

## KEYS TO ELT FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND BEYOND

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### Abstract

*This article provides an introduction to keys to ELT for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The keys include these areas of discussion: challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a ELT design for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and roadmap for ELT in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. The article also presents an investigation and implementation of the design for the new environment. This article also presents examples of how the design is successfully enhanced in ESL contexts. In the end, this article concludes with a roadmap of ELT for the future.*

**Keywords:** *Challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century, The Students at Work Design, Roadmap for ELT in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

### Introduction

David Johnson and Roger Johnson (2014) pointed out four crucial challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: (1) greater global interdependence, (2) the increasing number of democracies throughout the world, (3) the need for creative entrepreneurs, and (4) the importance of interpersonal relationships that affect the development of personal identity. These challenges will lead ELT to excitement: Where is the ELT field likely to go in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? I believe that innovative pedagogy and innovative facilities which form new learning environments will play a central role in teaching students the competencies they need to cope with the four challenges. Then what is a new learning environment design effective for 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### **A New Learning Environment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: "No More Classrooms!"**

Walking into a classroom, more specifically an ELT classroom, in any school in any country today, what you will mainly see is teacher-directed whole-group instruction and what you will always see are teacher-centered teaching methods and activities: looking, memorizing, concentrating, matching, comparing, thinking ahead, listening, searching, negotiating, creativity, teamwork and learning. Teachers of all fields need to rethink how the students learn and ask themselves whether these methods and activities can help their students cope with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. Most of the teachers might agree it is a high time to rethink and reconsider new directions that do not restrict to new teaching methods and activities and can create a new learning environment that can help their students to cope with the four challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Then what is the new learning environment design for 21<sup>st</sup> century like?

Among numerous ideas proposed as innovations and solutions for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most outstanding is the idea of "no more classrooms!" because traditional classrooms are out. The idea was voiced by Roger Schank, founder of the Institute for Learning Sciences at Northwestern University (Fielding, 1999). In his sense, learning is not limited in a classroom and not restricted to teacher-centered teaching methods and activities should be replaced a truly learner-centered environment. Between these two opposing directions: teacher-centered teaching methods in a traditional classroom or innovative learner-centered environment, this paper supports an innovative learning environment. The position of this paper is that, to cope with the four challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the new ELT design should encourage what is called *students at work* design.

### **A Key to ELT in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Students at Work Design**

The *students at work* design has two simple connected key modes: making something and talking with others. These two key modes can help the students to cope with four chal-

lenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (consisting of greater global interdependence, the increasing number of democracies throughout the world, the need for creative entrepreneurs, and the importance of interpersonal relationships that affect the development of personal identity) because, in this learning process, the students need to learn to deal with changes and transform themselves individually and socially. The former mode of the *students at work* design, making something, cognitively engages students with self-directed, constructive, holistic and deep learning experience that fosters creativity and democracies based on individual focus. The latter mode, talking with others, affectively engages the students with cooperative inquiry, reflective learning and learning experience in a socialization process that enhances interdependence and interpersonal relationships and atmosphere of learning to dynamics and change based on social focus.

How can *students at work* design lead students from a traditional teacher-centred classroom to an innovative learner-centred environment that can prepare them for the future? This design does not only change the way the students learn things but change the ways they see the world because the way the students learn determine the way they see the world. In other words, this innovative design can change the students' worldviews. The world keeps changing all the times so the ways they see the world change. The design prepares the students for changing worldviews. How can the design change the students' worldviews?

In this learning process, the students are challenged by direct experience which help them construct meaning on their own and learn how to learn by making and using skills and strategies to acquire knowledge rather than memorize facts and knowledge transferred from the teachers. Through this learning process, their worldviews gradually transform and will finally change. The changing worldviews will lead to change in the ways to acquire knowledge. The teacher-centered classrooms will be replaced and eventually there are no more such classrooms. The *students at work* is an effective design for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Cores of the Students at Work Design**

The *student at work* design aims to promote change through these core elements: in-

dividual experience, critical reflection, aesthetics conversation, holistic perspective, sensitive context and relationships on the basis of mutual trust and sincerity.

