

Lecture two: Kinds of Teachers in Teaching Styles

1. Introduction:

The teacher has always been known as the purveyor of knowledge and before him learners sit as empty recipients that are supposedly to be filled. This style has prevailed for years on end and is still. Now experts, throughout the world, recommend that the teacher should adapt and adopt a shift in focus in his teaching progressively and congruently to what is accredited in the institution he acts in. It is significantly recognised that when teachers stay back from the teaching learning process, the learning outcomes turn to be visibly positive. (J.Scrivener1996)

2. Teaching styles

Just as people have individual learning styles teachers have teaching styles that work best for them. It is important to be aware of one's preferences when preparing and presenting a lesson. While observing a teacher, his lesson is characterised either by being a teacher-centred course or a learner-centred one.

2.1. Teacher-centred class

Teachers centred or teachers fronted are those teachers who have a formal authority; they teach with the style that tends to focus on content. In this style the teacher is the only responsible for providing and controlling the flow of the content and the student is expected to receive it and neither special role nor a strategy is required from him/her in the learning process, which goes beyond their will or their concern. (J.Scrivener1996)

In this traditional style, the teacher stands at the front of the room teaching, and the learners sit on rows listening. In this teaching style the teacher is the knower and has the task to transmit knowledge to the students. This is mainly done by long explanations with a passive participation of learners and it is only by the end of the lesson that the learners are generally doing some assessment

activities. What also characterises the teacher fronted class style is that during the whole lesson timing, the teacher keeps control of the subject matter and supervises the flow of the course and

decides what the students do. In such classrooms, the teacher is by far the most active person, but by assumption not all the learners are completely involved. Some of the learners turn off because of long dull explanations, while others do not understand at all and would rather do something different. It can be noticed that this way of teaching, on the whole, is not deprived from the ill-effects which is on the top of teacher centeredness. One type of statement made by an instructor with this teaching style is "I am the flashlight for my students; I illuminate the content and materials so that my students can see the importance of the material and appreciate the discipline." (J.Scrivener1996)

In Algeria, however, this style has prevailed for long years, because the successive adopted classical approaches required the teacher to be at the centre of any teaching /learning situation. Now with the newly implemented approach, CBA (Competency Based Approach), teaching in our schools is taking new dimensions in which the learner is at the core of the teaching/learning process. What is also, worth noting, is that in teacher centred classes, the recurring teaching is based on doing what someone else has suggested or decided, using the lesson material or technique as given without adapting it in any way . In this way, the effectiveness of a teacher depends largely on his pedagogic skills, and his knowledge of the topic he is teaching, and on all the associated methodology. Consequently, this teacher is only as good as the techniques or materials that he employs, and improves by learning more about them. Worthy to note then that this style has been incessantly practised in the Algerian universities since the teachers have never been subjects of any training that prescribe the good effects of learner centeredness nor have they been acquainted with a special programme of professional development which help them grow within an experience that gives rise to the mastery of pedagogy and therefore to the knowledge of the subject matter. Above all, and what turns to be negative when compared to the new approaches of learning, these teachers, even more, do not want to build relationships with their students nor is it as important that

their students form relationships with other students. This type of teacher doesn't usually require much student participation in class. It is referred to as "Sage on the stage" model. Zeichner and Liston maintain that "these teachers are considered only as conduits for implementing programs and ideas formulated elsewhere." (1996:4) Paris, also highlights this fact saying that: "Teachers have been considered to be consumers of curriculum knowledge, but are not assumed to have the requisite skills to create or critique that knowledge." (1993:149). Arguably, this teaching pattern puts the teacher on the track of a dependence routine which prevents him to examine and modifies his beliefs and habits. Conversely, nowadays most interests are expressed on the importance of the whole person in the learner.

2.2.Learner Centeredness Perspective

Learner-centered approach is an approach to teaching that is increasingly being encouraged in higher education. Learner-centered teachers do not employ a single teaching method. This approach emphasizes a variety of different types of methods that shifts the role of the instructors from givers of information to facilitators and delegators student learning. Recent development in language teaching has emphasized a learner- centered approach with awareness of the learner as an individual and focus on learner autonomy. This has led to the development of the notion of autonomous learning. To enlighten this, one may assume that being a teacher does not necessarily mean gripping over the whole learning that may take place. A teacher cannot learn for his students. What a teacher can do is to help and create the conditions conducive to successful learning. He should set up a continuous attention of self-awareness and self-development in the learners. This operation consists of involving them, by enabling them to work at speed, by avoiding long explanations, by encouraging them to participate, talk, chat, interact, do things, etc. Scrivener explains all these as follows

