching writing skills.

在上述两种教学环境中，GoodNotes 都可以将 iPad 直接变成数字白板，让教师在教学材料上极其便捷地写下笔记和注释，使用演示工具，收集学生的作品，并在上课时间提供实时反馈，所有这些功能都将极大地助益写作教学。



Picture 2 shows how teachers can demonstrate essay structure and paragraph structure through the hand drawing process using the various annotation tools like pens, highlighters, and shapes. Such tools are also very handy when giving feedback to class. As shown in Pic 3, teachers can easily highlight different types of sentences, circle key words, as well as adding notes and sample answers to task sheets during the class.

图2 显示了教师如何通过手写过程，包括使用各种注释工具如黑笔、荧光笔和加入形状来演示文章结构和段落结构。这样的工具在给班级提供评价反馈时也非常方便。此外，如图3所示，教师可以很容易地高亮不同类型的句子，圈出关键词，以及在课堂上为教学材料添加注释和样本答案。

In addition, Goodnotes enables users to show a “split view” on iPads, which allows teachers more flexibility when giving feedback in class. Pic 4 shows an example when students are asked to change the writing style of a paragraph from informal to formal. The left side shows the original task, and the right side shows the answer from a student that was written down by the teacher. Teachers can then use the annotation tools to compare the informal writing and the formal writing and comment on the student’s answer immediately.

此外，Goodnotes 用户能够在 iPad 上使用“分割视图”，这使教师在课堂上给予反馈及修改意见时更加便捷。图4显示的例子是某学生按要求将一个段落的写作风格从非学术风格改为学术风格。左边显示的是学生需要完成的任务（原始段落），右边显示的是教师在课堂上手写的学生的答案。之后，教师便可以使用注释工具来比较两种不同的写作风格，并立即对学生的答案进行实时地批改和反馈。

## Additional Features of GoodNotes

### GoodNotes 的其他特性

Beyond basic annotation tools, GoodNotes also offers several exciting features. For example, the versatile lasso tool can select any objects created on the page and allow the users to move, copy, and reorder these objects,



Pic 2: Explaining essay structure  
图2: 解释文章结构和段落结构



#### Informal to formal

**Make this paragraph Try not to just substitute the following;**

- change words
- change the words
- add words (e.g.)
- use/summarise
- join sentences

