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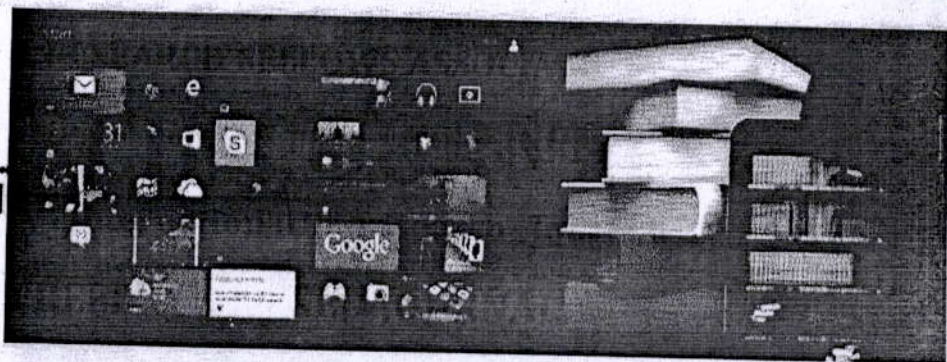
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Use of ICT in Higher Education



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## CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN THE SCENARIO OF ICT ENABLED TEACHING

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### Abstract :

*The paper discusses the changing role of English language teacher in Indian context. It tries to analyse the difference that has come in the teacher's responsibility as the controller of the class to the facilitator of learning. An attempt is also made to find out how the teacher could play an important role even in the era of computer assisted language learning.*

**Keywords :-** Role, English Language Teaching, facilitator, teacher-centred, pedagogy

Teacher plays a vital role in all teaching learning situations to evolve class room environment. Learners also have to change and modify their role with the teacher. Hence, teachers must have a clear view about the role they play in class room situations. This view is restricted to what the teachers should or should not do in the classrooms only.

The 'role' is a technical term. According to Dorney and Murphey the term 'role' "which originally comes from sociology and refers to the shared expectation of how an individual should behave. In other words, roles describe what people are supposed to do". In English Language Teaching (ELT), various methodologists have suggested many different kinds of roles for a language teacher. Richard and Rodgers (1986) think about teachers' roles as part of the 'design' component of a method. They point out that the teachers' roles are related to the following things:

1. the type of function teachers are expected to realize,
2. the degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place,
3. the degree to which is the teacher responsible for defining the content of teaching,
4. the patterns of interaction that develop between teachers and learners

According to Littlewood (1981), in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) teacher is not an 'instructor', he is rather a 'facilitator of learning' and 'co-communicator' with the learners. Harmer (2001) looks at the term "facilitator" with a broader and different point of view. He points out that the ultimate aim of all roles is to facilitate the students' progress in some way or the other. He discusses certain "precise" terms for the roles that teachers play in the classroom: controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, and observer. Tudor (1993) views the role of the teacher in the context of the notion of the learner-centred classroom. In a learner-centered classroom the focus is on the active involvement of the learners in the learning process. However, before considering what involves the role of the teacher in such a changed view of the classroom, it is sensible to have look at the traditional roles that an English language teacher has performed so far (especially, in the Indian context). This is important for us if we want to understand the factors which have compelled a change in the perspective, and if we want to consider to the extent to which that change is suitable in the Indian context.





### Conventional role of teacher

Search for the synonyms of the word "traditional", gives us many words: old, legendary, historical, handed down, customary, conventional, long-standing, established, correct, proper, etc. These words describe the most common traditional method of teaching English in the India. It brings us to the features of traditional method of teaching English in India. Traditional method is to a great extent teacher-centred. It always keeps the focus on the teacher. The teachers would lecture on the given topics at length and the students would listen to them attentively. English has been taught using this methodology for several decades. This methodology has been used various topics of grammar or phonology. It focuses mainly on formal features of language, instead of focusing on encouragement to the learners to use the language. Mechanical drills, extensive and repetitive practice, and rote memorization of grammar rules are important features of this traditional approach to language teaching. Wilkins (1976) calls it a "synthetic" approach in which "different parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up". Assumption behind this approach is that the purpose of all teaching is to simplify learning. The proper way of such simplification is to break down the contents into smaller parts and then present them in a sequential and graded manner. This approach of linear presentation of contents of language learning is explained well by Nunan (1996).

The teacher is responsible for constructing "the language wall." The teacher in this conventional approach is not only an organizer and controller of all classroom activities but also the sole evaluator of the learners' performance. It makes clear that traditionally the teacher is supposed to be the source of all knowledge; hence he has always played a dominant role. The learner has always been at the receiving end. His brain is a receptacle to be filled the knowledge imparted by the teacher.

Freire (1982) compares this system of education to banking system. He calls it "banking" system of education. Learners, here are like bank accounts wherein deposits of contents of learning are made at regular intervals. These deposits are to be withdrawn at the time of examination. Obviously, the responsibility here lies on the individuals making the deposits. Using this analogy signifies that the teacher bears the burden of the entire class on his shoulders. The learners are mere passive listeners to the teacher with rare exception when they repeat or react to the teacher's directions. The learner has no control over content of learning or the methods of teaching. This authoritative or sometimes autocratic role of the teacher is based on the conventional notion that success of teaching-learning process depends on how articulately a teacher delivers.

However, it is a misleading notion to believe that learning depends on articulate or "eloquent" teaching. Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out, "teaching, however purposeful, cannot automatically lead to learning for the simple reason that learning is primarily a personal construct controlled by the individual learner" (p. 44). Therefore, learning opportunities may be maximized only by involving the learner in the learning process. A teacher must remember that teaching and learning are interrelated and two way processes. It is hard to believe the traditionally sacrosanct view that teaching is broadcast of knowledge and learning is accumulation of knowledge.



