

Facilitating the Switch to Asia-wide EAL Dialogues: Wikinomics/English Corners-Meetups/WeCHAT...

Kevin Gaudette

Shanghai Industry and Commerce Foreign Languages College, China

chinamoviemagic@gmail.com

Abstract

For many years the Internet has been referred to, by Downes (2004, para. 35) among others, as a meeting place where dialogue is replacing information publishing and retrieval. In recent years, the WeCHAT phenomenon has spread throughout China and much of Asia. For some 30 years, English Corners have been spreading in China, and now are also developing elsewhere in Asia. This paper discusses the possibilities of developing a Synergy for the learning of English as an Asian Language (as well as other languages), by linking WeCHAT with English etc. Corners (whether in-person or online) and using the principles and practices of Wikinomics, such as Mass Collaboration and Peer Production, to bring a new dimension to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (Burston, 2013).

Keywords: WeCHAT, English Corner, EAL, MALL, Role Play, PBL

Introduction

If the world's ELT is culturally Anglo American oriented or dominated, what is going to happen when Japanese and Chinese meet? When they meet, it is unlikely that they will talk about London or New York.

(Honna, 2005, p. 86)

If we declare that we value different perspectives, as a commitment to dialogic literacy will lead us to do, perspectives of those new to a discipline or to academia, perspectives different from ours culturally, then we must develop practices which also value these differences. Such practices in turn commit us to a dialogic theory of learning that sees knowledge not only as the product of disciplined inquiry, where well-established conventions allow the accumulation of co-ordinated data, but also as the product of ongoing discourse, where different perspectives draw on the power of the negative to lead to a higher integration of understandings. Practices that value difference and a dialogic approach to language and learning are not easy to formulate or to employ in our academic environment.

(Cooper, 1998, p. 82)

Dewey (1910/1991) argued that learning is most effective when it is situated in an authentic, real world context and that this context is social as well as physical. Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development theory has been interpreted (by Lave & Wenger, 1991, among others) to mean that students learn better collaboratively because it is dialogue with others which pushes them into this "societal" space between the everyday behavior of the individual and social practice (p. 48). This space is dynamic in that it is itself changing, and influenced by the individuals in it, through "the negotiated character of meaning" (p. 33).

Swan and Shea (2005) identify three, distinctively social, main themes of learning theory:

- Cognition is situated in particular social contexts (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991)
- Knowing is distributed across groups (Cole, 1991; Perkins, 1993)
- Learning takes place in communities (Lipman, 2003; Scardemalia & Bereiter, 1996; Wenger, 1998).

These themes underpin many of the prevailing theories of online pedagogy, such that these approaches require students to engage with their course content through online discussion with their peers. This has proved difficult to achieve online (Kreijns, Kirschener & Jochems, 2003; Pawan, Paulus, Yalcin & Chang, 2003; Swan, 2004).

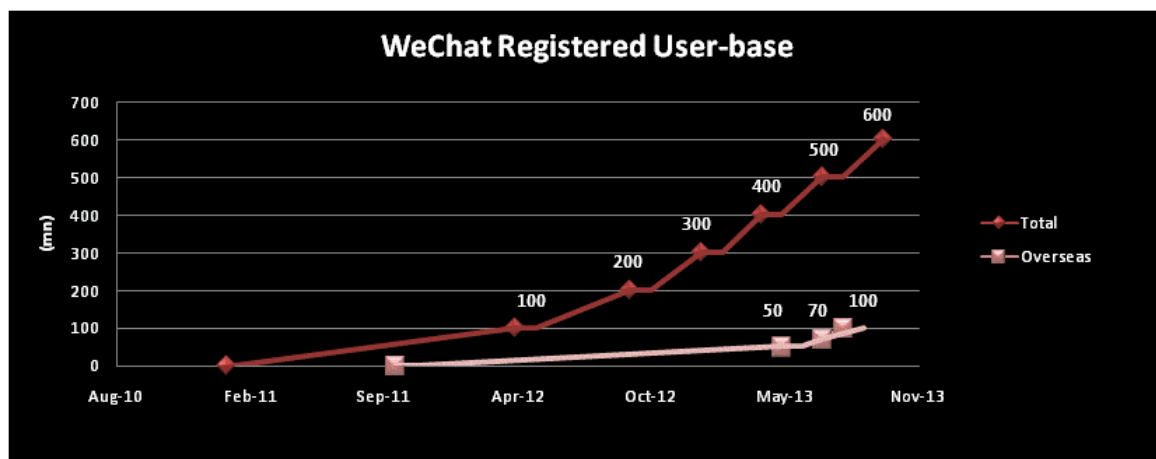
Such difficulties in transformation processes have been analyzed by AtKisson, an experienced theorist and activist in the field of paradigm shifts:

