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The Characteristics of a Successful EFL Teacher in the Learners' Eyes

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Abstract

There are two major interrelated reasons behind examining the topic of this paper. In fact, even after many years of their learning English as a foreign language, a large number of secondary school students' level of proficiency in the language is so low that they cannot use it communicatively, and cannot major in it at university, either. Accounting for their underachievement, a large percentage of such students claim that many teachers still play traditional roles in the teaching-learning process, which has contributed to the problem. The main purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the extent to which such a claim is justifiable. In this frame of reference, a questionnaire was administered to a certain number of students on the extent to which the teacher is responsible for the issue, as well as what they personally think the key characteristics of a successful EFL teacher are. Along with this, the paper will equally look at other qualities that ought to be available in EFL teachers with the overall aim of helping them to do their job successfully, and hence attain the expected learning results.

Keywords: English; foreign language; EFL learners; EFL teacher; teacher roles, affective roles; academic roles, teacher development

Introduction

Achieving a good level of proficiency in English as a foreign language among a high percentage of secondary education students in many Tunisian schools is still a formidable challenge for both the teacher and the learner even after many years of formal instruction in the language. There must be diverse objective reasons behind the issue. In this setting, wondering about the various reasons behind the issue,

many EFL teachers believe invincibly that the main reason is mainly related to an educational system which has proved unable to meet students' and their parents' expectations. Many others think that what lies at the root of the problem is lack of enough exposure to the language, in the sense that the classroom is often the sole environment where students are exposed to it. However, whenever asked about the causes of their low level of proficiency in English with the aim of prompting them to improve, a lot of secondary school EFL learners, as pointed out above, lay part of the blame on the teacher. This could be claimed to be justifiable in case the teacher adopts traditional ineffective roles in teaching the language and in dealing with the students both as learners and humans. By implication, in order for the EFL teacher to get round the problem of her or his students' underachievement in the language, it is recommended that s/he should assume particular affective and academic roles as one drastic measure that can contribute to effective teaching and successful learning.

What Lies at the Root of the Problem?

A questionnaire was administered to 117 fourth-year Tunisian secondary school students from two different schools. They were asked to which extent they think the teacher is responsible for the learners' low proficiency level in English. The results of the questionnaire show that the smallest percentage of answers (23.93%) is the one that does not consider the teacher responsible for the learners' low level in English. About 50% of the questioned students think that s/he is to reproach to some extent, whereas 31 out of 117 students representing a remarkable percentage of 26.50% believe that s/he is to blame for the problem to a great extent. These results would prompt us to investigate what should be done on the part of an EFL instructor, so as to redress the state of affairs.

For the sake of delving a little deeper into the matter, the same number of students (117) and one class of second-secondary school students totaling 33 individuals from another school were requested to specify what they blame their EFL teachers for in regard to their low achievement in English. Their overall answers center around a number of undesirable aspects of behavior related to the teacher's affective and academic roles. Below are examples:

Examples of Undesirable Aspects of Behavior Related to the Teacher's Affective Roles:

unfriendly; not understanding; does not call us by our names; often nervous; shouts at us; does not respect students; indifferent to students' problems; mocking students; punishing students; too severe; favors some students at the expense of others.

Examples of Undesirable Aspects of Behavior Related to the Teacher's Academic Roles:

lazy; sitting most of the time; sometimes refuses to explain what students don't understand; can't control class; gives very low marks for oral tests; his tests are very difficult; assigning homework, but doesn't control or correct it; uses difficult words; getting absent.

It is undeniably true that a teacher behaving as described above causes her/his students to scorn her/him and direct their attention from the subject s/he teaches, which is likely to lead to low results.

The same questioned students were asked to list what they think the qualities of a good teacher are. What they listed also pertains to her/his affective and academic roles. Following are examples of such qualities:

Understanding; having a strong personality; can control class; lenient; helps students with tests*; gives good marks; involves all students in lessons;* friendly*; cheerful; uses easy methods in his lessons; treats all students equally (i.e. does not favor certain students at the expense of others); discusses students' personal problems.*

All this leads us to deduce that students are really aware that successful teaching can be achieved by the teacher's imperative combining of her/his affective and academic roles, which implies the necessity of adopting a humanistic approach in her/his teaching methodology.

