Ritual and Intent in a Renaissance Faire – Taiwan

Sara Neswald, Soochow University, Taiwan

Abstract

This action-research explores the effect of intentional embodied ritualization in an advanced college ESL experience. Forty-six sophomore students (from two different classes) were asked to work together to create a complete half-day Renaissance Faire experience for students and faculty at the Soochow University Campus, Waishuangxi, Taipei. Students worked in self-organized teams of 2-8 people. Each team took on the responsibility of bringing a Ren Faire activity to life: there were bards, madrigals, buskers, jugglers, swordfighters, dancers, board-game gamers, and more. Half the students (one class) was asked to create a ritual for their members to conduct prior to the start of the activity and a ritual greeting to use when welcoming attendees at their activity during the Faire. Half the students were asked to create *neither* a ritual for their members *nor* a ritual for greeting attendees/guests. Thus a "test" and a "control" group were established. Following the Ren Faire activity, students reported on their activity, what they learned from the experience, and, for the ritual-makers, how they felt their ritual affected the outcome or appreciation of the activity. Students' after-activity reports showed a distinctly higher sense of achievement when engaged in intentional ritualization. Moreover, after-activity examinations – examination to assess how much students learned from *other* groups – showed that the ritual-makers retained greater historical knowledge and could better express social significance of various aspects of Renaissance culture. Such students also reported greater appreciation for the gains attained during the Ren Faire experience as a whole. Results indicate that intentional ritualization, when properly explained to students and when properly engaged by students, provided markedly improved educational experience.

Keywords: Ritualization, Taiwan, Higher Education, Renaissance Faire

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Introduction

As a researcher of East Asian history and religion, I understand how the concept of *ritualization* is significant to unpacking manifestations of cultural phenomena and social reason. Transformations in orthodoxy and rhetorical narratives are articulated through ritualizing behaviors. As a teacher of university students, I theorized that the concept of ritualization, familiar to anthropologists, might be employed in the educational field, as a tool to enhance students' integration into a topic and provide an embodied, deep learning experience. Ironically, whereas I am an East Asia scholar, my students here in East Asia are all in an English Department; I did not, therefore, bring this concept to life with an Asian-themed activity as I wished to accord more closely with learning objectives of English Department students. Instead, I chose to direct the Sophomore Business English project towards creation of a Renaissance Faire in order to ascertain how intentional ritualization might further learning gains. This allowed students to achieve the learning outcomes previously established for this project-based class, with the added benefit of absorbing additional historical and cultural understanding in their chosen field, English.

Literature Review

Ritual and Ritualization

Ritualization is distinguished from ritual. Ritual is a set of formalized actions that carry symbolic and substantive meaning, usually marking transitions in either personal or celestial conditions, or reaffirming membership in particular groups or sectors of society. Ritual is also purposive,

> …the participants believe that they are accomplishing their aim in what they do . . . this cannot be ignored . . . Day to day social life is perpetually changing; what is relatively constant in it is the part played by ideas and beliefs through which individuals both perceive events and evaluate their own and others' behavior -- what has been referred to has the moral order. To refer to it [moral order] as false, and the untidy process of living as real, is to make a judgement of value by comparing noncomparable [sic] entities, which cannot be helpful. (La Fontaine 1985, pp. 35-36)

Ritualization is a concept that might have been a bit 'avant-garde' in the 1990s but has become increasingly mainstreamed as it has moved from Religious Studies (Durkheim 1912, van Gennep 1906) and socio-anthropology (Tambiah 1979; Bell 1992, 1997) into the fields of political science (Kerter 1988, Fleischer 2010), business and finance (Gonzales); in education, however, the concept is under-utilized and generally understood in terms of a constraining and delimited set of rituals (McLaren 1986, 2000). A clearer and broader look at ritualization may help to lend a new perspective on what ritualization can be to education. Bell's work focuses on the broader social activities and embodied activities in which the performative *ritualization* provides social and symbolic meaning to significant activities. Bell explores four ways in which practices generate meaning: through strategic behavior, situationally, the necessary misrepresentation of its own enterprise, and its potential for redemptive hegemony in its discourse with power. As power is knowing (Foucault), the empowerment of ritualization possesses a powerful potential for learners and educators.

