

ESL/EFL in Teaching and Learning Process

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If a teacher is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the home of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind. - Kahlil Gibran

Abstract

Teaching comprises all types of disciplines and teachers need to look outside the confines of English as a Second Language. The acquisition of knowledge comes in a variety of the learners' educational potential. English as a Second Language in teaching and learning, focuses on active learner's involvement and reduction of coercion. Indeed, Gibran's thoughts remain true that "wisdom leads one to discuss his or her potentials. To realize this, teachers in all educational levels have to portray a less dominant classroom role in accord with the importance of classroom interaction in the teaching learning process.

N.A. Flaunders retorted that "in the average classroom someone is talking for two-thirds of the time, two-thirds of the task is direct influence." What does this mean? Students' participation or interaction in the classroom has a significant content to enhance their linguistic competence and its core basis is how to use the language as the most important factor in the classroom. Comprehending the information caters one to establish a fair and well-balanced condition that teachers are facilitators, and the learners are to stay in the frontline.

In today's classroom setting, the adoption-adaption of teaching strategies focuses on the learners' ability to have a strong command or fluency of the language. ESL is learned around the globe and the learners' interests are the primary goals in the teaching and learning process. Colin Blakemore once said that "True knowledge, as Plato argues, must be within us all, and learning consists of solely of discussing what we already know."

In an ESL classroom, discovery of knowledge is not a new game. Teachers do perform their tasks and the learners serve not as passive listeners but as active recipients in the transformation-sharing of all the five macro skills namely speaking, reading, writing, listening, and viewing. In fact, if commitment, knowledge of subject-matter for independent learning, and management of learning are packaged in one big box, both the teachers and the learners will operate a mutual process of generating a lively culture and quality of educational life.

With the aforementioned views I had experienced in teaching ESL, the teacher's passion for teaching and attitude in dealing with the learners create a strong impact on the learners cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

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ESL Teaching in the Classroom: A Closer Look

Learners study in different time zones and the process of learning matters based on the skills acquired in and out of the classroom. Each individual's performance in the learning of English holds the belief that exposure to English may not necessarily mean greater proficiency unless the learner is actively involved in the learning process. A necessary prod to active involvement is motivation.

Motivation (acronym form) in ESL teaching

Medium of instruction is English for non-native speakers who are learning in English. Bernardo (2004) in his paper "Non-Native English Students Learning in English: Reviewing and Reflecting on the Research" looked into the experiences of bilingual learners as they undertake learning activities in English which is a second or a foreign language for them. Different insights were drawn from the various studies reviewed were expounded as to how bilingual learners use their multilingual resources to attain their learning goals. One of the recommendations calls to study the experiences of bilingual learners' experiences in learning English and reflections for ESL and EFL teachers and other teachers of bilingual learners.

Olshtain (1990) enumerated factors predictive to success or failure in second language and foreign language learning among different learner groups. These are the (a) *the learner context* or the learning conditions formal and informal learning situations; (b) the *social context* which refers to attitudes and motivation deriving from political, cultural, and sociolinguistic milieu; and (c) the *learner's characteristics* encompassing language aptitude, academic knowledge of one's first language and IQ level, as well as other individual features. Students from less advantaged backgrounds have difficulty acquiring the linguistic competence necessary to cope with their school works and one of the major causes for lack of success in school. These factors hold true among the learners inability to reach out and optimize the usage of the language.

Teachers of ESL therefore should know the ways students learn and the components of critical and creative thinking. Learning is a reflective process whereby the learners develop new insights and understanding or changes and restructures the learners' mental process. Learning combines inductive and deductive thoughts whereas learning connotes a general process, critical thinking and creativity refer to specific aspects of learning. Language educators often come across obstacles caused by the hesitance and inhibitions of the learners towards learning the language. In essence, imparting learners' understanding coupled with the teachers' critical reflection is beneficial to their teaching practice.

Interest in learning English and teaching the course in all levels presents a huge scope of involvement from both parties. Learning from different tasks executed in the classroom matters based on the learners' needs. To borrow the words of Bernardo (2004), "language is used in the task and the language skills of the learner. Proficiency in language use will effectively learn or perform different learning tasks when these tasks involve materials not in their native language particularly English as a second language." In fact, it has become more

challenging for both teachers and the learners engaging in ESL since the pandemic occurred. The COVID-19 has enforced a new normal setting and environment for learning, thus the pedagogy has evolved to conform to the current needs in the academe.

