

LESSONS FROM MY FAIR LADY
ABOUT QUALITY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING :
SUPERVISING RESEARCH PROJECTS RELEVANT TO
MASTER STUDENTS CAREERS ASPIRATIONS

Michael Singh

University of Western Sydney ,Australia

Qi Hongying

Jilin University

Hu Jin

Ningxia University

Abstract

This paper examines the proposition that students interested in a career teaching ,popular films can be used as primary evidence for developing an understanding and appreciation of quality university teaching . Four interrelated elements are woven into the exploration of this suggestion . First ,drawing on a meta analysis of the research literature by Zammit ,Sinclar , Cole and Singh (2007) ,“ quality teaching ” is briefly conceptualised and defined ,and a review of research literature on the relationship between student diversity and quality teaching is provided . Second ,a short explanation is provided about the way in which the research focus for this study was refined during the course of the natural history of the research process itself . Third ,an analysis of Professor Higgins teaching methods ,as depicted in the film My Fair Lady is presented . The examination of his methods highlights his use of teaching aids ,error correction ,scaffolding student learning ,teaching spoken English ,reinforcement training and rote learning . Finally ,this depiction of teaching methods is then used as a vehicle to briefly discuss what may or may not be regarded as quality teaching in the light of current considerations .

Key words

My Fair Lady ;English language teaching and learning ;visual methods

1 . Introduction

Two challenges face English language majors and their supervisors in China in preparing Masters theses ,namely learning to collect and analyse primary evidence ,and linking their research project to their planned career trajectory . This paper explores the possibilities for working towards these interrelated goals ,having due regard for two important considerations . First ,the feasibility of any evidence driven research thesis must take into account the accessibility of primary evidence and secondary research literature available to students undertaking their Masters project ,in this instance north east China . This issues arises in a context where many Masters theses are constructed as literature reviews ,with students being taught little if anything about research processes involving the gathering and analysis of first hand evidence . Second ,Masters Graduates in English are finding it increasingly difficult to gain employment in their preferred career as university lecturers . There are several interrelated reasons for

this . China is reducing the amount of compulsory credits in College English required by all university students because of the proficiency many are able to achieve and the need for more primary English teachers ,the current focus of reform efforts . These that do not explicitly orient them to their future employment trajectory ,but are preoccupied with decontextualised ,linguistic abstractions are increasingly being questioned in the context of mounting labour market competition . These developments pose challenges to those lecturers responsible for supervising Masters students ,especially in terms of explicitly teaching these the skills and knowledge required to marry these two goals . Thus ,this paper explores the use of film as one source of primary evidence for researching an issue relevant to Masters students future careers as lecturers ,namely an investigation into quality university teaching .

What counts as “ quality university teaching ” ,an issue of particular interest to Master students wishing to pursue a career in this field ,varies amongst different stakeholders ,across different sites and through time . What ,for example ,might be said about the attributes of quality teaching of a professor who ,due to political ,economic ,social ,cultural and institutional changes in society insisted Master students use of standardised “ Voice of America ” English rather than one of its other (standardised) dialects ? “ Quality university teaching ” might be operationally defined as teaching that produces improvements in students learning outcomes . What then ,are we to make of the quality of teaching of a professor who recognised students linguistic differences and successfully eradicated one of these by having them achieve advanced proficiency in standardised English ?

Another approach to defining “ quality university teaching ” is that it involves professional practices that demonstrate expert knowledge of a particular field . In that case how might we judge the quality of teaching of a professor who does not necessarily teach Master students the knowledge and skills required for engaging in rigorous research processes ; does not integrate this knowledge with their career aspirations ,and does not makes any constructive connections between this knowledge and students prior learning ? What if the professor s expectation for whatever students learnt was very high ? Then again , “ quality university teaching ” might be defined as requiring a deep understanding of the underlying principles of teaching ; accumulated experience in evidence driven research practices ; a familiarity with recent advances in knowledge of research methods and postgraduate supervisory pedagogies ,and capabilities in the best available research techniques and methods for teaching Masters research students . Following this line of thinking ,what assessment might be made about the quality of teaching of a professor who was enthusiastic ,creative ,committed and passionate about teaching and research ? Even so ,the professor does not use pedagogies to motivate ,engage and com mit Masters students to learning about a range of research processes ; does not use methods of research supervision that enhance students strategies for meta cognitive learning ,and does not productively collaborate with them as early career researchers .

Typically such assessments of quality university teaching are made in confidential reports supplied by external reviewers of international standing to university promotions panels . Asking such questions of actual life and blood professors is ,of course ,a provocation most likely to cause offence ,rather than to advance any appreciation of what quality university teaching might involve or how it might be better realised . Getting some distance ,in space and time ,from real professors is possible using some of the many feature films that deal teaching . Thus ,this paper investigates the possibilities for using as primary evidence representations of teaching made in popular films as a means of developing an understanding and appreciation of quality university teaching ,an issue pertinent to graduates planning a career in this field .

This proposition is explored through four interrelated concerns . First ,the development of this argument is informed by a review of the research literature on quality teaching ,focusing specifically on what the presence of linguistic diversity among students means for teaching . Second ,a brief methodological note indicates how the research focus for this study was refined through the course of the project s history . Third ,based on analysis of the film *My Fair Lady* key features of Professor Higgins teaching method are presented . These findings are used as a basis for discussing what may or may not be regarded as quality teaching . *My Fair Lady* and the play on which it is based ,George Bernard Shaw s *Pygmalion* ,have long been successful as popular entertainment . Here Higgins teaching methods provide a useful vehicle for considering the place of teaching aids ,error correction ,scaffolding ,the teaching of public speaking ,reinforcement training ,and rote learning in the light of current considerations of quality

teaching .

