

The Efficient Language Teacher

*Nawel Zineb BOUGHERRA **
Department of English,
Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts,
Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbès, (Algeria)
[*bougherazinebna.well@gmail.com*](mailto:bougherazinebna.well@gmail.com)

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Abstract:

Efficient learning is closely associated with the concept of efficient teaching and by extension, with the notion of efficient teachers. Efficient language teaching has become an eminent issue in the domain of education as there has been a huge demand on learning foreign languages throughout the world. In the process of foreign language learning, the language teacher has a significant role on the students and their success depends greatly on the skills of the teachers. That is why enhancing the field of foreign language teaching and learning without improving the qualities of EFL teachers sounds impossible. The current article highlights a set of teacher-related factors for consideration in relation to efficient language teaching. More specifically, it stresses the importance of *knowing*, *analyzing*, and *doing* as three basic building blocks for an efficient language teacher. *Knowing* covers professional knowledge, procedural knowledge, and personal knowledge. *Analyzing*, on the other hand, depicts understanding learner needs, learner motivation, and learner autonomy. The practical facet, called the *Doing* part of the language teacher in the classroom involves in turn a range of components that nurture each other: the doing of teaching that boosts target learning outcomes, the doing of theorizing from the classroom, and finally, the doing of dialogizing that appeals to critical conversations with others on matters related to learning and teaching.

* Corresponding author

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1.Introduction:

Are good language teachers born or do people learn to be good language teachers through study, experience and mentorship? Language teaching is an art, a highly skilled activity learned by careful observation and patient practice. It cannot be carried out successfully by following a set of rules, and it cannot be reduced to a systematic set of logically related procedures. Undeniably, teaching languages demands awareness about the language being learnt; i.e. the target language, knowledge about language learning, knowledge about language teaching, procedural knowledge and some kind of personal knowledge, yet knowing alone is not enough. Language teachers should be aware of learner needs as well as the factors that stimulate learner motivation and learner autonomy. This is an indispensable part of their work. Besides, language teaching involves doing or taking action to reach target learning outcomes. Knowing, analyzing, and doing are to be discussed as the core processes any language teacher needs to be involved in to accomplish his / her duties successfully.

2. Research Methodology

The research of this paper has been located within a qualitative approach. The article's main interest lies in generating a crispy understanding of the topic under discussion by explaining descriptively and theoretically a set of teacher-related factors for consideration in relation to efficient language teaching. To this end, a wide variety of books, journal articles, and even conferences are used as sources for data collection.

3. Efficient Teaching

Efficient teaching plays a pivotal role in shaping the minds and future of students. Moore (2001:5) defined teaching as “the actions of someone who is trying to assist others to reach their fullest potential in all aspects of development.” The personal features and skills needed to accomplish this task have been debated for years. Some claimed that anyone who knows their subject matter can teach, but nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, “effective teaching involves having a sound understanding of how and why certain activities lead to learning and what factors influence their effectiveness. Teachers make use of a whole range of teaching skills to make sure learning occurs effectively. Only a combination of both subject-matter knowledge and an understanding of the nature of effective teaching itself can provide a solid foundation for effectiveness”. (Kyriacou, 1997:1). Oyetunde (2014) viewed efficient teaching as a purposeful and designed activity. It is purposeful (goal-oriented), rational (structured), and significant.

In other terms, efficient teaching implies assisting students to attain as well as use knowledge and develop the ability to think and solve problems. Therefore, whether students have progress or development is the most important indicator to measure efficient teaching (Lawson, Cruz, & Knollman, 2017). Moreover, Maduewesi and Aboho (2006) observed that for teaching to be efficient, the teacher needs to possess thorough knowledge of the subject matter, be skilled at displaying competence in communicating that knowledge in question to

the students, in addition to the capacity to select and use an array of teaching methods for the sake of achieving their instructional purposes in the class.

4. Teacher-Related Factors in Relation to Efficient Language Teaching

Teaching in general is an intricate process, particularly teaching languages. That intricacy in language teaching lies in the range of the teachers' views of the nature of language, language teaching and learning in general, in addition to their knowledge of the particular socio-cultural setting in which teaching and learning take place (Adamson, 2004). Another factor to be emphasized is the level of complexity related to the learners' definite and distinctive needs in a specific class at a particular time, and being aware that those requirements are subject to alter (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Teachers are then concerned with the process of analyzing factors promoting learners' motivation and autonomy. They face many challenges and opportunities in their profession, such as adapting to different contexts, learners, and goals, as well as keeping up with the latest research and methods. They are life-long learners always seeking for ways to boost target learning outcomes, they theorize from classroom practices, and they dialogize to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Knowing, analyzing, and doing are to be discussed in the upcoming sections as three key teacher-related factors influencing efficient language teaching.

