

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in this chapter covers the following areas:

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Theories and Approaches of Second Language Learning

Second language learning is, among other things, not totally unlike first language learning, is a subset of general human learning, involves cognitive variations, is closely related to one's personhood, is interwoven with second culture learning, the creation of new linguistic system (Brown, 1994: 275). Brown's statements were made as a result of research findings in the field of language learning/ acquisition. In

addition, another well-known scholar in this discipline is Lightbown, who made a list of generalisations about classroom practice. The list was drawn out of research findings of the last decade. In abbreviated form, her generalisations for adult second language learning were as follows:

1. Adults and adolescents can acquire a second language.
2. The learner creates a systematic interlanguage that is often characterised by the same systematic errors as those of the child learning the same language as the first language, as well as others that appear to be based on the learner's own native language.
3. There are predictable sequences in acquisition so that certain structures have to be acquired before others can be integrated.
4. Practice does not make perfect.
5. Knowing a language rules does not mean one will be able to use it in communicative interaction.
6. Isolated explicit error correction is usually ineffective in changing language behaviour.
7. For most adult learner, acquisition stops –fossilises – before the learner has achieve nativelike mastery of the target language.
8. One cannot achieve nativelike (or near nativelike) command of a second language in one hour a day.
9. The learner's task is enormous because language is enormously complex.
10. A learner's ability to understand language in a meaningful context exceeds his or her ability to comprehend decontextualised language and to produce language of comparable complexity and accuracy.

Following are some current theories that will be useful for the reader to engage in the realm of second language learning.

Whole Language

Whole language is not a specific method or collection of strategies, techniques, or materials. Instead, it presents a perspective on language learning and teaching (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). Whole language educators emphasize that language must be kept whole when it is learned or it is no longer language, but rules, patterns, and lists; that written language is as natural as spoken language and needs to be integrated with it in learning; that language uses are diverse and reflect different styles and voices; and that language is social and learned in interaction with other speakers, readers, and writers.

Whole language classes consist of communities of learners who work together to develop the curriculum, read and write for and with each other, and evaluate products together. Classroom activities might include extended reading and writing, with both sustained silent reading and oral reading of a variety of published and student-written works; group development of written texts that grow out of individual or group experiences (language experience approach, described below); direct instruction in effective reading and writing strategies; and ongoing student and teacher evaluation of student work and class success.

Whole language approaches are used in a number of basic and family literacy programs as well as in some workplace literacy programs (Pharness, 1991). Learners entering the program are given a blank, lined notebook and asked to write whatever they want. As they continue to write, their notebooks become reading texts and sources of ideas for further writing. New learners, more experienced learners, and tutors work together as they sit at round tables writing, reading, talking, and conferring about their writing.

Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach (LEA)--really a teaching technique or teaching strategy--is consistent with a whole language perspective. Learners'

experiences are dictated, then transcribed, either by the teacher or other learners, and the transcription is used as reading material. Although LEA originated with teachers of elementary school children (Stauffer, 1965), it is used extensively in adult programs. It is ideal for ESL learners with well-developed speaking skills and low-level literacy skills because it capitalizes on their strengths and allows their reading and writing to evolve naturally from their activities and spoken language. LEA also addresses a common concern in adult ESL classes: the lack of appropriate and interesting texts for beginning readers.

Language experience stories can grow out of individual or group experiences that occur naturally or are staged for the class. Personal experiences can be dictated by a learner to a teacher or an aide who transcribes them, reads them back to the learner, and then helps the learner read them. For group experiences, the class can choose an experience (such as making lunch or taking a trip somewhere), develop a plan of action (such as assigning ingredients or making schedules), and go through the experience. After the experience, the learners discuss it orally, compose a narrative about it, read the narrative, and participate in follow-up activities (such as developing vocabulary lists and cloze passages, or writing related stories). A teacher acts as the group's transcriber until learners become proficient enough to transcribe for themselves.

Monitor Model

In describing the Monitor Model, Krashen (1985) claimed that adult second language learners have two means for internalising the target language. The first is *acquisition*, a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to *pick up* a language. The second means is a conscious *learning* process in which learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own process. The Monitor is an aspect of this second process; it is a device for watchdogging one's output, for editing and marking alterations or corrections as they are consciously perceived. Krashen (1981: 99)

claimed that fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired, not what we have learned. Adults should, therefore, do as much acquiring as possible in order to achieve communicative fluency; otherwise, they will get bogged down in rule learning and too much conscious attention to the forms of language and to watching their own progress. According to Krashen (1982), our conscious learning processes and our subconscious acquisition processes are mutually exclusive: learning cannot become acquisition. This claim of no interface between acquisition and learning is used to strengthen the argument for recommending large doses of acquisition activity in the classroom, with only a very minor optimal amount of Monitoring, or editing, be employed by the learner.