2 . Conceptualising “ quality teaching ”

To begin develop and understanding and appreciation of quality university teaching a short review of the secondary evidence available in the research literature is provided here . This may give Masters students intent on working in this field some insights into what is expected . “ Quality teaching ” may be defined through its impact on student outcomes , or through the teachers acquisition of professional attributes (Knezek & Christensen 2002). The research literature identifies a range of contexts , professional practices and , teacher attributes associated with quality teaching that impact , positively or negatively on students learning outcomes (Ayres , Sawyer & Dinham 2004 ; Singh 1992). Quality teaching can have an impact on students cognitive , affective and behavioural outcomes , while the impact of poverty on teaching on students over time is not only measurable , but debilitating and cumulative . For instance , a study by Aduwa -Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2006) revealed that in Nigeria the infrequent use of modern instructional technologies and variety of teaching techniques was affected by the harshness of the learning environment , which was rowdy , congested and noisy .

Importantly , however , it has been found that “ quality teaching ” does not involve applying a predetermined set of methods in the hope that successful learning will automatically be guaranteed to follow (Darling -Hammond & Young 2002). Rather , quality teaching is contextual and dynamic . It involves giving serious attention to , and making decisions about , an array of interacting factors that ultimately influence students and their learning outcomes (Thrupp 1998). The research is clear on the point that the decisions teachers make about their context , and the actions they take , can bring improvements to the learning outcomes and capabilities of their students (Fenstermacher & Richardson 2005 ; Kennedy 2006). This paper explores the possibilities of using evidence of the impact of teaching on students learning , as represented in popular film , as a means of developing insights in contemporary views on quality university teaching .

The research literature indicates that the operationalisation of quality teaching involves a dynamic interplay among the three interrelated conceptual domains of contexts , practices and , attributes . The socio economic and cultural political contexts play powerful roles in shaping the structures , opportunities and dynamics of quality teaching (Blackmore 2004 ; Law 2003). It is difficult to fully understand the challenges of improving students learning outcomes without taking into account the ways the intersections of the dynamics forces which relate to and frame quality teaching (see for example Greenwald , Hedges & Laine 1996 ; Johnson & Landman 2000). Table 1 provides a conceptualisation and operational definition of quality teaching based on a meta analysis undertaken by Zammit , Sinclair , Cole and Singh (2007). They conceptualised quality teaching in terms of :

- 1 . The dynamic contexts in which teachers work and which influence policy and practice ;
- 2 . The professional practices of teaching that impact on organisation , pedagogies , effectiveness and student learning outcomes ; and
- 3 . The capabilities and attributes of teachers that contribute to effective practice .

Table 1 . A conceptualisation and operational definition of quality teaching (source : Zammit , Sinclair , Cole & Singh 2007)

Conceptual attributes of quality teaching	Operational features of quality teaching
The teaching context	Shaped by a complex and interacting array of societal , systemic and academic factors that include socio economic changes , reforms to the education system and changing expectations of educational institutions .
Changing expectations , changing times	Changes in the social , technical , political , economic and cultural contexts of education influence , but do not decisively determine the quality of teaching .

Conceptual attributes of quality teaching	Operational features of quality teaching
Diverse student communities	The increasingly diverse range of students (often as the result of government policy) adds to the complexities of quality teaching, can have a positive impact on the achievement of students.
Learning environment and management	Quality teaching is influenced by the physical and managerial features of the learning environment, and where institutions have an educative or managerial focus.
Teachers professionalism	Quality teaching is contextual and flexible, and involves employing a range of meta-cognitive teaching/learning strategies that fit student needs and the demands of educational goals, topics and methods.
Selection of content	Quality teaching involves using content which is of high intellectual quality, integrated across a variety of knowledge disciplines, connected to students prior knowledge and relevant to their work/life trajectory.
Control over curriculum and its design	Quality teaching occurs when the whole of program has a focus on teaching and learning with high expectations of all students, rather than on administrative or managerial imperatives.
Knowledge and practice of quality pedagogies	Quality teaching motivates, engages and commits students to learning, as well as enhances their strategies for learning.
Teaching attributes and capabilities	Quality teachers are enthusiastic, creative, committed and passionate about their work.
Personal attributes and capabilities	Good communication is a key attribute of quality teaching, being needed to assist students to understand new ideas and to achieve to the best of their ability.
Relational attributes and capabilities	Quality teaching is evident in the opportunities teaching have to develop and show leadership, bringing benefits to student outcomes in terms of skills, morale, retention and engagement.
Professional attributes and capabilities	Fully qualified and certified teachers have a positive impact on student learning, whereas uncertified teachers have a detrimental impact on their learning.

To narrow the parameters for this study the focus now turns to a consideration of student diversity and its relationship with quality teaching. Quicke (2000) reports that a limitation on efforts to improve the effectiveness of formal education has been inadequate appreciation of students cultural diversity. The linguistic diversity of students adds to the complexities of quality teaching (Bishop 2003). Typically, changes in the demographics of student population are due to changing government policies (O'Brien & Schillaci 2002). Such policy changes include efforts to retain and increase the participation of young people in learning; shifts in labour immigration; moves to address youth unemployment and provision for special needs students. Based on an extensive meta-analysis of research on student achievement, as well as analysis of US policies in 50 states and student achievement scores in reading and mathematics, Darling-Hammond (2000) found that student characteristics such as poverty, World English Speaking (WES) background and ethnicity were negatively correlated with student outcomes. However, quality teaching was shown to mediate the extent of influence of these demographic characteristics.

Research by Hill and Russell (1999) shows that students' cultural/linguistic backgrounds interact significantly with teaching practices to affect their learning outcomes. Differences in ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds affect students' learning (Han & Singh 2007). Liu (1998) found evidence of strong ethnocentrism in teaching in the Western English speaking countries, especially evident in the neglect of the educational needs of students from other countries. Teaching strategies that enhance students' scholastic achievement tend to be open to, and engage their ethnicity and home language (Hargreaves 2000). Alton-Lee (2003) reports that quality teaching which is responsive to student diversity has a positive impact on both low and high achievers. Quality teaching has been found to involve the use of content which is of high intellectual quality, integrated from a variety of knowledge disciplines, connected to students' prior knowledge and relevant to their work/life trajectory (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard 2005). The research indicates that rigour and relevance in the selection of curriculum content influences and are influenced by quality teaching. There is a positive relationship between content with these characteristics and enhanced student learning outcomes (Hu 2005; Rowan, Camburn & Correnti 2004).

