


Summer 9-1-2013

# Reflective Teaching Practices: Looking Beneath the Surface and Emergent Cyclical Experiential Learning Processes and Outcomes

Mazie E. Black  
*SIT Graduate Institute*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp\\_collection](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection)

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Black, Mazie E., "Reflective Teaching Practices: Looking Beneath the Surface and Emergent Cyclical Experiential Learning Processes and Outcomes" (2013). *MA TESOL Collection*. 696.  
[https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp\\_collection/696](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection/696)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Graduate Institute at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in MA TESOL Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact [digitalcollections@sit.edu](mailto:digitalcollections@sit.edu).

REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES: LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE AND  
EMERGENT CYCLICAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

MAZIE EUGENIA BLACK

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING DEGREE  
AT THE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL TRAINING (SIT)  
TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (TESOL)

GRADUATE INSTITUTE  
BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

AUGUST 30, 2013

IPP Advisor: Susan Barduhn



This project by Mazie Eugenia Black is accepted in its present form.

Date August 30, 2013

Project Advisor Susan Barduhn

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the benevolent Creator, ﷻ, for His mercy and blessings, family, friends, colleagues, faculty and staff at SIT for their direction and influence as I take a brighter path using critical reflective practices as a tool for enlightenment in my life and teaching career. I thank the Saudi Arabian International School Al-Hada (2007-2010), Ta'if, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its Principal Patricia Burnett for allowing me to guide its students toward being lifelong learners, the reflective hand lens concept for the hypothesis in this paper. During this time I was motivated to pursue the Master of Arts degree as a Fellow in the Interlink English Language Centers TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program. I especially thank Susan Barduhn; IPP project advisor, for her unselfish direction and wisdom during my matriculation at SIT. Also, my daughter, Chanté L. Black gave me a lot of caring, understanding and unconditional support during this project. Thank you, Abu Adam and Sabriyya Abdur-Rauf who pushed me to use my wings and fly towards completing this goal. Finally, this endeavor is dedicated in memory of my first teacher and mother, Mrs. Zula Reid Black, God rest her soul in peace (September 1, 1925 – April 29, 2012). As her life was ending, she gave me her blessings and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

## ABSTRACT

In this professional paper, I examined the kinds of processes I experienced for English language acquisition (ELA) in practice. This journey is about my transition from a generalist to a TESOL specialist. One of my most successful lessons was not in English, but a science lesson to students who were majority users of English as a second or third language. It was about the use of reflective and refractive telescopes. My approaches were very student centered and project based. They worked in groups, chose which type of telescope to make, kept journals with notes, drawings and key vocabulary, made inferences, and presented the results to the class. They also created their own assessments about what they knew, wanted to learn and had learned. The members of the group depended upon each other for English Language support because they were at different levels. Members of each group submitted for use in the class complete tests or sample questions, including gap fills, vocabulary matching, drawings for labeling and essays. The students relied on each other, using various tangible resources, as well as the teacher. This lesson resounds with me until this day. I have analyzed what makes lessons like these successful. I believe meaningful language and comprehension can be found in reflective processes and by encouraging these and future students to think about their learning and keeping a record of it is a key contribution. The results of my investigations are a testimony that reflection in action works.

ERIC DESCRIPTORS:

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching Methods

Reflective Practice

Student Journals

Transformative Learning

Instructional Innovation

Teacher Collaboration

REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICES: LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE AND  
EMERGENT CYCLICAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

**Table of Contents**

Introduction - Reflection Leads to Growth and Development.....1

Chapter 1. Telling the Story – Who am I? (I) .....4

Chapter 2. Involving Others in the Reflective Process (Thou).....11

Chapter 3. Analysis of the Context (It) .....21

Chapter 4. Looking at the Whole Picture .....28

Chapter 5. The Benefits of Reflective Practices .....33

Chapter 6. Implications for Future Consideration .....40

Chapter 7. Transformations: Summary/Conclusion .. .....45

References.....51

Appendices.....53

### **Introduction: Reflection Leads to Growth and Development**

This paper is being written from the perspective of my personal, reflective and collective experiences from working with English Language Learners (ELL). Today's teachers face an ever increasing challenge in the classroom. The paradigms for English language learning are constantly evolving and administrative demands for higher achievement scores are crucial for professional proficiency, merit raises, retention and positive evaluations. These factors were influential in my decision to make a shift from a regular or mainstream classroom teacher to an English language specialist. During my tenure of teaching all subjects, including computer technology, physical education and art, something was becoming very apparent. In more and more domestic school districts and in international schools abroad, ELLs are expected to perform with a greater degree of proficiency. This means that mainstream teachers need to know how to manage their proficiencies and needs right along with those of non-native or English language students with low-fluency. A lot of schools only budget for one ESL specialist at the Elementary level. Some urban schools hire more specialists based on larger and very diverse school populations. International schools often hire ESL teachers although the primary requirement for teachers is that you are a native speaker of English. In the larger scope of the function of the educational institution, its graduates, and key stakeholders is to prepare students to perform in a world where the use of the English language is steadily increasing. It is the common denominator that provides the opportunity to excel in many careers and allows one to connect with other cultures. Another goal for educators in general is to create lifelong learners by guiding them. Where do I stand in this picture?

Reflective practices gave me the realization that I needed to be able to give ESL students the same quality of education that native English speakers receive. This was enough to



make me want to seek more education in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language/Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TEFL/TESOL) field.

The processes that worked with my ELLs were evident in recollection of what happened during my science and math classes. These classes are often more successful for my ELLs. The use of demonstrations, manipulatives, and hands-on activities worked well for students working in pairs or small groups.

It is mentioned in the abstract that the science lesson about telescopic lens was one that opened the eyes of my students and me. Reflections occur when light bounces off objects. Light is a metaphor for awakening or awareness. Teachers also learn in the reflective teaching cycle and the result of the telescopic science unit resides with me until this day. Students must be engaged in their learning and encouraged to entertain their interests. This is motivating for all parties. In most cases, students were willing to share their interests or willing to discover where their interests lay. This did not happen autonomously. I had to create a learning environment that supported differentiation while addressing required standards. Differentiated lessons allowed students to make choices to help them understand the important concepts. Opportunities to present projects to fellow students and offer their views and feedback became a fun and expected part of learning and not laborious as they previously thought.

Before my matriculation in the School of International Training (SIT), Master of Arts, Teaching (TESOL) program, most of my reflective practices were derived from years of teaching and some teacher development courses along the way. It was refreshing to see that many of the practices that I was doing and my teaching philosophy matched the graduate institute's goal. On the website it is stated that SIT's programs are based on an experiential learning model, a commitment to social justice and intercultural communication. My learning there was a great

match because the nature of this kind of teaching involves caring for and about students and their learning. This is a quality that I am happy to take ownership of. I choose to be very interactive with my students and although the extra efforts prove to be beneficial to them, it is also valuable to my professional development as well. Subsequently, I want to examine these kinds of processes by looking at English language acquisition (ELA) in practice. How does a former mainstream teacher take these experiences and use them as an English teacher? I reflectively recall what went into the science lesson from the beginning, what happened during the processes, how the learners developed autonomy, how tasks were given, analyzed and revisited, and how learning was perceived (feedback) by both students and me. One important discovery is that reflection from input depends upon several factors, and must be inclusive of the learners' composite makeup and their motivation to be productive. When input factors interact with the reflective properties of learners, the outcome can be highly variable dependent upon the nature of the environment, the degree of self-awareness and the students' understanding of reflective processes.

I want to test my hypothesis which is described later and use the resulting investigations for information regarding overall positive transformative learning that took place in the classroom. My model "RTP: Looking Beneath the Surface" (Figure 6, Mind Map) shows a lens that is used to examine different types of influences from input to output, professional behaviors supporting collaboration, goals, motivation, resources, and environmental elements. Learning is cyclic and lifelong learners use what they have learned in their early formative years to build on. Teachers augment their learning by giving the right amount of support for growth. The various parts and processes that take place in the cycle will be detailed in Chapter 4. Looking at the Whole Picture.

The story of my journey is told here as I make the transformation from a generalist teaching all subjects to a specialist teaching the English language.

### **Telling the Story – Who am I? (I)**

I like this quote; “Reflective practice, like a tenacious wildflower in the city, vibrates with vitality, raising our awareness and calling us from passivity to action,” (Wellington, 1991, p. 4), because it speaks volumes about how I feel about my blossoming transformation in language teaching. One of the things addressed by Bud Wellington in the article from which the quote was taken explains that “Information about reflective practice is not to be confused with the experience of reflective practice. The map is not the territory” (Wellington, 1991, p. 5). The following description about who I am as a teacher is inclusive in the map of my teaching journey, but the unique part that I want to examine is the sequences that I discovered using reflective teaching practices.

Wellington’s quote summarizes what I feel about my transformation into a language practitioner. It has given me the drive to make a change from being an exceptional mainstream teacher to a good English language instructor. Passivity can stifle creativity, spoil desires, and impede goals. I was satisfied teaching all subjects as a mainstream teacher because I felt accomplished and competent. However, the more I worked with speakers of other languages; I realized that I liked teaching English language skills to them. What I observed were emergent cyclical experiential learning processes with often predictable outcomes.

Before I go into details about me as a teacher, I had to use observational skills to look at myself. My teaching experience is only a part of the bigger picture, so I needed a model that was inclusive of my profession and its scope of responsibilities. I chose the following one.

The model of "I, Thou, and It" was developed by David Hawkins in 1967 in an essay about what proper education should be. The concept is one in which the teacher is the "I", the student is the "Thou" and the subject matter is the "It". In this model, the teacher observes the student's learning as the student interacts with the "It". Hawkins' opinion agrees with mine that we will learn in the process only what we are prepared to observe and accept. I would dare to add to his premise that we learn when we are willing to be reflective, realize there is a need for the task and do something about it. Often we are required to make changes or realize that there are certain practices that bring forth good results. Teaching is very much about learning for the instructor as well as the learner for the reflective practitioner.

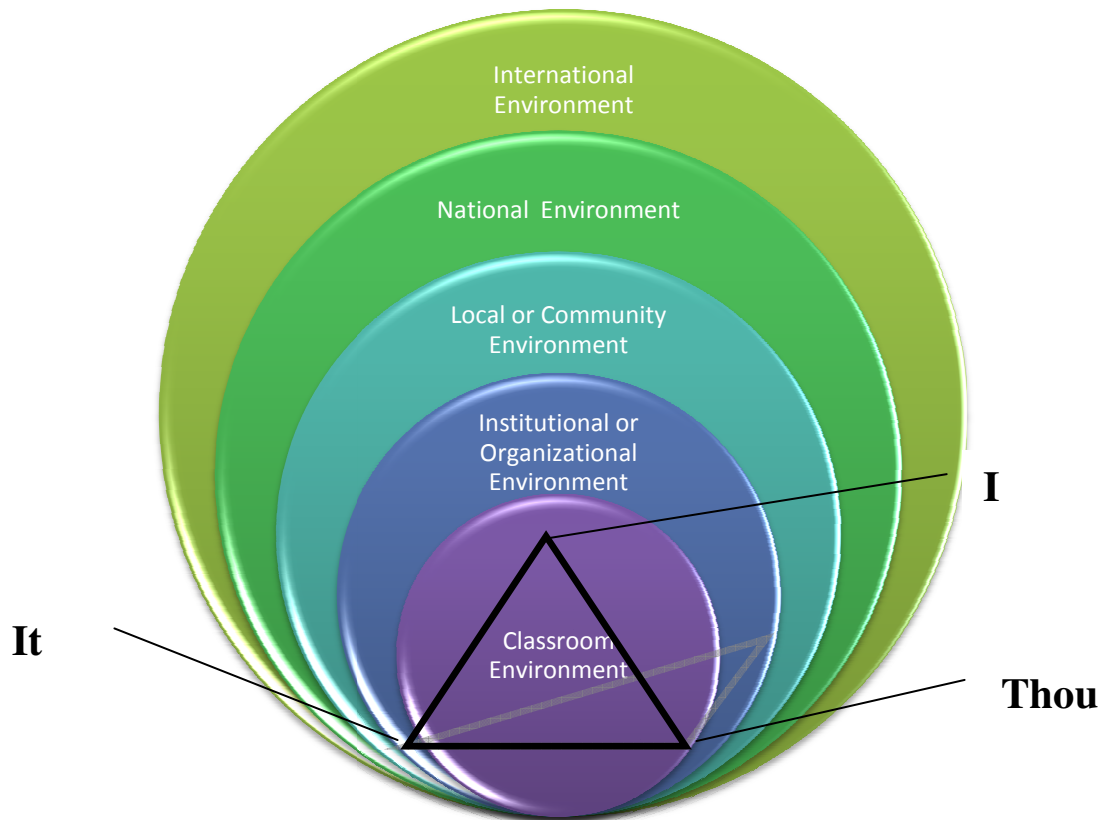
What does the "I, Thou and It" triad look like? (Figure 1) Donald A. Schön stated that "teaching should be understood as a dialogue of *I, Thou and It*" (Schön, 1991, p.3). To entertain that dialogue teachers should think about the student's discourse with the topic under discussion and the student's effort to learn about the material. In order to make sense of it, the teacher must attempt to make sense of the student's understanding of the material, and also make sure they have an understanding of the subject matter, objectives and tasks. All of these actions are going on within the framework of the institution, the school, and more specifically, the classroom (Schön, 1995).

