

Social-Motivational Metacognitive Strategy Instruction (SMMSI): Breaking the Silence in Language Reading Classes

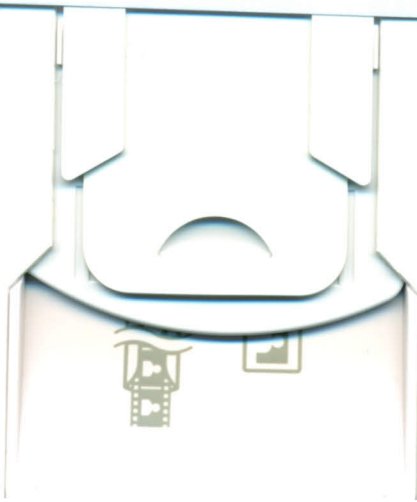
Bromeley Philip and Koo Yew Lie

Abstract

This paper attempts to address as far as possible the realities of prevalent “silence” among Malaysian learners. Acknowledging the fact that such “silence” has been an acceptable norm, it is recommended that the “silence” may at least partially be broken through a reading class that incorporates elements of critical pedagogy in the form of a metacognitive strategy instruction session. It is proposed that Social-motivational Metacognitive Strategy Instruction, abbreviated as SMMSI be offered as an alternative pedagogic practice for the ESL reading classroom. The SMMSI model hopes to train learners to become active co-participants in the classroom and critical meaning makers.

Introduction

This paper looks into some of the realities that occur in the Malaysian classrooms. It focuses on the prevalence of “silence” among Malaysian learners that seem ubiquitous enough to include almost all education levels from schools to higher level institutions. A strong culture of silence (Koo, 2004) is widely described as characteristic of classroom learning environments in Malaysia. This article intends not to introduce any radical upheaval to the existing scenario but to suggest some probable ways to at least “break” this dominating characteristic of “silence” that characterises Malaysian learners. The first part of the article will provide the broad scenario that exists in the Malaysian classroom context. This is followed by a suggestion to exploit the reading class through which it is recommended that it is possible to incorporate some elements of critical pedagogy within the reading lessons via strategy instruction. A strategy instruction model called Social-motivational Metacognitive Strategy Instruction, abbreviated as SMMSI, is then described. The next section discusses the implementation of the model in Malaysian context, in a hypothetical manner. The last part of the article redefines participant roles for both the teacher and the learners in the context of a reading class.



General Overview of Malaysian Classrooms

It has become common knowledge that Asian societies in general, and the multicultural Malaysian society for that matter, share the common tradition of respecting authority and positions of elders. This ingrained socio-cultural view has somewhat naturally permeated the pedagogic practice in most Asian societies, and the Malaysian classroom is no exception in generally manifesting this influence, where learners have been socialised into deference and obligation to the teacher as the “providers” of knowledge (Kirkbride et al., 1989). Malaysian learners have been brought up to respect the wisdom, knowledge and expertise of “authoritative” figures like their parents, teachers and lecturers. Such entrenched and privileged socio-cultural reverence for the teacher, who is unarguably considered to be the expert in imparting knowledge seems evidently manifested in the top-down transmissive and didactic nature of the Malaysian classrooms (even most ESL classrooms). Here the teacher takes much control of the teaching-learning process. This teacher-centredness tends to only encourage Malaysian learners to assume the passive role of knowledge “receivers” who eventually become “reproducers” of a fixed body of knowledge imparted by the teacher-expert (Koo Yew Lie, 2003). While respecting the teacher is indeed socio-culturally approved, conforming to this popular view uncritically might arguably lead to a lack of critical mind amidst Malaysian learners. The effect on the learners’ critical ability can be uncontrollably stifling. The unquestioning level of respect for the teacher has consequently to a large extent silenced the slightest probability of critical voice from the learners. It may not be a rarity for a Malaysian learner to become what Burbules and Berk (1999) describe as a passive consumer of information as opposed to a critical consumer of information who is driven to seek reasons and evidence.

The “knowledgeable” status accorded to the teacher has probably rendered Malaysian learners into becoming unwilling, or feeling uncomfortable, to challenge the teacher. Any attempt at questioning the knowledge imparted by the teacher from the learners might be perceived as an “overt display of cleverness” (Koo Yew Lie, 2003) by the teacher as well as their peers, only to be frowned upon as an unacceptable social norm of “showing off” or simply inconsiderate, a social behaviour not privileged in the Malaysian learning space (Bahiyah Abdul Hamid, 1992). This social behaviour of disapproving attempts at critical questioning of the “authority” will only stifle the learners’ critical epistemic adequacy (Burbules & Berk, 1999); a probable reason why Malaysian learners choose to keep silent in the classrooms.

Malaysian learners might also choose to silence their voices when it comes to participating openly in classroom discussions (if ever there are discussions) because of the fear of making mistakes and hence running the risk of losing face,



only to be laughed at by their peers as being “ignorant”. They prefer the security of keeping silent and not risk losing face as being unintelligent (Koo Yew Lie, 2004). The need to avoid face loss among ESL learners is also reinforced by the fact that they lack the necessary language to communicate effectively as they feel insecure about their English proficiency level. For that reason, Bahiyah Abdul Hamid (1992: 98) elaborates that these learners “...prefer to say little or nothing at all for fear that their mistakes would make their classmates or teacher laugh at or look down on them.”

