

Enhancing Poetry Instruction Through Constructivism and Principled Eclecticism

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the application of an innovative pedagogical method by testing the effectiveness of the contemporary teaching approach known as 'Principled Eclecticism,' combined with the language learning theory of 'Constructivism' in teaching poetry to undergraduate students. The eclectic methods employed include Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the Silent Way, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). An empirical study was conducted with a sample of 52 university students enrolled in the undergraduate course titled 'Literature and Life: IV.' The research methodology involved developing a lesson plan that aligns with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 while integrating constructivist principles and the application of principled eclecticism. In conclusion, the study highlights a promising pathway for enhancing poetry instruction through the innovative integration of principled eclecticism and constructivism.

Keywords: Innovation, Pedagogy, Language Teaching, Principled Eclecticism, Constructivism

INTRODUCTION

A. Constructivism

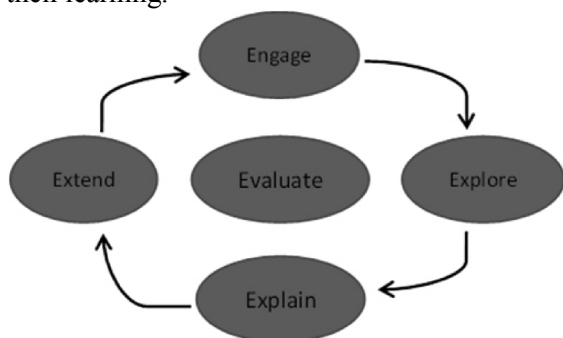
The constructivist approach, often referred to as the theory of constructivism, posits that learning is a process through which individuals construct their own representations of the world. This process is informed by their understanding of concepts as well as their pre-existing knowledge. Each learner engages in the individual construction of meaning as they navigate the learning process. Within the framework of constructivism, the essence of learning is the active construction of meaning; alternative forms of learning are not recognized within this paradigm. This quest for meaning is intrinsically linked to the notion of cognitive development, which examines how cognitive processes and knowledge evolve over time.

The constructivist approach is principally

attributed to the foundational contributions of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey. Jean Piaget, the initial proponent of this framework, referred to his work as 'Cognitive Constructivism.' He posited that cognitive development arises from the active engagement of the mind, facilitated through observation and experimentation. Piaget focused on two critical elements: age and stage, aiming to delineate what children are capable of understanding at various developmental points. Lev Vygotsky built upon Piaget's framework by contextualizing learning within a social paradigm. He contended that learning is fundamentally a social process, involving the interaction of learners with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, children acquire knowledge through active participation in their social environments. Vygotsky is particularly noted for introducing the term 'active learners' to characterize this participatory approach. John

Dewey further advanced constructivist theory by applying the concept of the ‘active learner’ specifically to language acquisition. He argued that learners must engage actively with their surroundings to meaningfully contribute to their learning processes. For Dewey, learning transcended mere passive reception of existing knowledge; it was the outcome of dynamic interaction with the world. The constructivist approach is characterized by four key principles: it is learner-centric, it recognizes learning as a mutual process for both instructors and learners, it is fundamentally a learning theory rather than a teaching theory, and it serves as an instructional strategy.

The instructional model known as the ‘Learning Cycle’ or the ‘5 Es’ outlines a structured approach to learning that begins with students engaging with their prior knowledge. This initial phase is followed by the exploration of new information, which is facilitated by the instructor. In the subsequent phase, ‘explain,’ students synthesize their understanding by integrating their prior experiences with the new knowledge acquired. The ‘extend’ phase allows students to deepen their comprehension of the material, providing them with the opportunity to process and solidify their learning.



Throughout each stage of the cycle, student evaluation is conducted. This evaluation can be external, administered by the instructor, or internal, wherein students self-assess their competencies.

The application of the constructivist method in classroom settings has proven effective, particularly for larger groups of students (Ugwuozor, 2020). In this model, the instructor assumes the role of a facilitator, presenting problems that resonate with students’ experiences. The learning process is organized around essential concepts, with students’ perspectives serving as insights into their cognitive reasoning. It is imperative for educators to adapt their teaching strategies to address students’ preconceptions and developmental stages. Assessment of student learning should occur within the context of the instructional process, ensuring that students’ interests are prioritized. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that learning is inherently interactive and builds upon existing knowledge. Collaborative group work is encouraged, emphasizing that knowledge is dynamic and evolves alongside students’ experiences.

