THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH TEACHERS: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

It is a well known fact that a teacher has greater responsibilities to perform in the present scenario than it was a few years back. The present concept of a teacher is widely different from the traditional concept of a teacher which upholds teacher as an agent to transfer knowledge to the students. In the present knowledge-driven world, the educational set up demands a teacher to be a mentor, a facilitator, a guide and a friend to the students; and the primary aim of the teacher is to help the child to be what he/ she is capable of being at his / her best. It is a common belief that a core subject teacher has much scope to perform than a language teacher in the contemporary educational set up. But the truth remains naked that the role of a Language teacher, especially that of an English teacher is highly significant in this era of globalization. An English teacher has to perform multi-tasked responsibilities towards the students because his/ her role is so praiseworthy in the moulding of the present generation at par with the requirements of the global scenario. The present paper on “The Role of the English Teacher” is an attempt to throw light to the renewed perspective of the English teachers’ responsibilities in the present world.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional concept of a teacher is as one who is rich in knowledge and the scholarship of the ‘Guru’ should be transferred to the ward step by step. So the primary aim of the teacher was to gather knowledge. One who wanted to be a teacher tried to enrich one-self with the subject knowledge. The teaching –learning process of that phase went on as a one-sided process that is whatever the teacher said the students accepted as the divine words and believed. If at all somebody felt questioning or contradicting the teachers’ point of view, it was considered equivalent to an act of blasphemy because a teacher was given the place of God. In this set up the dedicated teachers put in their best effort to convey the best to their students. Whether the teacher has conveyed the right information or the teacher has transferred the full information was neither supervised nor interrogated by anyone. The teaching and learning process went on comfortably because there was nobody to question them. Even the parents and the society stood strongly in favour of the teacher, the one who is knowledgeable. Slowly there came a change and then the system switched over to a different one where the child/student became the target of attention and that system was named Child-centered teaching: a system in which the teacher should focus on the requirements of the student and should create the teaching and learning methodology as per the requirement. Though it was a bit tough work, the teacher could manage somewhat satisfactorily despite the shortage of time.
and the hectic completion of the syllabus. But in that system also the teacher remained as the one who teaches with his/her knowledge. Teachers’ subject knowledge was the basic thing focused there. A change occurred or a revolution took place to this set up with the advancement of technology.

The knowledge which was considered to be the monopoly of the teacher became accessible to anybody with the advancement of technology. If you have your PC with a net connection, the treasure house of knowledge is within your hands. This fascinating magic box soon became the personal property of the students. Thus they have become the masters/possessors of knowledge. So the question arises “what is the role of the teacher now?” Is someone under the label ‘teacher’ required to transfer knowledge? Is there any more need now for the students to stand at the beck and call of the teachers for the bookish knowledge? What is the role of the teachers to the students of the present era of technology? This question sounds to be more significant when it comes to the Language teachers, especially English teachers. When there is a revolution in the means of acquiring knowledge, what does an English teacher has to do with the students? What is the role of an English teacher in this era of technology?

The exuberance of English medium schools and the anglicized syllabus and curriculum have made the students well versed in English. Nobody can blame on the lack of opportunity for a student to acquire this foreign tongue. After the school education when the student enters the higher education/professional education the scenario changes completely. English which was a significant part of the school curriculum continues to be in the same status but only for one term or one semester of the four or six years’ higher education. Naturally the students develop a casual approach to the subject. It becomes purely an exam oriented subject. The syllabus of English subject for higher education and professional course is very dry with direct grammar topics. So the students mainly focus upon mugging up the answers just to clear the paper. Besides the subject is made all the more easier by the increased bilingual trend in the teaching of English subject. Hence, it becomes again a perplexing query that what the role of an English teacher is in the contemporary society.

When the core subject teachers stuff the students with knowledge of their respective subjects and bring out a highly scholarly generation on whom the whole world can be proud of, the role of the English teacher is looked down upon under the belief that a language teacher has nothing to do in this knowledge driven world. Parents as well as the students and the teachers foster the same perspective towards the English subject in higher education and in professional courses.

The primary aim of an English teacher is to develop language proficiency among the students. Language proficiency is commonly defined as a person’s ability to speak or perform in an acquired language using all the four language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is surprising to note that the student who has been studying English language from the preprimary classes onwards, continue to be totally defective in effective communication in English even after their school education. When they enter the professional course or higher studies English subject is disregarded both by the students and the curriculum designers. The teachers handle the subject purely from the examination point of view and students just manage to score pass marks. This predicament of learning English gets over with the first year or the first
semester of the professional course. Both the teacher and the students are relieved of their tension.

