

The Changing Role of the University TEFL Teacher in Improving the Students Communicative English Skill: From Passive Technician to Reflective Practitioner

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Abstract

Prompted by increased concerns about the problems of education quality, this action research was conducted to study the role of the teachers in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) to improve the students Communicative English Skills at Ambo University. To achieve this objective, 198 (113 male and 85 female) first year (94) Pre-engineering and (104) Economics and Public Administration (FBE) undergraduate students of the University were purposively selected because the practitioner had been assigned to these particular students. The students were proportionally stratified into Experimental and Control groups based on the result of the pretest, field of study and sex. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from the respondents through lesson observation, achievement test, questionnaire, focused group discussion, recorded classroom teaching observation and teaching material analyses. The obtained results were then triangulated. The study mainly focused on the role of the practitioner as a reflective teacher in selecting teaching materials and planning lessons, implementing it properly, conducting both reflection in- and reflection on- action activities, as the result of the reflections, planning and giving remedial actions to narrow the gaps between the students, and making the process cyclical. The overall result of the study showed that it is possible for the instructor to be a reflective practitioner in teaching the language to students of both natural and social sciences. The reflective teaching strategies adopted were found to have significantly improved the students results, leaning power and interest. In contrast to the control group, 70% of the students in the experimental group scored above 75% in the test. However, the low commitment of the students, the large class size and ill-designed teaching materials are some hindrances to implementing the reflective teaching strategies. Therefore, the solution to the problem lies in bringing about improvement on these hindrances.

Keywords: Reflective teachers, Passive practitioner, Communicative English Skills and TEFL

Introduction

The goal of teaching language seems to be rather obvious. Teaching language is aimed at creating optimal conditions for desired learning to take place in as short a time as possible. However, good teaching process cannot be defined because the criteria differ according to the instructional situation and teachers' activities or roles (Harmer, 1998). Particularly, the role of the teacher has been a perennial topic of discussion in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), even as scholars are yet to precisely pin down the roles or functions of the teacher. The teacher has variously been referred to as an artist and an architect; a scientist and a psychologist; a manager and a mentor; a controller and a counselor; a sage on the stage and a guide on the side. Instead of investigating deep into the familiar metaphors, several researchers (Kramsch, 2006; Dewey and Leung, 2010, and Fanner, 2013) believe that it is much more beneficial to view the role and function of classroom teachers in order to understand how the concept of the teacher's role influences and shapes the language education.

The complex and creative activities of a teacher can be considered in relation to some common basic teaching functions: *Authentic Planning, Implementation and Evaluation functions* (Wallace, 1991 and Freeman, 1998). In carrying out these meaningful functions, teachers are expected to lay basic foundation for their students'

communicative competence in the process of learning it as a second language. As a result, the students develop the ability and the confidence to handle communicative situations both in and beyond the classroom (Motuma, 2014). Even such a seemingly simple statement hides a troublesome correlation: a cause-effect relationship between teaching and learning. This statement is based on the assumption that teaching actually causes learning to occur (Kramsch, 2006). However, the classroom teachers has a much more demanding and intimidating role with a direct bearing on shaping and reshaping the desired learning outcome. This shows the significance of the teacher's role in teaching language (Kramsch, 2006). Nevertheless, there is very little consensus on the precise role the teacher is expected to play. From this perspective, one can glean from the current literature on language teaching at least the following two strands of thought: teachers as passive technicians and teachers as reflective practitioners.

Teachers as passive technicians

The basic tenets of the concept of teachers as technicians can be partly traced to the behavioral school of psychology that emphasized the importance of empirical verification (Fenner, 2013). In the behavioral tradition, according to Haynie (2010), the primary focus of teaching and teacher education is content knowledge that consisted mostly of a verified and verifiable set of facts and

clearly articulated rules. According to Kumaravade (2003), classroom teachers are assigned the role of passive technicians who learn a series of content knowledge generally agreed upon in their field and pass it on to successive generations of students. They are also viewed largely as apprentices whose success is measured in terms of how closely they adhere to the professional knowledge base, and how effectively they transmit the knowledge to students.

In technicist approach, the primary goal of any teacher's activity is to promote student comprehension of

content knowledge. In an attempt to achieve this goal, teachers are constrained to operate from handed-down, fixed pedagogical assumptions and seldom question their validity or relevance to specific learning and teaching contexts. If any context-specific learning and teaching problem arises, they are supposed to fix it by turning once again to the established professional knowledge base.

Viewing teachers as passive technicians, Haynie (2010) had stated the primary roles of a teacher as follows:

The teacher's primary role in the classroom is to function like a conduit, channeling the flow of information from one end of the educational spectrum (the teacher) to the other (the learner) without significantly altering the content of information. The technicist view provides a safe and secure environment for those teachers who may not have the ability, the resources, or the willingness to explore self-initiated, innovative teaching strategies. The technicist approach to teaching and teacher education is clearly characterized by a rigid role relationship between theorists and teachers: theorists conceive and construct knowledge, teachers understand and implement knowledge. Creation of new knowledge or a new theory is not the domain of teachers; their task is to execute what is prescribed for them.

