

## TEACHER'S ROLE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

**Suhartina. R, M.Hum**  
STKIP YAPIM Maros  
suhartina\_stkip@yahoo.co.id

### Abstract

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia aims at providing learners with adequate knowledge to use the language for communicative purposes, both oral and written form. Although student-centered learning has been the dominant activities in the classroom during this decade, the roles of English teachers in managing the class, in applying teaching and learning methods, as well as in preparing the learning materials are still of crucial parts especially in conducting multidirectional communication between teacher and students and among the students themselves.

In term of teaching, teachers are not only requested to transfer knowledge from their brain to their students', but also prepare them with adequate skills and valuable social norms for the use of conducting good relationship in social life. This article attempts to investigate the roles teachers that should be performed at class and then give some advice of affective strategies in English teaching as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** English Foreign Language, Teachers' role, Communicative competence

### INTRODUCTION

Everyone of us adopt and play numerous as well as different 'roles' in everyday situations. The roles themselves change with the situation from time to time and/or from place to place. In the morning, for example, one may serve as a house wife in her own family. At school she plays her role as an educator, a facilitator, a model, and so on. The role of a teacher in society is both significant and valuable. Students are deeply affected by the teachers' love and affection, their character, their competence, and their moral commitment. A popular teacher becomes a model for her/his students. The students try to follow their teacher in her manners, costumes, etiquette, and style of conversation. In short, a teacher is students' ideal.

When we think of our first day in school, we would definitely remember the excitement we had joining a new school. Undoubtedly, we all remember our first teacher; this teacher became our first point of contact in our new world. Their care and concern defined our stay in school and our love for learning. Teachers are the

foundation upon which a child's character, skills, and social norms are built. A teacher should not only be restricted to teaching which is written in the textbook but should try to come up to the students' expectations for which education should not be confined to merely delivering lectures, because it is another name for mental growth. A teacher should teach the students to respect people, regardless of the social status—it is respect which returns you respect. The purpose of the teacher is not to cram the student's head with facts but to prepare them for a life of purity and sincerity.

When we speak of good teachers, it means that a teacher must be a model of faith and piety and should have a fairly good knowledge. A teacher should consider it his duty to educate and train his students and should feel responsible for it. He should feel that his students have been entrusted to him and he should avoid any breach of the trust the society has reposed in him. He should be a sociable person with his roots in the society. People should take him as their well-wisher and a sincere friend who cares for their children. It should be ascertained at

all cost that a candidate for this profession has a natural acumen and aptitude for teaching.

### Teacher's Role in English Learning

Regarding the role of the teacher in a foreign language classroom as it is in Indonesia, it is believed that a teacher who is the center of attention at all times—leading each activity, calling on students one-by-one to respond, and talking for nearly the whole class time (whether in the students' native language or the target language)—will feel burdened and

overwhelmed. Lee and VanPatten (2003) call this type of role, in which the teacher is—the authority, the expert, the central figure in the classroom who transmits knowledge to

the students the Atlas complex. In case of atlas complex, students do not reach their full potential because teacher himself did not give them enough opportunities to use the language in a meaningful way.

To avoid the atlas complex in the teaching a foreign language, teacher should play the role of an architect (Lee & VanPatten, 2003) in her/his teaching. Just as an architect leads a group of builders to construct a building, it is believed a teacher should lead his/her students toward a communicative goal by giving them the tools (Vygotsky, 1978) (e.g., a certain grammar principle or a cultural norm for applying in the target culture) to complete meaningful, real-life activities. This process allows students to learn and grow in their language proficiency as they use the tools to communicate (rather than recite) in the target language.

The way in which a teacher can provide his/her students with tools is through input, which can come in many forms, including writing, video, pictures, verbal communication, and so on. As Lee and VanPatten (2003) explain, input, like

petroleum,

can come in various forms and levels of quality. Often, the higher the quality of the refined petroleum (such as high-octane gasoline), the better a vehicle will run. In the same way, Krashen (1982, 1985) teaches that not just any input leads to language acquisition, but rather, input at a slightly more advanced level than what the students can

currently understand, or comprehensible input.