Quality teaching employs content that recognises differences amongst students and is responsive to their diversity (Fouts 2003). This involves having knowledge of the students' characteristics and making teaching responsive to these. Diverse sources of knowledge from different cultural resources were recognised and brought into play are part of deliberate attempts to increase the educational participation of students from different linguistic backgrounds (Singh & Han 2006). The educational relevance of this knowledge was made explicit to students, just as the cultural practices of their educational institutions were taught. Ways of taking and making meaning of the students' funds of knowledge and the educational culture in which they were now studying were made evident (Chapman, Weidman, Cohen & Mercer 2005). These culturally appropriate content choices involved quality teaching practices that respected and affirmed the students' access to funds of knowledge from a range of cultural resources, and so optimised educational opportunities for them (Alton-Lee 2003). Students' prior experiential knowledge was also recognised and built upon with new information that was linked to their experiential knowledge. Having considered the secondary evidence from the research literature we now turn to the process for generating primary evidence.

3. Refining the research process

The idea of examining the representations of teaching made in film as a source of primary evidence for developing an understanding and appreciation of quality university teaching was not just conjured up in the researchers' minds. The research question did not exist out there somewhere in the world waiting for the researchers to find it. Producing this research problem was not easy as it involved "coming face to face with something strange and new, looking afresh at the familiar, making a connection between things and ideas that were previously apart" (Clark 2003: 28). The production of this problem statement benefited from mindful creation and refinement over time as a result of engagement with the research literature and advice from other researchers who took the issue seriously enough to provide substantial, thoughtful and critical feedback. By distilling ideas from these various sources, it was possible to further clarify the focus of the research reported here. The creation of this research problem was much less a matter of discovery or uncovering of a researchable question, than an iterative process of active writing, purposeful reading, open-ended discussions and re-focusing. During the course of this study four different possibilities presented themselves as a possible research focus. As part of the research process it was necessary to consider each of these in order to refine the purpose for the project reported here. The issue being that, methodologically these different foci would take the study reported in this paper in different directions.

The first reason for studying quality teaching through films is to explore the historical context informing the movies' depiction of education and its underlying philosophy. Of course, this implies that the term popular culture does not only refer to contemporary popular culture, but that popular culture itself has a history (Holbrook 1993). My Fair Lady is more than forty years old having been released in 1964. This film provides vicarious insights into what British society was once like, who British people once were, what they liked and how they behaved towards each other across gender, class and linguistic lines. This Hollywood representation of British society was derived from the play, Pygmalion, written by

George Bernard Shaw (see teaching resources at <http://www.teachit.co.uk>). The play itself is based on a much older Greek legend that explores the desire to create and to be created (Levine 2001). Glenzer (2005) has studied this movie for its representations of the way that education was perceived in a previous generation. For this reason, this paper does not provide an examination of the philosophy behind conceptualisations of quality teaching of a past era, as represented in this movie.

Second, films may be used as a catalyst for discussing the attributes of the quality of professional teaching practices. Studying the film *My Fair Lady* could offer a basis for considering what quality teaching meant for the selection of knowledge, curriculum control and pedagogy in the late nineteenth century, the time this film portrays, or the mid 1960s when it was produced. By exploring the quality of teaching given expression by Professor Higgins in this film, Masters students and their lecturers have a basis for debating the ways in which the social, technical, political, economic and cultural contexts of education influence professional teaching practices. This particular use of film is open to further investigation.

Third, this study could have set out to demonstrate on how to use films in quality teaching. Xian and Sun (2007) found that students prefer to study English language videos because these helped them to better understand local conditions and customs in foreign countries while also improving their listening ability. In addition, such films may be used instructionally to motivate research students' interests and imagination in investigating depictions of teaching methods and, the socio-economic and cultural conditions affecting them. Here the focus shifts from studying the teaching methods in films, to Masters research students and their supervisors using film as a primary research evidence. This pedagogical use of movies for the purposes of research education requires further investigation.

Fourth, this paper suggests because of the historical and personal distance they can offer from real professors, films such as *My Fair Lady* may help inform the contemporary debates about quality university teaching and ways of improving it. Such representations of education as made in popular films have the potential for offering insights into understanding and appreciating quality teaching in ways that are pertinent to Masters students planning a career in this field. While *My Fair Lady* is a very old movie, it is now being recirculated in a digitally enhanced version on video discs. Pragmatically, researchers in China do not have ready access to the range of English language films available in countries such as Australia, less so since China's entry into the World Trade Organisation and the curtailment of "pirated" products. *My Fair Lady* was the only video available for purchase from video retailers and street hawkers in Changchun in 2006 for the purpose of this study. Further, the story at the heart of this old movie finds expression in a range of similar movies, some that preceded it, and many that have followed it since (see Table 2). As such these movies give expression to seemingly popular concerns about the social, cultural and linguistic deprivation in society and the important role of education in mitigating or mediating these inequities. Thus, this paper reports the results of an analysis of Higgins' professional practices in the light of current conceptions of quality teaching.

