Reconstructing and Expanding Pedagogical Practices: A Look at English Language Teaching Approaches

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Abstract

As a spoken language, English has been holding sway over other spoken languages for more than ten decades. Educators who are engaged in undertakings at any level, and in any capacity of the education system should give serious attention to this maxim. This is especially so for the teachers who are tasked with the teaching of English to learners whose Mother Tongue is not English. Globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends are largely responsible for narrowing the interconnection of world peoples via various means. For this very reason, English Language pedagogical issues exist in multilingual countries as well as in those countries that have a migrant multilingual population. This paper contends that there is a dire need to overhaul current pedagogical practices with a view to developing them continuously. It recommends tailor-made pedagogical approaches with appropriate levels of teacher autonomy, which allows for an all-embracing educational landscape that moves in step with the fast-changing times. It also demonstrates how pedagogical spaces should be reconstructed and expanded. The discussion draws from a wide literature base, research findings and firsthand experiences, but zeros in on theoretical frameworks such as constructivism, social constructivism and scaffolding. The paper concludes with this assertion: Changing educational landscapes in a fast-paced technological environment necessitate the reconstructing and expanding of pedagogical practices. This is especially pertinent in an era where global citizenship education has taken on a habitus of its own in educational institutions' curricula.

Keywords: pedagogy, Mother Tongue, migratory patterns, globalisation, constructivism, social constructivism, scaffolding

Changing educational landscapes seem to have maimed the symbiosis that should exist between principles and theories of education and the art of teaching. There is a dire need for English language teachers to reconstruct and stretch teaching learning activities to the point where creativity becomes the fulcrum of English language pedagogy and the intersection between its processes and techniques – Gertrude Shotte.

Pedagogy is as robust and enduring as the process of learning itself. It is the teacher's responsibility to keep it abreast of ongoing socio-political phenomena in these challenging and changing times – Gertrude Shotte.

Introduction

The English language has most, if not all, the attributes of the facets that constitute language dominance. The strength of its economic, technological and cultural power-base, as well as the achievements of the numerous people who speak the language, has helped it to become a major global language (Gohil, 2013; Chrystal, 2003). The use of the language in these and other contexts, for example ecclesiastical and academic concerns, plus business and trading legalities have earned the English Language its global status (Gohil, 2013; Rohmah, 2005). This status brings with it a respectable level of importance for developmental growth of the global citizenry. It is for this incontestable reason that educators at all levels of the education system should pay focused attention to English language teaching. This descriptive paper focuses on English language learners, but targets the pedagogy employed by teachers who are tasked with the teaching of English to learners whose Mother Tongue is not English.

The expression *the world is a global village*, finds full resonance in the out-workings of globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends. The increasing elevated levels of interconnection among societies across the world are largely responsible for narrowing the interconnection of world peoples via various means (Purba, 2021; Chirico, 2014). It follows therefore that English Language pedagogical issues exist in multilingual countries and in those countries that have a migrant multilingual population. It is against this backdrop that the paper explores the value of, and benefits to be gained, from employing tailor-made pedagogical approaches in English Language teaching. Obviously, it becomes necessary for the all-embracing educational landscape to be in step with the fast-changing times.

Following a brief note about the methodology, the paper takes a peek at the concepts and the theories that frame the discussion. It next describes how to overhaul current pedagogical practices with a view to developing them continuously. The descriptions were strengthened by some practical examples, related illustrations and suggestions that are based on personal experiences. It should be noted that the crux of this paper, in particular the methodology, conceptualisations, theoretical perspectives and the general assessment of the issues are discussed in a chapter of the BCES Conference Book (Shotte, 2024). The difference in this paper has to do with the illustrative presentations that support the discussion. The paper concludes with this assertion: Changing educational landscapes in a fast-paced technological environment, necessitate the reconstruction and expansion of pedagogical practices. This is especially pertinent in an era where global citizenship education has taken on a habitus of its own in educational institutions' curricula.

Methodology

There are voluminous data sources that addresses the topic under discussion. In order to expand and support my information base and to discover what other researchers have found about the said topic, I employed a literature-based methodological approach, where the literature is the main data source. Snyder (2019, p.334) affirms: "a literature review is an excellent way of synthesizing research findings to show evidence on a meta-level and to uncover areas in which more research is needed, which is a critical component of creating theoretical frameworks and building conceptual models". The meta-level used here does not focus "on data, as reflected by the operationalization of variables, the magnitude of effect sizes, and the sample sizes", but on narrative review (King and He, 2005, p.670). The paper is wholly qualitative in nature and is built within conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Firsthand experiences also formed part of the discussion.

