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RECENTLY INTRODUCED ICON AND PEACOCK MODELS IN WEST BENGAL SCHOOL ESLT: A CRITICAL RESPONSE

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Abstract

In post-NCF (2005) and Post-RTE (2009), the primary and secondary education in India including its state West Bengal has undergone several dimensional changes in terms of syllabus and curriculum framing, course content, teaching methodology and evaluation system. Again, after 2011 the present Government of West Bengal took a major step in developing curriculum from primary level to higher secondary level in line with the NCF and RTE for the purpose of raising competence level of the students at par with that of national level board students. In the present study we propose to look into the dimensional changes taking place and the role of English teachers in the backdrop of newly introduced school syllabus and material for ELT based on ICON and PEACOCK models.

Key words: constructivism, NCF, RTE, ICON model, PEACOCK Model, ESLT, etc.

'The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.'

- Sydney J. Harris

Introduction

In post-NCF (National Curcculum Framework) (2005) and Post-RTE (Right to Education) (2009), the primary and secondary education in India including its state West Bengal has undergone several dimensional changes in terms of syllabus and curriculum framing, course content, teaching methodology and evaluation system. Again, after 2011 the present Government of West Bengal took a major step in developing curriculum from primary level to higher secondary level in line with the NCF and RTE for the purpose of raising competence level of the students at par with that of national level board students.

West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (henceforth WBBSE) has thoroughly revised and introduced curriculum for all the subjects including that of English and developed teaching-learning friendly textbooks accordingly. To make teaching-learning effective in line with NCF and RTE, WBBSE has introduced ICON (Interpretation Construction) model based on Constructivist Approach to Teaching for classroom teaching and PEACOCK (it is acronym formed with the initial letters of Indicators: Participation, Experimentation, Application, Cooperation and Knowledge) Model for successfully implementing Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation. The Peacock Model takes case of the 'Learning to be' and 'Learning to

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live together' concept along with the ideas of 'Learning to know and 'Learning to do.' Therefore, the model caters to skills of learners in cognitive, psychomotor & interpersonal domains.

In the proposed paper, an attempt will be taken to explore the nature and scope of the Models introduced in ELT classroom teaching-learning and also the role of teacher in such classroom for the benefit of the learners and achievement of the goal as fixed in the curriculum. Before we proceed to present the topic in detail, it should be clearly stated that for writing this paper we have utilized the printed materials such as books and journals, and e-resources as mentioned in Work Cited.

Constructivism in Teaching-Learning

With emergence of cognitive psychology of education in the second half of the 20th century, education system i.e., teaching-learning and assessment of learning made a dimensional shift from behaviourist systematic predestined or pre-planned method to more dynamic learner-centred multi-faceted method addressing the learner's autonomy, prior knowledge, socio-academic and socio-cultural, environment, and socio-psychological state of mind, etc. This constructivist educational psychology suggests that meaningful as well as effective learning neither stems from direct motivational force nor from environmental pressure (i.e., external stimulus); rather, it happens, so far as the research in the educational psychology goes, as a consequence of a reorganization of psychological structures from the *organism–environment* interaction constantly taking place inside the human mind (Gilbert and Watts, 1983). Hence, constructivists believe that a learner's prior knowledge plays an essential as well as crucial role in the learning processes in which "the active person reaching out to make sense of events by engaging in the construction and interpretation of individual experiences" (Pope and Gilbert, 1983, p. 194). Hence Tsai (2011: 401) argues:

> Learning, in the constructivist frame, is a process of meaning construction and interpretation, and certainly, social interactions from teachers and peers also influence learners' knowledge construction. Teachers are not the course material presenters or controllers; rather, they become the facilitators of students' knowledge construction.

It is thus evident that this framework is mostly based on:

> 1) personal constructivism attributed to Jean Piaget and
> 2) social constructivism associated with Lev Vygotsky.

