THE ROLE OF TEACHER PERSONALITY AND METHODOLOGY IN ELT CLASSES

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ABSTRACT
English as a world language is becoming more and more important in our culture, thereby affecting the English classroom and its participants. The whole process of teaching English has been changing during the last decades and so have the students. They already start learning their first foreign language at a primary school level and teachers have to be flexible to enable students to learn. Thereby, teachers not only educate students what English is about and how it works, but also the usage of it and particularly communication skills. This article researches methods of teaching students to a foreign language using the language as means of intercourse, while a leading principle is the principle of a communicative approach.

KEYWORDS: *Controller, assessor, manager, resource, participant, investigator, role model, constructivist teaching, constructivist activities, modeling, coaching, scaffolding.*

DISCUSSION

Every student has a different ability while learning a second language. Some grasp it easily and develop a sympathy to it, others struggle and have difficulties which could lead to being demotivated and lack of interest. This leads to the question what an English teacher can and has to do, in order to teach students successfully. Nowadays teachers are supposed not only to educate, but also to create a suitable environment for learners.

First of all, it is necessary to perform many different roles in the classroom to fully achieve the best learning development. Roles which have its own characteristics, work differently and have various aims. Secondly, this leads to the question "what a role actually is" and I will give a short definition of it. Afterwards the various roles will be introduced and then described in detail. What are the characteristics of a role? What does it mean to perform it? Why is it necessary to do so? These questions will be answered later on. Finally, I will give a conclusion and a brief overview about the portrayed roles. Before describing the various teacher roles, it is important to explain briefly what a „role" actually is. The Oxford Advanced Learner´s Dictionary describes a role as:

"The function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in an organization, in society or in a relationship."

Whether we realize it or not, we are acting in roles in many situations on a daily basis and while doing so we are confronted with expectations. Thereby, one can act in various roles: For example, a manager acts in an authoritarian role at work, as a loving father at home and in his football team as a captain. These roles differ from each other in a way of choice: he can choose whether he wants to act as a manager or not, but his children will always perceive him as a father. He does not have to be the captain of his team but by fulfilling this role his team members expect him to act appropriately. The same happens when one chooses to be a teacher.

In the English classroom a teacher fulfills many roles with different aims. The most common thought of a role might be the fully organized classroom in which everything is controlled by the teacher (Controller). Also teachers are expected to assess their students by correcting them and giving feedback to their development and performance (Assessor). Another very important role is the one of the classroom manager. Good organization is a key

factor in planning a syllabus, a lesson or just a particular task and helps to discipline the students (Manager).

Furthermore, the teacher acts as a resource by helping the students if necessary. He/She provides additional information or simply talks to them providing the resource of spoken language (Resource). To increase the effectiveness of learning it is sometimes necessary to act with the students on the same level as a participant. Not only will the teacher gain an insight about the way students develop, but also give them the chance to interact with someone who has a much higher comprehension of the target language (Participant).

A role not directly related to the behavior of the teacher is the investigator. The teacher analyzes the way of teaching, observes what is going on in the classroom and investigates the ways students learn, with the aim to develop his/her methods of teaching (Investigator).The last role is the role model which goes beyond the classroom influencing children throughout their whole life. Honesty, affection or fairness for example, are not only learned from parents but also from teachers at school. Therefore, a teacher must be fully aware that his behavior in general has a huge impact on the personal development of his/her students. (Role Model)

Additionally, it is important to mention that roles also differ in their influence on the lesson and whether they are fulfilled actively or rather passively. The following diagram shows an overview about the different roles, whether they can be seen as active or passive and how far they are related to each other: As I said the role as a controller, standing in front of the class, talking to the students and giving instructions, might be the most common role of a teacher.

Harmer points out that teachers, fulfilling this role, control not only what the students do, but also when they speak and what language they use." Everything what happens in the class is controlled by the teacher and is in his/her responsibility. He/She educates the students by introducing the target language, giving tasks, using repetitive drilling techniques and leading them through the content. Furthermore, the teacher has complete control when it comes to the pace of a lesson, which means that everyone in the class is taught on the same level.