Input Hypothesis

The Input Hypothesis, a major offshoot of the Monitor Model, claims that an important condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understands (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure a bit beyond his or her current level of competence. If an acquirer is at stage or level i , the input he/she understands should contain $i + 1$ (Krashen, 1981:100). In other words, the language which the learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current competence that they can understand most of it should neither be so far beyond their reach that they are overwhelmed, nor so close to their current stage that they are not challenged at all. An important part of the Input Hypothesis is Krashen's recommendation that speaking not be taught directly or very soon in the language classroom. Speech will emerge once the acquirer has built up enough comprehensible input ($i + 1$).

Attention-Processing Model

This theory was proposed by McLaughlin (1990). The model juxtaposes processing mechanisms (controlled and automatic) and categories of attention to form four cells (Brown, 1994: 283):

Attention to Language	Information Processing	
	Controlled	Automatic
Focal	(Cell A) Rule learning	(Cell B) Test situation
Peripheral	(Cell C) Implicit learning	(Cell D) Communication situations

Controlled processes are limited and temporary, and automatic processes are relatively permanent (McLaughlin et al, 1983: 142). We can think of controlled processing as anyone learning a brand new skill in which only a few elements of the skills can be retained.

Automatic processes, on the other hand, refer to processing in a more accomplished skill, where the brain can manage bits of information simultaneously.

Both ends of this continuum of processing can occur with either focal or peripheral attention to the task.

Looking at the cells in the above table, most adult second language learning involves a movement from cell A through a combination of C and B, to D. Peripheral, automatic attention-processing of the language is thus an ultimate communicative goal for language learners (Brown, 1994: 284).

Although of these theories and approaches have been described separately in this work, in reality, there is considerable overlap among these ideas, and language programmes often combine them. For example, programs that have adopted the

Language Experience Approach often incorporate the Whole Language Approach, the Monitor Model, the Input Hypothesis, or the Attention-processing Model, in their classes.

Instructor Problems

Kosashunhanan (2007) explains that, as Thai teachers are second-language speakers, many are not proficient in English and have poor teaching ability. English major graduates are in high demand in schools and universities but there are not enough qualified English teachers. Some teachers have pronunciation problems and are unable to pronounce *th*, *ch* or *v* correctly. Some are unable to give clear explanations as they lack effective teaching techniques. Moreover, some teachers are very strict about grammatical rules. They expect perfect English in assignments and often scold students for mistakes.

According to Mackenzie (2002), the basic problem is that the general quality of teaching staff is low. Salaries are low, which makes teaching an unattractive career option. Rather than become teachers, the most competent language graduates become flight attendants, clerks, receptionists or find other positions in the private sector. This problem is not limited to language graduates, but is endemic within the Thai education system. Another major problem is the poor state of teacher training. Teacher college entrants are predominantly students who cannot get into university and the education faculties at all national universities have the students with the lowest academic levels of all the faculties. Generally, teaching is something that people go into if they are unable to do anything else. Especially at the elementary levels, teachers are unqualified, the classrooms are overcrowded, and the focus is on rote memorization and comprehension tests. There is little communication in classes and teachers know little about communicative approaches to language teaching.

Mackenzie (2002) states further that even if a teacher wants to become more competent, barriers to professional development are high. For example, if one desires

to follow a course of doctoral study, they may apply to a scholarship fund and receive funding for their degree. However, if they take six years to complete their degree, they are then attached to the scholarship-granting body in a teaching role (often in the university in which they studied) for a period of twelve years at a monthly salary of 10,000 Baht (\$250 US) – a sum roughly equivalent to the salary of a limousine driver for a hotel. At a different level, if a teacher wishes to attend a free government-run workshop which is held on a school day, since they are not teaching on that day, they do not get paid their regular salary leading to a net loss of income.

Sadly the education reform seems to be encouraging many teachers to opt for early retirement. More than 600 teachers in Bangkok alone applied for retirement: about 30 of them from prestigious schools designated to spearhead the education reform process. Reasons given for this exodus include just being fed up with the system, feeling tired, feel like they are working alone and having to work harder under extra pressure from students and the reforms (Bunnag, 2001). Some think the education ministry is not dealing with the real problems within the system and the changes are misdirected. These changes create more work for language teachers who are often already over-worked.

Some schools could elect to hire Burmese, Philippine, American or Indian teachers to teach content classes in English. But there is still the problem of teacher salaries being low (Mackenzie, 2002).

Learner Problems

According to *Teaching English in Bangkok* (2008), the average Thai does not speak English particularly well, especially when compared with some other South-East Asian countries like Malaysia or Singapore. There are many reasons for this including a) L1 interference, b) a questionable education system and, c) many very poor English teachers in Thailand (both the Thai teachers within the education system and foreigners at language schools). The Thai language is in no way related to English. Thai does not

come from the same family of languages as English so students really are very much starting from scratch. The Thai language is very basic in structure with little grammar including little in the way of verb tenses, verb forms etc. Thai also has a relatively small vocabulary which results in the language having a general lack of expression. If you compare sentences in Thai with the English equivalent, the English version is far more complex. The Thai script is totally different from the Roman script meaning that the Thai student must learn a new alphabet. (Many foreigners complain about written Thai being incomprehensible - well the Thais are forced to learn our script.) The one major complexity with Thai is the tones in spoken Thai. When spoken well, Thai can be very pleasant on the ears. Thai students invariably have difficulties with the pronunciation of English.