4.1 Knowing

Teaching requires knowing. In fact, lying at the heart of proficient teaching are the knowledge and skill that an individual teacher brings to the cognitive demands of teaching. What teachers do in the classroom is to a great extent dependent on what they know and believe, and on what they understand about the processes of teaching and learning. Language teachers need to develop manifold sorts of knowledge: professional, procedural, and personal knowledge.

4.1.1 Professional Knowledge

The learning process is not exclusively devoted to the student, teachers learn as well (Scrivener, 2011). They do that throughout their teaching career (Freeman, 2009), acquiring professional knowledge from a variety of sources: trainings, books, conferences, etc. Scrivener (2011) went even further by pointing out that successful teachers are required to be themselves lifelong learners, otherwise they will not be able to progress in their professional task. The professional knowledge foundation of teachers which is also called content knowledge refers to what teachers need to know about what they teach. Content knowledge constitutes knowledge that would not be shared with teachers of other subject areas. In the context of language teacher education, professional knowledge is the central part associated to language, language learning, and language teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

4.1.1.1 Knowledge about Language

Knowledge of the language being taught is regarded as the main building block of content knowledge in language teaching; teachers' knowledge a propos a language covers knowledge of language as a system, discourse, and ideology.

Language is a well-organized and well-crafted instrument. By treating language as system, one simply admit that each unit of language, from a single sound to a complex word to a large text has a character of its own, and each is, in some principled way, defined by and dependent upon its co-occurring units (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Simply put, teachers' knowledge of language as a system entails an understanding of, and ability to employ correctly, the rules and principles that govern language such as grammatical and syntactical rules, phonetic rules, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics of writing.

Discourse can simply be seen as language in use (Cook, 1989). 'Language in use' means the set of norms, preferences and expectations which relate language to context. That is to say, language used to do something and mean something, language produced and interpreted in a real-world context. Teachers' knowledge of language as discourse stands, therefore, for the consistent correlation that ties form, meaning, and the communicative purpose in a specific communicative situation, so that language use becomes grammatically correct and communicatively appropriate (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

Ideology is "a systematic body of ideas, organized from a particular point of view." (Kress & Hodge, 1979: 6). Language is not only a system or a medium of communication, but also an object of ideological processes. Language as ideology, goes way beyond the confines of systemic and discursal features of language, and locates itself as a site for power and domination by being both a transporter and translator of ideology that serves vested interests (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Being aware of language as ideology is to consider "the higher order operations of language at the intersection of social, cultural, political, and ideological meanings." (Ibid, 2012: 25). Indeed, the language teacher has to consider how languages carry, or are invested with certain moral, social, and political values, giving rise to hidden assumption people hold about a specific or any language.

4.1.1.2 Knowledge about Language Learning

Language teacher knowledge about language learning necessitates perception of the nature of the constituents that compose the input-output chain: input, intake, intake factors, intake processes, and output (Ibid, 2008).

Input in language learning is the amount of language learners are exposed to via different sources, which has to be useful and suitable for their learning purposes (Ibid, 2012). According to Kumaravadivelu (2008), there are three main categories of language input attributable to three distinct sources from which learners are likely to get / seek input: a. interlanguage input refers simply to the language delivered by the teacher inside the classroom; it is wisely selected and accessible to permit learners grasp it; b. simplified input is the grammatically and lexically non complicated language that teachers, textbook writers, and other proficient speakers utilize inside and outer the classroom while talking to learners; and c. non-simplified input entails the language of skilled speakers free from any simplification. For instance, the language employed in the media and used by proficient speakers in oral as well as written interactions.

Intake, however, is that particular amount of input that learners successfully process to build up internal understanding of the target language. It is 'what goes in and not what is available to go in.' (Corder, 1967:165). Similarly, Faerch and Kasper (1980:64) defined intake as "the subset of input which is assimilated by the interlanguage system and which the

interlanguage system accommodates to.” It is, thus, a subset of input that “the learner actually successfully and completely processed.” (Hatch, 1983: 81).

Many factors impact the way input is processed by learners. Intake factors are learner individual features such as age, motivation, anxiety, and attitude which are essential for determining individual success or failure in language learning. They also entail strategic factors such as using a number of learning strategies that make the learning experience trouble-free, more agreeable, quicker, more autonomous and more efficient (Oxford, 1990). Communicative strategies (e.g. paraphrasing, word-for-word translation from native language, etc.) are employed by learners use to solve problems they face in reaching a particular communicative goal (Faerch and Kasper, 1980). Educational factors include language policies and language planning put by governmental and educational agencies to determine the types and objectives of programmes offered to language learners (Kimaravadevelu, 2012).

