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POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE CONTROVERSY THEORY IN EFL CONTEXTS [*]

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ABSTRACT

In order to demonstrate the great potential of applying the constructive controversy theory in the general EFL context as well as in other fields, the first part of this paper is dedicated to a comprehensive literature review of correlated studies in terms of constructive controversy, and the second part centers on a feasible model for both EFL language instruction and teacher education that is well structured on the framework of the insights drawn from the studies. Lastly supplied is a simplified flowchart of the procedure.

"Conflict is not the problem; conflict is part of the solution"
--- Tjosvold (1991: 3)

1. Introduction

With a decade's devotion to the research on and practice of cooperative learning (CL) theories, I have noticed that one of the major process mechanisms that might determine the efficacy of practice in language instruction is how "conflict" is handled. However, like the large majority of teachers, I used to encourage my students to cope with their conflicts, if ever surfacing,

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rationally; but, in that any form of conflict has long been perceived to be either detrimental or destructive and therefore must be avoided, I never urged them to evoke and confront conflicts.

Only three years ago did I decide to concentrate on the study of conflict resolution when I happened to read an article about how Asian employees, after having been trained to constructively resolve their conflicts, had greatly improved their work quality and efficiency (Tjosvold 1998). When subsequently absorbed in voluminous reading on conflict, I was shocked to find that robust studies have been conducted on the matter across law, diplomacy, politics, business management, labor relations, psychology and sociology. In fact, in consideration of the great diversity in human personalities, interests, desires, beliefs and values plus misinformation, misperception, biased perception, competitive nature and many other sociological and psychological factors (Deutsch 1969: 8, 9; 1994: 13; 2000: 31), this popular trend of interest in conflict resolution across disciplines seems to have been destined. Many theorists (Falk and Johnson 1977, Johnson 1971a, 1971b, Johnson & Johnson 1979a, Krauss & Morsella 2000, Nemeth & Wachtler 1974, Thompson & Hrebec 1996, Thompson & Nadler 2000, Wong et al. 1992) have proposed conflicts for diverse perspectives to be processed so that the highest–quality decision may be made and that the most effective resolution may be worked out.

What was also unexpected was to find that the great majority of correlated studies directed at education had put emphasis only on campus or classroom discipline problems. They seldom addressed academic or instructional problems. Despite the fact that the cognitive and pedagogical significance of intellectual conflict could long be traced back to Piaget's (1950) "disequilibration" theory, in which the resultant 'nonbalance' from this conceptual divergence is believed to prompt the engaged disputants to seek further satisfactory reasoning information and to accommodate others' perspectives beyond their own, and hence to promote higher-quality understanding and productivity, only a negligible number of researchers have so far

been concerned about the learning efficacy of this cognitive conflict.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1994), over 550 experimental and 100 correlated studies had been conducted on cooperative learning for its classroom effects by that time, but only a few on the application of the theory of constructive controversy (CC)—a positive cognitive-conflict representation (119, 125). Furthermore, those few concentrated almost exclusively on the experimental application of the theory to the instruction of math, social science and natural science. For instance, over 20 studies conducted by Johnson and Johnson and their colleagues tested the theory in relation to learning on energy and environmental issues (125). No studies I have so far read involved the introduction of this theory into any language instruction.

As both verbal communication and nonverbal communication are of vital importance to constructive controversy (Innami 1994; Johnson & Johnson 1985b; Johnson 1971a; Liu & Littlewood 1998; Smith et al. 1984) and since dissent is claimed to enhance the highest levels of information processing (Dooley & Fryxell 1999: 392), I could not help but wonder if this theory could be incorporated into normal college EFL courses rather than in artificial environments as demonstrated in most studies.

Another query to answer is whether Chinese students will benefit from this so-called typical “imperial” approach. As Chinese, under the impact of Confucianism and collectivism, have long been considered conformists who emphasize social “harmony” and “face”, they have been particularly singled out as subjects extremely unsuitable to practice this “conflict-provocative” approach.