Characteristics of Constructivist Teaching

One of the primary goals of using constructivist teaching is that students learn how to learn by giving them the training to take initiative for their own learning experiences.

According to Audrey Gray, the characteristics of a constructivist classroom are as follows:

* The learners are actively involved

* The environment is democratic
* The activities are interactive and student-centered
* The teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous

Examples of constructivist activities

Furthermore, in the constructivist classroom, students work primarily in groups and learning and knowledge are interactive and dynamic. There is a great focus and emphasis on social and communication skills, as well as collaboration and exchange of ideas [1; 7]. This is contrary to the traditional classroom in which students work primarily alone, learning is achieved through repetition, and the subjects are strictly adhered to and are guided by a textbook. Some activities encouraged in constructivist classrooms are:

* Experimentation: students individually perform an experiment and then come together as a class to discuss the results.

* Research projects: students research a topic and can present their findings to the class.

* Field trips. This allows students to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real-world context. Field trips would often be followed by class discussions.

* Films. These provide visual context and thus bring another sense into the learning experience.

* Class discussions. This technique is used in all of the methods described above. It is one of the most important distinctions of constructivist teaching methods.

In the constructivist classroom, the teacher's role is to prompt and facilitate discussion. Thus, the teacher's main focus should be on guiding students by asking questions that will lead them to develop their own conclusions on the subject.

David Jonassen identified three major roles for facilitators to support students in constructivist learning environments:

* Modeling
* Coaching
* Scaffolding

Jonassen recommends making the learning goals engaging and relevant but not overly structured.

Learning is driven in CLEs by the problem to be solved; students learn content and theory in order to solve the problem. This is different from traditional objectivist teaching where the theory would be presented first and problems would be used afterwards to practice theory.

Depending on students' prior experiences, related cases and scaffolding may be necessary for support. Instructors also need to provide an authentic

context for tasks, plus information resources, cognitive tools, and collaborative tools [6; 34].

Constructivist assessment

Traditionally, assessment in the classrooms is based on testing. In this style, it is important for the student to produce the correct answers. However, in constructivist teaching, the process of gaining knowledge is viewed as being just as important as the product. Thus, assessment is 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:

* Oral discussions. The teacher presents students with a "focus" question and allows an open discussion on the topic.

* KWL(H) Chart (What we know, What we want to know, What we have learned, How we know it). This technique can be used throughout the course of study for a particular topic, but is also a good assessment technique as it shows the teacher the progress of the student throughout the course of study.

* Mind Mapping. In this activity, students list and categorize the concepts and ideas relating to a topic.

* Hands-on activities. These encourage students to manipulate their environments or a particular learning tool. Teachers can use a checklist and observation to assess student success with the particular material.

* Pre-testing. This allows a teacher to determine what knowledge students bring to a new topic and thus will be helpful in directing the course of study.

The way of leading a class depends on the character of the teacher. Every person has his/her own style of teaching. Some teachers are very open minded and do not hesitate being the centre of the lesson, whereas others prefer to let the students interact by themselves. Very authoritative persons will not have many problems with discipline but also a shy personality does not automatically mean chaos in class. Teachers who are popular among the pupils have less problems to keep them motivated and pass on knowledge. Wright quotes that "even a person who is not a born teacher can improve a lot by learning to smile, to be enthusiastic and patient, and to be constantly looking for new ways of getting his message across to the pupils."

In conclusion, what every "Controller" has in common is, that his/her language output is the central means for developing the students´ comprehension and I will deal with this so called "teacher talk" in more detail later on. A crucial factor however is, that the teacher keeps in mind not to act too much. Students also need to have their own free time to learn the treated content which means that control has to be reduced sometimes. Otherwise, one risks to hamper the student´s progress. Therefore, too much talking is not recommendable as students do not get the chance to communicate by themselves.

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