Table 2. Films sharing a similar focus: Education's role mitigating or mediating deprivation

Title	Release date	Main character	Educational make-over
Geraldine	1929	girl lacks social graces	sent to charm school, and upon graduation she is a poised fashionable lady
Pygmalion	1938	upper class phonetics professor encounters low class guttersnipe	passes her off as a duchess by subjecting her to intensely repetitive phonetics lessons in an effort to transform her Cockney dialect into standardised English
Funny Face	1957	owlish bookstore clerk	transformed into the fashion world's hottest model

Title	Release date	Main character	Educational make-over
My Fair Lady	1964	dishevelled cockney flower girl — “ deliciously low , horribly dirty ” — meets a misogynistic linguistic expert	elocution lessons transform her into a “ proper ” lady by teaching her standardised English
Educating Rita	1983	working class hairdresser	She blooms intellectually under tutelage , gains self confidence , self respect and intelligence
Born Yesterday	1993	brash , embarrassingly vulgar mistress and ex-chorus girl	Educated as to her responsibilities as a loyal ,honest American
The Princess Diaries	2001	a teenage klutz has a social outcast for a friend	the awkward teen tutored in royal behaviour

This focus on developing in Masters students the skills and knowledge required for evidence driven research that addresses issues relevant to their future careers is especially significant given that most of those majoring in English are young women . Taking such a focus for their Masters research project and thesis could represent a significant educational contribution to enhancing the capability and thus the agency of these women to pursue goals they have reason to value and progress . In turn , their realisation of these goals opens up the possibility for interrelated social and economic changes due to the unwillingness of educated women to be shackled by inequality . While education broadens their horizon , their Masters theses can extend and deepen the vision they have for future employment , give them access to knowledge useful for securing their well-being , and increase their freedom to exercise decisions (Sen 2005 :245) . Because the analytical reach of the concept of agency depends on its interpretation , Sen (2005 :239-240) stretches it beyond control over decisions to freedom to think and question without restraint or ignorance . Women s reasoned agency — their autonomy , empowerment and right to be heard — gains force from their capability to make a living wage and their extra familial role in the economy , as well as their education and property rights . These factors in combination with constructive information and knowledge producing capabilities enhances women s deliberative agency , and thus their power for economic independence and social emancipation within the family and other societal institutions (Sen 2005 :220-250) . From the perspective of economic freedom , women s informed and critical agency , including their capability for redressing the sufferings , deprivation and ill-being of women is powerfully affected by such variables as their

ability to earn an independent income , to find employment outside the home , to have ownership rights and to have literacy and be educated participants in decisions within and outside the family working outside the home and earning an independent income tend to have a clear impact on enhancing the social standing of a woman in the household and society . Her contribution to the property of the family is then more visible , and she also has more voice , because of being less dependent on others . Further , outside employment often has useful “ educational ” effects , in terms of exposure to the world outside the household , making her agency more effective . Similarly women s education strengthens women s agency and also tends to make it more informed and skilled . The ownership of property can also make women more powerful in family decisions . (Sen 1999 : 191-192 ; also see Sen 2005 :238)

To generate the primary evidence presented in the next section , the film My Fair Lady was viewed and actively listened to many times . The data were collected first , by carefully studying and observing the film and second , by making evidentiary notes . The focus was Higgins teaching methods and why he needed to teach Eliza standardised “ cut glass ” English , a native speaker of the language . When the film was viewed , a triple entry system of note making was used . Notes were written down in three columns : dialogue , contextual details , and researchers comments . In other word , this tri-level record of film notes

consisted of direct quotations from the dialogues in the film ;descriptions of scenes depicting the process of teaching ,and the researchers own reflective comments .

4 . Quality teaching methods and the improvement of students capabilities

The representations of teaching in *My Fair Lady* provide primary evidence for gaining insights into quality university teaching ,something that is of value to the employment prospects of graduates intent on engaging in this line of work . The data analysis presented in this section identifies six key elements in Higgins teaching method . These are the use of teaching aids ,error correction ,scaffolding ,teaching speaking ,reinforcement training ,and rote learning . The analysis of this primary evidence then provides the basis ,in the following section ,for discussing Higgins teaching methods in terms of what may or may not be currently regarded as quality university teaching .

4 .1 Teaching aids

Various types of instructional tools were used to help Higgins s teaching and Eliza s learning . Generally ,they are depicted as being helpful in this instance of English language education . First ,the tools seem to satisfy the need for self learning by making “student centered learning ” a reality . For example ,Higgins leaves Eliza in a language laboratory . She sits before a machine with a cable that runs from her mouth to an apparatus that draws a graph on a sheet of paper ;it shows the result of her pronunciation . In this way ,Eliza can know whether her pronunciation is right or not . She knows to try her best to correct it when her pronunciation is wrong ,although she cannot fully correct it all by herself . However ,the machine helps her to increase her capacity for self learning . Meanwhile ,Higgins plays the role of inspector when using this teaching /learning machine .

Second ,tools were used to enhance Eliza s efficiency in language learning . Apparently ,they helped this student to develop her learning potential to a substantial extent . When Higgins instructed Eliza in the pronunciation of the letter “ h ” ,he used a phonetics apparatus . He lit a burner ,plugged a tube into the bottom of it and turned on a rotating drum with mirrored sides . When the student pronounced “ h ” correctly ,the flame flickered ;when the student dropped the “ h ” ,the flame was still . Eliza practiced “ har ,har ,har ,har . . . ” using this instrument . Finally ,she was able to say ,correctly ,“ In Hartford , Hereford and Hampshire ,hurricanes hardly ever happen ” .

Third ,Higgins inserted marbles into Eliza s mouth while instructing her to say ,“ With blackest moss the flower pots were thickly crusted ,one and all ” . Eliza practiced this sentence repeatedly with the marbles in her mouth ;a somewhat dangerous procedure should she have swallowed any . At last ,she succeeded in pronouncing the sentence correctly . The burner ,tubes ,marbles and other apparatus are presented as providing useful instructional aids for English language teaching and learning . To the degree that Higgins s teaching is successful it cannot be separated from the use of these teaching aids .

4 .2 Error correction

Error correction is a method for teaching ,which is adopted by Higgins to teach Eliza standardised English pronunciation . The following is an example cited from the film :

Eliza :a ,e ,i ,o ,u .

Higgins :“ a ” ,“ e ” ,“ i ” ,“ o ” ,“ u ” .

In this example ,Eliza pronounced the letter “ a ” in a non standardised way ,saying [ai] ,instead of [ei] ,and also said the letter “ i ” as [a] ,instead of [ai] . In order to have her use standardised pronunciation ,Higgins repeated it accordingly ,to help her eliminate her “ Cockney English ” . This method may not be suitable in terms of contemporary communicative pedagogy . Because in these modern times communication is a key objective ,as long as what the speakers said is understandable the two parties can reach their goals .