1. **Promote the new.** Or...*"increase the perceived value of the new idea. This is the principal work of the Change Agents, but they certainly depend upon the work of the Innovators, who make a 'cool' product initially."*
2. **Critique the old.** Or...*"decrease the perceived value of the status quo by attacking it, either directly or subtly, in short, making the old way of doing things seem uncool. This is generally the work of the Iconoclasts, though Change Agents also help."*
3. **Facilitate the switch.** *"This is the most important and the least obvious strategy for making change happen. It is also where many change efforts fail, because they forget to reduce the perceived cost of making the change."* (AtKisson, pp. 193-194)

Facilitate the Switch: WeCHAT

(NOTE: The strategies to “Facilitate the Switch” also have relevance for users of Asia’s other popular services, such as KakaoTalk, LINE, SKYPE and WhatsApp, which was purchased by Facebook for \$19 billion in February 2014. For a comparison with other services, and a description of unique elements in WeCHAT, especially Audio Messaging, see Ma, 2014.)

Communicating with WeCHAT is verifiably ‘cool’. According to GlobalWebIndex, WeChat is the fifth most-used smartphone app worldwide (Millward, 2013). In October 2013 WeChat claimed it had over 450 million registered China-based users and over 150 million registered international users, covering over 200 countries and regions. Languages supported include traditional/simplified Chinese, English, Indonesian, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, Malay, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Italian, Thai, Vietnamese, Hindi and Russian. WeChat has Facebook groups for Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, Turkey, Argentina, Australia. (Facebook remains banned in China.) WeChat provides multimedia communication with text messaging, hold-to-talk voice messaging, broadcast (one-to-many) messaging, photo/video sharing, location sharing, and contact-information exchange. WeChat supports social networking via shared streaming content feeds and location-based social plug-ins ("Shake", "Look Around", and "Drift Bottle") to connect with and chat with local and international WeChat users. Tencent, the parent company of WeCHAT, set up a 500 million RMB investment fund in 2011, focused on online entertainment content. The investment included a 4.4% stake in Huayi Brothers Media, producer and distributor of some of China's most popular television productions and films, such as those by well-regarded Director Feng Xiaogang: *Bu Jian Bu San (Be There or Be Square)* and *If You Are the One*. Such a synergy certainly could facilitate the use of WeCHAT for movie-based AsiaCALL activities for learning English, Mandarin and other languages, while discussing HuaYi movies. Perhaps Tencent/HuaYi would be interested in becoming a Sponsor/Partner of AsiaCALL?

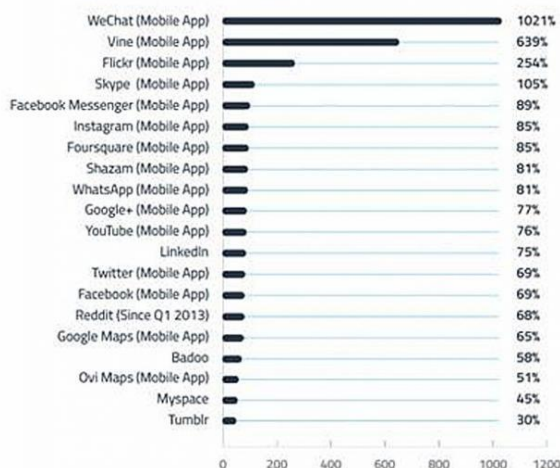


Source: Tencent, Media Reports

WHERE ARE THEY GOING?



