CONSTRUCTIVISM AND REFLECTIVISM AS THE LOGICAL COUNTERPARTS IN TESOL: LEARNING THEORY VERSUS TEACHING METHODOLOGY

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Abstract: The gist of the entire constructivist learning theory is that learners are self-builders of their learning that occurs through a mental process in a social context or communication setting, and teachers as facilitators generate learning by creating the expected environment and/or utilizing the process. This article theoretically proves reflectivism as the logical counterpart of constructivism through establishing their complete interdependence and then suggests certain strategies of reflection to be used in language teaching for ensuring the best possible constructivist learning of language learners. In doing so, the basic tenets of constructivism and reflective thoughts are elaborated, examining their mutual connection thoroughly in terms of constructivist recommendations. The research also focuses on three case studies to depict how the theory of constructivist learning principles comes into practice through judicious reviews or reflective process.

Keywords: constructivism, reflectivism, learning theory, teaching methodology

Tell me, I'll forget
Show me, I'll remember
Involve me, I'll understand

- Confucius, 551 BC - 479 BC, Chinese Philosopher

237

With the present trend of teaching coming closer to learners, the ideas like constructivist learning and reflective teaching are becoming more and more relevant and accepted as a norm in education. While constructivism basically deals with the learners' part, reflectivism comes up with the practical method of bringing it into teaching. A teacher in practice knows better how to facilitate and ensure the students' construction of knowledge because they can mull over their own teaching together with students' learning. In case of language teaching the idea becomes clearer because language requires the establishment of communication through a context shared by learners among themselves or with the instructor, and it can be attained through nothing but continuous reflection. Reflectivism, therefore, is the best secret of or key for actualizing a constructivist language teaching.

WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVISM?

Constructivism is basically a theory – based on observation and scientific study about how people learn. It proposes that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When individuals encounter something new, they have to accommodate it with their previous ideas.

The following excerpt from John Dewey underlines that one can learn only when they deal with a problem and find ways to resolve it. ,

> "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at hand, seeking and finding his own solution [not in isolation but in correspondence with the teacher and other pupils] does one learn."
>
> John Dewey, How We Think, 1910

Further, Jonathan D. Raskin (2001) precisely defines constructivism as:

> "A school of psychology which holds that learning occurs because personal knowledge is constructed by an active and self-regulated learner, who solves problems by deriving meaning from experience and the context in which that experience takes place."

As a philosophy of learning, constructivism can be traced back to the eighteenth century and the works of the philosophers Giambattista Vico, who main-

tained that humans can understand only what they themselves have construct-
ed. A great many philosophers and educationists have worked with these ideas.
The writings of Piaget (1972, 1990), Vygotsky (1980, 1986) along with the
work of John Dewey (1916, 1997), Jerome Bruner (1996, 1974) and Ulrick
Neison (1967) form the basis of the constructivist theory of learning and in-
struction.

Unlike behaviorism or positivism which usually relies on teachers or text-
books, constructivism proposes to allow learners to decide which knowledge is
important. The advantage of this philosophy, according to its advocates, is that
when one constructs a solution to a problem on their own, the solution becomes
part of one's own experience.

STREAMS OF CONSTRUCTIVIST DISCOURSE OF LEARNING

There are two major strands of the constructivist perspective. These two are:
1. Cognitive / Psychological / Piagetian Constructivism
2. Social / Vygotskian Constructivism

Cognitive Constructivism

According to cognitive constructivism of Jean Piaget (1985), knowledge is
the result of the accurate internalization and (re)construction of cognitive
meaning. This is a child-centered approach that seeks to identify, through sci-
entific study, the natural path of cognitive development. This approach as-
sumes that students come to classrooms with ideas, beliefs, and opinions that
need to be altered, modified and expanded by a teacher who facilitates this al-
teration and expansion by devising tasks and questions that create dilemmas for
students. Knowledge construction occurs as a result of working through these
dilemmas.

