Towards a Holistic Curriculum:
Program Cohesion and the Enhancement of the Student Experience

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In this essay I hope to explain the design of an integrated first year English listening and speaking curriculum. The two courses display a parallel design, and I hope to provide a context for this coordinated program. I will also present the results of an evaluation regarding the level of student satisfaction surrounding this curriculum design. Finally I will consider this curriculum in terms of Kolbs' learning cycle, and the role of Experiential Learning Theory.

The Cohesive Design of the Curriculum.

The integrated curriculum consists of two courses; two listening classes and three speaking classes which are currently being run at a Womens' University in Japan. These classes run for fifteen weeks during the first term, and fifteen weeks during the second term. The listening classes are divided into classes 1a and 1b during the first term, and classes 2a and 2b during the second term and these are taught by two part-time teachers. The speaking classes are divided into classes 1a, 1b and 1c in the first term and classes 2a, 2b, and 2c during the second term. These classes are taught by one full-time faculty member (myself) and three other part-time teachers. The two have been coordinated in such a way that the syllabi of the speaking classes follow the units from the textbook used in the listening class (see figure 1). This listening class textbook, *NorthStar 2, Listening and Speaking*, was selected after having trialled a higher level textbook (*NorthStar 3, Listening and Speaking)* during the previous academic year (2016–2017). This trial was to determine whether the level of the textbook was suitable for the students. This higher level book was in fact rejected as being too difficult, and the current textbook was selected after consultation with those teachers who were using the book. During the year in which the higher level textbook was used, the speaking classes were not combined with the listening classes as any problems which may have occurred with the use of the listening textbook would potentially have negatively influenced the speaking classes. Consequently, as determined by the results of student satisfaction questionnaires, the introduction of the lower level listening textbook was not seen to have had any significant negative impact on the speaking classes. The evaluation of the combined listening and speaking classes took place at the end of the academic year of 2018–2019. These integrated courses, the listening and speaking course, are both compulsory communication courses and the students for each course are selected from the student registration list based on the order in which they appear on this list (e.g. 1–15, 16–32, 33–55). Within the syllabi themselves (the listening classes' syllabi, and the speaking class' syllabi), there are classes which have been designated as 'teacher defined classes'; this is to give the individual teachers some element of control over what and how they teach, and each teacher can in-

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troduce materials or ideas of their own choosing. In addition, the speaking classes do not have textbooks and the content of the class is decided by the individual teacher based on the corresponding theme of the unit in the listening class textbook. The underlying rationale for this parallel design is that the teachers and students are given an opportunity to recycle vocabulary, ideas and concepts from the textbook of the listening classes into the speaking classes, and vice versa[1].

Setting the stage:
**　　Instructional Program Coherence and Capacity Building, A Holistic Endeavour.**

A simple question for educators to ask themselves is: *why do we have educational curricula and classroom syllabi?* The answer for many is so that we can effectively teach our students, and improve the learning of those students. The ultimate aim of improvement in this respect is that it makes a difference to the quality of students' lives and that it is more about just 'doing the right things' (Stoll, 2009). Newman et al. (2001) note that in many cases educational reforms may actually fail to improve student achievement if they fail to strengthen the role of program coherence within schools. The authors of this study define program coherence in a broad sense that is part of an integrated curriculum, which provides a set of interrelated programs for students and staff so that they, 'are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and that are pursued over a sustained period' (Newman et al., 2001).

The study of Newman et al. looked at elementary schools in Chicago and found that there were greater achievement gains where there were more coherent instructional programs. The authors however offer a caveat and suggest that the achievement of instructional program coherence is not necessarily an easy task, and that there are external governmental factors (within the US education system of this study) which can undermine instructional program coherence. The authors also note that there are factors within schools which may limit the role of program coherence and note that where staff are divided among various initiatives, and spend a great deal of time and energy in multiple workshops meetings and conferences, that the desired improvements in student achievement gains fail to materialise and that there can be a situation of "professional fatigue and frustration". The authors also suggest that where professional frustrate exists that teachers may be caught in a cycle of wanting more effective teaching, but that they are located in a large and fragmented circuit of school improvement activity.

1　Prior to the integration of these two courses, (the listening course and the speaking course), there had been no integration between the communication classes. The EFL communication classes which are listening classes, speaking classes, writing classes and reading classes had previously all been taught as separate entities.