According to Piaget and Inhelder (1969), the fundamental basis of learning is discovery. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978) believes that Piaget's emphasis is primarily and mainly on the internal processes of individuals. According to Vygotsky, the cognitive development of human being is primarily an outcome of complex function of cultural, historical and social interaction. He firmly suggests that human beings evolve and develop psychological tools in order to master/command their respective behaviors, the most important one being language or linguistic competence (in broad sense). Constructionism, in an educational setting directly and indirectly, attempts to promote the higher-order thinking skills among the learners such as *problem-solving* and *critical thinking*. In this connection while critically discussing Vygotsky's idea of constructivist approach of learning, Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess (2012: 110) argue:

> Whether knowledge is viewed as socially situated or whether it is considered to be an individual construction has implications for the ways

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in which learning is conceptualized. Such question like "how can the constructivist theory encompass both the collective activity and the individual experience to take into account the important classroom social interactions that are so much a part of the entire educational process?" underlie the complexities involved in translating the diversity of perspectives on constructivism into a common set of principles that can be operationalized.

Hoover, (1996) talks about the two vital and interlinked notions which encompass the simple idea of constructed knowledge as developed constructivists. The first notion relates to the fact that learners constructs or shapes new understandings using what s/he already knows. To put it in other words, an individual learner comes to learning situations with the previously gained knowledge and experience. That already existing prior knowledge helps him or her construct new or modified knowledge from the new learning. And according to Hoover (1996), the second notion is that learning is undoubtedly *active* rather than passive. Learners constantly try to negotiate and accommodate their knowledge or understanding in relation to what they encounter in the new learning situation. Hence "if what learners encounter is inconsistent with their current understanding, their understanding can change to accommodate new experience" (Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess (2012: 110). Learners in this construct, deconstruct and reconstruct their respective understanding and grow in the academic arena.

From the above discussion it is evident that constructivism, therefore, has important implications for teaching-learning (Hoover, 1996): (1) the transmission of knowledge from the enlightened to the unenlightened; constructivist teachers are rightly expected to take the role of the "sage on the stage," rather, "guide on the side" and (2) teachers must take into consideration the prior knowledge of the learners and sincerely attempt to provide learning environments that exploit inconsistencies between learners' current understandings and the new learning experiences before them (Clements, 1997; Hoover, 1996).

This notion of teaching-learning evidently poses challenge for teachers as they cannot assume that all children understand something in the same way. Furthermore, children may need different experiences to advance to different levels of understanding.

Moreover, if students must apply their current understandings in new situations in order to build new knowledge, then teachers must engage students in learning, bringing students' current understandings to the forefront (Hoover, 1996). Teachers can ensure that learning experiences inside and outside the classroom incorporate problems that inherently has importance to students, not those that are primarily important to teachers and the educational system. Teachers can also encourage pair or group interaction, where the interaction among participating learners helps them individually shape their own understanding by comparing and analyzing it to that of their peers.

Constructivism also believes that if new knowledge or understanding is actively evolved and shaped, then time is needed for that process. The time taken for that, it is believed, provides opportunities for student to have reflection about newly acquired knowledge/experience accommodating and being accommodated with the already existing knowledge or experiences. The teaching-learning practice in constructivism-influenced classrooms comprises mainly of the following principles based the understanding of the learning theory developed by its proponents discussed above:

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a. Values and integrally utilizes the prior knowledge
b. Is context-embedded learning
c. Integrates cooperative pair or group work
d. Ensures multidimensional assessment of learning
e. Integrates language, content, and process

The chief characteristics of a constructivist classroom as envisaged by its proponents and practitioners are as follows:

a. the active involvement of learners in the classroom activities
b. the democratic environment
c. the flexible interactive and student-centered activities
d. the teacher as facilitator in the process of learning
e. the autonomous learners

Notice that in the constructivist classroom, learners are always encouraged to work in groups and learn in a lively, interactive and dynamic manner. The focus and emphasis on social and communication skills, as well as collaborative and co-operative exchange of ideas are or can be noticed in such classrooms. Some learning activities encouraged and nurtured in constructivist classrooms are:

1. **Experimentation**: students individually are allowed to perform experiments and then to discuss the outcomes in an interactive healthy manner in the class.
2. **Research projects**: students are given or allowed to choose research topic and share their findings to the class.
3. **Field trips**. This gives opportunities to the learners to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real-world context. Field trips or field works are normally followed by class discussions and they gather real life experiences. This concretizes their new learning.
4. **Films**. These give an attractive and amusing visual context and thus bring another dimension into the learning experience.
5. **Class discussions**. Classroom discussions are made by capitalizing all of the methods described above. The main aim is to make the classroom suitable for a progressive and natural learning centre, not a prison.

One major and popular instructional model based the constructivist approach is **Interpretation Construction Model** or ICON model which emphasizes on learners' encounter with authentic issues in pair or groups, on constructing interpretation by the learners in groups, searching for information about the problems in groups and facing different interpretations about the problems in groups. In other words, it is group-based teaching-learning co-operative as well as collaborative approach which, as it is evident, lays emphasis and importance on the inclusive and all round socio-academic growth of the learners and also in way has drawn insights from the concept of **Multiple Intelligences** as propounded by the eminent cognitive scientist Gardner (1993)[1]. ICON Model, as Tsai, Chin-Chung. 2011 and other scholars in educational psychology argue, mainly rests on the principles such as observation in authentic activities (**Understanding Zone**), contextualizing prior knowledge and interpretation construction (**Understanding Zone**), cognitive conflict and apprenticeship (**Understanding Zone**, collaboration (**Application Zone**), multiple interpretations (**Higher Order Thinking Skill zone**), and multiple manifestations (**Higher Order Thinking Skill zone**).

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We can easily see that this holistic teaching-learning approach or method also proposes and implements the assessment or evaluation of the learners based not only on tests, but also on observation of the student, the student's work, and the student's points of view. Some assessment strategies include:

i. **Oral discussions:** The teacher will present students with a "focus" question and encourage an open discussion on the given topic.

ii. **KWL(H) Chart** (What we know, What we want to know, What we have learned, How we know it): This technique which is very dynamic assessment can be utilised throughout the course of study for topic. This assessment technique helps the teacher observe the progress of the student during the course of study.

iii. **Mind Mapping:** In this activity, students are asked and guided to list and categorize the concepts and ideas relating to a topic discussed in the classroom.

iv. **Hands-on activities:** The hands-on activities encourage students to manipulate their social and physical environments or a particular item of learning. Teacher as an assessor can frame a checklist and make observation in order to assess student progression with the particular material.

v. **Pre-testing:** This inevitably helps a teacher to identify what knowledge an individual student is carrying forward to a new topic to be discussed in the class.

PEACOCK Model

The PEACOCK model has been introduced in the state of West Bengal since the beginning of the academic session 2012-2013. The state has tried to incorporate the basic Principles of NCF-205 and statutory Principles of RTE Act-2009 and developed Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) which refers to a school based evaluation system (both within and outside the classroom) that covers an aspects of a student's development. A detailed discussion CCE has made in *Academic Support to States/UTs in CCE Implementation at the Elementary Stage: (Eastern Region): A Report* July 23-25, 2013. Published by Department of Elementary Education, NCERT, New Delhi. The term *Continuous* lays emphasis on the fact that evaluation is not a static process but a continuous and on-going process, spread over and beyond the entire span of academic session. The *Continuous* aspect of evaluation is related to the assessment of students in the beginning of instruction (placement evaluation) and assessment during the instructional process (formative evaluation) done informally using multiple techniques of evaluation. It is also carried out periodically i.e., the assessment of performance is done frequently at the end of unit/tem (summative evaluation). The ***Comprehensive*** component of CCE takes care of assessment of all round development of the learner's personality in the wider sense. It includes assessment in scholastic as well as co-scholastic aspects of learner's growth over a period of academic activity. Formative Evaluation takes place at the time of classroom transaction between the learners and teacher and learners as well. It gives the ample scope for the feedback to the learners as well as to the teachers to understand what they need to work on further. Summative Evaluation, on the other hand, makes judgment on how well the learners have achieved or acquired particular learning outcome.