Variety of teaching strategies applies to learners' needs as they traverse the path of learning. It does not dwell on the teacher's dominant attitude in the classroom but simply delivers or introduces activities that would enhance students' interests and this can be achieved by encouraging students feel better and express their ideas in English to acquire more English words and expand their knowledge pool. Various categories were taken into account in the new normal setting such as the environment of the learners, their connectivity to the internet, their individual abilities to learn and digest learnings and their attitude towards communication in a virtual way.

Assessment of tasks varies depending on the lessons presented as well as to the interest of the students. Traditional way of evaluating or assessing their performance may help in a way to help them boost their confidence both in the writing and oral activities and feeding them with information that would help develop their critical thinking skills and become good communicators in ESL. Reinforcement tasks may contribute towards excellent and friendly competition among the learners through participating in collaborative activities, patience and hard work to facilitate a smooth flow of interaction between and among the learners. Harry Wong retorts that "in an effective classroom, students should not only know what they are doing. They should also know why and how."

Time is the essence of teaching and learning. Reducing anxiety does not happen overnight. Students themselves have to try to seek chances to practice using/speaking the language in various situations. Teaching time is limited hence, students need to actively practice the language in and out of the classroom. Sharing their experiences with other students and ESL/EFL teachers is useful to understand the issues of anxiety and fear in different perspectives.

Other approaches to be utilized in the ESL classroom involve students' responses crucial to the quality of the learning experiences. This will greatly depend upon the resourcefulness and creativity of the teacher. There is no 'best' strategy or approach however if one decides to adapt such teaching tool, there must be motivation in the implementation of such strategies to encourage students' motivation by not being a passive or reluctant recipients of knowledge transformation. Strategies or pedagogies are ingredients in teaching. They add colorful flavor to inspire teachers' instructional mode. Although strategies vary, ESL teachers still depend on the learners' interests. No strategy is best as long as it is student-based. Teaching without assessing students' needs is not teaching at all. The real and fundamental core of teaching-learning process builds relationships with students by knowing their strengths. Out of those strategies, students will be motivated to learn and they would eventually participate or perform and be responsible for their own learning.

Native speakers as well as non-native speakers of ESL are in the right track to determine their students intelligibility and accuracy of language use. It applies to both Standard British English or Standard American English. Code-switching and code-mixing usually occurs. In language teaching, there are pedagogical facets that affect the behavior and teaching styles of an ESL educator. Teaching grammar is one. As David Wilkins put it, "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." Some students

(if not most) find grammar a tedious yet a boring lesson. Rules introduced repetitively does not offer a 'special flavor' and mastery of the rules seems to be an experience to a lesser extent particularly for those whose field of discipline is not in English. Mixing different languages and switching into another language in an oral discourse has not become a novelty in today's classroom of modern teaching. One of the reasons is the lack of vocabulary or appropriate choice of words that would substitute a specific term. One has to replace for a word or a phrase to complete the meaning of the written discourse.

To facilitate learning, the teacher must learn to match appropriate tasks with students' abilities and background knowledge. When tasks are under estimated, too many students do not learn up to their potentials and get bored (Boisier, 2000). The teachers' attitude and their strategy in teaching ESL is of crucial importance. Tejero (2009) remarked that given all the best in terms of the instructional requirements, teaching and learning may still fall short of the desired expectations if the teacher is not judicious in establishing the right environment for learning. The establishment of a favorable classroom atmosphere which is conducive to effective teaching and learning activities is an essential condition that has to be looked into by any seasoned and perceptive teacher.

By all means, ESL teaching and learning promotes and utilize intellectual understanding of the grammar of the language in real communication. If teachers expect their students to learn how to use language to fulfill real communicative functions, they must have opportunities to do so in a full range of real situations and social settings.

"Learning" occurs as a result of conscious study of the formal properties of the second language. Learning is developed. It is taught by explicit or formal instruction, and it is to be aided by the practice of error correction. In everyday language, acquisition is correct mental representation of a rule. "Learn" knowledge is available for use by "picking up" a language while learning is "grammar" or "rules." It is an accepted truth that being proficient in English is an advantage. It essentially helps a person to articulate his views and express himself and it also enables him/her to excel in a number of specialized fields (Longcop, 2000). Similarly, in order for an individual to succeed in his undertaking, he must have an adequate English language proficiency.

The bedrock of Teaching

Liakoupoulou (2011) asserted that knowledge on every subject in the curriculum the teacher teaches is a necessity. Manginsay (2015) too, emphasized that teachers' effectiveness on the subject matter is crucial since it is an indicator that they have a sense of direction and aware of the expected outcomes. Similarly Darling-Hammond (2005) underscored that a teacher needs the kind of knowledge that will enable her to observe her students, assess their attitude and performance so that she can choose those techniques and strategies that are suitable.