Kincheloe, (1993), had argued that such an outlook inevitably leads to the disempowerment of teachers whose classroom behavior is mostly confined to obtained knowledge rather than lived experience. That is why the technicist approach is also considered "passive, unchallenging, and boring that teachers often lose their sense of wonder excitement about learning to teach". As a result, the concept of reflective teaching evolved partly as a

reaction to the fixed assumptions and frozen beliefs of the technicist view of teaching (Widdowson, 2003).

Teachers as reflective practitioners

While there has recently been a renewed interest in the theory and practice of reflective teaching, the idea of teachers as reflective practitioners was originally proposed by

educational philosopher Dewey (1933) in the early twentieth century (Kumaravadive, 2003; Perlesz and Lindsay, 2003; Haynie, 2010 and Fenner, 2013). According to (Kumaravadive, 2003), teaching is seen not just as a series of pre-determined and pre-sequenced procedures, but as a context-sensitive action grounded in intellectual thought. Teachers are seen not as passive transmitters of received knowledge but as problem-solvers possessing "the ability to look back critically and imaginatively, engaged in a cause-effect thinking, derives explanatory principles, task analysis to look forward, and anticipatory planning" (Kumaravadive, 2003 and Fenner, 2013). Reflective teaching, according to both Haynie (2010) and Fenner (2013), is a holistic approach that emphasizes creativity, artistry, and context sensitivity.

Kumaravadive (2003) states that Schon (1989), who further expands the concept of reflection, showed how teachers, through their informed involvement in the principles, practices, and processes of classroom instruction, can bring about fresh and fruitful perspectives to the complexities of teaching. Kumaravadive (2003) distinguishes between two interlocking frames of reflection: reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action can occur before and after a

lesson, as teachers plan for a lesson and then evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching acts afterward. Reflection-in-action, on the other hand, occurs during the teaching act when teachers monitor their ongoing performance, attempting to locate unexpected problems on the spot and then adjust their teaching instantaneously. Kumaravadive (2003) writes that Schon (1989) rightly argues that the teachers' own reflection-in/on-action and not an undue reliance on professional experts, which will help them, identify and meet the challenges they face in their everyday practice of teaching.

What exactly do reflective teachers do? They go on to summarize what they consider to be the role of a reflective practitioner. By delineating the roles Zeichner and Liston (1996) were categorical in stating that learning to teach does not end with obtaining a diploma or a degree in teacher education, but an ongoing process throughout one's teaching career. Reflective teachers constantly attempt to maximize their class rooms learning potential and that of the learners through classroom-oriented action research and problem-solving activities. In the vein of teachers' role as reflective practitioners, Kumaravadive (2003) has stated the following:

A teacher as a reflective practitioner is expected to be inquiry oriented. To realize the optimum learning a certain language skill by students, the teacher must be grounded on a commitment to world making and to the cultivation of situated participations of students. These roles of the teacher must be extended by a concern with critical self- and social-reflection shaped by a commitment to democratic self-directed education. Moreover, a teacher should be committed to action and dedicated to an art of improvisation which is concerned with the affective dimension of human beings.

This statement suggests that reflective teachers' needs to cultivate and extend research skills that help them and their students to explore problems about life posed in and outside the classroom. They realize that appropriate knowledge is something that is produced by interaction of teacher and student in a given context and act on that realization. Reflective teachers recognized that they operate in classroom conditions of uncertainty and uniqueness and therefore are able and willing to improvise their lesson plans and instructional procedures. As a result, they are able to promote student discussion in class by situating the class in the words, concerns, and experience of the students. Consider ways of helping themselves and their students, reflective teachers need to gain a sense of ownership of their own education and conceptualize classroom techniques that encourage introspection and self-reflection to see thinking as a first step to action and continually design plans of action to carry out their critical thoughts.

The concept of teachers as reflective practitioners is clearly a vast improvement over the limited and limiting concept of teachers as passive technicians. Wallace (1991) and Freeman (1998) reported that the reflective approach provides (offers) ways in which reflective activities can be applied to many areas of teaching second and foreign language, such as classroom observation, microteaching, and teacher education. Richards and Lockhart (1994) had developed a carefully structured approach to self-observation and self-evaluation for second language teachers on ways to explore and reflect upon their classroom experiences. Freeman (1998) demonstrates how practicing language teachers can transform their classroom work by embarking (doing) on what he calls teacher research. He also provides a teacher-research cycle, mapping out the steps and skills associated with each part of the research process. In a similar vein, Johnson (1999) had examined how "reasoning teaching represents the complex ways in which teachers conceptualize, construct explanations for, and respond to the social interactions and shared meanings that

exist within and among teachers, students, parents, and administrators, both inside and outside of the classroom”.

