

My Beliefs and Reflection on Language Learning and Teaching

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Nowadays, more and more people, universities, and companies talk about how important English has become. It sounds easy and simple to talk about it; however, as we all know, acquiring a second language takes a very long time, and it is a time investment. Moreover, language learners need to continue to have their motivation and interest to keep learning their target language, which is often extremely difficult since many of us have our own jobs to do at work or at home. As an English learner myself, I have no idea how long I have spent on learning English. For us teachers, we must continually explore what it means to teach; this ultimately leads to our learning. This is an eternal challenge as long as a teacher is being a teacher. Here in this paper, I would like to share my opinions on language learning and teaching.

It's extremely important for teachers to understand teaching doesn't mean that learners learn exactly what we teach. Once when I asked my learners what they learned on that day, I wanted to hear my learners say that they had learned a certain main grammar point that I had taught to them. However, they told me something slightly off apart from the main grammar I taught, which surprised me. After I had that experience, I realized teaching English to learners is not simple in the least. Teaching doesn't automatically result in learners learning. Teachers need to understand that fact.

If teachers have been teachers for a long time, they tend to forget what it was like to learn and what learning was all about. Many of us may believe we do only teaching because we are teachers.

However, we should not forget the fact that we also learn many things from our students. Perhaps for teachers, learning from their learners may weigh more than teaching to learners. I understand that we want to believe we only teach. However, teachers actually learn more from their learners by interacting with them. In order to be a good teacher, we need to know how we can learn from learners. This is why I strongly believe we teachers should also keep learning a certain subject we teach. In my opinion, language changes every day, and each one of the teachers and learners' way of understanding things is different. With this in mind, we teachers can learn English by attending English teaching lectures, workshops, a TESOL program and so on. Even if teachers don't attend these types of classes, we can maintain or improve English by watching English movies, reading, and so on. In so doing, at least we can vaguely recall what learning is like.

Learners may not learn exactly what we teach, so what can we do about that? One of the methods I have been using is conducting real-life conversations during classes. Everyday conversations occur daily in relation to L1 in the real world. Thus, it can be seen in their English learning as well. By doing so, classes usually tend to have humorous and spontaneous communication. This method has the same idea as "Bringing real-life language use into EFL classrooms" by Éva Illés and Sumru Akcan in *ELT Journal* (2017). I believe it's important to have spontaneous communication class in English by using a classroom as a place for authentic and real-life learning. This method also allows learners to experiment with language, and they can make their decision with humour and laughter. The study conducted by Éva Illés and Sumru Akcan displays students' engagement, creating new coinages, compound words, humour, jokes, and laughter.

There are two more methods I have been trying for learners to have a maximized learning. One is to provide students with

homework related to the Linked Skills Activity (Nation, 2013). This seems to enable students to remember what they learned longer and more. The other is conducting lessons by using student language to review ways of talking about certain grammar (Thornbury, 1999). This is the modified version of the CLL methodology in which I record my students' conversations by focusing on a certain grammar. This way, my students and I can analyze and identify what kind of errors they made and how they can say things in English. By letting them listen to their conversations, not only do they get to analyze their own conversations, but also they try to listen to them very closely not to miss a thing. My students I have tried the method with mentioned that they got tired after the lesson, but they said they had enjoyed the lesson. They also said there are lots of things that they can learn from this lesson, and they would like to do it again sometime. They showed more interest about the lesson and they participated well.

As for my students' side, I have been encouraging my students to do certain things which, I hope, eventually leads to students' autonomous English learning. For example, if they have someone or something which particularly interests them such as singers, they can do some research on the Internet and write about them. I have only just begun using this approach. However, I would like to gradually expand it and hopefully they will be willing to study English by themselves in the future even outside the classroom.

Last but not least, we should not forget why we became an English teacher. Looking back on our own thoughts and reflecting on it are extremely important. Hence, occasionally we should reflect on it. In the same way, we should reflect on language learning and teaching, such as lesson contents, what teachers learned from our learners, teachers' beliefs and practices, metaphors, and even professional development. Farrell (2007) strongly suggests teachers should reflect on their teaching. By reflecting on teachers' language

teaching, we can learn something we haven't seen before with our unique and different lenses, which will lead to our professional teaching growth, and also that will bring new teaching angle/style, and development.

As long as we teachers try to learn, we notice the knowledge base of teaching is constantly changing (Richards and Farrell, 2005), and so is language. However, one thing which will not change for sure is that as long as I teach, I will continue to interact with my learners, reflecting on my language learning and teaching as well as continue to learn English myself as a learner. Teachers' interactions with learners, reflecting on it, and putting them into practice can lead to teachers' learning and teaching. Therefore, I strongly believe teaching and learning are interrelated and intertwined.

References

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