One very important part of reflective teaching practice involves forming a realistic definition of who you are as a teacher. Tracking and documenting changes along the way help you to define yourself. Review of my former teaching philosophy indicated that there were many areas that had changed since matriculating in the SMAT 29 (Summer Master of Arts, Teaching, Class 29) program at SIT. Over the years, there were many practices I had adapted out of trial and error that matched SIT TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other

Languages) program's premise that second language acquisition is best understood through the experience of being learners. The program gave me in-depth knowledge and experiences, using my background, current teaching practices, and theoretical competencies to build upon. My new teaching philosophy includes views about language acquisition, intercultural communication, methods, procedures and approaches, whereas before, the former one answered questions like, "How will my students acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, and acquire ideas and values?" The transformation process began when I recognized that I had to look backwards as well as to the present to formulate a true picture of what kind of language teacher practitioner I'd like to become. The process of change requires molding old beliefs into harmonious ones with exposure to new information, and then being able to express and actualize those reconciliatory current beliefs.

Being able to communicate who I am as a teacher has many benefits. Many employers and schools, including college or university posts, require you to present or state your beliefs in the form of a portfolio. I maintain both teaching philosophies (Pre and Post-SIT SMAT program) for review and comparison. I've found it to be an effective tool for improving and reflecting upon my teaching approaches in a constructive manner. Additionally, being able to articulate your teaching philosophy can serve as documentation for evaluations, a checklist for achievement for promotions and tenure reviews. The teaching philosophy can be used as solid documentation of teaching success for promotion and tenure review, and give clear definition to what you have done to promote language acquisition and learning with your students. As a reflective teaching practitioner I can compare my teaching philosophy to organizations that I am working for or intending to apply to. Copies of my past and current teaching philosophies are included in Appendix A.

Like all teachers, I have often wondered whether I am a good teacher or not. I have been assessed as being a good teacher with annual and periodic evaluations conducted over the years with good results. However, the answer to this question has varied to extreme ends depending upon various scenarios. Many discussions take place in the confines of the teacher’s lounge or grade level planning room especially about evaluations. The focus is usually on the question of “How well did I do?” and little else is of concern. There may be a few team members who chime in with responses about whether the students “got it” or if any learning took place. Most of the dialogue is about the teacher’s delivery of the lesson and not about what the students acquired by participating in it. In this section, I will explain some of my beliefs about the teacher’s role in the classroom.



*1, David Hawkins' I-Thou-It Framework*

Without a Thou, there is no I evolving.

Without an It, there is no content for the context, no figure, no heat,  
but only an affair of mirrors confronting each other.

David Hawkins, "I, Thou, and It." (Hawkins, 1967, p. 55).

I believe the role of a reflective teacher is to raise the level of the content that students are learning so that they can understand its value for living. The teacher is responsible for increasing the KASA (Knowledge, Skills, Attitude and Awareness) of the students in Hawkins' framework. Lessons had a greater degree of success when the students could understand the goals and objectives. For example, a glass house of mirrors would benefit neither the instructor nor the learner as there would be too much glare, distortions and the challenge of navigating a bewildering path from start to the finish. This allegory points to a lack of direction that RTP attempts to resolve. I noticed that after many lessons, the students began to seek out clarity for themselves by asking meaningful questions throughout the process. It is very rewarding to see students start to emulate reflective practices.

My role of the "I" is purposeful for fostering student engagement with the visible and tangible content of their lessons. The "I" displayed in the diagram at the top of the triangle is the teacher. I put the "I" at the top because the teacher is an instrumental, pivotal part driving the learning cycle along with the other two key parts that make up the catalytic and dynamic influences forming the interaction between the "I-Thou-It". The starting point of observation in my opinion should be about what you bring to the forefront. Imagine holding the metaphorical lens that is going to be used as the tool to observe the processes and think about the embodiment of the "I". The holder of the instrument is composed of a myriad of teacher attributes and

experience in varying degrees. Self-Perception and opinions of peers and others can shed light on what the “I” brings to the table. I put a list of attributes in the Input convention box in the figure of the mind map in Chapter 4. Typically, the teacher’s background includes Initial Reflective Practices; existent, nonexistent or trending. The term trending may be viewed in a couple of ways in regards to RTP. A teacher may be experimenting with the practice, already be a solid practitioner, or just doing it because it is the expected, current or popular thing to do. Motivation is a part of the “I” and the “Thou.” Scott Thornbury ‘tweeted’ a question to his followers on Twitter, “What motivates you as a teacher?” (Thornbury, S. *Staying healthy and motivated*. Retrieved August 2, 2013 from <http://itdi.pro/blog/2013/07/10/staying-healthy-and-motivated-scott-thornbury/>).

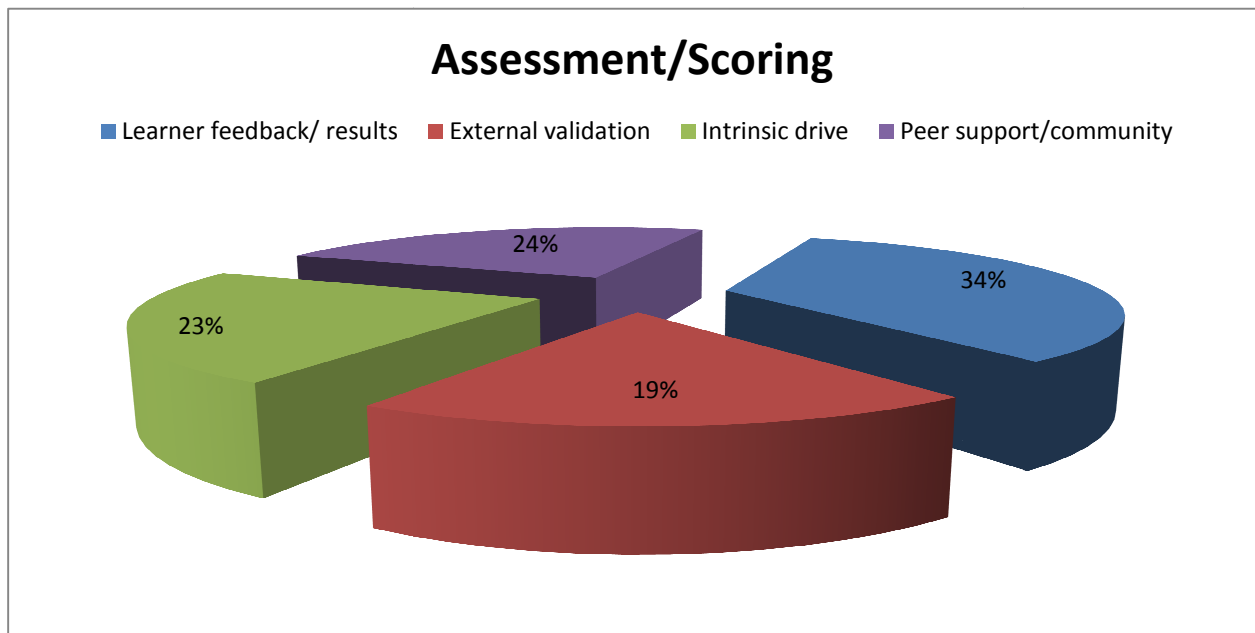
In order to determine my motivational factors, a compilation of summarizations from a plethora of readings on the subject matter was developed for introspection. The assessment tool is found at Appendix B. I created this tool to measure my motivational factors for teaching. The statements put in it were based upon the four areas described in Thornbury’s blog. The four areas are outlined following a pie chart at Figure 2 that depicts my motivation for teaching. The tool reeks of constructivism, but shows a connection that indicates that I am very interested in how well students learn and how they perceive their successes (34%). Constructivism is a learning theory based on scientific studies and observations. Its view is that learners build or construct their own perceptions of the world around them. Their views are shaped by experiential learning and reflection on those experiences afterwards. Every learner has a frame of reference by which they view new experiences. Some of the perceptions may change or be discarded completed and replaced by new information. The other area that made up the greater



portion of the pie chart is peer support and community (24%). This is very important because it makes up a large part of the collaborative pool of resources in an institution.

A community of teachers and others form a very valuable group of people who comprise a bounty of human resources known as More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs). MKO is a term described by Lev Vygotsky as someone who understands something better than you or possesses a higher capacity to perform or teach you about the subject matter, process, task or concept. One of the joys of teaching is when you have a very functional and collaborative group of people who work well together. The other parts of the illustration depict intrinsic (23%) and extrinsic (19%) motivations. My intrinsic or internal motivation comes from wanting to be a good teacher. I feel I really show that I care about my students by being a caring, kind and approachable teacher.

**Self-Administered Evaluation Results, Assessment Tool, Appendix B**



*Figure 2. Reflection – What motivates me to teach?*

I really liked one of the responses in the *Tweets* posted from Thornbury’s question about motivation by Sue Annan. It stated, “Sue Annan@thornburyscott. I love when the light comes

on in a student's eyes and you know that they've 'got it'. #motivating teachers" (Thornbury, S. *Staying healthy and motivated*. Retrieved August 2, 2013 from <http://itdi.pro/blog/2013/07/10/staying-healthy-and-motivated-scott-thornbury/>).

Scott Thornbury further categorized the responses by teachers in four main areas in his blog. Here are specific examples of indicators for the four areas in the Evaluation Tool that I used based on his categories:

1. **Learner feedback/ results:** For example: "I love when the light comes on in a student's eyes and you know that they've 'got it'"
2. **External validation:** "Appreciation also helps to raise motivation, whether from students or from your boss"
3. **Intrinsic drive:** "Continuous professional development & using my new knowledge to help students"
4. **Peer support/community:** "What keeps me going is the experience of knowing extraordinary people every year"

Thornbury believes each of these areas is within the teacher's control. A reflective practitioner can get positive results, "because you know what you're doing, and you do it well" (Thornbury, S. *Staying healthy and motivated*. Retrieved August 2, 2013 from <http://itdi.pro/blog/2013/07/10/staying-healthy-and-motivated-scott-thornbury/>).

### **Involving Others in the Reflective Process (Thou)**

Collaborative learning is a team process where teachers support and rely on each other to achieve agreed-upon goals. A lack of communal or peer support can make the teaching arena a very difficult environment to work in. What does a reflective practitioner do in this case? There are a few responses to this question. Team members who fail to function as a part of the team

can slow down the work and be more of a hindrance. The other thing to look at is whether the team is deliberately isolating members. That is why this is a good question to consider because idealists believe that all team leaders that are appointed are good. An inexperienced team leader may not have the skills sets to manage multiple personalities, teachers with different teaching styles than their own and need the help of their supervisor and others I have observed schisms in the planning room over personality clashes, professional envy, health and hygiene issues, race or ethnicity and nationality. A good leader will know how to handle this situation and others. A good leader will not be egocentric and do all the work themselves or appoint only a few to do the job. Collaboration should be a learning experience for all involved in the cycle. Sometimes collaborative teams have to be appointed and then allowances made for autonomy.

The reflective question is do I have the right tools to do the job? I believe there are sufficient tools in my traveling bag to do the job with room for updates and new skills. I am ready to begin a new academic year with the optimism as new learners enter the program. During my first summer at SIT, I learned how to prepare needs assessment for learners and learner self-evaluations for feedback. Preparing lessons and carrying them out is not a problem for my classes, but what is frustrating is the context in which they would be given in during the next school year. I would have to think of creative and more interactive plans and activities to improve language exchange and communication in classes.

The environment for the next academic year following the second summer at SIT would continue with me teaching at a reputable international school. The International School of Creative Science is known for its offering of unique dual curriculum based on the National Curriculum of England/American English language program and the Arabic Curriculum. The curriculum and mode of teaching in the English classrooms are generally task based and the

students do not normally like to speak out in class and are very shy. The first month of teaching proved these assumptions to be true. Realistic learning outcomes were askew. Although most students could perform simple gap fill exercises, there was a very limited means of English language expression. The year before I was in Grade Four and this year, I was shifted to Grade One to fulfill a need. The impression also was that if the students had a native speaker at this level, their English language skills would improve dramatically.