However, Kumaravade (2003) has identified that the reflective movement has at least three serious shortcomings. First, by focusing on the role of the teacher, the reflective movement tends to treat reflection as an introspective process involving a teacher and his or her reflective

capacity. Second, the movement has focused on what the teachers do in the classroom and has not paid adequate attention to the sociopolitical factors that shape and reshape a teacher’s reflective practice. Third, in spite of its expressed dislike for the teachers’ excessive reliance on established professional wisdom, the movement contributed very little to change it. The summary of the Roles of the Teacher is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the roles of a teacher

Areas of differences	Teachers as passive technicians	Teachers as reflective practitioners
Primary role of teacher	conduit	facilitator
Primary source of knowledge	professional knowledge + empirical research by experts	professional knowledge + teacher’s personal knowledge + guided action by teachers
Primary goal of teaching	Maximizing content knowledge through prescribed activities	all above + maximizing learning potential through problem-solving activities
Primary orientation to teaching	discrete approach, anchored in the discipline	integrated approach, anchored in the classroom
Primary players in the teaching process (in rank)	experts + teachers	teachers + experts + learners

Source: Kumaravade (2003)

In Ethiopia, the major problem identified nowadays is the general dissatisfaction with the present quality of teaching English as a foreign language in Ethiopian Higher Institutions (Teshome, 2001 and Motuma, 2014). In a study conducted by Ambachew (2003) and Alemu (2009), both findings indicated that most the freshman students of Ethiopian Higher Institutions were

unable to communicate in English language.

However, the trend of some researchers is to blame the secondary level teachers who readily pass on the baton of blame to the primary teachers for their students’ poor English Language ability (Ambachew, 2003). However, the role of the teacher in teaching the language is key to remedying the problem rather than

pointing an accusing finger. This is because the implementation of a designed curriculum is mainly affected by the role of the subject teachers (Freeman, 1991; Freeman and Freeman, 1998 and Gibbons, 2002; Dewey and Leung 2010 and Cuban, 2006). In other words, improper role play by the teacher can make teaching challenging and frustrating (Freeman, 1998 and Dewey and Leung 2010) which in turn negatively affects the success of students both in and outside the classrooms (Zimmerman, 2011).

The findings of this action research was intended to motivate instructors on the practicability of being a reflective practitioner as to always design suitable teaching materials and plan remedial actions based on the assessments for learning in the actual classrooms to improve the students' language ability; (Grabe, 2009; Grabe and Stoller, 2002; Hudson, 2007 and Gibbons, 2002). Hence the objectives of the study were;

1. To identify whether the reflective teaching strategies in the actual classroom improve the students Communicative English Skills.
2. To identify whether the reflective teaching strategies results in differences in achievement differences between natural and social sciences students'.
3. To identify factors that may hinder the instructor from implementing the reflective

teaching activities in his actual classroom.

Methodology

The study unit

The study was conducted at Ambo University, which is located in Ambo town, the capital of West Shewa Zone. As one of the Government Universities in Ethiopia, Ambo University has 42 undergraduate departments, which are organized into 9 streams: five Colleges, three Institutes and a School. Ambo University is committed to attain its vision through the use of modern technology and the provision of quality service to its students. In order to ensure this, the University strives to maintain a highly trained, motivated and dedicated workforce and enhance its internal capacity in various fields at different levels.

Sample size and sampling techniques

A total of 198 (113 male and 85 female) first year undergraduate students from Pre-engineering and Economics and Public Administration were purposively selected to participate in the action research from which, 94 (55 male and 39 female) were pre-engineering and the others 104 (58 male and 46 female) were Economics and Public Administration (FBE) students. This is because the instructor had been assigned to these particular groups of students.. Then,

the students were proportionally categorized into two groups based on their field of study (pre-engineering and FBE students), preliminary test results and sex. Next, the groups were assigned randomly to experimental (99 (57 male and 42 female) and the control groups (.99 (56 male and 43 female) The experimental group includes 28 male and 19 female pre-engineering and 29 male and 23 female FBE students. Similarly, the control group also contains 27 male and 20 female pre-engineering and 29 male and 23 female FBE students. The students were admitted into the university directly from preparatory schools and had all learned English as a subject in secondary (9-10) and Preparatory (11-12) school. The students were all Ethiopians with different languages as their first language.

Data collection instruments

A triangulated approach as described by Perlesz and Lindsay (2003) was employed. This includes lesson observation, test, focused group discussion and administration of questionnaire. A lesson observation was used to obtain direct information on teaching and learning practices. Three successive, 90-minute, lessons of the instructor was video recorded and later analyzed for key English skills episodes: using the selected material, students participation, using appropriate teaching techniques, assessing the progress of students, giving feedback to the students and

remedial actions. This helped the teacher to gain insights into the factors behind the teacher's behaviors as he prompted questions.