Thai students tend to be able to read and write English to a reasonable level but their listening skills are not usually that strong and their spoken English is often very poor, though low levels of confidence are partly to blame. The reason for poorly spoken English is often because they have studied just reading and writing for many years and have never actually had to speak! They may have heard their teacher utter a few phrases of English here and there but they themselves have possibly never actually used it outside a few phrases in the classroom. In terms of comprehension of written material, they are usually ok, but when it comes to producing written material, their writing is very disorganised and lacks structure. This is a classic case of L1 interference as anyone who is able to read and write written Thai will attest. Thai teachers may teach grammar ok, but when it comes to organisation of ideas and so forth, Thai language teachers are sadly lacking. On top of this, there are always errors in their use of verb tenses (Thai really doesn't have tenses as such) and using things like the passive voice provide problems.

Thai students are characterised as: (1) lacking willingness to speak due to a culturally-based seniority system and shyness, (2) having an over-emphasis on accuracy, and (3) having an ingrained attachment to rote memorisation (Mackenzie,

2002). Kosashunhanan (2007) points out that some students do not pay attention in class. They are bored with lessons and do not see the importance of English. Besides, they have a poor foundation in English, weak grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Some of them cannot read or write even simple words although they have learnt English for many years. Weak grammar results in poor class performance. Some are so worried that they will produce ungrammatical sentences that they cannot speak fluently. The other problem is related with personalities. Most Thai students are shy and lack confidence. They prefer not to participate in class activities or give their opinion in class even when urged by teachers. Hence they are unsuccessful in learning English.

Similar problems are seen in *Teaching English in Bangkok* (2008) revealing that Thai students are inherently shy and often reluctant to use the target language or even speak English! Sometimes they will just mill around grinning at each other and saying little. It is usually a problem of confidence and most Thai students are scared of making a mistake, saying something wrong and thus they are scared of losing face. Thai students often have totally unrealistic expectations about the courses offered and some truly believe that after a 30 hour course, they are going to be fluent and be able to understand and communicate about just about anything! They take their seat and sit there, often doing nothing. This is probably due to the way that they have been taught at school with the rote learning method where they listen, read, write and recite. Frustratingly, many students don't realise that if they wish to make progress, they must actually make an effort!

Curriculum and Textbook Problems

According to Kosashunhanan (2007), one of the problems could be an inappropriate course content. For example, courses may be so theoretical that students cannot apply the knowledge, as seen in courses with a focus on rule memorisation.

Also, materials can be problematic. Unattractive or outdated commercial course books may cause boredom.

There is no national EFL curriculum emanating from the Central Government. Each public and private educational institution is free to develop and implement its own EFL curriculum so long as public degree granting institutions meet the total required instructional hours. The EFL teaching curriculum is broken down into separate classes teaching reading comprehension or oral conversation. EFL is taught as a homogeneous subject. As a result, students in EFL classes are well schooled in grammatical rules but unable to produce an intelligible basic English conversation.

EFL teachers design the tests. These tests purport to measure student accomplishments in vocabulary, and reading comprehension, a somewhat dubious claim with even more suspect results, which have come under increasing criticism. In any event, these tests do not test oral communication or production ability. Tragically, these tests actually discourage oral English teaching throughout various levels. English classes have approximately 40 students sitting in a room. This provides each student with less time to practice oral English production with the teacher.

Qiang & Wolff (2003) note that English conversation textbooks are usually old and boring, using stories outdated by at least twenty years. The language is also old and outdated, culturally out of step with current language usage. English dictionaries are updated annually but these English textbooks are not. This is primarily due to budget constraints. Textbooks written by Thai teachers often use inappropriate vernacular. They are usually authored by teachers who have had little or no exposure to English culture and must rely upon their understanding of dictionary definitions for word choice. This dictionary definition English is too formalistic, rigid or brittle, and can produce tears of uproarious ridiculing laughter in a native English speaker who hears it. When was the last time you heard a native English speaker use any of the following expressions in daily conversation? 1. I am so sorry, pal. 2. Beg pardon. I

didn't quite catch your meaning. (*Interactive Speaking, 2001*) Current production, at least in America, would be closer to: 1. Sorry. 2. What?

The following are some random examples of sentences from *Interactive 2001* that simply do not reflect the way L1 English speakers talk (Qiang & Wolff, 2003):

- Its time to say our farewells.
- Could they make me known the exact time the plane takes off?
- I wonder if youd excuse me for a moment.
- I'm afraid.
- Will it be convenient if I call upon you at seven this evening?
- He chooses to look into the matter till the truth is out.