Susan Thompson did lo

fantastic at selling. But

her own recruitment ag

Then she opened another

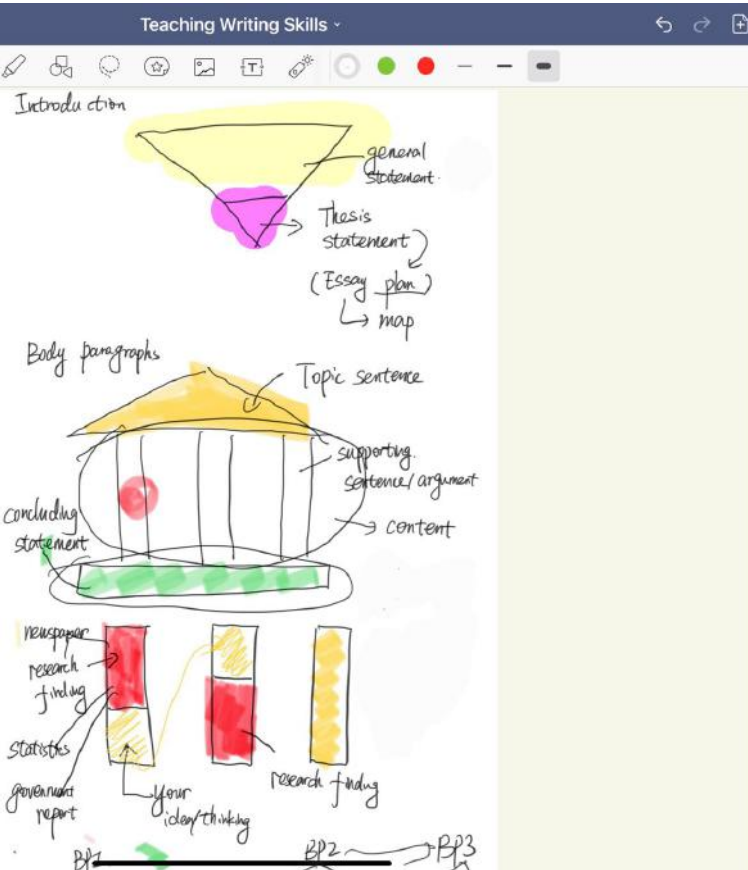
after that. She makes a

bedroom house with he

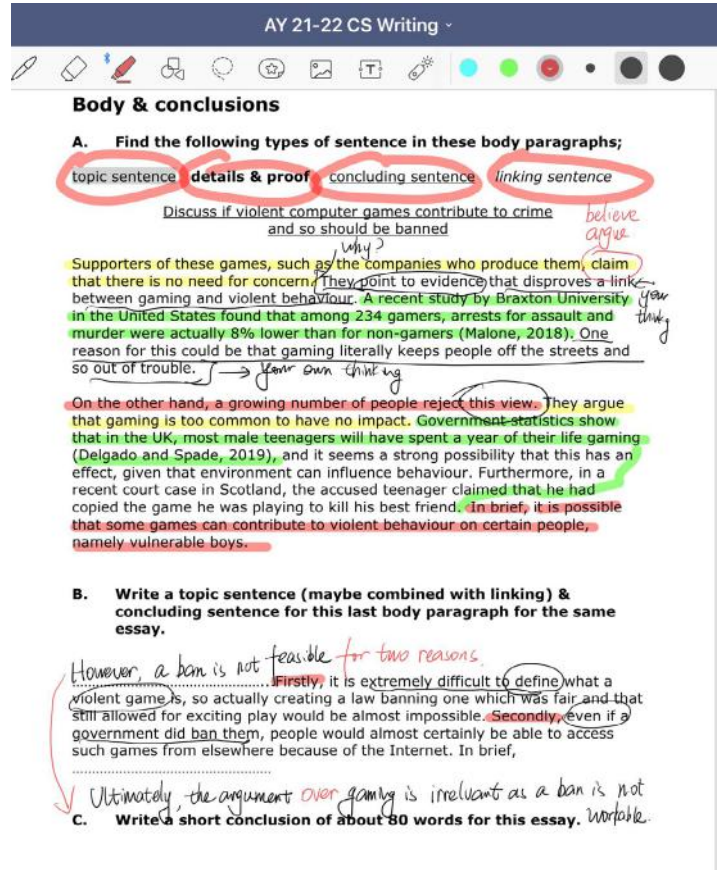
getting older so is think

Pic 4: Giving feedback to students  
图4: 在课堂上向学生提供反馈



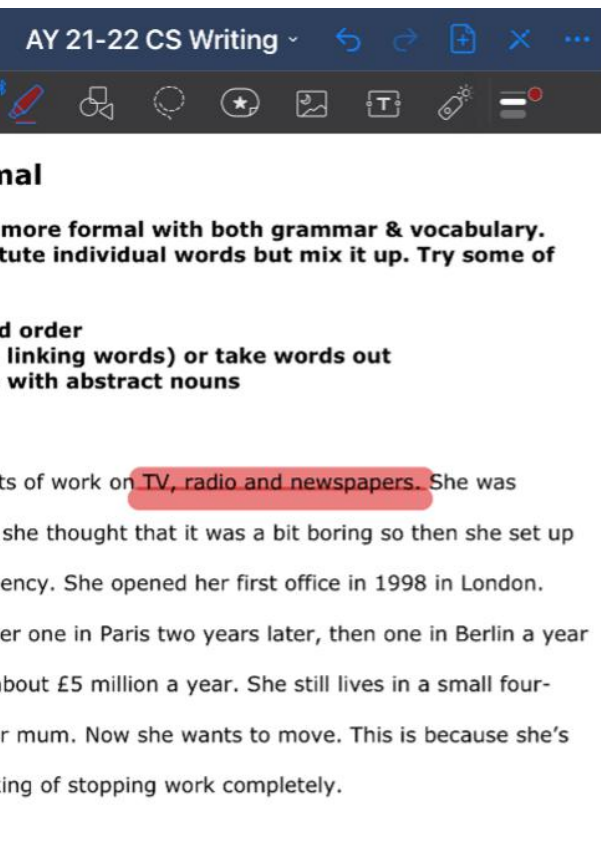


and paragraph structure



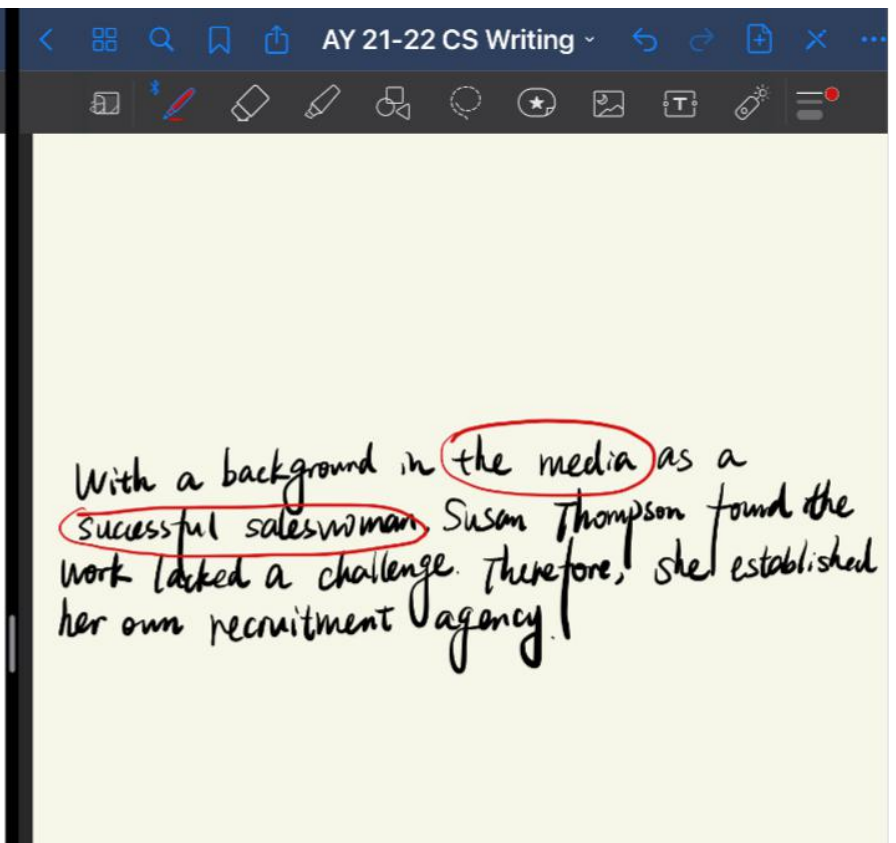
Pic 3: Adding annotations to teaching materials

图 3: 为教学材料添加注释



ents in class

反馈及修改意见





which can be helpful when teaching paraphrasing skills and the organization of ideas within a paragraph/essay. The handwritten notes can be converted to texts and GoodNotes can search the notes whether they are typed, handwritten or marked up on a PDF file. All the notes can be saved as PDF or pictures so that they can be uploaded to Learning Management Systems like the Moodle Platform and shared with students later.