A preliminary intervention test was administered to all the students to generate base line information. After collecting baseline data, the proposed action (which consists of a series of weekly lessons with different methods) was implemented. To evaluate whether the proposed action was properly implemented or not, a post intervention implementation test was administered/conducted to the same students. Both preliminary and post tests consists of five section (speaking, reading and vocabulary, writing, Listening, and grammar) with a total of 50 questions. . Based on Sharon (2006), 10 multiple choice questions were set for each of the five sections, with each question carrying a point value of 2 (i.e. $5 \times 10 \times 2 = 100$). In order to control testing problems, three instructors of the subject partook in the construction and administration of the tests as well as preparing the expected answer keys. The test construction process typically involved multistage item review so as to reflect ideas explicitly (construct validity) in the text and similarly understood by instructors of the department (Williams, et al. 2011). This process has helped to modify unclear questions and ensure only one correct response to a question.

The series of weekly lessons with reflective teaching methods (the proposed action) were implemented unlike the controlling group. Finally, the post intervention test was given to the same students to evaluate whether the proposed action was properly implemented and whether it helps to improve students' learning or not. During the analyses of the data, in addition to the qualitative method, different descriptive statistics such as weighted mean, standard deviation and range were employed. Moreover, t-test was carried out between the preliminary and the post intervention tests was calculated to determine the effect of the reflective teaching activities (Sharon, 2006). A quantitative comparison of the pre-test and post-test, in conjunction with a comparison of student attitudinal survey questionnaire consisting of 25

questions administered to all students before and after was also undertaken to assess the impact of intervention. In addition to these, the instructor was conducting a series of discussions with all the experimental group students to know the students' learning preferences and their expectations about instructors' roles in teaching the language.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary intervention test

The preliminary phase result of the action research showed that 109 (55%) of the students scored below 50%, 180 (95%) had scored below 80, while only five (2.5%) scored more than 80 (Figure 1).

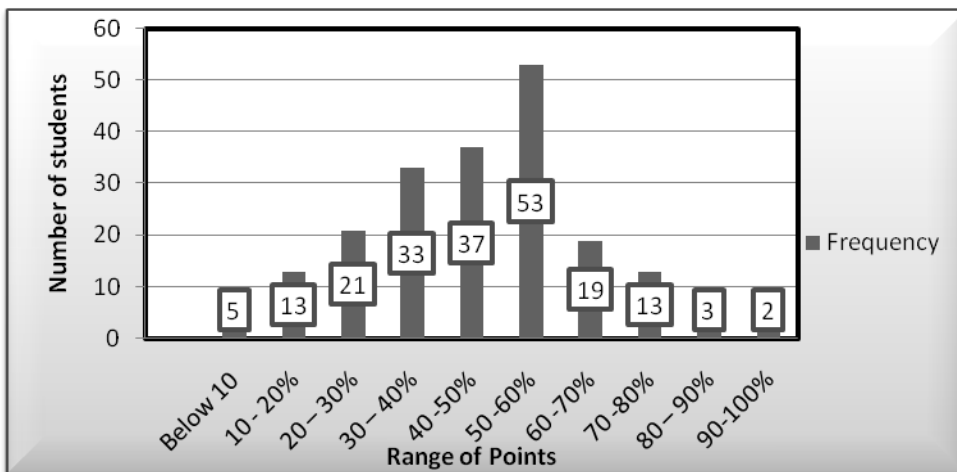


Figure 1: The pretest result of the students

The results of the pre-test, lesson observations and FGD indicated that almost all the students had difficulties

in learning the language and communicating with others. During the discussions held with the students,

Therefore, they want the instructor to select materials which are related to their interests and abilities. The result obtained through questionnaire also corroborates this situation.

The results of the preliminary assessment

Table 1 indicated that 119 (60%) of the students want their instructor to always be aware of their attitudes towards language. Besides, 79(40%) of them claimed that they want their instructor to sometimes assess their interests of topics or skills of language. As the result, almost 50% of the students wish that their instructor could always plan the lesson they need to learn. This is because they, 98 (50%) never like the existing handout and its relevance to their needs and language ability. The result also showed that 100 (50.5%) of the students want the instructor to sometimes determine what they know and do not know about the topic before teaching. Similarly, 90(45.5%) of the students said that they want their instructor to always clarify every key concept to build appropriate background. One hundred and ten (56%) prefer that the instructor to always give a clear directions before teaching commence. However, 90 (45.5%), of the respondents need explanations' and clarification for all difficult concepts.

The table also shows that about half, 98 (49.5%), of the students do not prefer the instructors to use existing handout. On the other hand, the students had a wrong perception of the instructors role because about 66% want the instructor to discuss and clarify every concept before engaging them in any activities. Therefore, these results help the instructor to look into the right needs and misconceptions of the students.