Teacher Roles

On the basis of the undesirable aspects of behavior on the part of the teacher mentioned by the questioned students, as well as what I personally noticed among colleagues, a number of teachers still maintain a traditional role. Such a role has two principal characteristics: being authoritarian and speaking most frequently in class. One major reason behind being authoritarian is to maintain discipline in class, as a number of teachers believe. Regarding being the one who speaks most of the time in class, it could be deduced that it may be the result of the teacher's severity, in the sense that a severe teacher may cause many students to be reluctant to participate in learning activities, by reason of their apprehension that they may make mistakes, which they think may provoke an undesirable reaction on the part of the teacher. Another reason is that being accustomed to her/his constant talk in class is very likely to make the students listen to her/him passively much more than playing an active role in lessons.

Accounted for by many teachers, their frequent talk in class is mainly the result of the low proficiency level of many students. Referring to the matter, one teacher once said, "I often feel I am teaching myself."

However, however serious and numerous the difficulties are, a successful teacher does not resort to assuming a traditional role that she herself or he himself may be aware that it cannot bring off the expected learning results.

Teacher Affective Roles

The affective roles of the teacher are intrinsically associated with her or his relationship with students as a person rather than a teacher in the mere traditional sense of the term. In this sense, Marks (2001: 82) points out that "the term 'affect' includes 'anything to do with the emotions, moods, dispositions and preferences'."

Taking affective factors into account is of considerable importance to the teachinglearning process. These include the learner's personal emotions and interests, and hence her or his positive or negative attitudes towards learning activities. The teacher ought to be aware of the importance of these factors and the necessity of her or his being able to deal with them properly, so as to contribute to the success of the learning process. In this respect, the teacher's affective roles are of crucial significance. Instances of the teacher's key affective roles are examined below.

Friend: Relying on a personal experience and on what the students mentioned in the above questionnaire, a good successful teacher is someone who establishes a good relationship with all students acting as a friend, and treating all of them on equal terms avoiding to favor brilliant learners over weak ones, or sympathize with males at the expense of females, or vice versa.

Apart from the teacher-student relationship, it is recommended that the teacher establish a good student-student relationship based on mutual respect and cooperation, which can contribute to facilitating the teaching-learning process in an agreeable atmosphere. Richard–Amato (2003) refers to this point arguing that "in classrooms in which mutual respect is lacking, differing values can lead to conflicts between student and teacher, and between student and peer" (p. 66). Therefore, it is imperative – as Ebata (2008) advocates – that teachers "teach all the students the importance of having respect for one another in a classroom, so that each of the students can actively participate in lesson."

Another factor relating to the teacher's role as a friend is calling learners by their first names. Doing so is, on the one hand, one aspect of the good teacher-student relationship; it shows the teacher does not keep learners at a distance, but s/he is rather one of them. On the other hand, it motivates the learner and gives her or him some confidence, especially in situations in which s/he is addressed praising expressions followed by her or his first name when s/he answers questions correctly or performs tasks in the right way.

Hess (2001: 16) lists a number of benefits of learning students' names that concern both the teacher and the learners. She argues that learning students' names is essential, because

. it promotes good basic human relationships;

. it is helpful in monitoring students' records (test results, attendance, assignments);

. calling people by their names is basic recognition that they are individuals, and are being respected as such;

. calling students by their names helps us to call them to order;

. we begin to feel more comfortable with a class as soon as we know our students' names;

. students themselves feel better when they know the names of classmates.

Motivator: Motivation is of a vital role in language learning. In this framework, one of the qualities of a good teacher is someone who is aware of this fact and implements it in class via diverse ways bearing in mind that motivating students frequently can actually pave the way for successful learning, and hence facilitate effective teaching.

Model: Acting as a model is not solely one of the teacher's academic roles, but it can be included in her or his affective roles. Putting it plainly, the teacher is not only a model for students to follow in teaching them the language, but also in guiding them directly to acquire some moral values and good aspects of behavior by, say, giving them pieces of advice in this respect, or indirectly through positive traits of her or his personality, which arouses their interest in learning. Where the teacher's personality is concerned, it is irrefutable that it can affect the students' perception of the teacher and their learning from her or him.

A few students among those questioned about the qualities of a successful teacher mentioned "*strong personality*", and one female student cited *"elegant"*. In this setting, one ingredient of a person's personality is the way they are dressed. By implication, one of the characteristics of a successful teacher is maintaining an admirable appearance. This would bring her or him respect and esteem on the part of students. The fact that many of them sometimes try to imitate their teacher in her or his good looks, and would like her or him to have a good opinion on them in this regard shows how important the teacher's appearance is in their eyes.

