

3.2 LECTURE: A FOCUS ON THE LEARNER



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Introduction

Classroom environment and student roles are often guided by teacher roles. Therefore, it is very important for a teacher to define his or her role, so learners can know what their teacher is supposed to do.

Teacher Roles in English Language Teaching

Teachers can play many roles. In a modern classroom, teachers can be facilitators who observe, advise and direct, rather than control and dictate the learning process. Teacher roles are connected to the teaching methods. These roles determine the degree to which a teacher controls a learning process. The content of lessons and how teachers and students interact also depends on teacher roles.

Traditional Role of English Teachers

Traditional classrooms are teacher-centered. A teacher directs the learning process by selecting what students should learn. He or she also focuses on teaching language features rather than language use. Students are asked to memorize, repeat, and do drills. The different parts of the language are taught separately, and they later develop into the whole language structure. This approach to language teaching is linear and it assumes the teacher as a source of knowledge. The learners are receivers of knowledge and they do not control what they learn and how they learn it.

Focus on the Learner

Changes in teaching ideas overtime lead to changes in teaching methods and in roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. In 1960s and 1970s a number of new theories helped change how language is taught. Among these approaches are:

- Humanistic approach to language teaching. It considers learner intellectual and emotional development to be equally important
- Communicative language teaching approach. It is based on teaching real world communication skills.

New Role of English Teachers in Task Based Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching provided foundations for the task-based language teaching (TBLT). TBLT is a new approach that focuses on learning by doing. To complete language tasks learners need to learn to understand,

plan, and manipulate the language. The goal is for the learners to use language for communicative activities. The role of teachers also changes. Teachers move to the background and become facilitators of students' learning. Instead of providing the knowledge, teacher is now expected to guide, motivate, advise and monitor students' progress. Teachers should now facilitate learning by providing students with diverse communicative activities. Teachers should also involve students in group and collaborative work, and keep them interested and motivated to learn the language.

Conclusion

The role of teachers in modern classrooms has changed from being a controller and an organizer to being a guide and a facilitator. Teachers now allow learners to have more initiative and responsibility. Learners can now be more in control of their learning process. It all sounds good in theory, however, it may be quite challenging to achieve such changes in teacher and student roles. Sometimes the learning context does not allow for these changes (e.g., educational systems may have rules and specific curricular guidance). Additionally, students may not be culturally ready to take on these changes. Therefore, teachers should always consider cultural norms and expectations in addition to various teaching approaches and strategies when planning a shift from a traditional to a modern teacher role.

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