Intake processes, however, are mental operations that intercede between, and interplay with, input data and intake aspects. These cognitive processes may be grouped under three major categories: inferencing, structuring, and restructuring (Ibid, 2008). And finally, output refers to what language learners actually produce orally or in writing.

4.1.1.3 Knowledge about Language Teaching

Knowledge of the varied methods in language teaching empowers language teachers with a solid background reference to their own stand on pedagogical matters and classroom practices, and helps them understand the process that language teaching has undergone. As expressed by Larsen-Freeman (2003: x), teachers who are knowledgeable in terms of the different methods are said to enlarge their repertoire of teaching techniques. This latter contributes to a great extent to the teachers’ “professional growth.”

There is a wide range of teaching methods that can be used in the language classroom; the most common consist of communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based language teaching (TBLT), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), the direct method, the grammar-translation, and audiolingualism. The effectiveness of each of these teaching methods depends on a variety of factors, including the subject matter, the specific learning goals, the needs and abilities of the learners, and the teacher’s experience and skills. Teachers should be flexible in their approach, willing to experiment with different methods, and adapt their teaching strategies to satisfy their students’ needs.

4.1.2 Procedural Knowledge

Procedural knowledge as well, represents a significant element of teachers’ knowledge since it influences their performance inside the classroom. According to Guerriero, (2013), procedural knowledge is dependent on how teachers apply their knowledge during classes. Indeed, language teachers are supposed to know how to manage classroom learning and teaching in a way to facilitate the flow of the course and guide it in the right direction.

Besides, teachers have to develop responsive and supportive relationships with and among learners, optimize learners' access to learning, promote their engagement in academic tasks, and intervene appropriately to assist learners with behaviour problems (Evertson and Weinstein, 2006).

To capture some of the complexities involved in language teaching, Day and Conklin (1992) divided procedural knowledge into a number of sub-categories, specifically: pedagogic knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and support knowledge.

Pedagogic knowledge is the focused, situated knowledge that language teachers aim at, taking into consideration the environment in which the activities of teaching and learning take place. This entails, for instance, knowledge of the general educational documents applying to the education system the teacher is involved in, knowledge of the students both in general and as individuals, and so on. Classroom management is also a dimension of teachers' pedagogic knowledge and relates to the techniques and procedures through which teachers promote and maintain an effective and harmonious teaching atmosphere. Effective classroom management is not reducible to issues of discipline and control. Indeed, "teachers need to think less about discipline and more about the practices and procedures that allow students to learn and teachers to teach." (Hardin, 2012:3).

Pedagogic content knowledge, however, is the relationship between one's understanding of content in a specific field and the selection of teaching approaches and strategies. It is knowing what, when, why, and how to teach using a reservoir of knowledge of good teaching practice and experience (Shulman, 1986). Kultsum (2017) regards pedagogical content knowledge as the combination of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge when teachers are transmitting information in a specific subject matter. The transmission has to be dependent on the learners' interest and capacity. It is used by teachers to guide their decisions and actions in classrooms.

And as far as support knowledge is concerned, it refers to those disciplines contributing to language teaching. In their discussion of this type of knowledge, Day and Conklin (1992) pointed out that it is developed from the disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics. Simply put, language teachers draw together knowledge and experience from elements of a range of different disciplines to support their teaching.

4.1.3 Personal Knowledge

Over time, teachers evolve a coherent pedagogic framework consisting of core principles that are applied across teaching situations. In other words, teachers accumulate an awareness of what constitutes good teaching in the long run. This is what we call teachers' personal knowledge, and it relates to the experiences and ideas that an individual draws upon in order to teach and evolve as a teacher. Indeed, teachers' personal knowledge 'involves the ability to critically recognize, reflect, review, and reinvent their own identities, beliefs and values.' (Kumaravadivelu, 2012:31). Such accumulate awareness can come only out of direct participation in classroom processes and events. In fact, personal knowledge is not merely a matter of behavioral knowledge, but more than that it engages a cognitive facet which is supposed to relate thought to activity, focusing on "the context-embedded, interpretive process of knowing what to do." (Freeman, 1996: 99). Of course, this does not develop instantly, but evolves progressively through determined effort. That is why teachers can

become autonomous only to the extent they are willing and able to embark on continual process of self-development.

4.2 Analyzing

Teaching is not just a matter of knowing and putting that knowledge into action; it is also about what informs what is done and how it is done. Based on that, what to teach and how to teach it has to rely on scrutinized needs' analysis, learners' motivation as well as learner autonomy.