In order to verify these assumptions and make headway with English competencies, I had to come up with a plan that would have a solid classroom management system, address the students' and institutional needs while fulfilling my own. One of my primary needs was to conduct the year's plans in a way that I could put reflective teaching practices to work, have adequate feedback and keep the students actively involved. One goal was to formulate classroom routines that would scaffold the four skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking, to a point where there would be a natural progression in language communication. For the first month, after a week of observation, I put the plan into effect. It was a way to get the students' attention and pry them from adhering to a stiff form of interaction. I wanted them to learn how to form interactions with each other in the classroom and not just one that extended the lesson from the teacher to the student and vice-versa.

The experiential plan that I developed using the pre-planned curriculum annual guide for all subjects revolved around a central theme. It would be one that would be entertaining, include cross-cultural interests, inclusive of all learners at differing levels and most importantly, fun! I wanted to know if I could use a variety of my newly acquired methods and approaches, develop materials, engage the students with each other and see how they compared to the other classrooms where the interaction was less student-centered and still achieve the same goals,

excel or meet the desired expectations. Details of the experience will be discussed in Chapter 4 about my hypothesis. The experience of being a mentor or team leader has helped me to become a better teacher, be observant and tolerant of others and a reliable problem solver. I tried to illustrate this in my mind map (Figure 6), where it begins with the instructor bringing their skill sets along with supportive others to meet to the needs of the learner for a successful and productive outcome. The flow towards achieving goals is driven by the student and guided by the teacher and the MKOs in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Constructivism along with a discussion of ZPD will be addressed more closely in the next chapter.

There is only one degree of change between which trait, peer and community support and intrinsic drive, as to what is most important to me in the circle of teaching. I believe that traits listed above are personality based or innate, God-given gifts and I am thankful for them. These are things that equip you for your students when you don't have anything else; no books, resources, even a classroom, or the support of others. As I am writing this I am thinking about scenes from the movie, "The Help." (The Help. Kathryn Stockett, New York: Berkley Books, 2011). If you have ever read the book or seen the movie you know that one of the main characters, Aibileen Clark, 'Aibee' cares a lot for a child, Mae Mobley Leefort, 'Mae', as a domestic helper. She sees the child being neglected and hurt and often Mae doesn't even know what she did wrong. Aibee shows and tells her always that there is something valuable about her. Many scenes in the movie show Aibee saying to Mae in her fossilized vernacular;

You a smart girl. You a kind girl, Mae Mobley. You hear me?

You is kind, you is smart, you is important!

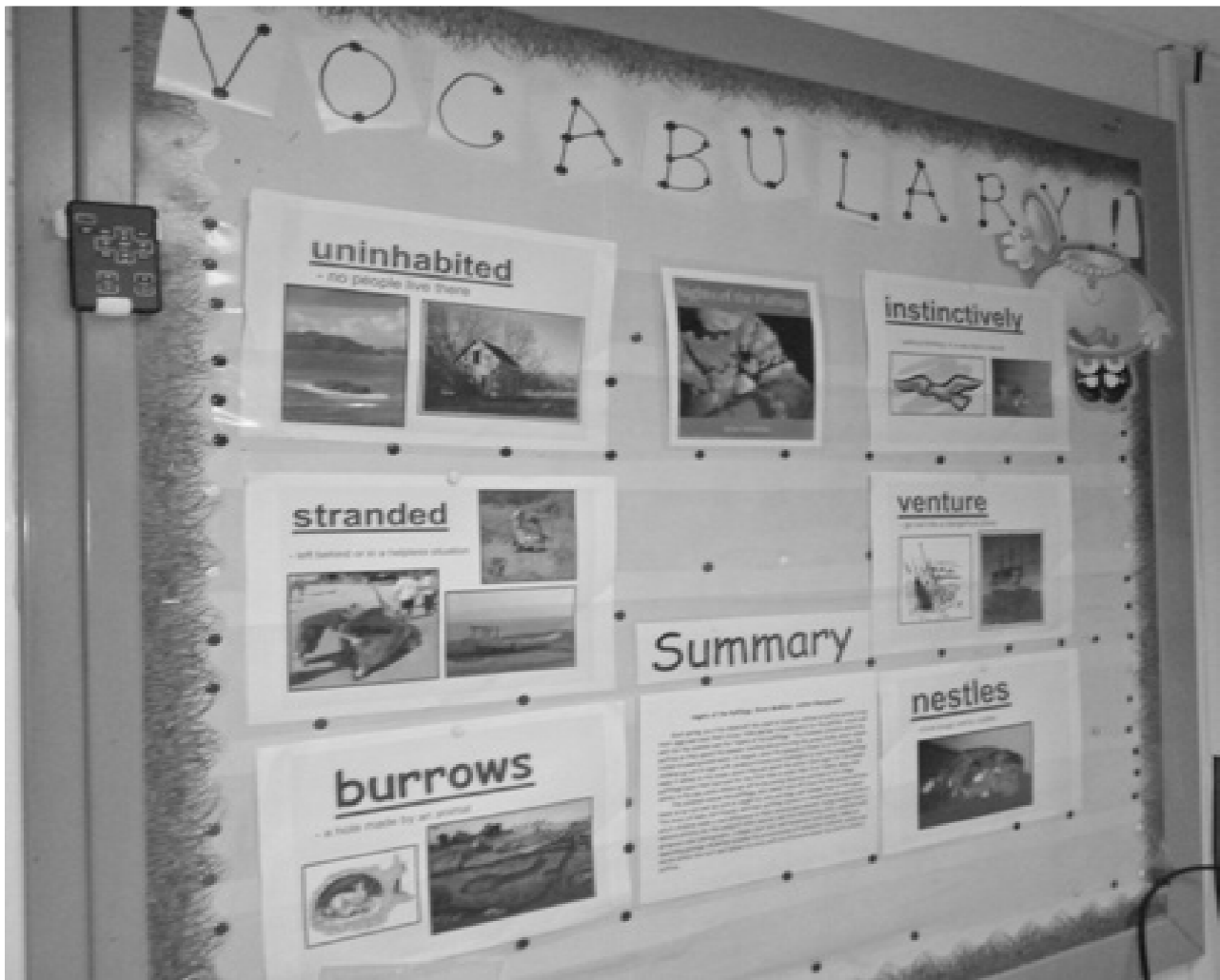
When Mae Mobley learns to talk, Aibee has her to repeat the reassuring affirmation. Mae still doesn't understand what is going on around her when Aibee is forced to leave her

employer. Aibee's caring continues as she reminds Mae of those words again. Abileen gives Mae something that will sustain her in the future. If the story continued, I would predict that the grammar of the mantra that she learned would be corrected. Aibee's caring would cause her to understand that she is a smart girl and capable of creating positive changes in her life.

English language learners require a lot of support from the teacher. They enjoy knowing that the teacher sees potential in their endeavors. Mainstream and ESL teachers often get caught up in the requirements to get students to complete course books, worksheets and examinations with the best of results. Problems come in when they encounter students who mess up the scores by not performing as well as they expect. Sometimes students view them as mean, uncaring and distant. They begin to break classroom rules and appear to be behavior problems and underachievers. Students must be aware that there are limitations and consequences for misbehaviors, but a reflective teacher will look at their lessons and determine if the materials are relevant. They may question themselves to determine if the classes are student focused, using methods that address different learning styles and differentiated instruction and materials, or are there underlying problems that cannot be addressed by the language practitioner but by another professional.

Vocabulary often presented problems, but when coupled with pictures and other visuals, comprehension, recall and pronunciation, difficulties diminished. I began to use visuals, videos, student models and representations for new vocabulary for language classes. (Figure 3.) Consecutive, repetitive review and group activities improved comprehension greatly. Implementation of interesting content, along with supports to scaffold student learning such as realia, for example, math manipulatives, investigations, and demonstrations can help provide the assistance ELLs need to be successful (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). Students have

opportunities for working independently on group projects in science, such as building electric circuits, growing plants, or observing the life cycle of butterflies. (Figure 4, Cooking Demonstration). In mathematics, students develop mathematical concepts through group activities with manipulatives, and solve problems by working in groups to understand the problems and find solutions. A word problem procedure that allows students to work collaboratively on problem solutions has proven successful (Chamot, Dale, O'Malley, & Spanos, 1993; Spanos, 1993).



*Figure 3. Vocabulary Bulletin Board*



*Figure 4, Cooking Demonstration*

Teachers are also learning in the reflective teaching cycle and the result of the telescopic science unit resides with me until this day. Students must be engaged in their learning and encouraging them to entertain their interests is motivating for them and the teacher. In most cases, students were willing to share their interests or willing to discover where their inspirations lay. This did not happen autonomously. I had to create a learning environment that supported differentiation while addressing required standards. Differentiation addresses students' needs in a variety of ways. They have different needs and abilities which change over time. Sometimes,



students were placed in small or large groups, whole groups or encouraged to respond or work independently. Differentiated lessons allowed students to make choices to help them understand the important concepts. One thing that helped me to determine the students' language abilities was to assess their levels. Decisions about differentiation of lessons and plans were based on these assessments. They provided purposeful or objective evidence of students' needs and abilities. Periodic checks like interest surveys and implementing of democratic processes for presenting their skills and abilities through projects proved to be helpful. This practice worked for us all. I assessed them and gave feedback. They learned to assess each other and my lessons and give feedback. The students enjoyed the many opportunities to present projects to fellow students and offered their views even more. Feedback became a fun and expected part of learning and not laborious as they previously thought when it was introduced to them as part of the daily lesson plan.

The learners' contribution to the learning process is seen in the types of activities learners carry out, the degree of control learners have over the content of learning, the patterns of learner groupings adopted, the degree to which learners influence the learning of others, and the view of the learner as processor, performer, initiator, problem solver (Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, 1998, p. 28).

I like to think that I have a connection with my students in order to be aware of their needs and why they want to learn English and their motivations for learning it. One of the readings from the Second Language Acquisition course during the second summer contained the following statements.

Motivation is differentiated along a continuum-- integrative at one end and instrumental at the other. Integrative motivation is seen in language learners whose desire to learn is rooted in

wanting to become part of the L2-speaking community, want more contact with it, or is genuinely interested in it. On the other end of the spectrum is instrumental motivation. A student who sees language as a means to obtaining some reward (good grades, employment, a diploma or for mere appreciation) would reflect instrumental motivation (Jill Cain, 2000, para. 10).

The learner must keep learning, so I decided to go back to school after many years of working and teaching after the age of 50. I choose a program that I thought could give me the tools to accomplish what I wanted to achieve in my profession and for myself. Possession of a MA is an extrinsic reward and it is at the center of the middle of the line of continuum for me. I am definitely a lifelong learner, and belonging to a noble profession of TESOL and English language experts is self-gratifying. The School of International Training is known as an institution that gives its students experiential and participatory learning that bridges practice and theory. When I went to their website I found what I was looking for. I saw that SIT's graduate TESOL program accentuated the following benefits (<http://www.sit.edu/graduate/ma-tesol-overview.cfm>):

- Acquire the theoretical knowledge and professional competencies essential for effective language teaching
- Gain practical tools through a meaningful, supervised teaching experience
- Develop a disciplined reflective practice
- Benefit from the experiences, perspectives, and feedback of faculty and fellow students
- Situate your work in a global context

Also, preliminary inquiries with the various departments helped me to make a final decision to attend the Graduate Institute at SIT.

The environment at SIT during the SMAT program was a very supportive one and I had the pleasure of working with two colleagues, Angela Richardson and Marcus Van, both very sharp English Language Instructors working in Korea and Taiwan respectively. We were peer mentors and formed an open, polite and tolerant relationship. Peer mentoring is often established with a person or those with more experience and someone of lesser experience. In this case, my peers had more English Language experience than me although I had more years of teaching and classroom management experience. We all had a lot of living abroad experience in different contexts. We managed to work in small groups, then as a whole. The environment was conducive to individual contributions with feedback from the group. The whole experience was intense, cohesive and sometimes disjointed, but supportive of all who participated in the program.

The initial practice was complicated at first and being a generalist, I found it hard to engage in smaller chunks of conversation. With time and coaching from my peers, it became easier to open up. We had a road map for the experience provided by our program supervisor, Dr. Susan Barduhn, Department Chair, Summer Master of Arts in Teaching Program, SIT. Using active listening skills (Appendix C), we were able to explore particular goals, cultural bumps, life experiences, challenges and even dreams. It became a relaxing experience began to like being the elder sitting at the feet of wise and intuitive youth. The incredible serene backdrop of the campus setting with green hills, grass and trees overlooking rolling fields and gentle breezes scented with the seasonal flora only heightened the experience. For this reason we chose to meet outside. (Figure 5- Campus, SIT)

As mentioned in my abstract, I had been a mainstream teacher for many years and the discussions we shared about their experiences as language teachers gave me a greater sense of

being connected to the world of TFL/ESL, or else I might have felt inadequate or lost. I feel that we believed we all had great communication skills, but benefited from learning how to be peer mentors, and more from the support, listening, encouragement and connectivity.



