The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment

V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
==

Abstract

English teacher has more responsibilities than any other teacher because of the required language skills to carry forward instruction and learning in other subjects. It has become normal now for an English teacher to be aware of the various methods and theories of English Language Teaching. By manipulating different methods and approaches in a class room, the teacher can make the learners to develop the language skills easily and comfortably. This paper examines the role of an English teacher, the role of a learner and various traditional/current methods in ELT. It also discusses the Learning, Teaching and Assessment job of an English teacher with special reference to CLT.

The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   278

English teacher has more responsibilities than any other teacher because learning all other subjects depends on the competence student's gain in English. For example, if a student does not have English skills, he or she will fall behind in their performance in computer science also.

In addition to teaching, teachers play several roles in the life of their students. They function as models to their students. The degree of control which the teacher has over the language decides how learning takes place. Teacher is responsible for determining the content of what is taught.

Methods typically depend critically on teacher roles and their realizations. In the classical Audio-lingual Method, the teacher is regarded as the primary source of language and of language learning. The role of teachers in Silent Way Method, for example, depends on thorough training and methodological initiation.

In **Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching,** Jack C Richards and Theodore S. Rodger state

> "Learner roles in an instructional system are closely linked to the teacher's status and function. Teacher roles are similarly related ultimately both to assumption about language learning at the level of approach. Some methods are totally dependent on the teacher as a source of knowledge and deactivations; others see the teacher's role has catalyst consultant guide model for learning; still others try to "teacher – proof" the instructional system by limiting teacher initiative and by building instructional content and direction into texts and lesson plan. Teacher and learner roles define the type of interaction characteristic of class room in which a particular method is used." (28)

Thus, the Language teacher has a significant role in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment. He or she is an important person in the class room and responsible for fulfilling the aim of the curriculum. At the same time the Language Learners also have the same importance in the class. It is better to keep in mind that all works such as

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   279

curriculum, method, approach and procedure and assessment are for the development of learners' communicative competence. So, the language teacher's role must be looked also from learners' point of view.

This paper examines the role of English language teachers, the role of a learner and the role of various traditional and current methods in ELT.

Method in Language Teaching

A method includes three components: (Aslam.M, 2003:35)

- Approach
- Design
- Procedure

Approach

Approach deals with learning theory. There are three major learning theories related to language learning. Learning theory is the base to create a method. Through learning theory only, the roles of the leaner and teacher are framed. (Aslam.M, 2003:35)

Behaviorism, Congnitivism, Constructivism

http://ci484-learning-technologies.wikispaces.com/

Table no: 1

Questions	Behaviorism	Congnitivism	Constructivism
How does learning occur?	Black box - observable behavior main focus	Structured, computational	Social, meaning created by each learner (personal)
What factors influence learning?	Nature of reward, punishment, stimuli	Existing schema, previous experiences	Engagement, participation,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   280

			social, cultural
What is the role of memory?	Memory is hardwiring of repeated experiences - where reward and punishment are most influential	Encoding, storage, retrieval	Prior knowledge remixed to current context
How does transfer occur?	Stimulus, response	Duplicating knowledge constructs of "knower"	Socialization
What types of learning are best explained by this theory?	Task-based learning	Reasoning, clear objectives, problem solving	Social, vague ("ill defined")

Design

Design deals with (Aslam.M, 2003:35)

- The general and specific features of the course
- A syllabus model
- Type of learning and teaching tasks
- Role of learners and teachers
- Role of teaching materials

Various Methods in ELT

1. Grammar Translation Method

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   281

There are many Language Teaching Methods and Approaches in ELT. But the Grammar-Translation Method is the oldest. The grammar-translation method of foreign language teaching was first known as the Prussian method. It is one of the most traditional methods that were originally used to teach 'dead' languages such as Latin and Greek. It was widespread in Europe and many other countries from 1840s till 1940s. The main exponents of grammar translation method were Seidenstucker, Ploetz, Ollendorf and Meidinger (German scholars). (Aslam.M, 2003:38)

Role of the Teacher

The teacher plays central role in this method. He/she controls everything in the classroom whether it is content based or task based. The teacher corrects the errors made by the learners in the classroom itself. So the learners completely depend on the teacher.