Similarly, Table 3 shows the responses given to the questions that require information on their need for appropriate teaching activities. The results indicated that more than half, 114(58%), of the students like when their instructor explains and discusses the concepts of the texts for them. However, they (52%) of them are never happy when the instructor encourages them to do or discuss any activities with their colleagues either in pair or groups. On the other hand, 118(60%) of them said that they like if the instructor sometimes makes them do any activities individually by themselves. Moreover, about 44 (22%) of the students indicated that they are always happy when the instructor makes them do the activities individually.

Table 2: Response of students to planning activities and selection of teaching materials

No	List of items	Always		Sometimes		Never	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	I want my instructor to be aware of my attitudes towards language skills	119	60	79	40	-	-
2	I want my instructor to select relevant teaching materials that meet my interests and needs other than the existing handout, as a result, plan the lesson for me.	98	49	90	45	10	5.0
3	I prefer my instructor to use the existing handout	10	5.0	90	45.5	98	49.5
4	I want my instructor to determine my knowledge of the topic before teaching commences	20	10	100	50.5	78	39.5
5	I want my instructor to discuss and clarify every ken concepts to me before ordering me to do something	80	40.5	90	45.5	28	14
6	I want my instructor to give me clear instructions before lesson.	110	56	70	35	18	9
7	I want my instructor to explain any difficult words before any learning activity is started	90	45.5	86	43.5	22	11

Table 3: The need for appropriate teaching activities

No	List of items	Always		Some times		Never	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	I am happy when my instructor is explaining and discussing the concepts of the text to me.	66	33	114	58	18	9
2	I am happy when my instructor made me do or discuss any activities with my colleagues	12	6	84	42	102	52
3	I am happy when my instructors engaged me in an activity alone individually.	44	22	118	60	36	18
4	I am happy when my instructors immediately inform and correct my errors in front of my colleagues.	36	18	44	22	118	60
5	I am happy when my errors are pointed out and corrected then in written.	101	51	70	35	27	14
6	I am happy when my instructor made me any activities at home and then discuss the exercises for me on the following day, in the class	102	52	79	40	17	8
7	I am happy when my instructor teaches me the language skills (e.g. reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, etc) separately.	110	55	81	41	7	4
8	I am happy when my instructor teaches me the language skills (e.g. reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, etc) using integrative approach.	42	21	63	32	93	47

In relation to assessment for learning or the learning itself, 118(60%) of the respondents do not like when the instructor immediately corrects them in front of their colleagues. However, 51% of students are always happy when the instructor tells them about their errors and corrects them later at the absence of other students in written because they do not want other students know their results. Moreover, more than half (52%) of them are always happy when their instructor makes them do any activities at home and then discuss the exercises for them on the following day in the class. Still, 110 (55%) of the students always want their instructor to teach them each language skill (e.g. reading writing, grammar, vocabulary, etc) separately, whereas almost, 93(47%), of them never want their instructor to encourage them to learn the language skills using integrative approach.

These results showed the students had misconceptions about the instructor's

role because they want the instructor to explain and discuss all lesson concepts for them. They also prefer individual activities to pair or group work. They also urge their instructors to teach them the language segments (e.g. reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, etc) separately rather than integrating them. Most of the students also prefer home taken assignments and delayed feedback. Table 4 also reveals the responses given to the questions that require information on students needs for appropriate activities expected to be done by the instructor after teaching every lesson.

The results showed that 133(67 %) of the students were disappointed when ask to select the points for discussion in every lesson as against when the instructor select points for discussion. Moreover, almost all 186 (94%) of the students' want their instructor to discuss those points.. They do not want to be left alone while they discuss both in pairs and in groups.

Table 4: Response to post- teaching activities

No	List of items	Always		Some times		Never	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1	I need my instructor to select the discussion points from the lessons.	133	67	37	19	28	14
2	I want my instructor to discuss the selected points in detail for me in the class.	138	70	38	19	22	11
3	I want my instructor to encourage me to select the points to be discussed in pair and groups.	25	13	40	20	133	67
4	I want my instructor to encourage me to relate the concept in the text with my actual life	141	71	41	21	16	8
5	I want my instructor to encourage me to write a paragraph similar to the tonic of the text I have read	123	62	58	29	17	9
6	I need my instructor to encourage me to make speech based on the concepts of the text I have read or listen to.	28	14	48	24	122	62
7	I want my instructor to encourage me to evaluate the text I have read; or somebody has written.	37	19	133	67	28	14

In this vein, 182 (92%) of them want their instructor to encourage them to relate every lesson topic to their actual life experiences. In relation to integrative approach, about 181(91%), of the students are happy when their instructor encourages them to write based on the concepts of the text they have read or listened to. On other hand, they, 122 (62%), never want their instructors to make speech based on the concepts of the text they have read or listed to. About 133 (67%) of the students want their instructors to encourage them to evaluate the text they have read; or that somebody has written.