**Focus on teacher**

The traditional approach presents the teacher as the supreme authority in the classroom. It, sometimes, altogether denies the existence of the learner. Dewey (1938) opposed this kind of spoon-feeding of knowledge. He pointed out that the learner plays an importance role of an active agent in his or her learning. Dewey is the founder of the well known current notion of "learner-centredness." Tudor (1996) says that it reflects, "a widespread desire in the language teaching community to develop means of allowing learners to play a fuller, more active and participatory role in their language study" (p. 1). However, it cannot be firmly stated that the learner-centredness in ELT is a product of a single school of thought. It actually is a result of the convergence of several innovative perspectives on language teaching. Among them, prominent are:

1. the humanistic approaches to language teaching which emerged in the later half of the twentieth century. It emphasized on equal attention to both the intellectual and the emotional development of the learner,
2. communicative language teaching, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. It was a reaction against the prevalent structural approach to language teaching based on drill methods. The communicative approach aimed to make language teaching "more flexible and more responsive to students' real world communicative needs."

**Role of the teacher in task-based language teaching**

In the current model of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), which is basically an outcome of communicative language teaching, learner-centredness has been in great focus. Nunan (2004) points out that the main conceptual basis for TBLT is, "experiential learning" or "learning by doing". TBLT has broken down the hierarchies of the traditional classroom because the process of trying to complete a communicative task entails planning and using strategies on the part of the learner.

The role of learner is significantly altered in a learner-centred approach to language teaching, like TBLT. The learner is engrossed with all classroom activities. He/she gets a hands-on practical experience of using the language for communicative purposes. This does not necessarily diminish the role of the teacher. Although, the teacher is not really in the focus here, the teacher has to perform an important "mediational" role which includes a wide range of responsibilities. These responsibilities of the teacher are qualitatively different from the traditional role of the teacher as the preacher who imparts information. In the process of mediation, the teacher becomes a true facilitator of learning for the language learners, who guides them through dialogic communication (Vygotsky, 1978) as they co-construct knowledge with the help of the teacher. In this process, the teacher's role of the instructor is restricted. The teacher is supposed to be "a guide by the side". He is expected to be an advisor who advises the learners after observing their strengths and weaknesses. The teacher also plans the tasks for the future and stimulates the learners' intellect by presenting new language content and motivating them to acquire them.

We need to understand an important thing that the teachers do not really have control over the learner's natural process of learning a second or a foreign language. Learners' process of achieving communicative ability in the second language is also beyond teachers' control. What a teacher can do better is to create conducive classroom environment for language learning. Motivation helps the learners to develop communicative skills. Therefore, teachers should facilitate this process by





involving them in diverse communicative activities. Pair work and group work are especially useful for this.

### **Learner centred environment in (Computer Assisted Language Learning) CALL**

Research in cognitive learning theories has made clear that students learn most efficiently when they feel 'engaged' with the learning process and the learning material, and feel in control over their progress. This is related with the sense of progression the learners receive. It may be disastrous to offer complete freedom to navigate through complex learning routines. Carefully planned levels of help, conditional branching and timely feedback help the learner to receive that 'sense of progress.'

The difficulty lies with necessity of carefully designed work. It often happens that the important step of creating a full instructional document is omitted. This step requires considerable thought so that the end user will think that we try to put together meaningful sequences of activities to enable student progression.

The important step of trial of prototype material with learners before the programme is finalized is often neglected. The designers and programmers do not believe this step to be necessary very often. The 'designer arrogance' is likely to take over at this point. In reality, nobody can be sure how a learner as end user will react to what is offered to them. The amount of research in this field is so insufficient that making hard and fast rules is extremely difficult. Adequate research is necessary. When, trials of prototype are conducted and the trials are monitored, even with just a few learners, the results are often surprising.

### **Conclusion**

The teacher has to play an altogether different and innovative role of facilitator in CLT or TBLT classroom is absolutely different from the role of controller and organizer the teacher has to play in a conventional classroom. Role of a facilitator involves learners' empowerment by giving them more initiative and responsibility. In the traditional teacher-fronted classroom, the learner is always under the power of the teacher. The teacher determines who says what to whom and when. In learner-centered classroom the teacher is expected to give up some of his or her power. In other words, learner-centredness allows the learner to have greater say in the determination of the course of the lesson. However, this may sound well in principle, in practice, especially, in the larger Indian context, it would be quite difficult for a teacher of English to undertake the innovative role of the facilitator because our education system is strictly syllabus- and textbook-oriented and examination-driven. In addition to that, our learners and teachers might not be ready to accept such different and innovative roles in attitudinal terms. Of course, this can be overcome by making the learners and the teachers aware about the benefits of the innovative practices. One more crucial issue needs our attention while we advocate the case of innovative roles of teachers, is the importance of the social context in which the language classroom is situated. What is suggested here is the overhauling of the power structure of the traditional classroom, and a reconceptualisation of the whole process of language learning. However, this "overhauling" and "reconceptualisation" should not have harsh effects on the cultural beliefs and assumptions of the teachers and learners about the behavioural patterns in the language classroom. Therefore, it is necessary that we take into account cultural patterns while considering the innovative roles of both teachers and learners in the language classroom.

The use of computers, which was a concern of only few experts a few decades ago, has become a matter of interest for a large number of language teachers. It clearly signifies growing interest in





the use of computers for language teaching and learning. There has been a growing interest in use of computers for language teaching and learning. Despite many difficulties, use of ICT in language teaching by multitude of teachers is a reality today.

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