To make the input comprehensible for students, Long's (1996) counsel could be a good model that is by slowing down and simplifying teacher's speech, using gestures and other visual aids, and by linking ideas to students' background knowledge. Lee and VanPatten (2003) claim that—features of language ... can only make their way into the learner's mental representation of the language system if they have been linked to some kind of real-world meaning. It is completely important to use the target language as much as possible in the classroom, even for beginner-level students (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). Teacher-talk time should be limited to less than 50% of the class, leaving the rest of the time for students to use the language as they communicate with each other to complete task-based activities.

Task-based activities (TBA) (e.g., Ballman et al., 2001; Ellis, 2003) play a key role in CLT methodology. One important characteristic of TBA is their focus on a communicative goal (Ballman et al., 2001) rather than simply mastering a specific grammar skill. To further explain TBA, Lee's (2000) definition of 'task' consists of: (1) a classroom activity or exercise that has (a) an objective attainable only by the interaction among participants, (b) a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and (c) a focus on meaning exchange; and (2) a language

learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans (p. 32).

One might notice Lee's use of the words 'interaction', 'participants', 'learners', and 'perform', implying that TBA are learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. Relating back to the architect metaphor mentioned earlier, though the architect (i.e., the teacher) directs the work, it is the group of builders (i.e., students) who complete the construction of the building. As students focus on the task at hand (rather than the 'correct' way to use a hammer), they become much more effective, and not only accomplish the task but improve their construction (language) skills and abilities.

The teacher would not need to teach all of the various verb forms and conjugations at this time. This same activity can also be adapted for ESL and EFL students. As demonstrated in the afore mentioned example of TBA, it is absolutely believed that grammar instruction should be focused on communication rather than on form (Ballman et al., 2001; Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In other words, effective language teachers focus on helping students communicate with native speakers of the target language rather than on saying and writing everything with no grammatical errors. Traditionally, there are two types of second language teaching methods that are located on opposite ends of the spectrum for teaching grammar (Ballman et al., 2001). On one end, there is the 'grammar for grammar's sake' type, and on the other end the 'no grammar instruction' type.

### The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach

The main concept of CLT in this discussion mainly refers to Jack C. Richards as the first founder of the approach. Communicative language teaching as stated by Richards (2006) can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.

Communicative language teaching sets as its goal the teaching of *communicative competence as the opponent of grammatical competence*. Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language. It refers to knowledge of the building blocks of sentences (e.g., parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentence patterns) and how sentences are formed.

Grammatical competence is the focus of many grammar practice books, which typically present a rule of grammar on one page, and provide exercises to practice using the rule on the other page. The unit of analysis and practice is typically the sentence. While grammatical competence is an important dimension of language learning, it is clearly not all that is involved in learning a language since one can master the rules of sentence formation in a language and still not be very successful at being able to use the language for meaningful communication. It is the latter capacity which is understood by the term communicative competence.

Communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions.
- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when

to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication).

- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations).
- Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies).

CLT as a learning method strongly stresses on the implementation of pair and group work interaction. Through completing activities in this way, it is argued, learners will

obtain several benefits:

- They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group.
- They will produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities.
- Their motivational level is likely to increase.
- They will have the chance to develop fluency.
- Teaching and classroom materials today consequently make use of a wide variety of small-group activities.

### **The Roles of EFL Teachers**

Given the current roles of EFL teachers and the shifts in instruction that must take place for English Learners (ELs) to achieve within the foreign language teaching framework, teachers' role must be redefined as experts, advocates, and consultants, and that the roles of principals and administrators also need to shift to support the English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' new responsibilities. It is strongly suggested that implementing the CC requires the role of EFL teachers to evolve. EFL teachers should be recognized as experts, consultants, and trainers well versed in teaching rigorous academic content to ELs. Often overlooked

is EFL teachers' expertise in understanding and teaching academic language. When implementing the CC, content-area teachers will need to know how to create language objectives as well as—or integrated with—their content objectives. Without proper training, however, content teachers will not have the necessary knowledge base to set academic language goals in their classrooms and help students achieve them. EFL teachers can play a critical role in helping content teachers analyze the academic language demands of their content areas, design lessons that teach academic language and content simultaneously, and implement CC-based instruction for ELs.