In essence, LaFontaine claims, participants in the ritual accomplish the aims through the ritual because they say they do. Van Gennep introduces the idea of a three-part sequence in

the ritual process which includes: first, separation from normal life or society; next, a liminal state during which the individual, set apart from the normal word (at the limins) experience transformation of self and status; and, finally, an aggregation or reintegration with normal society with the individual becoming 'reborn' into a new state or condition. Turner (1977) extends this 'liminoid' conception, focusing on the fluid, processual nature of ritual rather than the static and the structural. Tambiah focuses attention on contemporary ritual and its meaning in social and political stability and change. He defines ritual as "a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It consists of patterned and ordered sequences of words and actions, often expressed in multiple media, the content and arrangement of which are characterized in varying degrees by formality (conventionality), stereotype (rigidity), condensation (fusion) and redundancy (repetition)" (Tambiah 119).

With Catherine Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Bell, 1994) sought to break the limitations placed on 'ritual' intent and structure and, like Turner, looked more toward the dynamics of ritual performance. Bell focused on the broader social activities and embodied activities in which the performative *ritualization* provides social and symbolic meaning to significant activities. (Bell 1990) Bell explores four ways in which practices generate meaning: through strategic behavior, situationally, the necessary misrepresentation of its own enterprise, and its potential for redemptive hegemony in its discourse with power. Catherine Bell's seminal work, "Ritualization of Text and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Literature" (*History of Religions* 27.4 (May, 1988), pp. 366-392) explores how the codification of liturgical texts effectively "ritualized" these texts (e.g., made them performative ritual-like actions) by placing them within the spectrum of proper ritual performance. This in turn turned the ritual performance into a significant textual experience through the codification of the ritual texts and the inscription of the ritual itself. These two intertwining dynamics continuously reinforced one another through the empowerment of repeated practice and symbolic iteration that "effectively displaced revealed scriptures as a basis for religious authority and community in early sectarian Taoism." (Bell 367) Neswald (2023-2024) discusses how the intertwining dynamics that Bell has noted involved a concurrent formation of new *rhetorical spaces* – social and existential fields within which a new, potentially disruptive set of concepts and values could find discrete, coherent and socially accepted meaning. (Code 1995) These rhetorical spaces are self-legitimized by exactly those who form them; prosumers acting across social and literary networks whose consumptive patterns legitimize and affirm the legitimacy of the new valuations, actors and their products – poetry, ritual texts. By allowing ritual actors to independently create and be masters of their own ritualizing activities, I theorize that ritualization can form a powerful, creative and innovative classroom dynamic.

For a course in Business English, the Business context of ritualization is also meaningful. Business purposefully explores and employs *ritualization* to create (what Code might consider) "rhetorical spaces": brand communities and loyalty 'membership'. A quick search on Google Scholar or OCLC reveals nearly 3,000 busines-related studies published in the last few years with titles such as "Ritualization: A Strategic Tool to Position Brands in International Markets" (Sharma, Kumar and Borah, 2017), "Ritual and relationships: interpersonal influences on shared consumption" (Gainer, 1995), "Ritual Commerce" (Cook 2023), "Ritualization of Consumer Capitalism" (Gonzales, 2015), etc. In each of these studies, a dynamic relationship is found to arise in the intersection of consumption and ritualization, where ritualization spurs identification, branding and identity building while building reliable consumption patterns among users of particular brands such as "Dove" soap, "Downy" fabric softener or "Starbucks" coffee (See esp. Gonzales, pp. 24-28).

Within Education, ritualization has had a rather different history. A first attempt at bridging these two worlds (education and ritualization) is Peter McLaren's (1986, 2000), *Schooling as Ritual Performance: Toward a Political Economy of Educational Symbols and Rituals*. This study can be best understood as an ethnography of the schoolhouse. And yet, it provides key pedagogical insights. McLaren suggests that students vacillate between two major states, a 'street-corner state' in which students interact 'viscerally' and a 'student state' in which the intellectual is privileged.(McLaren, 218) Within the student state, McLaren suggests, teachers employ both *rituals* to establish intellectual framework for knowledge organization patterns and *ritualizing behaviors* to establish expectations of knowledge acquisition and production patterns. (McLaren, 147-156, 180-186 and 218-219) While McLaren views rituals frameworks and ritualizing behaviors as stultifying in the St. John's catholic school, manifesting negatively and being constraining of individual behavior, the author does provide interesting insight into the potential 'revivifying influence' these rituals could possess as 'conduits of power and creativity.' (McLaren, 218) I have found only one other education study found where a negative, constraining use of ritual/ritualization does not center the work: this is Helen Phelan (2008), where she explores the identity-building effects of ritualization in a musical setting, where community members, both young and old, come together to learn and to create music. In the process of practicing, Phelan finds group and self identity are formed through the storytelling habitus and creative improvisations of the musical community.