B. Principled Eclecticism

Eclecticism is an instructional approach that employs a combination of diverse language learning activities, each characterized by distinct features and driven by various underlying principles. Diane Larsen-Freeman and J. D. Mellow refer to this as principled eclecticism, which represents a coherent and desirable pluralistic strategy for language teaching. This method harnesses multiple teaching approaches tailored to address the diverse needs present within a classroom environment. Principled eclecticism integrates the unique advantages of various methodologies, adapting them into a cohesive approach that enhances the teaching experience. While individual methods may possess certain strengths, they also carry inherent limitations that can impact the effectiveness of instruction, particularly in heterogeneous classroom settings. By adopting principled

eclecticism, educators are empowered to select and implement strategies that align with the specific objectives of the lesson and the diverse learning profiles of their students. Recognizing that each learner possesses distinct styles, needs, and interests underscores the inadequacy of a one-size-fits-all methodology. Educators must be open to experimenting with new strategies and must adapt their instructional methods based on student feedback. The incorporation of multiple teaching techniques fosters student engagement and motivation, simultaneously enhancing teacher satisfaction by allowing for a variety of innovative and compelling instructional activities.

In this study, the principled eclectic approach encompasses the following methods:

- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
- The Direct Method
- Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)
- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
- The Silent Way

Each of these methods was selected for its learner-centric emphasis, aligning with constructivist principles. They promote active student participation and provide opportunities for learners to make mistakes and learn from them, thereby emphasizing learner autonomy. Additionally, the content is delivered in the target language, thereby facilitating the development of English language proficiency. Each method also incorporates elements of communicative competence, further enriching the learning experience.

In light of the growing necessity to investigate the disparity between eclecticism and principled eclecticism, particularly in relation to the integration of constructivist principles into the pedagogy of English as a Second Language

(ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this paper addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the advantages of principled eclecticism in teaching poetry?

RQ 2: How effective is a pedagogical framework that integrates constructivist learning theory with the principled eclectic approach?

Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To develop a lesson plan that aligns with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, grounded in a framework that merges constructivist principles with principled eclecticism.
2. To examine the necessity of eclectic methods in the teaching of poetry.
3. To identify the most effective instructional strategies for heterogeneous classroom settings.

Literature Review

Looking at the concentration on the evaluation of teaching frameworks that have connections to the teaching of poetry with reference to the ELT paradigm, there has been growing interest in this area of study in the recent past. That this work is focused on how and to what extent constructivism and, to a lesser extent, principled eclecticism can be used in poetry instruction may be indicative of a gradual readiness to make educational theories more active and involving learning environments. The further literature review combines all the main works and theoretical sources that touch upon the perspectives and concerns of these approaches. Regarding the matter, this paper selects the constructivist approach as a possible means of

enhancing the learning achievement of students in poetry.

The concept of the constructivist learning model originates from such educational theorists as Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. The approach emphasizes the learners' active construction of meaning and knowledge regarding experiences and interactivity. In particular, constructivism has been investigated as the approach that positively affects the teaching of poetry and increases the students' interest and learning.

An empirical work by Felix O. Ugwuozor (2020) provides an experimental evaluation of the reconstruction of constructivism in poetry learning and teaching among secondary schools' students in Nigeria. Based on the conclusions of the presented study, one can conclude that the applicability of the constructivist approach is beneficial in terms of raising outputs of learning poetry among students. Shedding more light on Ugwuozor's study, it is possible to generalize that the students who have been given an opportunity to learn poetry using the constructivist approach demonstrate progress in the sphere of critical thinking and appreciation of the knowledge acquired. This is so because the implemented teaching method falls within the teaching associated with constructivism. This includes student participation and interaction such as group discussions, peer teaching, and several forms of creative activity.