### **Individual Experience**

Individual experience plays a vital role in a new learning environment. The experience provides resources for making something and information for talking with other students. It helps them do and practice understanding of the value, system, activities or things with a great value to self-development. The design therefore integrates individual experience into classroom experience as a tool for discussion and interpretation.

### **Critical Reflection**

The classroom experience includes activities that allow individual students to reflect their ideas after doing activities so that the teacher understands how the students learn and how their beliefs or worldviews change. Individual students can reflect independently even though their opinions are like or different from others. Three types of reflection that can be included in activities:

- a. Content Reflection - Reflect on *what* individual students perceive, feel,
- b. think, and do
- c. Process Reflection - Reflect on *how* they perceive, feel, think, and do
- d. Premise Reflection - Reflect *why* they perceive, feel, think, and do

By answering questions, the students practice reflective thinking based on an examination of their original values (prior knowledge, individual experience and worldviews). This reflective thinking helps the teacher understand individual students' changes.

Reflection of each individual also includes an examination of the value, system, activities or things. The more activities that cause discomfort and affect emotional experience, the more opportunity to learn to change the worldview will be. For instance, if the students join community-related activities, the opportunity to change the worldview is even higher.

This reflection provides the students opportunity to share their learning to the class and learn from the other students. This sharing opportunity will lead to personal transformation and interaction in the group can lead

to social transformation. This reflective thinking is therefore a vital part of development of advanced learning or mature cognitive development.

### ***Aesthetics Conversation***

Aesthetic conversation is added into the *students-at work* design to create inner peace of mind and trust between students and teachers and among students. The inner peace of mind and trust will help to detect and reveal deep hidden things inside each one's mind. To promote the dynamics of personal and social transformation of individual students through aesthetic conversation, a teacher as a 'facilitator' can encourage deep dissemination by asking questions, "How do you do that?" To achieve this, there must be inner peace of mind and mutual trust between students and teachers and among students. Without inner peace of mind and mutual trust, group sharing is meaningless and social transformation will never progress.

### ***Holistic Perspective***

The process of learning and emotional development are interrelated. change is not usually caused by an analytical think-change process but is usually caused by a sensitive, mental and emotional see-feel-change process. Learning activities for change therefore integrate emotional and mental processes into the design. Those activities include the use of artistic processes (e.g. drawing pictures, dramas and music), the collective expression process (e.g. narrative and storytelling) and the search process that makes sense of their own and understand each other's feelings.

### ***Sensitive Context***

The *students-at work* design for change pay attention to contextual awareness. This contextual awareness is an in-depth understanding of personal factors as well as social and cultural factors that broadens learning and relates it to reality. This awareness influences learning and makes it easier to change. The contexts that make it easy to change arouse sensitive awareness engage individual students to transitional zone of meaning making.

### ***Relationships on the Basis of Mutual Trust and Sincerity***

Learning in the *students-at work* design has no strong anchor and is constantly flowing. The learning team needs some solid things to master learning and keep it successful and stable. The sincerity of the members towards themselves and others to change can be an anchor. The students get these benefits: be more conscious of their interests, recognize the needs of learners and realize that the interests of students may be different from the teacher's interests, make open to each other, and lead to an understanding that contextually influences behavior or practice.

These six main factors are not solitary but have a coherent relationship and practice together under the atmosphere to enhance individual and social learning how to learn from direct experience in making something and talking with others.

### ***How can ELT get there from here?***

In an attempt to prepare the students for the future, an empirical study of seven models of innovative learning in various contexts in Thailand that enhance innovative learning through the *students at work* design. The analysis of the models reveals how *students at work* design goes on in these models.

The contrast between these innovative models and the traditional models can be explained by Bloom's taxonomy. In the pyramid below, the innovative *students at work* models referred to learning by doing are seen on the top of the pyramid while the traditional ones referred to as learning by receiving and the ongoing process develops from traditional ones to learning by doing is participating.