I suggest that, for students in project-oriented educational frameworks, ritualizing behaviors can be deployed for this "revivifying influence" as "conduits of power and creativity" where individuals can create spaces of self-authentication and self-affirmation in which they are able to actualize and rationalize current dynamics and situations, and innovate new relationships with the renaissance world to form creative rhetorical spaces for self-learning. These dynamics can be further legitimized through storytelling processes, such as occurs in certain Deep Learning activities. The combination of self-ritualizing, self-authenticating behaviors can help us to draw the perimeters of their real and imagined rhetorical spaces and may assist them to re-create or re-normalize the world and their place in it.

Interpretative Psychological Analysis (IPA)

Interpretive Psychological Analysis (IPA) is a methodology for analysis which aims to provide a "systematic exploration of personal experience" (Thomkins, 2017). As *ritualization* emerged from mythology studies and religious students to become a methodology applied across multiple disciplines, so too has IPA spread from its roots in psychology to become a qualitative method of analysis used across disciplines. (Charlick, Pincombe, McKellar and Fields 2016; cited in Noon). IPA's objective is to understand lived experiences and explore how individuals make sense of their personal and social worlds. (Noon 2018, 75) While Noon and others find IPA an excellent model for qualitative interpretation of personal experience, Noon notes the application to ESL learners and those with less-adequate command of English self-expression. While these issues are noted, the level of students' ability at Soochow and my experience with these students over the year – and for some, over two years – provided me with a reasonable assurance that all students were able to express themselves cogently and coherently. Moreover, the students had nearly three months to complete the project and

report; those with difficulty expressing their ideas had more than adequate time to consider how to express themselves during the oral report.[1]

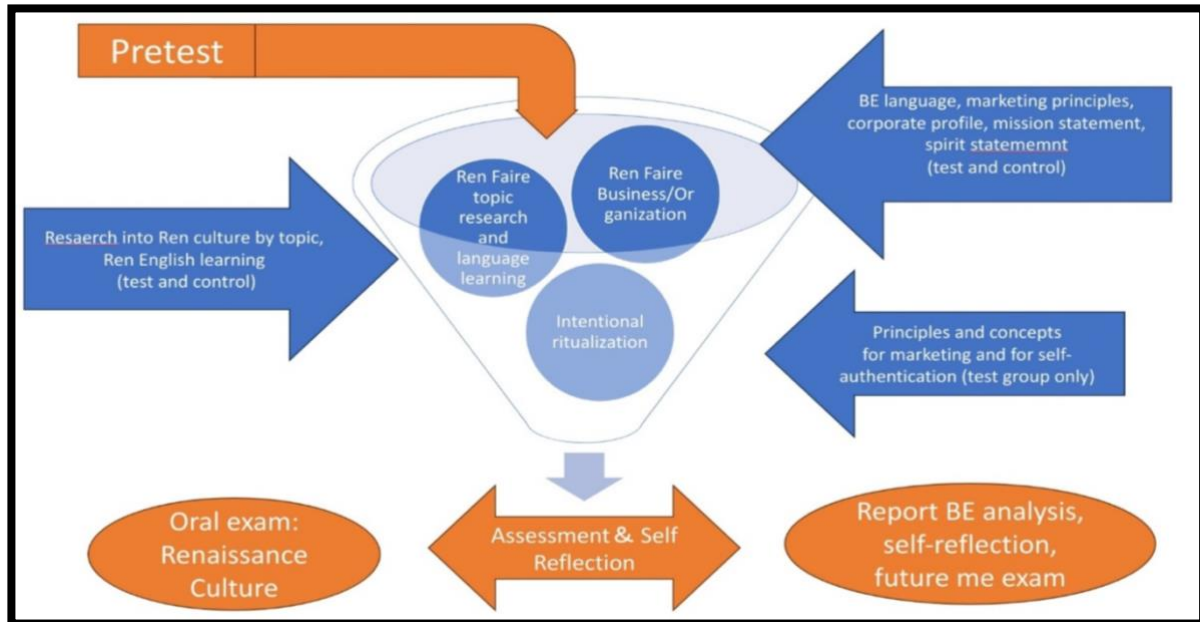**Implementation of the Student Project (The Renaissance Faire)**

Figure 1: Overview of Project Implementation

- o Pre-test: *Initial testing was conducted at the beginning of term in order to establish a baseline of knowledge.*

