

What is College for?

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「福岡女学院大学短期大学部英語英文学紀要」第五十八号抜刷

2022（令和4）年3月

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INTRODUCTION

What is college for? That is one question many teachers, students and administrators seem to have difficulty agreeing on. This paper takes a look at what college is (or at least should be) for, that is, the purpose of college in a student's overall education and, more importantly, life. If asked, "What is college for?", most people would probably say that college is "a place for learning", or "a place to prepare students for the future", or "a place to prepare students for future jobs", and so on. Perhaps more important and detailed questions could include, "Learning what exactly?", or "Preparing students for what kind of future?", or "Preparing students for what kind of jobs?". In the case of learning English as a foreign language, several other questions would emerge such as, "How can we develop students' proficiency in English?", or "How can we develop students to be more motivated to learn English?", and so on and so forth.

THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

If you were to say that college is a place for learning, or a place to prepare students for the future or for future jobs, then students are going to need several kinds of skills to be successful or at least develop their strengths even further.

One approach to teaching college students, or students of any age, is using the theory of multiple intelligences set out by Harvard researcher, Howard Gardner (1993). There are eight intelligences laid out by Gardner including; spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, linguistic, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences.

Let's look at each intelligence, define what they are and how they could be incorporated into a classroom and/or curriculum.

Spatial Intelligence is the ability to recognize and manipulate large-scale and fine-grained spatial images. There are several ways to use this intelligence in the classroom. Take photography, for example. In order to take a good photo, the photographer needs to be able to judge space well. They need to be able to judge the ideal distance from where they are to the object they are photographing. In addition, the photographer needs to consider the best angle from which to take the photo, how to center the object (or not center the object) as well as the lighting and what is in the background behind the object is, and so on. There are several kinds of activities a teacher could do with students in the classroom using photography. Some examples could include creating a photo blog on a number of different topics and/or creating a class email or paper-based newsletter, newspaper or magazine with photos. Students could also create photo books with photos around a certain theme such of the nature of Fukuoka and add captions, poems, or inspirational phrases to compliment the photos. If the teacher wanted the students to speak, perhaps a photo presentation or a recorded photo show set in a video format such as YouTube would work well. Instead of photos, students with a talent for drawing could do most of the activities mentioned above with drawings instead of photos. In addition, students could produce a storybook for

children using their drawings. Classes using spatial intelligence could be Photography, Photo Journalism, Yearbook, Storybook, Presentation, Video Production, just to name a few.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to use one's own body to create products or solve problems. Activities include sports (physical education), dancing, hiking and so on. These activities could be coupled with other intelligences such as musical intelligence (with dancing, naturally) and even linguistic intelligence (using English in P.E. class, for example) and nature intelligence (as with hiking or performing various camping activities). Classes would obviously be Physical Education (and/or any sport), Dance, Creative Dance, Hiking/Mountaineering and so on.

Musical intelligence is the ability to produce, remember, and make meaning of different patterns of sound. Musical intelligence could be developed through using music in the classroom in the form of listening to music and/or songs, playing musical instruments, singing, and performing musical plays. This intelligence could be coupled with English (linguistic intelligence). For example, when learning English through music, students can study the lyrics of songs for a variety of purposes such as to learn pronunciation, word stress, rhythm, vocabulary, grammar, and various social and global issues to name a few. Classes in a curriculum could include; Musical Appreciation, Choir, Learning English through Music and Songs, etc.

Linguistic intelligence is the ability to analyze information and create products involving oral and written language such as speeches, books, and memos. In an English Department, the linguistic intelligence would be the centerpiece. As stated throughout this section, most all the multiple

intelligences can be developed together with other intelligences. To develop linguistic intelligence, teachers would probably focus mainly on reading, writing, speaking and listening. There may be an extra emphasis on vocabulary, written and spoken grammar, test taking, language and culture, and so on. Another approach would be to teach and practice the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) both intensively and extensively as mentioned in a later section. The list of possible activities to help develop linguistic intelligence is endless, however, a few of the possible activities could include Academic Reading, Reading for Pleasure (extensive reading), Literature Appreciate, Process Writing, Academic Writing, Writing for Pleasure, Creative Writing (including essays and poetry), Journalistic Writing/Journalism, Extensive Listening, Presentation/Public Speaking, Discussion, Debate, Extensive Speaking, Fluency Practice (four skills) and so many other language-based classes.