Jean Piaget demonstrated empirically that children's minds were not emp-
ty, but they actively processed the material presented to them, and postulated
the mechanisms of accommodation and assimilation as keys to this processing.
Learning is primarily an individualistic enterprise. The constructivist model
says that when a student encounters a new information, they compare it to the
knowledge and understanding they already have for Accommodation or Assim-
ilation (Piaget, 1985), and one of two things can occur respectively:

- Either the new information matches up with their previous knowledge pretty well (i.e. it's consonant), and the student adds it to their understanding. It may require some effort, but it's just a matter of finding the right fit, as with a puzzle piece.
- Or the information does not match the previous knowledge (i.e. it's dissonant), and the student has to change their previous understanding to find a fit for the new information. This can be harder work and requires more effort.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism sees knowledge as the result of social interaction and language usage, and thus is a shared, rather than an individual experience. According to the pioneers of social constructivism, emphasis is given on education for social transformation and a theory of human development that situates the individual within a socio-cultural context. Its origins are largely attributed to Lev Vygotsky.

Individual development derives from social interactions within which cultural meanings are shared by the group and eventually internalized by the individual. Individuals construct knowledge in transaction with the environment, and in the process, both the individual and the environment are changed. The subject of study is the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social and cultural milieu (Vygotsky, 1980).

Schools and classrooms are the socio-cultural settings where teaching and learning take place and "cultural tools", such as reading, writing, and certain modes of discourse are utilized. This approach assumes that meaning is not acquired in isolation from its learning with people and reality, neither does theory or practice develop in a vacuum; they are made out and shaped by dominant cultural assumptions.

WHAT IS REFLECTION AND REFLECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING?

Reflection or "critical reflection" refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, and all available information about the persons and situations are considered and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and a utilization of relevant fact which

requires a continuous examining of the respective information as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and actions to take next.

When something goes wrong in our lives, our reaction should be to set a moment aside to think about why it happened, if we could have done something to prevent it, and how it might affect our future. Hopefully, we will be better prepared to face the situation if it happened again. Not in case of wrong incidents only, but also for reaching a future target we do the same by examining all available information and experiences. This introspection is commonly called "reflection", and professionals have adopted it in order to improve their practice. For educators, reflection involves "critical thinking" about past experiences or current experiences that occur or are occurring in classroom settings.

Authors like Richards, Lockhart, Ramirez (1992) and Wallace (1991) have carried out studies to help ESL/EFL teachers to teach reflectively. Bartlett (1990) states "for teachers of students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, becoming a reflective teacher offers a very real challenge" (p. 214). This is true because teaching a second language involves many different factors that need to be considered, and which may affect both teaching and learning. Ramirez (1995) has added "in the second language classroom, reflective teaching may entail asking a number of "what" and "why" questions about teaching practices, reasons for language study, and explanations for students' success or failure" (p. 372). These questions will make teachers learn what is good or bad, what works or does not work, what motivates or frustrates learners, what facilitates or hinders learning, etc. Thus, language teachers in general need to know about linguistics, education, psychology, and any other field that may affect the teaching/learning process.

HISTORY OF REFLECTIVE THINKING

Reflective thinking is not an innovation in teaching. It has its roots in the work of a number of educational theorists and practitioners. The concept has been around for more than 50 years. Richardson (1990) has stated that John Dewey was already discussing it in 1909 by suggesting that "a moral individual would treat professional actions as experimental and reflect upon the actions and their consequences" (p. 3). Leitch and Day (2000) clarified Dewey's considerations by explaining that being an effective "reflective practitioner" is more than just improving practice and developing additional competence. A re-

flective practitioner (Schön, 1987) should possess a set of attitudes towards teaching practice based upon broader understandings of self, society and moral purposes. This attitude involves stopping, slowing down, noticing, examining, analyzing and inquiring about aspects and complexities encountered in different situations.

Most definitions of reflective thinking found in the literature are based on Dewey's inquiry oriented concepts (Martin & Wedman, 1988). Richardson (1990) has explained that it was in the 1970s that educators began to show interest for reflection and inquiry. It was then that qualitative research based on ethnography started to gain popularity. In turn, the beliefs and actions of teachers in the interactive learning process could be explored through an approach based on Dewey's ideas. Later on, in the 1980's, Donald Schön extended Dewey's foundational aspects on reflection. He coined two new concepts on reflective thinking: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on action*.