More often than not the L1 English speakers are left to their own devices to obtain materials for the oral English class. When materials run short or the well runs dry they resort to showing DVD movies or playing games like hangman in class. They must also keep in mind that topics for discussion must be of interest to a majority of the class members.

Some schools provide English resources and materials but the teacher is free to select the specific materials and organizes them in the order of presentation. And of course there are always schools that do not provide sufficient teaching materials.

Administration Problems

The Education Ministry set up a quality assurance program in order to monitor schools and teachers. However, this manifests itself in a basic checklist of administration, punctuality, and time-management, which has little to do with education. Educational quality assurance should focus on teaching practices and student outcomes but there is no standard measure of these as yet in Thailand (Mackenzie, 2002).

Suwanna Tantayanusorn (cited in Mackenzie, 2002), Assistant Professor of English at Chiang Mai University notes that the education reforms create a phenomenal amount of red tape. She believes that not enough funds have been put into basic research and needs analysis. They are poorly thought out and do not address the main problems in the Thai education system. They are top-down changes that come from government ministers and dictate language-teaching methodology. Chiang Mai University (CMU) is supposed to be one of the coordinating bodies implementing those changes and is also supposed to be a key responsible research center. However, the government has put little funding into teacher development to deal with these changes.

The other problem is about failure to provide facilities for teaching and learning English, such as language laboratory equipment and audio-visual equipment. There may also be insufficient resources, with students lacking the opportunity to use them (Kosashunhanan, 2007). A native English teacher says that a lot of schools do not have air-conditioning in the classroom - something I personally could not deal with at all. A lot of schools still use blackboards and chalk - aaargh - I hate that too! The quality of resources varies but generally, what they have tends to range from a little old to downright ancient (*Teaching English in Bangkok*, 2008).

Recruiting too many students in a class has negative effects on instruction. The research findings of Al-Jarf (2008) demonstrate that large class sizes inhibit small group activities and individualised instruction, because of the noise level and lack of space in the classroom. The instructor does not have sufficient time to check each student's work. They do not have enough time to pay attention to each and give every student a chance to speak or participate. As a result, individual students do not receive sufficient attention from the instructor.

When classes are large, the instructors can not accommodate the wide individual differences (ability-levels) available in class. Poor students do not get enough attention. They can not have a one-on-one contact and do not have adequate

time to follow their students' progress. Students feel that the instructor calls and focuses on those who sit in the front row. They do not have a chance to answer or practice.

Large class enrollments also result in discipline problems even at the college level. Some students talk in class and make it difficult for the majority to hear the instructor and concentrate due to increasing the noise level. Many students might mishear an answer or a point. They pay less attention and are distracted by those who talk in class. They are psychologically inhibited from participation. Instructors spend a lot of time taking attendance. They cannot remember names and faces and cannot call on all the students.

Moreover, over-crowded classes have a negative effect on assessment. Extra work is required of instructors when classes are large. Grading 200-300 essays (per in-term test) is exhausting, tedious, and time consuming. Testing students individually and orally in the speaking course is also very time-consuming, no matter how short the questions are. *Teaching English in Bangkok* (2008) expresses the view that Thai high schools are very big and many schools have around 5,000+ students. This in itself is not so bad but when you consider that there is an average of 50, but sometimes as many as 60 students in a classroom at one time, then I start to think of this as more of a comedy show, or even as babysitting, than *real teaching*. Really, there is very little that you can do with these numbers in the classroom. Students at the back of the class will inevitably be chatting away to each other so discipline can become a real problem and with these sorts of numbers, you simply cannot give any one student any real attention.

Solution to the Problems

In the age where strides in technology rapidly enhance our global community, ESL/EFL professionals need to work hard to assure quality and quantity of classroom

learning and instruction. The field of ESL/EFL is evolving rapidly, and a big part of any teacher's responsibility is to keep abreast of new developments. As one tries to advance as a professional, one needs to be knowledgeable about the array of problems that occur and how to find proper solutions.

Solution to Instructor Problems

Fern, Anstrom, & Silcox (1999) suggest using active learning for limited English proficiency (LEP) students. Certain principles or practices of active learning have proven to be highly effective when implemented in the active learning classroom. These principles can be classified into the following areas: classroom environment, including organization and ambiance; structure of interaction; and approaches to making content instruction more comprehensible for LEP students.

The general classroom environment should be such that students feel safe and comfortable. A predictable structure, explicitly defined rules, and structured routines help to reassure students; graphic organizers aid students' understanding. Classes of fewer students function better in the context of this model. The physical environment of the classroom reflects the active learning process: furniture is made into flexible, moveable arrangements; and learning centers or small group discussion areas are typical of the active learning classroom.

The active learning classroom promotes a variety of interactive structures including, but not limited to, whole-group teacher-directed instruction. A range of groupings such as small group work, one-on-one instruction with the teacher, and peer teaching should be used. Student groupings should be carefully planned for heterogeneity of English skill level and content level knowledge. On the other hand, if a particular skill needs to be developed, homogeneous groups may be used for that purpose.