*Figure 5 - Campus, SIT, Brattleboro, VT, Photo Credit, Mazie Black 2011*

### **Analysis of the Context (It)**

A summer of peer mentoring that would commence throughout the second summer of residential learning and experiences would be further augmented with exposure and participation in a variety of knowing frameworks, methods and approaches. Equipped with a compilation of Internal and external factors (more opportunities, knowledge, abilities, skills and a positive attitude), and an evolving Teacher Philosophy that included specific addresses for language

instruction, I was ready to utilize the collection with a new group of learners in the Fall. The collection of tools for the trade was epitomized by the packing of a suitcase. We drew suitcases and wrote inside of them ideas, methods, approaches, theories and practices for future use.

Embarking upon my journey would mean that the landing zone would hold young learners with varying abilities, qualities and English language skills ranging from none to conversational. Working as a mainstream teacher in an environment where you are expected to teach ESL students without many resources is a challenge. Although the students have had a year or two in Kindergarten in an environment with English as the language of interest, they remained reliant upon their L1. Their Kindergarten phases were a transitioning period for most of the students as they were also learning Arabic at the same time. Unlike for most students in native English schools, the curriculum was basically a bilingual environment.

In international schools or bilingual schools, ESL instruction is basically nonexistent or positioned as an extra option to the mainstream curriculum. Many teachers in these kinds of schools are non-native speakers but are expected to produce ELLs that resemble native speakers. In my peer mentoring sessions, one of the goals that I discussed with my team was making the change from mainstream teacher to being a fulltime ESL teacher. Once again, not courageous enough to make a move towards accepting a job that would put me the position of teaching English only, again I found myself teaching English and Math, Science and Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE) education using English as a communicative medium. A goal deferred is not always a goal unachieved. Perhaps I wanted to use a familiar environment to analyze my cultivated powers of being an ESL teacher within the mainstream classroom and how is it linguistically realized within the scope of delivery and the curriculum of the international school.

Working in this scenario provided me with some valuable teaching lessons. I learned that there are a lot of difficulties involved in the dynamics of collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers especially when they are performing the same job, have various degrees of experience and their perception of their students as English language learners. My role as a senior teacher was to explore ways to maintain professional relationships and develop a better understanding of how to provide different approaches for the language and learning needs of the ESL students in our mainstream classes with least resistance. I use the words least resistance because the majority of the teachers did not have experience with addressing the needs of ESL students and opposed methodologies that seemed as foreign as me, the foreign native English speaking teacher. I do not believe that a non-native speaker teacher shouldn't be teaching students English. It is not a realistic option and often the institutions only resources are local teachers who speak a variety of languages other than English. However many schools market their institutions, especially private ones, and advertise that they have native speakers on their staff. The appeal is that the students would emulate the teacher's form of pronunciation.

Professional envies arise when personalities do not put the needs of their students at the forefront of their occupations. Often western or native speakers are expected to do and be more than their peers. Sometimes collaborative conversations veer from planning sessions to discussions of salary disparities, lack of materials or access to resources and other amenities like visas and housing benefits. Breaking down walls of these institutionalized disparities can crack when there are leaders and followers who exhibit maturity, professionalism along with institutional requirements that make it everyone's responsibility to contribute as a team. In my context, I observed that the majority of the teachers did not qualify to teach ESL on a "native speaker" level. They were excellent teachers, but only a minority could speak and write as well

as a native speaker. The local culture and institution place a value on the student's ability to pronounce English very well, but what happens when the teacher's pronunciation is not that of a native speaker with fossilized mistakes that they clearly pass along to their students? Eventually, it is noticed by someone, especially if the student plans to go to a college or university.

I shared a fairly painful cultural bump with the brightest of my students (Case Study – Asian Muslim). A cultural bump happens when two or more people encounter circumstances with different expectations about how to react or behave in the situation or moment. My experienced occurred with a student of Asian descent with excellent reading, writing, grammatical, critical thinking and speaking skills. Early in the year, he could decode, recall events and give comprehensible answers to reading passages assessed at grade level five. At the end of the year, his decoding progressed to grade level eight and his comprehension increased by another grade level. His parents were very literate in more languages than their L1 and professionals. The child continuously learned the mechanics as they were presented, and could quickly utilize them in practice. His cultural bump in language learning was not with English, but a disappointment with an Arabic language learning experience. He was considered a Hafiz at a young age of six. Modern Muslims use this term for people who have completely memorized the Quran. The breaking point came when there was a Quran competition and he had worked so hard to excel in his recitations. However, when he was not awarded the top award, he was crushed. The award naturally went to a native speaker of Arabic. The experience was very heartbreaking for him, his family and I suffered with a sad little boy in the days following trying to console him. He didn't even want to come back to the school the following year. Being the reflective teacher, I spoke with his parents and his Arabic teachers to come up with ideas that would help in the future. The culprit revealed was that he did not pronounce the words like a

native or local speaker would have. It was advised that he practice more with someone who could help him not to fossilize those mistakes. It is the same dilemma that a non-native speaker of English would have. The other thing that was not spoken about in the child's presence was that rarely an Asian would take the award, it was not necessarily racism, but the cultural prejudice for those who excelled in Fus ha Arabic recitations without any remnant of another tongue or accent was a silent norm. (Fus'ha (or al-fuṣḥā, الفصحى) is the Arabic name for what is known in English as Literary, or Modern Standard Arabic, as well as for Classical Arabic.)

For the rest of the year, I paid careful attention to his contributions in the classroom and even his absence that was rare when he became very sick and was gone for several days. Phone calls and messages were sent his way to let him know that he was a valued member of our learning community. Although his English language proficiencies in all areas yielded nearly perfect results, he was still not happy with the Arabic language experience. When I spoke of them going to the next grade level, he would always inform us that he wouldn't be making that trek with the rest of his classmates. We were affected by his announcements in various degrees from disbelief to sadness as expressed by his table members who hugged him upon seeing the dejection on his face. I am not sure if he learned a valuable lesson that year for the future. If he didn't, I surely did. My summation is that sometimes you have to seek out like-minded people or supportive people who don't defer your aspiration, but take your knowledge, skills and abilities and build upon them.

Unfortunately discrimination occurs in the classroom, institutions, and societies in general. In the circles of ESL teachers working abroad, it is no secret that many employers of TESOL and Applied Linguistics instructors give eminence to White native speakers. Based on such an understanding, the native speaker of English is seen as American, Australian, British,



South African or Canadian. More importantly, a native speaker of English is seen as a White person who was born and raised in these countries. People of other races are not identified as native speakers of English; rather they are seen as speakers of, for example, Black English/Ebonics, Pakistani English, or Chinese English. Specifically, Ahmar Mahboob states:

The fact that the native speaker of English is described as White and speaking a variety of English associated with the UK, Canada, the USA or Australia, while non-White individuals who speak a variety of English associated with a South country (such as India, Nigeria or Singapore) are constructed as non-native speakers, defines two dimensions of prejudice in the ELT industry: 'Whiteness' and 'native speakerism' (Ahmar M. Mahboob, 2006, p.2).

It is not mentioned in Mahboob's quote, but African Americans are included in this group that faces discrimination, although they are recruited and reported by institutions as being native speakers for the purpose of acquiring visas, accreditation and publicity. Unfortunately, this is one of the kinds of cultural, regional or institutional attitudes that prevail in the Middle East.

Although I hope that one day that these kinds of stigmas will disappear and as teaching English on a global scale evolves and changes; I think that it will. It is important to us as teachers and our learners that we all receive the justice that we deserve or the opportunity to teach and learn on an even playing field in our classes.

Over the past couple of years, I have been told by some non-native speaking teachers that they sympathize with me because of my inability to speak the student's L1, Arabic, fluently. At first I thought it was a way for them to give me a touché for all the stabs that they have taken for being non-native speakers. Using my active listening skills, I became conscious of a few points. They do have bragging rights when they are teaching and the students share their native

language. They know how to properly explain concepts, especially if they have the cultural experience from traveling or working with native speakers. They also know how to address certain pronunciation and grammatical points that they had trouble with when they learned the language. Another point is that non-native speakers recall and focus on grammar rules more so than native speakers in my experience. With this in mind, they can make it easier for their students to grasp L2 language concepts and learn them. I have taken personal time to study Arabic and add to my collection of books on how to teach ELLs from different language backgrounds. I think that this will help me to relate more to my students, but would only use their L1 to clarify something that didn't exist or make sense in the tongue. Many of these kinds of books were recommended during my second summer at SIT in the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) class. The most notable being Michael Swan and Bernard Smith's *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems*. Resources like this are treasures as it addresses various native languages and each section addresses difficulties relative to that tongue. My classes were generally multilingual and over the years, I have acquired bits and pieces of conversation from various common languages used by expatriates in the Middle East, like Urdu, Hindi, French, Indonesian, Malay, and Turkish. Texts like this one gives me an overview of my student's language's form and how it differs from English. There are many ESL teachers' toolkits online with links, recommended books, activities and lesson plans, but this book is exceptional because it helps me to teach students when I have no understanding of their mother tongues.

Experientially learning some of the components of another language as a student during the first summer at SIT and following discourses have proven to be a valuable tool for reflection. During the first summer term we were immersed in a beginning Japanese language class taught

by Kim Lier. The course was one where we functioned as a community and grew into the language as we took hold of fundamental abilities to communicate in the target language. There were reflective exercises and activities that allowed us to experience the culture of the language; songs to sing, role plays, writing and learning authentic scripts and so much more. Oral proficiency and listening skills were emphasized in the course description, however, error correction was handled in a manner where it was fun, warm and not frustrating. I learned techniques that are sure to follow me for the rest of my teaching days.

All of these experiences and tools helped me to be cognizant of what I am doing in the classroom. It helps me to reevaluate the instruction and assessment that goes on and spend time after lessons to think about how to adapt lesson plans, approaches or the curriculum and differentiating learning for successful as well as struggling ELLs. Whether I am literate in my students' various L1s, I have the awareness that I need to anticipate their linguistic problems. This confidence is attributed to the thought process that was put into a mind map detailing an overview of how I perceived learning by examining the processing using a metaphorical hand lens. The model shows that by carefully observing student and teacher interaction, there would be constant repetitious or cyclical processes with predictable outcomes. If the desired outcome wasn't achieved the process could be repeated and the lens adjusted according to many factors involved for greater results.

### **Looking at the Whole Picture**

The box in the lower left hand corner of the mind map of my hypothesis (Figure 6) encases the words, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It is the surface and backdrop for all of the cyclic elements in the diagram. The ZPD theory is the work of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Belorussian who studied and wrote effectively about how language

shapes thought that now influences modern language acquisition methods and approaches. He specifically stated that ZPD “is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

I thought it would be a good idea to mention at this point my notable interest in Vygotsky and constructivism although more detail information can be found in the later discourse about contexts. Interest in this particular theorist comes from are two major influences. The first instance being the introduction of Vygotsky by Elka Todeva who impersonated him by taking us on an imaginary journey into his life during our Second Language Acquisition Course. The other interest stems from the students that I have taught over the past few years, specifically the last three. I wanted to know if his ZPD theory would apply to the Thou-It context that I was teaching in because it represented a very different society, type of learner and traditional learning style that was teacher-centered vs. student centered. Curiosity caused me to examine these contexts for the purpose of writing this paper. Also, this is largely the environment that I propose to continue my professional development, teaching and training. These students came from diverse populations of international families with the majority being Muslims that memorize the Quran which is in Arabic, quote oral traditions and are skilled in verbal storytelling, songs called *nasheeds*, or chants that build on their core or basic beliefs and practices. The point of connection is that I share a large part of this religious community and basic beliefs. The difference is how I approach learning Arabic as a second language for myself and teaching English as a second language to these young ELLs. One question that follows my hypothesis is, “How much does this variation affect their learning with a teacher who conducts

their lessons, structures the classroom and environment that is very, very different?” This question is asked with regard to rote learning as an honorable, expected part of the inherent culture in the classroom and the radiating circles of environmental influence. The comparison is approaching the material could be described as learning by heart vs. learning by methods and approaches. In the following sections, I will describe the makeup of the students in each of the three contexts.

Self-reflection indicated further that I am a different kind of western expatriate English Language teacher. In this paper the “I” is me, and I will be describing myself, as seen from the rather detached position of dialogue/conversations, pictures of my own classes, observations and also from notes from my reflective teaching journals. I was not allowed to videotape my classes. I am and have always been more concerned with the It; rather than myself and what I did in class with my students, or how I influenced them. I just equate it to being a modest teacher as part of my personal make up. I try to give my students sufficient time to think, to express themselves, and use acquired English language skills. The majority of the students use their L1/Arabic in at least 2 of their 6-7 periods daily. Therefore, I think it is important for me to teach culture along with the English language. More discussion of how this was facilitated follows in the next chapter.