Role of the Learner

Learners are passive holder for the information given to them. A student in this method is viewed as a processor and passive holder for the information given to him. This means that he or she does not influence the process of learning or even other students. In fact learners are totally dependent on the teacher.

2. Direct Method

The direct method came from the need to teach foreign languages to facilitate trade, commerce, travel, etc., between the European countries. The language teachers found grammar translation method insufficient and ineffective in developing communicative competence. The principal advocates of direct method were Pendergaston (1816-1866) and Sauveur (1826-1907).

Role of the Teacher

The language teachers must make tremendous effort since they are not allowed to speak in their native language. They are able to find meaningful teaching materials to study along with the texts in the book. They have to make the learners

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   282

understand the general rules and structures of the target language studied in classroom. That is the inductive spirit of the Direct Method. The teacher should not spend much time in explaining grammar, setting up complicated exercises and written examinations. (Richards & Rogers, 2001: 12, 13)

Role of the Learner

The learners have to participate in the classroom activities and to be good listeners first. They warm up taking part in dialogues with which the lessons start. According to Gatenby (http://kingdavid.blogcu.com/an-evaluation-on-direct-method/5067250), the students associate an object, etc. with a combination of sounds, not with a picture of a written word in his brain. A very large proportion of the names learnt come to be known in association with some action. Students look a thing, point it, push it, run to it, and play with it. In the realization of their role the learners can make many mistakes and they are constantly corrected by other learners and teacher. The students are filled with various desires which they express in speech realize their role.

3. Structural – Situation Approach/Method

Situational language teaching is a term not commonly used today, but it is an approach developed by British applied linguists in the 1930s to the 1960s, and which had an impact on language courses which survive and some are still being used today.

In Europe the two significant British applied linguists – Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby both of whom were familiar with the works of Daniel Jones, the famous phonetician from University of London and a Swiss linguist Otto Jespersen, attempted to develop a more scientific approach to teaching of English than was found in the direct method so that language items could be presented systematically in the class room. The main focus of this approach was on vocabulary control which language teaching specialists like A. S. Palmer believed must be at the core of any foreign language program. (Aslam, M, 2003: 48)

The structural situational approach aims to develop oral proficiency in the language through carefully selected vocabulary which forms a general service list for the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   283

learner to use in everyday communication. Language teaching therefore begins with the spoken English. Materials are presented orally and practiced in situations.

This approach shares with the Direct Method the fact that they are both oral approaches except that the Situational Method is more systematic in terms of the principles and procedures that could be applied and the selection of the content of a language course. The focus of this approach was mainly on vocabulary and grammar control, and there was a tendency in the 1920s towards developing systematic principles of selection, gradation and presentation of materials to language learners. In the sixties, there was an emphasis on the principle of introducing and practicing new language points situationally, and "it was then that the term situational was used increasingly to refer to the Oral Approach" (Richards & Rogers, 2001: 34).

Role of the Teacher

The teachers function is threefold. In the presentation stage of the lesson, the teacher serves as a model, setting up situations in which the need for the target structure is created and then modeling the new structure for students to repeat.

Then the teacher "becomes more like the skillful conductor of an orchestra, drawing the music out of the performers" (Byrne 1976:2). The teacher is required to be a skillful manipulator, using questions, commands, and other cues to elicit correct sentences from the learners. Lessons are hence teacher-directed, and the teacher sets the pace.

Role of the Learner

In the initial points of learning the learner has need of simply to listen and repeat what the teacher says and respond to the question and commands. The learner has no power over the content of learning and is often regarded as likely to succumb to undesirable behavior unless skillfully manipulated by the teacher. For Example, the learner might lapse in to faulty grammar or pronunciation. (Richards & Rogers, 2001: 43).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   284

4. Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was born in the late 1960s. Before that Situational Language Teaching was the major British approach to teaching English as a foreign language. The language was taught by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities in Situational Language Teaching. But just as the linguistic theory underlying Audiolingualism was rejected in the United States in the mid-1960s, British applied linguistics began to call into question the theoretical assumptions underlying Situational Language Teaching.

