

## Some implications from the observer and the observed in public speaking contests

**Dr. Clara Cheng**

The case study participant Student A is now in Grade 10. She has been observed for two years in the case study (Yin, 2009). Dr. Cheng has been playing the role of an observer-researcher-coach during the period 2018-2020. She was Student A's English teacher in her Grade 8. She was also her chief coach in the first-time public speaking contest (chief jobs: guiding the research part for the topic; commenting and finalizing the script with the student; refining and coaching the public speaking skills; she acted as her school consultant during her second and third attempts of public speaking, giving comments on her topics (set/self-chosen) and finalizing the topics with her; marking and commenting the scripts for the contests.

### A summary of the learning-competition process (2018-2020):

Student A started her first-time public speaking training in 2018 Nov-Feb; she won her championship in the 21st Century Public Speaking Contest (Feb 2019); she obtained her 6th place in the national public speaking contest held in China in Apr 2019. She tried her second-time public speaking contest in 2020 (Hong Kong Federation of Youth, Public Speaking Contest 2020) and she won the district championship and obtained her chance to the Grand Finale in Hong Kong. She once reflected that she would give a "No" to public speaking which was never her best and something too new and challenging for her (see her reflection notes in *GT Blog* and *GT Newsletter*, 2019, 2020).



However, after her first-time experience, she changed her ideas about public speaking and herself (*GT Newsletter*, 2019, Vol. 5). Upon completing her second-time grand finale in the public speaking organized by the HK organizer above, she has a completely different perception of public speaking, herself, and learning. Within two years, she obtained another championship in Oct 2020 in the "21st Century Cup—English Public Speaking Contest (2020, Oct); this time in the senior form category. She joined the contest by invitation and she was a newly senior form student as compared with other contestants in the competition. Her third championship (2020, Oct) has consolidated some of her self-understanding, maturity, and confidence level, as well as her sense of pride and gratitude for learning and the support involved (see her reflection notes, *GT Newsletter*, 2020, Nov).

### Speaking Skills To Consider

- Eye Contact
- Enthusiasm
- Interaction
- Presentation
- Emphasis
- Confidence
- Body Language
- Facial Expressions
- Tone/Volume

## The case study on Student A was based on the multi-sources of data for data triangulation (Creswell, 2012):

- Student A's own reflection in school publications (*GT Blog*, 2020; *GT Newsletter*, 2019)
- Student A's video by the GT Video Team (an interview by teachers, Mr T and Dr Cheng, July, 2020)
- The researcher's observation notes (written and kept by Dr Cheng, 2020)
- Discourse data (WhatsApp communication between the student and Dr Cheng (2018-2020))

## The multiple intelligences Student A has demonstrated before the public speaking training-competition experience (2018-2020):

- Musical intelligence (since her primary school performance; the inside school and outside school awards she has obtained)

## The multiple intelligences Student A has demonstrated while the public-speaking training and competition experience in these two years:

- Linguistic intelligence

## After the public-speaking training and competition experience in these two years, other intelligences seem to have been witnessed or developed in Student A:

- Intrapersonal intelligence (see Student A's reflections and video, G.T. College, 2018-2020)
- Interpersonal intelligence (see Student A's reflections and video, G.T. College, 2018-2020)
- Ethical intelligence (see Student A's reflections and video, G.T. College, 2018-2020)
- Existential intelligence (see Student A's reflections and video, G.T. College, 2018-2020)

## Self-Exploration through Journalizing (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1997)

### Student A's monologue about

...the organization asked me if I wanted to join the national senior division out of the blue, with only two weeks left to write 2 speeches that had to be **good enough** . . . .  
**I was so sure I'm going to say no** because firstly, suddenly joining the senior division instead of junior **scares me** a bit. **And I knew if I said yes**, those two weeks before handing in the script will be really stressful. **However, I knew this was a very special opportunity, therefore** I took it.

### Student A's reflection on the process of the off-campus experience

...the process was **tough** but I **ended up learning** a lot throughout the researching process, and accidentally writing . . . speech **helped me understand** . . . , which was **useful** in the q&a session at the competition. Now looking back, **I'm really proud** that I took this challenge. **I overcame** my fear. . . . because I **found out what I can** do to train . . . answers in a few seconds and being able to . . . .  
And for some reason I've always thought I'd never be good enough . . . national grand finals, **I bursted in joy**. I was **really proud of myself**.