It has become too common a complaint by Malaysian ESL teachers as they relate their experiences of the “silence” that characterises their classrooms. A study focusing on the prevalence of “silence” in Malaysian ESL context, was that conducted by Umadevi (2001), involving undergraduates at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), where she found that these ESL learners hardly asked questions. These two studies could well expose but just the tip of the iceberg regarding the “silence” in the Malaysian ESL classrooms, which should be addressed rather urgently, with formulation of certain pedagogy that can help “break” the silence. The impact of socio-cultural factors manifests itself visibly in the “silence” that characterises Malaysian learners. The fear of making mistakes, the fear of being perceived as boastful, the need to value harmony and avoid arguments, the respect for teachers, all seem to converge into the need to conform to a collectivistic societal norm. This attitude of conforming to the norms and avoiding becoming “different” seems to have arguably been programmed by the broader impact of the socio-cultural system to include the issue of socio-cultural identities. Lee Su Kim (2003a) points out that learners possess a range of multiple identities which are context-dependent and are subject to the reference groups within which they are interact. This suggests that the learners need to “...subtly manage the complexities of their multiple identities in order to fit in or belong to the group they were interacting with (Lee Su kim, 2003b: 9). This is also because, as Lee Su Kim (2003a) explains further, that using the English language within certain contexts where resentment towards the English language exists may bring about “hostility, marginalization and even alienation.”(p.10) Lee Su Kim et al’s (2003) study indicates that socio-cultural influence has relation to the broader socio-political perspective where their research participants related their experiences of using English as being misunderstood, being accused of forsaking their cultural identity, or being suspected of disloyalty to their culture, race and country; problems that learners still encounter in the complex postcolonial Malaysia. This may not be surprising because as Koo Yew Lie (2004) argues, what is considered appropriate behaviour and values are generally derived from group and people with position in the Malaysian highly collectivistic and position-oriented social and political spaces. Hence, what seems to be equally powerful in contributing to the lack of critical thinking among Malaysian learners might arguably be the impact of a broader socio-political context (will not be explored in this paper) within a highly collectivistic Malaysian society.



For a highly collectivistic society like Malaysia, there exists a strong likelihood that Malaysian children are nurtured using a parent-centred approach. The most probable implication would be that Malaysian learners are brought up to respect the wisdom, knowledge and expertise of “authoritative” figures like their parents and teachers. The concomitant effect of this is that learners tend to take the passive role of knowledge “receivers”. A collectivist Malaysian society with large power distance (Hofstede, 1981) tends to reinforce educational practice that is didactic and teacher-centred advocating a top-down transmission of knowledge.

The top-down transmission of knowledge according to Koo Yew Lie (2004) has been influential in shaping Malaysian learners’ approach to literacy practices. Further, Koo Yew Lie (2004: 80) describes a high stakes and “highly regulated Malaysian examination-oriented education system” which awards good grades for success in standardised achievement tests and examinations which involve “learning a fixed body of knowledge which can be regurgitated and applied without much imagination and critique” exacerbates the importance of acquiring a fixed body of knowledge. She adds further that such social educational practice is privileged in the mainstream academic context such as schools and universities and in families, each becoming reproduction sites for such values and practices. The impact of such practice seems to show in the undergraduates’ inability to critically ask appropriate comprehension questions in relation to the contents of their lectures. A study conducted by Umadevi (2001) involving Malaysian undergraduates found that these undergraduates are unable to understand a great part of their lecture. They are also often unable to formulate questions to ask lecturers when they are confused. If they do ask questions after all their questions are really not questions but requests for a repeat of the explanation. Furthermore, Umadevi (2001) found out that these undergraduates prefer to ask their friends for help rather than the lecturer and if their friends are unable to help, they simply memorise and regurgitate facts to pass examinations. In fact, the critical ability of asking questions seems unnecessary for the undergraduates due to the examination-orientation of the lectures and the format of the examinations (Umadevi, 2001).

In the light of such realities in most Malaysian classrooms regardless of the education level (secondary or tertiary) (of course there are exceptions), it is necessary for Malaysian teachers particularly language teachers to think of some ways to confront this problem.

This paper sets out to suggest and share a pedagogy to confront the issue of prevalent “silence” among Malaysian learners via reading classes. Reading class

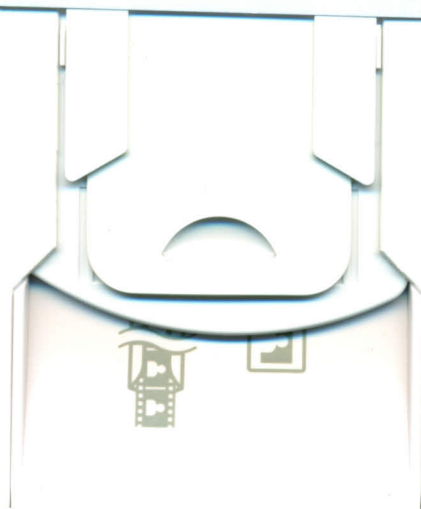


has long been viewed as involving passive participation from the learners through silent reading and subsequently responding to comprehension questions. More often than not, these learners might find themselves lost in the meaning-making process either due to limited vocabulary or a lack of strategy knowledge to be applied in facilitating their construction of meaning vis-à-vis the complexities of the text at hand. It is possible to exploit the reading class by empowering the learners to actually engage in a critical process of meaning making via effective strategy instruction. A strategy instruction provides opportunities for learners to develop strategic ability in their reading process because it enables even learners with limited language abilities to find their ways in comprehending reading texts by means of effective strategy use.

If an ESL reading class is to be of any advantage to Malaysian learners, the teacher concerned needs to consider incorporating direct instruction in learning strategies to help facilitate the reading process. The class however requires more than a mere informing of learners of the various strategies that can be used. Rather, the session should involved direct explanation of the rationales and benefits of using each component of a strategy, that is, it should focus on the “how”, “why” and “when” a strategy is to be applied. It builds in the learners a metacognitive knowledge of strategy use. Hence, it has aptly been called metacognitive strategy instruction. **It must be understood nevertheless that a metacognitive strategy instruction on its own is inadequate because a classroom setting involves learners with different characteristics which should not go unnoticed.** An ESL classroom is a socio-cultural setting, a place where learners and their peers are engaged in meaning-making process. For a metacognitive strategy instruction to be able to accommodate for the socio-cultural realities within the classroom setting, it needs to incorporate elements of social and motivational processes; the author hereby proposes a metacognitive strategy instruction that incorporates elements of critical pedagogy, Social-motivational Metacognitive Strategy Instruction Model (SMMSI)(Philip, 2005).

Social-Motivational Metacognitive Strategy Instruction Model (SMMSI): Theoretical Framework

The SMMSI for reading emphasises reciprocal effects of social, motivational and metacognitive processes. The combination of the three processes, social, motivational and metacognitive as a theoretical framework provides a strong basis for the realisation and actualisation of elements of critical pedagogy and learner autonomy as diagrammatically presented in Figure 1 below.



