

Role and Responsibilities of English Teachers in the Present-day Indian Context

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Abstract

Education is what shapes a life and a teacher's role as a 'Motivator' and 'Facilitator' is the key to effective learning at any level of education. It would not be an exaggeration if it is stated that the onus of imparting life skills lies on English teachers. English Language teachers have a major role to play in a developing nation like India as the nature of our official language is functional and is used in everyday situations. As facilitators, language teachers realise that effective learning of language skills is crucial for professional success. As Motivators, they understand that English literature can be applied to enhance the qualities of independence, autonomy and creativity nurtured in an accepted and mindful approach. In this context this paper discusses the actual role of English teachers in India, both language and literature.

Keywords: English language, literature, learner motivation, learning environment, facilitator, language skills.

In any country, in any age, irrespective of the local and international influential factors, the strength of a nation solely depends, undoubtedly, on the quality of education and the education system of that nation. For the advancement of a nation education is breath and a teacher, who is of paramount importance in education system, is oxygen. It is truly believed that if the standards of education are not good the lives of the people will not be good and the nation will not be strong. Despite swift increase (acceleration) in the use of technological devices in the process of learning, teachers play an ever significant role. In the era of globalisation, English has overcome the position of a mere language and has become one of the essential life skills. In India, it is a well known fact worldwide, a teacher's place is sacred, and it is next only to parents. Because of several reasons, in the 21st century, drastic changes have happened in the attitude of the learners. Despite these changes, still, teachers are being respected as primary source of learning. Teacher is a teacher whatever subject he teaches and wherever he works. But English teachers have a more crucial and more responsible role to play in shaping the lives and careers of the students specifically, in developing countries like India. To make this developing country a developed nation, English is also a basic asset. So, English teachers have an unavoidable role in nation building. The role of English

teachers can be viewed in two ways. One is teaching English language communication and another one teaching English literature.

Rapid changes have occurred in the users and in the ways of use of English in the past three decades. It has been estimated that more than two billion people speak English across the world (Graddol, 2006; Ur,2009), and many of them are non-native speakers of English. As people use this language for various purposes, it is gaining importance in every area today. Considering the number of languages and variation of dialects in our country, India, English is the connecting strand. In the globalised world, the purposes of English language are many - to get a job, to access information from the Internet, to communicate with their English-speaking friends of other states and other nations, to build up relationship with others etc. Majority of these people's objective is not to acquire native-like proficiency in English, but to know enough English to meet their communicative needs.

The language teachers need to learn and do a lot of things because theirs is a vital role in the global context. The kinds of responsibilities should be very clear in promoting and practicing methods and approaches to teaching English. Before teaching, the English teachers, as they are not native speakers, need to be willing to learn and possess (gain) proficiency of (in) English. In addition, and perhaps more notably, they need to develop a positive attitude towards teaching. Many applied linguists have made great endeavours and have given various models of teaching English language (McKay, 2002; Sharifian, 2009). It is thought that in reality, at the ground level, many teachers are less eager and enthusiastic to embrace such useful models.

It is quite a common sight in many educational institutes that two English teachers communicate in their mother tongue and they explain the importance and need of environment in specific language learning in the classroom. So, unquestionably teachers have to start the essential change. It is apt to cite Jenkins'(2007), Llurda (2009: 126), "... language teachers in general, and NNESTs [Non-native English Speaking Teachers] in particular, hold attitudes towards EIL [English as International Language] that are far from being enthusiastic." Good English language teachers are expected to retain language teaching principles apart from general educational ethics. Scarcity of well-versed teachers and lack of adequate aids are the problems in teaching English language. So that the teaching of English for the beginners as well as for the advanced learners has been a challenge especially in the four skills of language – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

Proper training of teachers is of great significance in improving the quality of English education. The language Teacher is a provider of language input, an ambassador of that language related culture, promoter of multiculturalism, facsimile of the native-speaker variety of English, user of language teaching methodologies such as communicative language teaching, enthusiast of other varieties of English, critical user of course books. All these roles should be accustomed to the changing status of English as a global language.

One of the most accountable roles is providing Facilitation. It comprises enabling learners by giving them more inventiveness and responsibility. However, though this sounds well in principle, in practice, especially, in the larger Indian context, it is quite difficult to play this groundbreaking role of the facilitator as the system is strictly syllabus and marks oriented.

When an English language teacher's role is successful, the learner can build relationship with the people of other countries and of others states in the country as people of different states speak different languages. Even though Hindi is the official language there are people (including those whose mother tongue is Hindi) who do not like using it and they use English to communicate with others. When the teacher is successful learners can also get jobs, can prosper in their career, business and personal life. They also can understand the developments occurring in different fields like science, technology, trade, national and international relationships, manufacturing, etc. All these lead to the prosperity of the nation and so the nation can become strong.

Another important role of English teacher in nation building is making the students or learners good citizens through teaching English literature. As a matter of fact, it is a bigger part than being a language teacher. It is said that literature is the history of human soul. It has the ability to transform the lives of the people. It has the ability to provide the essentiality to lead a successful and content life. The standards of the lifestyle of the people are estimated based on many factors, of them literature is also one. English literature is outstandingly rich with tremendous contribution of eminent writers.

It is fortunate enough that in India there have been numerous English teachers with passion and prominence for teaching English literature. Some of them have dedicated their lives in reading Shakespeare, Milton and the same has been taught to the students. These teachings can provide scope for in-depth thinking, debates and discussions because the works are rich in human element.

Motivation is essential to make the students learn and transform themselves as good citizens and good human beings. It is easier and influential to motivate them with the help of English literature. For instance, when a teacher wants to motivate them to be adaptable and to overcome outside obstacles he may quote Satan's words from Milton's *Paradise Lost: Book One* "the mind is its own place and in itself can make a hell of heaven and heaven of hell" and we can see great impact of these words on the minds of the students. We can motivate them through stories, novels, characters, incidents, lives of the writers, poems from English literature. Motivated learners are passionate, goal-orientated, determined and confident learners. They are enthusiastic to work hard to achieve their goal and they do not easily give up their efforts until they achieve goal.

English literature gives the teachers enormous ability and experience to analyse the innate abilities of the students and their needs also. Accordingly, they can proceed to guide the students. For this, one can tell the life histories of great people like Swamy Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Nelson

Mandela, APJ Kalam, Malala Yousafzai etc. and their worthy words will help generate aspirations in the individual students.

Another role which is readily accepted by English teachers is life skills trainer. Life skills like persuasion skills, problem solving skills, attitude development, interpersonal skills, negotiation skills etc are necessary to the students. Because of so many reasons like nuclear families and use of scientific devices make the people lose all the innate and inherent people skills. For retaining and possessing all the above mentioned abilities, students need special training classes. English teachers, with the help the knowledge of English literature, are successfully doing this more responsible business. English teachers are becoming successful soft skills trainers and are successfully training and instilling essential people skills.

As English literature forms the character and behavior of the readers, the English teachers are treated as role models to the students as well as fellow colleagues. Exhibiting leadership qualities wherever necessary, being humane in deeds, being dynamic in action, possessing high ideals in attitude, moving sharp and smart in social circumstances are only a few of this role model's impressionistic qualities.

It is undisputable to state that a teacher is considered a pillar of a nation since the walls and parapet are constructed based on the pillars. In this era of rapid technological development, by fulfilling all the roles and by accepting all the responsibilities, English teachers are one of the actual reasons for the peace and the power of a nation. Their roles should be highly commended and appreciated to continue this saga of success in strengthening our culturally rich country, India.

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