Reflection-in-Action and Reflection-on-Action

According to Schön (1983), *reflection-in-action* relates thinking and doing. He explained that these two actions (thinking/doing) lead to modifying teaching practice with the purpose of improving learning. It is an *internal conversation* of the practitioner where he/she takes hold of the process/or experience that has occurred, reframes it, and develops *on-the-spot* or *while-doing* strategies of action to improve or adjust previous experiences. Thus, "The competent practitioner learns to think on his/her feet and is able to improvise as s/he takes in new information and/or encounters the unexpected [in class]." (Pickett, 1996, p. 1).

Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, is viewed by Schön as: "Teachers' thoughtful considerations and retrospective analysis of their performance [at a later sitting] in order to gain knowledge from experience" (cited in Leitch and Day, 2000).

Schön's distinctions in critical reflection have been investigated by Ross (1990) and Spraks-Langer and Colton (1991), as cited in Picket (1996), by identifying five components of reflective thinking, that is: (1) recognizing an educational dilemma; (2) responding to a dilemma by recognizing both the similarities to other situations and special qualities of the particular situation; (3) framing and reframing the dilemma; (4) experimenting with the dilemma to discover the consequences and implications of various solutions; (5) examining

the intended and unintended consequences of an implemented solution and reevaluating the solution by determining whether the consequences are desirable or not.

In order to do this, educators are forced to look back into their own teaching practices, beliefs, attitudes, goals as well as those beliefs and attitudes of their students, of their colleagues, and of the teaching community itself. Educators, thus, need to be aware of the importance of the theory-practice relationship to really engage in reflective inquiry effectively and appropriately.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSTRUCTIVISM AND REFLECTIVISM

Neither reflective thinking nor constructivism is an innovative topic in the fields of psychology, education, and language teaching. The significant point here is their close connection in theory and practice. As the above discussion indicates, the target of both is successful knowledge-building of learners.

Their interrelationship remains equally strong even considering the two streams of constructivism. If learning is individualistic (cognitive constructivism), the teacher has to know about the student's personal information to provide suitable learning data. If learning is a social phenomenon (social constructivism), primarily the teacher himself has to interact, and next they have to find ways of making interaction among the learners, and this solely depends on a teacher's reflection of their learners and their own teaching. A comparison and contrast between constructivism and reflective thinking may help to understand their actual nature and interconnectivity of the two.

Approach versus Method and Technique

We can equate the relationship between constructivism and reflectivism with that of approach versus method and technique. There is often confusion among the three terms. They may be viewed as points along a continuum from the theoretical (approach) in which basic beliefs about language and learning are considered, to design (method) in which an overall practical plan for teaching (or learning) a language is considered, to the details (technique) where the actual learning activities take place. Richard and Rogers (1986) cite the following examples of approaches: The Oral Approach, The Structural Approach, The Natural Approach, The Communicative Approach. On the other hand, the ex-

amples of language learning methods are: Total Physical Response, Audio-lingual Method, Direct Method, and so on. As we have known, constructivism gives a wide explanation of the nature of learning and caters a specific view-point and an attitude to language learning, whereas reflective thinking can provide a practical way out to enact that in teaching. If constructivism is an approach, reflectivism can conveniently be called a method. Reflectivism also can be seen as a technique, not a detailed one, but a grand technique or a wide-range strategy.

Approach ⟶ Method ⟶ Technique

(Constructivism) ⟶ (Reflectivism) ⟶ (Tailored activities)
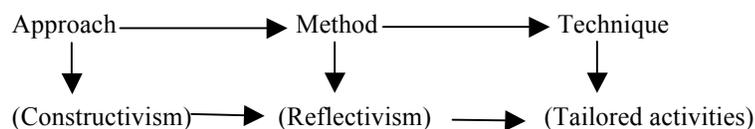
Constructivism for Learning, Reflectivism for Teaching

The dichotomy can also be seen from another perspective. In John Dewey's words, "Constructivism is a theory about learning not teaching" initiated by psychologists, while the idea of reflection (1990-2000), as indicated above, was broached by educationists like Richards, Wallace, Bartlett years after the arrival of constructivist discourses (1972, 1980). Constructivism brought the first breakthrough against conventional teaching and popularized the idea of learner-oriented teaching, and then reflective thoughts advanced it, coming up with a wider vision of the role of the teacher and clearer strategies of the development of both. However, the advocates of constructivism also have discussed the role of the teacher and constructivist classroom environment, but those are rather bi-products or suggested implications of constructivism rather than constructivism itself. On the contrary, the idea of reflection starts primarily from the discussion of teaching.