However, Ugwuozor in his study also employs some limitations that are within the constructivist research paradigm. All in all, as a form of positive subtle strategy, the approach is beneficial for the learners' engagement; however, its effectiveness directly depends on the learners' and the teachers' interaction as well as access to the resources. The study thus points to the need to improve architectural design, which in this case is the

space layout, to allow often desirable student-teacher or student-faculty interactions. Further, it also prompts the importance of teaching-learning and the use of other relevant resources, which can help spark the interest of the students in poetry. In addition, from the study, it is realized that the effectiveness of the constructivist approach does not differ based on the gender of the students, and thus the generalization of the results from this study to genders.

Another addition to the discourse on the constructivist approaches of poetry education is Palak Shah's (2021) thesis, where the author outlines a constructivist-based learning program aimed at introducing nine-year-old learners to English poetry. In connection with the findings in the study by Shah, the nature of the instructional processes concerning constructivist approach overall and poetry instruction in particular is discussed. The program developed by Shah is based on the constructivism conception, which is based on learners' activity as the main aspect of the process related to knowledge search, criticism, and collaboration.

Considering the learning environment, the major focus, according to Shah, should be on students' independence and their ability to build meanings in works of poetry on their own. Here it is possible to develop a definite ability to think critically and interpret, not only concerning the meaning of the poems. In the given thesis, constructivism is documented to have efficiency in raising the interest of the students and learning. However, the application of this approach requires special attention to the teacher and his ability to set up the proper atmosphere for the learning process.

In language teaching, there is another view that encompasses the elements of the aforesaid approaches and is referred to as principled eclecticism. Principled Eclecticism supports the

utilization of multiple teaching strategies and methods where a number of those could be adopted due to their appropriateness in realizing the pedagogic objectives and goals as well as the learner's requirements. Among the recently published articles and studies, there exist one of the most viewed and used—it is the article by Sultan H. Alharbi (2022) Principles Eclecticism, where the author examines whether this approach is efficient with reference to the teaching of the second or foreign language ESL/EFL writing to undergraduates.

Given this, Alharbi (2022) was in a position to support the notion that teaching language entails shifting attention from what is in the content as well as the notion that the approaches used in education should correspond with the characteristics of learners. Therefore, the study advocates for the heterogeneous way of teaching and learning the language, as different methodologies are employed in a systematic manner with the aim of improving learning. Thus, this paper has provided a basic framework on which future discussion of the application of Principled Eclecticism would be built and has also showcased that the approach is indeed flexible when implemented. In this sense, Principled Eclecticism is advantageous to teachers; hence, such teachers can have a lot of flexibility when it comes to choosing the section or the adoption of several teaching techniques. The review of literature also shows that this approach is useful to explain the various factors of second language acquisition that cannot be explained easily using the traditional approach.

The converging roles of constructivism and Principled eclecticism in the teaching of poetry bring an emerging area of research that is relatively scant. In spite of the distinct merit found in these approaches, there has been no major

literature identified that specifically dwells on their combined application within the context of teaching poetry. If this be the case, then it may well be assumed from a literary point of view that the integrating role of constructivism and principled eclecticism in teaching poetry is a new field to engage in.

The work of Sarifa N. (2021) is an initial probe into the teaching of poetry using Principled eclecticism and various methods that can be effectively used within this framework. Sarifa N. maintains that methods to teach poetry should be based not only on effectiveness in engaging students but also on enabling their deeper understanding and appreciation. It is in this that the thoughtful application of Principled eclecticism allows it to accommodate the diversified needs of students and the complicated nature of poetry as a subject. However, due to the apparent lack of such studies combining constructivism and Principled eclecticism in teaching poetry, further research is called for.

In this respect, the potential synergy between the student-centered, interactive nature of constructivism and the flexible, adaptive characteristics of Principled eclecticism could avail new means of innovation in poetry education. Such an integration would thus make good for the difficulties identified in literature that existed before—one of inadequate student-teacher interaction and availability of resources within the constructivist setting—while at the same time drawing strength from the pluralistic and adaptive strategies fostered by Principled Eclecticism.