Before a series of studies based on an action research of mine in this aspect can be accomplished, this paper is mainly intended to provide a literature review of correlated studies in terms of constructive controversy and a proposed model based on them for both EFL language instruction and teacher education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conflict Theories

It is undeniable that conflicts always accompany social interactions regardless of what contributes to these social conflicts could be what Freud believed 'innate aggression', which Schellenberg (1996) claimed not to be verified though, or what Thompson and Hrebec (1996: 407) referred to as the win-lose architecture that human cognitive system is built upon, or simply what many conjecture as a natural product arising out of diverse views from diverse people. In fact, there are varieties of conflict theories, sociologists', psychologists', political scientists', economists' and mathematicians' (Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold 2000: 65-66; Schellenberg 1996: 12). Although all of the theories are meant to seek solutions to conflicts raised in social interactions, conflicts had never been considered constructive until half a century ago. They had always been perceived to be pathological, divisive or destructive. In actuality, many people even today still hold the view that conflicts are driven by "intransigence and self-interested motivation" (Thompson & Nadler 2000: 213) and hence lead to hostile, aggressive competition. Tjosvold (1994: 41) attributed this mainly to most peoples' confusion between differences and opposing interests.

The truth is that conflicts may not only result from altruism rather than egocentrism (Thompson & Nadler 2000: 213) but may also benefit everybody engaged in the conflicts. It was Lewis Coser, who, in view of the negative concept of conflict permeating American sociology in the 1950s, first started acclaiming conflict as a force to establish social identity and a means to maintain social mobilization and cohesion (cited in Schellenberg 1996: 65).

This constructive sociological conceptualization of conflicts was somewhat in parallel with Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, "disequiliberation". Piaget (1950) proposed that children will learn from their peers through discussion as the resultant cognitive-conflict imbalance may force discussants to seek further information for more satisfactory reasoning and thus help them move from the egocentric stage to the stage with others'

perspectives in concern.

Meanwhile, psychologists and social psychologists such as Ames, Lowry, Murray, D. W. Johnson, R. T. Johnson, Smith and Tjosvold advanced a cognitive motivational perspective of conflict in the 1980's. They argued that conceptual conflict will elicit epistemic curiosity, which may in turn promote better understanding, more-facilitative procedures and higher-quality performance through the search for new information and synthesis of the new and the already known information.

In a word, "Positive conflict is [believed to be] both the end and the means" (Tjosvold 1991: 46).

Nonetheless, despite the fact that conflict, when avoided, most often simply makes problems "linger and fester" rather than disappear (Tjosvold 1991: 5), conflict is not always solvable and definitely not always beneficial. Conflict is indeed double-edged. Uncontrolled or poorly managed conflict could be extremely destructive, which may not only devastatingly sabotage any potential agreement but also collapse a well-established relationship. However, if constructively handled, "conflict revitalizes and rejuvenates" (6), most likely to result in effective resolution, reinforced relationships, creative perspectives and resourceful and skillful discussants.

"Conflict is not the problem; conflict is part of the solution" (3).

2.2 Cooperative vs. Competitive Goal Structure

To have conflict constructively "used", the antecedent is that it has to be embedded in the cooperative goal structure. With a cooperative goal structure, dissidents will share resources, exchange information, take reversal perspectives, be concerned with others' interests, assist one another and openly confront their conflicts to seek mutually satisfying consensus so that differences may be smoothed away and that psychological resistance, if any, may be overcome. These pooled together are believed to facilitate catering to each individual's goal and contributing to the ultimate win-win situation (Blerkon & Tjosvold 1981; Cooper et al. 1980; Deutsch 1949a, 1969, 1973, 1994, 2000; D. Johnson & R.

Johnson 1974, 1979b, 1989, 1994; R. Johnson & D. Johnson 1979; Katz & Block 2000; Qin, Johnson & Johnson 1995; Tjosvold 1984, 1986, 1990, 1991, 1998; Tjosvold, Dann & Wong 1992; among others).

In contrast, with a competitive goal structure, disputants' only concern is to win. They will consequently focus on their own interests, distrusting and blaming others, emphasizing the differences between others and themselves, closing their mind and rejecting to share or listen. In this way, conflict may grow in size or escalate, intensifying hostility, highly frustrating one or both sides and ending in a zero-sum situation (see those studies listed in the previous paragraph plus Stanne, Johnson & Johnson 1999 and Thomson & Hrebec 1996).

Deutsch (1994) thus concluded, "A constructive process of conflict resolution is, in its essence, similar to an effective cooperative process, while a destructive process is similar to a process of competitive interaction" (15). Tjosvold (1998) further asserted, "To choose to cooperate effectively is to choose to conflict" (299).

Apparently, cooperation and conflict are not incompatible as the majority of people think. Conflict is not the opposite of cooperation and nor necessarily has to lead to a win-lose or lose-lose game as competition often does. In fact, only through a cooperative goal may cohesion go beyond the destructively superficial phase and can conflict be really resolved.