It is indeed a requirement that the acquisition of knowledge and skills is connected to the subject being taught. In fact, Duangon (2013) claimed that one indicator of educational excellence is the presence of highly effective, truly committed, and competent classroom teachers. Also, the teacher should be able to bring the updated knowledge to the classroom and should have the expertise to impart it (Bite, 2012). Precisely, the teacher does not only

give inspiration and facilitate the learning process but also helps students become better learners. Their excellence and determination in learning depends much on the quality of teaching.

Teacher's effectiveness of teaching the language was a composition of other aspects of instruction in basic classroom that was perceived as sufficient and effective. Focusing on the learner's needs, making the classroom a 'friendly-learning site provides language input and output at an appropriate level. The initial challenge of ESL teachers is the acquisition of skills needed to present and navigate their everyday lessons.

To sum up, ESL teachers of today are not merely provider of lessons in the classroom but they possess some attributes like proficiency in the subject and devotion to the profession. Their success in teaching holds their beliefs that students' good performance usually dwells on how they perform their classroom tasks. It can be assumed that students' failure to understand the topic may result to teacher's inability to elaborate the content. Lack of preparation and interest in the subject may also result to different consequences hence; students are the primary victims of classroom injustice. Teachers' negative attitude toward the students may affect their teaching and certainly failure may occur. Teachers' personal problems too may contribute to the learning difficulty of the students thus resulting to the latter's disinterest in their studies.

Psyche of ESL Teachers

ESL teachers as agents in the classroom are not "information providers" but they should engage in reflection to discover their everyday practices which are fundamental in teaching. Their reflection determines their teaching practices which are fundamental in teaching. Their reflection determines their teaching practice which greatly affects their students' performance. However, being reflective also concerns how they project their image toward their students. Their personal attributes may drive them to acknowledge the unconventional behavior of the students and thus they need to embrace positive characteristics that would boost their morale.

Reflection captures a new picture in the teachers' teaching practices. It provides a link as an initial preparation for them to revise any unexpected outcomes regarding information, students' interests and limitations. Through reflection, one can determine positive changes in his or her teaching journey and it helps him or her enhance his or her actual performance.

Indeed, actual teaching practices produce different techniques that eventually transform individuals to engage in meaningful learning activities. With this, teaching and learning is an on-going challenge that both ESL teachers and students experience both inside the classroom and beyond. Practices are regarded as teaching tools that identify one's profession and lead students to learn in the real world.

Reflective teaching is knowing and understanding the learners. Students deserve what is best for them. In the same light, teachers are challenged to teach thus improving their craft would benefit their students to learn. Reflective teaching is beneficial not only to the teachers but also to the students. It helped them to adjust their instructional goals and objectives based on students' results or responses in learning. They also perceived reflective practice

as a preparation for evaluating their teaching, examining their students' learning, and thinking critically and deeply about approaches to improving classroom instruction.

Reflecting is embracing change. Knowing and understanding their students and their needs, the development of their teaching instruction, the use of instructional strategies, and the learning outcomes were the focus of their reflection in teaching.

Moreover, reflections vary and flexibility in teaching occurs anytime in the teaching practice. Doing this provided them the way to evaluate both their students' performance and the results of their teaching which enabled them to ponder or contemplate various approaches for future instruction. Van Manen cited in Disu (2017) considered this as 'contextual reflection.' In this stage, they determine the importance of a lesson based on their students' needs. Learning how to carry out the desired learning goals and modification of instructional mode offers a relaxing climate tension-free classroom. The way in which a teacher carries out his or her work determined by the union or connection of his acquired knowledge and personality traits.

In sum, teachers overall psyche is a component of *understanding and knowing the students, being innovative, selfless, and ready to embrace change*. Therefore, achieving competencies in teaching require such skills that would transform better individuals.

Decades of education research support the idea that by teaching less and providing more feedback, we can produce greater learning. - Grant Wiggins

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Author's bio

Professor **Gladys Gayola Mangada** has been working as an Associate Professor of English and a full-time English teacher at the College of Arts and Communication, Department of Languages and Communication University of Eastern Philippines. (UEP) She has attended a number of conferences and seminars in Philippines as well as in abroad. English Pedagogies and Language Learning are her chief area of interest regarding research. She occupies a number of prominent positions, including coordinator of Bachelor of Art in English language (BAEL) programme coordination. She also handles Philippine English critical writing, introduction to the English language system, Teaching and Assessment of macro-skills and gender courses.