Figure 1.　The Listening Classes and the Speaking Classes Syllabi.

2018-2019 TERMS 1-2	2018-2019 TERMS 1-2
1st year listening classes NORTHSTAR BOOK 2	1ST year speaking classes (No Textbook)
1．UNIT 1 Work	1．Work
2．UNIT 1 Work	2．Work
3．UNIT 1 Work	3．Work
4．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS	4．TEACHER DEFINEDCLASS
5．UNIT 2 Student Life	5．Student Life
6．UNIT 2 Student life	6．Student Life
7．UNIT 2 Student Life	7．Student Life
8．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS	8．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS
9．UNIT 3 Money	9．Money
10．UNIT 3 Money	10．Money
11．UNIT 3 Money	11．Money
12．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS	12．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS
13．UNIT 4 Etiquette	13．Etiquette
14．UNIT 4 Etiquette	14．Etiquette
15．UNIT 4 Etiquette	15．Etiquette
16．UNIT 5 Food	16．Food
17．UNIT 5 Food	17．Food
18．UNIT 5 Food	18．Food
19．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS	19．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS
20．UNIT 6 Heroes	20．Heroes
21．UNIT 6 Heroes	21．Heroes
22．UNIT 6 Heroes	22．Heroes
23．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS	23．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS
24．UNIT 7 Health	24．Health
25．UNIT 7 Health	25．Health
26．UNIT 7 Health	26．Health
27．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS	27．TEACHER DEFINED CLASS
28．UNIT 8 Endangered Cultures	28．Endangered Culture
29．UNIT 8 Endangered Cultures	29．Endangered Cultures
30．Unit 8 Endangered Cultures	30．Endangered Cultures

The study by Newman et al. (2001) indicates that a commitment to the improvement of learning by an educational institution is a complicated process and as Louise Stoll (2009) suggests, program coherence as part of a larger holistic network requires a cultural commitment from *within* the educational institution and, from *outside* of the educational institution. In other words, in order to enhance student learning outcomes there needs to be a strengthening of the school's capacity for the management of *change*. As Stoll sees it, the management of such change is the building of student capacity and this ʻcapacity building' is part of an interconnected ʻholistic' system that has the power to sustain the continuous

learning of teachers, and the school itself *for the purpose of enhancing student learning.* This enhancement of student learning should be taken as the single most important factor underlying the design of these integrated listening and speaking courses, and also of all the research and ideas mentioned in this particular study. Capacity building as a holistic enterprise therefore includes those internally and those supporting them externally who are policymakers in a process which is:

・Creating and maintaining the necessary conditions, culture and structure
・Facilitating learning and skill-orientated experiences and opportunities:
・Ensuring interrelationships and synergy between all the component parts
                                                      (Stone and Bonham, 2005 cited in Stoll, 2009).
The role of policy makers in the role of student learning cannot be overstated enough and the role of leadership in education will be considered in the next section (See Biddle 2019).

Leadership for Learning

Alma Harris has noted that the focus of educational reforms have recently been largely on a relationship between leadership, and school improvement (Harris, 2004). Furthermore an important review of the literature (Leithwood et al., 2004) has noted that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all other school-related factors that contribute to what students actually learn in school.

Effective leaders can have an influence on the effectiveness of the school and the achievement of students, and the enhancement of knowledge creation. Krogh et al. (cited in Harris, 2009) suggest that knowledge creation is most effective when it is supported and maintained by communities based on social processes where individuals collaborate and work together. Harris also tells us that in the search for effectiveness and achievement, leadership practices in schools can be 'reconfigured and reconceptualized' (Harris, 2004). Notwithstanding, it is certainly the case that leadership models vary significantly and, there are a variety of leadership models which can be applied to the idea of educational leadership. A particular model that has gained a considerable amount of attention and which regards 'capacity building' as a means of sustaining school improvement is a model of leadership known as 'distributed leadership'. From the perspective of a distributed leadership model traditional leadership is seen to reside in the hands of one or a few powerful people who determine the vison of an institution. In contrast to this approach a distributed leadership model regards leadership as something which has 'emergent properties', (Woods et al., 2004) arising from the sum of the individuals involved in the process. Individuals have expertise, and this expertise is seen to exist at all levels of participation in the educational institution and, within all participants in the educational institution. By accepting that all of the stakeholders have a leadership role, (and this role can include the vision and understanding of both part-time teachers *and* students within the institution), Leithwood and Riehl note 'that teacher leaders can help other teachers to embrace goals, to understand the changes that are needed to strengthen teaching and learning and work towards improvement' (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, cited in Harris, 2004). An important construct in the effectiveness of the distributed leadership model is that it relies on the use of a distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995) which can have a potentially positive and beneficial effect on the process of distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2009, a & b). Whereas formal leadership implies