### Student A's conclusion on her off-campus experience

This experience once again **proved** that when a door opens, go for it. **Don't overthink, just take the** opportunity because opportunities **don't wait**. Also it just **feels amazing** to finally be able to figure out how to deal with my **biggest fear**— the q&a session. And I have to thank Dr Cheng for taking time helping me in the process even though she was very busy herself. **I'm so glad that I took this challenge** and turned it into such a **beautiful lesson**.

(Student A's personal communication, Oct 9, 2020)

## Some character traits/categories from the grounded data retrieved from the multiple sources (reflection notes in whatsapp, interview videos, GT Blogs, GT Newsletters) mentioned above:

- thankful, polite, respectful (for parents, teachers, school, friends),
- independent, risk-taker (*GT Blog*, 2020, July, “I made the decision to challenge myself”; *GT Newsletter*, 2020 Nov, “I am really proud that I took the challenge”)
- understanding (the difficulties of other people—teachers, friends, parents) [interpersonal intelligence]
- humble, open-minded, and perceptive (trying to learn from those competitors/peers around her; *GT Blog* 2020 July “her achievement is not winning the championship; pushing herself to a place where she thought she would never be”; “every opportunity an open door leading to a new journey”)
- time-keeper (time conscious of plans and things to accomplish; knowing the time element in her life)
- diligent/action-person (to improve, to make better)
- determined (to work hard for improvement);
- purpose/goal-driven; goal-driven (fear of having lost chances to join national or local contests)
- honest and sincere (directly corrected her teacher’s wrong interpretation of the “award” she obtained in her second time public speaking contest)
- quite a person with faith (“spiritual” intelligence; prayers in times of high stress during the contests; a bond between the coach and the student)
- intrapersonal intelligence (delighted to have her own “self” understanding; trying to understand her own problems after some pressure during coaching; “overthinking and anxiety” in *GT Blog*, 2020, July)
- a keen singer (musical intelligence)
- a keen public speaker (linguistic intelligence)

## Implications of the case study on learning, MI education, and future research:

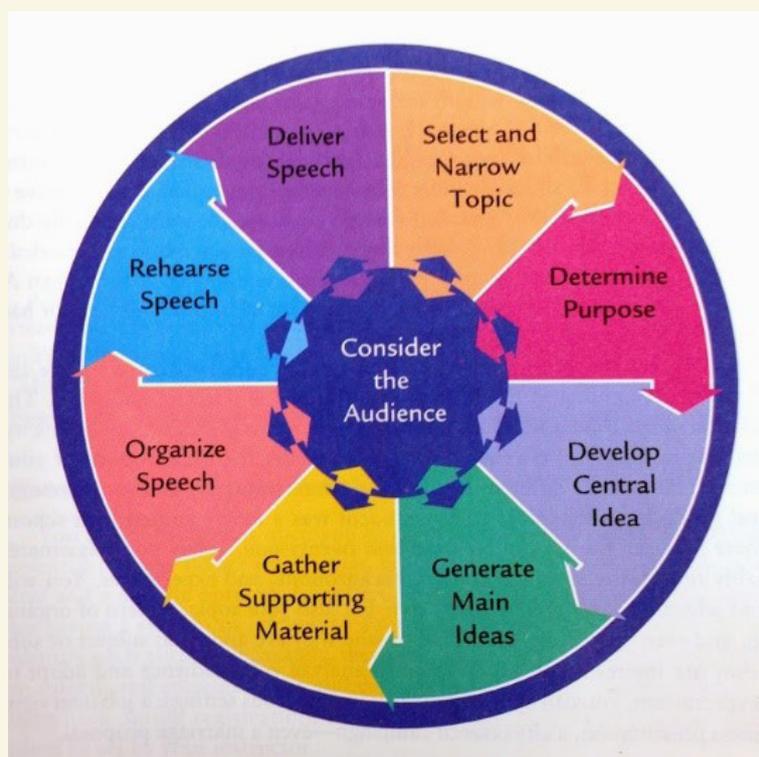
### On learning:

Off-campus learning experience can be as powerful or as more powerful than the standard or conventional school (on-campus) learning experience. It has enhanced the growth of the creative and disciplined mind of the participant/contestant/learner during the process (Gardner, 2007). But diligence and determination still seem to be the two key success factors in gifted or talented learners.