Approaches for making content instruction more comprehensible include: cooperative learning; the use of manipulatives; visual organizers and other extra-

linguistic support; avoiding idioms, unless explained to students; one-on-one conferencing; availability and use of support materials in the student's native language; the use of dialog journals; and content that is relevant and meaningful to students.

Activities and assessments should be compatible with each student's English level

Teachers can take teacher training with a native speaker instructor to clarify usage. Upgrade teaching methodology and materials and keep abreast with research. Have a sense of humour to make classes lively. Stress to learners the benefits of being proficient in English, including better job opportunities. (Kosashunhanan, 2007)

Apart from using active learning as a solution, teachers can alternatively use cooperative learning, which is an effective strategy for English language learning (ELL) classrooms. Cooperative learning strategy has been shown to improve academic performance (Slavin, 1987), lead to great motivation toward learning (Garibaldi, 1979), to increase time on task (Cohen & Benton, 1988), to improve self-esteem (Johnson & Johnson, 1989), and to lead to more positive social behaviors (Lloyd, et.al, 1988). For ELL students especially, cooperative learning promotes language acquisition by providing comprehensible input in developmentally appropriate ways and in a supportive and motivating environment. (Kagan, 1995).

According to Yahya & Huie (2002), the cooperative learning strategy has four steps:

Step 1: Starting from Home. First, the class is organised into heterogeneous groups of four. These groups are called "home groups."

Step 2: Becoming Experts. The students leave their home groups and join their expert groups. Each group has its own tasks to complete. The students will gain expertise which they will carry back to their home groups.

Step 3: Returning to Home. Once the expert groups have acquired their expertise, they return to their home groups and teach their skills to the home group.

Step 4: Showing What I/We Learned. In each home group, the students count off from 1-4. The teacher asks questions from the quiz. Each group then has one

minute to confer and make sure that everyone knows, and can explain, the correct answer. When time is up, the teacher randomly choose a number from 1-4 and call on a home group. The student in the home group with that number must answer the question. If the question is answered correctly, the whole group gets one point.

It can be seen that cooperative learning promotes transfer from group to individual learning.

Solution to Learner Problems

Students should be aware of personal learning style and fulfill academic obligations. Overcome shyness and participate in class activities. Ask teachers to explain when they do not understand and try to be more confident. Stop worrying about making mistakes because teachers will help them. Practise English outside the classroom with songs, news, movies, and books or periodicals in English.

(Kosashunhanan, 2007)

Many EFL instructors are faced with the challenge of getting their students to participate in the language classroom. As language instructors, part of this challenge is creating interesting activities to increase students' motivation. "We must find out what our students are interested in" (Rivers, 1976: 96). Part of providing conditions for language learning is building on existing motivations in order to increase students' knowledge of the new language (Rivers, 1976). When there is engaging content that will involve learners and in which those learners have a stake, students become intrinsically motivated (Stevick, 1996). Activities in which students use L2 as a means to solve a problem are not only meaningful to EFL learners but also increase their motivation, participation and use of the target language. The reason for this high interest and involvement lies in the fact that students have to use their cognitive skills and logic to arrive at solutions to problems relevant to their own lives. Students learn and acquire the target language by using it for critical thinking and problem solving (Maxwell, 1997).

The example of critical thinking and problem solving described here focus on important aspects of finding employment after graduation from university. Many students, who will soon be looking for jobs, should find this issue meaningful; the activities give them a chance to think, talk, and form their own opinions about employment situations.

Goal and targeted language

The goal of this activity is to encourage students not only to express their opinions about a work-related issue but also to support their opinions with a strong argument. Supporting personal opinions requires students to validate their stances. The targeted language is opinion language (I think, I feel, in my opinion), conditional statements using modal constructions (I would, he should, they could, if I were in his position, etc.), and comparisons (X is better than Y; X is not as good as Y, etc.).

Partner interview

In pairs, students interview each other and record their partner's responses to the statements. Some of the statements concern work practices and encourage students to think about what roles academic history and ability might play. These statements are included to set the stage for a brief discussion on work-related issues. By comparing and contrasting, the students form more ideas and opinions about working and hiring practices. Following are some questions for the interview:

1. Do you think that the name value of a university is more important than working experience and ability? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that it is easy for women to find good jobs in Japan? Why or why not?
3. In your opinion, do you think that women should get the same salary as men for the same job? Why or why not?

Critical thinking task

The problem involves two university graduates seeking employment. One student graduated from a high ranking university and another from a mid-ranking university. The students first make a grid and list the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. After the target language is introduced, students try to use the new phrases to tell their partners who they think should get the job and who should not get the job, providing one reason to support each opinion. They write three sentences using the target language to explain who they think should get the job and why. Then they write three sentences concerning who they feel should not get the job and why.