an underutilization of members in a scenario in which there is a leader and a cast of players, distributed leadership implies that the increased utilization of its members is a valid idea as it will optimize the use of an implicit cognitive knowledge and the expertise of those involved in the educational process (i.e.‘the system’). Distributed cognition asserts that the mind is ‘out there’ in the world, as opposed to the world, being ‘in’ the mind. Consequently, the necessary knowledge and cognition for task enactment does not exist solely within a limited group of people, but rather this knowledge and cognition is inextricably distributed across the objects, individuals, artefacts, and tools of the social environment (David, 2007). Distributed cognition as a function of the actors’ own pasts, and the groups and institutions to which they belong can significantly enhance the decision making process at the level of task enactment. Distributed leadership is therefore more than the delegation of duties to a larger number of members, it actively recognises and values the cognitive result of the interactions of school leaders, followers and their situation (Spillane et al., 2004, 2006, and 2009). In this manner, the efficiency of the organisation can be necessarily increased to improve the learning of the students, (Woods et al. 2004). Efficiency for an educational institution is a product of organizational, planned and concertive action with the explicit aim of improving the educational establishment.

The distributed leadership net can be thrown wide and as the number of potential stakeholders involved in the leadership process increases, so do the number of people involved. This ‘reaching out’ to all the participants may be met by the resistance by certain members of an educational institution and an experienced school principal (Hadden, 2019) tells us that school principals who are committed to building capacity among their staff will use strategies that are designed to invite participation, embrace diversity and focus conflict even though certain dominant leaders (or type A personalities) may view democracy in their school as a threat to their own status and power. However, he further tells us that,

> ‘it is precisely the skills of serving, facilitating and sharing that characterize leadership that is conducive to shaping a positive school culture where the potential of all is realized and stretched’…. Effective leadership involves identifying goals and the means to achieving them—it is not the exercise of power. In fact, we often hold democracy as the keystone to successful classrooms. The notion of the teacher as the sage on the stage has long been rejected in favour of the teacher as guide on the side; that is, the teacher encourages an enquiry-driven classroom (Hadden, 2019).

Hadden is I believe suggesting that the democratic vision of a culture of learning in an educational department or institution translates into the empowerment of the teaching staff, and consequently of the students in their classes.

An important point to note is that even though the distributed leadership model extends to an awareness of the dangers of what Gronn (2009) calls ‘normativism’, (an approach which advocates the supreme validity of a particular leadership model, and which serves no purpose except to perpetuate hyperbole), effective distributed leadership should be a function of ‘hybridity’. There are situations which sometimes demand leadership which should be distributed, and situations which require a more focused,

i.e. top-down approach. Distributed leadership should not be seen as an alternative to traditional models of leadership but rather as part of an emerging and developing fluidity which should incorporate both the traditional 'focused' approach to leadership and the non-focused forms of leadership, in order to achieve the best possible school outcomes. Harris and others have however noted that we cannot have distributed leaders without distributed followers (Harris, 2008). The distributed leadership model, as proposed by Spillane and Diamond (2007) acknowledges that in addition to a leadership-plus aspect (the use of best educational policies achieved through collective association) that we need to critically analyse the day-to-day practices of leadership within our educational institutions. McBeth offers a framework for leadership practice and improvement which is premised on four centrally reflective questions; 'Do our leadership practices meet the needs of their intended purposes?', 'How do we know? 'What am I (are we) going to do about it?', and 'Did the implemented practice enhance and change teachers' practice?' The answers to these reflective questions need to be determined *empirically* by asking the institutional stakeholders, including staff members and students, and by gathering as much data about the current leadership practises as possible. The accumulation of this information forms part of an 'information cycle', the first cycle of three in McBeth's framework. The other two cycles are 'the practice cycle', and 'the infinity of practice cycle'. The information cycle forms the underlying basis for practices which are to be deployed by later design in the practice cycle and the practice cycle is used developing new strategies and ideas for a final rollout. The infinity of practice cycle McBeth suggests, is seen to be the real test of the worth of an institution as it is the extent to which schools continually revisit their practices and this is a measure of successful leadership.