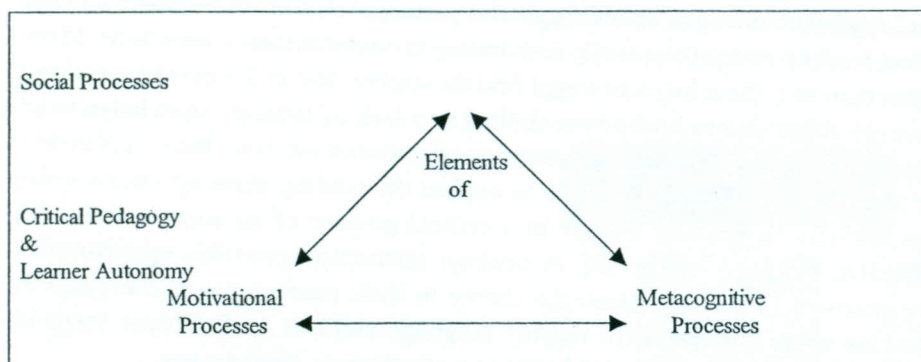


FIGURE 1 Fusion of three processes

Metacognitive Processes

SMMSI demonstrates what strategies can be used, how they can be applied, when and why strategies are helpful (metacognitive/conditional knowledge). As Winograd and Hare (1988) point out, most strategy instruction models provide declarative and procedural knowledge about strategies. The teacher engages **Direct Explanation (DE)** approach of modelling strategies and giving feedback on strategy effectiveness to the learners as they practise using the strategies. But understanding how to use particular strategies when directed and being able to produce them are minimal prerequisites for independent use. Metacognitive awareness constitutes what is known as conditional knowledge. Conditional knowledge is understanding when and why to employ forms of declarative and procedural knowledge (Paris et al., 1983). This means that possessing the requisite declarative and procedural knowledge to perform a task does not guarantee learners will perform it well. For example, consider learners reading an academic text. They know what to do (read a passage in the text), understand the meanings of vocabulary words (declarative knowledge), and how to decode, skim, find main ideas, and draw inferences (procedural knowledge). When they start reading, they use strategies regardless of their appropriateness. As a consequence, they perform poorly on a subsequent comprehension test. Knowing facts and procedures alone does not guarantee effective reading. They should also know when and why to employ that knowledge. Knowing when and why is metacognitive awareness, and such awareness plays a role in determining appropriate strategy use. Conditional knowledge helps students select and employ declarative and procedural knowledge to fit task goals (Schunk, 2000). This reader's metacognitive/conditional knowledge encompasses knowledge of and control over their own thinking and text processing (Walczyk, 2000; Borkowski et al., 2004). Metacognition thus, involves awareness of one's cognitive processes, and regulation of one's cognitive processes. In other words, metacognition



includes assessing the requirements of the problem, constructing a solution plan, selecting an appropriate solution strategy, monitoring progress towards the goal, and modifying the solution when necessary (Mayer & Wittrock, 1996). Paris (2004) strongly feels that instructional programmes need to emphasise the *how*, *when*, and *why* of strategy use. The rationale for this is that effective strategy use involves the ability to coordinate and plan the execution of a strategy and the knowledge of when and why a strategy should be used. But this effort might be insufficient to ensure continuing strategy use. What is very crucial if long-term strategy maintenance and transfer is the instructional goal of a strategy instruction, is for the teacher to include information about "...when and where to use the strategy being taught as well as opportunities to practice the strategy and practice adapting to new situations (Pressley & McCormick, 1995: 194)." As learners gain such metacognitive information, the teacher should gradually shift the responsibility to the learner and scaffolding should take the form of negotiated interactions.

SMMSI is geared towards making learners becoming self-directed/self-regulated, and autonomous in their regulation of metacognitive knowledge. Paris and Winograd (1990) state that strategy instruction should be regarded as an opportunity to "provide students with knowledge and confidence that enables them to manage their own learning and empowers them to be inquisitive and zealous in their pursuits" (cited in Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002: 250). SMMSI prepares learners into becoming equipped with metacognitive knowledge, which includes knowledge of strategy components, knowledge of each component's role, knowledge of when to employ each component, knowledge of preparedness to employ each component. One of the goals of SMMSI is to enhance the development of learners' strategy use through application of Self-regulated Approach to Strategic Learning (SRSL) (a strategic learning approach, SRSL has been conceptualised for use by learners within the SMMSI model that assists learners in using strategies systematically) for the purpose of individual empowerment, promoting self-direction and planfulness (McCaslin and Hickey, 2001).

Social Processes

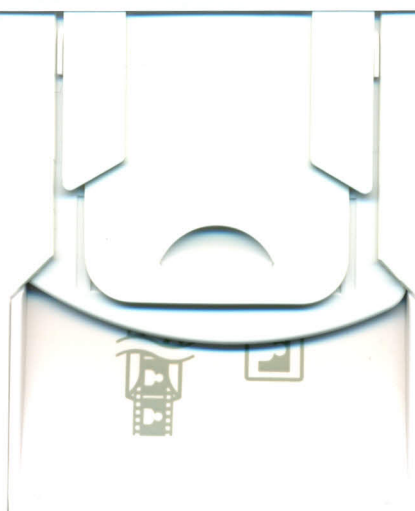
SMMSI allows the responsibility for generating, applying, and monitoring effective strategies being transferred from teacher to learners. When scaffolding for strategy use, a teacher normally has the objective to support the learner's strategy use until support can be withdrawn (Many, 2002). The goal is for the learner to be capable of independently identifying situations where the strategy can be useful and to be able to implement that strategy as needed. However, scaffolding may not end with learners gaining independence but instead scaffolding can effectively be carried out through shared negotiation of meaning



or conceptual scaffolding (after Many, 2002). In this approach, the teacher initiates the reading task. What differentiates the teacher from the learners is the level of knowledge whereby the teacher assumes a competent model or the knower. Being the knower, the teacher holds the responsibility of providing the less knower with the required information. Successful instruction allows learners to interact with teachers and peers and to assume equal partnership in learning. In such equal partnership, learners and teachers collaborate more as equal social partners in a learning enterprise. Within the SMMSI instructional framework, social interactions between the teacher and learners revolve around using several types of scaffolding as instructional tools. Hogan and Pressley (1997) identify five main types of scaffolding which include offering explanations, modelling desired behaviours, inviting students' participation, verifying and clarifying students' understandings, and inviting students to provide clues. These types of scaffolding are reduced as the learners move in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) of strategy use, gaining more responsibility for their learning. Eventually, the learners are in control, indicating that they have internalised ways to contribute to the interactions.