Since these two goal interdependencies together with another--independence (individual goal structure)--were identified by Deutsch in 1949a and further confirmed by Owens & Straton in 1980 and greatly elaborated on by Johnson and Johnson (1989), considerable research, including field experiments, has been conducted to examine their correlation with achieving, cognitive, affective outcomes and process variables. Extensive research has generally confirmed the proposition that the cooperative goal structure yields much more positive outcomes than the other two structures.

Johnson and Johnson (1974); and Johnson, Maruama et al. (1981) reviewed about 20 relevant studies respectively. Johnson

and Johnson concluded their review with an overwhelming support for the cooperative goal structure in terms of learning process and cognitive and affective outcomes. However, in 1981, when they with other colleagues used a meta-analysis procedure to examine related studies, they modified their stand. Although they still found cooperation superior to competition and independence, they also noticed intergroup and interpersonal competition exerted different degrees of efficacy. For instance, intragroup cooperation with intergroup competition was found to seem to induce more positive outcomes than interpersonal competition and individual efforts. In 1986, Johnson and Johnson used the same procedure to examine 122 studies conducted between 1924 and 1981 and reached a similar conclusion as they had in 1974, reconfirming the positive impact of the cooperative goal structure on achievement, retention of learning and continuing motivation. In 1989, they expanded their investigation scope by covering 500 studies totally and still concluded that the propositions in the theory of cooperation and competition were basically supported. In fact, Johnson and Johnson with their colleagues themselves also conducted a series of similar studies (Cooper et al. 1980; Johnson & Johnson 1979b; Johnson, Johnson & Tauer 1979; Johnson, Skon & Johnson 1980; Skon, Johnson & Johnson 1981) and came up with similar findings.

Hill in 1982 reviewed studies focusing on group and individual, reporting also the general outperforming of the former in respect of learning and cognitive outcomes. Nonetheless, Hill meanwhile found an interwoven relationship between participants' ability and their application of the so-called 'truth-wins decision strategy'. They observed that high-achieving participants might not benefit from cooperation if voting rather than this strategy was used. Daniels's 'norm of mediocrity' (1994:1011) could possibly account for this phenomenon. As mediocre people almost always comprise the largest proportion of any population, their decision is hence very likely to override even the specialists' if vote is the only measure taken to resolve conflict. Hill further noticed how other variables such as gender and affiliation preference might modify the effectiveness of the

two goal structures as well. Qin et al. in 1995 reviewed 46 studies published between 1929 and 1993 in terms of the effect of cooperation vs. competition on four types of problem solving—linguistic, nonlinguistic, well-defined, and ill-defined. Despite the fact that cooperation was still found more effective over all of the four types they identified across age and ability, superiority, however, seemed to be more salient in nonlinguistic problems than in linguistic ones.

In fact, a great majority of the studies aimed at the achieving and affective outcomes of the goal structures (Daniels 1994; Johnson & Johnson 1979b; Johnson, Johnson & Tauer 1979; Johnson, Skon & Johnson1980; Skon, Johnson & Johnson 1981), and very few addressed cognition or process variables (Chen et al. 1998; Cox et al. 1991; Owens & Straton 1980; Skon, Johnson & Johnson 1981). Research into process variables focused on age, gender, ability and cultural traits such as collectivism and individualism. Generally speaking, findings indicate that girls prefer cooperation while boys prefer competition and independence, that preference for cooperative and individualistic goal structures decreases with increases in age, and that collectivists favor cooperation to independence.

Cooperative goal interdependence, in fact, has been proven effective in resource sharing, work relationships and productivity even in the competitive workplace (Tjosvold 1990; Tjosvold, Andrews, & Struthers 1992; Tjosvold & Tsao 1989).

To sum up, despite some minor modifications, the cooperative goal structure, compared with the competitive and individualistic goal structures, has been verified to indeed contribute a great pedagogical value, inducing more intense intrinsic motivation, greater peer support, richer exchanged information, and higher quality cognitive representations, which in turn may facilitate academic performance.

Research further indicates that people in cooperation compared with those in competition are much more capable of managing conflicts constructively so that they are all successful (Cooper et al. 1980; Smith, Johnson & Johnson 1984; Tjosvold 1982; Tjosvold, Dann & Wong 1992; Tjosvold & Deemer 1980;

Zhang 1994).