4 .3 Scaffolding learning

In terms of Eliza s different phases of learning ,Higgins scaffolds her learning by building from easy tasks to more difficult ones . At the beginning ,when Eliza cannot pronounce a letter in the standardised

manner, Higgins initially instructs her in easy tasks. For instance, there was the following dialogue between them when Eliza first learns the standardised pronunciation for the letter "h":

Eliza: In Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen.

Higgins: Oh, no, no, no...

Eliza: Shall I do it over?

Higgins: No, please. Start from the very beginning. Just do this: go, "har, har, har, har".

Eliza: Har, har, har, har.

Here Higgins coaches Eliza in a rule appropriate for students who are just starting to learn standardised English. Eliza wanted to say the long sentence when she was just beginning to learn to pronounce [h]. Whereas, Higgins provided a scaffold by asking her to pronounce just one sound by having her say "har, har, har, har", instead of saying the complete sentence. For a beginner it was appropriate for Eliza to learn in this step by step or scaffolded approach. With considerable practice, Eliza became adroit at pronouncing this single sound.

Higgins then began to tutor her in the standardised English pronunciation of a whole sentence. He instructed her to say "With green grass the flower pots were thickly crusted, one and all". It was hard for Eliza to say this sentence in standardised English, for she was used to saying the single sound and was not accustomed to speaking such sentences. But Higgins persisted in teaching her, even though it was difficult for Eliza, since she was a beginner in learning standardised English. This can be seen from the following dialogue between Pickering and Higgins:

Pickering: Higgins, perhaps that poem [sentence above] is too difficult for the girl. Why don't you try something simpler, like the owl and the pussycat?

Higgins: Pickering, I can't hear a word the girl is saying.

That is to say, Higgins insisted on his method of teaching difficult examples instead of sticking with simple ones, for he believed that simplicity is suitable for beginners who are just learning English. Raising the level of expectation for beginning learners is necessary, because it gradually squeezes them into relatively higher levels of English language proficiency. Teachers increasing levels of expectation for learners can help them to step into a higher level, to learn more difficult points so as to practise their abilities in language learning. At different and higher stage of learning, the experienced and knowledgeable teacher adapts the easiness and difficulty of the content to be learnt in different ways.

Higgins seems to understand Eliza's present learning situation. For example, he observes Eliza on the street and writes what she said in Cockney English and then he records and analyses her "incorrect" pronunciation on a phonograph. In this way, Higgins can find the flaws in her pronunciation and establish the main differences between standardised English and her dialect. By using this contrastive analysis procedure, Higgins adopted concrete methods to decrease the negative forms of her own speech. Second, Higgins imitates or models the standardised pronunciation of vowels, consonants, words and sentences to let her know the behaviour that has to be and can be learned through the process of teaching. All of this Higgins carries out in the process of teaching in concrete and detailed steps.

4.4 Speaking with rhythm

Rhythm plays an important role in language learning, being integral to speaking. Higgins focused on rhythm when teaching Eliza standardised pronunciation. This is demonstrated in the following listening/speaking dialogue:

Eliza: How kind of you to let me come.

Higgins: No, no. "kind of you", "kind of you", "kind —", "how kind of you to let me come".

Rhythm is reflected in and expressed by stress. Eliza misplaced the stress in the sentence so lost its rhythm. Hence, Higgins instructed her to say it with the correct stress and thus the correct rhythm. He said "How kind of you to let me come", correcting the misplaced stress in "kind of you". In this way, Eliza learnt to master the rhythm and so speak in standardised English, like this "How kind of you to let me come". In order to get Eliza to speak standardised English with rhythm, Higgins asked her to say

the words “cup ” and “of ” repeatedly . The idea was to enable her feel the rhythm of the language . The rhythm of the language was used by Higgins to aid her language learning .

In addition , Higgins used tongue twisters to instruct Eliza in the rhythm of language . As we have seen he had Eliza to say , “ The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain ” ,and “In Hartford , Hereford and Hampshire , hurricanes hardly ever happen ” . These two sentences were taught by Higgins because of their strong rhythmic properties ,as well as the related sound in the various words . In this way , Eliza developed a good command of rhythm which facilitated her English language learning . Since all languages are rhythmic , learning to speak English cannot be separated from learning its rhythm . This focus on rhythm proved effective in developing Eliza s proficiency in speaking .

4 .5 Reinforcement training

Reinforcement training refers to doing much practice in a limited time . It is especially suitable for language teaching and learning . This can accelerate with the frequency of spontaneous language use ,but evidence of this spontaneity was absent from Eliza s experience . Getting students to perform language well in a short time helps them become technically proficient . Higgins instructed Eliza through using a substantial amount of reinforcement training . This is evident in the dialogue between Mrs . Pearce and Higgins :

Mrs . Pearce : You simply cannot go on working the girl this way : making her say her alphabet over and over , from sun up to sun down , even during meals .

Higgins : When she does it properly , of course . Is that all , Mrs . Pearce ?

Mrs . Pearce , the servant , sympathised with Eliza , who had to practise the pronunciation of the alphabet many times . The maid wanted Higgins to give Eliza a break . However , he refused . He would not let Eliza rest until she could speak the alphabet in the required form . So Higgins had Eliza to practise again , again and again in order that she could speak standardised English . This is further illustrated in the following dialogue :

Eliza : That s what I said : a , e , i , o , u . That s what I ve been saying for three days and I won t say em no more .

Pickering : I know it s difficult , Miss Doolittle , but try to understand .

Higgins : It s no use explaining , Pickering . As a military man you ought to know that drilling is what she needs . Now you leave her alone or she ll be turning to you for sympathy .