SMMSI encourages teachers and learners to share control of and assume responsibility for the learning environment/task via negotiated interaction. One of the teacher's goals is to scaffold for conceptual understanding of strategies. This involves building on learners' ability to draw on ways of knowing how to apply strategies appropriately. In this way, learners can become active contributors to the dialogue as participants in socially constructed meaning. Teachers do not withdraw support, rather they continue to be participants in the conversation, weaving understanding of the concepts with learners (Many, 2002). The purpose in conceptual scaffolding is not simply to bring learners to the point where learners are developing understandings individually and in isolation, but to facilitate learners' full participation in the social construction of meaning. So, scaffolding conceptual understanding is less reflective of a gradual withdrawal of responsibility but rather a "movement toward shared negotiation of meaning through consideration of diverse ways of knowing." (Many, 2002: 402). Through the process of conceptual scaffolding, both teachers and peers help move the learner in his/her ZPD to the point where he or she can be fully involved in the meaning construction process. Many (2002) also stresses that both the teacher and the learners continue to participate in the fabric of the conversation, co-constructing knowledge and gaining new knowledge. In fact, the goal of scaffolding in the ZPD is to foster meaningful connections between the teacher's cultural knowledge and the everyday understandings and experiences of learners (McCaslin & Hickey, 2001).

What is essential to Vygotskian perspective on ZPD is the relationship between the co-participants. The goal of structural support in the ZPD is not simply learner adoption of adult or cultural knowledge. Rather, as Yowell and Smylie (1999) (cited in McCaslin & Hickey, 2001: 237) put it, learner movement in the ZPD "represents



an emergent and imaginative understanding of concepts learned in collaboration with the adult. It means that both learners and teachers mutually regulate the ZPD; ZPD is not a top-down notion of change (McCaslin & Hickey, 2001). Both teachers and learners are involved in what McCaslin and Hickey (2001) call "co-regulation", which connotes shared responsibility. The change in learners' ZPD is the consequence of co-regulation between teachers and learners, sharing control of and responsibility for the learning environment.

Sharing of responsibility via co-regulation leads to making learners interdependent as they learn to interact to make meanings. Being interdependent, learners should be able to 'produce, clarify issues, propose solutions and make a difference to their world through their learning.' (Hall & Beggs, 1998: 33). In other words, through co-regulation learners are able to learn to develop their own voices within their social classroom contexts to negotiate their meanings interdependently. Being interdependent, learners tend to construct and reconstruct their identities as they co-construct knowledge with their teacher and peers. The learners learn to monitor and regulate their roles according to the immediate situation and audience and may switch among different sets of identities for the different roles (Paris et al., 2001). In so doing, learners are taking risks as they co-participate in the verbal communication. It is by taking such risks that learners according to Hall and Beggs (1998), can develop their own perspectives or voices through interaction and interdependence, which is what they (Hall & Beggs) view as learner autonomy. Being interdependently autonomous, according to Hall and Beggs (1998) (p.37), is "about learners taking risks as interdependent language users, as legitimate producers of language within social groups both inside and outside the classroom." SMMSI allows learners the freedom to be themselves as they assume appropriate identities/roles while co-constructing meaning interdependently.

Motivational Processes

SMMSI allows learners to develop personal beliefs that strategies are useful and necessary. A critical feature of successful training program is the positive perceptions learners develop about the strategies. They become convinced that the strategies are important, helpful, in fact, necessary for success. If learners believe that the tactics are only plausible but not required, or helpful but not efficient or economic, they may not adopt the strategies despite their awareness of how to employ them. Learners must believe that the strategies are worth additional time and effort and understand that, with practice, strategies become automated, efficient aids to problem solving (Goetz & Palmer, 1988). As learners experience success using strategies they should be able to attribute such success to those strategies. Attributing success to strategies will motivate learners to use



those strategies again in similar contexts in future tasks. Continuing motivation to use strategies is derived from prior success in using those strategies. The teacher should ensure that learners are provided with ample opportunities to reap success in strategy use. SMMSI promotes self-efficacy beliefs among learners as they have the opportunity to experience success in actual strategy practice.

SMMSI allows learners to gain confidence and feelings of self-efficacy. The teacher can help promote learners' perception of self-efficacy by making learners aware of their ability and effort via attributional feedback. Learners who are conscious of their strategic ability are most likely to feel confident in using strategies. Learners are also likely to gain confidence when they are given just enough assistance to perform a task that they are not quite capable of achieving on their own. Based on Attribution and self-regulation theory, teachers can build confidence by providing learners with a reasonable degree of control over their own learning and helping learners to recognise that learning is a direct consequence of their own efforts and effective learning strategies. Belief in self-efficacy determines the degree to which an individual will become engaged in and expend physical or mental energy in an activity (McCabe, 2003). Learners can gain confidence from what they have done well and attribute poor performance to specific problems that can be corrected (Driscoll, 1994). What is essential is that learners gain self-efficacy because it has an important influence on motivation.

SMMSI helps shape the learners into becoming critical in their thinking, that is, they are trained in meta-cognitive knowledge of strategy use. With such strategic ability the learners must have gained a high level of confidence in their self-efficacy so much so that they are motivated enough to become autonomous. Being autonomous, the learners are in control of their own learning and consequently there exists a strong likelihood that these learners are will be inclined to have their voices heard in the classroom. Also, being autonomous and self-efficacious, the learners should be able to become active co-participants in the classroom interactions. Simply, the learners are able to "hold their own" in the meaning-making process in the classroom.