As evidenced, conflict and cooperation, when highly interacting with each other, are generally constructive, whereas conflict and competition in combination are mostly doomed to failure.

2.3 Constructive Controversy vs. Concurrence-seeking & Debate

Based on the research on constructive conflict, the concept of conflict has been further elaborated as cognitive dissonance or "incompatible activities and behaviors" (Deutsch 1969: 7; 1991: 33) that could arise in both competitive and cooperative contexts. These two distinctive contexts give rise to two varying approaches to conflict resolution: competitive conflict resolution and cooperative conflict resolution, which Walton and McKersie named "distributive bargaining" and "integrative bargaining" (1965, quoted in Deutsch 1994: 14), and which Cosier and Ruble (1981: 816) called assertiveness and cooperativeness. One of the representative approaches for the former is 'debate', which ends in the win-lose orientation, with unilateral interest, or more precisely unilateral 'position' as the only concern, whereas 'controversy' and 'concurrence seeking' best represent the latter, which center on reaching a group consensus.

However, even though controversy and concurrence seeking are both built upon the cooperative goal structure, aiming at a common agreement, they are sharply distinct in the way they come to it. Basically, concurrence seeking, also known as the concession-convergence approach, although meant to come to some point that each side find acceptable, often elicits only benevolent cooperation or superficial cohesion where a rigid or premature agreement is reached through a series of stepwise concessions on both sides during the process, turning the underlying differences into superficial convergence and hence often ending in a lose-lose agreement (Johnson & Johnson 1979a, 1985b, 1994; Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold 2000; Rubin 1994; Schweiger, Sandberg & Ragan 1986; Smith, Johnson & Johnson 1981; Thompson & Hrebec 1996; Tjosvold 1998; Tjosvold & Johnson 1977; Weitzman & Weitzman 2000).

This could be well illustrated by a repeatedly cited example provided by Rubin (1994: 36). The example shows that two people who wished to divide an orange between them ended with each one in possession of a half. This seemingly fair outcome, in fact, had come out of a typical lose-lose decision by sacrificing part of both sides' needs without going through full exchange of information in view of the fact that one of them, after getting the half, threw the peel and kept the fruit while the other just did the opposite. Rubin further attributed this negative resolution to the participants' focus on "*positions* (how much each wants) rather than *interests* (the underlying motivations or needs that drive positions)" (36).

In contrast, protagonists in constructive controversy tend to willingly invite and incorporate diverse views, openly challenge invalid assumptions, fully exchange perspectives, reasonably articulate rationales, actively search for new information, enthusiastically assist one another, and subconsciously undermine groupthink so that a mutual agreement or an integrative solution may be reached to accommodate all parties' needs. Furthermore, discussants involved tend to recall more opposing views and use the argument on a new issue later (see the list of studies given above plus Dooley & Fryxell 1999; Falk & Johnson 1977; Lowry & Johnson 1981; Nemeth & Wachtler 1974; Smith, Johnson & Johnson 1984; Tjosvold 1982; Tjosvold & Johnson 1978; Tjosvold, Johnson & Lerner 1981).

The theoretical basis for introducing controversy into conflict resolution is derived from Piaget's cognitive development (1950), Deutsch's (1973) social psychological balance theories and Johnson and Johnson's conflict theories (1979a, 1985b, 1994). According to the three theories, cognitive conflicts will arise when participants with divergent views engage in controversy, and then uncertainty and disequilibration will occur owing to inadequate reasoning. In order to better understand the issue under discussion so as to be able to further defend and articulate their rationales, participants will search for additional information to meet their aroused epistemic curiosity. Consequently, the protagonists will integrate all information from both perspectives

to reach a mutually satisfactory solution (Ames & Murray 1982; Johnson and Johnson 1994; Slavin 1987; Tjosvold 1998; Tjosvold, Leung & Johnson 2000). In fact, this disequilibration might be so influential that participants, when searching for new equilibriums through assimilation, synthesis and integration, may benefit from even incorrect information that conflicts with a prior but equally erroneous belief, leading to what Ames and Murray (1982) labeled as "two wrongs to make a right" in their study. This was referred to as "conflict quo conflict" in Murray's interpretation of the study (1982: 268).