One very important part of reflective teaching practice involves forming a realistic definition of who I am as a teacher. Tracking and documenting changes along the way helped me to define myself. Review of my former teaching philosophy indicated that there were many areas that had changed since matriculating in the SMAT 29 (Summer Master of Arts, Teaching, Class 29) program at SIT (School of International Training). Over the years, there were many practices I had adapted out of trial and error that matched SIT TESOL (Teaching English to

Speakers of Other Languages) program's premise that second language acquisition is best understood through the experience of being learners. The program gave me in-depth knowledge and experiences, using my background, current teaching practices, and theoretical competencies to build upon. My new teaching philosophy includes views about language acquisition, intercultural communication, methods, procedures and approaches, whereas before, the former one answered questions like, "How will my students acquire knowledge, intellectual skills, and acquire ideas and values?" The transformation process began when I recognized that I had to look backwards as well as to the present to formulate a true picture of what kind of language teacher practitioner I'd like to become. Upon completion of this project, I accepted a job as a Full-Time ESL Instructor and Site Director. I was ready to transform completely into an ESL teacher and was no longer a mainstream classroom teacher.

An English teacher's philosophy of teaching should be to bring the maximum benefit to a student with the power of his/her English knowledge and awareness. Teachers are guided by their own philosophies while teaching ELLs. Anyways, whatever your philosophy is, it should reflect everything you do with your students and about the guidance you provide them - right from your approach to your means and goals. Make the philosophy a part of your class activities as well as that of your assessment strategies and adhere to them while teaching.

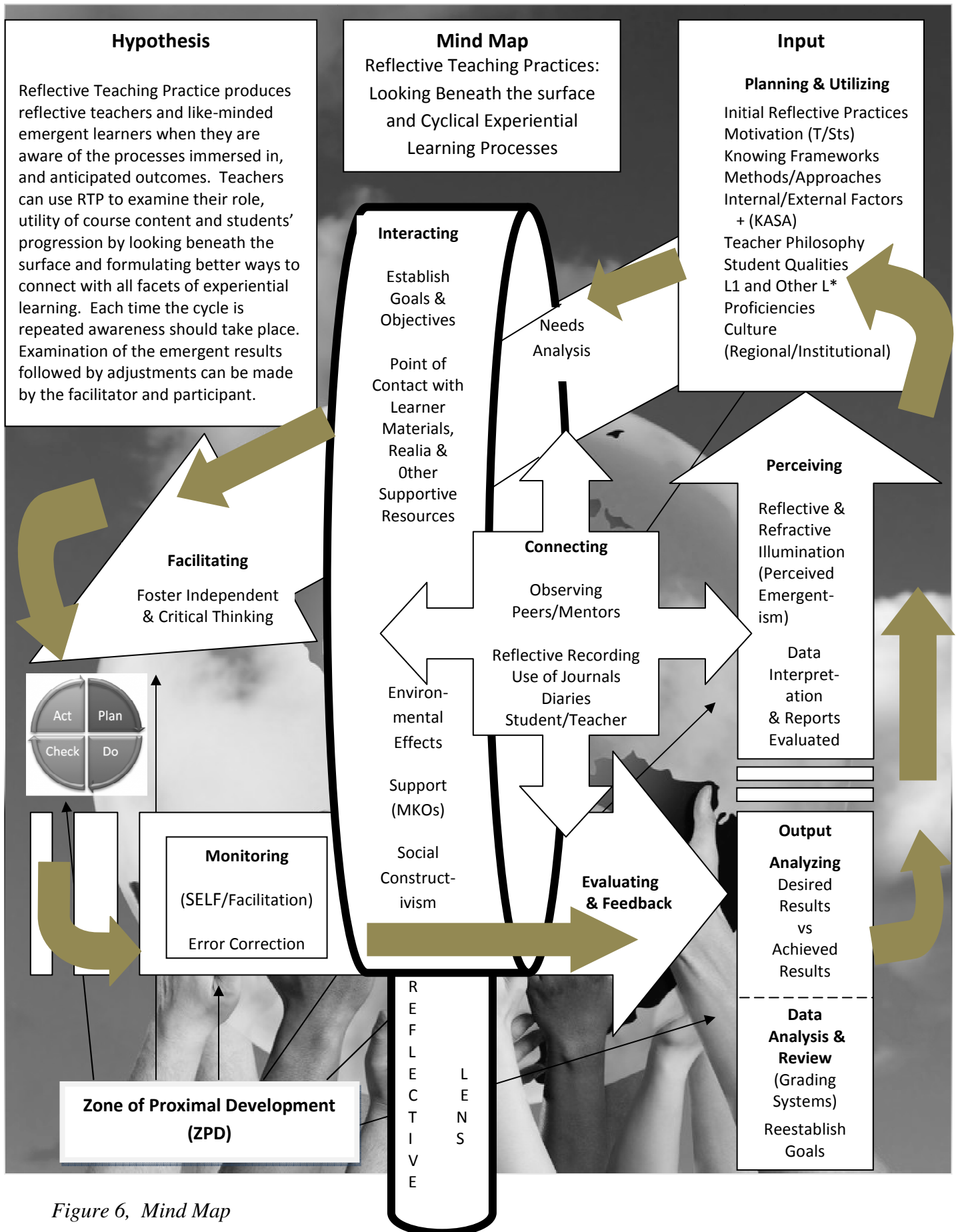


Figure 6, Mind Map

The teaching philosophy along with a portfolio should be addressed to appeal to the audience or type of institution you would like to work in. Your document can be evaluated as to whether you make a good fit or can contribute to the organization. Conversely, as a reflective teaching practitioner you can also compare your philosophy to organizations that you are working for or intending to apply to.

Hypothesis: Using the mind map, I've created, I believe that you can create the conditions that will allow you to achieve the behavior that you want from your class or individual ELLs and that knowing who you are as a teacher is vital to all processes. All stages of the reflective processes are described in the next section.

### **The Benefits of Reflective Practices**

There are two commonly recognized functions of reflective practice. One is for the purpose of helping to help teachers to become better educators. This practice involves training teachers to use tools for inspection and transformation of their teaching practices for the betterment of their students.

My general hypothesis is based on my belief that Reflective Teaching Practices produce reflective emergent learners when they are aware of the processes, immersed in them, actively participating and cognizant of them. Simply stated, I believe that every teacher starts with their beliefs about language teaching and learning, based on personal experiences as a language learner. In RTP, the teacher uses these experiences in the classroom, observes and reflects on the results, and makes adjustments as needed to achieve desired results. The classroom becomes a kind of observatory where the teacher can connect teaching theory to teaching reflectively in practice. If you look at the Mind Map, the process begins with the box labeled *Input*. I subcategorize with action titles of Planning and Utilizing. These elements are assets that the



teacher possesses in various degrees that can be used to establish goals and objectives. The cycle continues by performing a needs analysis. It is a way to find out what your students need and want to learn. The assessment should determine their current ability level. If you determine what they want to achieve it is even better. After the needs assessment or analysis, the teacher comes into direct contact with the learner (*Interacting*). This is the most critical stage of teaching as you look at and engage the learner. It is represented in the map as a hand lens. Tangible items are required such as materials, resources, a good learning environment and the freedom to build upon past experiences (social constructivism).

The RTP must connect with the learner as this stage by observing or through the use of recording devices, journals and peers or mentors. The next stage is the *Facilitating* process where the teacher is a coach or guide. The teacher's responsibility is to create opportunities for developmentally appropriate instruction that addresses individual learners' strengths, needs and interests that helps them to become more independent and responsible for learning at the next level ( $i + 1$ , Krashen). This can be viewed as an inner working of another cyclical process of 4 components – Plan, Do, Check and Act. Independent learners can instinctively improve themselves by repeating the 4 steps in the model for carrying out change. The cycle should be repeated over and over for continuous progress. A student can *plan* what to *do* if he/she understands the goals or objective. At this point in the cycle, I look for creativity and using guiding questions or silence as a tool to see what students can demonstrate. They then *check* themselves through group collaboration to figure out what has happened. If the students have grasped the skills, then they can *act* on it over and over. For example, the student will be able to use *have* and *has* correctly to show possession in the 'perfect tense' by writing five (5) correct sentences. (I have a very good English teacher. She has a new iPhone.)

Independence is fostered by allowing students to facilitate their own learning by coming up with examples of their own and comprehending how and why their work is correct or not. This can be done through self-facilitation and error correction. I find that if error correction is done appropriately it functions as a very good learning tool for ELLs. However, if error corrections are used too much, or at the wrong times, then it is a hindrance more than a help.

Facilitating and Monitoring are behind the lens as a way to see what is going on with the student's learning. The learning is set on the backdrop of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD as Vygotsky describes it as the difference between what an ELL can do for himself or herself and what he or she can do with facilitation and monitoring. On the mind map at the bottom above the label Zone of Proximal Development are arrows of varying lengths and angles. I chose this representation to demonstrate that each learner has his or her 'hot spot.' This is the area, moment when the ELL is most receptive to learning whether it is collaborative, discovery-based or instructor-led. The most important thing to realize at this point is that the focal point changes constantly based on illumination – the light that is shed by the teacher during the input phase at the beginning and interaction. The facilitator must challenge and motivate the student by planning activities, projects, research or use technology to keep students a step past his or her current degree of independent thinking and abilities.

The next part of the diagram shifts to the right after *Monitoring* with the categories of *Evaluating and Feedback*. In my reflective teaching practices, this is a very critical point in the cycle. Recall that a motivating factor for me in teaching is learner feedback and results. It formed the largest part of the pie chart in Figure 2. The other sections are closer in percentage. The RTP evaluates the student's progress and identifies strengths and weaknesses of the ELL in order to formulate new learning challenges at the individual and whole group level. A seasoned

observer may be able to realize distinctive thought patterns that students use for critical thinking and encourage independency. The use of e-learning and technology are tools that can be used to encourage students to interact socially to bring about more learning (Edmodo, whatsApp, Facebook, Youtube, Skype and etc.).

There a series of questions that I seek to answer as I entertain my speculations during feedback and evaluations. These are: What happens once contact is made with the ELL? What do you want? What happens? What are the factors/outcomes? What do you do next? What if your objectives are/aren't achieved? How do you know? What do you do next?

I have addressed reflection from the teachers' standpoint and the learners' role. My mind map shows a category of *Connecting*. Another word that could be used is collaboration. In addition to collaboration there are observations by supervisors and peers. This is an important process of the reflective teaching cycle and provides the teacher with feedback which can be subjective or objective depending on the format. My last experience with formal observations combined the two perspectives. In my classroom, I maintained a copy of questions expected to be answered using the supervisor's preconference classroom observation form. This helped to create a bi-directional framework for answering questions that were important for the students, teacher and administrator. I recall wanting a more concise inspection that included the students' input in the observations, rather than my own and the observer's. This was not always possible because there were various degrees of consideration about student centered learning and reflective teaching practices in organizations and their administrations. The pre-conference and post conference forms, and meetings allowed me to express my desire to have reflective teaching practices as part of my teaching observations and evaluations. Not all institutions have the time, directives, resources, or trained individuals to implement RTP on a wide-scales basis. Therefore,

only individual effort by certain teachers who employ these practices can give insight into what reflective teaching might look like as a skill and as a process. Utilization of a post observation conference form can also allow a RTP teacher to give feedback that opens up opportunities for sharing, exhibiting reflective teaching practices and mutual exchange of professional knowledge, skills and abilities.

Reflection is a process, both individual and collaborative, involving experience and uncertainty. It involves identifying or formulating questions about issues that have emerged consistently or considerably, then taking your thoughts into mental or written communication with yourself and with others. The *Connecting* frame in the mind map has arrows radiating from all sides. Record keeping or mental notes are important throughout the entire process. The instrument that I have found to be most effective to assist me in documenting progress is the use of journaling. Keeping a journal helps you to reflect, evaluate or share your discoveries acquired from day-to-day interactions with yourself, others and the context from which the reflections materialize. Reflective teaching practice taught me that in order to realize your stance in teaching, you must know yourself first. The examination of my teaching habits and reflections began when educational institutions and job interviewers wanted to see a teaching philosophy. A lot of thought goes into the description of who you are as a teacher. Also for the last few years many employers want to see a teacher's portfolio. These processes prompt you to take an in depth look at your teaching nature.