TREND IN ACTIVE USAGE, TOP 20. % of Teens 16-19s between Q1 2013 and Q3 2013 Global exc. China. Question: Which of the following social platforms have you used or contributed to in the past month? // Base: % change in millions // Source: GlobalWebIndex



Find out more // www.globalwebindex.net // @globalwebindex // +globalwebindex

Facilitate the Switch: English Corners/Meetup Groups

My interest in the English Corner (EC) concept was germinated in 1969 in Sierra Leone, West Africa, when I was serving as Coordinator/Curriculum Developer for the Mende Language Training Program for incoming Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs). As a PCV-in-training in the 1968 Mende program, I had felt frustrated by the AudioLingualMethod and the continuous repetition of Sentence Patterns, without an opportunity for experimentation/creation. After the 2-month training program, I became a village Primary School “English Sentence Pattern” teacher, and later was allowed to transfer into the Agricultural Development program. As the only foreigner in my village, I made rapid progress in the Mende language, scored a 3+ in the Foreign Service Institute oral test, and was invited to run the 1969 Mende Language Training Program. There I developed a “deschooling” activity, by training local children to ask the PCVs questions which they would be regularly asked by Mendes, as well as to engage in simple, unscripted NS conversation with each other, with the PCV trainees listening, and expanding their i+1 limits. Key elements in the Training Program included: many NSs/NNSs talking at the same time, as at a normal social gathering; learners able to experiment with various words/structures and get one-on-one feedback

from NSs; lowered “affective filter”; a natural “information gap”/a TPR-Story environment; Role Playing. All this was many years before I’d trained briefly with Lozanov (at SALT Conference in 1977), and some years before I had even heard of Asher or Curran, or Krashen, or Gattegno or Stevick or Lozanov. My experience with English Corners/Clubs began in 1982, where I did a Qualitative Evaluation of an English Club, for a rival English School. In Macau in 1983, I had a contract with the Macao Post and Telegraph Co., and developed an intensive English Club in my apartment, using Video segments of movies for developing Listening Comprehension/Role Play/Discussion. In Taiwan in 1985, I worked full-time at an EC. During my decade in Los Angeles (1990-99), I often participated in the weekly Japanese-English Club, developed by a Japanese-American teacher with the L.A. Adult Education Dept. While in China (1999-2011), I regularly participated in public ECs, wherever I was living/teaching. At an English Club in Shanghai I initiated a project bringing together Chinese learners of English and foreigners learning Chinese, to view and discuss segments of Chinese movies. In Ho Chi Minh City I participated several times in the lively and crowded ECs at the government-run Youth Center, with hundreds of chatty folks—both young and old--in multiple classrooms. After a brief meeting, the Youth Center’s Director enthusiastically welcomed me to use an in-class projector, and I gave a well-received demonstration of my MovieMagic approaches for using movie segments for Description/RolePlay/Discussion.

The first known English Corners began informally in China after Deng Xiao Peng’s “Opening up” to the world in 1980, and they sprouted up all over the country as English learners and curious observers came together. China’s ECs are now nation-wide, and they offer an excellent opportunity to “facilitate the switch” to initiate an Asia-wide network of educators and learners using WeCHAT and Wikinomics-based Mass Collaboration for Digital Dialoging. For these past thirty years, China’s unique development in the history of Non-Formal Education has been taking root and spreading throughout the country. These spontaneous, grassroots activities have no formal syllabus, curriculum, admission policies, graduation ceremonies, placement tests or any of the other policies and procedures we in Academia have come to think of as indispensable to learning. Usually weekly, sometimes daily, ECs take place in public parks, university campus spots, private schools, tea houses, KFCs etc.