The propositions above have been evidenced in the findings of the few experimental studies conducted to compare the effects of the three modes: controversy, concurrence seeking and individualistic efforts or two of them (R. Johnson, Brooker et al. 1985; Lowry & Johnson 1981; Smith et al. 1981, 1984; Tjosvold 1982; Tjosvold & Johnson 1977, 1978; Tjosvold, Johnson & Lerner 1981). Some researchers even criticize concurrence seeking for its being "primitive" and "mindless" (Rubin 94: 37) since it is mostly affect-based rather than cognition-based and since it often resorts to 'voting' rather than 'truth-wins decision strategy'. The only study in which concurrence seeking was highly recommended was conducted by Innami (1994). However, firstly, Innami only compared concurrence seeking (addressed as 'consensual conflict resolution' in Innami) with debate and secondly, judging from Innami's focus and design (414-415), the process dynamics were considerably similar to those of Johnson and Johnson's constructive controversy. Both required "knowledge-based logical arguments" and discouraged any premature consensus (412), which is quite unlike the traditionally understood concession-convergence approach or the repeatedly experimented concurrence-seeking approach. Both of the latter call for ready concessions. The only difference between Innami's and Johnson and Johnson's procedures is that in Innami's model, there was no perspective exchange as existed in Johnson and Johnson's.

Another study partially favorable to consensus was conducted by Schweiger, Sandberg and Ragan (1986) by

comparing consensus with debate and criticism. Consensus was reported to best satisfy the participants, to inflame the strongest desire to continue working with their groups, and to contribute to the greatest acceptance of their groups' decisions. However, consensus was meanwhile observed the least effective on the promotion of the quality of their recommendations and assumptions.

Almost all of the research on the effects of controversy has documented its superiority whether the comparison was made between controversy and debate (Johnson & Johnson 1985), or controversy and concurrence seeking (Tjosvold 1982; Tjosvold & Johnson 1977, 1978; Tjosvold, Johnson & Lerner 1981), or controversy and other two approaches (R. Johnson, Brooker et al. 1985; Johnson & Johnson 1985, 1989; Lowry & Johnson 1981; Smith et al. 1981,1985; Tjosvold et al. 1980; Tjosvold et al. 1980); or whether the effects researched into covered all of the three outcomes: learning, cognitive and affective outcomes (Johnson & Johnson 1985b, 1989; Lowry & Johnson 1981; Smith et al. 1981,1984; Tjosvold, Johnson & Fabrey 1980) or two of them (R. Johnson, Brooker et al. 1985; Zhang 1994), or a single outcome (Ames & Murray 1982; Falk & Johnson 1977; Nemeth & Wachtler 1974; Lowry & Johnson 1981; Tjosvold 1982; Tjosvold & Johnson 1977). Almost all of the findings have supported the underlying constructive controversy resolution theories, indicating that controversy helps to foster more complex and higher-level reasoning strategies such as generalizing principles, analyzing or assimilating perspectives and making higher-quality assumptions, greater task involvement, greater liking, social support and self-esteem; stimulating exchange of more facts and reasons, greater interest in understanding and incorporating opposing views, more active search for new information and more elaborative oral interactions; decreasing the positional orientation victimization and promoting higher achievement and better retention. Even though the study conducted by Smith, Johnson and Johnson in 1984 found that their subjects' achievement and attitudes were similar for both the concurrence-seeking and controversy conditions, those in the

controversy condition were still noted for their more elaborative oral interactions.

A few studies examining constructive-controversy process dynamics have helped further elaborate the underpinning theories. For instance, Blerkom and Tjosvold (1981), who addressed the effects of social context and others' competence on 80 college students engaged in controversy, found that discussants in cooperation would test the validity of their assumptions through controversy whereas discussants in competition tended to strengthen their opinions either by choosing a more competent discussant with the same opinion or a less competent one with an opposing view. Dooley and Fryxell (1999) investigated how discussants' differences in loyalty and competence might affect the processing of dissenting information and the actions taken. It was found that information error greatly increases with the decrease in the perception of within-team loyalty and competence. Tjosvold, Johnson & Lerner's (1981) study of 33 college students' response to confirmation, acceptance and disconfirmation showed that the disconfirmation of others' competence might induce doubt about the accuracy of their views and decrease their willingness to accommodate the opposing information and position.

