

CLA Faculty Research Updates: Abstracts and Presentations



March 2021 Faculty Updates

Abstract of the paper published in the Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice.

Class Discussion and Class Participation: Determination of Their Relationship

Authors: Leah Li Echiverri, Shang Haoyu, Xu Keer

Class discussion as an instructional strategy is placed at the heart of the classroom learning experiences to elicit active student participation. Convenience sampling of 105 undergraduates, majority of which are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners at Wenzhou Kean University (WKU) in China, participated in this descriptive correlational online survey. Findings showed a strong and positive relationship between class discussion and class participation. When there is enough time given for a group of three to five students to discuss general and creative topics on discussion questions given by instructors, the students are more confident to actively participate in class.

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Conference Presentations:

Here are abstracts of three conference paper publications presented last Spring 2020 during the 6th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'20) in

Valencia, Spain. The DOI numbers are provided for those interested to read the full research paper.

Classroom Learning Motivators: Breaking ESL Chinese University Students' Passivity in Class Discussion

Author: Leah Li Echiverri

ABSTRACT:

Chinese university students enrolled in overseas coursework and English as Medium of Instruction courses domestically have a reputation for classroom passivity as recognized internationally. Thus, the case study was employed to explore Wenzhou Kean University (WKU) students' 'willingness to communicate' based on motivation and attitude toward the classroom learning milieu. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used in the semi-structured interview of 75 informants during the focus group discussion. Thematic content analysis method was used to analyze qualitative data collected. Grounded theory was used for the generation of theories. Findings showed that ESL Chinese university students are motivated because of knowledge acquisition and English spoken ability improvement when they engage in class discussion. A relaxing classroom climate, instructor's personality and professional competence in designing the learning experiences contribute in shaping favorable learning attitudes necessary for active student participation in class discussion. Most WKU students intend to pursue graduate studies abroad and considers English speaking ability important in their future and career goals. This belief persistently motivates them to engage in class discussion. Besides, thinking skills development, self-confidence enhancement, leadership skills, team working and adaptability to new environment development heighten the importance of class discussion.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4995/HEAd20.2020.11098>

Relationships Between External Factors and University Students' Attitudes towards Academic Research

Authors: Leah Li Echiverri, Jiyang Yang, Feng Tang

ABSTRACT:

Research is an important part of an academic career, yet it is not always frequently practiced by most students. This descriptive-correlational research aimed to find out the external factors that influence students' attitudes toward research. The researchers sampled 201 undergraduates at Wenzhou-Kean University and analyzed their responses to the questionnaire in order to determine the relationship between possible factors and their attitudes. The results revealed that the external factor of the training environment has a

moderate positive influence on research attitude, while support from the university has a strong positive influence on research attitude. Specifically, factors of faculty support, curriculum design, on-campus academic activities, library service, and financial support all moderately influence students' attitudes towards research in a positive way. The most salient influential factor of all is faculty support. The results suggested that to improve students' attitudes towards research, sufficient support is vital, especially academic and financial support. Therefore, to externally encourage students to conduct academic research, faculty and university could give more consideration to support provision.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4995/HEAd20.2020.11123>

Factors That Shape University Students' Attitudes Towards Academic Research

Authors: Leah Li Echiverri, Wanghan Chen, Xinyi Wang

ABSTRACT:

Students almost always hold different attitudes toward academic research. In order to describe that phenomenon and find out the factors which affected and caused students' different attitudes toward academic research, the researchers investigated Wenzhou-Kean University (WKU) students' attitudes towards the support from the university, research training environment, and their future academic career directions. This descriptive-quantitative study also considered students' attitudes as a variable to measure respondents' understanding and knowledge of academic research, and personal experiences. The sample size of 227 undergraduates represented the cross sectional respondents of the four colleges. Based on data collected by online questionnaires, results showed that most WKU students held positive attitudes toward academic research and are aware of its significance. WKU students did not have enough personal experiences in undertaking research studies. Generally, WKU students realized and acknowledged the significance of academic research in cultivating their inquiry mind and gain better understanding of the research course content. All of the three factors could affect students' attitudes and motivations toward academic research. Faculty mentoring in the research training environment has the strongest influence while on-campus related activities in the support from the university has the lightest influence on WKU undergraduates' attitudes towards research.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4995/HEAd20.2020.11175>

L3 Distance Learning: Emotions and Projects

by Celine Doucet and Joaquin Lopez

We are working on a few different projects in order to enhance positive emotions while learning a foreign language.

As a way to start to disseminate our findings, and engage with other academics in the field, we presented a paper “L3 distance learning: what impacts on emotions and motivation Chinese-speaking university students” via Zoom in a conference at the National Institute of Languages and Eastern Civilizations (Sorbonne-Paris) in November 2020, and we are currently writing a peer-review article for publication for them.

Moreover, the following research is going to be presented in Zagreb (accepted for 2021, but postponed due to Covid-19) at the 12th International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism in November 2022.