McBeth's approach emphasises the analysis of leadership practices as part of a continually cyclical process and that it is a data driven approach to reflection and leadership. With this empirical approach in mind an evaluation of the listening and speaking courses, the focus of this study was administered. The results of which can be seen in the next section.

The Listening and Speaking Curricula: Evaluation

Final Results: (N = 55 speaking class students)	YES	NO	Chi-square $p = .05$
1. Are you **happy with the same** NORTHSTAR topics in the listening and speaking classes?	43 (78.1%)	12 (21.8%)	X^2 (1, N=55) =17.47 (p=.000), p<0.05.
2. Would you prefer to have **different topics** in the listening and speaking classes?	19 (34.5%)	36 (65.4%)	X^2 (1, N=55) =5.22 (p=.022), p<0.05.
3. Would you like to have **writing classes** with the **same topics** and ideas as the listening and speaking classes?	21 (38.1%)	34 (61.9%)	X^2 (1, N=55) =3.07 (p=.080), p>0.05.

Discussion

This evaluation of the validity of the program coherence which exists between the listening classes and the speaking classes was an initial inquiry to establish whether this program was an acceptable idea for the students, or not. It was an 'information gathering' exercise, and the first stage in McBeths' empirical cycle. In the event that the students would not have been satisfied with the introduction of this new approach to curriculum design the possibility of reverting back to the original design of the communication classes as distinct entities, and discontinuing the approach, would have been a very real possibility (modifications to the design would also have been a possibility). Fortunately, as is apparent from the overall results, there was a high degree of acceptance by the students for the combined listening and speaking classes. The first question, 'Are you happy with the same NORTHSTAR topics in the listening and speaking classes?' produced a majority 'Yes' response (78.1%) or a significant majority and a minority 'No' response (21.8%). Chi Square analysis[2] indicated the relationship of these variables was significant, X^2 (1, N＝55) ＝17.47, (p＝.000), p＜0.05. This would indicate that the students are gaining some benefit from the similarity of the topics. What that benefit may be is not clear at this point, and it can be assumed that there are benefits to be gained from the repeated use of vocabulary and the concept reinforcement that occurs between the two classes.

The second question, 'Would you prefer to have different topics in the listening and speaking classes?' was essentially to reinforce the responses to the first question, and a majority of the students (65.4%) replied that they *would not* prefer to have different topics in the listening and speaking classes and a minority of (34.5%) replied that they *would* prefer to have different topics between these classes. Once again indication of a significant level of satisfaction with the courses. Chi Square analysis indicated the relationship between these frequencies were significantly different, X^2 (1, N＝55)＝5.22 (p＝.022), p＜0.05.

The third question, 'Would you like to have writing classes with the same topics and ideas as the listening and speaking classes?' was asked to determine whether the next planned stage in the curriculum, the introduction of parallel writing classes using the same topics as the listening and speaking classes, might be a good idea, or not. Surprisingly the majority of the students (61.9%) indicated that they were not in favour of having writing classes with the same topics as the listening and speaking classes with a minority (38.1%) indicating an interest in keeping the same topics, X^2 (1, N＝55)＝3.07 (p＝.080), p＞0.05. Initial thoughts suggest that the students may prefer to have new topics to write about as they may consider it boring to rehearse the same topics and ideas once again. It may be possible in the future to develop integrated writing courses which integrate with the listening and speaking classes in ways which are not overtly topic orientated, and consultation with the staff and students involved in the process will hopefully produce a resolution. These can be investigated during the practice cycle of the program. What kind of writing classes the students are interested in, needs to be established.

2　I am indebted to H. Iimura sensei for his assistance with these statistics.

Clearly, there is room for more analysis of these listening and speaking courses and we need to develop practices which help the students in these classes. If it is the case that students are recycling vocabulary and ideas then what strategies do the students employ, or what activities do the teachers use to achieve this vocabulary goal? As part of a cyclical process it is perfectly reasonable to re-visit these classes and to further determine how and the efficacy can further be developed. Notwithstanding we can assume that it is possible to understand in general terms the way in which learning that is taking place in the class and this understanding can be realised through the work of Kolb and others, and through the principles of experiential learning theory. The approach of experiential learning theory will be discussed next.