After the trauma of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), it was a liberating experience for people to have freedom of assembly as well as (discrete) speech with strangers. ECs were closed for some time after the 1989 Tienanmen incident. At the typical public EC, learners of various levels, ranging from a handful to over one hundred, gather together in small clusters, talking about (1) whatever seems “proper”, (2) whatever interests them, or (3) whatever they are able to say. As at a vibrant social gathering, EC folks often circulate from cluster to cluster, checking out for interesting individuals, attractive group dynamics, and suitable English levels. In sharp contrast to China’s typical teacher-centered, book-based, English classrooms, China’s ECs are high-energy, non-formal, learner-centered, English-speaking environments. (Gaudette, 2007)

In many of China's major cities, there is an active EC somewhere every day of the week. However, after thirty years of expansion throughout the nation, ECs remain as they were in the pre-Internet era—unconnected and *ad hoc*. ECs are often criticized, both by advanced Chinese learners as well as by English-speaking foreigners, because many of the less-advanced EC participants continuously ask stock questions: "Where are you from? What is your favorite movie? Do you like China? Do you like Chinese food? Do you like Chinese people?" Clearly, there is a need for continued evolution in the English Corners. One limitation is that the process lacks whole-brained context and content. Many advanced English learners can cynically talk about current events, without discussing creative alternatives. Less-advanced learners, like folks on a first date, can struggle nervously to find a topic they can discuss. Frequently the talking can become dominated by a few (male) advanced English speakers/thinkers, while

a small crowd listens passively. The time is ripe for English Corners to evolve to a new level of development and effectiveness. Synergizing WeCHAT, movie-based role play/discussion and Wikinomics dynamics can promote whole-brained English-learning, critical thinking, emotional well-being, positive group dynamics and income-generation (for highly motivated EC participants). The worldwide phenomenon of Meetup Groups offers an excellent opportunity for experimentation and evolution of the English Corner process. According to the Meetup website (www.meetup.com), there are 284 Learn English Meetup groups, with 51,272 members, in 146 cities in 31 countries. In China there Meetup groups in nearly 50 cities. Worldwide, a Meetup starts somewhere every 13 seconds. Over 9.5 million people have joined long-lasting face-to-face local Meetup Groups, around shared interests and purposes. According to its Website (<http://www.meetup.com/about/>), the Meetup Mission is “to revitalize local community and help people around the world self-organize”, based upon the belief “people can change their personal world, or the whole world, by organizing themselves into groups that are powerful enough to make a difference.” Using the Meetup Website, EAL speakers and learners can develop and promote sustainable income-generating groups which are specifically focused upon specific interests.

Facilitate the Switch: After 10 Years

Here in Shanghai, we intend to launch a Meetup/WeCHATgroup focused specifically upon a synergy of:

- English-Mandarin Corner as a Learning Community
- Role Play and Discussion of Movies
- Speech-making and Discussion from TED and RSA Animate presentations
- Wikinomics-based Peer Production of EAL materials, using WeChat and VoiceThread platforms
- Mind Training, using Yoga and Tai Chi.

WeCHAT and Meetup can help us materialize the sort of synergy project which, in 2004, I described on my semi-blog, URL: <http://forums.eslcafe.com/job/viewtopic.php?t=16848> :

ChinaMovieMagic	Posted: Mon Nov 22, 2004 6:38 pm Post subject: Movie Magic-- Principles/Practices
Joined: 02 Nov 2004	
Posts: 2102	
Location: YangShuo	

Key Elements

- high ratio of native/advanced English speakers to English learners
- a bilingual Mandarin-English environment--bringing together Chinese interested in improving their English, as well as foreigners
- a variety of activities available for the participants
 1. free conversation
 2. viewing/discussion of movie/movie segment
 3. discussion of movie reviews
 4. movie-based role plays
 5. a wide range of other activities--Theatre Games, discussion topics, public speaking training, Karaoke singing

Over the years, L2 teachers have developed a wide range of communicative techniques based upon the creative use of movie segments, such as:

VIEWING COMPREHENSION (with sound off)

DIALOGUE BUILDING (with sound off)

AURAL ONLY PREDICTION (with sound only)

PREDICTIVE VIEWING--What will happen?

REVERSE PREDICTION--What happened before the sequence seen?