4.2.1 Understanding Learner Needs

A typical problem for novice and experienced language teachers alike is being required to design a course that is both efficient and relevant. As a departure point to reach that, educators have to consider the specific needs and objectives of the target population. In fact, learners possess different, personal motivations that trigger them to develop the target language. Therefore, taking the initiative to get closer to students and be caring as well as eager would have a very positive effect on both the teaching and learning processes. The various tools, procedures, and materials used for finding out about learner needs usually come under the heading of 'needs analysis' (Scrivener, 2011), and it is "the starting point for devising syllabus, course material and classroom activities." (Jordan, 1997:22).

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), needs' analysis aims at discovering what language learners have to learn in order to function effectively in the target situation (learner necessities), what they like to learn (learner wants), and what they have not yet learned (learner lacks). Such an analysis feeds directly into the syllabus for a course, determines its goals and objectives, and ensures its relevance.

Necessities or learner objective needs can be diagnosed by the language teacher based on needs analysis done by policy makers, education ministries, institutions, etc. Subjective needs or learner wants can be identified by administering specially prepared survey questionnaires focusing on learner perception of learning goals, and their learning styles and strategies. Closely linked to necessities and wants are lacks. Learner lacks in terms of linguistic features such as grammatical constructions, vocabulary, etc., can be revealed easily through a diagnostic test. Lack of essential resources like textbooks, audio-visual aids, etc., is also included within the category of lacks while analyzing learner needs.

4.2.2 Understanding Learner Motivation

The process of language learning is significantly influenced by a set of factors including students' motivation. Learner motivation correlates positively with successful language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Thus, an effective language teacher attributes a considerable importance and work to motivating learners (Dornyei, 2001). Language teachers should not only be aware of their important role as motivators but also need to decide upon the right and effective method to prompt their students' enthusiasm in language learning. Language teachers can motivate learners relying on various instructional interventions: using

appraisal feedback, varying classroom activities to suit all learning styles, giving clear instructions and providing guidance about how to do the task, engaging student learning through cooperative group work, competitive teams, etc. Besides, they must inspire confidence and offer a good model as the target language users. And most importantly, they must be fair, treat their students equally, and understand and act on the worries and aspirations of their students.

4.2.3 Understanding Learner Autonomy

Page (1992: 84) stated: “Learners must no longer sit there and expect to be taught; teachers must no longer stand up there teaching all the time. Teachers have to learn to let go and learners have to learn to take hold.” With the change from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness in education, learner autonomy has become an educational goal for language learners. According to Holec (1981:3), a learner who is capable of “taking charge” of his/her own learning experience is an autonomous learner. Thus, self-directed language learners possess an active attitude towards their language study, and take, therefore, the initiative to be responsible for their own learning. Yet, developing the capacity to learn independently cannot be accomplished without supportive environment. An encouraging milieu depends on the teacher’s guidance. This latter, i.e.; teacher’s guidance is a key element without which learners’ independence will not be as efficient as it would be and the learning process would be messy. Independent learning does not mean necessarily learning alone or without a teacher (Ibid, 1981). Three elements are required to develop self-directed learning: an incentive (stimulus), insight and supervision from teacher.

The language teacher can foster learner autonomy by acting as: *a facilitator* who initiates and supports decision-making processes, develops students’ self-confidence and interest, and arouses students’ interest, *a counselor* who responds to the ongoing learners’ needs, and is willing to assist them through the use of practical learning strategies which are of great help to students, *an instructor* who explicitly presents the teaching plan, teaching requirements in addition to the teaching contents so as to ensure students know teacher’s expectations clearly (Yang, 1998), *a resource* who makes his/her knowledge and expertise available to the learners when it is needed (Voller, 1997), *a coordinator* who builds up a relaxing learning atmosphere for learners and creates a number of occasions which allow more practice, and *a cooperator* who acts as a peer-learner which means a member of the group to create a close partnership and productive interaction with students so as to learn from each other.

4.3 Doing

Knowing and analyzing will lead to naught if the doer is not doing. Doing involves teaching that boosts target learning outcomes, theorizing from the classroom, and dialogizing which requires critical conversations with informed interlocutors.

4.3.1 The Act of Teaching

Teaching is a system of actions intended to induce learning (Smith, 1961). It is a complex, multifaceted activity requiring creativity, artistry, and context-sensitivity. The language teacher juggles multiple tasks and goals simultaneously and flexibly to maximize learning opportunities, and monitor personal transformation.

