

# PARADIGM SHIFT IN MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY

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## ABSTRACT:

*In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the focus of teaching and learning has radically shifted. The historic emphasis on teacher (guru), is now focused on the learning and development of the learner. Micheal Lessard-Clouston has suggested a few approaches for language learning which can be adopted by the teachers. A method of unrestrained participation in the development of their own communicative abilities with the help of tools is already making its way. Teacher, classes, programs, departments and institutions play a vital role in the learner's development. Active learning, student-engagement, critical thinking, analysis of arguments and generate hypotheses are some skills acquired by the learner. Without the focus on the learner the entire concern of teaching – learning process, would become invalid. One must understand and give space, choice and voice to the learner, though traditional emphasis on teacher involvement is abundantly necessary, in fact teacher should be very vigorously engaged with learner development.*

Keywords: learning, active learning, student-engagement, space development, critical – thinking skills.

## Introduction:

Teachers are great modifiers, moulders, makers and mobilisers ! They can utilise some steps given below , for learner- development:

1. **Study the Teaching Context:** It is critical for teachers to review the learning scenario and gather adequate information about the classroom dynamics in order to encourage students to find the best LLS to address their specific needs. Individual interests, motivations and preferred learning styles should be gleaned as classroom lessons progress.
2. **Emphasize LLS in the Lesson Plan:** Once specific LLS have been determined for a particular individual or learner group, create learning scenarios wherein the likely usage of the particular LLS is very high. Create clear examples or models to guide students toward the learning goal.
3. **Revisit the encounters and encourage learner feedback:** Teachers should primarily reflect on both the negative and positive experiences they themselves encountered for each application of specific LLS. Equally important is the learner's own recollection of the appropriateness or effectiveness of specific LLS. This will allow both the teacher and the language learners to recalibrate their preferred LLS or try other language learning strategies to better approach a specific learning scenario
4. **Classroom management and teacher's role in the classroom:** There are two poles of education: namely- the teacher and the taught. The process of teaching-learning surrounds these two. The teacher plays a pivotal role in shaping, changing, molding, directing, leading. But in a learner-centered classroom , he controls the entire activity and therefore can be called as the 'facilitator of learning'. (Littlewood 1981, 92). The teacher is the one who takes decisions. It entails that there is

a power relationship between the teacher and the learner. Tudor (1993) looks at the role of the teacher in the context of the idea of the 'learner-centered' classroom, in which the focus is on the active participation of the learner. However, before we discuss the paradigm shift, let us find out what was the role of a teacher in the classroom. This is important to understand the factors which have necessitated change in the perspective and to consider to what extent that change is acceptable in the Indian context.

The traditional role of English teachers: Features and drawbacks:

In a traditional (meaning customary, conventional) classroom, it is normal that the teacher 'lectures' and the 'learner 'listens passively'. Well, this has been happening for centuries now and time has come to check whether the teacher reaches the students and learning takes place. But it has been a sad truth that learning doesn't take place! Teachers have been reading the textbook and explaining meaning either in simple English or in their mother tongue (which is also the teacher's mother tongue), giving 'notes', taking extra lectures for grammar, at times dictation of difficult words. Memorization of grammar rules, mechanical drills and repetitive practice are certain features of this approach to language teaching. Typically, an English teacher wants to finish his/her portion on time, and doesn't like to 'waste' his or her time on difficulties of the students. He/she is terribly burdened to speak bilingually almost without stopping and without willing. He /she is either too smart to do away with regular class tests and get a feedback of his teaching, I mean he is unreachable! Or he /she is oh-so busy with some trivial translation work, that there is hardly any time to correct small details of learners and their queries. This approach leads a learner to 'sit silently and watch' the teacher without uttering a single word. Of course, there are a few teachers who allow students to participate or let them share a few ideas on the topic being taught. But most of them build a 'wall' around themselves. In the meanwhile, the 'beneficiary'- the learner is lost somewhere. Dewey for the first time objected to such passive learning and emphasized the need of active participation of the learner in the teaching-learning.

THE MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT: All human beings 'acquire' at least one language. The first language is essential for survival. A second language, however, if learnt and used well, has always brought power and prestige to its users. People in multilingual communities have always sought to learn another language for various purposes. Dulay, Burt and Krashen observe:

Over a billion people in the world speak more than one language fluently. In the Philippines, for example, many people must speak three languages, if they are to engage fully in their community's social affairs. They must speak the national language Filipino, one of the eighty-seven local vernaculars and English or Spanish. Throughout much of the world, being able to speak at least two languages and sometimes three or four, is necessary to function in society (Dulay, Burt and Krashen: 1982: 1).

India is also a multilingual country. Every educated person speaks at least two languages, that is English and the mother tongue. In many multilingual cities such as those of people living in Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune and so on, children grow up speaking at least three languages. Nair has written about language acquisition by a child in New Delhi (1991).