The challenges and opportunities of teaching poetry are unique to the Indian educational system, and recommendations are found in some leading textbooks. General good practices regarding teaching English in India, with a special

focus on the cultural and educational context of the subcontinent, are reflected, among others, in works by B. Salim vd., V. Saraswathi, H.S. Dimple, and P.P. Khatri, published in 2020, 2019, and 2021, respectively. Regarding this, Salim's "A Companion to Teaching of English" provides a philosophical account of pedagogical approaches that are successfully implicated in the Indian classroom situation. In this perspective, it greatly puts forward an appeal for contextualization of teaching methods against the culturally and linguistically diverse backdrop of learners in India.

Along these lines, Saraswathi's "English Language Teaching: Principles and Practice" makes a comprehensive presentation of the principles of language teaching, with practical guidance about how these can be put into practice within the Indian context. This means developing an inclusive learning environment responsive to the different needs of students hailing from various regions of India. Dimple and Khatri's "Teaching of English" adds to this very discourse by highlighting problems unique to the teachers in India while teaching English poetry. The book presents a balanced approach, some traditional methodology, and some modern one with regard to the eventuality of different levels of English proficiency among Indian students. Therefore, authors insist that the teaching strategy must be manipulable and adjustable toward linguistic diversity amongst students.

Methodology

This study aimed to investigate the necessity for an innovative pedagogical approach tailored to the effective teaching of poetry. Conducted with a sample of 52 undergraduate students enrolled in the course titled 'Literature and Life: IV,' the research encompassed a heterogeneous class exhibiting four distinct forms of diversity. The

participants were categorized according to their cultural backgrounds, language proficiency levels, academic disciplines (including science, humanities, and commerce), and varying degrees of learning capabilities. The primary focus of the study was to develop a lesson plan designed to optimize effective learning outcomes within this diverse classroom context. There also had to be equal focus on the English language and the content that was being dealt with in the class. Overall, the lesson plan had to align with the NEP 2020 norms. Thus, the first step was to choose the competent approach and method for the preparation of the lesson plan that would be able to cater to the size of the class. Thus, after deliberation, the chosen approach was the constructivist approach, and the chosen method was principled eclecticism. Within principled eclecticism, the chosen methods were Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Direct Method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and the Silent Way. These methods were chosen as they all favored learner-centrism and focused on student participation within the class, thus aligning with constructivism, which is also a learner-centric approach. After the method and approach were chosen, material was collected for the literature review and the teaching of the poem "Divided Destinies" by Rudyard Kipling. After this, the lesson plan was prepared following the template based on the standardized NEP 2020 lesson plan. Thus, using the lesson plan template, the learning outcomes, the students acquired skill set, sustainable development goals, types of learners based on the multiple intelligence theory, the pedagogy, assignments, assessments, and subject enrichment through activities were made clear. The teaching of the sample class of 52 students was conducted in 2 sessions. Post-teaching, an evaluation of student assignments was done to

understand the level of understanding of the students. After this, feedback forms were distributed amongst the students, and an analysis of the outcome was studied to form the conclusion of the study. The feedback forms that were provided to the students had five opinion-based questions that had to be answered based on the 5-point Likert scale and one subjective question. The questions included on the feedback form were:

Q1. Was the lesson taught effectively while covering the relevant aspects relating to the topic?

Q2. Were the activities given in the class effective in increasing the understanding of the topic?

Q3. Was the class student-centric? Were the students given enough opportunity to provide their input?

Q4. Were the learning objectives/goals clearly stated at the start of the lesson?

Q5. Did the homework assignment allow the students to use their creative liberties?


Q6. Any feedback/suggestions?

Analysis

LESSON PLAN

Name of Institution	Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning
Name of Teacher	Meghana Srinivas Mandalappu
Subject	Additional English (AECC-101)
Class	I UG
Name of Chapter	“Divided Destinies” - Rudyard Kipling
Number of Periods[Write the number of periods as per the need.]	2
Learning Outcomes	The students will be able to: (HOTS)· <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable students to explore the poem for its themes, literary devices, and socio-cultural commentary. • To enable students to analyze and interpret Rudyard Kipling’s poem “Divided Destinies”· • To allow students to express their understanding of the poem through discussion and creative activities.
Skill Set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Creativity • Critical Thinking