The in-residence portion of the MA TESOL program culminated in the Sandanona TESOL Conference during the Summer of 2011. My presentation was entitled, *Reflections: Journaling for Self, Learning and Learners*. The objectives of the presentation which was in the form of a workshop were:

- To introduce the purpose of journal writing to encourage reflection thinking
- To take a look at the triad of involvement in journaling; ('I, primarily; then the 'it (learning) and 'thou (learners)
- To be able to utilize the techniques and strategies to implement journal writing for reflective practices in ESL/EFL/ TESOL education curriculums.

The focus of the presentation was on the *Self* (I) as I perceived this workshop being expanded for a half to whole day workshop. The remaining third of the workshop was directed at learners and learning.



Hand Lens Graphic Source: URL <http://school.discoveryeducation.com>  
 Figure 7. Reflective Teaching Practices – Take a Look Beneath the Surface

The next part in the cycle is *Perceiving*. It has two parts consisting of reflecting and refractive illumination which I call perceived emergentism. In this paper, refractive practices are not discussed, but for the purpose of understanding the meaning, I will explain what it means to me in this context. Refraction is the manner in which illumination or *Input* factors are bent upon reaching the surface of the ZPD and the degree of its return towards achieving desired results. The major difference between reflective and refractive practices is that the latter seeks to control the degree of return for desired results.

Subsequent to *Perceiving* is *Output* where data interpretation and reports are reviewed and analyzed. The RTP can analyze and establish new goals and objectives based on new needs, use of alternative teaching methods and approaches, how to obtain better instructional feedback, or better use scaffolding and grammatical chunks for learning. The use of data provides insight to help us tailor and orchestrate student-centered learning successfully for all students. It connects the end processes to the beginning with input based on concrete research designed to implement better language learning teaching and standards.

What is the purpose of this cycle? It is to view and continuously review the emergent cyclical experiential learning processes and outcomes so that adjustments can be made by the facilitator and learner. I will not diverge into a discourse on Emergentism at this point. But for the sake of clarity on the use of the phrase ‘emergent cyclical experiential learning processes and outcomes’ in the title of this paper, I will explain its meaning as I see it with regards to my hypothesis.

The SMAT 29 class was very fortunate to be a part of the 2010 Sandanona TESOL conference with Diane Larsen-Freeman as the special guest and plenary. Meeting Mrs. Larsen-Freeman in person sparked an interest in her books and theories which sometimes seemed very

difficult to understand. Elka Todeva's insight into Second Language Acquisition helped us to understand emergentism in her classes. What seemed very complex to me as I participated with our community of learners was that emergentism allows language acquisition to be in motion. There are no definitive methods or approaches associated with emergentism to date. It involves comprehensible input and noticing (cognitive awareness), output, interaction, evaluation and feedback. In some classrooms there may be a focus on form, meaning and usage, but my focus is generally on results. I want to know how well my students perform and demonstrate that they obtain a high level of proficiency. With regards to emergentism, Diane Larsen-Freeman, states:

The descriptions of systems with many different elements in continuous flux and how they change over time seem to resonate with the problem spaces of applied linguistics. A language learning community can be thought of as a complex system, as can the brain/mind of an individual language user, and conventional ways of thinking of language as a system can be extended to seeing language as a complex system. Complex systems theory seems to make better sense of our experience as applied linguists and to offer fascinating new tools for thinking and for research. (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 227)

### **Implications for Future Consideration**

The Course Design and Analysis (CD&A) coursework completed during the first summer of the SMAT program complemented the other courses (ICLT and Approaches) in that we actively entertained definitions of who we were as general, cultural and language teachers. The four major areas for definition centered on articulating the following: "your view of language, your view of the social context of language, your view of learning and learners, and your view of teaching" (Graves, 2000, p. 28).

My core beliefs in these areas are as follows:

A part of the reflective process is to examine perceptions about personal beliefs regarding language learning. There are some general beliefs that I would like to share. The experiential part of language learning for me has been trying to learn Arabic to a moderate degree for communicating with the local citizens of the countries where I have worked in the Middle East. I have become aware that my progression of acquiring has been influenced majorly by my need to become a functional member of the society, able to express myself in a variety of situations and seek assistance. There is an intrinsic reward for feeling like you belong and a large part of it is being able to participate in the culture and utilize the language across many social domains.

I've learned that within supportive and caring environments, language development blossoms and has a positive effect on desired outcomes. Even before I was introduced to Stephen Krashen and the 'i +1' theory, I was a firm believer in the language development or learning in general is heavily influenced by the environment. An environment which supports the greatest use of language is advantageous. Krashen's theory about Comprehensible input asserts that ELLs acquire language by listening to language and understanding its meaning that is 'one up' above their current English language level. It is also referred to as Comprehensible Input +1.

The reflective practitioner must consider the affective filter as an obstruction to learning or SLA. These hindrances are caused by negative emotional or affective responses in a learner's environment. When the affective filter is lowered between the speaker and the listener, there is a reduction of misunderstanding. Whereas when there are negative emotions or an uncomfortable environment, it prohibits effective communication. The RTP can reduce the affective filter by genuinely being interested in the learning process, generating unique learning opportunities, and establishing anxiety-free environments and building the self-esteem of the ELL.



How can a language teacher accomplish the above? According to Krashen (1982), there are two tactics that help to lower the affective filter. The first is to allow for a silent period by giving the student ample time to think before speaking. This allows the learner to receive an adequate amount of comprehensible input according to their own needs. The second is to allow the students the opportunity to speak without correcting their errors too soon in the process. I also discovered that my students liked gap fill exercises and a strategically placed word box helped in many cases to reduce anxiety for using new vocabulary.

I've the pleasure of teaching a variety of students, including mixed classes of males and females and gender specific classes. In all types of classes, I believe a teacher can promote the development of the student as a person while building values without debasing gender. Another general belief that I value and appreciate is students' diversity and individuality in expression. Good language skills boost self-esteem and will give students the impetus to be more and more active in their communities as well as professional endeavors. Language acquisition occurs when there are opportunities to explore authentic resources. The following categories state my personal views about language acquisition:

*View of Learning and Learners*

- Students can improve their language abilities by building upon what they already know. (Use of L1 and other known languages)
- Students will be able to be better English communicators by listening to other speakers.
- Speakers of other languages have different pronunciation challenges.
- Students can develop good language skills and remain an individual.

- Learning another language allows learners not only to interpret their surroundings but to question and modify it.

#### *View of Teaching*

- A supportive and caring environment has a positive effect on desired outcomes.
- Passionate teaching never fails to make a difference in and outside of the classroom.
- There is not enough hands-off time from teachers to allow students to fully explore the material presented to them.

The more opportunities given for independent exploration help to develop autonomous learners. A culture that doesn't support people development has a negative impact on the individual and the society that they should make positive contributions to. Students tend to flourish in environments where they feel they are supported. The teacher should know the students, get acquainted with them, establish expectations and class norms, and stimulate enthusiasm and interest in the activities and learning sequences planned for them. Preparation is the key. You want to convey to your students that you are organized, are in control, and know what you are doing.

It is not just the teacher's impact on the students that enables them to learn but the surroundings also make a difference. The classroom should be clean, organized and bright. Furnishings provide an aesthetic appeal, but also serve a higher purpose and each piece of furniture defines a part of the classroom space, directing attention, pupil interaction, or traffic flow for contributing to learning.

These careful preparations and execution of the plans should be noticed by the students on the first day and continue throughout the term. The subject matter of speaking/content should

cover both language and culture. The lessons learned in the classroom should extend beyond the doors of the classroom and to other environments outside as well.

Language is a critical part of business and workplace communications. There are a lot of motivating factors for ELLs to gain those skills and be able to communicate effectively in the workplace as jobs open up for them. It is the teacher's responsibility to portray a picture of hope, opportunity and a brighter future in the classroom. These efforts should not be so laborious as to take away fun from the learners' interests, but relaxing and engaging.

I value and appreciate students' diversity and individuality in expression. Lexical diversity of the students' performance in speaking is enhanced by the range of their vocabulary. People in society generally judge lexically diverse or multilingual speakers as more knowledgeable, of higher social standing, and more influential than a low-diversity (monolingual) peer. Guiding students to use tools like lexicons, dictionaries and thesaurus is a skill that can have lifelong effects. Integration of various online tools such as game sites, speaking avatars, wikis and interactive stories can be an effective motivation for English Language Learners (ELLs). We live in a digital world with easy access to digital information, especially via iPads, phones and tablets. Research shows that when ELLs have access to online tools, they are motivated to practice English outside the classroom (Aydin, 2007; Colombo & Colombo, 2007; Son, 2007). I am currently working with adult learners via a social networking framework called Edmodo ([www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com)). It has clearly shown to be effective for determining that ELLs are prompted to practice English outside the classroom when given access to various online tools managed via this website. Edmodo is a free educational web space, which allows a number of teachers, their classes and students and others to work together on documents with embedded essentials such as assignments, libraries, polls, tests and links to

supporting sites. The use of assigning classroom listening links to sites indicated that these online tools improve the listening and comprehension skills of ELLs. Test scores and student feedback also pointed to a higher student satisfaction with the integration of online language learning content, especially with listening.

If students want to succeed, they will try to become more fluent in their speech while maintaining their own identities. Students who will want to appear affluent will try to be good speakers and strive for that. This nature is valuable to them outside of the classroom as well.

There have been studies related to how students perform in a classroom that is relaxed versus those that are disorganized and non-supportive. One of the things that the teacher must recognize is the effects of general anxiety and situational stress upon the student regarding their lexical diversity, speaking rate, speaking time, and ability to project what they want to say without losing their individuality. This allows for risk taking, observing changes in speech patterns amongst friends and strangers, proximity to each other and unfamiliar cultural contexts. As a result the teacher must be willing to learn and transmit information to the student to help them develop as an individual and holistically.

“Through reflection, one reaches newfound clarity, on which one bases changes in action or disposition. New questions naturally arise, and the process spirals onward (Jay, J. K., & Johnson, K. L. (2002). p. 76).”

### **Transformations: Summary and Conclusion**

Reflective Teaching Practice produces reflective teachers and like-minded emergent learners when they are aware of the processes immersed in and anticipated outcomes. Teachers can use RTP to examine their role, utility of course content and students' progression by looking beneath the surface and formulating better ways to connect with all facets of experiential

learning. Each time the cycle is repeated awareness should take place and by examining the emergent results, adjustments can be made by the facilitator and participant.

Some significant questions are: What happens once contact is made with the ELL? What do you want? What happens? What are the factors/outcomes? What do you do next? What if your objectives are/aren't achieved? How do you know? What do you do next? Conversely, students can ask the same of themselves about the teacher or teaching experience. What do you want from your teacher? How relevant is the material or course content? The students should be taught to emulate the questions that the RTP asks.

In *Introduction to Teaching*, 'reflection' is positioned as the lens through which 'being a teacher' is understood, developed and practiced (Graham, 2003, p.7). Students are encouraged to take responsibility for what they learn and the decisions they make in relation to their future development and shaping as a teacher. I require my students to keep a journal as a depository for this kind of learning and reflective diary. This journal may be included as a part of a creative hard copy portfolio or an e-portfolio. Their work is expected to be authentic using authentic language. Creating a tangible collection on their efforts is personalized, giving each student a reason to contribute. The RTP must realize that there are many representations in different forms of language. Although the end goal is to produce a fluent English language user who speaks, writes, reads and listens with clarity. Graham further states, "Whilst the use of journals is anything but new in teacher education the emphasis in these journals is very much on learning the skills of reflection as distinct from documenting observations and actions. The transition is not smooth. Many students struggle to learn at the level of experience – they balk at accessing assumptions, beliefs, values and attitudes that underpin action" (Graham, 2003, p.7). This project is a journal of a sort. It conveys my thoughts, approaches and beliefs. It is a record of

my teaching journey from a generalist (teacher of all subjects) to an English Language specialist. It chronicles my observations, emotions, hopes and desires for I, Thou and It. Collectively, the writings continue in a collection of journals that I maintain year after year.

Reflective teaching practices pay off. The rewards may come quickly or develop over a period of time. I'd like to conclude with a success story of a student who was in the class where I was inspired by the students to pursue my own learning to a higher level. I had a student whose handwriting was not very good. Most of the time, it was barely legible. I asked him if he could type and he said, "Yes." His assignments were typed from then on, except tests in Math. I set up my classroom with a computer and a printer and he was free to use it to complete his written work. However, he managed to work more and more to improve his penmanship.

At the end of the year, all students were to write a final entry in their journals. It was about their year's experience from the beginning to the end. I treasured their reflections and even wrote one of my own and shared it with them. The one that I treasured the most is included on the following page. "I Learned in grade five . . ." By Asem. Today he maintains contact through Facebook with me. I am very proud of his efforts. He also remembers that year and gives me a lot of credit that I humbly return to his honor because he harbors the talent. The last sentences on the first page and at the top of the second page tell about the experience with the refracting and reflecting telescopes. It is a reminder about the learning that changed us both.

