

Self-evaluation: A Divine Tool

- Indira Jha

Abstract: To err is human, not to accept it is an act of stupidity. To accept and rectify it, is more than human and not to repeat it, is divine. Keeping this motto in mind teachers need to reflect on the responsibilities which they are expected to undertake in the present society. In the present context self –evaluation basically means the ability of a teacher to judge his or her own teaching honestly and to see how much learning is taking place in the class. The purpose of teaching is to help students to learn. So we can only judge teaching by seeing how well students succeed in learning. The teacher can improve students' chances of learning by:

- Creating a good class-room climate. The class-room climate is affected by the teacher's own attitude and behavior eg, how he or she controls the class, how much he or she uses English in the class etc.
- Being sensitive to the needs of individual learners and recognizing that each student has different needs and problems.

So the teacher should try to find out more about each student, eg, by getting them to talk and write about themselves, and by finding time to talk to students outside the class. Counselling is essential to channelise the students to courses suited to their abilities and aptitudes. The importance of triangle, the relationship among teachers, students and parents or community should receive prime consideration. For a good teacher who, does all the things above, likes his/her job, other things that students appreciate in them are punctuality, their marking home-work and class-work on time and willingness to help outside the class-room. Self –monitoring, self-assessment, self-observation and self- evaluation are wonderful tools to measure our inner growth.

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The teacher's role, like most professional roles, is defined by the society in which the teacher works. Different social groups have different perceptions of different professions, and these change with time. The teacher or Guru in ancient Indian society was next only to God and one's parents. Teaching is an art in which the relationship between human beings, between teacher and taught, is crucial to real success. Learning to teach is not to pick up formulae but to act on internalized principles – to borrow terminology from religious instructions, we are concerned not with outward and visible signs, but with inward and spiritual graces. The signs are the conventions of particular times and places, but the internal motivation and sensitivity of the good teacher will transcend the limitations of particular local conventions through the process of relating to people – the class. Each teacher recreates the principles of teaching in relation to each new class and each new student. Some teachers do it better than others, of course, but all teachers will attest to gradually getting a 'feel' for teaching, as they become more experienced. We can

analyze this feeling, but the analysis will not lead to experience – it must come after the event – and the event can only occur in the process of teaching. Analysis concerns itself with facts, teaching 'feel' is concerned with values, but in the public domain we only have facts available for scrutiny, for we cannot live values in print, we can only refer to them, and careful reference turns rapidly to analysis.

In our day to day lives we are constantly engaged in decision making, and the decisions we make reflect the way in which we perceive our environment. When making decisions we try to judge the possible effects of alternative approaches or strategies we might adopt, and the decisions we finally make are based on the choices we perceive before us. Decision-making is an essential competency for a teacher. Teaching is essentially a thinking process. When teaching, we are constantly confronted with a range of different options and are required to select the option that we think is the best suited to our particular teaching objective. In the process of decision making, we try to interpret our environment, to anticipate future courses of action and evaluate their possible consequences, and finally we select a particular course of action. If good teaching requires good decision making, we need to develop our decision-making abilities by analyzing the kinds of decisions teachers are required to make in the context of classroom.

We cannot easily evaluate or evolve teaching method without some idea of how students learn. Exactly how we learn our own or second language is still not completely certain, but we do know in general terms what is involved in the process of language learning. Let us consider three different kinds of learning a language:

1. Language by heart
2. Forming habits
3. Acquiring rules

Learning by heart the language patterns may not help us, basically learning a language must mean learning to use those skills. Forming the habit by drilling and repetition is another way of learning a language. Acquiring the language rules is the most powerful way of learning. This may lead the teacher towards:

1. Students' errors
2. Repetition drills
3. Explaining grammar rules
4. Using English in class

We as teachers should always go back and place ourselves as learners and see which teacher we preferred and why? We certainly prefer the teacher who corrected our errors in an encouraging way. All of us at some point of time or the other get wrong, how should we handle the errors frequently made?

Self-evaluation, in the present context is the ability of the teacher to judge his or her own teaching honestly and to see how much learning is taking place in the class. It also judges our ways of providing feedback to

students on their performance. The sole purpose of teaching is to help students to learn, so we can only judge teaching by seeing how well students succeed in learning. The teacher can improve students' chances of learning by:

- Creating a good classroom climate. The classroom climate is affected by the teachers own attitude and behavior, e.g., how he or she deals with errors, how he or she controls the class, how much he or she uses English in the lesson, etc.
- Being sensitive to the needs of the individual learners and recognizing that each student has different need and problems. So the teacher should try to find out more about each student, e.g., by getting them to talk and write about themselves and by finding time to talk to students outside the class.