In a nutshell, the teacher's having a good-looking appearance is highly recommended, in view of the fact that students learn better from someone whom they respect and reckon as a model at more than one level.

Fun: One of the definitions of fun according to *Macmillan English Dictionary* (2002) is "someone who you enjoy spending time with, especially because you enjoy the

same activities." In this setting, students usually prefer teachers who are humorous to those who are very often serious and hardworking. A number of students among those to whom the aforementioned questionnaire was administered about the characteristics of a good teacher jotted down words and phrases connected to humor, such as *funny*, *makes pupils laugh*, and *tells jokes*. In the very context, Weiss (1993: 42) points out that "when students are queried about the characteristics of a teacher they most appreciate, they often reply 'a sense of humor' and 'the ability to communicate knowledge in an interesting way'." Therefore, an important characteristic of a successful teacher is being personally humorous and introducing humor in her or his lessons, so as to spare students being bored and anxious, and increase their attention span. Maurice (1988) stresses the role of humor in helping acquire or learn languages holding that "[…] much has been written in the field of TESL/TEFL in recent years about the place of affective factors in language acquisition. Humor, as one affective 'technique', can be of some help to us in our task of facilitating acquisition within the classroom." Gagné (1985), in turn, lists a number of instructional functions of humor. These are: (a) activating motivation, (b) informing the learner of the lesson objective, (c) directing attention, (d) stimulating recall, (e) providing learning guidance, (f) enhancing retention, (g) promoting transfer of learning, and (h) eliciting performance.

In a later section dealing with the teacher's academic roles, we will make suggestions for ways of introducing humor in various learning activities relating to the four language skills.

Social worker: Undertaking such a role in the right way requires the teacher to be au fait with the different social backgrounds of learners, their various interests and feelings, as well as their diverse attitudes towards learning.

As it is very likely to be difficult for the teacher to have enough information about all these issues relating to every individual student and recall it, s/he can resort to what is called a background questionnaire, which s/he can keep during the whole academic year, so as to refer to it whenever need be.

A duty of the teacher's as a social worker, and one of the highly-appreciated qualities of a good, successful teacher is helping students with their personal problems, or at least taking them into serious consideration in case of learner frequent absenteeism, misbehavior, unsatisfactory learning performance, or low exam results. Dealing with the teacher's role as a social worker, Wiriyachitra (1995) suggests that "s/he should create an atmosphere of friendliness and trust by listening to students, accepting their ideas/opinions, and if they have any problems finding ways to solve them." Acting as such will certainly cause students to change much for the better at the level of their affect, their conduct, their perception of the teacher, and their view about learning.

Concluding her above statement, Wiriyachitra (1995) affirms that "students will feel relaxed, confident, assured, and not embarrassed. This behavior can definitely lower the students' affective filter which, in turn, may enhance learning." Personally, it is my experience that the students who have got some help from the teacher with their personal problems, and generally enjoy a friendly relationship with her or him show considerable interest in her or his subject matter, and do their utmost to ameliorate their proficiency in it.

In sum, it could be held that by assuming particular affective roles in the right way as those examined above can facilitate the teacher's various academic roles a great deal. Roughly, the very claim is expressed by Arnold and Brown (1999) who point out that "by attending to the affective realm […], teachers might well find that their whole task becomes easier."

Teacher Academic Roles

It is argued that in the course of foreign-language classes, teacher roles are sometimes undertaken spontaneously or without the teacher's being aware of what they are. One characteristic of a successful teacher is being knowledgeable about the different roles s/he ought to play and the learning activities that can be best performed through assuming one or more particular roles.

In this section, we will consider the main academic teacher roles that are deemed to be in marked contrast with traditional roles, and on the other hand can help engage students as much as possible in learner-centered activities, and are hence of real benefits to the achievement of successful learning.

It deserves mention that the principal teacher roles that will be examined include other secondary, but important roles as will be discussed.

Group leader: What may count more with respect to the two-term name of this role is its first part, *group*; not *leader*. The teacher acting as a group leader implies her or his being the head of the whole class as one group or divided into a number of small groups, and does – of course – not signify monopolizing the performance of the learning activities on her or his part, because they should rather be studentcentered. Rogers (2002: 190) sums up the function of the teacher as head of the group briefly stating that "[it] is to keep the group together, to keep things going."