John Dewey's Idea of Applied Constructivism

John Dewey (1916), in the third section of his landmark book 'Democracy and Education", emphasized the place of experience in education, his focus being not on the theory, but on the way of applying the idea of constructivism. Dewey was a believer in what he called "the audacity of imagination". He rejected the notion that schools should focus on repetitive rote memorization. In-

stead, he proposed a method of "directed living" in which students would engage in real world in practical workshops where they would demonstrate their knowledge through creativity and collaboration. Students should be provided with opportunities to think from themselves and articulate their thoughts.

John's primary idea of applied constructivism as evidenced by the later elaborations of George (1991), Brooks & Brooks (1993) and Jonassen (1994) clearly hint how constructivist ideas of learning were preparing ground for and pointing finger at none but the upcoming reflective school of thought. That is perhaps the reason why constructivist elaborations and recommendations occurred almost in the same decade of reflective thoughts' being popularized by authors like Barlette, Richert (1990), Richards, Lockhart, and Ramirez (1992).

Theory vs. Practice

It always has been a matter of curiosity why two different types of educators are found in higher education settings: those with a vast expertise on theory and research practices, but with difficulties in teaching practices; and those novice professionals who can implement innovative and wonderful activities, but with little understanding about the rationale behind their teaching practices. Both types of professionals are missing one of the two components, theory and/or practice. Only an understanding of the link between constructivist learning theory and reflective teaching can help to fill in this gap. Beyer (1984) has explained that situations like this (gap between theory and practice) occur, because there is a tendency "*to accept existing classroom situations as given, essentially unalterable, and beyond criticism*" (p. 38, italics added). He believes that once this happens, critical thinking or any other alternative possibility is considered useless or irrelevant. Perhaps the key to avoid this taken-for-granted attitude is to prepare teachers for the possible situations they will encounter and train them with teaching tools so that they can deal with these problems before they enter the classrooms. This is highlighted by Richert (1990) in the following statements:

> "The ability to think about what one does and why – assessing past actions, current situations, and intended outcomes- is vital to intelligent practice, practice that is reflective rather than routine." (p. 509).

In sum, linking theory and practice through reflective inquiry brings flexibility in instructional settings by helping practitioners examine successes and failures in facilitating learners' knowledge construction. It also provides practicality because it not only asks practitioners to make connections between their beliefs and what really is happening in different contexts, but also involves those practitioners who teach in varied contexts and meet a great range of individuals with different styles of learning.

REVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP IN TERMS OF CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The general theoretical and practical constructivist consensus, however, across all types of constructivism, indicates that eight factors are essential in constructivist pedagogy, they are: (1) learning should take place in authentic and real-world environments; (2) learning should involve social negotiation and mediation; (3) content and skills should be made relevant to the learner; (4) content and skills should be understood within the framework of the learner's prior knowledge; (5) students should be assessed formatively, serving to inform future learning experiences; (6) students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware; (7) teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors; and (8) teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content. (Brooks, J.G., & Brooks, M.G., 1993)

To better understand the interconnectivity of constructivism and reflectivism, we can check out some of the above recommendations and guiding principles to understand how they practically lead to reflection and necessitate reflective teaching.

Reflection for Creating Real-life Environment of Learning

'Learning should take place in authentic and real-world environments'. Whether building accurate representations of reality, consensual meanings in social activities, or personally coherent models of reality, experience is paramount. Experience provides the activity upon which the mind operates. For the cognitive constructivist, authentic experiences are essential so that the individual can construct an accurate representation of the real world, not a contrived world. For the social and radical constructivists, authentic experiences are im-

portant so that the individual may construct mental structures that are viable in meaningful situations. However, recall of experiences and reflection is an evident pre-requisite for attaining the said environment. Teachers do not have any divine power by which they will be creating a suitable environment. For passing a new knowledge in a real life context, teachers actually have to reflect on the situation continuously and relate it to the respective context.