<p>SDG Goal(s)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Education • Reduced Inequalities • Sustainable Cities and Communities • Responsible Consumption and Production • Life on Land • Partnerships for the Goals
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<p>Type of Learners: Multiple Intelligences</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Education • Body Smart [Kinesthetic] • People Smart [Interpersonal] • Word Smart [Linguistic] • Logic Smart [Logical] • Nature Smart [Environmentalists] • Self-Smart [Intrapersonal] • Picture Smart [Visual] • Music Smart [Auditory]
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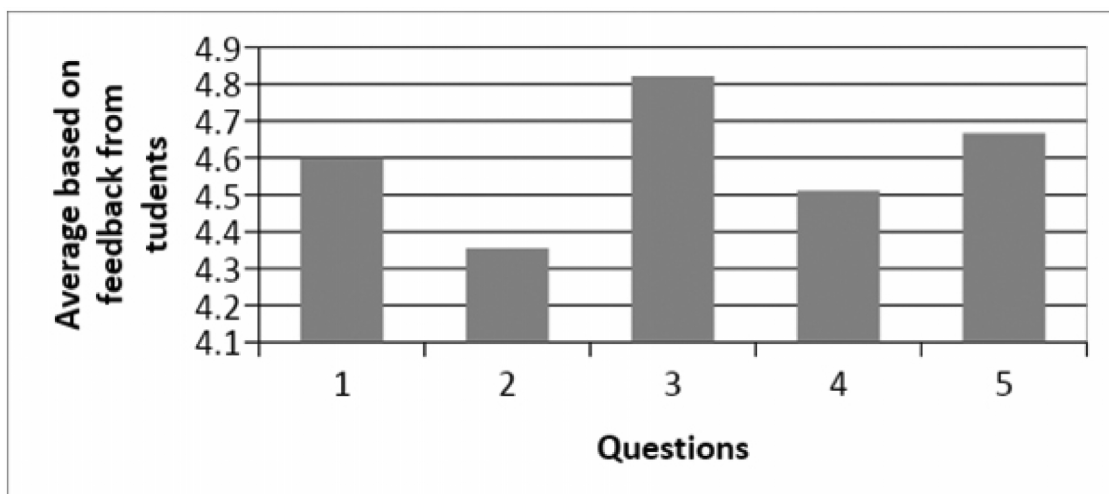
<p>Flow of Chapter [Day wise] / Pedagogy</p>	<p>Day 1: Introduction: Brief discussion about Rudyard Kipling as a well-known author 1. Introduction of “Divided Destinies” Reading and Analysis of Poem: 1. Reading out of the poem in class by either teacher or students reading stanza-wise 2. Ask students to underline phrases that stand out to them 3. Class discussion on the poem- initial impressions, reactions and interpretations, and what the students understand of the poem’s overall lesson. Group Activity: 1. Division of class into a few groups with one stanza of poem assigned to each group</p>
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	<p>2. Discussion of the monkey’s perspective of human life.</p> <p>3. Each group presents their analysis to the class</p> <p>Day 2 Recap:</p> <p>1. Understanding students’ understanding of the poem from the previous class by asking them to recollect the session</p> <p>2. Discussion of homework assignment samples</p> <p>Discussion of Poem:</p> <p>1. Exploring various themes present in the poem</p> <p>2. Listing out the figures of speech present in the poem</p> <p>3. Placing the poem in the sociocultural context of the age</p>
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	<p>Wrap-up:</p> <p>1. Summary of key points, the importance of understanding different perspectives, and the power of literature to provoke thought.</p>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Learners • HOTS • Paragraph on the monkey’s perspective, and what the monkey represents • Pen a poem on the topic perspective
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous internal examination was conducted with questions based on the poem and the author
Subject Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion based on the perspective of the monkey in the poem