It is advisable that EFL teachers are best positioned to understand and describe how content-area teachers can use ELs' first language and culture most effectively during CC-based instruction. In addition to helping content teachers with academic language, EFL teachers could, for example, help design a plan for how to draw on ELs' first language and culture during CC-based instruction. Although the role of the EFL teacher must evolve, time and staffing of EFL teachers remains a challenge because of the wide variety of ways in which EFL teachers serve their schools. For example, some EFL teachers are itinerant, with a caseload of two to three schools (or more) per EFL teacher. This situation creates the need for a more consultative model, in which the EFL teacher not only teaches EFL at the school but also works with content-area teachers on how to support ELs through CC-based lessons.

### **The Roles of Teacher in Teaching the Four Language Skills**

It is undeniable fact that teacher holds important roles in assisting his students comprehend the aspects related to the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as the teaching of vocabulary as the main essence in learning

any languages. In case of teaching listening, EFL teachers as suggested by Badi (2012) should know that students listening comprehension influences by the level of proficiency in learning L2. This what Robin Wills and Naizhao Guo established in this quotation" Language knowledge is the foundation of learning English. If students' knowledge of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary is insufficient, it is probable that their English listening comprehension will be negatively affected by lack of language knowledge.

EFL teachers should use a simple language which is fully of explanation and clarification to help students to understand the given input in the correct way. The main purpose of teaching listening skill is to enhance this skill to help students being skillful and proficient in L2. So, the role of EFL teachers is to give students the opportunity to listen to talk which includes grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation and then produce those aspects. That aims to highlight the importance of teachers' talk in increasing the interaction in the classroom because asking for clarification and giving it is an interaction itself. EFL teacher should organize the classroom mainly by encouraging the most important aspects language learning processes which are exclusively comprehensible input and 'social interaction.

In relation to the teaching of speaking as the second skill to mastery in learning any languages, Talley and Hui Ling (2014) state that speaking is an important part of teaching of any foreign language, and it requires a communicative approach integrative of both implicit and explicit teaching methods in order to achieve successful integration into the EFL curriculum. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is comprised of an approach to teaching a language through a syllabus designed for instruction, materials, classroom techniques, teachers, and learners.

The teaching of spoken English in the EFL classroom requires students to learn English in their own cultural setting without using their target language in a real situation.

English speaking is a modified communicative activity that involves English spoken language to achieve a particular goal or objective in the English language medium. In the case of any international college (i.e. a significant enrollment of foreign students), this cultural facet of language learning is not present. The EFL classroom environment represents the cultural boundaries of the host culture with full language immersion, ready access to English-language media, and the presence of western teachers. EFL students are fully expected to accept their portion of the –communicative burden. Lee, & VanPatten (2003). This communication –burden implies that students are expected to be responsible for initiating, responding, managing, and negotiating their part of the oral exchange.

On the other hand, Rao (2000) suggested that teachers adapt their teaching to the way that learners from a particular community. This means that teaching styles and learning styles should be matched accordingly. In a classroom discussion involving teacher and students, the communicative duty is shared among all classroom participants. However, in an oral test situation, the burden falls clearly upon the individual student to speak rather than a collective effort commonly found in group discussion. Either way, spoken communication (i.e., interpretation, expression, and /or negotiation of meaning) will be expected by the teacher or of the students in order to determine learning-level progression or for evaluative purposes. The goal of this approach is to develop learners' communicative competence and performance (Richards, & Rodgers, 2001).