Logical-mathematical is the ability to develop equations and proofs, make calculations, and solve abstract problems. As we now live in what could be called the “information age”, analyzing data and numbers is more important than ever. People need to know what the data and numbers they read or see mean and be able to apply that knowledge to their everyday lives, study and work. When making presentations, students could be taught how to present and explain data clearly so that viewers and listeners can understand it easily.

Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand other people’s moods, desires, motivations, and intentions. Much like Social Intelligence (Goleman, 2006), interpersonal intelligence is a significant intelligence to develop to be successful in most any social endeavor. The ability to communicate is more than just linguistic skill. A person needs

to be able to connect with others in meaningful ways and that is where interpersonal intelligence comes in. As a speaker of English as a foreign language, interpersonal intelligence allows a student to communicate naturally in several types of social settings. One such social setting, or social situation, involves the ability to make "small talk". Small talk could be defined casual verbal communication and can include topics such as the weather, sports, news and the like. While considered trivial by some people, small talk allows people to make the meaning social connections in life that helps not only maintain peace and social relationships, but also allows people to develop deeper and more meaningful relations varying from lifelong friendship to business partners or even marriage partners. Some formal settings in which social intelligence and interpersonal intelligence is valuable would include job interviews, various types of speeches in various social settings, and meetings of most all kinds such as with customers or clients, and so on. A person with a higher level of interpersonal intelligence might be called "a people person" or "the life of the party". In the classroom, interpersonal intelligence could be practiced and developed through pair work or small and large group work with various partners using a variety of activities and conversation or discussion topics. Possible classes focusing on the use of interpersonal intelligence could include Interpersonal Communication, English for Socializing, Public Speaking, Business Negotiation, and so on.

Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand his or her own moods, desires, motivations, and intentions. Intrapersonal intelligence is what can also be called Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995). It could be argued that this is the most fundamental and important intelligence to develop because that if one is not able to control themselves, then there are little chance they are going to be able to function well in

society and with other people. Knowing yourself, or being self-aware, and being able to find your purpose in life and improve yourself is vital not only for success in life, but, more importantly, find true happiness. There are several ways students could do this. They could read books or watch videos on the subject of intrapersonal intelligence. They could take a psychology class. They could meditate or spend some time in prayer. They could do yoga. They do go outside in nature and move their bodies thus in combination with other intelligences (for example, naturalistic intelligence and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence). Classes to develop intrapersonal intelligence could include; Intrapersonal Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health, Positive Psychology, Yoga, Meditation and Prayer, and so on. Intrapersonal intelligence could also be developed through various extracurricular activities involving serving others (volunteerism).

Naturalistic intelligence is the ability to identify and distinguish among different types of plants, animals, and weather formations that are found in the natural world. Nature includes all living things, for example, birds, fish, plants, trees and the ecosystems they live in like oceans, rivers, and the mountains. Activities to develop naturalistic intelligence could include nature walks, hikes in natural settings, camping in nature, planting trees, maintaining gardens, wildlife conservation volunteering, and so on. Classes could include Nature Studies, Biology, Ecology, Environmental Studies, Mountaineering, Outdoor School, Gardening, Wildlife Conservation Wildlife Volunteering, and the like.

GROWTH MINDSET

In order to improve yourself, you have to believe that is possible. This is what has been called “mindset”. The research and theory of the Mindset

has been rather simply and eloquently written about by Carol Dweck of Stanford University (Dweck, 2006). Dweck mentioned two types of mindsets, a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. In a fixed mindset, people basically feel that no matter what they do, no matter how much effort they put into something, and so on, they are not able to change things or grow personally, that is, their development is fixed and the skill set they have is either something they were born with or developed at an early age and they are now beyond get any better at anything. In a growth mindset, on the other hand, a person believes that they have the ability to improve, to grow, to get better if they work hard. A person with a growth mindset can develop throughout their lives and can overcome the various challenges in front of them. Not only is a growth mindset essential for students, it is essential, if not more so, for teachers and administrators since they are the ones in charge of the instruction to help shape students' lives. In order to develop a growth mindset, students need to be guided through various activities that help them realize goals and success through their own practice and effort. With the development of a growth mindset comes the development of motivation, resilience, and achievement. The growth mindset can be taught and learned. With a teacher's guidance, students can learn to set goals, makes plans to achieve their goal this fostering greater motivation and enjoyment. Programs such as Project-Based Learning can help students think, plan, create and thus develop a growth mindset.