Prior to the start of this activity, these Sophomore students were questioned to assess their overall knowledge of Renaissance England. Most of these forty-six sophomore students were only vaguely aware of the idea of a "Renaissance" England; those that could place the Renaissance *conceptually* (four students), could not place the English Renaissance *historically*: given a multiple choice question, students universally placed the Renaissance in a period between 1850 and 1920. However, *every* student had heard the name *Shakespeare*. Indeed, students were able to name quite a few Shakespearean plays: six in one class, nine in another. One-third of these students were familiar with the play, *Hamlet;* however, *none* were able to name a single character from the play, including Hamlet himself. When asked about England's Red Queen and White Queen, four students asserted that they knew of both queens: upon further investigation, it became clear they were referring to the characters in *Alice in Wonderland*. Only one student, when prompted to name the *historical* Red and White Queens, was able to associate Queen Elizabeth with the White Queen.[2] When given the name Queen Elizabeth 1 (the White Queen), only one of forty-six had heard of her; oddly enough, this was *not* the same person named in the sentence above. Neither of these two ladies (above) were able to place Elizabeth 1 in history within a 200-year window of accuracy. When asked why Renaissance England is termed "renaissance", one student was able to

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[1] That said, I plan to further enhance this rubric with the inclusion of DL (Deep Learning) with LSP (Lego Serious Play) as a means to prompt students to better express their ideas.
[2] This student spent the first fourteen years of her life in Malaysia. It is possible that this experience accounts for her familiarity with the White Queen: she had seen the BBC film by this name.

accurately guess; no student appeared to rightly know why. This assessment allowed me to proceed with the understanding that I was working with a relatively blank slate. The only real handhold these students had on the historical period was Shakespeare, and even that was, to some extent, fragile.

- o What is it? *Introduction to the Renaissance English Marketplace and the individuals and businesses found therein.*

The next step was to get students to understand what the Ren Faire could be, and what activities were found there. This could then lead them to understand what they might choose for an organization they could establish within the Ren Faire. The Red and White Queens were invited guests in order to "keep the peace"; to avoid an Alice in Wonderland creation; and, to give students a more popular understanding of the individuals within the marketplace.

- o Organization of student businesses/organizations and cold contemplation of social significance.

o Swordfighters
o Tailors
o Tailors
o Garland/milliners
o Bard and minstrels
o Dancers
o Carole dancers
o Maypole – Sauternello dancers
o Calligraphers
o Marzipan and bread makers
o Board-game gamers
o Jugglers/buskers
o (Freshman open theatre)

Table 1: Organizations and Companies Established by Student Groups

At this point, students were asked to assign themselves to a group or an activity. I provided a list of several; some students volunteered their own ideas. In all, some ten activity groups or "organizations" arose (see table 1). Students were asked, cold (without research), to guess at the historical and cultural importance of their chosen topic and, its significance in the lives of three categories of individuals:

- a) royalty & elite society
  - a. children (male, children female)
  - b. adults (male, female)
  - c. the very old (male, female)
- b) middle-class and merchant-class society
  - a. children (male, children female)
  - b. adults (male, female)
  - c. the very old (male, female)
- c) the poor, the indentured, the enslaved
  - a. children (male, children female)

b. adults (male, female)
c. the very old (male, female)

In order to facilitate engagement, students were rewarded (with fake money) *attempts* to engage, not rewarded for *correct* answers. Following the discussion, students created individual LINE groups (shared with the prof). They wrote out their answers in class. These responses allowed for a theoretical baseline, for which students could, through research, establish proofs and correct stereotypes.

I then instructed students to begin researching their area of expertise, and to confirm their suspicions about the historical and social importance of these activities at each level of society. Students were required to consult at least three references from books or peer-reviewed articles and to report back in two weeks. In this, students excelled: they had a clear and familiar task: research, summarize, report back. Students reported the results of their research during week 4.

Concurrently, we also began to work on short (20 minute) information-exchange sessions using only Shakespearean English ("conversational" Shakespearean English, including grammar and a limited vocabulary). These sessions began with short question-and-answer exchanges, "How are you?" and the like. Then progressed to "What did you do last weekend?" and on to more complicated response sessions. This segment continued weekly from the 2nd to the 9th week of class, until students were discussing their entire progress in groups using Shakespearean English. Success in this area was patchy: many students were very committed to the project of learning to really speak Shakespearean English; others, less so.