Higgins instructed Eliza to practice “ S ” the alphabet many times , although she was tired from doing so . He believed that drilling is essential for learning standardised English . Eliza was learning to speak and behave like a lady . This meant learning standardised English verbal expressions and upper class etiquette or manners . She learnt to pronounce the alphabet , words and sentences in the way of “ Received Pronunciation ” , using correct grammar and coherent language structures . In addition , Eliza must learn to act with lady like manners , such as social communicative skills . Eliza had the inborn ability for language learning as well as being motivated towards learning standardised English in order to be a lady . Her desire for this consequence arose through her self observation , self judgment and self reaction . Higgins took her to a ball . This experience provided a stimulus to help her recall what she had been taught so as to make her to think again about the gentlewoman she had seen in various formal situations .

4 .6 Rote learning

Language is a tool for communication . Higgins adhered to the principle of making learning serve a practical purpose . Once Eliza had learned to say , “ The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain ” and other drilling patterns , Higgins excitedly said to Pickering , “ I think the time has come to try her out . Let s test her in public and see how she fares ” . Higgins geared Eliza s learning to practical uses . He wanted to know how Eliza used the knowledge and skills she had acquired in concrete social contexts . Hence , he took Eliza to the horse races where he said to his mother , Mrs . Higgins :

I taught her how to speak properly . She has strict instructions as to her behaviour . She s to keep to two subjects : the weather and everybody s health , “ fine day ” , and “ how do you do ” , and not just let

herself go on things in general . Help her along ,darling ,youll be quite safe .

In order to get Mrs . Higgins to aid Eliza to practise her spoken English ,Higgins prescribed two topics for his mother to talk about with Eliza . Namely ,he told his mother that she should only talk about the weather and health .In this way Eliza was expected to practice what she had learned . Higgins mother helped Eliza practice her newly acquired language skills and social behaviour in the social environment of a horse racing track . The following dialogue occurred between Eliza and Mrs . Higgins :

Mrs . Higgins :My dear Miss Doolittle .

Eliza :How kind of you to let me come . How do you do ?

Mrs . Higgins :How do you do ?

Mrs . Higgins helped Eliza practice her spoken English by greeting her with the dialogue that Eliza had learnt ,albeit without any apparent generative capacity . Eliza proved she had learnt standardised English well enough to engage in this concrete activity :

Mrs . Higgins :Will it rain ,do you think ?

Eliza :The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain . But in Hartford , Hereford and Hampshire , hurricanes hardly ever happen .

Through these dialogues ,Eliza used the language skills she had learnt to communicate with another person .In this way ,Higgins provided Eliza with another opportunity to learn to appropriately use his prescribed dialect of English . Meanwhile ,this helped Eliza to cultivate her language and social competence and so increased her interest and enthusiasm for learning the language . That learning serves practice proved effective in developing her speaking skills . To effectively learn it ,requires practise in a range of social contexts . But what can we say about the quality of this teaching ?

5 . Debating quality university teaching

The primary evidence analysed in the previous section was drawn from an examination of the representation of teaching made in My Fair Lady . Six key elements in Higgins teaching method were identified ,namely the use of teaching aids ,error correction ,scaffolding ,teaching public speaking ,reinforcement training ,and rote learning (see Table 3) . This data now provides a basis for developing an understanding and appreciation of current views about quality university teaching so as to better inform Masters graduates expecting to work in this field . This discussion is framed in terms of the two challenges facing English language majors and their supervisors in China in preparing Maters theses . These are ,first the teaching and learning required to collect and analyse primary evidence ,and second the need for supervisors to work with their Masters students to link their research project to their projected career trajectory . It is not evident in My Fair Lady that positive student teacher interactions ,interdependence or collaboration are important to Higgins . There is little sense of a shared ownership of the teaching / learning space ,mutual respect ,tolerance and understanding .

Table 3 . Quality university teaching :Points for debate from My Fair Lady

Attributes of quality teaching	Professor s Higgins
The teaching context	Higgins teaching of standardised English shaped by social class pressures against Cockney dialect
Changing expectations , changing times	Political ,economic ,social ,cultural and institutional changes in wider society informed Higgins desire for teaching standardised English
Diverse student communities	Higgins recognised that Eliza s dialect differed from the standardised version and sought to eradicate the latter and promote her proficiency in the former

Attributes of quality teaching	Professor s Higgins
Learning environment and management	Higgins teaching of English and Eliza s outcomes were influenced by the physical and management features of the learning environment
Teachers professional practices Selection of content	Teaching practices are contextual and flexible Higgins does not necessarily use of content (knowledge) which is of high intellectual quality ,not integrate a variety of knowledge disciplines and nor is it connected to Eliza s prior knowledge of selling flowers
Control over curriculum and its design	Higgins does indicate that language learning is more likely to occur when the focus is on teaching and learning with high expectations of students , rather than on administrative or managerial imperatives
Knowledge and practice of quality pedagogies	Higgins does not use pedagogies to motivate ,engage and com mit Eliza to learning , nor does he use methods that necessarily enhance her strategies for language and cultural learning
Teaching attributes Personal attributes and capabilities	Teaching capabilities necessary for pursuing valuable goals Higgins is enthusiastic ,creative ,com mitted and passionate about his work
Relational attributes and capabilities	Higgins does not collaborate with others in terms of securing moral support or sharing the workload
Professional attributes and capabilities	Higgins is qualified linguistic but not an accredited teacher which may explain his negative effects of Eliza s language learning

What counts as “quality university teaching” when it comes to the supervision of Masters students undertaking a research project that leads to the presentation of a thesis? In this instance, quality postgraduate supervision may be operationally defined as teaching (or supervisory pedagogies) that produce an improvements in students knowledge of evidence driven research processes and generates a thesis pertinent to their anticipated career prospects. An interrelated element of “quality teaching” holds that the professional practice of lecturers must develop expert knowledge of postgraduate supervisory pedagogies, evidence based research and ways to link Masters students research projects with their career interests. This requires supervisors to develop a deep understanding of the principles and processes of evidence driven research; to accumulate experience in professional research practices; to develop familiarity with recent advances in knowledge of research methods and postgraduate supervisory pedagogies, and a mastery of relevant supervisory techniques and research procedures. Of equal importance, it also means developing an understanding of the place of education in contributing to the agency of young women. A Masters research project and thesis that is oriented to enhancing their capability to make a living wage, or engaging in extra familial roles in the economy, or to acquiring property rights may make a small, but nonetheless useful contribution to their autonomy, empowerment and right to be heard (Sen 2005 :220-250). The combination of these factors make it important for supervisors to provide specific, frequent, positive and responsive feedback to students on their work, especially on each succeeding draft of a Masters thesis. Higgins seems to have been less inclined to do so.