ABSTRACT:

How pair-work activities influence positive emotions in Chinese university students learning a L3

Learning a new foreign language is always a new adventure, even if it is within the phenomenon of third language (L3) acquisition. The L3 learning process can be influenced by many factors such as identity's learner, the role of the L2, personal language aptitude, motivation and emotions among many other variables.

Teaching a L3 by using Western communicative and active approaches to Chinese university students could clash with the traditional Chinese setting and may produce negative emotions when engaging with their L3 learning process. Consequently, these negative emotions could impact on the learners' emotional baggage of motivation (Arnold, 2011; Dewaele e & Thirtle, 2009). We found that it is important to adapt our ways of instruction to regulate L3 learners' emotions in class to improve their engagement, achievement and well-being.

This paper will focus on how the pair-work activities set up in class produced relevant positive learning outcomes and impacts on learners' positive emotions in their L3 learning. We introduced some pair-work activities in L3 classes in order to contribute to the student's positive psychology and to support them experimenting with what Dewaele & MacIntyre (2016) call Foreign Language Enjoyment. Specifically, we focus on the emotional intelligence of third-language acquisition research in our Spanish and French classes at a beginner's level. Our action-research took place in Wenzhou-Kean University, a Chinese-American higher-education institution, located in China. Qualitative data were collected through 140 questionnaires and over 50 semi-structured interviews over a period of one year. The results of this ongoing study are discussed in relation to prior significant discoveries as well as their conceptual and practical inferences for L3 teaching and learning in China.

Chua, J., Krishnamoorthy, S., and Li, H. (2020, Dec. 19). **Visualizing the Current Study Abroad Market for Chinese Students: data analysis from a pilot study** [Conference session]. Academia-Industry Consortium for Data Science at Wenzhou-Kean University, Wenzhou, Zhejiang, China.

ABSTRACT:

Prior to Covid-19, Chinese students spent US\$30 billion on overseas tuition fees but the pandemic is unlikely to dampen future demand for international education (Wang, Oct. 31, 2020). However, while China sends more students abroad than any other nation (Qi, Wang, & Dai, Sept. 25, 2020), this market's current landscape and its associated data are insufficiently studied. This short paper outlines the scope of a study using primarily data from www.mygoodagency.com, a newly launched free platform for Chinese students to share and get information about global education. Currently, in a soft launch pilot phase, the platform aims to help students in their application process while we simultaneously gather and study data related to students' destination choices, concerns, and use of educational agencies. Two sources of data from the platform appear promising. Firstly, all registered users are asked to complete a questionnaire surveying their intentions, education background, as well as services required from, satisfaction with, and fees paid to agencies. Secondly, users can post questions and replies in our forums comprising 100 plus topics. With nearly 5000 questions and replies in the forums, we are using content analysis software to generate a word frequency count to evaluate what issues are of importance to users. Preliminary data suggest changing trends of interest to educators, agencies, and students. For example, there is almost two times more discussion about IELTS than TOEFL, the test of English proficiency used in the US. There is evidence of increasing interest in pursuing further studies in the greater China area and Asia in general, including in Hong Kong and Singapore. Regardless of the destination, 67.43% of respondents said they would pay substantial sums, sometimes in excess of US\$23,000 to agencies for services such as writing application essays, securing internships, and selecting schools. The success of this pilot study will allow us to spread the platform's use across China, to support the continuing high demand for tertiary education, and help Chinese students make informed decisions.

Chua, J. (2020, Oct. 17). **FGM in one of the world's richest countries**. In T. von Gleichen (Chair), Democracy, populism, coronavirus & enduring patriarchal traditions [Panel presentation], King's College London Symposium (online).

ABSTRACT:

FGM is seldom discussed openly in Singapore, even among survivors and there has been insufficient research done there. Part field research and part autoethnography, this paper narrates my return to my native Singapore to conduct this investigation. It began with

hearing about unsubstantiated claims British citizens took daughters to Singapore to get cut. It led to me co-organizing Singapore's first FGM conference with the NGO AWARE (Association of Women for Action & Research). My investigations included recording undercover videos of medical personnel who offered to cut my imaginary daughter. The cost of this cutting, which appears to be Type 1 or Type 1A (as classified by WHO), was around US\$12. When I presented this video to the British High Commission in Singapore, they were concerned about the possibility that British citizens went there to cut their daughters. However, they admitted they wouldn't persuade the Singapore government to outlaw the practice. I conducted the first-ever survey of FGM among Singapore's Muslim women. Results of 119 women surveyed show that 85 of these women are FGM survivors. 25% of survivors support continuing the cutting tradition with their daughters. However, several survivors I interviewed disagreed with FGM. One interviewee reported that the Islamic Council supports the cutting of females. While Muslims are a minority in Singapore, the government funds the Islamic Council and also appoints the national Mufti who issues fatwas. Until 2014, the Islamic Council advocated for FGM on its website. They have since removed this proclamation.

Editing and Layout by Dr. Erin Schwartz