4.3.1.1 Maximizing Learning Opportunities

According to Kumaravadivelu (2008), the teachers' first and foremost duty is to maximize learning opportunities within the language class. Language teachers are entreated to maximize learning opportunities to create a bridge that incorporates their role as managers of teaching acts and mediators of learning acts. Hence, their mission is to facilitate negotiated interaction so that they can enable and stimulate learners to initiate topic and talk, not just react and respond. They are supposed to contextualize linguistic input, to raise cultural consciousness, to integrate language skills, and to equip learners with strategic means necessary to self-monitor their own learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Besides, they are supposed to plan activities and tasks so that everything works smoothly, and ensure consistent and fair application of rules. Moreover, great teachers maximize students' opportunities to learn by minimizing wasted time, by preventing, anticipating and responding to potentially disruptive incidents, and by reinforcing positive student behaviours.

4.3.1.2 Monitoring Personal Transformation

Teaching is a transformative process (Giroux, 1988). Viewing teaching as the act of merely transmitting knowledge to learners and turning learners into containers to be filled by the teacher was criticized by Freire (1972) who viewed teachers as transformative intellectuals. That means, teachers own the knowledge, skillfulness, standards and outlooks towards various questions. They are also capable of perceiving, questioning and ultimately act as "agents of change" facing a number of biases (Giroux, 1988). It is noteworthy, however, that teaching should also bring some personal transformation and fulfillment to the teacher which can be achieved when what goes in the classroom is constructive for both parts; teachers and learners alike. Teachers are "professionals who are able and willing to reflect upon the ideological principles that inform their practice, who connect pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues, and who work together to share ideas, exercise power over the conditions of their labor, and embody in their teaching a vision of a better and more humane life" (Giroux and McLaren, 1989: xxiii). They are supposed to criticize the purposes, content, approaches, and technologies of teaching. Accordingly, the language teachers' role is now stretched beyond the borders of the classroom. They can model the skills and characteristics of responsible citizens, and can use the micro-society of the language classroom as a model for the greater society the learners will meet when they leave the educational setting.

4.3.2 The Act of Practical Theorizing

According to Edge (2001: 6), "the thinking teacher is no longer perceived as someone who applied theories, but as someone who theorizes practice." Developing a personal system of knowledge, beliefs and understandings drawn from the practical experience of teaching is known as the theorizing of practice (Borg, 2006). Borg (1999:157) defined it as: "implicit personal understandings of teaching and learning which teachers develop through educational and professional experiences in their lives", and contrasted it with ideological or idealistic beliefs/theories, which are influenced by technical or propositional knowledge of what teachers should do when conducting their teaching (Phillips & Borg, 2009). Theorizing from

the language classroom involves reflecting on teaching experiences in order to better understand the nature of language teaching and learning. These reflections may lead to explanations as to why things happen in the way they do, to generalizations about the nature of things, etc. Classroom data in the form of a live or video-taped lesson, or a lesson transcript, are the ideal resources for initiating and sustaining the process of theorizing.

4.3.3 The Act of Dialogizing

Scrivener (2011:380) pointed out that: “one good way to keep learning about teaching is to never let your ideas ‘set in concrete’, to remain open to the possibility of being wrong – or to more interesting alternative ways of doing things, to always be questioning (and possibly changing) some of your ideas.” Teacher dialogizing means having conversations with Self, with texts and with others on issues related to learning, teaching, and theorizing (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). According to Scrivener (2011), the quality of the progress a teacher makes in teaching is partly to do with other people. In fact, if teachers work in a staff room where people are open and ready to discuss and exchange ideas and materials, they have a huge bonus. By engaging in such a process of learning conversations with peers and mentors, the language teacher acts as dialogic inquirer. Dialogizing offers and excellent opportunity to construct knowledge collaboratively (Atay, 2004), and involves a focus on teaching issues and concerns, namely; the use of textbooks, development of tests, course planning, etc. This will help teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities, and areas for improvement and development.

5. Conclusion:

Teaching is a multifaceted activity which often requires teachers to juggle multiple tasks and goals simultaneously and flexibly. Efficient teaching is widely acknowledged to be one of the key factors leading to successful learning outcomes. And although there are many different ways to teach efficiently, good instructors have several features in common. To make their teaching more efficient and their students more successful, language teachers have to understand how to build a viable professional, procedural, and personal knowledge base, how to explore learners’ needs, motivation, and autonomy, and how to do the right kind of teaching, theorizing, and dialogizing. By extension, teacher educators have the responsibility to create the conditions necessary for teachers to know, to analyze, and to do. Of course, their main objective is to design and develop an instruction that is meaningful, consistent and impactful.

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