For the homework assignment, the students were asked to write a paragraph on their understanding of what the monkey in the poem represents and whether or not they agree with the perspective of the monkey. They were also asked to pen a stanza on ‘perspective’. On evaluating their assignments, it was clear that the students had understood the way the poem had been taught in class, based on the teaching input and the discussions amongst the students. The submitted assignments from the students showed the students’ comprehensive understanding of the poem and the various concepts that were discussed in class about the poem. Students were also able to pen poems by themselves, thus adding creativity to their skill set. The results of the examination also showed satisfactory results as ninety percent of the students had scored full

marks on the questions that were related to “Divided Destinies”. Feedback received from the students showed that the students had enjoyed the learner-centric attitude of the classroom and it had piqued their interest. Some learners had pointed out that the class was well structured, and the objectives had been set well. Some students had pointed out that the interactive sessions had helped them gain better perspective for them to gain knowledge. Students were satisfied with the overall proceedings of the classes and also mentioned that they were able to easily comprehend the lesson through the group activities, as peer learning gave them more clarity. Overall, learners enjoyed the classroom sessions. The following chart shows an analysis of the average student feedback received.



Findings

Considering the factors related to effective teaching, it is evident that principled eclecticism emerges as a successful instructional method. Specifically, within the context of this study, it can be concluded that the integration of constructivism as an overarching approach, alongside principled eclecticism as a

methodological framework, proves beneficial for teaching poetry. Notable advantages of principled eclecticism in this domain include:

1. The students are taught poetry in a variety of ways and are hence able to decipher which learning method resonates most with them. This is because, in principled eclecticism, the teacher uses a variety of teaching methods

and activities that help the students stay engaged and motivated (Scrivener, 2017).

2. Principled eclecticism leads to improved student outcomes as the teachers can tailor their instructions to the student's individual needs. Depending on the reading or writing levels of the students, the teacher provides the students with different levels of support for their work, thus being able to cater to a larger group of students.
3. The teacher has enough flexibility to shift between methods based on the output they receive from the students. If a teacher finds a particular method ineffective in teaching poetry to a particular set of students, the teacher has the freedom to use another method that they deem better.
4. The use of a variety of assignment methods to measure the learning of the students allows the teacher to get a broader picture of the students' learning and, hence, allows the teacher to assess the students based on their learning styles. This variety in assessment forms also aligns with the NEP 2020 requirement for the student to be able to pick up a specific skill set from a particular lesson that is taught.
5. Principled eclecticism allows for a more inclusive and open-minded learning environment for the students. By using a selection of teaching methods and activities, the teacher can provide every student in the class with the opportunity to learn and appreciate poetry, regardless of their background or abilities.
6. As a method of teaching poetry, principled eclecticism fosters a love for learning in the students. This is seen because the students

are exposed to a variety of teaching methods and activities and are therefore more likely to find something that they are more interested in or more excited about. This facilitates a curiosity and thirst for more knowledge within the classroom, thus making the classroom more interactive (Alharbi, 2017).

Upon comparing the objectives of the lesson plan with the learners' outcomes, it became evident that students were able to comprehend the material and acquire new skills. By analyzing the poem through the socio-cultural lens of the Victorian era, the lesson plan effectively integrated sustainable development goals pertinent to the poem, aligning with the requirements outlined in the NEP 2020 framework. Furthermore, this approach fostered the development of critical thinking skills, encouraged creative expression, and facilitated peer communication, thereby enhancing the students' overall communicative competence.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Through this empirical study conducted on the students of the first-year undergraduate additional English course, it can be concluded that the combination of principled eclecticism as a method and constructivism as an approach contributes to a successful teaching-learning experience. The student experience is enhanced by the interaction and communication facilitated between the students and between the student and teacher (Linse and Nunan, 2005). Both the approach and the method are also seen as successful methods for teaching larger groups of students and enhancing the understanding of the concept (Sarifa, 2020). Heterogeneous classrooms benefit from this combination of constructivism and principled eclecticism, as the teaching caters to the diverse backgrounds of the students who are

present within the classroom.

By employing this combination of method and approach, paired with the principles by which the teacher chooses the different methods that form a part of the method of principled eclecticism, poetry can be taught to students effectively, allowing students to create their representations of meaning as they attempt to interpret the poem by themselves based on the information that is provided to them in the classroom by the teacher. Thus, for heterogeneous classrooms, having a large number, one recommended method would be principled eclecticism, as it caters to a larger number of students from a variety of backgrounds, not limited to cultural and linguistic differences alone, but even catering to levels of learning and language and the communicative competence of the students.

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