Once students had researched their area of expertise (week 5), they were asked to decide how to bring this activity to life *with authenticity.* The word *authenticity* had already become a hallmark word in both classes: it had been repeated by the instructor at least 3-5 times during each and every class in order to stress the importance of this idea. Students worked together to create as authentic an experience as was materially and financially possible: each student group had been given a budget of only NT$2,000 (about US$60). No students chose to do fund-raising to increase this amount;[3] some students took funds from their own pockets to attain results they desired.

As the date of the Faire approached, the concept of ritualization was introduced to the "test" group. One of the two Sophomore Business English classes was asked to incorporate **ritualization** into their activity. They learned the meaning of ritualization, the purpose of performing the ritual for themselves, the purpose of performing the ritual for others, and the desired effects of ritualizing their activity. They were then given an hour of class time to discuss, create and practice their rituals. Emphasis was placed on simplicity: the ritual should clearly be separated in space and time from other activities or actions. But the ritual should not be drawn out: a 30-second ritual was just fine. Because many students are familiar with the triple-bow (in Buddhist and Daoist traditions), the idea of a ritually significant but brief action was not difficult to convey.

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[3] As noted above, this class has been a project-based course, usually involving the creation of a charity or other non-profit action group. In previous years, most projects were funded by student-organized fund-raising efforts; those previous year projects were, however, not organized around enactment of a Ren Faire.

Execution of the Faire: Although designed purposefully to be small, the Ren Faire event had nearly two hundred-fifty participants.[4] The event opening with the bard announcing the opening, and the White Queen and her knight valient welcoming the attendees into the event space. They then encountered the Red Queen and her army of knights. The Red Queen's knight valient threw down the gauntlet, challenging the White Queen's sole knight to a fight. Each of the Red Queen's five knights were defeated in turn in a sword fighting demonstration. Following this, the swordfighting 'business' offered two simultaneous activities: in one, the knights demonstrated to some the history of sword fighting and bladesmithing in Renaissance England; participants of this activity could engage in a series of student-designed games to test their knowledge. Other participants at the sword fighters' arena could learn the basic moves of sword fighting and engage in a duel with one of the knights. These activities continued throughout the four hours of the Faire with individuals in the group taking breaks in turn. At the same time, all other market activities were open and available to attendees. There were marzipan makers offering bread and sweets, and introducing the history of marzipan in Renaissance England and Europe. There were garland makers and bag makers teaching students how to make garlands and the history of fashion in Renaissance England. There were calligraphers demonstrating and teaching calligraphy and its history. Every half hour, there were dancers (two groups) demonstrating and teaching two popular dances of Renaissance England. And there were madrigals and a bard who joined together to announce events and to perform music of the period.

Faculty attendees: 23
Student attendees: 163+
Other attendees: 9+
Student entrepreneurs: 46
Coordinating faculty: 1
External assistants/actors: 2+2

Table 2: Attendance Figures

Each event 'business' had prepared posters conveying information about the history of their event and the social significance of the event (Ex. History and social significance of fashion, of swords and sword fighting, of bards and minstrels, etc.). Some of this information was conveyed in the form of a table game (sword fighters' activity) and engaged battles; some was conveyed by student event organizers as participants engaged in the event (all activities); some was conveyed by activity organizers (all activities); some was conveyed through student-designed games testing and imparting knowledge, some was conveyed via posters set about in the area of each individual activity. There was no attempt to assess the learning outcomes for non-organizing participants; there was an attempt to assess the audience appreciation.[5]

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[4] Disclaimer: These numbers are estimated, as there was a major staff error in the registration of participants; numbers are based on a combination of names on a signup sheet, individuals personally witnessed at the Faire, individuals self-reported (staff, faculty) to be in attendance, and/or those found in video footage of the event.

[5] Audience appreciation was broken down into metrics through which students could assess the relative success of their activity; this relates to the *business* aspect of this Business English course. Details of these learning outcomes are not discussed in this report.

Data Collection and Tabulation

Two types of data collection were applied to this study. A quantitative analysis of results from a final oral exam; and, a qualitative (IPA) analysis of results from an oral report complete with students' self assessment.