“The teacher is teaching but it is unclear how much learning is taking place. It is quite possible for a teacher to be putting great effort into his/her teaching and for no learning to be taking place; similarly a teacher could apparently be doing nothing, but the students be learning a great deal”(1994:2)

In this kind of teaching/learning situation, the teacher, as mentioned above, is not the transmitter of knowledge, but it is the learner's performance which is more active. Another more or less important factor is the physical setting which differs greatly from traditional ordinary classes because learners sit down in circles within which it is sometimes hard to guess which person guides the learning process. Henceforth, the tasks and the speaking is done by everyone within the circle rather than by just one person standing before learners. However, this does not prevent the teacher to interfere from time to time, in order to motivate, instructor explain something to all the learners. Nunan defines the learner centred approach as: “information by and from the learner is used in planning, implementing and evaluating language programmes” (1989:19). This means that learners are substantially involved in the process and even determine most aspects of learning that may take place. On the other hand, the teacher is less involved and becomes a guide, an organiser a counsellor or a resource of information when needed. These teacher roles are basically considered as the requisites for the current learning process.

3. Kinds of Teachers in the light of TED.

In the new trend of learner centred classes teachers are categorized according to their personality, methodology (knowledge and skills) and language (knowledge and use). In fact, relatively to the already mentioned criteria Scrivener (1998:6) classified teachers into three categories: the explainer, the involver and the enabler.

3.1. The Explainer

He is the one who knows little of teaching methodology, i.e. does not have

his own views on learning and teaching, does not possess available materials and at last does not reflect his teaching techniques to enhance development. His lectures are based mainly on explanations as a way of transferring knowledge rather than analysing and synthesising his/her teaching. This may be performed enthusiastically with great entertainment. Whereas the learners just listen, taking notes from time to time and occasionally answering, but are not personally involved or challenged. Teachers who act as explainers are in charge of the class and of the activity taking place in a way that is substantially different from a situation where students are working on their own groups. Likewise Harmer (2001:58) asserts: “that controllers¹ take the roll, tell the students things, organize drills, read aloud, and in various ways exemplify the qualities of a teacher – fronted classroom”. This means that these teachers view their job as the transmission of knowledge from themselves to their students and inspired them through this knowledge and charisma.

3.2. The Involver

The involver as a teacher, on the other hand, has better knowledge of teaching methodology. In terms of knowledge this teacher has different views on methodology and skills. He gives great importance to lesson planning and to action research. He is able to use appropriate teaching and organisational procedures and techniques to help the learners learn about the subject matter. Furthermore, students with clear learning goals and a responsible attitude to their learning can potentially become involved in most levels of decisions-making with the guide of an involver teacher. Tudor (1996:279) quoted in Hedge & Whitney poses that: “real involvement requires course planning, which is, according to him, a very complex process, one to which different types of students can contribute to varying degrees”. He, therefore, proposes a course planning that includes the following points: Course structure (e.g. the mix of in-class, self-access, and independent study components);

- Goal-setting;
- Choice of methodology;
- Activity selection and organization;
- Linguistic syllabus (e.g. will the teacher decide on the language points to be covered, or will this arise out of students' observed performance in communicative tasks?);
- Choice of materials (e.g. can students provide materials directly relevant to their learning goals?);
- Topic selection;
- Evaluation;
- Independent study.(ibid:279)

In this way, the teacher sets his learners in a gradual involvement process within which they start to think critically about what their teacher proposes to them.

3.3. The Enabler

This teacher possesses a close relation of feelings with his learners. Hence, he has the ability to stir in the learner's mind to sort out new aptitudes and attitudes towards learning a foreign language. Since he has a complete mastery of his subject matter, this teacher can create the right conditions and atmosphere that enable the learners to learn for themselves. Added to his personal qualities are attitude towards change, development, diversity, co-operation and authority. Also the enabler has a good knowledge of methodology. Having acquired his own views on learning and teaching with consistent and available materials, he originally plans and teaches according to the implication of theory. Hence, he encourages highly autonomous learning by being, from time to time, a guide or a counsellor or resource of information when needed. Equally, for example, when learners get at a loss, while performing a task, the enabler nudges them

forward in a discreet and supportive way. Harmer (2001:60) posits: In such situations we want to help but we do not want, at that stage, to take charge because we are keen to encourage the students to think creatively rather than have them hang on every word. This assures that teachers when they enable their learners do it with sensitivity, encouragement and, most of all, with great discretion.

In a nutshell, this categorization can be very helpful for teachers to reflect on what kind of teaching one has mostly experienced in his life, and help them to determine the kind of teacher one sees as being now or in the future. The future means a change towards making out new decisions that will lead to effective learning and creating the best learning atmosphere by initiating a rapport with learners that would bring success and satisfaction.