Learner-Centred Education

The principles employed by Kolb et al. derive from among others the classical humanistic tradition inspired by Carl Rogers and his client-centred approach towards psychotherapy and counselling, (e.g. Rogers, 2003). The experiential learning model aims to emulate the principles of Rogers' client-centred approach in the creation of freedom as an autonomous approach to self-regulated learning. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) emphasises the Rogerian triangle of trust (genuineness), empathy (an understanding of the students' learning processes) and unconditional positive regard, (a non-judgemental respect for students). This approach is characterised by nondirective teaching which encourages the development of critical thinking. Experiential Learning Theory also focuses on creating learning spaces where learners have ownership and control over the learning process, and learn with and from, each other. ELT requires teachers therefore to create learning spaces in which discovery takes place, and an initial curiosity is satisfied by the environment of the classroom.

Experiential Learning Theory

The fact that students are attending parallel listening and speaking classes means that they are undoubtedly experiencing for themselves what happens in both of these classes. The nature of this subjective experience is explained by Kolb et al. so that we as educators may understand the learning process of the students in our classes. The theory of experiential learning is of particular relevance to these listening and speaking classes as Kolb and Kolb (2017) note, conversation is one of the most common forms of experiential learning. During a 'conversational learning cycle' the act of conversation involves individual cycles of learning which are integrated with the exchange of speaking and listening. When listening we experience the other and reflect on what they say, and when speaking we think and formulate intentions and ideas in order to respond. This experiential approach to understanding learning is also of particular relevance as it revolves around the dialectical nature of learning through the resolution of various contrasting poles of existence. The listening and speaking classes' cohesive design means that the classes can be viewed as in a dialectical relationship to each other by virtue of the integrated experiences which occur in the two combined classes, and because these two integrated classes can become a 'learning space'.

Experiential Learning Theory: Kolb's Learning Cycle

The Experiential Learning Theory is "a holistic model of the learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow and develop. The theory is called 'experiential learning' to emphasise the central role experience plays in the learning process' (Baker, Jensen and Kolb, 2002).

Concrete Experience
(doing / having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning / trying out what you have learned)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing / reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
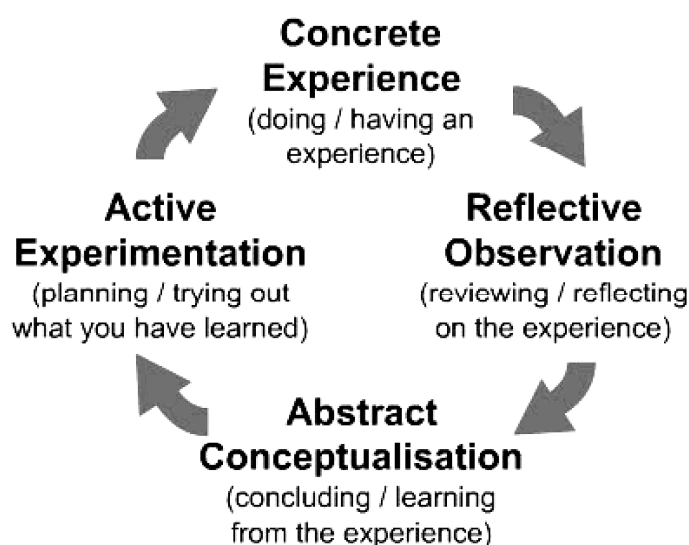(concluding / learning from the experience)

Figure 2. Source: Simply Psychology

The ELT model as premised on the work of Kolb and others (e.g. Kolb and Goldman, 1973) is often referred to as Kolb's Learning cycle, (see figure 2). The model consists of two dialectically related modes of experience: **grasping experience** and **transforming experience. Grasping experience** requires processes of apprehension (concrete experience) and comprehension (abstract conceptualization) while **transforming experience** requires learners to have intension (reflective observation) and extension (active experimentation). Learning requires individuals to actively resolve abilities that are polar opposites and a learner must choose which set of abilities he or she will use in a specific learning situation. The model also accounts for individual learning differences in that when grasping experience, some learners perceive information through concrete tactile qualities relying on sensory observations whereas others tend to grasp knowledge through symbolic representations or abstract conceptualization. Similarly, when transforming experience some learners tend to carefully observe others who are involved in the experiences and reflect on what happens while some may choose to immerse themselves within the experience and start doing things (Kolb and Goldman, 1973, Baker, Jensen & Kolb, 2002)

The 4 modes of learning in figure 2 function in a cyclical manner whereby a learners' deliberate attention resolves the dialectically opposed learning dimensions. The cycle begins with (1) the immediate or concrete experiences that serve as the basis for (2) observations and reflections. These reflections are (3)

assimilated into abstract concepts from which new implications for actions can be drawn. These implications can finally be (4) actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences.