Reflection for Social Mediation

'Learning should involve social negotiation and mediation'. While only social constructivism emphasizes social interaction as a basis for knowledge construction, cognitive and radical constructivism do assign social interaction a role. Social interaction provides for the development of socially relevant skills and knowledge, and gives a mechanism for facing cognitive challenges that may require individual adaptation. Regardless of how it works, the main thing is the mediation that needs contemplation about the involved interaction among the participants of a social situation.

Reflection for Establishing Relevance or Context

'Content and skills should be made relevant to the learner'. If knowledge is to enhance one's adaptation and functioning, then the knowledge attained (i.e. content and skills) must be relevant to the individual's current situation, understanding, and goal. This relevancy is likely to lead to an increase in motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) too. But the question is, how can the learners find this relevance necessary for adaptation of knowledge, and/or how can the teachers facilitate that? The answer is, 'through reflection'. Only by reflective efforts, teachers can find and utilize the link between varied information, social situations, and experiences, and give out a fruitful context.

Reflection for Channeling Schema

'Content and skills should be understood within the framework of the learner's prior knowledge'. Understanding a student's behavior requires an understanding of the student's mental structures, that is, 'an understanding of the student's understanding'. When a Bangladeshi, or Malay student confuses 'he and she', they actually do it because there is no gender-specific pronoun in

Bengali and Bahasa Malay for third person singular number. Or for instance, when a student replies that the answer to 75-38 is 43, the teacher must not think "Oh, that is wrong," but rather "What is the student's understanding of subtraction that has led to this answer?" In this case, the student appears to be using the following rule of subtraction, 'subtract the smallest from the largest'. While this rule is 'incorrect' given our current system of mathematics, it is none-the-less, the rule the student is using. Only by reflecting and attempting to understand a student's prior knowledge, will the teacher be able to create effective experiences, resulting in maximal learning.

Reflection for Students' Assessment

'Students should be assessed formatively, serving to inform future learning experiences'. Unfortunately, knowledge and understanding are not directly visible, but rather must be inferred from action. Institutional systematic tests may not be enough to find it out. Thus, to take into account an individual's current level of understanding and potential next level in this ongoing process, a teacher must continually assess the individual's knowledge by meticulous reflection and note taking. Reflective assessment (that combines both formal and informal judgment) is necessary to accurately create the next series of assessments and activities for students.

Reflection for Active Learning of Students

'Students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware', and 'Teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors'. This underlying tenet of constructivism requires that students, with the help of teachers, learn *what to learn* as well as *how to learn* and get to new meanings from the existing ones. The question may arise, if the entire matter is with the learners, what does the teacher have to do regarding self-regulated learning and more importantly how to do? The simple answer is, 'find ways of creating learner autonomy through reflection', that is, through considering every possible information about the learners' background knowledge, culture, learning achievement and so on.

Reflection for Multiple Representations of Content

'Teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content'. They can do this by maintaining a repertoire of multiple and diverse network of a target content and reflect on those. The relationship of multiple perspectives and multiple representations is that of cause and effect within cognitive constructivism. Experiencing multiple perspectives of a particular event can provide the teacher with the raw materials necessary to develop multiple representations. These multiple representations provide with various routes from which to retrieve knowledge and the ability to develop more complex schemas relevant to the experience.

Reflection for Ensuring Step-by-Step Learning

Step-by-step learning is another key component of constructivist theory of learning. The idea is that the learners cannot instantly get to a totality of some knowledge and have to proceed step by step by putting one brick upon another like a building constructor. The entire matter necessitates a conscious or subconscious reflection on the part of both teachers and students. Teachers need to maintain a sequence of steps by keeping notes on his teaching and students' achievement, and to occasionally change that as part of a continuous reflective process.

WHY TO REFLECT?

The following points will further reinforce the necessity of reflection in teaching especially in ESL/EFL teaching.