JIGSAW VIEWING (Only half the viewers see the sequence, and they relate it to those who haven't. Replay it to compare.)

Such approaches can create an enhanced learning environment, in harmony with Krashen's principles:

A RICH VARIETY OF COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT

A LOW-ANXIETY SITUATION

REAL MESSAGES OF REAL INTEREST

A short (1 to 3 minutes) close-captioned movie segment offers the learner a synergistic schemata of opportunities for comprehensible INPUT. The visual images themselves are comprehensible and are stored in the students' memories as EXPERIENCES, rather than as a language lesson that must be "studied/learned" because the teacher will test the students for their ability to "remember" the lesson. A schematic tapestry of English words becomes associated with the movie's images and emotions. Plot, character, emotion--these are the 'hooks' by which the language becomes comprehensible input and stored intake. This dynamic is quite different from the artificial approaches typically used--vocabulary lists, linear progressions in grammar complexity etc.)

To use another metaphor, the memories of the movie segment can be seen as gravitational schemata which can attract and retain words associated with the images. As the learner thinks of a scene, an ever-expanding constellation of words and sentences can become linked in the memory with a pleasant (LOW-ANXIETY) experience, rich with REAL MESSAGES OF REAL INTEREST. As the learner thinks of one character, a tremendous variety of adjectives and actions can become part of the schemata. This is in harmony with the episode hypothesis, which states that "text (i.e. discourse in any form) will be easier to produce, understand, and recall to the extent that it is motivated and structured episodically...these ideas lead to the supposition that perhaps second language teaching would be more successful if it incorporated principles of good story writing along with the benefits of sound linguistic analysis." (Oller)

In addition to discussion of the movies, Members and Dialogue Partners will also be active in role play based upon the movie segments. In *Why Drama Works: A Psycholinguistic Perspective*, Susan Stern of UCLA brings together a wide range of research relating to the power of role play for creating an enjoyable and effective second language environment:

(https://www.academia.edu/1638922/Why_drama_works_A_psycholinguistic_perspective)

Movie-based role play can be a valuable method for helping students to become empathic language learners. Psychodrama pioneer Adam Blatner M.D. is a pioneer in the field of role play. His website (<http://www.blatner.com/adam/papers.html>) contains over 100 of his papers on Psychodrama, creativity, play and other areas. Blatner describes empathy as (1) an ability to imagine with some degree of accuracy what it's like to be in the predicament of the other person, and (2) the ability to communicate that awareness so the other person feels understood. Blatner views the skill of empathy as a matter mainly of focused imagination, picturing in the mind what it might be like to be in the other person's predicament. (Blatner, 2010).

The skill of empathy also involves an integration of remembering, rational thinking, intuition, and feeling, all of which support the active imaginative process. One warm-up technique I have adopted from Blatner is "the Talk Show Host Game." (Blatner & Blatner, 1991). This technique, as well as many others described by Blatner, can easily be used in English Corners and with WeCHAT (Blatner, 1995). Role playing is a natural vehicle of language learning because it is an extension of the imaginative, pretend play of childhood (Blatner & Blatner, 1991). Role playing requires a build-up of spontaneity in its participants (Blatner, 2009). In my classes over the past 12 years in China, I have seen that such movie-based role plays can facilitate these processes of imagination, spontaneity and empathy, and can promote conversational fluency.

Facilitate the Switch: Wikinomics/Peer Production/Partnership Values

In *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, wide-ranging examples are given to show that mass collaboration is "helping to transform the way we conduct science, create culture, inform and educate ourselves, and govern our communities and nations" (Tapscott & Williams, 2008, p.xii). The organic self-organizing dynamics of such peer production communities are contrasted with those of those of the typical multinational entity and its "corporate command-and-control hierarchy" (p. 25). English Corners (whether in-person and/or online) are well-suited for using movie-based WeCHAT activities, and morphing into mass collaboration/peer production platforms, for digital-based English-/Mandarin-/Japanese-/etc.-teaching and/or, and (for the most motivated) income-generation, as skilled Conversation Partners/Material Developers, especially as micro-enterprise projects for the many experienced English teachers in India and the Philippines.