A Dialectical Approach to Conversational Learning

Drawing on this theory of experiential learning Baker, Jensen & Kolb (2002) suggest that conversational learning can be understood as an experiential learning process which occurs while the conversation takes place. In a conversational scenario learners move through a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, abstracting, and acting as they construct meaning from the experiences and conversations (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). A dialectical approach to conversational learning suggest that conversation is a "meaning-making process" (Baker, Jensen & Kolb, 2002) in which understanding is achieved through the interaction of opposites and contradictions. Language is created by this process and the generation of ideas occurs by one's awareness of the tension and paradox between two or more opposites of the four modes of the ELT model. Dialectical inquiry in toto attempts to achieve a holism through embracing differences and contradictions and in conversation this inquiry begins with contradictions or opposing speech acts. When students take opposite points of view they can in doing so increase an understanding of the situation. The ELT view suggests that cognition is a process which constructs reality on the basis of what it sees and thinks, according to pre-existing models and tends to discard or distort material that does not fit into this model (Baker, Jensen & Kolb, 2002). In order to model a conversational approach towards experiential learning, a theoretical framework based on five process dialectics has been proposed. These are detailed below:

The 5 dialectical processes of conversational learning (Baker, Jensen & Kolb, 2002)

1. The dialectic of knowing: apprehension and comprehension
2. The dialectic of the praxis of integration of intention-reflection and the praxis of extension-action.
3. The dialectical tension between the epistemological, discursive process and the ontological, recursive process
4. The dialectic of individuality and relationality that contrasts conversation as an inside-out and outside-in experience.
5. The dialectic of status and solidarity that describes the ranking and linking dynamics that shape the social realm of conversation.

<div align="right">(Baker, Jensen, Kolb, 2002)</div>

Conversational learning is premised on the simultaneous interactions and resolution of these 5 dialectics which ultimately guide the process. Another way of considering these interactions of these dialectics incidentally, is to consider that the teacher is only a small part of this entire process.

An Understanding of the Five Dialects of Conversational Learning

１．The dialectic of knowing: apprehension and comprehension. The dialectical relationship between apprehension and comprehension is that concrete knowing which is called apprehension, is "an immediate, feeling-orientated, tacit, subjective process largely based in older regions of the human brain that serve as physiological and emotional gatekeepers that monitor the emotional dimensions of learning" (Baker, Jensen and Kolb, 2002). This works in dialectical contrast to abstract knowing which is also called comprehension, and is "a linguistic, conceptual, interpretive process based in the relatively new left cerebral cortex of the brain". (Baker, Jensen and Kolb, 2002)

２．The dialectic of the praxis of integration of intention-reflection and the praxis of extension-action. The dialectical relationship between these two poles is that learning requires action. That is 'active learning' is required by learners with an experiential commitment. It may of course be apparent that in some cases students do not feel either able, willing or competent enough to engage in a detailed level of experiential conversational processing. Baker et al. cite Freires' 1992 metaphor for traditional education as "the banking concept of education" to account for this situation. According to this belief the main focus of traditional education is to "deposit" ideas into the heads of students and as such the relationship between teacher and student is a typically conservative one. The traditional learning cycle is focused on students taking-in information, and places little emphasis on the students' expression of his or her meaning-making process through intentional action. Experiential-learning approaches to education on the other hand, "seek to develop a conversational space where the praxis between reflection and action is fully recognized", (Baker, Jensen and Kolb, 2002, page 58).