Why is this disregard towards English subject by the students as well as by the teachers?

The observations highlight the following points:

1. English subject is taught by teachers without true aptitude.
2. English taught by a teacher with defective proficiency in the language
3. Unimaginative teacher
4. Exam oriented teaching
5. Ignorance about the objective of language teaching
6. Ignorance about the term language proficiency
7. Defective designing of the syllabus and the curriculum for English teaching

The above observations show that the sole cause of the defective proficiency of even a student who learnt in an English medium background is the teacher and the educationist. It is high time the English teacher should think seriously about the role played by him/her as an English teacher.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Language is the specific capacity of human beings which distinguishes them from the rest of the living things. This skill comes to full bloom when an individual becomes proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing in an acquired language. So it is the primary duty of the English language teacher to enable the students to acquire proficiency in using the language. The latest concept is that the role of the present teacher is neither teaching nor transferring knowledge but he/she is a facilitator/ a guide or a mentor. What is the requirement then of a teacher? The advancements of technology have caused tremendous changes in the present world and we are living in world that is changing fast in all spheres: scientific, technological, social, political, educational, economical and cultural. So it has become mandatory for a student also to change in pace with the global changes in order to survive. Could our educational system be content in their responsibility to develop English language competency in our students? Are the Language teachers competent and happy in achieving their goals? There is no need to make any further study to get an answer to this question. Without any doubt the following observations prove that the English teachers fail in their primary duty towards their students:

1. The selection process of the MBA course shows that even students with very good academic score are rejected because of their poor communication skills in English.
2. The campus placement results also show the dissatisfactory response due to the poor English communication skills of the candidates.
Almost all the job agencies demand the effective /proficient communication skill in English for their prospective candidates.

Students show a kind of stage fear towards attending interviews, which is mainly due to their diffidence in English communication.

Exams to be written in English give nightmares to the youngsters.

Situations where English communication is needed make the students nervous.

Students score good marks in written exam but fail in oral communication.

Our students are intellectually excellent. So why they cannot communicate well in English leads us directly to the lapse of duty from the English language teachers. Now the question arises why we should stress on English communication even though the student can very confidently communicate in mother tongue. The simple answer is that we are living in an era of globalization. Globalization makes the whole world into a small village. The work location also changes from one end of the world to another due to the mushrooming MNC culture. More over it is a proven fact that a person proficient in English appears to be smarter, confident and proficient; and stands a better chance in this world of tough competition. Globalization is transforming English to the status of universal language from that of the international status. The technological developments, scientific advancements and globalization make it necessary for an average competent also to develop English proficiency for better survival in this fast changing world. The above mentioned statements emphasize the significance of the role of an English teacher in the contemporary society.

The latest concept of a teacher is neither as one who teaches nor an agent to transfer knowledge, but he/she is a facilitator/a guide or a mentor. What does this really imply? What is the actual role of a teacher here? The teacher must first and foremost should wipe out the prejudice that only through he/she the student can learn or acquire knowledge. Knowledge acquisition is nothing now-a-days as long as you have the ‘magic box called computer with an internet connection. One who sits in the class-room in front of a teacher is more scholarly than the teacher with regard to the access to knowledge. So the teacher’s monopoly on scholarship has been pushed farther back with regard to teaching. Hence the primary role of a teacher is to be a facilitator/mentor, i.e. to help the ward bring out the best in him/her through correct and timely guidance with a friendly approach. If it is so, what is the role of the English teacher? What innate talent can a teacher bring out from a student by enabling him acquire a new language? The English teachers can do wonders in the present world if he/she discharges the responsibilities with commitment.

FOLLOWING ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ENGLISH TEACHER

1. Be strongly proficient in English communication.

2. Be well versed in the correct use of language skills

3. Develop proficiency in subject knowledge
4. Achieve the target of enabling the students to be competent communicators in English language.

5. Have a deep awareness about the current issues in the national, international and global level and provide platform for the students to discuss on such live issues and draw conclusions.

6. Practice integrated approach in teaching

7. Frame / recommend syllabus and curriculum suitable to achieve the language proficiency.

8. Plan and conduct classes where lot of situations and activities are included for developing language proficiency

9. Language being potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes, it is the duty of the teacher to encourage the students to converse in English for the expression of their natural feelings, views, ideas and emotions.

10. Use the latest advancements of technology to acquire a more refined communication skills for our students through video-conferencing or language exchange programmes by the native speakers of English.