The teacher's role as a group leader lies primarily in devising suitable activities compatible with the learning objectives intended to be fulfilled, clarifying the instructions for these activities – acting thus as a manager – so as to ensure everybody understands what to do, and sometimes initiating them, or asking a good student to so do, if need be, for the sake of a better performance by the whole class.

With reference to the above questionnaires, some students stated that one of the characteristics of a successful teacher is making the whole class participate in lessons, while some others expressed roughly the same opinion in different terms

asserting that one of the teacher's qualities they disapprove of is caring only for a few good students.

In this frame of reference, the teacher's acting as a manager also involves assisting everybody in taking part in all classroom activities concentrating somewhat more on the shy and low-achieving learners; and in parallel with this, s/he ought not to allow good students to take the lion's share of participation and outpace slow or weak peers in pair or group-work activities. Rogers and Horrocks (2010: 206) refer to such students as *persistent talkers* who try to monopolize the discussion, and recommend that "it is important not to let them wreck the group."

Behaving with students of different levels of proficiency as suggested above requires the teacher to be of an outstanding pedagogical competence and to acquire sufficient knowledge about certain learners' psychological characteristics so as, say, not to embarrass weak learners by prompting them too much to be constantly active and present the desired performance, and on the other hand not to dampen brilliant learners' enthusiasm so frequently that they may feel frustrated and discouraged. Therefore, the teacher should not only be a pedagogue, but also somewhat a psychologist – as it were – in respect of taking into account her or his students' various feelings, emotions, and reactions to the various learning activities, as well as to the ways the teacher should behave with them as persons and her or his attitudes towards their learning performance.

Equally as a group leader, the teacher can function as a promoter of the targetlanguage learning, mainly during group-work activities. Plainly speaking, for instance, as learners tend to use their mother tongue while working in groups, s/he should entice them through diverse ways to keep using the L2 as much as they can.

Group member: Acting as a group member denies the teacher's being considered as authority in the classroom, and opposes the traditional belief that s/he is the only source of knowledge and the sole person who teaches. In point of fact, such a role implies the teacher's performing activities alongside students learning from them while they are learning from her or him. Briefly, in other words, s/he is a teacher and a learner at the same time. Freire (1988: 67) strongly approves of such a role arguing that "the teacher is no longer merely the one – who – teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn, while being taught also teach." In this way, as Larsen-Freeman (2000: 28) points out, "the teacher and the students are more like partners in the teaching-learning process," which would help students – as Harmer (1998: 9) suggests – to be responsible for their own learning, which is one of the characteristics of good learners.

One practical way of encouraging students to be self-confident and making them realize that they are responsible for their own learning is to allow them sometimes to suggest homework assignments associated with a particular language-skill activity. The teacher together with all the students may agree upon a particular

homework assignment for the whole class with the intention of giving all students some freedom to do the homework that suits their ability, thus taking into account the learners' different proficiency levels, so as to guarantee everybody does the assignment.

From the above-considered roles derives the teacher's part as a 'co-communicator' (Littlewood, 1981). This is mainly manifest in her or his participating in various forms of interaction with learners, such as dialogs, role-plays, simulations, and class discussions. The teacher-learner interactions have different aims. For instance, a particular form of interaction may take place between the teacher and a good student as an example for the whole class to follow with the object of facilitating a learning activity before they engage in performing it.

Further, as a mere 'co-communicator', the teacher can, of course, take part in class debates expressing her or his own views, listening to students' arguments, and agreeing or taking issue with them; and on the other hand, giving learners a chance either directly or indirectly to freely comment on her or his opinions and argue for or against them if the situation entails to so do. Behaving as such, the teacher makes it clear for students that s/he is not the domineering teacher who is the lone fountain of knowledge, whose voice is the most frequently resounding in the classroom, and whose standpoints are irrefutable truth. Therefore, since the teacher-learner relationship is horizontal, the teacher is regarded more as a friend – as noted above – and also as a 'co-learner' (by analogy with Littlewood's (1981) use of the term 'co-communicator'). In this way, students become self-confident or more so, and feel psychologically at ease, and that they learn in a comfortable atmosphere, which spares them apprehension of errors, and thus assists them in expressing themselves freely. All this can be among the key factors that can help promote effective teaching and achieve successful learning.