３．The dialectical tension between the epistemological, discursive process and the ontological, recursive process. A dialectical tension between epistemology, the nature of knowledge and ontology, the nature of being. Conversational learning occurs within two separate but connected temporal dimensions of linear time and cyclical time. The discursive process occurs in a linear time whereas the recursive process occurs in cyclical time. The discursive process is an epistemological process and is a rational approach towards an understanding of the individuals' ideas and the experiences which occur during the conversations. As a consequence this process occurs in linear time. The recursive process on the other hand is in ontological process concerned with the nature of being, and refers to the desire of the individual to return to the same ideas and experiences which generate conversation. In this sense ontological recourse is cyclical in nature and this is where ideas and concepts acquire new meanings as individuals return to the same conversations so that they can question and inquire about their own experiences. A learner's ability to simultaneously engage in two distinct temporal dimensions will largely determine the quality of the learning generated in the conversations.

４．The dialectic of individuality and relationality that contrasts conversation as an inside-out and outside-in experience. There is a tension between individuality, where a person takes in life experience as an individual process and relationality, where life is the experience of a connection to others.

５．The dialectic of status and solidarity that describes the ranking and linking dynamics that shape

the social realm of the conversation, and this dialectical contrast can also refer to the equality of status between the instructor and the participants (Kolb and Kolb, 2002). The 'dialectical tension' of status and solidarity necessitates the creation of "a hospitable space where individuals engage in conversation with mutual respect and understanding toward one another" (Baker, Jensen & Kolb, 2002). Status refers to one's positioning or ranking in the group whereas solidarity refers to the extent to which one is linked personally to others in a network of relationships. The interaction of the dialectical nature of these constructs defines and creates a hospitable space conducive to conversational learning. Some degree of both status and solidarity are necessary to maintain a conversation as without an equality of status, there is a chance that one person will dominate the conversation and that the conversation will lose direction. Without solidarity, where participants are connected to each other, conversations can lose meaning.

The Conversational Learning Space

As a learning-centred approach to education, ELT places a primary emphasis on the creation of learner-centred learning spaces. This space recognises the role of other important stakeholders in the educational process, (such as teachers, formal leaders, educational institutions and organisations,) but acknowledges that it is the learner who is ultimately responsible for, and in charge of his or her learning. A conversational learning space, which recognises the complexity of experiential learning, is a space where learners can resolve the dialectical oppositions which are inherent in their learning experiences. A conversational learning space also requires an exploration of what students already know and believe and this approach has informed the program coherence which brings together the listening classes and the speaking classes mentioned above.

What uniquely defines the conversational learning space however is that in addition to the creation of the actual space which allows for an experiential approach to occur, teachers are encouraged to *join with* the learners' experience by an empathetic understanding of their experience. In order to understand this learning experience Kolb et al. explain the process in terms of three pillars of experience; attention, interests, and beliefs, and these will be exemplified in the next section.

Understanding the Learner's Experience: Three Pillars of Experience

Attention
Kolb and Kolb (2002) explain that learning is determined by one's interest in the object of attention and is an experience created by the sensation of feelings we have which we take-in from that object and hence that which is around us. These experiences are then processed into working memory.

Interest
It is possible to make a distinction between two different types of interest; an individual interest and a situational interest. Individual interest is a sustained form of interest that concerns engagements in objects and events or ideas over a period of time and is related to the individual's previous experience, knowledge and values. Situational interest is an immediate emotional reaction stimulated by aspects

of the immediate environment in which the individual is. Interest in a particular topic or activity is thought to be a combination of both individual and situational interest factors.

Beliefs

Beliefs are the third important issue to consider in creating a learner-centred learning space. This requires an understanding of what learners believe about what they are learning. Belief should be considered as one of the primary goals of education as the conviction of belief is a far more important determinant of action than the recitation of declarative knowledge.