Solution to Curriculum and Textbook Problems

Curriculum leaders may wonder which learning theory to incorporate into a school curriculum. According to Schunk (2004), learning theories are never right or wrong; rather, they can be evaluated only in the light of conditions such as the nature of the task to be learned, the type of learning to be accomplished, and the characteristics learners bring to the situation. Constructivism focuses on the learner rather than on the teacher (Brooks & Brooks, 1999). Additionally, constructivist theory of learning encourages social interactions with peers as an effective method of acquiring skills and sharing knowledge. Constructivism supports teamwork with collaborative and cooperative activities (Ghaith, 2003). Schunk, 2004 believed that discussions and project-based learning would enhance student-learning performance.

According to Deutsch (1997), curriculum leaders should consider the role of technology, academic studies, cognitive processes, societal needs, student self-actualization, and subject content for future generations. Likewise, the university should also develop a new English curriculum to set standards for English as a foreign language (EFL). The new curriculum should address constructivist perspective on curriculum and learning, information processing; aligned with brain-based learning

theories, and the needs of learners. English teachers should find the new curriculum conducive to learning because the principles and standards support different learning styles, multiple intelligences, inquiry and problem-based learning, and technology. The new English curriculum should be a well planned EFL artifact that enhances student performance and embraces different learning styles.

Of course, the perfect textbook does not exist; but the best book available for teachers and learners certainly does. Such a book should be selected according to these conditions (Grant, 1988: 118):

- It should suit the needs, interests and abilities of the students.
- It should suit the teacher.
- It must meet the needs of official public teaching syllabuses.

Evaluating a textbook is essential if one needs to solve learning problems. Initially we often need to assess quickly whether a textbook is likely to be worth looking at more closely. We do not want to waste time. So in our initial evaluation, we want to filter out obviously unsuitable materials. However, we should try to avoid making judgments that are too hasty, particularly if the textbook appears to be rather unusual in its format.

One way of finding out whether a book is worth looking at more closely is to ask ourselves the following questions (Grant, 1988: 120):

- Is the book communicative? Will the students be able to use the language to communicate as a result of using the book?
 - Does it fit in with our aims and objectives?
 - Does the course seem teachable? Does it seem reasonably easy to use, well-organised, easy to find your way around?
- Are there any useful add-ons (additional materials such as teacher's books, tapes, workbooks, etc)?
 - Does the level seem about right?
 - What is your overall impression?

- Are your students likely to find the book interesting?
- Has the book been tried and tested in real classroom? Where? By whom?

What were the results? How do you know?

Obviously, when choosing a textbook, it is important not to make any instant decisions. It is advisable to obtain copies of new materials, preferably from at least two different publishers, and allow time to evaluate them properly. Consult with colleagues. It is important that any decision is taken after the fullest discussions with colleagues. If there are other people whose opinions you respect, ask them for their views.

A more rigorous method of evaluating a textbook is using a questionnaire, which may contain the following questions (Grant, 1988: 122):

Choosing a textbook: questionnaire			
1. Is it attractive? Given the average age of your students, would they enjoy using it?	YES	PARTLY	NO
2. Is it culturally acceptable?	YES	PARTLY	NO
3. Does it reflect what you know about your students' needs and interests?	YES	PARTLY	NO
4. Is it about the right level of difficulty?	YES	PARTLY	NO
5. Is it about the right length?	YES	PARTLY	NO
6. Are the course's physical characteristics appropriate? (e.g. is it durable?)	YES	PARTLY	NO
7. Are there enough authentic materials, so that the students can see that the book is relevant to real life?	YES	PARTLY	NO
8. Does it achieve an acceptable balance between knowledge about the language and practice in using the language?	YES	PARTLY	NO

9. Does it achieve an acceptable balance between the relevant language skills and integrate them so that work in one skill area helps the others?	YES	PARTLY	NO
10. Does the book contain enough communicative activities to enable the students to use the language independently?	YES	PARTLY	NO

It is apparent that the questionnaire can contribute to the process of choosing textbooks effectively. The questionnaire ensures that the selected textbook will be properly designed; with appropriate difficulty, length, size, and language skills.

Solution to Administration Problems

The focus here is on dealing with problem staff such as teacher who is persistently late for work or never completes paperwork on time. After spending time hiring or integrating these people into the teaching team, they know the school and the procedures well. So, it's easier to retain them than to hire a replacement. However, certain aspects of behaviour need to be changed. The objective should be to extinguish the undesirable behaviour without alienating or demotivating the member of staff. A demotivated and resentful employee can do business harm. Tact and diplomacy are required for dealing with the issue. If you are an administrator, Pollard (2005) suggests that this is best done in an interview with the person concerned. There are stages to follow: before, after, and during this interview. We'll consider them in turn.

Before the interview, if you have been alerted to a problem, consider it carefully before diving in. Gather evidence and observe the problem for yourself. For example, look at class registers or records of work to be sure that the member of staff is not doing the necessary paperwork. You may feel like you're spying and being sneaky. In fact, you're getting the facts straight. Your checks might reveal that the

person is doing their work correctly. If so, all the better. If not, you're dealing with concrete facts that all is not well.