Quantitative Analysis

Students were asked to respond to questions within a five minute timeframe. For each question, students were rated on a scale of 1-5 for oral expression, 1-5 grammar, 1-5 depth of knowledge, 1-5 connection of topic to social significance. Oral expression was assessed based on students' fluency, language use, speed of response, and coherence of answer. Grammar was based strictly on the use of appropriate use of tense, pronoun, etc.; if the word was used improperly but coherently (use of *speak* when *tell* would be required), this was considered under oral expression. The other two ratings related to questions that could be answered by anyone mindfully engaging in the Renaissance Faire that our classes put on; topics included court and commoner culture, calligraphy, music and entertainment, bladesmithing [6] and swordsmanship, dances and dancing, fashion and tailoring, food. [7] Because this data was gathered in real time during oral examinations to a large number of individual students, responses for this study were tabulated based only on these four parameters. Raw numbers were further valued as below:

Oral expression fluency, language use, speed of response, coherence	1-5 rating	10 points
Grammar	1-5 rating	10 points
Depth of knowledge Could they identify the subject matter? How much did they know about the history and development of the topic?	1-5 rating	40 points
Connection to social significance Could the students identify social significance at any level? (Level of realm, level of queen and court, level of commoners? Men? Women? Children?)	1-5 rating	40 points
Total points		100%

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[6] Bladesmithing or swordsmithing is the art of making knives, swords, daggers and other blades using forge, hammer, anvil and other smithing tools. (Hriscoulas 1987) *Please note: Bladesmithing has a very deep and rich scholarshipThe definition above has been compiled from a large number of sources, including Wikipedia, OED, Collins and various specialist websites, articles and resources too great to be included in this footnote. As a nod to the recent Harvard scandal, I include this note for clarity. The references given are only partial.*

[7] Food during the Faire was limited to confiserie due to post-COVID considerations. Exam questions were, therefore, also limited to this narrow area of food consumption. There are plans to wide this scope of knowledge in future activities.

Qualitative Analysis (IPA)

Data for qualitative analysis was gathered students' final oral reports, presented in 20-40 minute sessions (depending on group size) over 2 weeks (4 hours) of class time. Students were provided with the questions for the oral report at the beginning of term, and were guided through developing an activity that could accomplish the goals of their term projects. After execution of the Faire, students were asked to privately evaluate one-another and themselves.[8] Students were then given additional self-assessment questions and were asked to consider how they might extend their performance, where they might go with the project should their "business" be incorporated into a formal Ren Faire circuit outside the school curriculum, and what they might do had they better used their funds or had additional funds (limited to NT$2,000 or about US$60) to expend. Finally, students were asked to consider what they learned from the experience and how this experience might help them into the future.

With Noon's very practical guide as reference (Noon, having beautifully considered and applied IPA principles from numerous sources), proceeded to tabulation of data. Reports had two parts:
   a) *a group report* covering various areas of mutual concern (organization of the business, mission and spirit statement, financial report, assessment of business metrics, authenticity of their performance to the specialization (fashion, sword fighting, etc.) , challenges encountered and overcome, etc.); and,
   b) *an individual report*, on what they learned from the experience and how this experience might help them into the future.[9]

Tabulation of data advanced in three steps. ***First***, I focused on individual students' individual performance within the first 'business' considered, the swordfighters. I re-played recordings for each student in the first group, noted down issues and my reflections/responses. I placed each issue into one of two tables, "group data" and "individual data". I then moved to the next student in the 'business', and continued until the first 'business' data was completely tabulated. I then moved on to the following nine student 'businesses.' ***Second***, I organized the various 'issues' into 'themes':
   • *Relationships* (family, friends and relationships, resolution of adversarial relationships);
   • *Education, immediate use:* use of time and efficiency, organizational skills; how to do research;
   • *Well-being and wisdom building:* appreciation of history, desire to travel to England, understanding of literature as a social dynamic, interest in specific cultural themes (dance (6), calligraphy (4), music (2), flight school (1), desire to pursue a career in education or literature (8));
   • *Post graduation interests and guidance*: education or literature (8), further education in business or sociology (6), engagement in business (3), flight school or other non-related interest (5), travel (6), did not mention or did not influence interests (7).[10]

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[8] Freshman students attending this Faire were also asked to respond to a survey on the Ren Faire experience and what they learned from it. Their experiences are recorded in an independent analysis apart from this report.
[9] Students were also encouraged (but declined) to provide feedback to me on what I might have improved upon.
[10] Some students' responses fell into more than one category.

Third, I organized 'themes' across individuals and groups. As this discussion falls largely within the scope of individual experience, the focus herein lies with "individual data." An example of the tabulated data is below.