SMMSI Grounded in Principles of Critical Pedagogy

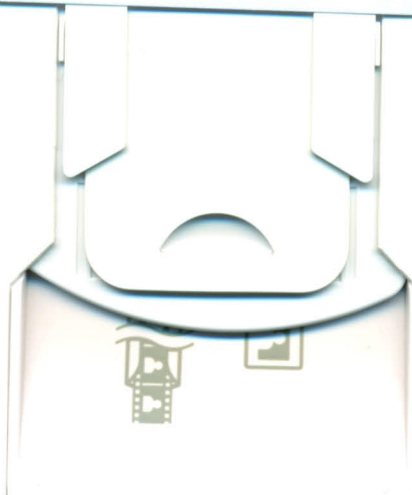
SMMSI is an attempt at incorporating elements of critical pedagogy. SMMSI recognises that what happens in the classroom will shape the learners *politically* (Degener, 1999), and for that reason, learners in SMMSI are accorded their own voice within the context of co-regulation and co-participation as they discover strategy use through SRSL in reading task. In traditional classrooms, the teacher is an authoritarian figure whose voice dominates the class, controlling what is taught, how it is taught, and how learners interact with texts and other learning



materials. SMMSI however, provides learners with strategic knowledge and the means for self-understanding which, according to Degener (1999), may guide them towards critical consciousness of discovering their own voices and hence, become epistemologically empowered. Degener (1999) continues, that when learners perceive that the teacher accepts and values their language, they begin to see that their ideas are important and do matter to the teacher and their classmates. SMMSI seeks to provide a pedagogical experience that is meaningful to the learners by encouraging active participation through dialogical communication as they co-construct strategic knowledge.

Freire (1998) (cited in Degener, 1999: 35) refers to the importance of dialogic communication between teachers and learners as one means of actively involving learners in their own education. In his view, dialogism is the cornerstone of critical education. To teach learners in a meaningful, personal way, educators must open their minds to what learners have to say. Freire (1993) writes, "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education" (p.73) (cited in Degener, 1999:35). In traditional classrooms, the teacher is the holder of the knowledge, and the learners, who are perceived as ignorant, are receptacles for this knowledge. Freire refers to this as a "banking model" of education and critiques it for its view of learners as objects of learning. To prevent their classrooms from reflecting a "banking" sensibility, educators should consciously help their learners to become active learners. (p.38) In SMMSI instruction, co-regulation and co-participation between the teacher and learners is emphasised. SMMSI stresses the significance of dialogic communication which views teachers and learners as important contributors to the learning process. SMMSI concurs with Freire's (1993) belief in a more fluid relationship between teachers and learners, so that learning goes both ways: teachers are learners and learners are teachers (cited in Degener, 1999: 35).

Within the SMMSI lesson, the teacher invites learners to contribute clues and ideas on how to use strategies effectively in real academic contexts. So, SMMSI represents a dialogical classroom, where the teacher can be seen as what Degener (1999) considers as a problem poser, encouraging learners to question existing knowledge rather than presenting subject matter as immutable and universal. It is this process of mutual inquiry that leads learners to discover their own voices. The function of SMMSI teacher is that of a critical educator shouldering the responsibility of creating a classroom environment that allows for these silenced voices to emerge through the democratic and critical discourse of dialogue. Shor (1992)(cited in Degener 1999: 41) sees dialogue as a means for changing the nature of communication between learners and teachers, which has typically been characterised by the authoritarian position of the teacher. Shor (ibid) believes that dialogue is a discourse created jointly by learners and teachers, one that questions existing knowledge.



A dialogic classroom however, is not simply about having discussions in class where everyone is allowed to share their opinion. Rather, dialogic education expects teachers to listen to their learners to learn about their problems. Teachers must not be afraid to share their own expertise. SMMSI promotes sharing ownership of strategy knowledge between the teacher and learners and vice versa. Although the nature of dialogical education requires a fluid relationship between teacher and learner, teachers have knowledge that will enable learners to broaden their understanding of issues of importance. Allowing learners to share what they know does not mean that teachers should submerge their own competency. A teacher is obliged to be an authority on his or her subject matter but should also be open to relearning what he or she knows through interaction with learners (Degener, 1999: 41). This is an element of *intersubjectivity* (Driscoll, 1994), inherent in SMMSI theoretical framework. SMMSI recognises that learner participation in decision making is an important part of the dialogical classroom. At the same time, teachers need to recognise that not all learners may be able to or want to speak up. Learners have the right to be silent.

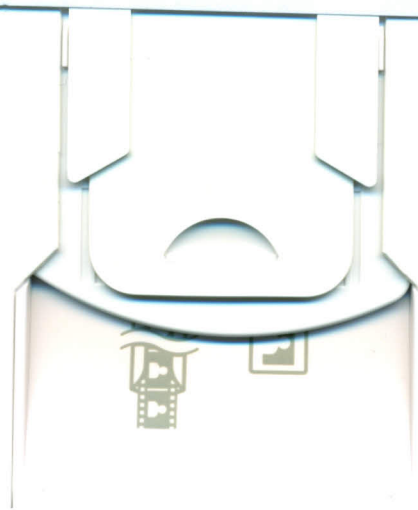
SMMSI takes into account the fact that Malaysian learners have traditionally been encouraged, through authoritarian classrooms, into devaluing their own voices; they may be resistant to sharing the power within a classroom. This is because as Degener (1999) puts it, it may be hard for the learners to let go the long-perpetuated notion that certain kinds of knowledge or ways of knowing are more highly valued. In fact, they may firmly believe that their own ways of knowing do not count. It takes time and patience on the part of SMMSI critical strategic teachers to help learners understand that their voices do count and that, in the words of Degener (1999: 42) "the canons of knowledge are merely social constructs that can be questioned and held up for examination". In this way, SMMSI lessons are transformative in that it would promote learners' acquisition of the necessary strategies and skills to help them become social critics capable of making decisions that would affect their social, political and economic realities (Degener, 1999: 44). When learners begin to recognise their ability (knowledge of strategy use) to gain access to information sources and to be able to use their own voices to name their world, and to critique and analyse their own situations, they will begin to understand that they possess the power to change their world. SMMSI is gearing learners towards that political end of becoming epistemologically empowered as their voices become heard, through efficient access to knowledge by means of powerful metacognitive knowledge. In a sense, SMMSI is moving towards the ultimate goal of critical pedagogy; the ultimate goal of critical pedagogy is achieved when educators recognise the political nature of education (Degener, 1999: 42).