When you've got the details, you need to fix an appointment with the person. Explain that you want to review some aspects of performance. Agree a day and time and organise a quiet room where you won't be interrupted. You also need to check the rules, by reading contracts or other relevant documents. Rules and regulations will vary according to the law of the school you're working in. You also need to consider the severity of the offense. Lateness and arriving drunk for classes are both issues for concern. Lateness can be dealt with by an informal conversation; drunkenness requires more serious handling. Consider whether the issue is minor, serious or major and handle it accordingly.

During the interview, turn up on time and ensure you won't be interrupted or overheard. Start by building empathy; for example, "Our relationship is normally very good" or "We value your teaching". Explain the reason for the interview; e.g. "I noticed you were late for class twice last week". This phrase deals in facts, not personality. Contrast it with "You're always late". The first sentence is respectful of the other person and focuses on observable behaviour. It's also difficult to contest the fact that they were late twice. On the other hand, they can disagree with a statement that they're *always* late. Try to avoid extremes such as "always" or "never" as they can become a point of contention. The objective isn't to spend time discussing how often the person is late. Your time will be better spent resolving the issue. Keep your focus on the behaviour, not the person. "I noticed you were late for class twice last week" focuses on the problem behaviour. Whereas "You don't take your classes seriously" focuses on the person and their personality.

You need to explain that there is a gap between expected behaviour and the behaviour of the individual. You can use statements such as:

- Our students expect their classes to start on time. Your classes started late twice last week.

- Teachers are required to attend monthly admin meetings. You were absent from the last two admin meetings.

- Teachers need to be sober and alert in class. I noticed that your breath smelt of alcohol on Wednesday.

Using such statements ensures that the person is aware of the rule or standard. Try to get the person's agreement that your observation is correct. Getting their agreement means that they are more likely to commit to improvement, which is your ultimate goal. If they haven't agreed you can't do much to improve the situation. Your detective work before the interview will come in useful here. Again, focus your discussion on behaviour, not personality.

All of the above focus on facts; so it should be easier to get their agreement that the statements are true. Try to stay calm and objective. Be clear and concise; it is more difficult for the member of staff to disagree with your observations if they are specific. If the person's omission or mistake is carefully worded, you're more likely to get their agreement that it is true. Any discussion should be well-structured, controlled and unemotional. Throughout, you need to be:

- receptive: listen to what the other has to say.
- direct (without being rude)
- clear: don't soften your comments to the point that they are muddled. This can lead to misunderstanding.
- timely: let the person know about the problem quickly so they don't continue doing the same.

You can then move onto a discussion of the reasons. It's usually more fruitful to ask "Is there any particular reason for your absence?" or "What are the reasons for your absence from meetings?" Asking "Why were you absent?" can be interpreted as a challenge. At this point allow the member of staff to do all (or most) of the talking. Your role here is to listen and ask for clarification. If you've been respectful of the person, they'll feel able to open up to you. Listen carefully, check information and ask

for clarification. You need to decide which factors really are outside the control of the person and which they can do something about. Be prepared to be wrong or to change your opinion but don't allow the person to play you on this. You need to focus on the gap between actual and expected behaviour and ways to reduce this gap. You can then move from talking about the past to talking about the future.

Try to get the person's commitment to making improvements. The issue is closing the gap between expected and actual behaviour, not about changing the person entirely. Discuss and agree solutions. You can ask the member of staff to make suggestions for improvement. Be firm about the expected outcome whilst being understanding towards the person. Let the person know what the consequences will be if the standards are not met. Reassure the person that you want them to succeed and let them know if a note is placed in their personal file.

If you decide that there are extenuating circumstances and the member of staff can be absent from a meeting (or excused from any other duties), let them know that it is exceptional and not a regular occurrence. The rest of your staff also need to be aware that this person is excused exceptionally so that resentment doesn't build up and so that they don't think they can be absent too. Be tactful and delicate when announcing this; try not to reveal information about a person's private life. A simple "Tom is excused from this month's meeting" will suffice to let others know that the absence is authorised.

After the interview, set a review date during the interview and stick to it. If you offered help, you need to follow up on this. During the review, give feedback on your observations, both positive and negative. Encourage and praise improvements. If the problem behaviour continues, you can consider further steps.

Finally, don't be afraid or nervous of handling such issues. This is one aspect of the role of management. Be confident and don't apologise for the discussion. Make any punishment fit the crime, don't be over-zealous in your desire for perfection! Be hard on the issues but fair on the person.

Research Related to Problems in Learning English

A large number research are related to problems in learning English. Some of them are mentioned as follows:

In an effort to identify students' learning difficulties, Rachal, Daigle, & Windy (2007) studied students' self-reported problems engaging in several academic tasks. It was hypothesized that students would report less learning difficulties as they matriculated through the curriculum. This study also identifies which learning difficulties are most prevalent at according to student self-reports. Student behaviors related to studying and learning strategies were assessed with an on-line version of the Learning Needs Questionnaire. Factor analysis identified fourteen factors related to academic learning needs. Regardless of academic classification, students reported learning problems related to poor information processing, reading, writing, motivation to study, math, and test taking skills. Test anxiety was the only factor that demonstrated a significant difference between academic classifications. Recommendations are made to improve student use of learning strategies across the curriculum.