This is the story of one student that I have thought about over the years. I look at my mind map and I have a tool that I can use to analyze our relationship as student and teacher. The Mind Map can prompt me to think about any student that I teach and how I can guide them for best results for academic purposes and for life applications. It is evident in his writing for TED<sup>X</sup> Youth, Alexandria, Egypt that he is a reflective practitioner with strong leadership qualities.

*"I Learned in grade five..."*

*By Asem*

*I Learned in grade five plenty of things I learned mathematics, science, social studies, and mostly language arts. Mrs. Mazie my teacher in grade five she taught us how to be the greatest scholar in the whole universe. Even she is a Muslim and sometimes she teaches us about Islam as well as Christianity. I'm proud she's is my teacher.*

*Mathematics was first invented by the Egyptians. They used what they learned and built the pyramids. In grade four I was the Math boy and I won a book because I was the best one. Math has a lot of braches like algebra, geometry, and statistics. Math is my best subject I learned in it LCM which stands for least common multiple, HCF which stands for highest common factor, LCD which stands for least common denominator. Math is the most important thing because everything is math since everything has weight, mass, volume, length, width, height, and depth. I also learned fractions. I learned in it adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, changing from mixed number to improper fraction, and changing improper fraction to mixed number. If you want to go to college and get good grades you need to now math. Once Mrs. Mazie said to me you will the teacher in adding fractions I was scared but happy. Mrs. Mazie cared a lot about math every day in the morning work we do math and proofreading.*

*In science I learned lots about the five animal kingdoms. It wasn't that hard but long and lots of interesting facts. We also learned about Earth and space. We had a science club about stars and experiments. We found different stars and constellations. And in the experiment part we made flubber. Flubber was hard to make but we still managed the ingredients were borax, glue, water, and flour. We bought these things only to learn and study more about science. What I liked about Mrs. Mazie is that she never forgets her religion. After we saw the stars, we went to pray and I was the imam. We studied about the circulatory system which is the heart, the veins, and arteries and capillaries. We also studied about the digestive system. We learned about how the food gets and travels through our body and how it is digested in different stages in the body. I learned about the roles of the large intestine, the small intestine, and the stomach. We also learned about the excretory system. It was a little bit disgusting, but it will surely help me if I want to be a doctor in the future. We learned about the rectum and the anus. I did not like that part of the book, but it is helpful. I learned that the mouth and the skin are an important part of the excretory system. We even studied some earth science. I learned about some of the science of astronomy. We learned about the stars and planets. I learned about the two kinds of telescopes which are refracting telescopes and reflecting*

telescopes. The refracting telescopes use to convex lenses. The biggest refracting telescope is Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin. On the other hand, the reflecting telescopes use mirrors. The biggest reflecting telescope is the McDonald observatory in Texas. I also learned about comets, meteors, meteorites, and asteroids. We even studied about mass, volume, and density. These are related to matter and energy. I liked studying about plants and the photosynthesis process. The nature part was the best part in the science book. I liked studying about ecosystems, communities, populations, adaptation, and niches. I learned about the water cycle and how the water changes from one state to another state of matter. The most things I got sad about were the pollution that is ruining the environment. I learned about water pollution and air pollution. I studied about some ways we can save our environment from pollution. For air pollution, we need to stop getting smoke out of factories. For water pollution, we need to stop throwing garbage in fresh water sources. I even studied about volcanoes, and we made a big project on it it was about three pages. I really enjoyed studying science this year.

In language arts I learned a lot of things such as nouns, verbs, and pronouns common nouns proper nouns, but that's only in the beginning in 2<sup>nd</sup> term we learned prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, and how to write a story. In 3<sup>rd</sup> term we were reviewing and writing. Once Mrs. Mazie said we have to write an Autobiography so I wrote mine, but it was nice so Mrs. Maida and Mrs. Mazie we should show this to Ms. Saidi. Next day Ms. Saidi came and said your autobiography was even better than some of my 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. We also take spelling which is part of language arts. Some people say spelling is not important but it is more important than anything else because it gives more vocabulary and it shows you how to spell words. Reading as part of language arts is also important because the more you the more vocabulary and more fluency and also it are sometimes fun. Also in the oratory day me and Nimra we said a poem in front of the whole school and we took a medal and a certificate each. But I have weak point which is my handwriting it is worse than when a chicken writes and I will try to improve by writing two pages daily.


At the beginning of the year no one of the lass liked S.S. but once Mrs. Mazie said we are going to make a S.S museum everybody was sad but when we started to do it we they were happy. I said they because I still don't like S.S. and I will never like it even if they did what I will never like S.S. now with the help of Mrs. Mazie almost all the students like S.S.

I also learned a lot in P.E I learned team work and cooperation. P.E. is fun and useful. In French I learned the numbers and about 200 French words. In Arabic I learned some Qur'an and had some fun




Experiential learning is life changing. I've enclosed a sample of Asem's English writing today. He was chosen to participate in TED<sup>X</sup> Youth@ Alexandria, Egypt, 2012. I am very proud of him and believe that he is a learner for life who shares his reflections with others along his journey. Asem's successes prove that emergentism is a valid theory and his experiences continue to materialize and go through the cycle over and over. His young life is just beginning.






**TED<sup>X</sup>Youth@Alexandria**  
= independently organized TED event



**INSIDER**

*just After* **INSIDER** *the event*

**TED<sup>X</sup>Youth@Alexandria**  
= independently organized TED event



Today, just after the event by month, we met again. We started by sharing our opinion about how everything went. It was clear that everyone was more or less satisfied with what the team has accomplished, and what he himself has done. The spirit of pride filled the place, and smiles never left any of our faces. We shared the moments, moments of inspiration, courage, hopelessness, failure at times, and triumph. We talked about how this event could've been if it wasn't for the love the team shared. "Not one conflict between team members was encountered this year," said the ED. "I still remember every detail of our meetings, I can still feel the taste of that crepe," said Sohaila Rabee before everyone giggled. And then a moment of silence and pleasure when we played footage of all the work we've done. At first, to be honest, our spirit was down in the beginning. We know that cause' it showed clearly in the video. I don't have a complete explanation for this, but all I know that we all hated it, despised it. Hesham El-Sheirf, head of marketing, was once asked, "If you were in a team where none of the members worked hard enough. Will you do all the work alone? Or will you just do your work and blame everyone else?" "It depends on how much I love the team, and if I really want the work done or not. It depends if I'm passionate enough." He answered. This answer turned tables. Hesham then knew for sure that he wants the event to be a success. His new spirit and his positive energy were passed on to the rest of the team. The spirit went up again; it was the power of X.

We doubled the work and speeded it up. The HR committee filtered applications. Program Committee interviewed and tested speakers and performers. Marketing and Sponsorship Committees went crazy and sleepless at times. The last month before the event was the hardest, yet the best. My personal experience with the TEDxter family was the best thing that ever happened to me. Happiness was all we felt together. It's the only place where we felt comfortable. The place we could be ourselves without hiding anything. If I gained anything from this whole experience, it's going to be self-confidence. TEDxYouth@Alexandria's event this year made a great success, as the chairman said, "Gentlemen, I want to congratulate you on this successful event. You shared ideas that are worth spreading. Chapeau." We were flooded by positive feedback from the attendees. Is there anything better than pride?

*written by Asem Yasser*

Figure 8. Asem Yasser is the 5<sup>th</sup> Participant from the Left on the Back Row

### References

- Cameron, L., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (2007). Complex Systems and Applied Linguistics. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(2), 226-240.
- Chamot, A. U. & J. M. O'Malley. (1994). *The CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Chamot, A. U., Dale, M., O'Malley, J. M., & Spanos, G. A. (1993). Learning and problem solving strategies of ESL students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 16 (3&4): 1-38.
- Hawkins, David. (1967). I, Thou, and It, from *The Informed Vision: Essays on Learning and Human Nature*, New York: Agathon Press.
- Hawkins, David, (1974). *The Informed Vision: Essays on Learning and Human Nature*, New York: Agathon Press.
- Jay, J. K., & Johnson, K. L. (2002). Capturing Complexity: A typology of reflective practice for teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18, 73-85. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00051-8, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00051-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00051-8)
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press: Oxford.
- Mahboob, Ahmar. (2009). Racism in the English Language Teaching Industry, *Studies in Applied Linguistics and Language Learning*. United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
- Richards, Jack C. and Rodgers, Theodore S., (1998). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press
- Schön, Donald A. (1991). *The Reflective Turn*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Schön, Donald A. (1995) *Reflective Practice: its implications for classroom, administration and*

research, A public lecture given for the Dept. of Language, Literacy & Arts Education  
The University of Melbourne, <http://www.uni.edu/~eastk/109/sp08/270905.pdf>.

Retrieved: February 8, 2012.

Swan, M., & Smith, B. (1987). *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems*. Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press.

Thornbury, Scott, (2012). *The iTDiBlog, Staying Healthy and*

*Motivated*. <http://itdi.pro/blog/2012/04/30/staying-healthy-and-motivated-scott-thornbury/>. Retrieved: June 13, 2012.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[http://www.isatt.org/ISATT-papers/ISATT-papers/Grierson\\_ChangingConceptions.pdf](http://www.isatt.org/ISATT-papers/ISATT-papers/Grierson_ChangingConceptions.pdf)

Retrieved: September 18, 2011.

<http://www.teachingenglishtips.com/resources/philosophy-of-teaching.html>

Graves, K. (2000). *Designing language courses*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle. Retrieved: November 17, 2011.

<http://www.teachingenglishtips.com/resources/philosophy-of-teaching.html>. Retrieved: November 17, 2011.

<http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/writing-teaching-philosophy-statement>. Retrieved: November 17, 2011.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusha>. Retrieved: May 5, 2012.

<http://www.sit.edu/graduate/5388.htm>. Retrieved: July 15, 2012.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A Teaching Philosophy (Pre and Post SIT SMAT 29 Program)

Appendix B What Motivates Me to Teach? Self-Designed Assessment Tool

Appendix C Becoming an Active Listener

Appendix D Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Appendix A Teaching Philosophy – Pre-SIT

# My Personal Teaching Philosophy

By Mazie Eugenia Black



**It takes a whole village to raise a child.**

**~ Ancient African Proverb**

## **My Personal Teaching Philosophy**

By Mazie Eugenia Black

### ***How will my students acquire knowledge?***

I believe that students need various methods to help them learn information and retain it. Some children must see and touch things to understand what they are or how they work. Some need to write and rewrite information before it is relative to their understanding. My goal is to give my students varied and frequent opportunities to be exposed to familiar as well as unfamiliar material. **I like to give logical and critical thinking practices, as well as material that keeps challenging them over time.** This building up of complexity ultimately usually helps children in processing and understanding new learning about different subject matters. Additionally, children in turn receive an opportunity to prepare for the diversity of experiences that they will undoubtedly have in their lives. Practical uses of information that is learned in school can help students in their daily lives and to teach them how to be responsible for how they acquire this knowledge, whether it be from school, from friends or from their own lives is an important life skill.

I can help my students to acquire knowledge through accessing their understanding of how things are, namely what they know to be true in their realm of understanding (personal frame of reference). I will then use this as a basis to build upon what they know. Educational philosophers often call this scaffolding or skills building. This layering of new and relative experiences will aid me in my pursuit of helping students to increase their knowledge and understandings of concepts, facts, and “hands-on” techniques. My goal will ultimately be first activate their understanding and knowledge of some concept and then teach them a new concept or aspect that builds upon their prior learning. Finally I will be certain to teach them how to think about their learning processes, which helps students

to understand how they think so that they can positively affect their future learning endeavors. The areas that I most emphasize using this approach are Math, Social Studies, and Science.

### **How students should acquire intellectual skills**

Upon observing many types of students, I see that some are like recorders who take in information and play it back. Others are like new born babies who when stimulated react in differing emotional responses, often preferring pleasant stimuli to keep them interested. **At my current level of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I see a need for students to move from emotional thought to intellectual thought.** Students accomplish this through training and experiences, mostly experiences where they realize that it is makes more sense to convince someone through intellectual debate rather than crying to convince someone. Therefore, students eventually come to learn that intellectual thought is desired because it involves making educated decisions rather than relying upon impulses. The purpose for the hands-on laboratory that I often conduct in Science with my students encourages them to “Think and Act like a Scientist.” They act the part and dress as laboratory researchers in lab coats, from their hypotheses and questions. Most importantly they know that the purpose of the sessions and work towards discovering answers to their inquiries.