It is worthy of note that in much ELT writing, considerable mention has been made of the teacher as a learner without actually exploring what s/he can learn from students. In order for the teacher to learn from students, s/he should primarily learn about them. A threefold query, in this regard, is to be raised: a) what should the teacher learn about students? b) What can s/he learn from them? c) What benefits does the teaching-learning process derive from both types of learning?

What the teacher ought to learn about her or his students are specific issues that are connected with their learning and have particular effects on it. It is recommended that the teacher deal with these issues in such a way as to make them affect learning positively. Principal instances of these are discussed below.

. Language attitudes: Students have different attitudes, either positive or negative towards the target-language learning depending mainly on their need for the language and their proficiency level in it. In this context, the teacher can assume the role of a psychological stimulator in boosting learners' positive attitudes and helping

the students who have negative attitudes to rid them of such attitudes, and create in them positive attitudes, in that these can enhance learning.

. Learning styles: These are also referred to as learning strategies. Students of whatever proficiency in the language they are learning have a variety of learning styles on the basis of their command of the language as a whole, as well as their standard in the various language areas. By way of illustration, a student who is good at grammar and weak at mastering vocabulary may find no difficulty in the teacher's methods of teaching grammar, but may find it difficult to learn vocabulary if, for instance, the teacher does not often use the learners' native language. Such a student may prefer that the teacher use the learners' mother tongue, and when learning on her or his own, s/he may use bilingual dictionaries very often in order to comprehend unfamiliar lexis, which is a strategy that can be reckoned as ineffective, especially in case it is resorted to frequently. In this situation, the teacher can assume the role of mentor. S/He ought to encourage student effective learning strategies, but in respect of ineffective learning strategies, it is recommended that – as is the case for learner errors, the teacher should sometimes be tolerant of them. One justification for this argument is that the teacher's disapproval of ineffective learner strategies in one way or another may result in certain negative attitudes towards learning on the part of students. However, the teacher's tolerance of certain ineffective learning strategies can be taken as a temporary measure. In the course of time, as the teacher notices that students' performance is improving, s/he can recommend learners implicitly to get rid of those strategies and substitute them for effective ones.

Affective interests: It is of considerable importance that the teacher be in the know of the students' overall affective interests that are in connection with the learning course. One of the factors through which the teacher can take up the responsibility of a motivator is satisfying those interests as possible as s/he can. What the teacher can take into account, in this regard, are comprehension materials (listening and reading passages), speaking and writing topics (oral and written production), and certain types of activities, such as games, role-plays, and songs. The teacher should often select what can comply with the students' interests, so that they can carry out the desired performance, and hence achieve the expected leaning results. By implication, therefore, it is imperative that the teacher should not depend much on the contents of textbooks as one measure that can take part in fulfilling the abovementioned objective.

Language needs: The most significant learners' need for language is their ability to use it communicatively for diverse purposes, such as entertainment, traveling abroad, and jobs requiring fluency in the language. But, many learners are not aware of their current and future needs for English. In this setting, a further role assumed for the teacher is a counselor. S/He ought to advise students about the necessity of

learning English and sensitize them to their needs for it as the most used language for communication worldwide.

Besides what the teacher personally knows about the above-considered issues, using questionnaires, diagnostic tests, and interviews is of considerable assistance in providing her or him with sufficient data about those issues.

Responding to the previously-raised query as concerns what the teacher can learn from students as a 'co-learner', one could hold the claim that s/he can:

. learn how to adjust her/his teaching methodology in accordance with the overall proficiency of the whole class. A teacher who does not know enough about all students' learning abilities and styles may not do so; it is likely that s/he keeps her/his teaching techniques always or often in conformity with brilliant students' level only.

. become more tolerant. Tolerance of learner errors and ineffective learning strategies helps build self-confidence in students, and consequently can aid effective leaning. Tolerance also implies patience, which is one of the qualities of a successful teacher. If s/he does not deal patiently with certain challenges, such as students' underachievement and disruptive behavior, s/he is likely to risk feeling frustrated, which may make situations worse.

. easily find out the areas of weakness among students; and in the light of this matter, s/he can prepare a suitable remedial program.

. assume another valuable role: needs analyst. This requires the teacher to select the appropriate instructional materials and devise the learning activities suitable to the language needs of students. Such a role can pave the way for the teacher to get a more important job as a syllabus designer.