Such a project is in harmony with the *Wikinomics* best-practices for successful peer production:

1. The object of production is information or culture, since this keeps the cost of participation low for contributors;
2. Tasks can be chunked out into segments which individuals can contribute in small increments and independently of other producers;
3. The costs of integrating these multiple pieces into a finished end product, including the leadership and quality-control mechanisms, must be low (Tapscott & Williams, p. 182).

Consider the following examples from *Wikinomics* (pp. 183-84):

- Wind-up Records--fans have voluntarily invested over a quarter of a million hours producing and sharing more than three thousand music videos, using their PCs to synchronize Japanese animé art with popular music tracks to create animé music videos. The website (<http://www.animemusicvideos.org/guides/>) contains a large collection of these videos, and it also offers free training and information-sharing regarding editing, and other technical or aesthetic areas.
- Creative Commons Developing Nations License has allowed creators to make their works available for attributed free distribution (copies can be freely shared, providing the original creator is credited) in the Global South, while still retaining all copyright control in the Global North. Creative Commons has developed a mashup platform (<http://ccmixter.org>), which uses the Mass Collaboration/Open Source phrase "Download, Sample, Cut-up, Share" and describes its focus: "ccMixer is a community music site featuring remixes licensed under Creative Commons where you can listen to, sample, mash-up, or interact with music in whatever way you want."
- BBC's *Backstage* project (<http://backstage.bbc.co.uk>) invites developers to create new prototype services built around BBC content.
- BBC's Creative Archive initiative, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/creativearchive/?inc=News>), has opened up portions of the vast BBC TV archives, as well as film clips from the British Film

Institute, allowing the public the legal freedom to use/mix/mash the content as they like, for noncommercial purposes.

- Taking ITGlobal, whose membership has exceeded 230,000 active members from about 261 countries. TIG's website (www.tigweb.org/about/) uses as key words: "Inspire. Inform. Involve" and describes its mission as: "prepare students for today's knowledge economy...provide opportunities for learning, capacity-building, cross-cultural awareness, and self-development through the use of Information and Communication Technologies." TIG could be an excellent partner in helping develop a global language-learning PeerProduction/Mass Collaboration movement, which would be in harmony with TIG mission, as well as an income generator for TIG and its members.

Community Language Learning and Peer Production Communities

For the whole-brained Wikinomics-based morphing of ECs with WeCHAT/Meetup, next steps could include:

1. Developing WeCHAT-/Meetup-based materials and training to expand the content and process of English Corners, by promoting the use of Role Play/Discussion of movies and presentations such as those developed by TED.com and RSA Animate. Before coming to the EC, participants would be able to prepare for the process, by:
 - Viewing movie segments/TED/RSA Animate shows on-line,
 - Reading selected segments of movie reviews (such as those from www.metacritic.com and www.imdb.com) and transcripts of the TED/RSA Animate shows
 - Viewing/reading discussions of the movie/movie reviews/TED/RSA Animate on VoiceThread/WeCHAT,
 - Hearing/preparing audio-edited versions of these discussions (using software such as Audacity for repetition, echo, dichotic/bilingual input etc.),
 - Preparing role plays based upon the movie segments/TED/RSA Animate.
2. Developing bi-lingual Community Language Learning groups at ECs/Meetups, based upon Mandarin-English/Mandarin-Japanese/Korean-Japanese/etc. role play and discussion of chosen movie segments and TED/RSA Animate shows, while using WeCHAT (with only audio, or with both audio and video functions) to record (only with quality microphones) the process. These bilingual translations/recordings can be valuable, both for lower-level learners (allowing them to hear/record their Native Language speech translated into their Target Language), and for more advanced learners (serving as translators, promoting their bi-lingual fluency, with assistance from their peers in the group). By developing a bi-lingual environment in China's ECs/Meetups, for example, more English-speaking Mandarin learners may choose to participate.