The supervision of Masters students majoring in English in China operates in an era of social, technical, economic and cultural change. In particular the diminished employment opportunities for these graduates to gain employment in their preferred field of work now warrant changes in how these students prepare their Masters thesis. This also means changing how these students are now supervised. In

particular, this calls for transformations in the knowledge and skills that their supervisors need to exhibit; the roles they are required to undertake as supervisors, and the ways in which they engage in postgraduate supervisory pedagogies (OECD, 2005). Supervisors prepare their Masters students for their future employment through the actions they take in supervising their research projects and the direct help they provide in the preparation of their theses. In this context of change, supervisors are expected to develop Masters students' research skills, knowledge and understandings, and to provide the groundwork for their work/life trajectory. However, student control and self-regulation were not encouraged by Higgins. Eliza had little responsibility for her learning. She was given little confidence to express herself and to take legitimate risks in her learning. It is open to debate as to whether Higgins promoted Eliza's generative use of "London English".

Quality teaching engages Masters students in a range of meta-learning strategies to enhance their active involvement in learning through research and thesis writing. These strategies include explicit teaching methods; cooperative teaching/learning; probing and using students' ideas and questions; scaffolding material; asking higher-order questions; and making the purpose of learning and its links to future employment overt (Fouts 2003; Darling-Hammond 2000). Higgins did not seriously engage Eliza in a range of meta-learning strategies to enhance her active involvement in the teaching/learning process. However, securing and sustaining Eliza's engagement and motivation to learn standardised English required Higgins to use a range of teaching/learning strategies rather than a single, rigid approach. Higgins used a variety of pedagogies that emphasised Eliza's involvement with and application of linguistic knowledge. Whether Higgins would vary the pedagogies used according to the needs of his students is an open question.

Knowledge of Masters students, their learning/learning trajectories, the content of research methods and postgraduate supervisory pedagogies is not static. These change with time. Quality teaching depends on the ongoing development of lecturers' knowledge about subject content, teaching/learning, students, education policies and labour markets (Day 2000). Professional development that accommodates the needs of lecturers and acknowledges their passions can also enhance their knowledge and skills. Self-aware, reflective practice undertaken in the context of feedback, collaboration and discussion among professional colleagues are beneficial to professional learning and improving teaching practices (Quicke 2000). Workshops have limited impact where participants are then not given adequate time to thoroughly grasp the ideas, debate the initiatives and experiment through implementation (Law 2003). Productive methods for the professional development of postgraduate supervisors include the mentoring and coaching that comes through co-supervision. Higgins does not rate highly in regard to regularly engaging in professional conversations about his teaching, research or research ethics.

6. Conclusion

This paper provides support for the contention that the representations of teaching made in films can provide primary evidence that is useful for encouraging thoughtful and tactful debates about quality university teaching. However, the feasibility of any evidence-driven research project and associated thesis must take into account the prospects for accessing relevant primary evidence and secondary research literature. This can be a challenge in a developing nation such as China. Access to both of these resources is not as easy as it is in Australian universities. Even so, while many Masters theses by English majors have been constructed as literature reviews, it is possible for supervisors to teach their research students (mostly young women) about the research processes involved in the collection and analysis of first-hand evidence.

In addition, this paper has suggested the importance of, and ways to link the research project and theses produced by Masters students to their planned career trajectory. It is acknowledged that Masters graduates with English majors face difficulties in gaining employment as university lecturers, the field for which they have typically been prepared. The project reported here was explicitly oriented to the student's future employment trajectory as a university lecturer, taking as its focus an investigation into quality university teaching, and thus better prepared to seek such employment. But it is likely there is a need for a consideration of a broader range of fields in which their English language skills might be employed. Such consideration might begin with the place of English in enhancing the success of China's

development of innovations across the range of sectors where it faces challenges. Masters theses that do not have such an employment orientation, and prefer to dwell on decontextualised linguistic abstractions are questionable given changes in the graduate labour market and the demands China has for advanced knowledge available in English. These changes also pose challenges for the professional development of supervisors of Masters students research projects and theses. They now need productive programs so they can learn to explicitly teach these evidence driven research skills, knowledge of collaborative postgraduate supervisory pedagogies, and strategies for marrying these with considerations of students career aspirations. By way of illustrations this paper has explored the use of film as one source of primary evidence for researching an issue relevant to Masters students future careers as lecturers, namely an investigation into quality university teaching.

Further research is now needed into the possibilities for accessing and using films and other sources of primary evidence for developing an understanding and appreciation of jobs which are pertinent to Masters students career aspirations. That such projects explored their intersection with China's social, economic and environmental challenges would be especially beneficial. For instance, it might be interesting to investigate the responses of university research ethics committees to a proposal to conduct a research experiment modelled on that represented in *My Fair Lady*, and so develop Masters students knowledge in this field. Career-minded, Masters research students might use films such as *Educating Rita*, *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers* to investigate quality teaching in terms of their depiction of teaching methods and how these are influenced by the social, technical, political, economic and cultural contexts of society. Likewise, there is a need for research into the professional development of lecturers to enhance their skills in conducting evidence driven research, their knowledge of advanced postgraduate supervisory pedagogies, and strategies for articulating students thesis research with their career aspirations.

Acknowledgements

Work on this paper was finalised during Professor Singh's professional development program, supported by the University of Western Sydney, and while a Visiting Professor at Jilin University during September 2007.