However, the learning environment, according to Dulay, Burt and Krashen, may have a constraining rather than facilitating effect in SLA. They observe:

‘...environmental factors that apparently limit the scope and quality of second language learning: 1) the absence of peers who speak the language natively; and 2) severely limited and often artificial conditions under which the language may be learned... (Dulay, Burt and Krashen 1982: 109) So the multilingual pedagogy had to be worked out and therefore the following paradigm shifts in the entire teaching- learning scenario.’

### **THE PARADIGM-SHIFT:**

A shift from the teacher-fronted classroom to the learner-centred classroom is not just a socio-political matter- a matter of being democratic. It also relates to the effective learning of a language itself. Therefore, we will try to define the ‘learner’. Broadly speaking, there are two types-low and high achievers. There may be of course, average and other categories in the class. They come from different family backgrounds. Diversity is the law of nature and therefore the teacher will have to adjust himself. Heterogeneity needs to be met with motivation. The classroom structure is changed to yield different positioning of the teacher. The teacher is no longer the head of the class, in front of rows and rows of students. She is much more mobile. Students need not sit one behind the other and focus attention on one point in the classroom, namely the teacher. They can talk to their neighbour, the peers in the groups, across the groups and to the teacher. Interactions are multifaceted- teacher to the whole class; teacher to one pupil; teacher to group of pupils, pupil to pupils and so on. Here the learner rather than the teacher is the focus of such a class. It is the learner’s interests and needs which are catered to specially, not the textbook or lesson plan. This is the true essence of learner-centred pedagogy as against teacher fronted.

Much of the learning takes place collaboratively. When the teacher is a facilitator, she can instantly help the learner in completing the given task.

### **Who are the LEARNERS?**

Some learners are abstract thinkers, some concrete. Some want audio, some would like to have pictorial depiction. Some of them can see themselves in the context of others; some have a sense of separate and individual identity. Some have better interpersonal skills and are socially sensitive; some others are more into themselves. Some of them are good learners ; others do self-learning. Learning a language is as crucially dependent on factors within learners as it is upon those without. What do learners learn, how do they learn, what is the role of social factors in this learning and what is the role of individual factors in this learning? More basic questions are- what do we mean by ‘language’ and ‘thought’? Chomsky (1986:9) observes that ‘knowledge of language is often characterized as a practical ability to speak and understand.’ Skinner called it verbal behavior.

To answer a plethora of such questions many approaches came to light.

- 1) The humanistic approach which gives emphasis on equal attention to both the intellectual and emotional development of the learner.
- 2) The communicative language teaching approach which developed in the 60's and 70's and which was both a reaction against structure-oriented drill methods of language teaching popular during the time and a result of the desire to make language teaching 'more flexible and responsive to student's real world communicative needs ( Tudor 1996).
- 3) Learner-centered instruction: This term applies to curricula as well as to specific techniques. It can be contrasted with Teacher-centered instruction, and has received a variety of recent interpretations. Learner centered instruction includes:
  - a) Techniques that focus on or account for learners' needs, styles, and goals.
  - b) Techniques that give some control to the student (group work or strategy training, for example).
  - c) Curricula that include the consultation and input of students and that do not presuppose objectives in advance.
  - d) Techniques that allow for student creativity and innovation.
  - e) Techniques that enhance a student's sense of competence and self-worth.

Discussion of learner-centeredness are often complicated by the fact that the term is used to express at least the following four related, but none the less distinct, perspectives on language teaching (Tudor 1996 : 271-273).

### **(1) Practical necessity:**

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in learner autonomy and self-direction in language teaching. In part at least, this arises from the needs to cater for language teaching in situations where a traditional classroom-based approach is not feasible. There can be a variety of reasons for this:

- a) Students may not have sufficient free time to follow a traditional course.
- b) There may be insufficient demand for a given language to justify setting up a standard Teacher-led course.
- c) Budgetary restrictions may place limits on staff-student contact time.

Faced with real-world constraints of this nature, the teaching profession has looked for new approaches to teaching which allow students to attain their goals with less direct teacher support.

### **(2) The curriculum design perspective:**

Writers such as Brindley (1984) and Nunan (1988) have suggested that curriculum design can be seen as a negotiation process between teachers and students. In this view, decisions regarding the content and form of teaching can be made at classroom level via consultation between teachers and learners. There would seem to be a number of basic ideas which, at one time or another, underlies most discussions of learner-centeredness. These are:

- a) Goal-setting can be made more relevant if students can contribute to the process on the basis of their own experience.

- b) Learning is more effective if methodology and study mode are geared around student preferences.
- c) Students get more out of learning activities if they have a say in deciding their content and in organizing the activities.
- d) Learning will, in a general sense, benefit if students feel involved in shaping their study program.

### 3. Teacher roles in the learner-centred classroom

In a learner-centred communicative approach to ELT, students are expected to assume a more active and participatory role than is usual in traditional teacher-centred approaches. Logically, however, student roles cannot be redefined without a parallel redefinition of teacher roles in the learner-centred classroom.

There are a variety of roles that teachers are expected to play.