Reflection to Avoid 'Fossilization' of Practice

In-service teachers who teach the same course several times without reflection may use exactly the same strategies throughout the years without considering the varied needs, abilities and socio-cultural backgrounds of students from group to group. They do not realize that each new group of students represents a later generation and that teachers' over-used practices are at times to be blamed for the decline in students' achievement. The risk here is that practice *"fossilizes"* (Schön, 1987) and loses the 'flexibility' needed for tailoring

teaching. To avoid this, teachers should bring a judicious change in materials, activities and classroom settings guided by reflection, inquiry and critical thinking.

Factors Leading to Reflection

What leads to reflection? Definitely it is our successes and failures in teaching practices. When teachers comment about their teaching practices as the following example statements, there is room for improvement: 'I used an information gap, but it did not work. Students couldn't perform the task. It was too difficult.'; 'Students were lost; they couldn't understand what I was saying'; 'The opening of the class was confusing'; 'Students did not understand my instructions'; 'The activity was too long'; 'Students rarely talk. I am doing most of the talking'; 'Most of the students fail on the test when I put things they had not practiced in class.' These statements may lead to reflection. They are the starting point towards a positive pedagogy. Underhill (in de Arechaga, 2001) has explained that teacher development is related to personal development, particularly as a teacher. He has clarified that this process entails the teachers' personal choices about the way they think, feel and behave as teachers, and how instant choices they make while teaching.

Meta-language

Wajnryb (1999) has explained that observing our own teaching is a way of discovering the classroom from a perspective other than the one we actually engage in; it is a way of providing focus and clarity. Self-observation provides meta-language to teachers which, as she has highlighted promotes an awareness of classroom and other realities and a 'reservoir of information and experiences' that will direct ESL/EFL teachers towards discussions and *'extracted generalizations'* with peers, and the decisions taken would be more informed and systematic.

Reflection for Informal or Beyond-classroom Teaching

While classroom teaching depends on learning materials and prepared lessons, teaching beyond classroom absolutely depends on respective teachers' interaction with the students on topics of real life without formal lessons say, a

grammatical topic in language teaching. The teacher uses their awareness about the students' socio-cultural background, interests and existing language competence and performance, and keeps prepared to readily use every possible opportunity based on relevance.

CONSTRUCTIVE-REFLECTIVE DUAL IMPACT IN ELT: CASE STUDIES

In the following, I would like to present some case studies from several teaching experiences to indicate how reflection can help to customize teaching strategy and bring necessary changes in order to ensure students' building on their own meaning and autonomous construction of their learning. The case studies thus will also solidify our idea of the theoretical dichotomy and the essential nature of the relationship between constructivism and reflectivism. The studies were conducted in Bangladesh and are described below in first person singular number.

Case 1: Teaching Listening: Shifting from Equipped Language Lab to Noisy Classroom Settings:

As child language acquisition theories suggest, listening comes/should come first while learning a language. Therefore, it is essential to introduce listening items (e.g. recordings/tape-scripts) to the students at an early stage of any language course. The learners in this case study refer to all first semester students of various departments of a leading private university of Bangladesh. The university offers English language enhancement courses to all new students. This university has a language lab with modern equipment where students are given listening practices three times a week.

After the first few times of the language lab, I noticed that although several students were performing well in the listening tests and practices in the lab, they could not reproduce the same level of performance as when it came to listening to the teachers' instructions and explanations in English in the class which were in fact easier in terms of accent and speed. Neither could they comprehend from listening when they needed to interact and respond to each other during speaking sessions. After observing this for quite some time, I deliberated into the situation and came to the conclusion that listening is a natural process; a skill that we adopt in a natural setting with background noise as an

integral part of the whole context. When students practice listening in the language lab they become habituated to 'focused listening' with no background insertion or disruption. So to develop the listening ability of the students, it is important to habituate them in a natural setting with interactions and verbal responses that reflect how much they have understood and retained of the conversation.

Therefore, instead of taking students to language labs, I combined the listening practice with conversations, dialogues to which students needed to respond appropriately as participants. I also started to play some of the listening tapes in the classroom so that at least some background noise would play a part. Although there was not a dramatic improvement, some students showed a better level of performance and others seemed more accustomed and comfortable with the listening activities after a few weeks. They were also better able to adapt to *interactive* listening practices both in the classroom and beyond.