Additionally, the teacher as a 'co-learner' can equally learn directly from students, namely bright ones at both cognitive and pedagogical levels. For instance, they can remind her or him of or provide her or him with information s/he has forgotten or s/he does not know. Still, the teacher can learn from students how to approach certain tasks (e.g. problem-solving tasks and games) in a better way and perform them in a shorter time than s/he personally does.

It deserves mention that as a 'co-learner', the teacher should not feel ashamed of or embarrassed by learning from students. S/He ought rather to show them be it explicitly or implicitly that s/he is modest; s/he is not the only dispenser of information nor is s/he a know-it-all, and that s/he can learn from them as they do from her or him, as well as from one another. This is very likely to strengthen the good teacher-student relationship, motivate the whole class, and build or promote learner self-confidence.

In a word, the role assumed for the teacher as a group member can help her or him a great deal discover new key factors of success associated with the teachinglearning process, and can subsequently assist her or him in acquiring a more effective teaching methodology.

Facilitator: This teacher role is equally of paramount importance to the teachinglearning process for it facilitates both the teacher's and students' tasks. The role entails a set of factors in connection with the teacher, the types of learning activities, and the instructional materials.

Assuming the part of facilitator involves particular qualities of the teacher both as a person and an instructor. A couple of such qualities are – as noted above – being humorous and establishing a friendly relationship with students. So far, we have examined how the teacher can be fun as one good trait of her/his personality. We suggest, in the table below, examples of humorous learning activities as a procedure for facilitating learning.

Language skills	Examples of activities
Listening	Listening to songs; exchanging riddles in group-work activities; listening to music while doing another activity.
Speaking	Singing songs; telling jokes; chatting on the Net with English-speaking people; performing funny role-plays; describing a comedian comically; completing a short story funnily; telling riddles.
Reading	Cross-word puzzles; cartoons; reading comic selections; reading funny short stories.
Writing	Writing jokes; writing funny mini-sagas; writing about a trick you played on someone; writing about a trick someone played on you; shadowing the lyrics of a song in writing.

on you; shadowing the lyrics of a song in writing. Fig. 1: Examples of humorous learning activities

Ur (2006) refers to the benefit of inserting amusing elements in English courses asserting that if students are listening to something entertaining, they are likely to attend and get benefits from the listening experience. Moreover, the occasional introduction of components like songs and stories into English lessons can improve student motivation and general morale, and show the language in a new light – not just as a subject of study, but as a source of enjoyment and recreation (p.63).

Another duty of the teacher as a facilitator is acting as an advisor. As was suggested above, it rests with her or him to increase the students' consciousness of the great value of English as a worldwide medium of communication, and raise their hope for being good or better at using the language communicatively. This can be done through pieces of advice, as well as via providing learners with instructional

materials that can assist them in being able to so do, such as newspapers, magazines and short stories; and guide them how to reap profit from them during their autonomous learning.

Equally of potential benefit as a measure for facilitating learning for students and contributing to their becoming effective learners is the teacher's communicating with their families via various ways, and making them feel that they can really contribute to the success of their children's learning. This argument is supported by Kraft and Dougherty (2013). They conducted a study based on a randomized field experiment which found that the frequent teacher communication with students' families increased the learners' engagement and their motivation for learning.

Probably included in the role of the teacher as a facilitator is her or his responsibility as an evaluator, and hence as a promoter of effective learning. In this frame of reference, although tests are an inevitable part of the teaching-learning process as they are the usual means of evaluating the learners' performance, they ought not to be used as gauges to measure the rate of success and failure of students.

They should rather be utilized as a mere means to see how much progress they have carried out, and as one stimulus for achieving the expected learning results. For the teacher's part, they also serve to help her or him verify the extent to which the teaching objectives have been attained.

It equally rests with the teacher assuming the part of facilitator to do her or his utmost, in collaboration with colleagues and the school administration, to provide learners with the necessary instructional materials that can ensure a better performance of purposefully-selected learning activities that conform to the students' affective interests and language needs. Further, facilitating the learning conditions for students on the part of the teacher also includes the setting where the teaching-learning process takes place. Plainly, the classroom ought to be a location where both the teacher and students work in a restful and comfortable atmosphere. One matter assuring such an atmosphere, namely in case of large classes, is that learners should be seated in a way that can allow them to work at ease in small or large groups, and make it easy for the teacher to move about, see and hear everybody in the classroom.

