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Issues in Applying SLA Theories toward Reflective and Effective Teaching

Edited by

Mitra Zeraatpishe, Akram Faravani,
Hamid Reza Kargozari and Maryam Azarnoosh



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PREFACE

We, language teachers, desire for commitment to unrelenting pursuit of our goals as reflective practitioners. We are responsible to take actions and make decisions as agents of immediate situations in line with the constant changes of the world. This spontaneous burst of situating ourselves in the immediate contexts won't be attainable without reflection. This book is an attempt toward practicing EFL teaching in a reflective way as a result of which we could train reflective learners too who can regulate their own learning, who can gain practical skills other than knowledge, who can become autonomous at the end. This book consists of two parts; the first part focuses on SLA theories and the second part is on reflective and effective teaching of language components and skills.

In the first chapter, Kargozari and Faravani introduce key figures of behaviorism and discuss the features of this psychological school of thought and the way it is put into practice in a language class. They end with the drawbacks of behaviorism. In the second chapter, Maftoon and Shakouri illustrate different reflections on cognitive approaches to SLA and discuss several pedagogical implications for L2 teaching and learning. In their paper, the controversy over nature/nurture is elucidated by juxtaposing both relying on some features of behaviorism along with some of those in cognitivism. In Chapter 3, Nassaji and Tian focus on two branches of constructivism, namely cognitivism and social interactionism and their application to second language learning. Loewen with his chapter on connectionism, introduces this concept as one consequence of the criticisms of classical cognitive science which assumes cognition in general, and language processing in particular. Loewen and Majorana in Chapter 4 elaborate on the interactionist framework and the main concepts it covers. The final chapter in the first part of the book written by Crookes is a focus on the critical theories of SLA and that how these theories can be used toward creative teaching.

The second part of the volume starts with Levis and McCrocklin's chapter on reflective and effective teaching of pronunciation. They refer to four characteristics of effective teaching of pronunciation. Finally they suggest some questions for teachers' reflection before and during their teaching. Reflective and effective teaching of Grammar is co-authored by Weaver and Gillmeister in Chapter 8, which is divided into two parts. The first part includes the theoretical scheme underscoring the role of equipping learners with comprehensible input in teaching grammar. The second part is on the application of the steps to be taken to teach grammar which was based on Richards and Rogers (2001). Nurmukhamedov and Plonsky start their chapter (Chapter 9) on teaching vocabulary with introducing four goals for vocabulary instruction, such as expanding learners' vocabulary size, raising their awareness about formulaic language, and developing their word knowledge.

To achieve these goals, they recommend the four strands of teaching vocabulary by Nation (2001), including: meaning-focused input; meaning-focused output; language-focused learning; fluency development.

Covering the reflective teaching of components of language, the second part continues with the pragmatic side of the language and language teaching. Liontas, in Chapter 10, introduces three general idiom tenets regarding the content, construction, and their dependence on the contexts in which they are uttered during conversations. Then he elaborated on a reflective and effective teaching of idioms through outlining specific pragmatic concepts for incorporating these three idiom tenets within conversational contexts.

Part 2 continues with the reflective and effective teaching of language skills. Chapter 11 is on teaching speaking. Relying on the idea that speaking is a combinatorial skill, Burns emphasizes the core skills learners have to gain. She also proposes a teaching-learning cycle including seven stages: focus learners attention on speaking, provide input and/or guide planning, conduct speaking task, focus on language/skills/strategies, repeat speaking task, direct learners' reflection on learning, facilitate feedback on learning.

Zeraatpishe and Azarnoosh co-author the next chapter on teaching writing. They suggest a reflective post-process approach to writing. They introduce some metacognitive and cognitive strategies and also propose an eight stage model for reflective and effective teaching of writing. These stages include teaching mechanics of writing, pre-task planning, drafting/writing task, teachers' feedback on the first draft, learners' reflection through monitoring and editing, learners' reflection through interactive feedback and self-assessment, teachers' direct feedback on the final draft, teachers' reflection on the whole procedure.

Chapter 13 by Goh and Vandergrift is on teaching listening which consists of two parts. In the first part, they discuss the cognitive processes that come into play during the process of foreign language listening comprehension. Then in the second part in the chapter, they point to the techniques and ways listening can be practiced reflectively and effectively.

In the final chapter, Day writes about reflective and effective teaching of reading. He puts forward an in-depth discussion of the nature of reading. Day highlights the concept of reading fluency and criticizes those approaches that just teach reading for the purpose of comprehension.

We hope this book will enlighten the ways of teaching and learning languages in an EFL or ESL context. Since each teacher is responsible for his/her own professional development, this book can be a tool to achieve self-regulating, self-evaluating, and self-improving abilities. This way, we hope teachers will become more effective in their professions and that through collaboration this will lead to the betterment of their colleagues and their own students.

We are so grateful to the contributors who honoured us writing the chapters and we owe a lot to Elias Sheybani, Fateme Motavallian, and Atefe Ghods who assisted in the formatting of the book.