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The phenomenon of 'interruption' a destructive or positive act of communication within the learning environment

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DRAFT NOTES TO SUPPORT THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION.

PP1 TITLE: Interruption within the learning environment.

This very presentation defeats the object of my material the 'interruption' as perhaps you would envisage it. However, your mobiles, your own thoughts and the social implications of the weekend are already at play in your mind.

PP2: When people talk about "the interruption culture" in today's workplace, there's a tone of resignation. It's as though the interruption culture is immutable – as though interrupters must be permitted to continue their depredations no matter how injurious to the learning environment, and actual knowledge satisfaction. It's bizarre. Interruption is a potentially destructive force that is permitted to churn its uninhibited way across our ability as teachers to teach and students to enjoy learning and yet if we to harness its power and engage further we wouldn't be threatened by these events and we would use them to our advantage.

To place the whole idea of interruption it is useful to complete what I would call a desktop exploration regarding the general art of conversation within cultural boundaries. Begin with a general consideration and investigation of current ethnographic studies identifying the concept of social and cultural conversations and the nature of the conversational interruptions

Intracultural – familiarity with the same language, culture, values and interests

Intercultural – understand each other but belong to different cultures, values and interests
intrusive (power related) and cooperative (non-power related) [Dunne and Ng, 1994].

Notes:

At present I have some interesting observation

Japanese changed according to the situation. Moments of respect and status – co-operative

When with peers – interruption can be intrusive – non-productive. Familiar case of students changing the subject matter before the lesson starts by asking a question.

Other cultures such as Thai – recognise conversation/dialogue and interruption in a more positive manner socially and so appear to be more cohesive and enable each person to take an equal share in the development of the idea being expressed and so assisting the speaker in their story. Hence their style of Asian theatre is different to European theatre.

Other significant observations by [West and Zimmerman] regarding interruption are in studies between men and women. Men interrupt more. However, it is in the overlap of conversation that this happens. 'Let me finish....' You only have to listen to John Humphries on the 'Today' programme to know what I am referring.

This is difficult to actually get accurate statistics as some researchers will consider one word 'overlap' to be an interruption and others a whole thought process.

In the work of KOMOROVSKY [1962:353] Interruption is also a recognition of dominance and control and SILENCE the non-verbal interruption is as equal in its power. Such phrase as would emphasis this... 'He doesn't say much but he means what he says...' There are many dramatic devices used to explore relationships where the dialogue refuses to keep to the main point of the argument and this is in effect equal dominance at play.

In the UK I have taken the phenomenological approach to illuminate the specific and to try and identify how the phenomenon of conversation is perceived by those observed. Through qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation and present the information as a study of the experience from my point of view.

PP3 On screen only – speaks for itself! Overall these ethnographic studies and secondary observations will engage with the ideas to be explored within the classroom and as a means of using these ideas to explore methods of teaching and communication. The cultural background of each speaker as to the nature of the conversation and the style of the communication [Han Z. Li: p263]

This work will be desk top / secondary research but hopefully will be a good introduction to the main point of the assignment as to whether interruption can be seen as an 'intrusive' or 'cooperative' aspect of education.

PP4 A phenomenological approach which will explore personal knowledge and observations to these situations that I have observed such as meetings, teaching, 1-2-1 sessions.

One thing I have noticed is the elements of conversational change as if impacted upon by the audience.

1-2-1 often cooperative want to learn but often controlled by the status and situation

Learning environment – anxious to contribute but also challenging.

Sometimes the room can be a little gladiatorial if the students think they have the ears of their peers.

Meetings – familiar phrases such excuse me let me finish.

I intend to do some observational research and social and timed experiments between students regarding the removal of, or use of mobile phones and conversations to explore the everyday communicative practice of speaking and communicating in public places in order to engage with both the theoretical and practical crucial aspects of human social life. Observations of general public in public spaces.

PP5: A Flight from Conversation
A shift from spoken word to writing/texting
A new day – mobile amnesty!

Relying on digital communication is destroying our potential to communicate and so the complexity of teaching acting is become more and more difficult.

Common picture within society and the café. Send messages rather than speak to them. The tube train. Ignore the other person and communicate to others whilst speaking to someone else. Multi-tasking or simply rude. Mobile etc.

My personal worry is that this engagement with digital technology is encouraging a lack of empathy and communication and a desire to put everything into abbreviated texts.

The impact of the mobile and the value of the conversation

Not valued, dismissed, not as interesting, lacks attention and interest, social skills reducing, activities being observed reduced to texting others about something else.