Teacher Development

Another fundamental hallmark of a successful teacher is being aware of the necessity of professional development as a key factor that contributes a great deal to success.

Defining Teacher Development

As a process, teacher development refers to the operation of constantly improving one's teaching experience through a wide variety of ways and keeping up with

innovative teaching methodologies, so as to do one's job as successfully as one should.

As an outcome of a process, teacher development as defined by Richards and Schimidt (2002: 542) is "the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and knowledge and examining his or her teaching systematically."

Ways of Developing as a Teacher

It is affirmed that developing as a teacher need not cover only teaching methodology, but also other areas that can aid effective teaching performance, namely general knowledge (necessarily including educational psychology), scientific competence in one's specialty, collecting and developing instructional materials, gaining and bettering class management skills, and so forth. Within a similar framework, it is unwise to restrict teacher development to the in-service training sessions under the guidance of ELT inspectors and teacher trainers. These are not usually enough at all in terms of frequency, and are most often limited only to purely pedagogic matters. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that a teacher seek out ample opportunities and diverse ways of developing herself or himself on her or his own.

Listed below are ways the teacher can develop herself or himself on her or his own.

. Self-evaluating teaching performance on a regular basis. As suggested by Nolasco and Arthur (1995), this can be done by the use of observation sheets, or recording lessons on audio or video tape. The aim behind such a procedure is to overcome weaknesses and boost strengths;

. Observing colleagues' lessons and inviting colleagues to observe your lessons, and devoting enough time to discussion just after each observation;

. Asking students occasionally to jot down what they appreciate and what they do not about the teacher's lesson, as well as what they would suggest how certain activities can be better performed. The teacher should study what students have jotted down at a later time, and take into consideration the useful remarks. Since "teachers can never be quite sure what their students think of them," as Harmer (1998: 3) puts it, learners can also be asked to do the same at the end of the academic year as concerns the teacher's character and her or his teaching methodology during the whole year. This can be written in a sheet of paper without the students' writing their names, so that they can express themselves freely. As recommended above, students' voices in that regard should be taken into serious account, because they can contribute to improvement;

. Devoting time to reading a variety of printed and electronic publications on ELT topics, educational issues, and teacher development. In this setting, Prodromou (1991) suggests subscribing to ELT magazines and journals. This would make the

teacher avidly interested in reading, and thereby enlarge her or his knowledge in the field of English language teaching;

. Trying to contribute articles on ELT subjects and/or educational concerns to journals and magazines. Publishing articles is very motivating; it enhances reading and searching on the mentioned areas, which subsequently assists teacher selfdevelopment;

. Taking part in setting up a specialized ELT room in educational institutions, where a variety of resources and teaching materials are to be collected in collaboration with the teaching and administrative staff.

Other ways contributing to teacher development proposed by Prodromou (1991) include (a) joining professional organizations, such as IATEFL and TESOL, and attending their conferences whenever possible, (b) forming local teacher's groups and holding regular meetings to discuss common problems, (c) inviting fellow teachers/teacher trainers and guest speakers to contribute lectures and workshops, (d) publishing an ELT newsletter on a local or national scale, and (e) arranging ELT book exhibition with the help of ELT publishers, organizations, such as the British Council, or relevant ministry.

Conclusion

The teacher's assuming the affective and academic roles discussed above can be considerably beneficial to the teaching-learning process. Notwithstanding, it is worthy of note that one may argue that in situations where EFL classes include a sizeable percentage of low-achievers, the teacher playing such roles, especially that of a group member, in accordance of which s/he learns from students while s/he teaches them, with the aim of fulfilling the objective of making students responsible for their own learning may be reckoned as too idealistic. Therefore, EFL teachers, students, and their parents having such a pessimistic view should bear in mind that success cannot be achieved in just one day. No wonder, attaining the desired results is a gradual process. On the other hand, achieving one hundred percent success is beyond even the most successful and most experienced teacher, but achieving some or even the least success is, of course, much better than yielding to disagreeable situations and being hopeless of improving them or changing them for the better.

Aside from the various affective and academic roles a teacher ought to assume with the object of contributing to effective teaching and successful learning, teacher development is a requisite for the same aim. Following from all this, it should also be borne in mind that our real success as teachers does not lie solely in helping good students to be better, but in large measure in assisting low-achievers in being successful learners.

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