These results showed that the students had some misconceptions about the roles of the instructor in teaching communicative English Skills. They do not seem ready to take responsibility for their learning because they are waiting for their instructors to select discussion points and discuss it for themselves. During their group focused discussions, they indicate that the instructors are sometimes misguided about their reflective roles particularly when they are teaching the students using the pair and group works. They think that

teaching students based on student centered class as if the students must be left alone without any teachers' intervention and guidance. This is because some instructors may assume that language skills are acquired from one another through pair or group discussions.

Intervention activities

On the basis of preliminary intervention results, different scholars had recommend various action frameworks to be implemented to increase the students' integrative language power (Kincheloe, 1993; Widdowson, 2003; Dewey and Leung 2010; USAID, 2010; USAID, 2011 and Fenner, 2013). In the point of view of evaluative perspective, they forward such frameworks for action research to help practitioners compare teachers' effects and behaviors against established baseline results of preliminary test (Grabe, 2009; Grabe and Stoller, 2002; Hudson, 2007 and Gibbons, 2002). As a result, the following framework was reconstructed to depict the major roles of a teacher as a reflective practitioner for this action research.

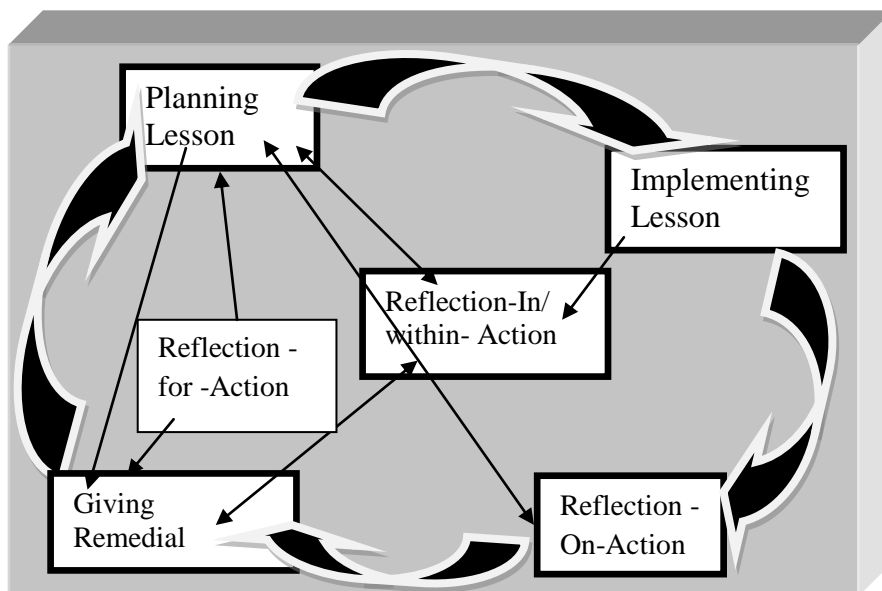


Figure 2: The Framework of the Action Proposed: developed by the practitioner

The above framework shows a complex but interrelated elements of teachers role as a reflective practitioner in this research. These include:

- Selecting teaching materials for every lesson to reflect teaching techniques (integrative, interactive and transferable strategies).
- Planning every lesson carefully based on the gaps identified and design activities so as to address the learners' needs identified during the preliminary test analysis.
- Engaging in discussions before, during and after every lesson so as to redirect the teacher's approach and to give remedial action to meet students' needs and correct the misconceptions of the students towards the teacher's roles.
- Presenting the lessons interactively with reflective in/within action and reflective on/for action activities to the experimental groups during their regular periods.
- Based on the result of the assessment for learning, appropriate remedial actions were given.
- The same pattern was adopted with modification so as to indicate the learning progresses of the learners in all the cycles of the action research.

Implementation of action

The teacher as a reflective practitioner in teaching English as a Foreign

Language is expected to provide the skills necessary for proper understanding and use of the language differently. To play the reflective teacher's role, the practitioner is expected to often prepare the teaching materials (in addition to the existing handout provided for the course) and plans the teacher and students' activities based on an integrative, interactive and transferable teaching strategies. The contents of the plans are usually the same with the existing handout which include the critical elements (Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking and Culture) of Communicative English Skills course. In all the critical elements, both grammar and vocabulary items were integrated into the teaching and learning processes. After the planning process had been completed, the proposed action was carefully implemented to the experimental group as a solution to the identified problem. These initial efforts to implement reflective teaching activities were strengthened through a variety of activities and exercises as described by Cuban, (2006) and Kramsch, 2006. These include:

- Transferable learning strategies that students can assimilate and use with other texts to emphasize the transfer of skills such as beginning a new text similar to the text for which effective strategies have already been taught.
- Integrative activities use text language and ideas in second language listening, speaking, and/or writing, for example, summaries, new endings, reenacting text, dramatizing interviews based on the text; carefully listening for key words or phrases in authentic video or audio tapes, and creating role-play situations or simulations of cultural experiences.
- "Follow-up" exercises that take students beyond the particular language skills in text in one of two ways transferring the skills to other texts or by integrating the skills with other language skills.

