

Love Language Interactive Exhibition – Project Proposal

Background

Arising from innate human needs, effective affection communication is paramount for sustaining a healthy relationship; however, the outcomes of affectionate expressions often extend beyond the act itself to the broader dyadic dynamics, potentially giving rise to dissatisfaction within the relationship (Floyd, 2006). This is a particular concern for young adults in Hong Kong, to navigate the complexities of romantic relationships, and predominantly rely on their interpersonal relationships as a primary source of support during this developmental stage. In response to this challenge, we propose to organise a "Love Language Interactive Exhibition" targeted at young Chinese couples.

Theoretical Framework – Affection Exchange Theory (AET)

The activity is based on the Affection Exchange Theory proposed by Kory Floyd in 2006, suggesting that humans are innately capable of giving and receiving affection. He proposed three types of affection communication: verbal affection, nonverbal communication, and indirect affection. Particularly, extensive research supports that Chinese individuals, across ages and cohorts, tend to be less affectionate compared to other cultural groups, which may potentially harm their marital satisfaction and well-being (Chen et. al., 2024; Halford et. al., 2017; Wu et. al., 2019). Moreover, receiving less affection than desired can lead to negative relational outcomes, such as low relationship satisfaction, closeness, and commitment, requiring significantly more effort to counteract the adverse effects of these deficits (Floyd, 2006; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Hesse et. al., 2016). AET suggested that affectionate communication skills can be improved over time.

Five Love Languages (LL)

Chapman (1992) proposed five ways people show and prefer to receive the signs of commitment, which align with the types of affection communication in AET as described in Table 1. The Five Love Languages are *words of affirmation*, *quality time*, *receiving gifts*, *acts of service*, and *physical touch*. Understanding and using a partner's Love Language is correlated with increased relationship satisfaction, reduced misunderstandings, and enhanced communication effectiveness (Mostova et al., 2022). Love Languages, a well-recognised tool in couple counselling settings, will be used to facilitate affection exchange in the exhibition.

Objectives of the Activity

1. Self-awareness: Participants will be able to understand and explain their preferred LLs.
2. Awareness of partner's LL: Participants will be able to understand and explain their partner's preferred LLs.
3. Encourage the use of love language: Participants will demonstrate more effective use of their partner's LLs.
4. Facilitate affection exchange: Participants will demonstrate more effective affection communication techniques and communications.

Activity Content

For the five love language zones, we will design three interactive installations that incorporate three key elements: a question card station, an expressive writing component, and a shared activity in each zone. Details of the activity plan can be found in Appendix A.

- **Question Card Station**

Simply knowing one's own love language is insufficient; the right actions and words are crucial, as individuals may interpret their love language differently based on personal experiences. To address this, we propose a set of question cards that focus on what each partner needs for love and how to express it effectively. Research by Chen et al. (2024) indicates that an intervention using love language questions can enhance communication and relationship satisfaction. This approach aligns with our objectives to increase self-awareness regarding one's own love language and awareness of a partner's love language. Each set includes five questions on the positive aspects of love, focusing on making partners feel valued, and five questions addressing negative aspects to help couples recognise unintentional hurts and encourage reflection.

- **Expressive Writing**

Expressive writing is a cost-effective method for identifying and processing thoughts and emotions, particularly in committed romantic relationships (Pennebaker, 1997). It helps individuals integrate feelings and experiences that may be challenging to communicate verbally. This approach aligns with our objective to encourage the use of love languages in daily life.

For words of affirmation, writing a letter can enhance intimacy through self-disclosure. Emotional self-disclosure can contribute more to intimacy than factual sharing (Laurenceau, 1998).

When it comes to quality time, exploring new date ideas together using first-person plural pronouns, like "We are going to do...", enhances a sense of mutuality and encourages partners to see themselves as part of a larger whole (Allgood, 2019).

For acts of service, writing down each partner's strengths and needs in various situations encourages a positive outlook on life circumstances. This positive written expression has been linked to improved mood (Burton & King, 2004).

With gifts, creating a memo wall allows couples to express gratitude and reflect on gift-receiving experiences, so to promote higher relationship satisfaction through positive affective language.