As devised in the WBBSE handbook titled *Peacock Model: Training Module English (Second Language)* (2015), five indicators have been set to measure the all round development of the child. The indicators are set in such a way that the partition-line between curricular and co-

curricular areas gets blurred. Number of indicators is kept to five so that it remains user-friendly, both with the teachers and the students. There is a sense of plurality in the indicators as each of them reflects more than one quality of the pupils. The word PEACOCK is the acronymic term of the five indicators as mentioned below. A rubric for each of the indicators, regaining qualitative statements from teachers during the assessment for learning stage, is meant to identify learning gaps and provide counteractive interventions from teachers (see for detail the WBBSE Handbook (2015) mentioned above).

1. Participation (P)
   a. Participating actively and having the quality of leadership
   b. Participating actively through exchange/interaction
   c. Participating but not willing to interact
   d. Less-eager to participate
2. Questioning and Experimentation (E)
   a. Able to frame learning-friendly related questions and inquisitive
   b. Able to frame learning-friendly related questions but not inquisitive
   c. Does not ask frame learning-friendly related questions but inquisitive
   d. Ask questions but those are not helpful in learning-related inquisition
3. Interpretation and Application (A)
   a. Able to explain the related ideas with examples and apply
   b. Able to explain the related ideas with examples but unable to apply
   c. Able to partially explain the related ideas with examples but unable to apply
   d. Only cram the related idea
4. Empathy and Cooperation (CO)
   a. Empathetic towards both the known and unknown persons
   b. Actively empathetic towards the known but only sympathetic towards the unknown
   c. Sympathetic towards the known persons
   d. Expression of empathy is less
5. Aesthetic and Creative Expression of Knowledge (CK)
   a. Aesthetic and Creative (inside and outside the class)
   b. Aesthetic and Creative (inside the class)
   c. Eager for aesthetic and creative activities
   d. Less eager for aesthetic and creative activities

Moreover, the line between the curricular scholastic & co-scholastic areas has been blurred, ensuring the holistic development of the child. The PEACOCK Model takes case of the 'Learning to be' and 'Learning to live together' concept along with the ideas of 'Learning to know and 'Learning to do.' Therefore, the model caters to skills of learners in cognitive, psychomotor & international domains.

The educationists working in this field look at school as a unit free from tension with learner-friendly ambience and atmosphere and enjoying institutional democracy and envision CCE in a school based evaluation system that;

1. Covers all aspect of students' development
2. Considers evaluation is a continuous process , not an event
3. Spread over the entire span of the whole academic session
4. Regularity and rigorousness in assessment

5. Identification of gaps in learning.
6. Provision of remedial measures for less-advanced or slow learners
7. Constructive and insightful feedback to both the teachers and students for self evaluation
8. Improvement in teaching-learning with the help of feedback.

They mentioned that Formative Assessment, as the term suggests, is a tool or mechanism for monitoring the student progress in a non- threatening, supporting environment and

1. It involves and keeps record of the regular descriptive feedback
2. A chance for the students to reflect on and reassess their performance, take advice & improve upon it.
3. It ensures the involvement of the learners as an essential part of assessment.
4. Assessing self or peers. it can naturally improve students' performance tremendously
5. Raising the self-esteem and self-confidence of the learner and
6. Reducing and restructuring the workload of the teacher

Summative assessment sums up how much a student has learned. It is to be conducted at the end of a course of learning. It certifies the level of achievement and is not a valid measure of growth & development of a child. For Co-Scholastic areas it has been suggested that Skills such as *Thinking skills, Social skills, Emotional skill* of the learners need to be assessed. The teachers concerned will try to connect with text book, transform knowledge, expand the learning concept and help learners discover the relevance of the topic and find correlation, if any, between the text and outer world around them. Teacher would help them in concept formation and knowledge construction with the written and spoken activity, workshops, etc. S/he is expected be able and competent to evaluate whether the students are acquiring/imbibing the method of learning a concept–-the process of observing, questioning, hypothesizing, testing, finding evidence, analyzing, concluding etc as per CCE format as prescribed by Govt. of WB. It is to noted that there is no formal schedule or date of announcement of evaluation. The students would enjoy stress-free learning without any fear or trauma & ultimately share their own evaluation with the teacher.