#### (1) Information-gatherer

In response to students' ever-changing needs, teachers constantly collect information about them, analyze their language behaviour, and observe ongoing interactions. Also, language teaching is a complex social and cultural activity. Teachers need to understand students within their socio-cultural context, asking the following questions: "How motivated are my students?" "How mature are my students?" "What are my students' cultural attitudes to language study and to the roles of teachers and learners?" "Are there any external constraints that place limits on learner direction?"

#### (2) Decision-maker

Teachers make decisions on a moment-to-moment basis. Their knowledge of learning theory and educational practice allows them to plan flexible learning experiences and to respond sensitively to learners of differing language ability levels and varying backgrounds, interests, and needs. While providing the necessary linguistic and emotional support, teachers encourage students to use their abilities to the utmost. As for involving learners, Tudor

(1996: 279) suggests that teachers may find it helpful to draw up a list of decisions they have to make, and then select from this list the areas where their students seem most likely to be able to make a sensible contribution to decision-making. Such a list might include: course structure, goal-setting, choice of methodology, choice of materials, activity selection and organization, evaluation and so on.

#### (3) Motivator

Teachers motivate students to acquire English. They arouse and maintain their students' interests by constantly assessing the needs and goals of their students and tailoring their instruction accordingly. They provide stimulating, interesting lessons that respond to the emotional, cognitive, and linguistic needs of the learners. Csizer (1998:215) offered a set of ten commandments" for motivating learners, based on a survey of Hungarian foreign language teachers. All the following items focus on what the teacher can do to stimulate intrinsic motivation.

- a) Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
- b) Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

- c) Present the tasks properly.
- d) Develop a good relationship with the learners.
- e) Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence.
- f) Make the language classes interesting.
- g) Promote learner autonomy.
- h) Increase the learner's goal-orientedness.
- i) Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

#### **(4) Facilitator of group dynamics**

Teachers have strong skills in group dynamics that help them to provide efficient classroom routines and smooth transitions. They organize instructional tasks logically and understand how to use different types of grouping (including individual, pair, small group, and large group work) to encourage specific types of learning. While there are differences among the models of cooperative/collaborative learning (CL) , Johnson and Johnson (1999) and other researchers suggest that the following are key elements of CL : positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing. CL should be evaluated as a culture-sensitive approach to developing communicative competence and learner autonomy.

#### **(5) Provider of opportunities for communicative and authentic language use**

English is not just a series of word lists or grammar forms. But a living language for communication. Teachers provide students with materials from video clips, Casual conversations, newspaper extracts, interview-type activities, photographs & pictures, maps & charts, and so on. To help students understand and use authentic language. Various types of language assistance are provided by the materials. Teachers bring objects from the real world into the classroom, Invite native speakers to class, and arrange field trips for students so that students encounter a variety of native speakers.

#### **(6) Counsellor**

Teachers know when to serve as counsellors. They provide emotional support just when it is required and help learners feel secure and confident about second/foreign language learning. They recognize psychological problems that may hinder their students' progress acquiring English and help students overcome these difficulties. Teachers monitor students' learning progress regularly. The feedback that they provide learners is timely and constructive. Students value the incentives that teachers regularly provide.

#### **(7) Promoter of a multicultural perspective**

Teachers expect their students to take a multicultural perspective. They encourage students to be tolerant of cultural conflicts, to respect those of diverse cultures, and to avoid stereotyping others. Through team-teaching with a native speaker, teachers develop various materials for cross-cultural communication. They need to remember a healthy balance between the necessity of teaching the target culture and validating the students' native cultures.

### (8) Reflective practitioner and researcher

A reflective practitioner is a professional practitioner. The notion of "reflective practice" places as much emphasis on teachers' own evaluations of their practice as on the planning and management skills into which such evaluations feed and has spawned a considerable volume of theory and publications devoted to its elaboration and promulgation (Schon 1983, 1987 ; Wallace 1991 ; Mitchell and Weber 1996 ; Loughran and Russell 1997). The interdependence of reflective research and teaching is a foundation stone of EFL education.

### 4. Conclusion

For a learner-centred approach to work well in the EFL classroom. Students will have to learn more than just the target language. They will need to learn about themselves as language learners. Thus, in addition to a given level of language competence, students should learn a course with a better understanding of language and of themselves as both language users and autonomous learners.

Learner-centred instruction adds a number of responsibilities relating to the development and channelling of students' human and experiential potential. Teachers who envisaged opting a learner-centred approach should think carefully of the implications of this choice in terms of the extra work and responsibilities it entails. The same applies to department heads or educational bodies who might wish to experiment with a learner-centred mode of teaching on a larger scale: appropriate teacher education and ongoing support are essential.

Becoming an EFL teacher and teaching in a confident, competent, creative and ethical manner is a challenging and complex learning process, where teacher-learners can learn from their teaching experiences, question the educational values, evaluate their own practice, and develop their teacher autonomy. In order to foster autonomy among learners, teachers should be both free and able to assert their own autonomy in the practice to teaching.

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