Communicative method or methodology, not like other methods, discussed before, is interpreted differently by different experts. There is a lot of arguments, among the teachers, about what exactly is meant by communicative method. The name emerged out of diverse principles of language and language learning which form a basis for a wide variety of classroom procedures and techniques. These principles are commonly argued under one umbrella term, communicative language teaching or CLT (terms like notional – functional and functional approach are also used to denote the approach) (Aslam, M, 2003: 54)

The origins of CLT can be traced to the dissatisfaction that teachers felt with the earlier approaches to language teaching and learning. Noam Chomsky had leveled at structural linguistic theory in his book **Syntactic Structures** (1957).

Chomsky had demonstrated that the current standard structural theories of language were incapable of accounting for the fundamental characteristic of language – the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences. British applied linguists emphasized another fundamental dimension of language that was the functional and communicative proficiency rather than mere mastery of structures. Scholars who advocated this view of language, such as Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson, drew on the work of British functional linguists (e.g., John Firth, M.A.K Halliday), American work in sociolinguistics (e.g.,Dell Hymes, John Gumperz, and William Lobov), as well as work in philosophy (e.g., John Austin and John Searle).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   285

Another important development that contributed to the emergences of CLT was the fast changing educational scenario in Europe. European nations cad come under one European common market and with the increasing interdependence of these nations there emerged the need to teach adults the major European languages, thus, laying the foundation for a different approach to foreign language teaching.

The Council of Europe at Strasbourg, a regional organization for cultural and educational cooperation, constituted a committee of experts whose job was to explore the possibility of developing a course that would satisfy the linguistic needs of the adults in member countries of European common market. The committee studied the needs of European learners and proposed language codes in 1972 which was based on unit credit system, in which tasks are broken into units are portions each of which corresponds to the needs of the learner the course to completely different perspective of language learning. Here the focus was on what the learner need to understand and express through the target language and not on the accumulation of grammatical items. (Aslam.M, 2003:55)

The political, economical, social, cultural and educational development in Europe gave birth to The Common European framework. **The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment**, abbreviated as CEFR, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries (for example, Canada and Japan). It was put together by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" between 1989 and 1996. Its main aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching and assessing which applies to all languages in Europe. (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf)

In November 2001 a European Union Council Resolution recommended using the CEFR to set up systems of validation of language ability. The six reference levels (see below) are becoming widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. (http://www.britishcouncil.org/italy-english-naples-cef-levels.htm)

CLT Objective

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   286

Communicative language teaching does not look at the language as a set of linguistic items for the learner to store them in his/her memory. It aims to develop communicative competence. Learners are encouraged to use the language. The focus is laid on meanings and functions not on forms of the language. It is the learners and his learning that is more important. Language should be acquired instead of learned consciously. The result is a class room where the teacher facilitates the language acquisition. Teacher is a facilitator in this method. All the four language skills Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing receive equal treatment.

(http://www.cambridge.org/other_files/downloads/esl/booklets/Richards-Communicative-Language.pdf)

Principles of CLT

Language as it is used in real context should be introduced. Students should be able to figure out the speaker's or writer's intentions. The target language is the vehicle for classroom communication. One function may have many different linguistic forms. Opportunities should be given to students to express their ideas and opinions. Errors are seen as the natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Fluency is more important than accuracy. Creating situations to promote communication is one of the teacher's responsibilities. The social context of the communicative events is essential in giving meaning to the utterances. The teacher acts as a facilitator of students' learning, a manager of classroom activity, or a co-communicator. When communicating, a speaker has a choice about what to say and how to say it. Students should be given opportunities to develop strategies for interpreting language as it is actually seen by native speakers. Language is used in a great deal through communicative activities such as games, role-play, problem solving. Communicative activities have three features: information gap, choice and feedback.

Role of the Teacher

Teacher in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less and listening more–becoming active facilitators of their students' learning (Larsen-Freeman,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   287

1986). The teacher sets up the exercise, but because the students' performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, sometimes acting as referee or monitor. A classroom during a communicative activity is far from quiet, however. The students do most of the speaking, and frequently the scene of a classroom during a communicative exercise is active, with students leaving their seats to complete a task. Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language Learners are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writings.