Relationships family	"This project helped me to better appreciate my mother's role in our family. I really had to get a lot of help from her…" "We ended up having to stay on campus some weekends. I really missed my family." "My sister is a grad student at XYZ university (in USA). She was really impressed… I felt really encouraged [when I spoke to her]."	My response: *unexpected. Student's relationship with mother and appreciation of mother improved.* My response: *workload stress on family relationships* My response: *Relationship with and appreciation of elder sister*
friends and relationships	"Some of the people I thought were my friends were really just using me…" "I felt like the others were not cooperating, and they [made me do most of the work]." "We worked together really well. X and Y have become two of my best friends."	My response: *student realizes used by friends* My response: *student realizes used by friends* My response: *teamwork leads to lasting friendships*
resolution of adversarial cooperation	"They just didn't show up. Finally, I quit this team and joined X."	Mu response: *resolution of adversarial teamwork situation, avoiding conflict; doesn't dare to speak up*

Discussion and Analysis of Results

IPA's objective is to understand lived experiences and explore how individuals make sense of their personal and social worlds. (Noon 2018, 75) For the purposes of the present study, I applied IPA to the analysis of students' final reports self-reflection. In this process, I followed Noon (2018), allowing the flexible nature of IPA frameworks to adjust various steps for the particulars of the present research. Students were asked to assess their own progress in terms of attaining the pre-determined project goals and to consider if/how what they learned during the term could be applied to their future goals. IPA is perhaps the best methodology for analysis, providing a "systematic exploration of personal experience" (Thomkins, 2017).

I also applied a simple oral test-based analysis to learning outcomes to ascertain levels of knowledge attained.

Business English (BE) Related Outcomes

In prior years, the Sophomore Business English Class was established with a) a practical component, b) a research and report component, and c) various conversational exercises. During this experimental year with the Renaissance Faire, these components were retained in modified form.

BE abilities (quantitative)	2024 Test group (ritualization)	2024 Control group (no ritualization)	Compiled data 2022-2023
Creation of *mission statement*	92%	90%	86%
Creation of *spirit statement*	86%	83%	93%
Creation of *project description*	96%	93%	88.5%[11]
Creation of DM (posters, etc.)	92%	86%	Not applied
Use of SMART principles	84%	63%	83%
Creation of *financial plan*	80%	72%	85.5%
Implementation of *financial plan*	84%	72%	84.5%
Reflection on financial planning: Useful considerations offered	52%	56%	Not applied
Ability to use advanced BE language	92%	83%	81%
Reflection on Project and its application to students' future	See IPA assessment	See IPA assessment	Data not recoverable
Self reflection (IPA qualitative)			

Mission and *spirit statements* were assessed based on the a) expression of idea, b) grammar, and c) language use. Scoring of this types remains subjective; however, the Faire groups, as a whole, seemed to have initiative in re-writing and finessing their mission and spirit statements *following* the Faire: their engagement in the activity was of great influence in how they experienced and related to the activity (calligraphy, juggling, etc.) in question. Examples produced and understanding of the use of the mission statement was consistently higher than with those engaging in the Renaissance Faire, with those in the *ritualization group* producing the best examples. However, a great number of students in both groups appeared unable to distinguish mission statement and spirit statement. I suspect this is due to the difficulty in bringing to life an event like the Ren Faire, an event for which students' lacked familiarity. Students in the 2022-2023 'businesses' had formed organizations set in contemporary Taiwan. By the time students were preparing their final report, they most likely set the spirit statement aside as less important than other areas of concern.

Project description scores were significantly higher in both 2024 classes (test/control group). I suggest this has a great deal to do with how seriously students researched their topics/markets. Students in the 2022-2023 groups were asked to research their markets whereas students in the 2024 classes were asked to research their topics. Each student group made great efforts and repeated returned to me for advice on finding resources on their individual topics; this occurred rarely among 2022-2023 groups. This lead to greater excellence in the finished reports and higher excellence in their product descriptions for their 'company profiles.'

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[11] Prior year's groups (3+3 (2022), 4+5 (2023) with 3 disqualified for inclusion of students from different levels or universities, (86+82+73+98+96+92+88+86+97+89+88+87).

Financial planning was a major problem with the 2024 classes. In 2022-2023, no funding was offered to students. They, instead, had to run fundraising activities to raise funds for their 'businesses' and finance their activities. The 2024 classes were provided with funds ($2,000). Spending was erratic most groups underspent (used only part of the allotted funds) rather than make excellent use of the funds on offer. One group (gamers) had even greater, teamwork-related issues. The gamers had split itself into two, jugglers and stilt walkers. Jugglers spent 100% of the funds on juggling equipment, leaving the stilt walker with no funds for renting stilts. The stilt walkers were forced to change their activity late in the term, yet were able to produce an excellent event with near zero funds. An impressive feat.