Shuell (1988) states that learners who are actively and spontaneously engaging the various psychological processes necessary for learning, independent of any attempt to elicit them by the teacher, are involved in autonomous learning. To do that, learners use learning strategies on their own without or minimal guidance from the teacher (Shuell, 1988: 283). SMMSI instructs strategies and encourages learners to practise those strategies independently, thus promoting learner autonomy. Cotterall (1995) points out that the practical argument for promoting learner autonomy is quite simply that a teacher may not always be available to assist. Learners need to be able to learn on their own because they do not always have access to the kind or amount of individual instruction they need in order to become proficient in the language. Learners become more efficient in their language learning if they do not spend time waiting for the teacher to provide them with resources or solve their problems.

Learners can be taught to regulate their behaviours, and these regulatory activities enable self-monitoring and executive control of one's performance (Rivers, 2001). Executive functions consist of two types of metacognition: metacognitive self-assessment, i.e., the ability to assess one's own cognition (Paris et al., 1983; Paris, 2004) and metacognitive self-management, i.e., the ability to manage one's further cognitive development (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The parallel between the attributes of successful autonomous/self-directed learners and executive function (metacognitive self-assessment and metacognitive self-management) is clear, if one considers the descriptions of the autonomous learner as a learner who fixes objectives, defines the content and program of learning, and monitors and evaluates his or her progress towards his or her objectives. Self-managed and self-directed learning requires "...the learner to assess accurately and to manage actively his or her learning goals, behaviours, environment, and outcomes" (Rivers, 2001: 280). In other words, the main characteristic of autonomy as an approach to learning is that students take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction (Cotterall, 1995: 219).

Effective learners are characterised as being cognitively and affectively active in their learning process. They are seen as being capable of learning independently and deliberately through identification, formulation, and restructuring of goals, use of strategy planning; development and execution of plans; and engagement in self-monitoring (Wang & Peverly, 1986). That effective learners must be what Rivers (2001) describes as the expert learner, who approaches the learning task differently than the novice. Expert learners demonstrate more use than novices of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to organise input and knowledge, including a general tendency to reorganise learning tasks along deeper abstract and conceptual structures and schemata rather than along surface structure. Experts notice features and meaningful patterns of information that are not noticed by novices. Experts have varying levels of flexibility in their approaches to new



situations. In this respect, SMMSI is moving towards developing learners who are autonomously strategic in their use of strategy knowledge to become what is referred to as “the expert learner” through its strategy instruction process.

Contextual Interfaces of SMMSI in ESL Malaysian university setting: A Hypothetical Perspective

Conceptual Scaffolding refers to scaffolding episodes where both the teacher and peer-learners move the learner to the point where he or she can be fully involved in meaning making as a co-participant (Many, 2002). The realities of the Malaysian classrooms as discussed above seem to imply that implementing conceptual scaffolding might be problematic, as Malaysian learners tend to take passive role in the classroom. Most Malaysian learners might find it too difficult to engage in dialogic interaction with the teacher or even their peers largely because of their socio-cultural/socio-political backgrounds. Speaking English among Malaysian learners can lead to ridicule or resentment as Lee Su Kim's (2003a) study shows that labelling a fellow Malaysian who speaks English within interpersonal contexts, as “showing off” still does exist. While it is difficult for the teacher to change the established social norms it is possible for the teacher to influence the learners into engaging in classroom interactions. There are in fact certain aspects of the socio-political realities which can actually be exploited by the teacher to enable him/her to implement the process of scaffolding. The reverence accorded to the status of the teacher in the classroom can actually be exploited to position the teacher into introducing the conceptual scaffolding which the learners would feel obliged to get engaged in. It is plausible for the teacher to emphasise that dialogic interaction in the SMMSI classroom is an acceptable behaviour by virtue of the “teacher's authority”. The teacher can explicitly inform the learners what is expected of them and the “acceptable” behaviour in class (Syaharom Abdullah, 1993) as regards dialogic interaction. Making known to the learners the acceptable norms of interaction to which the learners are expected to adhere to in the classroom will help encourage the learners to actively engage in the classroom discourse.

The SMMSI teacher will need to convince the learners that they can actually interact, perhaps comfortably, with the “provider of knowledge” (teacher himself/herself) by portraying a non-authoritarian figure in the SMMSI session. The SMMSI teacher needs to explicitly inform Malaysian ESL learners that they should not feel insecure about interacting in English because they have the freedom to even capitalise on their non-standard varieties of English if need be. What matters is that the learners need to exploit whatever resources available (even non-standard varieties) to assist them in their interactive process of meaning making. Only through such freedom of exploiting their multi-lingual resources can Malaysian



ESL learners have the confidence to participate in the text construction process via dialogic interactions. It is possible that the learners' understandings of the text could be dynamically mediated through the use of English language including the standard and non-standard varieties. After all, the status of English language in the Outer Circle should no longer afford a hegemonic view of direct affiliation with linguistic power based in England. The hegemonic voice of the English language ought to make way for the pluralisation of voices based on the varieties of Malaysian English because being in the Outer Circle, Malaysia has the liberty to choose and decide on the type of English to use (Gill, 2002). The SMMSI teacher can engage the type of scaffolding which involves *inviting student participation*. In this type of scaffolding, learners are given opportunities to join in the process that is occurring. After the teacher has provided illustrations of some of the thinking, feelings, or actions that are needed to complete the task, the learners have opportunities to fill in pieces they know and understand using as far as possible whatever varieties of Englishes that can empower that epistemologically. A less rigid view of the kind of English used is significant in building confidence in the learners to at least wanting to speak up in the classroom without being bothered by the fear of making mistakes.