除了基本的注释工具之外，GoodNotes 还提供了多种新颖的功能。例如，套索工具可以选择页面上创建的任何对象，并允许用户移动、复制和重新排列这些对象，这在教师讲述转述技巧（paraphrasing）和段落或文章结构等内容时很有帮助。此外，手写的笔记也可以转换为文本。同时，GoodNotes 还具有强大的搜索功能，所有手写的笔记，以及 PDF 文件上标记的文字都可以通过搜索功能进行检索。教师所有的笔记（如课堂笔记和手写批改）都可以保存为 PDF 或图片，这样就可以上传到学习管理系统，如 Moodle 平台，以便于与学生分享。

## Limitations 软件缺陷

Unfortunately, Goodnotes is not available for Android users yet. In addition to the app (about 50 RMB in the Apple App Store), an Apple Pencil, which may cost about 1,000 RMB, is also required to fully tap into the app's potential. Although there are cheaper alternatives to the Apple Pencil, some teachers may also find the setup process too complicated and may therefore need more guidance on using the app for teaching.

遗憾的是，GoodNotes 还没有向安卓用户开放。除了购买应用程序（在苹果应用商店约为 50元人民币）外，用户还需要一支Apple Pencil（约 1000 元人民币）来充分运用这个App的强大功能。虽然有比Apple Pencil更便宜的替代品，但老师们可能也会担心设置过程相对复杂，因此可能需要更多关于使用该App进行教学的实际操作指导。

## Conclusion 结论

Overall, I would give 4.5 out of 5 based on my experiences using the app in my classes. In their research on the influences of digital whiteboards on students' engagement, Campbell et al., (2019) identified five types of student engagement, i.e., social engagement, intellectual engagement, emotional engagement, physical engagement and behavioral engagement. While it is not entirely clear which type(s) of engagement GoodNotes fosters among students, the app has shown strong potential for language classrooms, both online and offline and should be explored more by teachers who have fond memories of chalkboard writing but who also want to embrace the exciting opportunities offered by new educational technologies.



总体而言，基于我在课堂上使用GoodNotes的经验，我对这款App的打分会达到4.5 分（满分 5 分）。在Campbell et al., (2019) 关于数字白板对学生课堂参与影响的研究中，研究者发现了学生课堂参与的五种类型，即社会参与、智力参与、情感参与、身体参与和行为参与。尽管目前尚不清楚GoodNotes 对于学生促进了哪种类型的参与，但该款App无论在虚拟教室还是传统教室的语言课堂中都显示出强大的潜力，值得所有怀念黑板书写体验，但同时又想拥抱新教育技术的教师同行们尝试。

**Rating 评分: 4.5/5**

## References 参考文献

Al-Saleem, B. I. A. (2012). The interactive whiteboard in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. *European Scientific Journal*, 8(3), 126–134.

Campbell, M., Detres, M., & Lucio, R. (2019). Can a digital whiteboard foster student engagement? *Social Work Education*, 38(6), 735–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2018.1556631>

GoodNotes. (2020, August 14). Online teaching with the iPad and GoodNotes. Medium. <https://medium.goodnotes.com/online-teaching-with-the-ipad-and-goodnotes-d0909a75e530>

Haldane, M. (2007). Interactivity and the digital whiteboard: Weaving the fabric of learning. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 32(3), 257–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439880701511107>

Reguera, E. A. M., & Lopez, M. (2021). Using a digital whiteboard for student engagement in distance education. *Computers & Electrical Engineering*, 93, 107268. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compeleceng.2021.107268>

Sales-Lerida, D., Guerrero-Rodríguez, J. M., Cobos-Sánchez, C., & Martínez-Jiménez, P. M. (2020). Starting flipped classroom method with iPad and Apple Pencil in the Analog Electronics Course. 2020 XIV Technologies Applied to Electronics Teaching Conference (TAEE), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TAEE46915.2020.9163673>





Follow  
XJTLU  
SCHOOL OF  
LANGUAGES  
LINKEDIN PAGE



Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University  
西交利物浦大學