Finally, a preference chart for physical touch can reduce self-consciousness, encouraging self-disclosure in a non-face-to-face format (Allgood, 2019). Couples can communicate effectively about their needs while reducing the pressure of direct communication.

- **Shared Activities**

Research shows that lacking positive interactions is a stronger predictor of future breakups than expressing negative emotions, (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). Therefore, increasing positive interactions, particularly those that convey affection, is crucial. The Gottman model also emphasises the importance of feelings of togetherness, which create shared meanings and goals, helping to keep couples linked (Gottman & Silver, 1999). This approach aligns with the objective of facilitating affection exchange.

In terms of Words of Affirmation, couples can write down affirmation notes, which helps partners understand the insecurities that might hinder their partner's ambitions.

For quality time, planning a perfect date involves giving each other undivided attention. Discussing and deciding together fosters emotional focus, emphasising that at least one partner wants to participate, the other is willing, and both understand that they are expressing love by being together (Chapman, 2008).

Regarding acts of service, designing "request vouchers" is a valuable practice. Couples learn that love involves making requests rather than demands (Chapman, 2008). By discussing each other's strengths and desires, they can create appropriate vouchers that affirm each partner's worth and abilities.

For receiving gifts, DIY keychains serve as a meaningful way to express love, emphasising that gifts can have personal significance beyond monetary value. Creating something together can strengthen bonds and create lasting memories.

Lastly, in the realm of physical touch, following tango dance steps encourages cooperation and the exploration of physical touch, turning the challenge of finding new ways to connect into an exciting experience (Chapman, 2008).

Activity Setting

The exhibition will take place from 18 to 22 March at the Affiliated Societies' Meeting Room and Student Common Room in United College. In total, there will be 20 sessions, with four sessions per day running from 3 pm to 9 pm. Each session will be 90 minutes, comprising a 10-minute briefing session, 1-hour exhibition and a 10-minute debriefing session respectively, the extra 10 minutes are reserved as buffer time.

Participants

The exhibition is open to Chinese heterosexual couples aged between 18 to 25, whose relationship has lasted for a minimum of six months. Both partners must be able to communicate in Chinese. Couples in long-distance relationships will be excluded from participation.

Aiming at 50 participating couples, the maximum number of couples per session will be limited to five to ensure the venue can accommodate all participants and allow for a comprehensive exploration of the exhibition.

Flow of Activity

Participants will be recruited through online registration two weeks before the activity. The exhibition will feature five zones for each Love Language. They will be asked to explore the zones of their primary love languages (Appendix Figure 1).

Homework Session

After the exhibition, participants will receive a mission booklet to guide them in completing love language tasks over two weeks, enhancing communication and emotional connection between partners. The booklet includes a Portfolio + Introduction, a Mission Page with mission choices based on love language research (Chapman, 2015), and Mission Log for reflection. Participants will complete one mission every three days, totaling four missions, with WhatsApp reminders to track progress. They must photograph their Mission Log entries for confirmation and those who complete at least 85% of the assignments (three out of four) will receive a photo frame featuring a couple's photo from the exhibition's photo booth.

Evaluation – [Pretest and Post-test]

All exhibition participants will complete two questionnaires: a pretest before the exhibition and a post-test two weeks later, following the homework session. Both tests will cover the same content (excluding contact numbers) to measure shifts in knowledge and relationship dynamics.

Key Components

- **Consent Form:** Participants consent to data use for research only.
- **Personal Information:** Data on age, gender, and birthday will be collected to match couples. The pretest will gather contact numbers for follow-ups.
- **Love Language Test (Chapman, 2015):** Identifies participants' primary love languages.
- **Love Language Knowledge Test (Nichols et al., 2018):** Assesses understanding of love languages.
- **Trait Affection Given and Received (Chen & Chen, 2023):** Measures affection felt towards partners using a 7-point scale.
- **Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS):** Evaluates relationship satisfaction.

Data will focus on heterosexual couples aged 18-25, excluding those in relationships under six months to avoid honeymoon phase effects. Couples completing less than 85% of the homework will also be excluded from analysis.