In CLT, Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggested teachers and students to speak for communication. Rao (2000) stated, "Only by reconciling communicative activities with non-communicative activities (i.e. explicit learning) in English classrooms can students in non-English-speaking countries benefit from CLT" (p. 85). Wong (2005) pinpointed that the CLT approach had grown largely out of a realization that patterned practice and explicit grammar knowledge do not afford learners with the practical capability of speaking their L2s in a communicative fashion. CLT was considered to have the potential to encourage both practice and participation in authentic speaking situations. According to Chambers (1997), CLT promotes the use of authentic, spontaneous, and functional language in an effort to build students' spoken fluency. Students in the EFL classroom are encouraged to deal with unrehearsed situations under the guidance, but not the control, of their teachers. In a communicative classroom, learners are regularly placed in situational transactions and roleplay exercises (Crookall, & Oxford, 1991) that will involve selecting, sequencing, and arranging words, sentences, and utterances to achieve unified spoken discourse. Students are expected to demonstrate their comprehension in response to the task type and then to express themselves through some form of meaningful language output, verbally or in writing.

Spoken interaction is necessary for language learning to occur, but its simple occurrence is insufficient by, and of, itself. In an interactive linguistic environment, such as with the EFL classroom, the right amount and the right kind of verbal interaction must occur simultaneously for learning to take place. Long (1990) proposed three features of verbal interaction, including (a) input, (b) production, and (c) feedback. When

interpreting a language by native speakers offered to the language learner (or by other learners) of a target language. Production (or output) is the language spoken by the language learners themselves. Feedback is the reaction offered by the conversational partners to the production of the language learner. In classroom communication interaction, EFL students may achieve higher levels of speaking competence through appropriate strategies. Richard-Amato (1996) proposed four strategies for students to learn spoken English:

1. Think of what you are going to say.
2. Think about the structures you are using but do not let them interfere with what you want to say.
3. Do not be afraid to make mistakes (mistakes are normal as you are learning a language).
4. When you are not understood, use repetition, gestures, synonyms, definitions, acting out, whatever comes naturally as you begin to feel more proficient in the language.

Reading is the third level in the hierarchy of the four language skills. In conjunction to the teaching of reading Blair and Rupley state that teacher plays a major role in determining the effectiveness of a reading instructional program. Duffy-Hester (1999) perhaps stated it best when she noted the role the teacher played in helping children learn to read: "I am convinced that the teacher is more important and has a greater impact than any single, fixed reading program, method, or approach". Recognition of the significant role of the teacher is not new. Early studies on effective teaching, however, yielded little specific information about exactly what teachers do in the classroom and how what they do makes them effective.

In line with the concept of reading, Archer (2004) puts forward an effective

reading theory. He states that effective reading teachers lead each and every student in the classroom to become proficient and successful readers. Effective teachers do not use only one specific method or technique, but implement many strategies and skills to accommodate the needs and learning styles for each individual student in the classroom. Slavin (2000) notes that, -effective instruction is not a simple matter of one person with more knowledge transmitting knowledge to another. Rather, effective instruction demands the use of many strategies. Successful reading teachers are cognizant of the fact that reading can be taught using a variety of methods. Richard Allington (2002) notes that -effective teachers manage to produce better achievement regardless of which curriculum materials, pedagogical approach, or reading program they use. Walls, Nardi, von Minden, and Hoffman (2002) defined effective teachers as: appearing to have better developed schemata for classroom teaching with strong links between subject matter and ways to teach it; to be more effective lesson planners and implementers, and yet be more flexible and reflective in meeting student needs and facilitating student social and academic growth. Mohr (1998) adds that an effective teacher

-establishes literacy communities and encourages students to participate as responsible, contributing citizens. As there is not one universal definition that is accepted among researchers as to what constitutes effective teaching, there seem to be certain themes that are established throughout research, such as encouragement, academic growth, and a variety of skills and strategies.