ESLLT in West Bengal
Armed with the theoretical insights and clearly spelt-out teaching-learning model, English curriculum has been developed from the primary to the secondary level in the state of West Bengal. Expert Committee, School Education Department, Government of West Bengal has developed the English syllabus/curriculum and textbooks[2] following the principles discussed so far. The main aim of the newly developed textbooks is to 'inspire our learners' and to learn in lively and friendly atmosphere. These textbooks, as mentioned in the Preface to each **Butterfly** (title of the textbook from Class III to V), venture

> to link classroom experiences with life and nature. So we hope to supply
> our learners with enough materials to develop their sensitivity and provide
> a holistic viewpoint of life through the textbook. To make their learning
> joyful we invited famous artists to iluustrate the book.

The English textbooks produced for the primary, upper primary and Secondary levels address the particular themes such as Nature, adventure, faces of Bengal, our culture and heritage, the world of imagination, sharing our planet, etc. This clearly indicates that this series ventures to link the classroom knowledge and experience with nature and society at large and thereby to develop the

linguistic competence and communicative competence among the learners in an aesthetically and practically sound atmosphere with great pleasure, not with stress. All the activities given in the texts have been devised with a view to activate and arouse motivation to learn or acquire. The teaching materials have prepared and arranged in such a manner both linguistically and in content in tandem with the growth of the learners' psychological and social consciousness. It is clearly evident that keeping in mind the basic principles of Constructivism, ESLT textbooks have been developed. These honour our learners as active participants with prior knowledge in learning the second language. Texts materials along with pictures and the activities framed after each Unit of the each Lesson draw the attention of the learners, make them inquisitive, arouse their aesthetic sensibilities, prepare them and motivate them to get involved in studying each bit of those. These ensure learners active participation, constant feedback, remedial measures and application of knowledge through project works, solving the questions given in the activities as expected in constructivist approach of learning. Moreover, most of the activities (Let's do type) framed in the texts demand group or peer work and such group work and peer work help them build their interactive power both inside and outside the classroom.

In a way, the application of ICON Model in the classroom for the teaching-learning of ESL in West Bengal has been certainly ensured by the newly produced textbooks. The scope for the implementation of this model of teaching has been created by showing the teacher how to initiate the topic/item of learning, handle that and encourage him/her to undergo various stages: observation, knowledge-contextualization, collaboration, interpretation construction, multiple interpretation and manifestation in relation to consolidation of newly encountered knowledge or language item in the minds of the learners.

It is interesting to note that this method of teaching ESL provides the teacher with a better scope for using his/her own innovative techniques to utilize in the classroom, if s/he is interested in doing so. As the present method believes in CCE, it poses greater challenge to the classroom teacher. Teacher's work does not come to an end immediately after providing the learners with knowledge only, as already mentioned. The emphasis on Internal Formative Evaluation (IFE) coupled with Summative Evaluation ensures the continuity and comprehensiveness of evaluation and thereby follows the principles: **Assessment for Learning** and **Assessment of Learning**. The growth of the learners in terms of knowledge of English, its use and application to be manifest in describing or explaining (spoken or written) the idea/object/thing being or to be encountered by them can easily be traced both in terms of number and grade. In the backdrop of the present ESLT in West Bengal motivation for teaching with sincerity and commitment on the part of individual teachers is fundamental need of the day to make this much coveted and sincerity-cum-ambition driven venture on the part of the Government of West Bengal. Hence in order to properly (in the true sense of the term) handle the texts, teacher needs to be