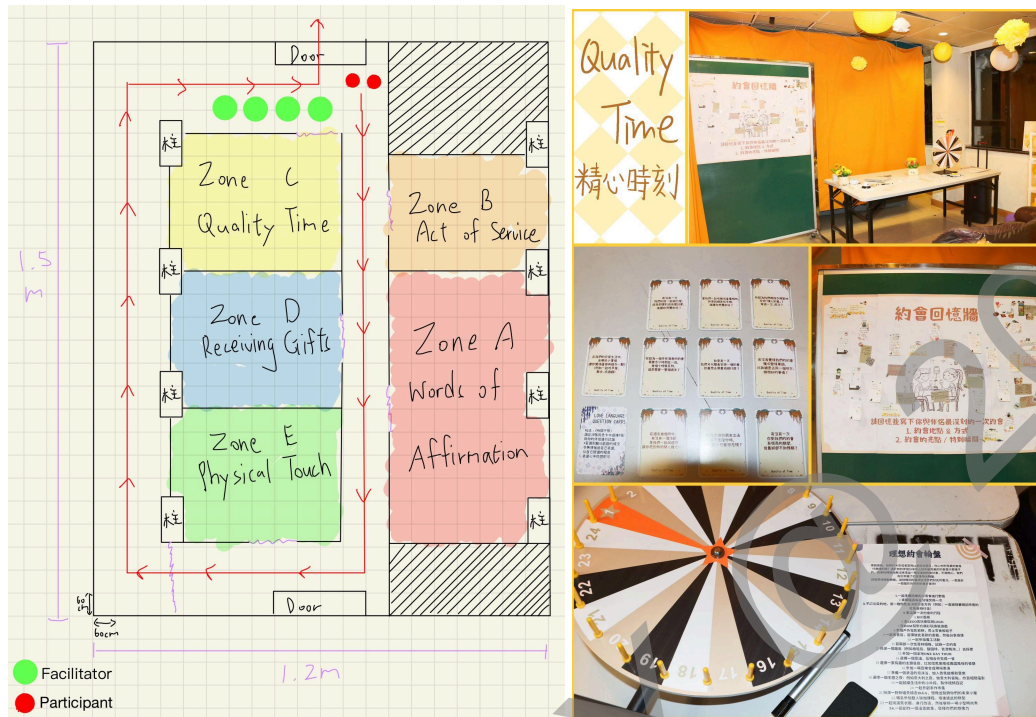
Data Analysis & Expected Outcomes

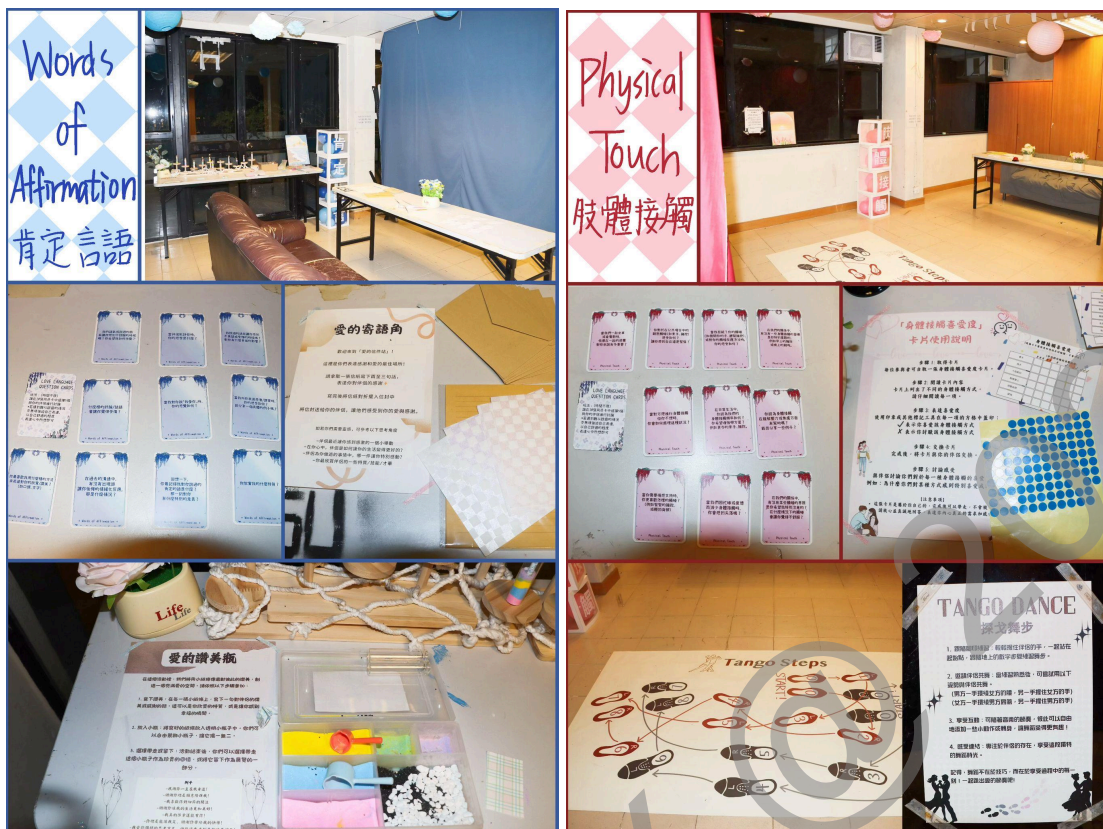
T-tests will compare pretest and post-test scores, while correlation analysis will explore relationships between affection given, affection received, and relationship satisfaction. This analysis aims to identify significant changes and correlations regarding the effectiveness of the exhibition and homework. We anticipate that participants will gain a deeper understanding of love languages, reflected in improved scores on the love language knowledge test and DAS items. We expect closer scores in trait affection given and received, ultimately aiming for a positive impact on participants' romantic relationships.

