

The Teacher's Role in the Classroom and New Trends

El papel del profesor en el aula y las nuevas tendencias

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Abstract:

A teacher is a professional who performs in a classroom and has a big influence on students. So the teachers' role is very critical in a language teaching environment because they can have a huge impact on students' learning process.

According to Yan & Zhang (2002), there are three main basic roles that teachers do; these are the following: Lecturer, teacher, and facilitator. They made distinctions among the three based on the theory of affective factors. The first one, lecturers, are those teachers who only consider their professional skills but neglect teaching methodology, this is an example about teaching philosophy before taking the specialization online; the second one refers to teachers and these are the ones who possess teaching methodology and professional skills but rarely pay attention to students learning. Finally, the last role refers to facilitators, that is, teachers who not only take care of students' performance in the classroom but also pay attention to their learning process during the course.

Keywords:

Teacher's role, Language teaching, trends

Resumen:

Un maestro es un profesional que se desempeña en un aula y tiene una gran influencia en los estudiantes. Entonces, el papel de los docentes es muy crítico en un entorno de enseñanza de idiomas porque pueden tener un gran impacto en el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Según Yan y Zhang (2002), hay tres roles básicos principales que los docentes desempeñan; estos son los siguientes: profesor, maestro y facilitador. Hicieron distinciones entre los tres basados en la teoría de los factores afectivos. El primero, profesores, son aquellos profesores que solo consideran sus habilidades profesionales pero descuidan la metodología de enseñanza, este es un ejemplo sobre la enseñanza de la filosofía antes de tomar la especialización en línea; el segundo se refiere a los maestros y estos son los que poseen metodología de enseñanza y habilidades profesionales, pero rara vez prestan atención al aprendizaje de los estudiantes. Finalmente, el último rol se refiere a los facilitadores, es decir, a los profesores que no solo se ocupan del rendimiento de los alumnos en el aula sino que también prestan atención a su proceso de aprendizaje durante el curso.

Palabras Clave:

Rendimiento, papel del profesor, enseñanza de idiomas, tendencias

Introduction

Experience is extremely significant for being a good teacher, but not only does that matter, it is considered that English teachers should be in a continuous process of improving their classes, that is a good reason for the Language Center at Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo to evaluate teachers performance every semester; they come to the school and observe a complete class after that they evaluate teachers class, lesson planning, learning environment, knowledge of the subject and finally the use of the teaching cycle that Davies, Hernández Alvarado, Hernández Hernández & López González

(2014) state in their books series used by the university and high school in both versions, Make It Real Professional and Junior.

Therefore using this teaching cycle allows students to start the journey about learning English as a foreign language from the very beginning because this cycle has four main points that an English teacher can consider for his or her lessons.

People use a language to communicate and also to express their feelings, emotions, thoughts, needs, desires etc. in words using an alphabet; with a gesture which is considered as a language, for example, body language which seems to be a good tool when teaching a second language at school.

New facts about teaching philosophy.

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When we got enrolled in a new adventure named: Specialization in teaching and learning English as a foreign language, and it was the best decision that we have ever taken. And we will try to summarize in few words why; firstly because even though we had few years' experiences teaching English as a second language but honestly we did not know that there were a lot of things that we did not take into account when we were teaching to students from high school and college.

During the last year in 2017 where we attended some courses in Pachuca City, Hidalgo; Building effective Teaching (BET 1 and BET 2) there were some conferences and workshops where people from the USA and England came to the place where we work Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo (UAEH) and gave some conferences about new trending in English teaching and we as teachers who faced real problems in classroom had the chance to exchange ideas between each other and in a certain way it was an enrichment activity.

It was the International Congress about language and culture 2017 and in December last year we did for the very first time a video about English from our school and it was uploaded on iTunes and YouTube platforms, and they are available in the following links:

<https://youtu.be/BLyHow4n54w?list=PLqOltvxL5mFW9c2VbAAb8iIX1rownJYW>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqOltvxL5mFWSqea7Fs9U7NyklIHR3T_K

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8eKM2yjA38&index=2&list=FL-nn_MTOfeoXw41SeRiAJSA&t=4s

They have been very good experiences recording these videos that can be used to explain our students a topic (how to use comparatives in English), (needs and obligations) and the last one about Superlatives in English. The three links for the videos above were uploaded on YouTube, iTunes, and UAEH platforms that are available for all the community.

Theory underlying teaching practice and identity.

The classroom is the true center of educational experience, and, it is here through the teaching and learning process, where education happens, according to Hall (2017) but he personally believes that educational experience not only happens in the classroom or even though at school. Sometimes it can happen at home or in other different environments. (Hall, 2017)

Some months ago, we were wondering if we will be able to do a specialization at the UPN; it is very important because we are going to be improving our students' English level and promote their active participation in class. Additionally, teachers could be practicing short listening and students help each other to understand the meaning of certain words.