A teacher of English should not only have a good command of the language, but should also acquire knowledge about the knowledge. When students make mistakes he should be able to tell them why they are wrong. This necessitates knowledge of how the language works, what its rules are, etc. So a major aim relevant to an English teacher is to provide the students the knowledge 'about' language so that he may function effectively as a teacher of English.

In fact, the twentieth century has witnessed many approaches to language teaching and the last two decades have seen an upsurge to communicative language teaching, i.e., learning a language not for the rules but for its use. With the advent of communicative approach the teaching of listening and speaking the significance given to these two skills in language learning has received a new impetus. Several years ago, Rankin's (1928) study observed that the amount of time devoted to the language arts is inversely related to their social utility in human affairs. He found that seventy percent of our working day is spent in verbal communication. And of this communication time forty five percent is spent in listening and thirty percent in speaking, sixteen percent in reading and nine percent in writing.

Moreover, it is necessary for the teacher of English to have adequate knowledge and ability in phonetics, so that he can hear mistake in his pupils' pronunciation, find out the precise faults in terms of articulatory positions and movements and devise suitable remedial exercises when mere imitation is not enough. The teacher should himself be able to imitate the pupil's pronunciation accurately and present right and wrong forms side by side for comparison. This needs phonetic training, including phonetic theory and practical work. The training should not be restricted to the phonetics of English and of the pupil's mother tongue. What is required is the ability to identify and produce sound and sound features, in general. In acquiring these skills, the teacher will also improve his pronunciation of English. It should, however, be pointed out that this phonetic knowledge is for the teacher, and he should not try to pass on the whole of it to his pupils. He has to apply this knowledge to the teaching of English, adopt suitable techniques and devise suitable

exercises. We should bear it in mind, that if programmes are to be learner-centered, then learner's wishes should be conversed and taken into account, even if they conflict with the wishes of the teachers. This is not to suggest that the teacher should not give everything that they want. Evidence from teachers suggests that some sort of compromise is always possible.

It is high time that we deviate from the traditional approaches and adopt communicative approaches or we may call it interactional approaches. Traditional approach emphasizes two skills, reading and writing, but current approach regards spoken interactions at least as important as reading and writing. The teacher is a resource person who provides language input for the learners to work on. It is the role of the teacher to assist learners to become self-directing by providing access to language data through such activities as active listening, role-play, and interaction with native speaker. The most important thing that an English teacher should have is a personal interest in the students as human beings. They know we are students, yes, but inside we are persons, with our problems and feelings. I think a good personal relation is the first thing we, students and teachers, should try to achieve because it is an inseparable basis for a good professional relation, founded on understanding and esteem. This is very important above all, in the case that the students have not chosen to study English, but are forced to because it is one of the ministerial subjects. The teacher, in this case, has to interest the students in what he or she teaches.

The second most important quality for a teacher is to be well prepared and able to convey students what he or she knows. I think, I do not need to explain why a teacher should be skilled. It is not unusual the fact that the students at the secondary school learn something that is completely wrong and being particularly interested in the subject will always persist in their mistakes. Another important point is the didactic methodologies the teacher prefers. In my opinion, a teacher should be very flexible in his or her approach. In general, it is better to work on pair works, to allow students to discover things for themselves and make them face to experiment new structures, but there is also a time when a lesson with the teacher at the center of the attention and a close comparison of the language used by students are preferable.

Self-monitoring or self-observation is a wonderful method to grow. Keeping a diary and jotting down the day to day problem helps in clarifying thoughts and feelings about learning and the way of handling problems that come forth with doing real learning. There is a wide measure of agreement throughout the bilingual world that the earliest stages of schooling not only must, but should be conducted through the medium of the child's mother tongue. However, five methods of second language teaching are:

1. The traditional, formal method, including language exercise and grammar
2. The direct method
3. The reading method

4. The oral method
5. The bilingual method

Which second language approach should be adopted then? The quick, though not helpful, answer is the one that works in local conditions. Although it contains a valid point, it bags the important questions, but it also suggests that the topic cannot be considered in the abstract. Some teacher-learner activities are suggested below:

1. To introduce pupil activities, such as, skits, dramas, mime, to increase the pupil's power of comprehension and expression
2. Expanding the student's vocabulary up to 2000-2500 word range with equal competence in the mother tongue
3. Double the reading speeds of the students
4. Teaching the syntactic structures in the first term in order to create confidence and ability
5. To give a reasonable amount of practice in the basic syntax of English
6. To concentrate on one skill at one stage so that other skills also get enriched
7. To use different reading material for the bright and the weak students
8. Slow learners may be grounded in comprehension and language study through the translation method
9. To use better classroom techniques
10. Teaching reference skills:
 - Use of a bilingual dictionary
 - Use of an atlas or a road map
 - Use of encyclopedia
11. General reading of supplementary readers that is not prescribed for study. The class can devote time by organizing Book Review session and Story telling through dramatization. It is wrong to think that story telling has no relevance at degree level.
12. Chomskyian structural grammar is based on language analysis. It is nicely compatible with any sensible teaching approach in ELT.

How do we achieve it in the present scenario of?

1. Our crowded classrooms
2. Lack of practical work
3. Too much emphasis on academic work
4. Lack of essential laboratory facilities
5. Lack of family involvement and
6. Language chosen for the teaching

The remedies are:

1. Training of teachers in a scientific manner
2. University teachers should receive pedagogical training and should have more contact with primary and secondary schools.

Counselling is essential to channelise the students to courses suited to their abilities and aptitudes. The importance of triangle, i.e., the relationship between the teachers, students and parents or community should be emphasized. Apart from these, one of the main tasks of any educational institution and its teachers is to check on the success of their courses with reference to particular students and the whole group. In the case of the individual student, there is a need to know how well he is keeping up with the programme. Should there be difficulties, he needs to be provided with a remedial programme or moved to a more appropriate course. Checking on group progress enables a check to be made on the course itself and provide clues as to how it can be improved.

The importance of the progress test will vary from one situation to the other. In a small institution, where there are close contacts between the staff and students, the teacher's assessment of students will probably have much greater impact than in the large institution with many classes conducted at the same time or where circumstances impose a considerable number of teacher changes. In the latter case, there will be much higher pressure for a yardstick by which to judge a student's progress. However, even in the small school a double check, such as the one provided by a progress test, will help the teacher to review his assessments and will help to indicate what areas of the course have yet to be mastered. A good progress test can also help the student to understand where his weaknesses are and build confidence by indicating those areas that he has mastered.

Many of the principles for preparing good progress tests are similar to those for preparing achievement and proficiency tests. Instructions to the students should be clear so that they have no difficulty in understanding what they have to do. Trick questions should be avoided. These are more likely to trick the better students than the poor ones. However, in other ways, the principles will be quite different, reflecting the different purpose the test is to serve.

Finally, the questions need to be written and the test booklet designed. These should always be at least double-checked. A second opinion will often see flaws that the first writer cannot see until they are pointed out. The following questions need to be asked:

1. Are the instructions clear?
2. Is the content restricted to course content or what might be reasonably thought as a prerequisite to the course?
3. Are the tasks in open-ended questions sufficiently defined? Are they likely to provide the student with an opportunity to show his ability in the relevant skills?
4. In multiple choice questions, is there clearly one and only one correct answer?
5. Is the marking scheme for the subjectively marked tests clear? Does it emphasize areas stressed in the course or does it

emphasize other areas? For example, if the course has stressed communication over accuracy, does the marking reflect this?

To sum up, we can have a ready check-list, which should at regular intervals provide the following guidelines to us:

1. Instruction is guided by a pre-planned curriculum.
2. There are high expectations of students for learning.
3. Students are carefully oriented to lessons.
4. Instruction is clear and focused.
5. Learning progress is monitored closely.
6. When students do not understand, they are re-taught.
7. Class time is used for learning.
8. There are smooth and efficient classroom routines.
9. Instructional groups formed in the classroom fit within instructional needs.
10. Standards for classroom behavior are high.
11. Personal interaction between teachers and students are positive.
12. Incentives and rewards for students are used to promote excellence.

Viewed in this light, the way we state our teaching content may be half the battle, but the other half remains to be fought in the classroom. How we continue with this battle, depends on our vocational attitude towards this noble profession of teaching.

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