Bloom's taxonomy of learning retention pyramid above includes 3 stages: receiving, participating, and learning by doing with different retention rates from 0 to 1000%. In these models, the process of learning is primarily based on collaborative and self-directed learning atmosphere and relates all three learning domains (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and engages students with all domains in a coherent relationship and practice all the domains together under the atmosphere that foster these two aspects - doing things and thinking about the things they are doing through play, activity-based learning, group work, project method, technology-based learning etc. the underlying factor be-

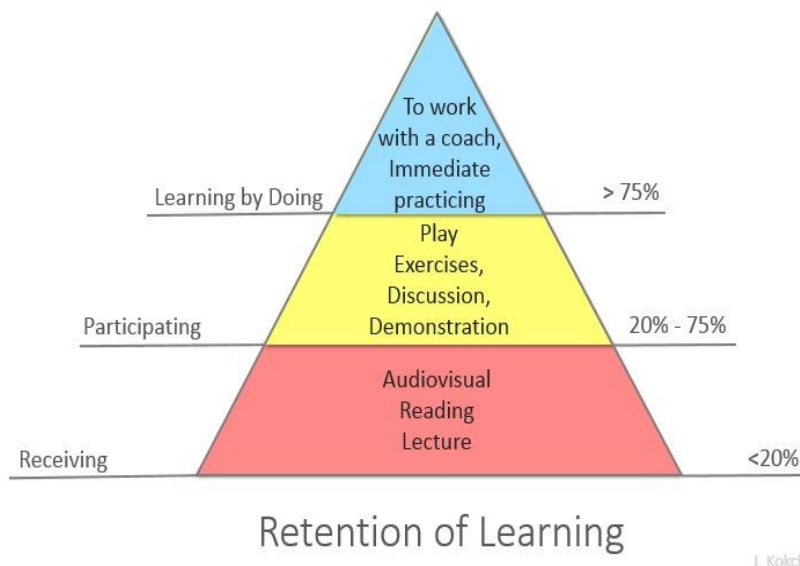


Fig 1. Learning Retention Pyramid

(Source: [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Learning\\_Retention\\_Pyramid.JPG](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Learning_Retention_Pyramid.JPG))

hind these are some significant qualities and characteristics of active learning.

The tasks in the process of learning are relevant to the students' concerns and the students are encouraged to reflect on the meaning of what is learned, negotiate goals and methods of learning, learn from different ways and means of learning the content, compare learning tasks with complexities existing in real life and making reflective analysis, deal with the situation to establish learning tasks and real life tasks reflected in the activities conducted for learning.

The learning environment of these models involves students in the learning process more directly than in conventional process. Students participate in the process of learning by doing: doing something and thinking about the things they are doing. In this learning environment, the students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement. In particular, students engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The activities in their learning process involve direct learning that relates the students to three learning domains together. The three learning domains include knowledge, skills and attitudes. Students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. The learning approaches, methods and tools begin

with problem-based learning using presentation as tools in project-based learning with communicative language teaching approach. All these learning approaches, methods and tools are integrated and practice together in a coherent relationship to enhance individual and social learning from direct experience in making something and talking with others.

#### ***Problem-based learning***

In these models, activities and tools emphasize collaborative and self-directed learning while being supported by tutor facilitation. Learners are presented with a problem and through discussion within their group, activate their prior knowledge. Within their group, they develop possible hypotheses to explain the problem. Together they identify learning issues to be researched. They construct a shared primary model to explain the problem at hand. Facilitators provide [scaffolding](#), which is a framework on which students can construct knowledge relating to the problem. After the initial teamwork, students work independently in self-directed study to research the identified issues. The students re-group to discuss their findings and refine their initial explanations based on what they have learned.

#### ***Project-based learning***

Unlike traditional, teacher-led classrooms, students are given the opportunity to explore problems and challenges that have

real-world applications and increase the possibility of long-term retention of skills and concepts. The core idea of learning in these models is that real-world problems that capture students' interest and provoke serious thinking as the students acquire and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context. The teacher plays a role as a facilitator who works with students to frame worthwhile questions, structures meaningful tasks, coaches both knowledge development and social skills, and carefully assesses what students have learned from the experience.