Role of the Learner

The emphasis in Communicative Language Teaching is on the processes of Communication, rather than mastery of the language form, leads to different roles for learner from those found in more traditional second language classrooms. Breen and Candlin describe the learner's role within CLT in the following terms:

"The role of learners as negotiator-between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning-emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes. The implication for the learner is that he should contribute as much as he gains, and thereby learn in an interdependent way." (1980:110)

There are many methods and approaches in ELT. Every method and approach has its own description of teacher role. In the present scenario, it is important to know how to use yet another important learning theory 'Constructivism'.

Constructivism

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment 288

Constructivism defines that learning is an active and constructive process. The learner is an information constructor. Learner actively builds up or creates his or her own subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to previous knowledge, thus mental representations are subjective. Vygotsky, Piaget, Dewey, Vico, Rorty, Bruner are major contributors of this learning theory.

Constructivism is a response against to didactic approaches such as behaviorism and programmed teaching and it states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. Knowledge is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. Learners continuously test these hypotheses through social negotiation. Each person has a diverse understanding and construction of knowledge development. The learner is not an empty box. He or she transports past experiences and cultural issues to a situation. (http://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html)

It is not stated that teacher does not give lecture or say anything directly in constructive-based class room. This is actually puzzling a theory of pedagogy (teaching) with a theory of knowing. Constructivism guesses that all knowledge is constructed from the learner's previous knowledge, regardless of how one is taught. Thus, even listening to a lecture engages active attempts to build up new knowledge. (http://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html)

Role of the Teacher

The role of teacher a constructivist classroom is not to present much lecture at students in but to act as an expert learner who can motivate students into adopting cognitive strategies such as self testing, expressing understanding, asking probing questions, and reflection. The role of the teacher in constructivist classrooms is to put together information around big ideas that employ the students' interest and he or she helps students in developing new insights. He or she tries to interrelate them with their previous learning. The activities are learner-centered, and Learners are motivated to ask their own questions, carry out their own experiments, make their own analogies, and come to their own conclusions. Becoming a constructivist teacher may prove a difficult

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   289

transformation, however, since most instructors have been prepared for teaching in the traditional, objectivist manner.

(http://www.answers.com/topic/learning-theory-constructivist-approach)

(http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm)

Role of the Learner

Learning is an active process in constructivism. Students are actively involved and are accountable for their learning. According to Grennon Brooks, the learner controls their own learning, not the teacher. Learners are given freedom to express their opinions and viewpoints. Learners should also exhibit their knowledge everyday in a variety of ways. The learner would be asking questions in the classroom setting. They would communicate an interest in the actions and would begin interactions with others. The learner also would make decisions, and be confident in their skill to share their thoughts and opinions with others. In addition, the learner constructs relations with previous experience. All of these characteristics involve the learner to be an active

(http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Constructivism_%26_Technology/Individual_Learners)

Conclusion

English teacher has more responsibility than any other subject teacher because acquisition of English helps to learn other subjects, when English is the medium of instruction. In this regard Chew says 'lack of a command in English would mean the continued marginalization of their children in a world that would continue to use the language to a greater degree. It would also deny them access to the extensive resources available in English – resources which have developed as a consequence of globalization.'(1999, 41)

An English teacher is a facilitator and an independent participator in CLT. He or she must be a researcher and also a learner. Other roles assumed for teacher is needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager. He or she must be a good motivator because motivation accelerates language learning. Sense of humor and presence of mind

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   290

are two important characteristics of good language teacher. He should have good attitude and aptitude as well.

===

References

- Mohamed Aslam, (2003). **Teaching of English**. Delhi: Foundation Books..

- Jacqueline G. Brooks and Martin G. Brooks (1993**). In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development**, Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Jack C. Richards and Theodore Stephen Rodgers (2001). **Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching** (2nd Edition) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- http://education-2020.wikispaces.com/connectivism

- http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf

- http://www.britishcouncil.org/italy-english-naples-cef-levels.htm)

- http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm

- http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/index.php?title=Connectivism

- http://www.answers.com/topic/learning-theory-constructivist-approach#ixzz21pxjL2S7

- http://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html

- http://ci484-learning-technologies.wikispaces.com/

===

V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
210-B Nochinagar
46-Pudur Post
Erode 638002

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   291

Tamilnadu, India
vpugazh_mphil2003@yahoo.co.in

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 10 October 2012
V. Pugazhenthi, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. Scholar
The Role of English Teacher in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment   292