References

- Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, S. & E. Iyamu. 2006. Factors affecting quality of English language teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nigeria. *College Student Journal* 40 /3 :495-504.
- Alton-Lee, A. 2003. Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis - what role this kind of work can and can't take in building teaching quality? (Proceeding of the ACER Research Conference, Building teacher quality. What does the research tell us).
- Ayres, P., W. Sawyer & S. Dinham. 2004. Effective teaching in the context of a Grade 12 high stakes external examination in New South Wales, Australia. *British Educational Research Journal* 30 /1 :141-165.
- Bishop, R. 2003. Changing power relations in education: Kaupapa Maori messages for "mainstream" education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Comparative Education* 39 /2 :221-38.
- Blackmore, J. 2004. Restructuring educational leadership in changing contexts: A local/global account of restructuring in Australia. *Journal of Educational Change* 5 :267-288.
- Chapman, D., J. Weidman, M. Cohen & M. Mercer. 2005. The search for quality: A five country study of national strategies to improve educational quality in Central Asia. *International Journal of Educational Development* 25 /5 :524-530.
- Clark, N. 2003. The play of the world. In M. Pryke, G. Rose & S. Whatmore (eds.). *Using Social Theory: Thinking through Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L. 2000. Teaching for America's future: National commissions and vested interests in an almost profession. *Educational Policy* 14 /1 :162-183.
- Darling-Hammond, L. & P. Young. 2002. Defining "highly qualified teachers": What does "scientifically-based research" actually tell us? *Educational Researcher* 31 /9 :13-26.
- Day, C. 2000. Teachers in the twenty first century: Time to renew the vision. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 6 /1 :101-115.
- Fenstermacher, G. & V. Richardson. 2005. On making determinations of quality in teaching. *Teachers College*

Record 107 / 1 :186-213 .

- Fouts, J. 2003. A Decade of Reform : A Summary of Research Findings on Classroom, School and District Effectiveness in Washington State. Seattle :Pacific University .
- Glenzer, H. 2005. Living learning theory through My Fair Lady. British Journal of Educational Technology 36 / 1 :101-105 .
- Greenwald, R. L. Hedges & R. Laine. 1996. The effect of school resources on student achievement. Review of Educational Research 66 / 3 :361-396 .
- Han, J. & M. Singh. 2007. Getting world English speaking student teachers to the Top of the Class : Making hope for ethno-cultural diversity in teacher education robust. Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education 35 / 3 :291-309 .
- Hargreaves, A. 2000. Four ages of professionalism and professional learning. Teachers and Teaching : History and Practice 6 / 2 :151-182 .
- Hayes, D. M. Mills, P. Christie & B. Lingard. 2005. Teachers and Schooling Making a Difference : Productive Pedagogies, Assessment and Performance. Sydney :Allen & Unwin .
- Hill, P. & V. Russell. 1999. Systemic, whole school reform of the middle years of schooling. In R. Bosker, B. Creemers & S. Stringfield (eds.). Enhancing Educational Excellence, Equity and Efficiency : Evidence from Evaluations of Systems and Schools in Change. London :Kluwer .
- Holbrook, M. 1993. Nostalgia and consumption preferences : Some emerging patterns of consumer tastes. The Journal of Consumer Research 20 / 2 :245-256 .
- Hu, G. 2005. English language education in China : Policies, progress, and problems. Language Policy 4 / 1 : 5-24 .
- Johnson, S. & J. Landman. 2000. "Sometimes bureaucracy has its charms" : The working conditions of teachers in deregulated schools. The Teachers College Record 102 / 1 :85-124 .
- Kennedy, M. 2006. From teacher quality to quality teaching. Educational Leadership 63 / 6 :14-19 .
- Knezek, G. & R. Christensen. 2002. Impact of new information technologies on teachers and students. Education and Information Technologies 7 / 4 :369-376 .
- Law, W. 2003. Globalization as both threat and opportunity for the Hong Kong teaching profession. Journal of Educational Change 4 :149-179 .
- Levine, S. 2001. On the mirrorstage with Henry and Eliza or playing with Pygmalion in five acts. Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies 3 / 2 :103-125 .
- Liu, D. 1998. Ethnocentrism in TESOL : Teacher education and the neglected needs of international TESOL students. ELT Journal 52 / 1 :3-10 .
- O'Brien, L. & M. Schillaci. 2002. Why do I want to teach anyway ? Utilizing autobiography in teacher education. Teaching Education 13 / 1 :25-40 .
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2005. Teachers Matter : Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers. Paris :OECD .
- Quicke, J. 2000. A new professionalism for a collaborative culture of organizational learning in contemporary society. Educational Management and Administration 28 / 3 :299-315 .
- Rowan, B., E. Camburn & R. Correnti. 2004. Using teacher logs to measure the enacted curriculum : A study of literacy teaching in third grade classrooms. The Elementary School Journal 105 / 1 :75-102 .
- Sen, A. 1999. Development as Freedom. New York :Anchor Books .
- Sen, A. 2005. The Argumentative Indian : Writings on Indian Culture, History and Identity. London :Penguin .
- Singh, M. 1992. The literacy teacher as a professional : Insights from the work of Sylvia Ashton-Warner. Australian Journal of Language and Literacy 15 / 4 :273-286 .
- Singh, M. & J. Han. 2006. Quality English teaching for a knowledge producing society : Inspiring robust hope, creativity and passion. In B. Doecke, M. Howie & W. Sawyer (eds.). " Only Connect " : English Teaching, Schooling and Community, pp. 42-65. Kent Town (SA) : Wakefield Press .
- Thrupp, M. 1998. Exploring the politics of blame : School inspection and its contestation in New Zealand and England. Comparative Education 34 / 2 :195-209 .
- Xian, X. & X. Sun. 2007. Investigation of teachers and students of universities about their evaluation of teaching activities. Journal of Xi'an International Studies University 15 / 2 :91-93 .
- Zammit, K., C. Sinclair, B. Cole & M. Singh. 2007. Teaching and Leading for Quality Australian Schools. Canberra :Teaching Australia .