On the use of *SMART terminology and concepts, t*he Renaissance Faire group members (2024) split dramatically: the Control group members' performance was on a part with the 2022-2023 group members' performance; the Test group members fell far below the Test and the 2022-2023 group members.

In the use of *advanced Business English vocabulary and phrases* (demographics, annuity, etc.)*,* the Control remained on par with the 2022-2023 group members' performance. In this area, however, the Test group members far outmatched both the Control and the 2022-2023 group members.

It appears that, the BE learning outcomes among individuals in the TEST (*ritualization)* group were greater than among those in the 2024 Control and 2022-2023 groups. The use of advanced business English language was best performed by individuals in the *ritualization* group (92%) compared to 81% and 83% among individuals in the Test and 2022-2023 groups, respectively. The greatest weakness among 2024 Control and Test groups was in the area of financial planning. The major difference between the 2024 groups and the 2022-2023 groups is in the provision of funds. I suggest the provision of funds removed from the students a sense of financial responsibility. In future, I plan to remove the provision of funds in future to assess whether this will return to students a sense of financial responsibility and allow them to apply their own financial planning strategies, thus enhancing their learning outcomes in this area.

Cultural/Historical Learning Outcomes

By far the greatest surprise was in the cultural and historical outcomes, where individuals in the Test (ritualization) group outperformed individuals in the Control (non-ritualization) group by an average of twelve points: 96:84. Clearly the cultural and historical knowledge garnered is impressive. How much of this is to due influences of other coursework and how much was due to the activity itself, this is difficult to isolate. However, the questions involved in the discussions (types of blades used in Renaissance England, when and how these blades first emerged, gun powder and guns in relation to swordsmanship's social meaning, the political meaning of Queen Elizabeth 1's adoption of Irish calligraphy, etc.) were closely related to the content to which students were exposed during the Faire. It is hard to imagine this knowledge derived from elsewhere; and, there is a clear indication of dramatic positive movement in these terms.

Personal and Wellness Outcomes

The IPA analysis likewise found that individuals in the Test (ritualization) group expressed much higher levels of satisfaction with the outcome of their performance, greater

appreciation with what they had learned from the experience and greater ability to connect their own learning outcomes with things they might do in the near-or-more-distant future. It was interesting to find that those least able to make these longer-term future connections were also those with difficulty coordinating and manifesting team-building skills.

Those in the 'business' with greatest difficulty coordinating funds (the buskers) (Control group), expressed more anxiety over relationships with both family and friends, and also had greater difficulty manifesting strong teamwork. The strongest and, perhaps, two of the best organized 'businesses' were those found in the Test (ritualization) group, and these individuals expressed zero or low anxiety with friendship, team-building or family relationships; high levels of satisfaction with their performance, and high levels of cultural/historical knowledge retention. This suggests that the use of intentional self-ritualization in this project-based activity has great potential from helping students to organize, plan and implement a longer-term project, to retain and sustain teamwork and a spirit of cooperation, to grasp and retain a sense of the meaningfulness of what they are doing in real time, and cultivate deeper fields of knowledge.

Conclusions and Future Considerations

The impressive differences in learning outcomes between the individuals in the Test (ritualization) and Control groups suggests that intentional ritualization, if properly implemented, can have positive effects on students' learning outcomes, their levels of satisfaction, and their ability to foresee future applications of what they have learned. It will be interesting to follow the careers of the students involved in the Faire, to assess their future choices, and consider how the organizational and cultural knowledge garnered may impact their lives and choices. It will be interesting to repeat this experiment with a second group of students, with enhanced instruction in *ritualization* in business and in self-authentication. The latter would have three aims: first, the aim to verify the results of the first study; second, the aim to create a stable instructional model to apply into the future; third, the aim to provide students with greater awareness of the importance of ritualization in marketing and commerce such that students may apply the techniques with greater zeal and gain greater understanding of the meritswiththeir own intentionally ritualizing actions. Finally, a repeat of the research may allow the implementation to be redesigned in such a way as to avoid the loss in learning gains in the area of budgeting and financial planning.

Note

Appendix can be provided by the author, upon request.

Appendix 1: Table of Learning Components in Prior and Current Years

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Contact email: chinesebodytech@gmail.com