2.4 Perspective Reversal

As constructive controversy is mainly used to constructively manage the inevitable differences that people bring to cooperative interaction, to understand the opposing perspective is a prerequisite to any possible synthesis of the contradictory forces of dissent and consensus, and the best way to fully understand others' perspectives is perspective reversal. Johnson (1971b: 323) justified this strategy with three reasons: the increasing number of exposures to opposing views; more attention drawn to dissenting opinions and greater opportunity to rehearse one's viewpoint for any future application. Perspective taking is therefore believed to facilitate decreasing, if not entirely moving away from, a rigid commitment to the participants' original position, and minimizing the harm from misperceptions or egocentric biases and obtaining

creative, new orientations, which in turn may affect the effectiveness of the comprehension of information, the nature of conflict and cooperativeness and the quality of the ultimate outcome (Falk and Johnson 1977: 68; Johnson 1971a, 1971b; Johnson & Johnson 1979a: 54, 60; Krauss & Morsella 2000: 137-138; Nemeth & Wachtler 1974: 529; Thompson & Hrebec 1996:400, 407; Thompson & Nadler 2000: 225; Wong et al. 1992: 312).

2.5 Cultural Constraint

Another important determinant factor that may influence the effectiveness of controversy is cultural differences. Although collectivists, as mentioned earlier, are especially apt for cooperative interaction, they also favor groupthink. They are therefore inclined to value more group goals, group norms, affect-based trust (in contrast to cognition-based trust) and group reward, and to care more about mutual face and other face (Chen, Chen & Meindl 1998), readily willing to sacrifice personal interests to show respect for others and to ensure group harmony. These exactly contradict what constructive controversy calls for and may only induce concurrence seeking.

Considerable research has demonstrated how the Chinese would dodge, yield, compromise, short-circuit or diffuse an open conflict to refrain from any confrontation so that harmony is maintained and social face survives intact (Bond et al. 1985; Cox et al. 1991; Ho & Crookall 1995; D. Ho & Kang, 1984; Hofstede 1993; Meade & Barnard 1989; Ryback et al. 1980; Tjosvold 1998). Ho (1976) and Hwang (1987) further remarked that this indigenous orientation is actually reflected in the Chinese language itself, from which the English concept of “face” is literally translated. Tjosvold, Leung and Johnson (2000), while exploring the viability of a cooperative conflict approach in China, noticed that the connotation of the Chinese word for conflict is ‘warfare’, which reflects the Chinese negative perception of and attitude towards “conflict.”

However, Liu and Littlewood (1997) questioned this kind of “convenient” cultural explanation with the illustration of another

important Chinese term for “knowledge”, which is literally translated as “learn” and “ask” (374). They further confirmed this active, “inquisitive” nature of the Chinese in their study. Still another study conducted by Chu in 1979 revealed that Chinese, although not so independent as their US counterparts, were found to be classified more (56% vs. 29%) as either conformers or anticonformers. In fact, according to Littlewood’s finding (1999), Taiwan ranked 10 out of 53 of selected countries for degree of collectivism but 29 for acceptance of power. This suggests that in comparison with US’s ranks 53 and 38 respectively, Chinese in Taiwan may be much more collectivism-oriented than Americans, but certainly not so sharply contrastive in terms of conformity.

Meanwhile, Tjosvold and Huston’s (1978) findings from 64 US college students seem to imply that “social face” could be equally crucial to the success or breakdown of an agreement in the Western world. Tjosvold (1983), after reviewing abundant research on social face dynamics, concluded that social face is highly valued worldwide. In other words, this behavior trait could be universal, only different in degrees or patterns from culture to culture.

Whether Chinese are culturally constrained, recent large-scale studies such as Wong, Tjosvold and Lee (1992); Ho and Crookall (1995); Tjosvold, Hui and Law (1998); Tjosvold, Leung, Johnson (2000) did show that Chinese people, regardless of their strong desire for harmony, can express their opinions freely and do realize the necessity of managing conflict, following the ‘imperial’ Western design, which is generally doubted to be viable in China, to develop their cooperative conflict abilities. Employees participating in the projects of Tjosvold and his colleagues’ not only highly valued openness and made good use of controversy but also characterized those who disagreed directly as strong persons and competent negotiators and those escapists as being weak and ineffectual.

Tjosvold once put well his assertion: “Harmony needs to be worked out, not imposed.” (1991: 40)

2.6 Conclusion

Certainly, not all conflicts are amenable in cooperative constructive controversy interaction and nor are all of the conflicts resolvable. However, as research has demonstrated the value of constructive controversy management across all of the three outcomes: learning, cognitive and affective, and as the ability to follow an argument and to defend and articulate our viewpoints is a crucial asset in this modern democratic world, it is definitely worthwhile to try constructive controversy in the classroom. Furthermore, the rich oral exchange and the initiative search for further information during the controversy process both provide a natural context for language learning. In addition, given the fact that ample critical thinking, argument and reflection ignite during the process, there could not be a more ideal approach to teacher education as the act of teaching itself is critical in nature.