I always demand that mobiles are switched off. Consequence anger and irritation, disobedience, caught out, shame, conflict destroyed atmosphere and peers reject or accept according to the status of the person committing the act.

PP6 The call for control... Is this what the teacher or society wants? [Bingham, 2009]

Is the teacher to be the measured by what society blames the education to be responsible for?

Is this where the dialogue and conversation breaks down?

Martin Buber's ideas on dialogue, presence, and listening. in Buber's model, listening involves a kind of active attentiveness to another's words or actions, engaging them as though they are directed specifically at us. Buber's discussion of dialogue and listening also indicates that the relation between speaking and listening is one of reciprocity and mutual dependence and that listening plays an essential role in initiating many dialogues by creating a space in which two people can embrace each other as complete individuals.

PP7 Learning and education are different concepts. Biesta [36]

How is this achieved? It depends on an understanding of status and an ability to communicate effectively between student and tutor!

PP8 We need to establish the role of the teacher and understand their position within the learning process.

Are we ...

to teach an agreed set of information?

to facilitate the information?

Students to learn from or be taught by...

The moment of potential 'interruption' occurring at certain points in the process.

PP9 as a result of this potential intrusion what is the most productive for both student and teacher.

Let us deal with the interruption whether it be supportive or intrusive.

As noted in the previous research between cultures and societies we have a classroom which is the microcosm of the outside society.

The interactive element of the class has the potential to be the interruptive element the point is who has control?

In reaction to '**intrusive**' and '**cooperative**' The perfect situation is where the tutor can take the back seat and allow the students to discuss the point of the class.

PP10 Diagram self-explanatory. The two-way passage between student and teacher hints at the shared dialogue in the Socratic method. The teacher and student both being in a position to learn something from each other. Both the teacher and the student ask questions – hence the teacher has to be empowered with knowledge in order to answer fully. My session today would not go down well with those who practice the Socratic Method of teaching. PowerPoint would indicate a controlling element and a clear sense of direction that implied I wasn't prepared for dialogue.

PP11 Various elements of such interactions can be (i) 'taking the floor' (ii) conversational 'overlap' to enable the story or idea to be supported by others; (iii) those who are confident they know the answer and (iv) speaking for yourself and so identifying yourself within the group as understanding. These various aspects of interruption will require study and research to develop a clearer concept of exactly what is going on within the classroom for the learning to take place.

The success of all these interruptions and methods of conversation within the learning process are because of the face-to-face potential of the work unfortunately this is becoming more and more complex as stated above - students depend so much on the current digital technological age to communicate.

PP12 The teacher has to be able to use the act of interruption as a positive aspect of the role and so engage with the destructive force in a positive way. When the teacher is **the facilitator** this becomes difficult because there is no substance on which to further the argument and engage with the discursive element of the interruption.

The teacher being the '**fount of all knowledge**' may appear to be demanding an inappropriate but the whole point of Plato's' dialogue **MENO** to Socrates and his 'learning paradox' is the point that if you don't know what you are looking for - how on earth will you know when you have found it! It also means that a teacher should have a vast experience, worldly and academically of the subject being taught, and has knowledge way beyond the perceptions of the students in their company.

As a note I fear that it is often these lessons that are the most difficult to comprehend until much later in our lives... the student might not possess factual knowledge but has a 'way of knowing' and observing the world that will last for ever and be transmitted through body and mind for the rest of their life!

The arrows that enable the teacher and student to interact both ways are not a mistake! Yes, a voyage of discovery might appear to be one sided to the student but the teacher must be aware of all the events within the train journey that has to be experienced and also know when to get off...

This implies the value of the teacher as a vocation and something of note. Some refer to this as a gift of teaching. Derrida would disagree [1992, p16]. However, knowing the finite difference between 'learning from' and 'being taught by' for the teacher remains a distinction of note!

Before Final Slide:

There is a dichotomy for all teachers to come to terms with and that is that the real desire in the 21st century for students to learn for themselves and hence embrace the digital age. This then encourages the students to consider that they can learn from each other rather than from the teacher.

PP13 Prophets are never recognised in their own countries. Likewise, teachers are never really recognised for their great skill and as suggested by Todd (2003) Socrates in his teaching was like the perfect murderer who 'makes it appear that the teaching has not taken place, who leaves the scene without a trace, and who, moreover, is convinced of his own innocence'.

23rd April, 2016