Beliefs and Learning

Educators are sometimes faced with situations where learners have strong beliefs which are potentially in conflict with the educational objectives of the teacher. This can be of course stressful and emotional encounter, as an educator's previous beliefs are challenged and changed. Prophetically, Kolb & Kolb (2017) note that "From this turmoil emerge new beliefs and relationships". Additionally it has to be considered that the beliefs of students are evolving as they progress through their educational life. William Perry chronicles the changes in the beliefs of Harvard students as they progressed through college in what has become known as Perry's Scheme (see Rappaport, 2019 for a full explanation). According to this research, Perry sees students on a 'journey' which takes them potentially to a level of academic awareness. The first stage of this journey is that of Dualism/Received Knowledge in which there are only right or wrong answers, 'engraved on Golden Tablets in the sky, known to Authorities; (Rapaport, 2019). During this stage of development first year students enter university with "absolutist beliefs" i.e. certainty about knowledge and ethics. During the second year and the next stage of development, there is an awareness of multiplicity/subjective knowledge, i.e. where students are faced with conflicting answers and therefore students, 'must trust their "inner voices", not external Authority' (Rapaport, 2019). During this stage a students' experiences evolve into a more relativistic perspective. Interestingly some second year students may feel challenged by the exposure to different ideas and beliefs which they are experiencing, and this may cause some students to react against this diversity by retreating back to the security of absolutism. At this point, 'some students become alienated, and either retreat to an earlier ("safer") position ("I think I'll study math, not literature, because there are clear answers and not as much uncertainty") or else escape (drop out) ("I can't stand college; all they want is right answers" or else "I can't stand college; no one gives you the right answers"), (Rapaport, 2019). In the later years some students can emerge from an *everything is relative* perspective to a stage of consciousness in which there is a deliberate commitment to reflection and critical thinking. Such critical thinking involves the employment of an academic rigor of 'disciplinary reasoning methods: connected knowledge: empathetic (why do you believe X?; what does this poem say to me?) vs. separated knowledge: "objective analysis" (what techniques can I use to analyse this poem?), (Rapaport, 2019).

Empowering Learners to be Experiential Learners: Ideas and Activities

It has been mentioned that traditional mainstream educational systems often does not encourage an awareness of learning and teaching from an experiential perspective. Consequently there have been various *undefined* calls for a more 'active approach' to learning (e.g. Ito, 2017). Experiential learning is

an excellent way to promote active learning. This approach does however require a partnership which in some cases may challenge the concept of 'teacher as expert' and which may cause some teachers to feel uncomfortable with the idea. In other instances students themselves may reject the idea of a partnership and students ultimately have the power to withdraw their participation in the learning process. Most educators recognise however that the vast majority of students are naturally committed to the act of learning and that there is always the potential for a learning partnership to be created. From an ELT perspective this partnership requires communication and trust between the partners and Baker at al. (2002) suggest that in order to create a conversational learning space learners and educators need to share their respective expectations about desires and responsibilities, and to establish a "psychological contract" for learning. This could be in the form of an artefact, which is an actual physical contract written by the participants. The starting point for this contract is not where students ask 'what is expected in the final exam?' but rather the teacher asking: 'what do you expect to learn?'

Students can also be introduced into the world of experiential learning by using activities which allow them to define their own boundaries and reflect upon their own knowledge. There are ideas and materials available for teachers to select from and which reflect the philosophy of the ELT movement. Activities which encourage partnerships typically include discussion, role play activities, and project based activities such as poster presentations or PowerPoint presentations. An interesting activity which might be an entry point for some teachers might be what I have called 'a reverse quiz' activity. In this activity students are paired together so that they can prepare a list of quiz question and answers about the subject content of the course, or of the lesson. These questions are then asked to another pair who in turn ask their questions. The dynamics of this activity are complex although they and can be understood by refereeing to Kolbs' learning cycle. As the students prepare and deliver their quizzes they can be observed engaging in processes of drawing on concrete experience (knowledge of quiz structure), reflection (on the subject content), abstract conceptualization (as they make the questions) and active experimentation (as they try out their questions on the other students). It is then possible to join with the students in an understanding of this process for example by giving the students cards which ask the students to organize and describe the process of making and delivering the quiz. These cards can then be the subject of a conversation about how we made the quiz.

Conclusions.

This paper has explored the curriculum design of two integrated first year university listening classes and speaking classes. These two courses are by definition a part of a larger educational infrastructure. The design of the two courses, when considered as an attempt to improve the learning environment of the students can be seen as way to develop student capacity. The policy decisions which enabled the promotion of the development of this student capacity can also be considered in terms of a distributed leadership approach towards the organization of an educational establishment which has the development of student learning as its underlying rationale. The underlying policy decision to implement this integrated curriculum was demonstrated empirically to have been well received by the students involved in these courses.

The implication of the integration of these two parallel courses, when understood from an experiential learning perspective, means that dialectical resolution is a form of learning which has educational significance for the students of these courses.

The experiential implications, and the curriculum integration described here is only a beginning, and there is room for further research to understand more about what the students in these classes want to learn, and how they would like to learn this. This knowledge would need to be combined the knowledge of the teachers of these classes with the aim of creating a continually evolving integrated learning program.

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