One of the limitations of the qualitative design is researcher bias because of personal experiences and/or the area of expertise, which may lead to the possibility of making incorrect assertions or even making erroneous inferences. In building and pre-

senting the discussion, I constantly reflected on the limitations of the approach, with a view to avoiding, as much as possible, the surfacing of biases and subjectivity in content selection and data analysis.

Conceptualisations and Theoretical Perspectives

Globalisation, internationalisation of education, migratory trends and pedagogy are the main concepts that bound the claims presented in this paper. Associated to these are several theories that support teaching learning practices. The confines of this paper do not allow the space that can demonstrate a full interaction with the concepts and related theories. It will therefore present brief perspectives on constructivism, social constructivism and scaffolding, as well as show their connection to other useful theories.

Concepts
Globalisation: This is a concept that is so complex that it has attracted numerous debates on definitional levels. Put simply, it is the influential methods used by organisations to do business on a global scale. It refers to the global-scale changes that happen in political, economic, social and cultural spaces of life (Purba 2021; Appadurai, 1996). For the purpose of this paper, I will concentrate on Appadurai's (1996) five proposed 'scapes' – ethnoscape (global migratory trends), technoscape (links people via technology), finanscape (unstable economies), mediascape (information flows) and ideoscape (political ideologies). There are inextricable continuous interactions between the *scapes,* which have serious implications for teaching learning activities around the world.

Internationalisation of Education: The literature shows a strong developmental link between internationalisation and Higher Education, within cross-border activities (Marginson, 2022). Given that international, regional and local share a complex relationship that interacts on various levels, which are encased by cultural hybridity, it seems safe to conclude that the internationlisation of education can also be interpreted within other non-tertiary education processes. Knight contends that the integration of international dimensions into teaching learning and research activities, is what creates an international stance (2004, p.7). This means that non-tertiary institutions who integrate international dimensions on the basis of their action research work, can too be linked to an internationalised status. In a world that is influenced by the globalisation 'scapes', it is a step in the right direction for educators to embrace the incorporation of international elements into their pedagogic activities.

Migratory Trends: Migration is not a new phenomenon. Little wonder that it generates a plethora of discussions in national, regional and international settings. Both in and out migration impact education in many ways. But immigrant learners are the ones who seem to be negatively impacted most. European Network of Education Councils (ENEC) (2013) notes:

> "…excellence and equity should be regarded as the two sides of the same coin, since offering equal opportunities to all students is critical in the process of building the pedagogical context in which all children are ambitious and are challenged to learn and develop, discover their talents and achieve high standards of the learning outcomes".

Clearly, immigrants learners need to have appropriate support if they are to have a smooth integration into a given learning institution. They should also be allowed to experience educational attainment, and success in the labour market.

Pedagogy: The word pedagogy is generally linked to teaching, but it denotes much more. I employ Friesen and Su's (2022) explanation as the framework for this paper. They see pedagogy as "limited neither to sets of instructional strategies or political programs, nor to what occurs in institutional settings and professional practices…, *but* as a broader conception of human becoming". Taking this position, Friesen and Su link pedagogy to an "unavoidably ethical activity" that is primarily undertaken for the learner.

Theories and Related Methods

Constructivism and Social Constructivism: The theory of constructivism is ascribed to the works of Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner. Lev Vygotsky has the credit for social constructivism. Both theories are concerned with how knowledge gained via firsthand experiences, is constructed and understood. They propose that learners are active participants in their learning. Emphasis is placed on meaning and understanding via a discovery-based approach (Akpan, Igwe, Mpamah and Okoro, 2020).. Sometimes it is necessary to plan discovery-based activities that are outplayed in group settings. This is the precise point where social constructivism enters the theoretical discourse.