The SMMSI teacher will at all time need to respond to the learners' contributions via another type of scaffolding called *verifying and clarifying student understandings*. This involves the teacher checking the students' emerging understandings. If the emerging understandings are not reasonable, the teacher offers clarification in a non-intimidating way. In this scaffolding, learners are reminded of the need to share their understandings with their peers through giving opinions or even arguing if they need to. The teacher needs to assure the learners that they can acquire argumentation competence while yet remaining accepted within their social group by learning how to contradict politely, how to draw attention to common points of view, and how to arrive at conclusions and achieve outcomes in English (Kaur, 2002). As one of SMMSI's basic premises is incorporating elements of critical pedagogy, the learners may also be taught how to become critical readers by informing them that there is no one interpretation of the text and that one's interpretation is justified by logical arguments (Muniandy, 2002).

And, even when confusion occurs on the part of the learners, the teacher must ensure that the confusion does not lead to losing face or resentment by providing the necessary information and assuring the learners that making mistakes is part and parcel of learning to become critical thinkers. The teacher may also clarify the confusion by engaging another type of scaffolding known as *inviting students to contribute clues*. This involves the process whereby several learners contribute clues for reasoning through the confusion or problem in the spirit of a collectivistic classroom community. In this form of scaffolding, learners are encouraged to offer clues and together, the teacher and learners verbalise the process in the



form of shared ownership of meaning making. The SMMSI model is a move in the direction of a critical pedagogy as it sets out to empower learners through the use of strategy knowledge and strategic learning framework to actively value and draw upon their rich epistemological, philosophical and multicultural/lingual resources, and to look at the world through critical lens via active co-construction and co-participation processes. Most importantly, the teacher needs to acknowledge the learners' effort at co-participation as being important and useful.

Redefined Participant Roles Of Malaysian ESL Teacher and Learner In The Context of SMMSI Pedagogic Operation

The SMMSI model calls for a redefinition of the teacher's and learners' roles into assuming equal partnership in the classroom. The essence of SMMSI model lies in a dialogical relationship between learners and teachers. The SMMSI teacher and learners would together negotiate the structure of the class through conceptual scaffolding within the larger framework of intersubjectivity. This involves an understanding that learners need to see themselves as sharing equal power with the teacher as classroom participants. The teacher would need to create a safe environment where learners would feel free to express themselves even if it means using sub-varieties of English. After all, according to Shor (1992), teachers should not restrict learners from using their own language. Shor believes that non-standard learner speech must be recognised as legitimate and rule-governed dialect that is and that it should be used in tandem with Standard English, which learners need to learn (cited in Degener, 1999: 40). Embedded within SMMSI is the space for the learners to freely express their multicultural selves of even using their own non-standard varieties of English as they seek out to make meaning through negotiated interactions. The teacher ought to be consciously non-authoritarian but rather willing to learn from their learners, respecting their dreams and expectations. The learners are made to become aware that they have the autonomy to make choices and decisions regarding their learning. Such dialogic interaction via scaffolding process is possible because the structure of DE classroom procedure provides negotiation space for both the teacher and learners to assume joint responsibility in co-constructing strategy knowledge as they jointly construct the reading text. Therefore, for DE instruction to work effectively, the teacher needs to recognise the fact that his/her function is to engage as much participation from the learners suggesting that he/she will need to alter the teacher's traditional "authoritative" role, and the learners on the other hand, ought to be instilled with confidence to be willing to participate actively. In other words, the co-construction of strategy knowledge via scaffolding in the context of a social reading practice between the teacher and learners entails redefining the teacher's traditional "authoritative" role and the learners' passive "receiver" role.



Conclusion

Overall, the SMMSI model is an attempt to address as far as possible the realities of socio-cultural and socio-educational contexts in Malaysia that influence to a large extent the instructional methods, pedagogic roles and expectations in the Malaysian ESL classrooms. This is in line with a view held that

“...understanding learners’ struggles in learning the English language involves ...an awareness of how sociocultural meanings are linked in complicated ways to sociocultural identities. ...Teachers and practitioners should be aware that the classroom is not a neat, self-contained mini-society isolated from the outside world but an integral part of the larger society where the reproduction of many forms of domination and resistance based on gender, ethnicity, class, race, religion and language is a daily event (Lee Su Kim, 2003a: 10).

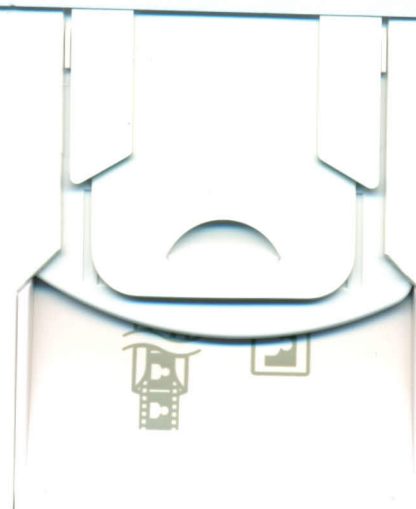
References

- Bahiyah Abdul Hamid. (1992). “Malu” – shyness and shyness behaviour in the English language classroom. *The English Teacher* 21: 97-107.
- Burbules, N.C. & Berk, R. (1999). Critical thinking and critical pedagogy: relations, differences, and limits. In T.S. Popkewitz & L. Fendler. (eds). *Critical theories in education: changing terrains of knowledge and politics*, pp. 45-65. New York: Routledge.
- Cotterall, S. (1995). Developing a course strategy for learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*. 49(3): 219-226.
- Degener, S.C. (1999). Making sense of critical pedagogy in adult literacy education. *The annual review of adult learning and literacy*. 2: 26-62.
- Driscoll, M.P. (1994). *Psychology of learning for instruction*. 2nd Ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Goetz, E.T. & Palmer, D.J. (1988). Selection and use of study strategies: the role of the studier’s beliefs about self and strategies. In: Weinstein, C.E., Goetz, E.T. & Alexander, P.A. (eds). *Learning and study strategies: issues in assessment, instruction, and evaluation*, pp. 41-57. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Halls, D. & Beggs, E. (1998). Defining Learner Autonomy. In W.A. Renandya & G. M. Jacobs. (eds). *Learners and Language Learning: Anthology Series 39*, pp. 26-39. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Hogan, K. & Pressley, M. (eds). (1997). *Scaffolding student learning*. Canada: Brookline Books.
- Kaur, M. (2001). Creating critical discourse awareness: classroom to workplace. In Koo Yew Lie. (ed). *Voices and discourses: mediating spaces – a festschrift to honour Prof Madya Dr. Harriet Wong*. pp. 30-40. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Bahasa.