Typical projects present a problem to solve or a phenomenon to investigate. Project-based learning replaces other traditional models of instruction such as lecture, textbook-workbook driven activities and inquiry as the preferred delivery method for key topics in the curriculum. It is an instructional framework which allows teachers to facilitate and assess deeper understanding rather than stand and deliver factual information. PBL intentionally develops students' problem solving and creative making of products to communicate deeper understanding of key concepts and mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century essential learning skills (e.g. problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and communication). Students become active digital researchers and assessors of their own learning when teachers guide student learning so that students learn from the project making processes.

### **Communicative approach**

The goal of language learning in these models is to enhance the ability to communicate in the target language. This is in contrast to previous views in which grammatical competence was commonly given top priority. These models do not use a textbook series to teach English, but rather works on developing sound oral/verbal skills prior to reading and writing. The activities (e.g. role-play, interviews, group work, opinion sharing, and scavenger hunt) in these models aim to promote collaboration, fluency, and comfort in the target language. The activities vary based on the level of language class they are being used in and are chosen based on what the teachers believe is going to be most effective for developing communicative abilities in the target language. The teachers or facilitators choose classroom activities based on what they believe is going to be most effective for

developing communicative abilities in the target language. These models encourage interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study and through the use of the language both in class and outside of class. In this process, the students converse about personal experiences with partners, incorporating their personal experiences into their language learning environment and focusing on the learning experience in addition to the learning of the target language.

### **Presentation tools**

In these models, activities and tools emphasize presentation tools. In resolving the problem, the critical task is presenting and defending a solution to the given problem. Students need to be able to state the problem clearly, describe the process of problem-solving considering different options to overcome difficulties, support the solution using relevant information and data analysis. Being able to communicate and present the solution clearly is the key to the success of this phase as it directly affects the learning outcomes. With the help of technology, presentation has been made much easier and more effective as it can incorporate visual aids of charts, pictures, videos, animations, simulations etc. Ideas and connections between ideas can be clearly demonstrated by different tools.

In short, these models used the *student at work design* to build up learning to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century based on what is guided by sound theories (e.g. direct learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and communicative language teaching). A research study was conducted to verify the findings based on the *student at work design* that aimed to develop EFL students from the levels of learning by receiving and participating to learning by doing based on Bloom's taxonomy.

### **An Implementation and Investigation of a Students at Work Design for Adult Learners**

A study of Sa-ngiamwibool (2012) investigated how CLT and awareness-raising enhanced Thai learners' awareness of their local wisdom in a tour-related project work with three specific purposes, which were to explore how the learners interacted with textual representations of their local wisdom to create their project, what extent CLT and awareness-raising tasks developed their com-

municative competence of the target language, and what object of awareness that the tasks could help the learners realize while working on their projects. This study was triangulated. The elicitation instruments were project instructions, CLT and awareness-raising tasks, pretests and posttests based on TOEIC test, learner logs, interviews, and observation notes. What the students learned was based on collaborative and self-directed learning atmosphere that relates all three learning domains of learning (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes) to make something by using project instructions and talking with others by using CLT and awareness-raising tasks.

In the process of project learning, the instructions consisted of 6 stages: 1) opening, 2) topic orientation, 3) proposal writing, 4) preparing proposal presentation, 5) presentation and sharing, and 6) evaluation of learning process and project. The researcher made sure that all groups were fully aware of the purposes of each stage and comprehended the procedures of each stage thoroughly. Then, various CLT and awareness-raising tasks were introduced to the stages appropriate and effective for achieving the purpose of the particular stage and for enhancing the learners' awareness of content learning, of communicative competence, and of language development in the project production and presentation. During each of these stages, each group was assigned to write a learner log of all stages. Also, each group was interviewed for more details concerning its cognitive and affective learning.

The various CLT and awareness-raising tasks were introduced according to the purpose of each of the stages as presented below.