Language, interpretation and experience are at the heart of knowledge attainment specific settings where people interact. In these settings knowledge becomes socially constructed. But knowledge is also co-created because it was developed within a group setting. What is demonstrated here is the meeting of 'old' and 'new' knowledges, which prompts action after new knowledge is processed mentally. In social constructivism, there is the acquisition of knowledge within a social context, and this in turn supports cognitive development. Undoubtedly, educational learning spaces are ideal places for the cultivation of learner's social interaction. Bruner and Piaget also supports the idea that cognitive development happens in a social space where people influence each other. Constructivist and social constructivist pedagogical approaches are instrumental in motivating learning, which is made possible by applying Piaget's *readiness principle* to all learning activities. When a learner's development is stimulated, learning as well as the desire to continue to learn, happens spontaneously. This practice facilitates a smooth transition to Bruner's *spiral learning* ideas.

Scaffolding: This term was coined by Bruner who connected it to Vygotsky's work on *Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP)* – skills or knowledge that learners gain with the help or guidance from others, hence the common use of the term *Vygotsky's scaffolding*. Although intricately linked to Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, scaffolding is actually a teaching method that "helps students learn more by working with a teacher or a more advanced student to achieve their learning goals" (Sarikas, 2020). The literature reviewed points to the effectiveness of scaffolding, but with a caveat to be mindful of creating passive learners (ibid et al). Other theories that are used alongside scaffolding are Maslow's *hierarchy of needs,* Gardner's *multiple intelligences*, Ausabel's *advanced organisers* and Bloom's *taxonomy of objectives*. The application of theory to pedagogy is a beneficial exercise for learners and teachers alike.

Reconstructing and Expanding Pedagogical Practices

Let me begin by pointing out that reference to reconstruction in this paper is not linked to the theoretical position of reconstructionism, in the strict sense that relates to the changing of intransigent societal standards. Reconstructing pedagogical practices simply means the revisiting and overhauling of teaching learning practices with a view to making them more effective. In other words, making learning fun, practical, meaningful and worthwhile for learners. Expansion of these practices has to do with teachers' willingness to be flexible and adaptable when changing circumstances demand

such situations. Hughes offers this thought: "… just as the student of the twenty-first century needs to know a huge amount, the teacher needs to be pushed further, to know not only a huge amount about her subject, but about pedagogical techniques too" (2018, p.115).

It is clear that fallout of globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends have brought about challenging situations for educational institutions. Teacher Education Institutions and other training organisations are compelled to respond to the ever-changing educational landscapes. However, in some cases, some of the pedagogical practices fall short of meeting high-quality-education expectations. The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education interrogates the implications there are for the future of schools, teacher training, pedagogical practices, including how learners learn. Perceptions of AI, whether they be positive or negative, do not nullify the need for reconstruction and expansion of teaching learning techniques. In fact, based on personal experience, I would venture to say that the need for sound pedagogy becomes even more acute. Besides, there is the involved matter of Emotional Intelligence (EI), which should not be ignored, especially because it is intricately tied to culture and identity dimensions. Hughes reminds that being emotionally intelligent is being sensitive to the diverse cultural paradigms. In this way "behaviours are not judged out of ignorance but with some wider understanding of the different ways that emotions operate in different societies" (2018, pp. 140 & 141). Taking the knock-on effects of AI and EI into consideration, it is obvious that all teachers, more so English language teachers in the context of this paper, need to think about the importance of reconstructing and expanding pedagogical practices. The next section looks at some successful pedagogic examples.

Some Practical Examples

The examples cited here are based on personal experiences gained from various teaching learning situations in different countries – all have English as an official language, but regularly use other languages and dialects. All the activities undertaken were framed within the earlier-mentioned theories and techniques.

I have selected a *Parts-of-Speech* theme as the background for the examples chosen because these parts are the cornerstone of meaningful communication. The eight parts of speech are words we read, speak, hear and even think! Each has a particular function and occupies a particular position in any given sentence. Elsewhere (Shotte, 2013), I note: "… it is not just the word itself that matters; how it is used in the sentence, its position in the sentence and its meaning also need some consideration if one is to know what part of speech a specified word is". Knowledge of how the parts of speech operate, aids the understanding of sentence construction and how speech should be interpreted. But equally valuable, is the knowledge that helps in the improvement in writing skills.

Example1: The Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) Approach

The PPP technique is one of the successful methods that I have used for English language learning. For *presentation*, the teacher takes the lead and the learner plays a subordinate role; in the case of *practice*, it is a balanced teacher-learner collaboration setting; and with regard to *production*, the learner takes the leading role, while the teacher facilitates if necessary. Figure 1 illustrates what the PPP techniques represents.