Writing is the last skill to master in the process of learning any languages. As a productive skill like reading, writing is regarded to be the most difficult item to comprehend, so that certain strategy,

approach, method, and learning model should be accommodated by any teachers in that students could promote their skill in any types of writing. Hyland, K (2003) states that the role of the teacher in writing classes does not go beyond providing guidance and assistance to students. Here, suggesting a fixed role for the teacher could be tricky as the focus of the writing concept, for our writing classes, changes from a guided fashion to the process writing. In the former one, the teacher focuses on enabling the learners to execute fixed patterns and imitating model texts. When the latter one takes the lead, the teacher helps students develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas. Raimes (1992) refers some ways to how a teacher should handle with these strategies: -This is achieved through setting pre-writing activities to generate ideas about content and structure, and encouraging brainstorming and outlining, requiring multiple drafts, giving extensive feedback, seeking text level revisions, facilitating peer responses, and delaying surface corrections until the final editing.

The process writing, recursive and interactive, allows us to go back and forth and revise what has been written. Thus, what counts are the stages that the learner goes through, not the product. There are actually two main levels we focus when giving feedback. First one is at surface level. At this level we have been using color codes, which inform the students about the location and type of their errors, if any. This enables readers to question his/her weakness in a particular language use and search for a way for treatment rather than a spoon-fed correction. As for the latter, it is the -content rather than -form that takes the initial seat. Thus, generating, drafting, and refining ideas are of crucial importance at this level. Here there may arise some misunderstandings regarding the concept of

-content. A particular student might be frightened to take a certain stance as it would clash with that of his/her teacher. However, here progression of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves.

## Conclusion

As a foreign language in Indonesia, the model of teaching and learning English has shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered. It is intended to accelerate learners' understanding about the English language in that communicative competencies as the primary objective of the teaching and learning process could be well accommodated by every learner. Although student-centered model of learning is given higher priority than that of teacher-centered, the roles of teachers, especially in designing learning materials and in managing classroom activities are still so crucial that without them the learners' communicative competencies will not optimally be achieved.

## REFERENCES

- Allington, R.L. (1983). The reading instruction provided readers of differing reading abilities. *The Elementary School Journal*, 83, 548–559.
- Archer, E. (2010). They made me an invitation I couldn't refuse: Teaching refusal strategies for invitations. In D. H. Tatsuki & N. R. Houck (Eds.), *Pragmatics: Teaching speech acts* (pp. 181–194). Mattoon, IL: United Graphics, Inc.
- Asher, J. J. (1969). The Total Physical Response approach to second language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 53, 3–17. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.1969.tb04552.x
- Ballman, T. L., Liskin-Gasparro, J. E., & Mandell, P. B. (2001). *The communicative classroom*. (Vol. 3). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Thomas Learning.
- Blair, T.R. (2003). What research on teaching tells us about reading teacher competencies. In A. Pandian, G. Chakravarthy, & S. Che Lah (Eds.), *English language teaching and literacy: Research and reflections*, Serdang, Malaysia: Universiti Putra Malaysia Press.
- Blair, T.R., & Rupley, W.H. (2000, May). *Assessing instructional emphases in a balanced reading program*.
- Duffy-Hester, A.M. (1999). Teaching struggling readers in elementary school classrooms: A review of classroom reading programs and principles for instruction. *The Reading Teacher*.
- Duff, P., Wong, P., & Early, M. (2000). Learning language for work and life: The linguistic socialization of immigrant Canadians seeking careers in healthcare. *Canadian Modern Language Review*.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Han, H. (2009). Institutionalized inclusion: A case study on support for immigrants in English learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(4), 643–668. doi:10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00190.
- Hyland, K. 2003. *Second Language Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practices in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon. [electronic version accessed 24 April 2013 at [http://www.sdkrashen.com/Principles\\_and\\_Practice/Principles\\_and\\_Practice.pdf](http://www.sdkrashen.com/Principles_and_Practice/Principles_and_Practice.pdf)
- Lee, J. F., & VanPatten, B. (2003). *Making communicative language teaching*



- happen (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. *Handbook of second language acquisition*.
- Richards, Jack C., and Theodore Rodgers (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Second Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, Jack C., and Charles Sandy (1998). *Passages*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Slavin, R. (1999). *Cooperative Learning, theory, research, and practice*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Swain, VanPatten, B. (1988). How juries get hung: Problems with the evidence for a focus on form in teaching. *Language Learning*.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, E. Souberman (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.