For mobile audio access, bi-lingual dichotic audio materials (Aarons, 1987/1990) can also be produced and tested, particularly regarding the nature of mixed hemispherical dominance for native-level speakers of tonal languages such as Mandarin/Thai/Vietnamese etc. (BBC, 2003; University of California, Irvine, 2006; Rice University, 2009; Rice University, 2012). Audio materials can also offer options for a variety of background "mind-music" selections (Halpern, 2013).

3. In the case of China, these Mandarin-English digital audio materials can be used for editing, via Wiki-style Mass Collaboration, for both English learners as well as for Mandarin learners, and using other Internet-based materials--in English and in Mandarin--for audio post-production.

While online, learners (of Mandarin or English) will collaborate with native speakers to edit digital audio according to their own Krashen-ian "I+1"comprehension levels. By editing for their own comprehension levels, using repeat, pulsing, silence, mind-music background etc., the learners can create a digital product which could also be suitable for millions of others at similar comprehension levels. Using Wiki-community formats, such individuals will be able to make connections with each other and collaborate on the co-production of language-learning materials, some for free and some for a fee.

The modulation of attention to these intonation units can be facilitated with free audio-editing software (such as Audacity and NanoGong), allowing the editor/audience to both hear and see (especially with the zoom-in function) such intonation units. Various advanced editing methods (repetition, pulsing, silence, fade-in/fade-out, mind-music background, dichotic bilingual audio background, mix&mash-up) can be used to improve listening comprehension and memorability. Such editing can be a group Project-based Learning (PBL) process, in which students do the audio editing to suit their own levels of comprehension and personal preferences. These audio can be uploaded to VoiceThread.com files (each VoiceThread project can hold up to 1,000 audio files), and learners can select, comment on, and vote for audio-projects they prefer.

As an example of the massive audio options available, consider the wide range of YouTube etc. videos relating to popular movies, and the possibilities for PBL/Mass Collaboration:

- VoiceThread/WeCHAT members choose the movie reviews they wish to audio-edit and upload to VoiceThread as MP3 audio files, while posting the URL on EC/WeCHAT sites;
- Then they and others comment (with text, audio, or Web-cam) upon:
- The ideas/feelings expressed in the VoiceThread/WeCHAT audio
- The comments of other VoiceThread/WeCHAT members.

An optimal synergy of YouTube etc./VoiceThread/WeCHAT/PBL could include:

- Memorable movie segments uploaded to YouTube etc., including current as well as classic scenes (such as those selected at www.filmsite.org)
- VoiceThread/WeCHAT uploading of MP3 audio from the movie segments (both unedited, as well as edited in a variety of formats);
- VoiceThread/WeCHAT uploading of movie reviews from www.metacritic.com;
- VoiceThread/WeCHAT uploading of PBL by members, including (1) audio description/commentary about the scene/movies/characters, (2) audio commentary/discussion of fellow members' uploads, (3) audio commentary/discussion about various movie reviews from www.metacritic.com (Chafe, 1998);
- Downloading of Audio files to learners' Smart Phones, allowing for mobile audio input, expanding the i+1 comprehension levels.

The depth and vocabulary-range of such discussions can be expanded by the inclusion of movie reviews, especially in the format of www.metacritic.com, which gives both complete reviews as well as a graded scale of evaluations of the movie, with brief phrases (intonation units) from each review, showing the variety of opinions. These review-snippets can be used as another PBL activity, by having members choose which snippet(s) they wish to read aloud (with spirit!) and upload to the VoiceThread/WeCHAT project. First they could listen to a variety of uploaded VoiceThread/WeCHAT audio files, read by Native Speakers and others, with expressive voices, and (extremely important!) quality microphones. These NSs and other members can later comment upon the readings of the other members.

Metacritic Movie Review Segments

<http://www.metacritic.com/movie/the-english-teacher>

“...where different perspectives draw on the power of the negative to lead to a higher integration of understandings. Practices that value difference and a dialogic approach to language and learning are not easy to formulate or to employ in our academic environment.”