3. Potential Pedagogical Applications

3.1 Principles

In order to fully develop the effectiveness of constructive controversy, theorists and researchers (Deutsch 2000; Johnson & Johnson 1971a,1971b, 1979a, 1989, 1994; Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold 2000; Krause & Morsella 2000; Raider, Coleman & Gerson 2000; Rubin 1994; Thompson & Nadler 2000; Tjosvold 1998; Tjosvold & Huston 1978; Weitzman & Weitzman 2000) have provided sets of principles. Given the fact that they have all aimed at a similar goal—positive decision-making and problem solution, many commonalities can be drawn:

1. Foster authentic cohesion and build social rapport skills. Ways to develop loyalty, trustworthiness, unity have been voluminously documented (Arcaro, 1995; Baloche 1998; Bennett. & Dunne 1992; Byrne 1987; Clarke et al. 1990; Cohen 1986, 1994; Ehrman & Dornyei 1998; Foot et al. 1994; Garner 1995; Golub 1994; Hamm & Adams 1992; Hill & Hill 1990; Jacob 1999; Jaques 1991; Johnson & F. Johnson 1987; Johnson & R. Johnson 1985a; Kessler 1992; Peterson et al. 1994; Putnam 1997; Reid et al. 1989; Scrivener 1994; Sharan 1994;

Shoemaker & Shoemaker 1991; Slavin 1988, 1995; Slavin et al. 1985; among others). Both internal force sources such as group names, group logos, group rules, labor division, informal social gatherings, resource sharing and small projects; and external force sources such as intergroup competition, group member evaluation and group reward are facilitative. Social skills such as how to break the ice, to start small talk, to make a civilized request, and to tactfully offer assistance are also indispensable. In controversy activities, participants particularly need to develop their affirming skills, encouraging, supporting, and enhancing one another as Tjosvold, Johnson and Lerner (1981) suggested.

2. Cultivate constructive conflict resolution skills.
   What is most critical here is to have protagonists equipped with the capability to differentiate interests from positions and differences from oppositions, to creatively generate diverse views, to actively listen to and rationally refute and challenge dissidents without making personal attacks and to consciously take others' perspectives.
3. Develop high-quality decision-making strategies
   Discussants need to set a clear goal and standard; to critically analyze, evaluate and choose alternatives; to summarize and integrate diverse views; to drop advocacies and fully commit to group decisions when a substantial discussion is over.

3.2 Models

Apart from the principles proposed, theorists and researchers have suggested quite a few models as well. For instance, there are Rubin's Mutual Gains Model (1994); Tjosvold's Controversy Dynamics (1998); the Coleman Raider Model (Raider, Coleman & Gerson 2000); Weitzman and Weitzman's PSDM (Problem solving and decision making) Model (2000); and the Constructive Controversy Procedure suggested or actually applied in the series of studies conducted by Johnson, Johnson and their colleagues

(Johnson & Johnson 1979a, 1985b, 1989, 1994; Johnson, Johnson & Tjosvold 2000; Lowry & Johnson 1981; Smith et al. 1981; Tjosvold & Johnson 1978; Tjosvold, Johnson & Fabrey 1980), which has also been described under the names of "Academic Controversy Procedure" and "Consciously Structured Constructive Controversy Process."

As the model designed by Johnson, Johnson and their colleagues had been extensively experimented, particularly in classrooms, regardless of the fact that it was constantly practiced under a well-controlled condition rather than proceed spontaneously, and as the model had been repeatedly proven effective, their model seems to be the best choice for both language and teacher education courses. However, in view of the fact that their model was designed for L1 learners and that our interest here is with regard to English or teaching methodology instruction to EFL learners, linguistic support, especially for those linguistically disadvantaged learners, has to be taken into the priority concern. In order to equip EFL learners with required linguistic competence on the issue under discussion through meaningful rather than boring, mechanical drills, "jigsaw reading" or "group investigation" (Aronson & Patnoe 1997; Kessler 1992; Sharan 1980, 1994; Sharan & Sharan 1989/1990, 1992; Yi 2001) could be added before any information exchange or discussion. If materials to be read are too long, or if the learners' English proficiency is poor, materials should be first divided, assigned equally to opposing pairs and then be familiarized as a whole eventually through repeated regrouping and restating to different people.