11. Open the vast world of e-books, e-learning, language exchange programmes, interactive learning etc to the students as a guide. The advancements of technology have caused tremendous changes in the present world and we are living in a world that is changing fast in all spheres: scientific, technological, social, political, educational, economical and cultural. So it has become mandatory for a student also to change in pace with the global changes in order to survive. Hence the type of education the present child is supposed to acquire must be fully incorporated with the technology. That is the only strategy for the successful survival of the individual.

12. Treat your students as if they were, what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of becoming.

13. Be aware of the different methods and strategies to make the teaching –learning process a pleasant experience for the students and apply them appropriately for effective class-room management.

14. Respect your wards, their thoughts, feelings and views so that they also will respect you.

15. Be ideal and graceful in your behaviour, appearance, interaction, scholarship and outlook, so that your students will look up at you and they will follow your foot prints with respect.

16. Instill confidence and other moral values through your interactions, give tips for their personality development and enable them to come out as confident, successful and useful individuals.
17. Expose them to the life stories of great personalities and encourage them to assimilate the best to be better personalities.

18. Encourage them to read newspapers and inspire them to update themselves with the current information.

19. The English teachers can do a lot to develop a good awareness about excellent etiquette and manners to be impressive personalities.

20. Should train the students for making a successful career by briefing them with excellent careers and giving practice in selection processes.

TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Technology has been a common tool in education. Both the teachers and students are benefitting from it in almost every institution. Educational institutions are very keen now-a-days about having the facilities of technology. When we talk about technology, it goes in hand with science subjects. But here our focus is on how this technology can be utilized by the English language teachers for teaching English.

Now-a-days education institutions give due importance to installing adequate technology for educational purpose which is directly a gesture for attracting students. Irrespective of school or colleges or professional institutions, technology has established its monopoly. The parents as well as the students look for institutions with the maximum technical advancements. But the irony is that in more than 80% of the educational institutions these technical equipments are kept as costly fancy items or they may be not accessible to the students and the teachers. They are name sake luxuries of the institutions. The students also believe that computers are for them to play games and net connection is to open facebook or to down load games and movies. Parents also believe it and consider the computers and net connection as a curse on their growing children. Here comes the true significance of a teacher’s role as a facilitator or guide or mentor.

A teacher must have a good proficiency in technology. That doesn’t mean that the teacher has to know everything about computer and the associated things. But necessarily, the teacher must know something about everything and everything about something of the technology. The basic requirement are:

- Teacher must know how to incorporate the technology to the effective teaching OF English language.
- Must know the latest developments in technology that can be applied to teaching
- The application part of technology
- Should be free from the wrong concept that the association with technology will spoil the child.
- Should be receptive and broadminded to the various usages and application of technology
Should have the open and inquisitive mind to understand the latest developments

Should be a student, even to learn from a student

Should be well aware of the scope of the use of Technology in the language acquiring process.

ROLE OF LANGUAGE TEACHER IN PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

It is interesting to note that the professional and technical institutions appoint the English teachers under the title ‘Assistant Professor or Lecturer in Communication Skills and Soft Skills. What does this ‘soft skills’ imply? It implies the new role of the language teacher in grooming the professionals to a well-mannered, disciplined candidates with excellent training in business and personal etiquettes. A soft skill training includes the personal, social and professional grooming of the students. This grooming session provides the upcoming professionals a very effective platform to grow and develop into very successful personalities. So apart from the language acquiring task, the English teachers train the individuals to develop a well groomed soft skills for their successful personality.

ROLE IN DEVELOPING HUMANITARIAN VALUES

The core subject teachers are extremely busy with the responsibility of ensuring the subject knowledge and its practical aspects. Hence it becomes the significant responsibilities of the English teachers to give the final touch to the fine sensibilities of the generation. From time immemorial human beings enjoyed listening to music stories etc. The apt literature lessons like poems, short stories, novels etc exposes the real life situations with the problems, issues and predicaments of life. The appropriate presentation of these lessons enhances the appreciation skills, nourishes their dry and hard hearts with fine senses and also awakens their creative skills. This particular responsibility of the teacher plays the true role of the English teacher in giving the final touch to the successful personality of the upcoming generation.

When the teachers of English perform the above mentioned responsibilities, the students will find the class really useful and effective and worthy. Once when a teacher succeeds in bringing the students to this mood of interest towards the subject, the aim of teaching and learning English becomes an interesting and pleasurable activity. By the time they complete one year of their professional course, there would be tremendous improvement in the confidence level, personality, knowledge and communication competency. Such a community of the upcoming professionals would be the true leaders who uphold the glory of our motherland in the Universe as the ideal country. For this a teacher should switch over from the role of teacher to a mentor and a facilitator: one who is ready to guide the students to bring out the best in them through a friendly and scholarly approach.
REFERENCE