Furthermore, Al-Jarf (2008) studied the problems of female EFL programs regarding student achievement and attitudes, program staffing, classroom instruction, management, assessment, resources and facilities utilization on the basis of female faculty demographic, female faculty teaching load, number of courses and total number of credit hours offered by the department, freshman students enrollment statistics and grammar test scores. Female students, instructors, department head and program coordinators' perceptions of the causes and outcomes of large female freshman student enrollments are reported.

Apart from students' problems, attention is now focused on teachers' problems. According to research findings, Bhaowises (2008) discovered that EFL teachers were left behind and struggled alone. They lacked adequate support in terms of training in

teaching strategies e.g. child-centred and communicative approaches, EFL subject content and curricular knowledge which were concerned with communication, English culture, integration with other subjects, and language used in the real world. Findings also revealed that even though EFL teachers had been trained in how to implement the new curriculum several times, they could not implement change effectively. The findings also showed that EFL teachers still carried on teaching based on their old teaching styles: employing teacher-centred and grammar-translation approaches with Thai language as a means of instruction, using the old curriculum as teaching guidelines, and managing teaching and learning activities based on their own interests not the learners’.

Attempts are also made to find solution to learning problems when Hwang, Tseng, & Hwang (2008) diagnosed learning problems of students by developing computer-assisted learning and testing systems to help students improve their learning performance. Conventional testing systems simply provide students with a score, and do not offer sufficient information in order to improve their learning performance. It will be of more benefit to students if the test results can be critically analysed and hence learning suggestions can be offered accordingly. This study proposes an algorithm for diagnosing students' learning problems and provides personalised learning suggestions for Science and Mathematics courses. An intelligent tutoring, evaluation and diagnosis system has been implemented based on the novel approach. Experimental results on a Mathematics course have demonstrated the feasibility of this approach in enhancing students' learning performance, making it highly promising for further study.

On the part of teachers, an effort was made to solve problems when Teeters (2001) successfully experimented with his Teach with Style Model. Such a model was based on four distinct instructor styles as follows: (1) systematic (collaborate with participants as you plan; assess participant learning needs and styles; set clear, meaningful goals; plan to reach your goals; evaluate your plan); (2) stimulating

(present information in interesting, useful ways; use active learning approaches; encourage creativity; help participants solve real problems; help participants practice new learning); (3) spontaneous (help participants tell their stories; make learning funny and fun; use imagination and the arts; build in risk taking; take time to reflect); and (4) safe (help participants feel at home; let participants know what to expect; help participants get acquainted; keep time commitments; build trust and openness).

Moreover, feedback and reflection are suggested as a solution to the problems. Brandt (2008) examined tutor and peer post-teaching practice feedback in the context of short intensive TESOL certificate courses. Outcomes of recent research into such courses suggest that feedback is a contentious and problematic component. The outcomes are considered in the context of the syllabus, and in the light of recent research into adult learning, reflection, and what is considered "good practice" in feedback. Drawing upon insights from these areas, a new approach to the post-teaching practice meeting is proposed in which feedback alone is considered insufficient. Instead, feedback and reflection are integrated in the form of reflective conversations with a number of features including the assigning of greater prominence to reflection, and to the presence of a facilitator and language learners. It is suggested that such features would address several of the problems identified in the research by providing a more trainee-centred forum in which feedback is balanced by reflective practice.

In addition, regarding the administration problems, the research conducted by Hodgson et al. (2007) is concerned with the effects of policy on three types of learners-unemployed adults attempting to improve their basic skills in community learning settings, younger learners on Level 1 and 2 courses in further education colleges, and employees in basic skills provision in the workplace. What is distinctive about all three groups is that they have historically failed in, or been failed by, compulsory education. What is interesting is that they are constructed as "problem learners" in learning and skills sector policy documents. They use data from 194 learner interviews, conducted during 2004/5, in 24 learning sites in London and the North East of England, to argue

that government policy assumptions about these learners may only be "half right". The researchers argue that such assumptions might be leading to half-right policy based on incomplete understandings or surface views of learner needs that are more politically constructed than real. They suggest that policy-makers should focus more on systemic problems in the learning and skills sector and less on problematising groups of learners.

It can be seen from the above studies that many scholars try hard to examine the problems in order to find successful solutions. Some venture to identify students' learning problems based on student self-reports. Recommendations are also made. Moreover, some also investigated the problems in more details such as management, assessment, facilities, and so on. Aside from students' problems, teachers' problems are equally important. They lack professional training, morale support, and so on. Some problems are also concerned with policy-makers. In order to solve the problems, some researchers recommend using computer; others suggest a number of useful techniques such as using feedback and reflection.