Other able or above average learners (e.g., her class/schoolmates) might have been encouraged by achievement and success (see the observation notes by Dr Cheng).

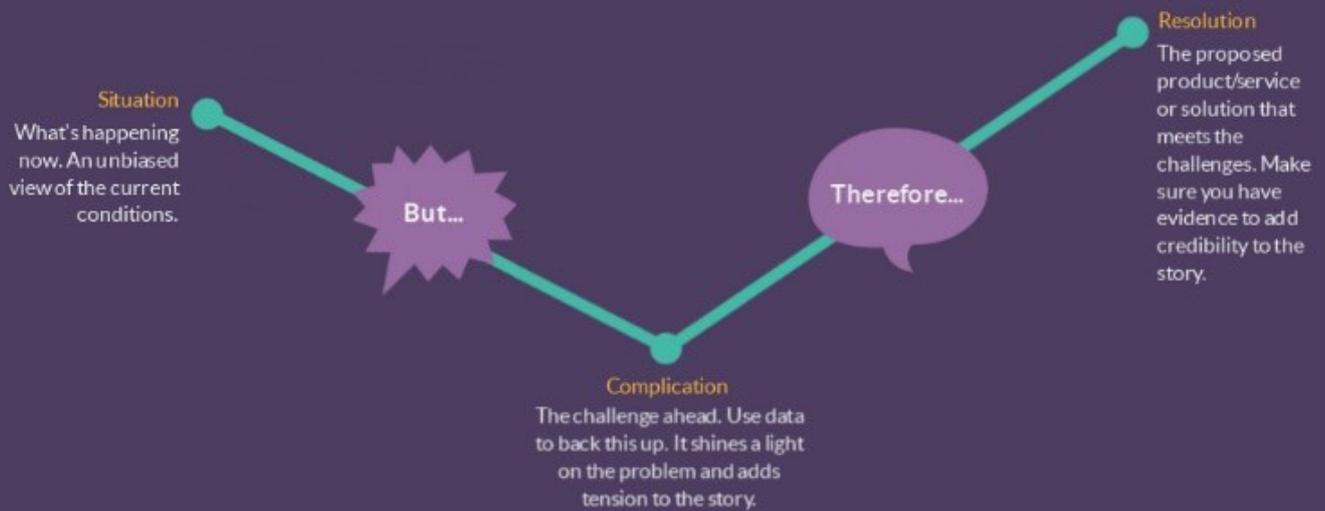
### On MI education:

Intelligences can be developmental (as suggested by Gardner in his books about the minds and MI). From Student A’s case, it is encouraging to see that she and her teachers might not be very much aware of her linguistic



## 5. Situation - Complication - Resolution

In the realm of B2B sales and business consultancy, most presentations follow the Situation - Complication - Resolution structure. It is a three element storyline linked by the words **but** and **therefore**.



intelligence until her local and national public speaking contests. The able learner should not limit herself or be complacent with one type of intelligence. Doing and keeping doing can trigger more intelligences.

Other intelligences can be discovered, triggered, and/or developed after the training and the contests. In Student A's case, the respectful and ethical mind was discovered (Gardner, 2007); her interpersonal intelligence has enhanced her year-long training and exchanges with her coach and other teachers; a contrast to another participant (by the same coach) who had gone for long as there was a lack of such an interpersonal intelligence inside him. Student A also has grown her "intrapersonal intelligence" (she has been more aware of the needs and problems inside of her) during and after her three off-campus learning or competitions within two years.

In order to gain more understanding and perspectives of the "sample" (Student A, the sole participant of the case study), the researcher will need to conduct further with the intimate persons (e.g., schoolmates and parents) in Student A's life. Interview data may triangulate more objectivity, validity, and depth of the transformed learner of Student A.

### On future research:

More case studies for in-depth understanding of gifted or talented learners can be conducted at different levels and in diverse domains of intelligences in their on-campus and off-campus learning experience (Grbich, 2007).

More learners should be encouraged to join the on-campus and off-campus learning or competitions. The process of learning can be initiated by teachers in general, but followed by teachers with research experience as more systematic evidence-based follow-up might be available. The personal traits as witnessed in Student A seem to be both intrinsic and developmental in the process (see the multi-data sources above).