- Kirkbride, P.S, Sara F.Y Tang and Shae Wan Chaw .(1989). The transferability of management training and development: the case of Hong Kong. *Asia Pacific Human Resource Management*. 27 (1): 7-19
- Koo Y.L. (2005). Pluriliteracy in diverse contexts; literacy practices around pluralistic texts. In Ambigapathy Pandian, Muhammad Kabarul Kabilan, Sarjit Kaur. (eds). *Teachers, Practices and Supportive Cultures*. (pp. 226-236). Universiti Putra Malaysia Press: Serdang, Malaysia.
- Koo Y.L. (2005). Language, Education and Society in Changing Times: paradoxes, tensions and challenges. *3L Journal of Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*. Vol. 10: 1 – 7. Centre of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,
- Koo Y. L. (2004). Multicultural meaning-makers in the 21st century: the case of Malaysian ways with words and with the world. In P. Kell, M. Singh & S. Shore. (eds) *Higher Education @ 21st Century: Global futures in theory and practice*, pp. 55-75. New York: Peter Lang
- Koo Y.L. (2004). The Sociopolitical Contexts of Language Teaching, linguistics and literature: exploring the third spaces of meaning in language learning and language use. *3L Journal of Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*. Vol. 9: 1 -11. Centre of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, .
- Koo Y.L.(2003). Asian Pacific Perspectives: challenges and issues in multicultural/lingual contexts. *3L Journal of Language Teaching, Linguistics and Literature*. Vol. 8: 1 – 7. Centre of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.,
- Koo Yew Lie. (2003). Sociocultural literacy of multilingual/cultural Malaysian learners. In A. Pandian, G. Chakravathy & P. Kell (eds). *New times, new practices, new literacies*, pp. 60-77. Serdang: Universiti Putra Press.
- Lee Su Kim. (2003a). Exploring the relationship between language, culture and identity. *GEMA*. 2003 Issue: 1-13.
- Lee Su Kim. (2003b). Language of empowerment. *New Sunday Times*, 9 November: 2003: 3.
- Lee Su Kim, Koo Yew Lie & Thang Siew Ming. (2003). Investigating learner characteristics in the design of an online ESP programme: learner readiness, identity and literacy in changing contexts. Paper Proceedings: SOLLS Conference 2003 at Putrajaya. pp. 1-20.
- Mayer, R.E. & Wittrock, M.C. (1996). Problem-solving transfer. In D.C. Berliner & R.C. Calfee. (eds). *Handbook of educational psychology*, pp. 47-62. USA: MacMillan.
- Many, J.E. (2002). An exhibition and analysis of verbal tapestries: Understanding how scaffolding is woven into the fabric of instructional conversations. *Reading Research Quarterly*. 37(4): 376-407.
- McCabe, P.P. (2003). Enhancing self-efficacy for high-stakes reading tests. *The Reading Teacher*. 57(1): 12-20.



- McCaslin, M. & Hickey, D.T.(2001). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: A Vygotskian View. In B.J. Zimmerman & D. Schunk. (eds). *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: theoretical perspectives*, pp. 227-252. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mokhtari, K. & Reichard, C.A. (2002). Assessing students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 94(2): 249-259.
- Muniandy, A.V. (2001). Developing Malaysian learners' critical awareness. In Koo Yew Lie. (ed). *Voices and discourses: Mediating spaces – A festschrift to honour Prof Madya Dr. Harriet Wong*. pp. 41-50. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Bahasa.
- Paris, S.G. (2004). Principles of self-regulated learning for teachers. In Jessie Ee et al. (eds) *Thinking about thinking*, pp. 88-107. Singapore: McGraw Hill.
- Paris, S.G., Lipson, M.Y., and Wixson, K.K. (1983). Becoming a strategic reader. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 8: 293-316.
- Paris, S.G., Byrnes, J.P. & Paris A.H. (2001). Constructing theories, identities, and actions of self-regulated learners. In B.J. Zimmerman & D.Schunk. (eds). *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: theoretical perspectives*, pp. 253-288. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Palincsar, A.S. & Brown, A. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction*. 1: 117-175.
- Philip, B. (2005). Towards a social, motivational, metacognitive strategy instruction model: Theory and practice, Unpublished PhD Thesis. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
- Pressley, M. & McCormick, C. (1995). *Cognition, teaching and assessment*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Rivers, W.P. (2001). Autonomy at all costs: an ethnography of metacognitive self-assessment and self-management among experienced language learners. *The Modern Language Journal*. 85(ii): 279-290.
- Syaharom Abdullah. (1993). "Pseudo" classroom indiscipline. In Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid & Gaudart, H. (eds). *Towards more effective learning & teaching of English: Proceedings second international conference*, pp. 53-58. Malaysia: MELTA.
- Shuell, T.J. (1988). The role of the student in learning from instruction. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 13: 276-295.
- Schunk, D.H. (2000). *Learning theories: an educational perspective*. 3rd Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Umadevi, S. (2001). The silence in classroom and what it means. *Language Reporter*. 2001 Issue: 13-34.
- Walczyk, J.J. (2000). The interplay between automatic and control processes in reading. *Reading Research Quarterly* 35 (4): 554-566.



- Wang, M.C., & Peeverly, S.T. (1986). The self-instructive process in classroom learning contexts. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 11: 370-404.
- Winograd, P. & Hare, V.C. (1988). Direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies: The nature of teacher explanation. In C.E. Weinstein et. al. (eds). *Learning and study strategies*, pp. 121-137. California: Academic Press Inc.