**Figure 1:** The Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) Approach
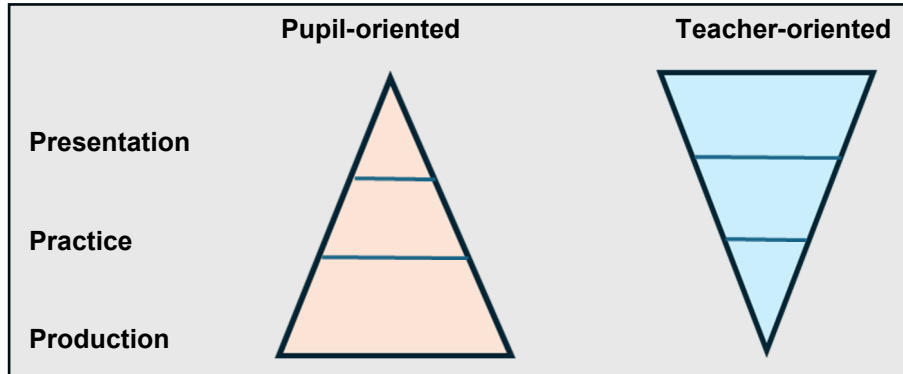
Example 2: The Music-Poetry Approach

**This section is underpinned by the principles found in these three quotes:**
> *Music is the **universal language** of mankind - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.*
> *Poetry is the **universal language** which the heart holds with nature and itself - William Hazlitt .*
> *Poetry and music are **universal tools** that are ideal for teaching a **universal language** – English Workbook.*

The aforementioned theories, constructivism and social constructivism, as well as instructivism, have a direct link to the music-poetry approach. The use of a PPP approach in this setting demands teacher-intuition, balance and a recognition that there is a need to know and understand the theories that can be applied in the teaching learning processes. Figure 2 illustrates four different classroom scenarios that can help teachers to create situations where different approaches support a learner-centred setting.
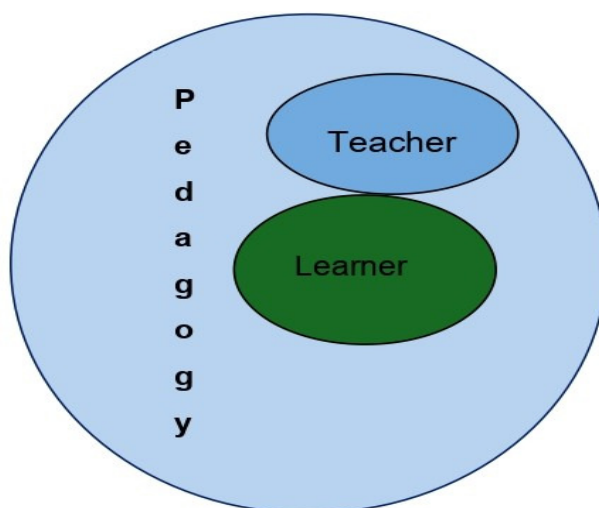
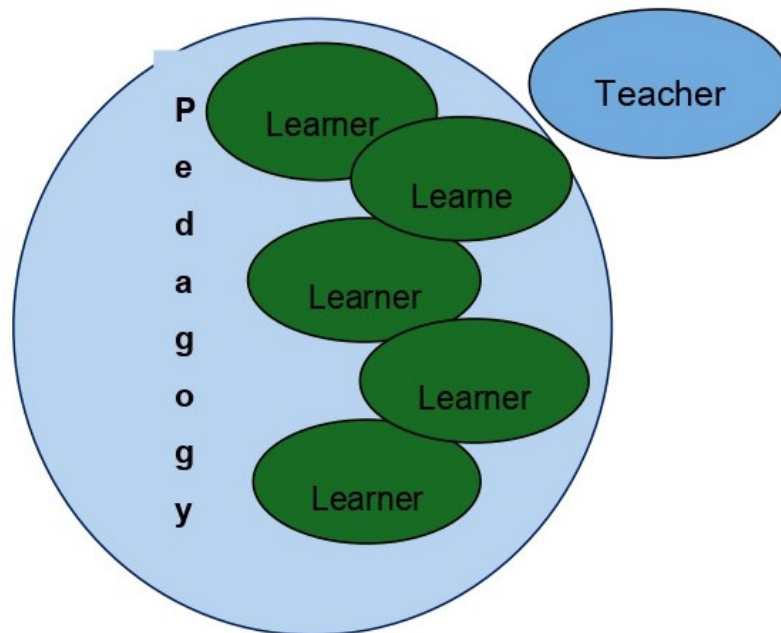**Figure 2:** A Pedagogic Shift From Instructivism to Constructivism to Social Constructivism
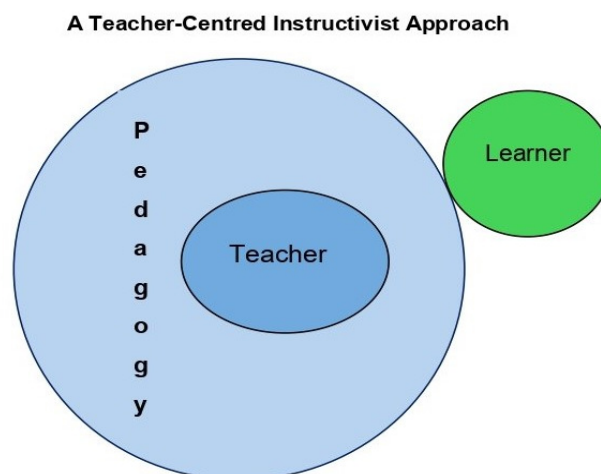
Towards Constructivism
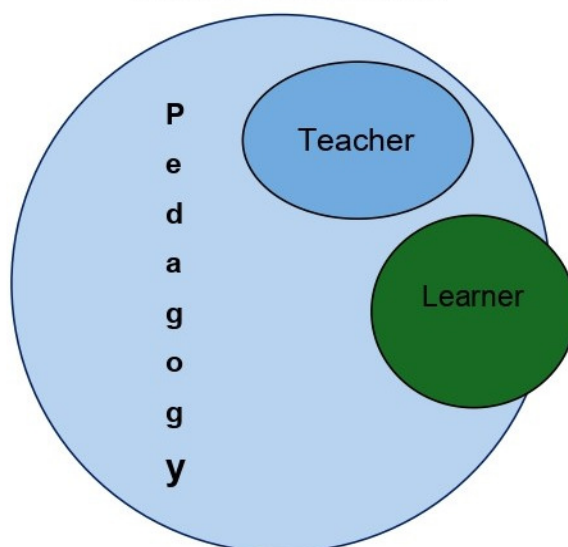
Teacher Learner Interaction – A Constructivist Approach