1. Sound in the English language and updated in the use and usage of language in different fields of society
2. Well-conversant with the socio-academic backgrounds of the learners
3. Competent in using language (both spoken and written) in different socio-academic and socio-cultural situations
4. Active and energetic in interacting with the learners both inside and outside the classroom

5. Enthusiastic and spirited in inculcating the genuine inquisitiveness and motivation among in the learners for learning the language, other than his/her mother tongue
6. Ready to help the weak /less-advanced/slow learners with new activities to be framed by himself/herself keeping in conformity with the lesson being taught
7. Innovative in using materials, in addition to those in textbooks, from the real life situation and problem-centric experiment-based situations being encountered or to be encountered by the learners.
8. Innovative and creative in framing novel/unique activities for the better/advanced learners
9. Both sympathetic and empathetic in handling the learners belonging to different strata of life
10. Constantly active in keeping in mind that IFE should be considered as an integral part of teaching-learning process for enhancement of learning
11. Consciously involved in integrating the aims of ESLT, text materials, classroom teaching and evaluation techniques adopted
12. Close observant of the growth of the learners' ability in using English in different situation
13. Well-aware that assessment will be done on the basis of innovative approaches adopted by the learners and not necessarily on the accuracy of the end-results AND
14. Responsible in keeping records of the IFE and Summative evaluation for the purpose of sharing with the learners and their respective parents the GROWTH TRAJECTORY IN THE SUBJECT.

Thus in the present ESLT scenario in West Bengal, the teachers' role has undergone a great change for the overall development of the learners coming from different sections of the society and having different levels of abilities (both mental and physical). Teacher is no longer a knowledge resource' and s/he needs to be an active catalyst as well as manager in the noble venture of teaching-learning. S/he, clearly stated in section 'Teachers' Guidelines' of Class IX textbook titled *Bliss,* "is supposed to facilitate, support and encourage learners to construct their knowledge and develop their language competency" (107). In a word, teacher needs to be both resource and source of this dynamic, learner-friendly venture for the successful implementation of the Government's venture in education which puts emphasis on knowledge application and assimilation to be manifest in learners' use of English as a Second Language in the real sense.

Notes
[1] Gardner (1993) talks about the following **eight** intelligences. Armstrong (1994) reclassified Gardner's more theoretical explanations of intelligences as "smartness", so as to make it more concrete and comprehensible for the layman:

1. **Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence** ("word smart") involves the capacity to acquire verbal skills and to learn and use languages with ease and felicity. This intelligence includes the ability to learn, remember and use words in a large number of syntactical and structural patterns. People with linguistic intelligence become good writers and speakers.
2. **Logical Mathematical Ability** ("number/reasoning smart") is the ability to analyze problems logically and scientifically. This intelligence provides capacity to approach problems empirically and rationally and to discover general patterns, laws and structures.

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3. **Visual/Spatial ability** ("picture smart") is the ability to orient oneself to environment, to create mental images and sensitivity to shape, size and colour.

4. **Musical Intelligence** ("music smart") includes the ability to perform, produce and appreciate musical rhythms, tone, pitches.

5. **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence** ("body smart") refers to the ability to learn through bodily movements and physical activities. This intelligence involves the capacity to learn through doing something physically rather than through reading or hearing about it.

6. **Interpersonal Intelligence** ("people smart") is the capacity to know and judge moods, intentions, motivations and desires of others and to respond effectively to others. People with this intelligence learn best with interaction and discussion with others.

7. **Intrapersonal Intelligence** ("self smart") is the capacity to know oneself and to peep into ones own feelings, motivations, ideals and thoughts. This capacity involves introspection and self-reflections.

8. **Naturalistic Intelligence** involves the ability to recognize, classify and relating information about plants, animals and different species of the natural world.

Moreover, the book edited by Bardhan and Mukherjee (2011) is an attempt to study the theory of MI in the Indian context.

[2] The Textbooks from Class III to Class X prepared the WBBPE, WBBSE with the assistance of Sarva Siksha Abhijan and Rastrya Madhyamik Siksha Abhijan have been consulted for writing the paper.

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