However, as an educator, I don’t believe in either/ors. Life is full of risks, chances, and choices, and rarely is there a situation where someone only has two choices to choose from. Similarly, people shouldn’t have to choose between being completely emotional or completely intellectual; a balance should exist. So, I seek to educate my students that it’s normal to have a range of emotions to certain situations. I will teach them that there are times where emotional thought is more appropriate and even necessary to deal with certain situations. I will then teach them that intellectual thought is thought that involves reasoning and thinking, rather than exploding emotionally and thinking about it later. For example, I will seek to educate my students about how to control your emotions if they get

into a situation where someone makes them very angry. My goal will not be to have students suppress their emotions. Instead my intent will be to educate students that it's alright to experience emotions; they just need to be aware of what they are feeling at that time and to recognize that people can have different reactions to emotions being conveyed.

### **How students should acquire ideas and values**

Ideas are the result of past learning through a personal experience, through education, or through viewing or reading about an idea. Once we understand the idea, we then attribute values, mostly whether we like the idea or not, and whether the idea may be a threat or support our belief network. Students are constantly learning new ideas and attributing positive or negative values to them. Sometimes students learn about concepts such as social injustice or bigotry and then they attribute negative or positive values to those ideas. Students also learn about concepts such as math, and depending upon the approach used in the class, the student may attribute negative values. The problem in this example is that the student is correlating a negative value to something that is necessary for them to be successful in future schooling. Thus, my goal as a teacher is to bring new ideas to students, and guide them towards attributing either positive or negative values towards concepts.

As a teacher, I will lead my students to experiment with forming their own values of things and experiences. However, I do believe that students wouldn't benefit if all of their values were given to them and they accepted them without question. Students are in fact spoon fed values from parents, family, friends, and teachers. I want to ultimately teach students that they need to decide if their values meet their needs. Similarly, I will also expose students to the concept that values can also exclude people, such as racism. Therefore, I will teach my students that just because you have a value of something doesn't mean that it can't hurt others. In order to ultimately show me why your value is important to you and justifies the hurt of others, the goal will be to have students explain why the value



makes sense. So, it could be said that I want my students to think about why they know something, how they something, and to think about if their perceptions are correct just because someone told them it was true.

All of these aspects are some of my many beliefs about how I aim to teach my students. I will ultimately apply these techniques and perspectives in my classroom through assessing students' abilities (formally/informally and objectively and subjectively) to adapt to my styles and through my ability to alter their education based upon their needs and abilities.

Appendix A Teaching Philosophy – Post-SIT

# My Personal Teaching Philosophy

By Mazie Eugenia Black



**It takes a whole village to raise a child.**

**~ Ancient African Proverb**

## **My Personal Teaching Philosophy**

By Mazie Eugenia Black

### ***Why do I teach?***

I teach because I can and enjoy it. I feel that is a noble duty in this life. Muhammad Ali said, “Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.” Teaching for me is not only an act of servitude, but I believe it is one of the most effectual and pleasant ways to transform people who in turn change the world. We are living in tumultuous times and there is a need to change many things in our environment. The way we communicate, choose to protect the environment, foster peace efforts and democracy are examples of areas in need of change. Awareness about these things comes from learning and teaching others through the acquisition of the English Language is one of the ways I'm choosing to do it. Teaching begins with me. I've learned that reflective teaching practices allow me to work on my own heart and mind first. Then I can use what I've learned to help others to empower themselves by becoming more proactive by being able to speak, write and share information.

I have witnessed the power of teaching. The students always prove my beliefs to be true. There are many students who emerge from a cocoon of limited communication and after time transform into beautiful creatures that rise up with hope and dreams for a better life for all people. Literacy is powerful. I've seen many of my students emerge from their shells of uncertainty, shyness, and weaknesses discover their skills and passions, and go to college and beyond. I have witnessed the unmotivated become the motivated and lead others to become life-long learners or life changers. This is why I teach.

***How will my students acquire knowledge?***

I believe that students need various methods to help them learn information and retain it. Some children must see and touch things to understand what they are or how they work. Some need to write and rewrite information before it is relative to their understanding. My goal is to give my students varied and frequent opportunities to be exposed to familiar as well as unfamiliar material. **I like to give logical and critical thinking practices, as well as material that keeps challenging them over time.** This building up of complexity ultimately helps students in processing and understanding new learning about different subject matters. Additionally, students in turn receive an opportunity to prepare for the diversity of experiences that they will undoubtedly have in their lives. **Practical uses of information that is learned in school can help students in their daily lives and to teach them how to be responsible for how they acquire this knowledge, whether it be from school, from friends or from their own lives is an important life skill.**

I help my students to acquire knowledge through accessing their understanding of how things are, namely what they know to be true in their realm of understanding (personal frame of reference). I will then use this as a basis to build upon what they know. Educational philosophers often call this scaffolding or skills building. This layering of new and relative experiences will aid me in my pursuit of helping students to increase their knowledge and understandings of concepts, facts, and “hands-on” techniques. My goal will ultimately be first activate their understanding and knowledge of some concept and then teach them a new concept or aspect that builds upon their prior learning. Finally I will be certain to teach them how to think about their learning processes, which helps students to understand how they think so that they can positively affect their future learning endeavors. This approach was used in the earlier years of my teaching experience as a generalist or a mainstream

teacher. Those things that worked before, I now incorporate them in my practices as a specialist in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

### **How students should acquire intellectual skills?**

Upon observing many types of students, I see that some are like recorders who take in information and play it back. Others are like new born babies who when stimulated react in differing emotional responses, often preferring pleasant stimuli to keep them interested. Students often tell me that they understand what I am saying in English; however there is a need for them to be able to express themselves clearly and to speak about something for an extended period of time. How do I get them to do that? I see a need for me to help my students to connect with the subject or topic at hand. I like project based learning. This gives students the opportunity to make a connection using realia, cultural explorations and self interests help them to move from emotional thoughts to intellectual thoughts about the area under discussion. Students accomplish this through training and experiences, mostly encounters where they realize that it makes more sense to convince someone through intellectual debate rather than crying to convince someone. Therefore, students eventually come to learn that intellectual thought is desired because it involves making educated decisions rather than relying upon impulses.

However, as an educator, I don't believe in either/ors. Life is full of risks, chances, and choices, and rarely is there a situation where someone only has two choices to choose from. Similarly, people shouldn't have to choose between being completely emotional or completely intellectual; a balance should exist. So, I seek to educate my students that it's normal to have a range of emotions to certain situations. This approach builds them up in Pragmatics. Pragmatic language is transformative in the moment. Communication of meaning is not just dependent upon linguistic or grammatical usage but the context in words are shared and perceived by the speaker and listener. There are times where

emotional thought is more appropriate and even necessary to deal with in certain situations. I teach my students that intellectual thought is thinking that involves reasoning and reflection, rather than exploding emotionally and thinking about it later. For example, I seek to educate my students about how to control their emotions if they get into a situation where someone makes them very angry. My goal is not be to have students suppress their emotions. Instead my intent will be to educate them that it is alright to experience emotions; they just need to be aware of what they are feeling at that time and to recognize that people can have different reactions to emotions being conveyed.

### **How students should acquire ideas and values**

Ideas are the result of past learning through a personal experience, through education, or through viewing or reading about an idea. Once we understand the idea, we then attribute values, mostly whether we like the idea or not, and whether the idea may be a threat or support our belief network. Students are constantly learning new ideas and attributing positive or negative values to them. Sometimes students learn about concepts such as social injustice or bigotry and then they attribute negative or positive values to those ideas. Students also learn about concepts such as math, and depending upon the approach used in the class, the student may attribute negative values. The problem in this example is that the student is correlating a negative value to something that is necessary for them to be successful in future schooling. Thus, my goal as a teacher is to bring new ideas to students, and guide them towards attributing either positive or negative values towards concepts.

As a teacher, I will lead my students to experiment with forming their own values of things and experiences. However, I do believe that students would not benefit if all of their values were given to them and accepted without question. Students are in fact spoon fed values from parents, family, friends, and teachers. I want to ultimately teach students that they need to decide if their values meet their needs. Similarly, I will also expose students to the concept that values can also exclude people,

such as racism. Therefore, I teach my students that just because you have a value of something doesn't mean that it can't hurt others. In order to ultimately show me why your value is important to you and justifies the hurt of others, the goal will be to have students explain why the value makes sense. So, it could be said that I want my students to think about why they know something, how they something, and to think about if their perceptions are correct just because someone told them it was true.

All of these aspects are some of my many beliefs about how I aim to teach my students. I will ultimately apply these techniques and perspectives in my classroom through assessing students' abilities (formally/informally and objectively and subjectively) to adapt to my styles and through my ability to alter their education based upon their needs and abilities.

#### **How do I measure my effectiveness?**

I try to look at what I do in the classroom. Sometimes, I take pictures, videos and use students and peers assessments to get an idea. Formal and informal observations by More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs) often help to gauge my teaching effectiveness. MKO is a term described by Lev Vygotsky as someone who understands something better than you or possesses a higher capacity to perform or teach you about the subject matter, process, task or concept. Therefore, peer mentoring and feedback is a very useful and collaborative teaching tool for English language learning. The trick then is to implement the changes suggested that will lead to a more positive learning experience.

I believe that input affects output and data evaluation which examines systematic outcomes and results that are conscientiously linked to course goals and objectives. Again, reflective teaching practices play a key role. Teachers can use RTP to examine their role, utility of course content and students' progression by looking beneath the surface and formulating better ways to connect with all facets of experiential learning. Each time the cycle is repeated awareness should take place.

Examination of the emergent results followed by adjustments can be made by the facilitator and participant. Input begins with the following items:

- Teacher Philosophy
- Initial Reflective Practices
- Motivation (T/Sts)
- Knowing Frameworks
- Methods/Approaches
- Internal/External Factors + (KASA: Knowledge, Abilities, Skills and Awareness)
- Student Qualities
- L1 and Other L\* Proficiencies
- Culture (Regional/Institutional)

Once these areas are incorporated in the cycle of learning, I can examine specific outcomes. Outcomes are different for each student. To affect or to enhance the learning for individual students, I feel it is important to develop a student-centered environment. Students generally want to actively participate, rather than be lectured or mechanically learn.

#### **How do I measure student's effectiveness?**

Daily, I post the required objectives or skills required. Next, I review the previous skills that are relative to the new ones, so that the students become accustomed to scaffolding. Then a discussion elicits their own a rationale for learning or mastering each objective and skill. If they fail to understand the task, I give examples that build upon their discussions at the beginning of the class. This builds upon the ability to think critically and explore the deeper meaning or needs for the task at hand. They think about "real-world" problems and their solutions.



Throughout the teaching and learning process, I incorporate multiple choices and pathways through the learning materials. I encourage students to engage in open-ended formative and summative evaluation of the course (what's working, what's not). I also ask students to self-evaluate individual progress. Finally, my course design includes a data-driven evaluation component, which focuses on systematic outcomes and results that are clearly tied to course goals and objectives.

Specific tools used for measurement in my classes are:

- Needs Assessments and Follow Up
- Portfolios/e-Portfolios
- Collaborative and Project-based Presentations
- Multimedia Projects – (Videos; YouTube, Slideshare, Prezi, Pinterest, Scoopit, and etc.)
- Tests and Quizzes
- Student Edited Newsletters
- Writing Activities

### **Summary**

My philosophy of teaching addresses general teaching and specific needs for English Language learning and a belief that all students are entitled to a quality education. We all thrive in an environment that is engaging and stimulating. I like to entertain their role in the world, their aspirations and dreams. I believe that interest in lifelong learning is fostered in an environment where students are allowed to interact with current and relevant materials (curriculum). There should be ample opportunities for them to interact with each other individually and collectively, and with me. My teaching philosophy promotes a valuable reflective view on experiential learning.



## Appendix C

### Becoming an Active Listener

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say.

#### 1. Pay Attention

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts.
- Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language.
- Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

#### 2. Show That You're Listening

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like *yes*, and *uh huh*.

#### 3. Provide Feedback

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is." and "Sounds like you are saying." are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say." "Is this what you mean?"
- Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

---

#### Tip:

If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: "I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?"

---

## **Becoming an Active Listener (Continued)**

### **4. Defer Judgment**

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish.
- Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

### **5. Respond Appropriately**

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
  - Assert your opinions respectfully.
  - Treat the other person as he or she would want to be treated.
- 

### **Key Points**

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do! Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself frequently that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviors and concentrate on the message. Ask questions, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

<http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>: Retrieved . August 12, 2012.

## Appendix D

**Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

CD & A	Course Design and Analysis
EFL/ESL	English as a Foreign or Second Language
ELA	English Language Acquisition
ELL	English Language Learner(s)
ICLT	Intercultural Communications Language and Teaching
IPP	Independent Professional Project
KASA	Knowledge, Skills, Attitude and Awareness
L1	Language 1 (1 <sup>st</sup> Language)
L2	Language 2 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Language)
PSHE	Personal, Social, Health and Economic
RTP	Reflective Teaching Practice
SIT	School of International Training
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SMAT	Summer Master of Arts Teaching
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language/Teaching
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development