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I hail the music-poetry approach for its highly successful rates. There is no limit as to what teachers can do to present lessons in a variety of interesting and exciting ways. This is because poetry and music are inextricably linked since they are *two peas in the same pod*. I refer to the following explanation because it worked then, and it is still working today:

> Both poetry and music are easy to 'digest' because of their rhythmic nature. They also have the power to evoke deep-seated feelings, which suggests that these tools can be used not only to help children to learn, but also to help them 'bring back to mind' what they have been taught. The all-embracing nature of poetry and music puts them in a strong position to be the 'perfect' catalysts for teaching and learning.

The universality of both music and poetry, together with the global reputation of the English language, are practicalities that teachers should consider in reframing pedagogy. And the approach suggested here brings the issue of space into sharp focus. There is an unavoidable interrelationship between the material space and the social interaction that governs activities in that space. Wang and Wang (2022, p.732) claim: "Learning space is not restricted to a physical space where learning occurs intentionally… it also involves a variety of interpersonal, socio-cultural and institutional context…". They further note that an "interactive learning space is indispensable to the implementation of collaborative learning" (ibid).

Physical space is a crucial element in a learning environment. Sometimes it becomes necessary to have different seating arrangements to accommodate effective learning. Equally important is the consideration given to the value of interpersonal and socio-cultural spaces. In these spaces, educators have numerous opportunities to bring the aforementioned theories to life. The application of constructivism and social con-

structivism theories necessitate the use of space in practical ways that will facilitate teaching and inspire learning. Learning does not only take place in a standardised seating arrangement, but also in situations where a personal and/or collaborative style is necessary. Some tasks can be dealt with singularly, others need a shared formula, either with peers or a facilitator. For pedagogy to work at its best, continual reconstruction and expansion of practices is a gainful practice.