Since the introduction by Hymes in the 1960's the term communicative competence has increased popularity among the teachers, researchers, and others interested in language. In the world, people had to communicate since the beginning, and they were using different ways to communicate with each other; as in my classes students need to communicate too, we use English as a tool to do it in Richards & Schmidt (2014). (Richards & Schmidt R., 2014)

The second language acquisition according to Benson (2013) is something that gives them the chance today in the modern world to continue learning a language without a formal instruction. It is known that today schools have provided a lot of practice in

English, and many other languages too. But some years ago, people did not go to schools to learn a language, they even did not have Internet access, platforms or apps to get involve into a language, people who traveled more or who were in direct contact with the language were who learned a second language in advance.

(Benson, 2013)

Richard & Rodgers (2014) proposed that at the beginning of the 20th century the teaching of a language has suffered along the time of different events, such as the changes in language teaching methods like the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, and the Audiolingual Method. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014)

It is going to briefly summarise these methods, the first one is: According to Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2013) the Grammar Translation Method, and as its name indicates, is a method that only focuses on grammar and the students need to memorize a lot of grammar rules and one of the main disadvantages is that they are looking for words in the dictionary and most of the times they do not get that vocabulary; also teachers who use this method use little of the target language during classes.

On the other hand the Direct Method, it is not allowed the translation to the target language is used in a class all the time, another thing is that teachers do not explain Grammar, it includes a lot of body language, realia, and visual materials, as Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2013) definite, and one of the most important things is that it is taught in the target language. The authors' state that this method has been very useful in their classes.

The last method is the Audiolingual Method where Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2013) proposed that it uses a lot of modeling and repetition, not too much grammar only very short dialogues; there is an emphasis on accuracy, the mechanical practice allow beginners the opportunity to practice the sounds of English, especially when they have not had previous exposure to the language.

It is known that people, especially English teachers will be wondering which method is the best one, and that depends from their perspective, but even though the authors think there is no best method, but English teachers could use the best from everyone.

Second Language Acquisition.

Second language acquisition (SLA) research is a field of study that deals with how learners go about acquiring a language other than their first language (L1). Before looking more closely at some of the hypotheses, models, and theories of SLA and the areas of research, they will briefly talk about the name SLA by specifically discussing the term second.

In the field of SLA, the term second is typically used to discuss and explain the process of learning languages which are learned after the first language (L1). However, it is important to understand the complexities underlying the term second. Therefore, in the following section, they will briefly discuss how the term second is a very general concept which hides many of the complexities underlying the process of learning English as a foreign language in Mexico. One of the first issues with using the term second is that it is not necessarily true that all of our learners are in the process of learning a second language according to Galasso (1999).

Research on the second language acquisition (SLA) has already expanded enormously since its beginning. Studies of SLA have

improved in quantity as some researchers have addressed a wider range of topics, asked new questions and worked within multiple methodologies where Pica (2015) says:

At the same time, the field has become increasingly bi-directional and multi-faceted in its applications. As new theories and research have emerged on language, and even more so, on learning, their application to the study of SLA has been fruitful. (Pica, 2005, p. 1)

It has led to long-needed explanations about developmental regularities and persistent difficulties and has opened up new lines of research on the processes and sequences of the second language (L2) development.

Learning

De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes & Moors (2013) agreed on a definition about learning.

Learning has been defined functionally as changes in behavior that result from experience or mechanistically as changes in the organism that result from experience. Both types of definitions are problematic. We define learning as ontogenetic adaptation—that is, as changes in the behavior of an organism that result from regularities in the environment of the organism. This functional definition not only solves the problems of other definitions, but also has important advantages for cognitive learning research. (p.1)

According to that principle De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes & Moors describe learning is a change where experience is important for the process of learning, therefore learning reflects an innate capacity and desire for language acquisition, but the prior knowledge of L1 cannot negate when considering the 'initial state' for L2 learning.

(De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes, & Moors, 2013)

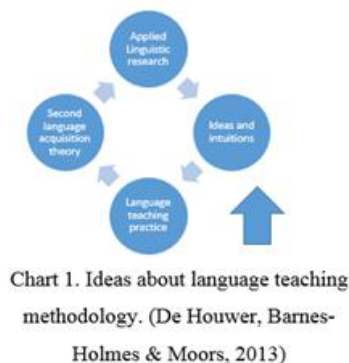


Chart 1. Ideas about language teaching methodology. (De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes & Moors, 2013)

Krashen's hypothesis

This hypothesis by Stephen Krashen is one of the most controversial theoretical perspectives in Second Language Acquisition. It is based on a set of five interrelated hypotheses that are listed below:

The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

As mentioned above, Krashen (1982) claims that there is a difference between acquisition and learning. The acquisition is "a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language, not unlike the process used by a child to 'pick up' a language". Learning is a conscious process in which 'learners attend to form, figure out rules, and are generally aware of their own process' (Brown, 2002, p. 278). (Brown, 2002) (Krashen, 1982)

The acquisition-learning distinction is perhaps the most fundamental of all the hypotheses to be presented here. It states that adults have two distinct and independent ways of developing competence in a second language.