(Cooper, 1998, p. 82)



75 The screenplay, by husband-wife team Dan and Stacy Chariton, is thin as a poker chip but as clever as it is contrived

75 Sometimes it's just plain fall-down funny.

75 ...could benefit from being a bit more daring.

50 ...a predictable and flimsy backstage farce...the husband-and-wife writing team of Dan and Stacey Chariton can't decide whether they want to flatter or talk down to their audience.

50 ...feels like a movie written as a homework assignment...Unfortunately, the story goes soft when it should be at its most daring: The film loses its bite.

50 The line between "cute" and "cutesy" is violated, repeatedly, in the sometimes funny, often cloying comedy "The English Teacher." ... That sense that it's all pre-ordained mutes the film's potential big laughs and makes even the chuckles few and far between. As an English teacher might put it, they aimed (and missed) at light comedy when they should have reached for farce.

50 ...boasts few surprises—except perhaps its message, which seems to be that selling out isn't so bad. Chalk it up to a case of "write what you know."

50 ...aims to channel great, time-honored storytelling without being able to tell a great story.

40 It is a movie at odds with itself.

30 A tragedy masquerading as a comedy and doing a disservice to both

20 ...reveals that a respectable cast and much noisy boisterousness isn't enough to generate a single laugh ...a cartoony stew of unlikable characters.

20 a tone-deaf comedy flipping like a gasping fish between silly and maudlin...100 percent predictable, so there aren't even shocks to wake you from the unfunny torpor ...goes through the motions of allegedly dramatic romantic misunderstandings and overblown backstage hijinks.

Conclusion

The interactive Web 2.0 has transformed internet activities from passivity to peering: "sharing, socializing, collaborating and, most of all, creating loosely connected communities" (Tapscott & Williams, 2008, p. 41). Some US critics warn that Open Source and Wikinomics dynamics promote a trend to "collectivism." Digital pioneer Howard Rheingold points out: "Collectivism involves coercion and centralized control; collective action involves freely chosen self-selection and distributed coordination" (Tapscott & Williams, 2008, p. 17). The Ohloh Website, which tracks the open source industry, lists over 1,400,000 people working voluntarily on 540,000 open source projects. In *Wired Magazine* this global open source movement is described as "the new socialism" (Kelly, 2009).

	
The Old Socialism	The New Socialism
Gaudetteity centralized among elite officials Limited resources dispensed by the state Forced labor in government factories Property owned in common Government- controlled information Harsh penalties for criticizing leaders	Power distributed among ad hoc participants Unlimited, free cloud computing Volunteer group work a la Wikipedia Sharing protected by Creative Commons Real-time Twitter and RSS feeds Passionate opinions on the Huffington Post

SOURCE: Wired Magazine

If English Corners become Meetup-/WeCHAT-connected peer-production communities, members will both improve their English skills as well as develop the collaborative skills which will be increasingly valued in the new digital economies. For corporations, success in the new world of co-creation and combinatorial innovation will depend upon building a loyal base of innovators that strengthen institutional ecosystems. Using Meetup-WeCHAT synergies, ECs can facilitate the development of guild-like peer production communities, with codes of conduct that set the formal and informal norms and rules of practice. Peer-to-peer reputation-rating can help to identify high-quality, reliable collaborators for projects. Engaging in such meaningful activities can cultivate social consciousness.

Morphed ECs can serve as training grounds, preparing participants for success in the world of Wikinomics, based upon the principles of "openness, peering, sharing, and acting globally" (Tapscott & Williams, 2008, p.267), as well as "...effective habits of discriminating tested beliefs from mere assertions, guesses, and opinions...sincere, and open-minded preference for conclusions that are properly grounded, and ...methods of inquiry and reasoning appropriate to the various problems that present themselves." (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 28).

We derive our competence from forming connections... Chaos is a new reality for knowledge workers... Unlike constructivism, which states that learners attempt to foster understanding by meaning-making tasks, chaos states that the meaning exists, the learner's challenge is to recognize the patterns which appear to be hidden. Meaning-making and forming connections between specialized communities are important activities.

(Siemens, 2005, para. 15)

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