GRIT

Related to the growth mindset is something that has been called, "grit". "Grit" was what Angela Duckworth called her research and subsequent book (Duckworth, 2016). As Duckworth explains it, grit is the secret to success and achievement and is a special blend of passion and persistence.

Surely, without passion and persistence, it would seem very unreasonable to succeed and achieve at anything in life. How could you if you did not enjoy what you were doing or gave little effort toward your goals? Talent or skill is not enough, explains Duckworth. Students (and teachers) need to be aware of the importance of grit and strive to develop it in and out of the classroom. Students should have the opportunity to study and do the things they love according to their own person skills and interests (as mentioned about multiple intelligences). In addition, when pursuing an interest, students should give it time knowing that persistence is also essential so that they do not give up quickly and easily on their goals. Author Malcolm Gladwell even wrote in his book, “Outliers” (2008), that it takes 10,000 hours of intensive practice to achieve mastery of a complex skill. If one were to devote an hour a day to their practice, it would take over 27 years to achieve mastery give this 10,000-hour rule. This gives educators and learners all the more reason to view education as a lifelong pursuit. Again, it takes time, passion and persistence to achieve success in the form of mastery. You may ask, what is “mastery”? George Leonard, in his book, *Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment* (1992), illustrated mastery as a mysterious process in which something is difficult at first, but becomes progressively easier and more pleasurable through practice. Leonard added that the sure route to success and happiness in life is through the long-term “goalless” process of mastery. Therefore, in order to succeed and find fulfillment in life, not only do we need passion in our pursuits, but also the persistence (grit) to get through the difficulties, especially in the beginning. It is in these beginnings in college, that teachers can lead students on the lifelong paths of mastery.

INTENSIVE LEARNING AND EXTENSIVE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

One way to approach language learning is from the intensive and extensive learning perspective. Both are important, but it seems the latter often gets either overlooked or ignored all together. Intensive learning takes place in lectures, process or academic writing classes, reading skills classes, and perhaps classes with a focus on presentations and speeches. Other learning practices such as memorizing (and later forgetting) difficult word lists or an emphasis on “correct” spelling and grammar could also be considered intensive if not overly so. I would liken this intensive approach to a runner who is doing short intensive training like strength training or short hill sprints. While these kinds of exercise are valuable to the runner, they are not necessarily what makes the runner able to run longer distances faster. This type of training cannot be sustained for long periods of time since the intensity is so high. Intensive training or practice may not necessarily be fun either and the practitioner may quickly get bored and/or tired from the activity. On the contrary, extensive language practice takes a much different approach. Learners are encouraged to set their own goals and materials thus enhancing the quality of the learning experience, increasing self-confidence, and developing learner autonomy and self-motivating learner strategies (Dornyei, 2001). The practice of extensive reading should be fun and easy and thus can be done for much longer periods of time. For a runner, this would mean a slow jog. If done in nature with the company of friends, a slow jog over conversation would be fun indeed. For the language learner, extensive language practice could be done over any of the four skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The key is to go as long as the learners’ motivation takes them, so the practice has to be fun and easy. Extensive reading is intended to develop good reading