The first mode is language acquisition, a process similar to, if not identical, to the way that children develop ability in their first language. Language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication according to Krashen (1982).

The consequence of language acquisition, acquired competence, is also subconscious. English teachers are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages that they have acquired. Instead of that, they have a "feel" for correctness. Grammatical sentences "sound" right, or "feel" right and errors feel wrong, even if they do not consciously know what rule was violated.

The affective filter hypothesis

One obstacle that manifests itself during language acquisition is the affective filter; that is a 'screen' that is influenced by emotional variables that can prevent learning. This hypothetical filter does not impact acquisition directly but rather prevents input from reaching the language acquisition part of the brain. The effective filter can be prompted by many different variables including anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, and stress. (Krashen, 1981, p. 31)

Emotions have a big influence in students' learning process, as Krashen (1981) states, but also many different factors can influence in student's language acquisition, such as a lack of self-confidence, the motivation that a student has or the level of the street in which a student is involved.

Research over the last decade has confirmed that a variety of effective variables relate to success in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). Most of those studied can be placed into one of these three categories:

Krashen defined "motivation" (1981, p.31) in which students with more motivation will learn quickly the second language and it is generally seen in the author's classes.

Another important aspect is the Self-confidence, where Krashen defined "Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition" (1981, p.31), and if you trust yourself, you can have a better response in an English environment.

Finally the anxiety where Krashen states "Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether

measured as personal or classroom anxiety” (1981, p.31) and it means that if a student is a concentrate in class and feel relaxes, he or she will be able to handle with the learning of a second language, which is English in this case.

Chart 2. Krashen’s theory. (Krashen, 1981)

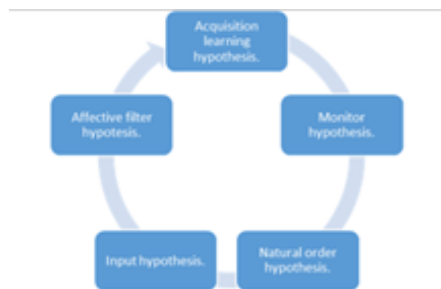


Chart 2. Krashen’s theory. (Krashen, 1981)

Zone of Proximal Development

"Zone of proximal development" (ZPD) is Vygotsky’s term for the range of tasks that a child can complete independently and those completed with the guidance and assistance of adults or more-skilled children. The lower limit of ZPD is the level of skill reached by the child working independently. The upper limit is the level of additional responsibility the child can accept the assistance of an able instructor. The ZPD captures the child’s cognitive skills that are in the process of maturing and can be accomplished only with the assistance of a more-skilled person. Scaffolding is a concept closely related to the idea of ZPD. Scaffolding is changing the level of support. Over the course of a teaching session, a more-skilled person adjusts the amount of guidance to fit the child’s current performance. (Mishra, 2013, p.22)

The dialogue is an important tool of this process in the zone of proximal development. In a dialogue, unsystematic, disorganized, and spontaneous concepts of a child are met with the more systematic, logical and rational concepts of the skilled helper.

(Vygotsky, 1962) introduced the concept of ZPD to criticize the psychometric-based testing in Russian schools. The traditional testing reflected only the current level of learners’ achievement, rather than learner’s potential for development in future. The zone of actual development (ZAD) does not sufficiently describe development. Rather, it reflects what is already developed or achieved. The level of assisted performance in ZPD highlights the potential for emerging behavior and “tomorrow of development” (Vygotsky, 1978).

CONCLUSIONS

English teachers have the main responsibility, to form and create good environmental conditions for students to develop

the Intercultural communicative competence to prepare them to interact in intercultural and diverse environments. In other words, language teaching must integrate skills and strategies for developing cultural awareness leading to the Intercultural communicative competence to become these young English learners to fit in the globalized world and become citizenships from the world.

Students will be adapting to new English communicative competences, and in this research was found that students and teachers will continue to grow up academically and increase the knowledge that has to be learned in an excellent English class. One thing that can be demanded is the way that learners can become someone else after learning a foreign language, because students and English teachers can learn culture from everyone and integrate ICTs in classroom to provide new relationships among students and teachers; concluding that is a great opportunity to evolve to a new way in which English is learned and become very useful for everyone.

During the time we have worked as an English teacher at the UAEH, all the staff from the school has to take different courses which are oriented in three axes. The First is in ICT’s, the second is in pedagogy and finally the third in English. So they have been taking the courses in ICT’s and they have learned how to create new and better presentations using Prezi, and with the author’s university email, it was created their account for educational purposes on the Prezi website. Rohatgi, Scherer & Hatlevik (2016) agreed together in their research about using new ICT’s in the classroom to improve students learning. Teachers should learn new things to adapt and use in their teaching environments to have a better performance.

The authors have been presenting some lessons using new materials and techniques, and the final result has been spectacular and it has been noticed that students are more comfortable when they are following the different patterns from this presentations and the classes are not the same like when they were studying English before.

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