Appendix

Figure 1

Floor Plan & Activity Details





Mission Log Sample:

Mission Log

Please fill in the corresponding part every time you finish a task

Take a photo of the log for us every time you finish a task

♥ Gain a photo frame with your loved one for 85% (6/7) or above participation ♥

Task 1

Date: ____/____/____

Mission Code : _____

How do you feel about the task :

How does he/she feel about the task :

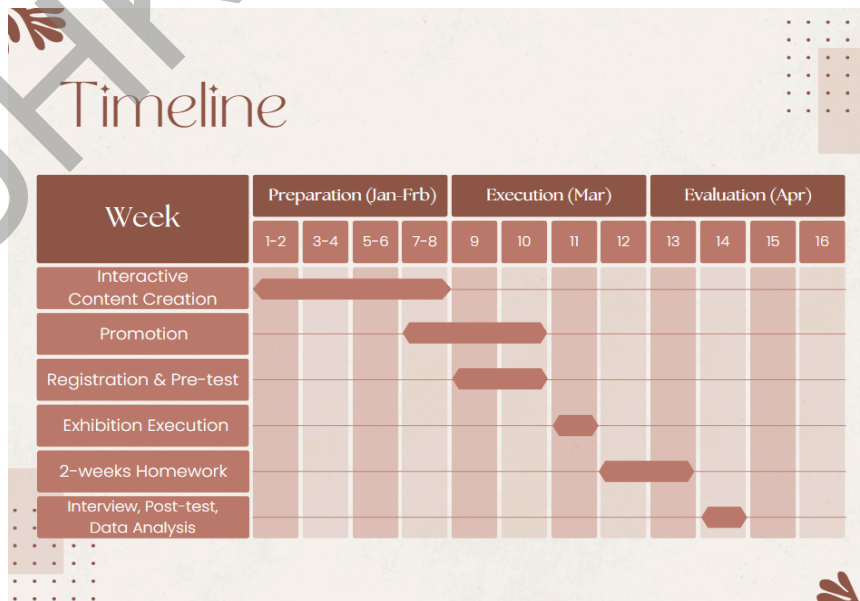
Any other remarks?

Budget Plan

Zone Materials	Items	Burget
Words of affirmation	Letter cover	200
	Letter Paper	
	Glass Bottle	
	Bottle Rack	
	Bottle Decoration	
Acts of service	DIY Card & Voucher	100
Quality Time	Memo Paper	100
	Wheel	

Zone Decoration	Burget
Words of affirmation	200
Acts of service	200
Quality Time	200
Receiving Gift	200
Physical touch	200
	Total: 1000

Program Timeline



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