Case 2: Teaching Writing in Large Classrooms: Finding Alternative to Individual or Random Checking

The students of this case study are all in first semester. They have taken Basic English course to improve their language skills for practical purpose and to facilitate their learning in major courses where the language of books and classes is in English. The course content includes grammar, vocabulary and development of the four skills of language. Writing is taught in two steps: *First,* the students are taught individual sentence construction based on certain structures and grammar items. Then, they are taught free writing (paragraph, essays etc.) in which they are expected to implement their learning of the primary level. It was noticed that the students did well in the first level (sentence construction focused on individual grammar item), but when it came to the second level of guided or free writing of sequencing sentences based on a topic, they made the same mistakes of grammar items that they had been drilled on during the first level. Because the class consisted of 40 students, and I could meet them for two classes a week, of one and a half hours each, the biggest challenge was to provide feedback to each student individually. Every student has their unique mistakes that require individual instruction and drilling. Of course, there are many common mistakes, but when their works are checked individually, each student has to be instructed separately. It is also difficult to test all the students later on to find out if they have been able to sustain the correction and drilling.

So instead of checking in class or at counseling hours as usual, I took two writing samples of everyone for my personal contemplation over two weeks and identified the more common mistakes majority of the students were making. These were for example, use of prepositions, use of 'be' verbs and forming 'wh' questions. Based on these mistakes, I selected writing topics and customized practice materials that would focus on these areas. At the same time, they were given free writing which would test the retention of the practice. Interestingly, this proved to be truly helpful as the number of common errors they had made previously were reduced in some weeks. I could then give my attention to the remaining few students with uncommon errors in their writing. Thus, thoughtful and planned reflection helped me greatly handle a large class. I passed the idea to some of my colleagues, and they also reported to me positively about the same experience.

Case 3: Nativizing Practice Materials for Authentic Learning

A teacher has to go through the continuous process of selection, sorting and customizing the materials so that they suit the level, social background and aptitude of the students. The challenge for selecting listening materials is especially great, as most of these are based on the social and cultural contexts, topics of the target language, country and society. The beginners and those who are weak in the target language find it difficult to cope with the accent of the native speakers of the listening materials. This difficulty is further enhanced when they also have to interpret the conversations based on a particular country's socio cultural context with culture-specific register which is very different from that of their own country. The activity becomes more extra-linguistic than linguistic.

The students of this case study are the same as those in case 2. While using the Headway IELTS practice books for listening practice, I noticed the weaker students were struggling to keep pace with the students who were better. So I took the weaker students aside and formed a separate group for them. Instead of starting their listening practice with Headway or IELTS materials, I started with a Bangladeshi context based listening material 'Jibon Tori' which is a part of the spotlight program that uses an easier method of broadcasting English. The narrative is about the first floating hospital in Bangladesh. It describes how the floating hospital started its journey in the country, what kind of service it provides to the poor people of the remote areas. Many of the students

come from the rural areas outside Dhaka the capital, and therefore they could relate to the problems, situations, contexts, background and places referred to in the narrative. After a few weeks of regular practice with these specialized versions, the students of the group showed notable improvement in varied kinds of listening practices.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Thinking about all the possible variables that affect the teaching/learning process while we are teaching might be overwhelming and confusing, especially for ESL/EFL teachers. Because it is almost humanly impossible to handle all the information at the same time, reflective teaching has been designed as a process of doing this with a target of actualizing students' constructive learning. It means taking one step at a time, approaching knowledge with an open mind and a wholehearted attitude, and committed responsibility in order to renew it through experience. *Open-mindedness* will create an interest in considering all sides of an issue, and a willingness to seek out or create alternate possibilities for ensuring constructive learning; *sincerity* will allow practitioners to self-evaluate themselves, their work, and existing structures; and last but not least, *responsibility* will lead to an extended concern and a desire to actively seek out the truth in order to solve the problems encountered again and again in extracting information and constructing new learning content. Reflective teaching suggests that experience alone is insufficient for professional growth, but that experience coupled with reflection of an open, sincere and responsible mind can be a powerful impetus for teacher development and making the teacher's role more practical in a constructive classroom. Thus constructivism and reflective process function as the logical counterparts in TESOL/ELT as well as other branches of knowledge.

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