Example 3: The Think-About-It Approach
Speaking, listening, reading and writing are essential English language skills if learners whose Mother Tongue is not English, are to become masterful in the use this universal language. I have added another skill to the list – *thinking*. From the literature reviewed, this skill is not mentioned alongside the other four, although none of them is fully functional without it. Interestingly, being occupied in receptive or productive mode, demands a respectable degree of thinking for successful engagement to be attained. The receptive skills are listening and reading, and the productive skills are speaking and writing. I place thinking squarely in the intersection of both modes (Figure 3). The art and act of thinking is unrehearsed and unstructured, which make thinking an available and convenient skill to embrace.

Figure 3: Essential English Language Skills
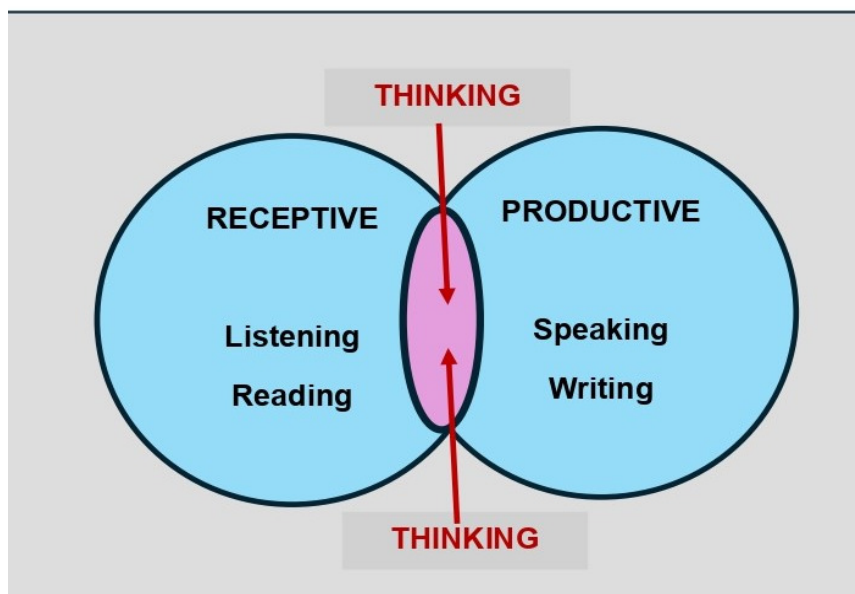
The three approaches mentioned in this section offer sufficient scope for the reviewing and reframing of pedagogy at any point on the teaching learning spectrum. The balance and scope that they continuously create can help teachers to allow learners to become active participants in their own learning.

Conclusion

This descriptive paper highlights the need to continually reconstruct and expand pedagogical practices. Its main focus is on pedagogy for teachers who teach English to learners whose Mother Tongue is not English. It acknowledges that the English language is the most widely spoken language in the world, and that its spread continues as a result of globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends.

The paper's focus on pedagogy draws attention to the need for teachers to use techniques that relate to various teaching learning theories. Constructivism and social constructivism are the two main theories that guide the discussion, but reference is made other related theories such as Gardener's multiple intelligences, Bloom's taxonomy of objectives and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and techniques such as scaffolding, spiral learning and the principles of readiness. In this context, it reminds that there is an unavoidable interrelationship between the material space and the social interaction that governs activities in that space. Examples of three teaching approaches based on personal experience are cited as practical and successful techniques - *The Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) Approach, the Music-Poetry Approach and the Think-About-It Approach.*

The paper makes clear that named three approaches are as convenient as they are easy to use. Together, and singularly, they offer sufficient latitude for the continuous re-examining and refashioning of pedagogy at any point on the teaching learning continuum. Their self-replicating nature creates stability and balance. This increases a teacher's ability to help learners to be active participants in their own learning.

In this era of ever-changing educational landscapes, the author asserts that the restructuring and expanding of pedagogical approaches is an imperative. The macro forces that influenced the use of English as a global language are still at play. There seems to be no immediate end to their impact on global affairs, so teachers should remain alert to the techniques and strategies that can enhance teaching learning activities. Bearing in mind that today's learners are tomorrow's leaders, English language teachers, especially those who interact with learners whose Mother Tongue is not English, should always strive to create a learning environment that brings lasting benefits to *those who teach and those who learn*.

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