First, in the opening stage, each group discussed their topics of special interest to initiate topic planning. CLT tasks such as information-sharing and trust-building were introduced to get each group into a communicative approach, develop positive group dynamics, articulate interest, introduce use of data from various sources and media (e.g. the Internet) for topic planning and text retrieval and production, and introduce texts as data for their project.

Second, in the topic orientation stage, a CLT task (i.e. brain-storming) and awareness-raising were used to arouse curiosity and create awareness of the project topic area, share

data retrieved from the Internet, exchange existing knowledge and personal experiences of the topic, and weight and evaluate the data.

Third, in the writing stage, each group drafted the outline of the project proposal. CLT tasks (e.g. interpersonality and interaction) were used for allocating areas of responsibility. In addition, language exercises with a focus on raising cognitive and affective sensitivity by awareness-raising tasks, which specifically drew the members' attention to the gaps in knowledge of contents and areas of language weakness were introduced to edit the first, second, and third drafts and produce the final draft of written proposal.

Fourth, in the stage of preparing presentation, each group selected the data for presentation, decided on the form of the presentation, prepared texts for presentation, practised the presentation, and evaluated the practice. The same communicative tasks in the previous stage were used for allocating areas of responsibility. In addition, the same awareness-raising and language exercises which specifically drew the presenters' attention to the gaps in the content presentation and areas of language weakness while presenting the oral presentation were also practised.

Fifth, in the presentation stage, the presenter gave a lead-in to the proposal, presented the contents of the project, and ended the presentation. After each presentation, it was a sharing time when exchange of information and experience, comments, questions and answers, clarification, and feedback on contents and presentation from teacher and from other groups were allowed. CLT tasks in this stage were primarily determined by groups and used various forms of communicative tasks appropriate for communicative situations.

Sixth and lastly, in the evaluation stage, each group evaluated the learning process and product. The evaluation of learning process was mainly concerned with the group dynamic processes whereas that of product was concerned with what each group received from the sharing time after the presentation. Then, each group made use of what it received from the sharing time and further worked on areas of content and language based on new ideas received from the sharing time. Finally, each group submitted the final draft of the project.

The study revealed that, first, on the awareness of local wisdom in a tour-related

project work, the learners interacted with textual representations of their local wisdom through theme-centered learning process. Second, on the enhancement of CLT and awareness-raising, CLT allowed the learners to deal with interactive, spontaneous, and more meaningful communication actively while awareness-raising helped the learners consciously focus on semantic, linguistic, and pragmatic aspects of the target language. Lastly, on object of awareness, CLT and awareness-raising tasks could lead the learners to realize these objects of awareness: nature of experiential learning, subject content, and skill content. For pedagogical implications, project-based teaching with the support of CLT and awareness-raising tasks can raise learner awareness of local wisdom in tour-related topics effectively. Pedagogical implications illustrated effective practical applications of project-based learning and CLT and awareness-raising tasks for challenges.

#### Roadmap for ELT in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

This article concludes with a roadmap of ELT for the future. The ELT design for the future need to consider the four challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century: (1) greater global interdependence, (2) the increasing number of democracies throughout the world, (3) the need for creative entrepreneurs, and (4) the importance of interpersonal relationships that affect the development of personal identity. To prepare the students for the challenges, the *students at work* design which aims to enhance learning for the challenges and change based on two key modes (consisting making something and talking with others) are effective for the purpose. The former will foster creativity and self-directed democracies based on individual focus while the latter engages the students with cooperative learning experience in a socialization process that enhances interdependence and interpersonal relationships based on social focus. The two modes need to include the six core elements into the design: individual experience, critical reflection, aesthetics conversation, holistic perspective, sensitive context and relationships on the basis of mutual trust and sincerity. The sound theories and approaches that can integrate these core elements into coherent relationship to form the *students at work* design and develop the three

domains of learning, individual and social learning from direct experience in making something and talking with others include active learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, presentation tools and communicative language teaching approach. These new ideas show promise and produce results for ELT in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

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