During and after every lesson, both the students and the teacher often reflected on the proper implementation of the plan. Moreover, based on the results of the reflections in/within-action and reflections on/for-action (assessment for learning) of every lesson (when it is necessary), relevant lesson plan was often prepared and implemented as the remedial action to narrow the learning gaps among the students in the experimental group. The study, which used the regular classes of the English Communicative Skills, has spanned one semester (which means 48 periods) to complete the first cycles of the action research.

On the other hand, the students in the controlling group were taught the same topics using the existing (premade) handout and traditional teaching activities. In other words, no daily lesson plan, reflections in or on action or assessment for learning and remedial action conducted for the controlling group.

Evaluation of action/ outcome

The comparisons of the results of students both in preliminary and post tests, as well as the results of

controlling and experimental groups are presented in Figures 2 and 3 respectively. The result revealed that all the experimental groups improved their results in general. To be specific, among 198 students, almost 189 (95%) of them improved their results by 20% to 45% during the post test. The result of the test also indicated that few 35 (18%) of the students scored more than 90%. On the other hand, the number of students, who had scored less than 50% in the pretest was reduced from 109 (55) to 16(8%) in the post test.

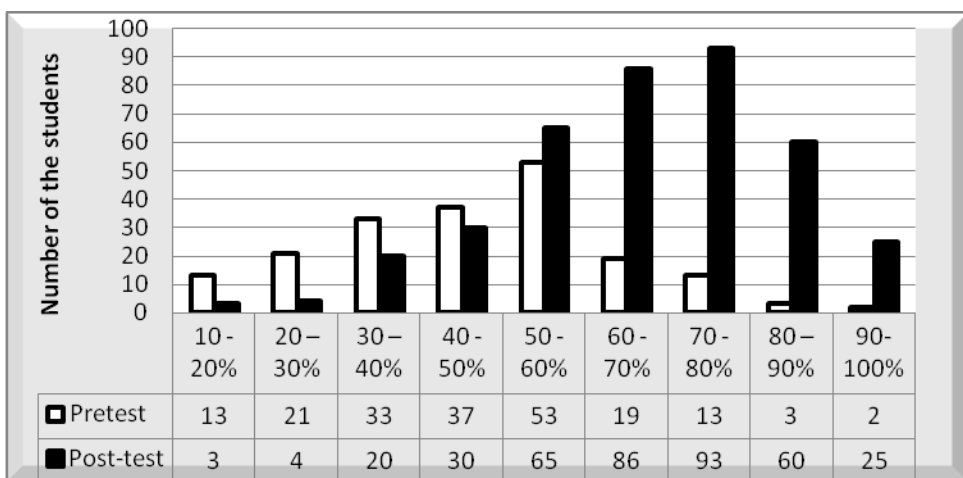


Figure 3. Comparison of the preliminary and post tests

The t-test analysis showed that the students improved on their result in post test . The t-test (t= 4.1) showed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest whose means respectively were 61% and 80%. This result confirms the basic assumption

of a correlation that reflective teaching activities can result in good students' achievement in teaching and learning processes. This means that appropriate and relevant teaching activities actually cause learning to occur. This in turn showed the

significance of the teacher’s role in teaching language.

The result of the test also indicates that students in the experimental group scored better than those in the control group. Students in the experimental groups had improved their results by 71% when compared to those who were in the control group. Specifically 70 (71%), of the 99 students in the experimental groups

(,36(64%) of PE and (67%) of FBE) improved their results in comparison to those in the control group. Additionally, 27(13.6%) of those in the experimental group scored more than 90%, while only 8(4%) in the control group had scored more than 90%in the post test. Moreover, no student in the experimental groups has scored less than 30% in the test; but 7(4%) of the students in the control groups scored below 30 (Figure 3).

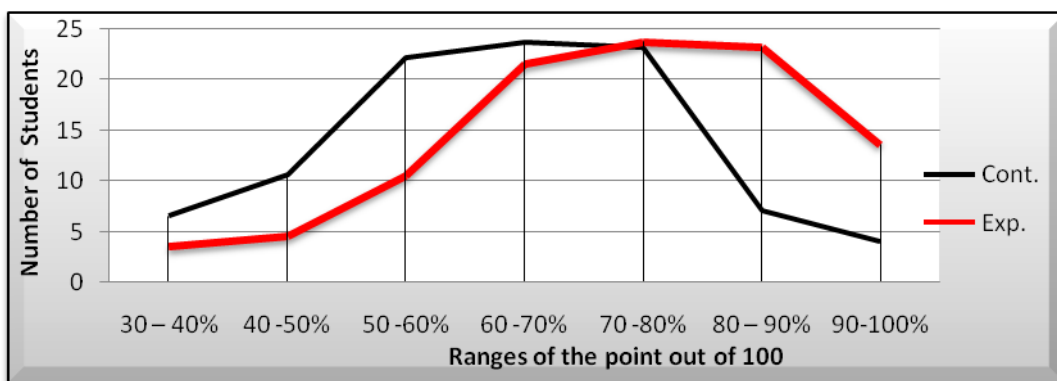


Figure 3. The comparisons of experimental and control groups results

The intercept point in the figure showed that the results of the experimental and controlling groups of students’ test are the same at the range (70-80%) or there is no difference between the two groups which means the t-test result is zero. In addition to the analysis made from the results in Figure 3, the t-test value has also been calculated to cross-check

the reliability of the findings. The calculated result of t-test was 4.0488, where the mean scores of the students in the control and experimental groups were 67.48 and 84.89 respectively. As it is clearly inferred from diagram 3, the difference was significant at $t = 4.0488$ which was greater than t-value (2.01).