After learners have mastered basic language and knowledge required for their assigned position, each two opposing pairs can form a team and start to restate to the opposing team pair what they have understood. To ensure they listen attentively, to further reinforce their linguistic competence and to prepare them for role reversal later, they should be told to take notes while listening and then restate from their notes only when the information supplier has accomplished his/her task.

When both sides are well informed of what the other pair

have read, they can start challenging, refuting their dissidents' views and elaborating their own views. When listening, they may like to take notes of what seems new or vital to them. After a preset time, for example, 15 or 20 minutes, each two pairs should make a perspective exchange. At this stage, all participants should be told to hold on to their positions and do their best to rationally persuade the other side. No consensus is required to be reached at this point.

Following this preliminary discussion, learners can be given some supplementary materials or told to search for further information on their own to support their originally assigned positions. When they are ready, they can start the second-round structured argument.

After the issue is finally fully discussed, they will be told to freely choose their side and develop an argument with their teammates so that a final consensus can be reached. Lastly, they can be requested to deliver either a written or oral report or both.

If time allows, what should be first allowed for is numerous micro situational practices on small talks, civilized responses and challenges, and encouraging affirmations. Included should also be group games, and group rules to be designed so that they may well manage group dynamics.

The procedure suggested above is applicable to both language and teacher education courses. The only difference is in material choice. Any controversial issues interesting to students can be chosen for language instruction as long as the materials are linguistically and culturally compatible with learners' background. For instance, the following are some of my students' favorite topics: cohabitation, human cloning, homosexuals' adopting children, legalization of lottery tickets, the installation of condom machines in the restrooms on campus, euthanasia—involuntary death. As for teacher education, abundant controversial issues are available, such as fluency vs. accuracy, audio-lingual approach vs. communicative approach, target language exclusively vs. native language, teacher authority vs. learner autonomy, and so on. In fact, a whole syllabus can be built upon this model.

The following is a simplified flowchart for this model:

Cooperative Controversy Model for EFL Instruction

Stage 1	**Building cohesion & social skills** 1. Micro situational practices 2. Group games
Stage 2	**Providing linguistic sheltering—** versus substance & common expressions 1. Jigsaw Reading I—Reading individually 2. Jigsaw Reading II—Discussing for comprehension in groups 3. Jigsaw Reading III—Restating in advocacy pairs
Stage 3	**Developing assigned positions** 1. Restating to the opposing pairs 2. Listening to and taking notes of opposing views
Stage 4	**Advocating the assigned position & challenging the opposing position** 1. Presenting rationales, refuting attacks and challenging opposing views 2. Listening to and taking notes of opposing views
Stage 5	**Reversing assigned roles** 1. Presenting rationales, refuting attacks and challenging opposing views 2. Listening to and taking notes of opposing views

Stage 6	**Searching for additional information or the assigned positions and engaging in the second-round structured argument** 1. Presenting new information, stimulating further ideas and taking role reversal 2. Listening to and taking notes of new information or ideas

Stage 7	**Choosing a position & advocating it** 1. Presenting rationales, refuting attacks and challenging opposing views 2. Listening to and taking notes when needed

Stage 8	**Reaching a consensus** ˙Integrating and reconstructing information

Stage 9	**Performing** ˙Giving an oral or written report

4. Conclusion

From the procedure given above, one can easily tell that there is a huge amount of verbal communication involved. Participants are always talking about something new, or talking about something old but to someone new so that there is always an authentic purpose—sharing or exchanging information. At the same time, students need to read not only the material assigned, which is actually minimum necessary to read, but also much supplementary material that they often have to find on their own, actually in most cases, authentic online material. Furthermore, they have to listen attentively, take notes and give an oral and/or written group report. What the teacher has to do is mostly before

and after the instruction. In class, the teacher is only a facilitator and occasionally an intruder in case there should be any uncivilized deeds or words.

In other words, this model, apart from the intellectual opposition involved, which has been proven particularly facilitative to high-level cognitive development, is also characterized by its whole language approach, communicative approach and learner autonomy approach. In addition, with full linguistic support at Stages 2 and 3, it could be successfully applied to both high- and low-level students, as verified by my students across four levels. A related workshop is to be given in November, 2003 and subsequent studies are expected to be published in the near future.

Academic controversy is indeed of great pedagogical value to educators.

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