habits and build knowledge of spelling, vocabulary, grammar, discourse structure, but perhaps more importantly, encourage more positive attitudes toward reading (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). For extensive reading, for example, they learner can choose their own books to read and read at 97–100% comprehension at 80–100 words per minute (Waring, 2000) though speeds of about 150 words per minute may prove more beneficial. Lower comprehension rates would slow the reading speeds and thus inhibit the development of fluency which is one of the main purposes of extensive practice. Readers should aim to read at least 20 minutes a time and more would probably be better, especially for more advanced readers (Day & Bamford, 1998). As readers read more, they encounter vocabulary and grammar used in a variety of ways more frequently thus enhancing learning and language development. As regards to vocabulary, Waring (2000) stated that an average word must be must 15 to 20 times before it is 'known'. A similar approach would be made to extensive writing. The emphasis is on pleasurable practice so the learner should aim to write as much as they can on topics of their choice and without worry or concern about accuracy which they can practice in their intensive language practice classes. Again, the focus is on fluency, so learners should be encouraged to write without using dictionaries or erasers. Learners should also be encouraged to write freely without worry or concern about making mistakes (Seow, 2002). The same could be said for speaking. Learners need to learn about speaking in some classes, but they also need a time and place to speak extensively using many of the guidelines used for extensive writing. As of extensive listening, similar guidelines used for extensive reading apply. The listening should be rather easy giving the listener near 100% comprehension and enjoyment.

LEARNER AUTONOMY, MOTIVATION, CREATIVITY, PROJECT-BASED AND EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING

You may often hear the expression, “learning by doing”. Project-based learning and experimental learning take that approach to learning. As a way to encourage learner autonomy (Benson, 2011) and motivation (Dornyei, 2001), project-based learning and experimental learning approaches are more interesting and enjoyable and thus more likely to generate intrinsic motivation, creativity and productivity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, Robinson, 2009). An additional benefit to these approaches is that they encourage the learner to be more creative. In this day and age of technology in the form of A.I. and robots, creativity should certainly be a human skill school help students develop. Obviously, any traditional art class would help student develop their creative skills. However, creativity can be applied to most any pursuit requiring thought, planning, design and production. Classes in college could include Yearbook, Photography, Journalism/Newspaper/Magazine, Podcasting, School Goods and the like. In order for students to learn most effectively, they need the freedom to think for themselves and the opportunity to express themselves freely. In the ideal situation, students can choose what they want to learn and when and where they want to do it. This is the basic concept behind learner autonomy. While many teachers, administrators and even students themselves may see learner autonomy as somewhat radical ideas, please consider what would be opposite ideas. School with strict rules, much like a prison, and teacher-centered instruction in which students’ preferences, opinions and needs are largely not concerned or even fully ignored.

THE FUTURE OF JOBS AND HUMAN SKILLS

One perspective many students, teachers, and administrators have about the purpose of college is that it prepares students for future jobs. While that certainly is an important purpose, the future of jobs in 2022 and beyond is rather unclear and with the onset of technological advancements in the form of A.I. and robots, employment trends and needs are in constant and accelerated flux (The Future of Jobs Report 2020, World Economic Forum, 2020). Many of the current jobs are being replaced by A.I. and robots, especially jobs that are repetitious or dangerous. In addition, many of these repetitious or dangerous jobs are being filled with foreigners, mostly from other Asian countries. To compound problems, Japanese has not only an aging population, but also rather low birthrates. The population of people who can fill repetitious or dangerous jobs is constantly decreasing. The good news is that there are still several jobs A.I. and robots cannot do, such as jobs that require human skills. There are some things that A.I. and robots cannot do. There are things (jobs) that human can still do much better than A.I. and robots. That is, humans, being human, have human skills, social and emotional intelligence (or lack of), grit and motivation to do things. Human have such “skills” as gratitude, optimism, empathy, kindness, tenacity, curiosity, patience, conviction, humility, and ambition (Vaynerchuk, 2021). In addition, well-developed humans have self-awareness and a sense of accountability that machines cannot replicate at this time. As a result, there are certain jobs that humans are better at and therefore, schools should do their best to develop these human skills in their students. Classes in psychology, volunteering, project-based learning, unschooling could all help students develop these skills. Activities like creating school goods, helping others, yoga, experimental learning and fieldwork would be great ways to develop human skills.

CONCLUSION

What is college for? This paper aimed to answer that question for several perspectives in hopes to give the reader some of their own answers and possibilities of what can be done in college. College is a special time in a person's life and can be a place to explore and find out about several academic topics, make lifetime social connections and grow as a person in general. College should not be like a prison with many constricting rules and regulations filled with countless formal procedures and forms to fill out. College should be fun, where learners can learn without fear and are encouraged to find out things for themselves with the support of their classmates, teachers and administrators. A student with a more fully developed mind, body and soul will be more equipped for any challenge in life.

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