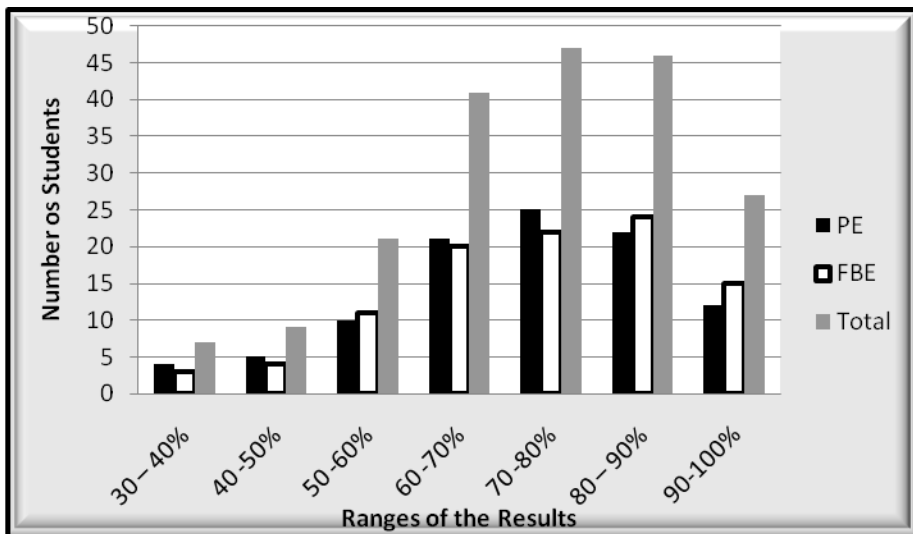


Figure 4. Differences between PE and FBE students in the pretest

Besides, few, 7(14.9%) of PE and 9(17.3%) have scored below 50% in the test. Hence, 40(85.1%) of PE and 43(82.7% of FBE students scored more than 50% in the post test. Moreover, 12(25.5%) of PE and 15(28.9%) of FBE students scored greater than 90% in the posttest. Similarly, the mean scores of the students in experimental group were 83.4 for PE and 85.1 for FBE in post test result. As the result, the calculated t-test ($t = 0.53$) shows that the implementation of reflective teaching strategies in teaching communicative English Skills did not create significant difference between the pre-engineering and FBE students. This means reflective teaching strategies are applicable to teach the English language for natural and social sciences students in the context of Higher Education.

Conclusion

This action research has laid foundation for the development of confidence for the instructor to implement the reflective teaching activities in the context of higher education, because the students' results were improved in actual classroom teaching. A difference was observed between students in experimental and control groups. The strategies enable the students to integrate some language skills (writing, speaking and listening with reading skills) and transfer the some language aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar and structure) from one text to other language skills. They learnt to use the language forms that had been identified in a text in conversations and writing activities. However, there

are some factors that make the implementation of reflective teaching strategies more challenging and frustrating in actual classrooms. Factors such as large class size, misconceptions about the teacher's roles, teaching-learning expectance, low motivation of the students to attain remedial actions, reluctance to obey instruction given by the teacher, the attitude of the students towards remedial actions, were identified as challenges to be overcome in the implementation of the reflective teaching strategies.. In short, an English language teacher can properly play appropriate roles as a reflective practitioner in his/her actual classrooms particularly in higher education context. It is useful, therefore, to treat the reflective teaching perspectives not as absolute opposites but as relative tendencies, with teachers leaning toward one or the other at different times.

Implications for the next cycle

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following actions are suggested to improve further the teaching skills of an instructor and students' integrative learning strategies.

1. Developing Best Practices in teaching TEFL using Lesson Study. This could be achieved through self training and experience sharing in the form of workshop, and discussion forums

to acquaint himself with up-to-date methods of teaching.

2. Conducting action research to minimize the factors that hinder the instructor to properly implement the reflective teaching activities in teaching different English Language Skills.

The instructor need to design an action research on the factors (large class size, misconceptions about the teacher's roles, teaching-learning expectance, low motivation of the students to attain remedial actions, reluctances to be obeyed by the instruction of the teacher, the attitude of the students towards remedial actions) that make the implementation of reflective teaching strategies more challenging and frustrating in actual classrooms.

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