**Lecture Nine: The Role of Teachers and Learners**

1. **The Role of Teachers**

The role of teachers changed overtime. In traditional classes, the teacher was considered to be the holder of knowledge who transmits it to the students to return it back in the exam paper. The teacher at that era played the role of “a sage on the stage” Although in CALL some researchers claimed for teachers to be “Ghosts in the wings” (their role is minimal and associated with ignorance), the teacher is more considered to be a facilitator, his role changed to “a guide on the side” i.e. s/he is no more the only source of knowledge; the latter could be gained from a variety of sources, but s/he needs to be flexible and adapts to learners’ needs (Le Baron-Earle, 2013).

Although the teachers’ role was primarily underestimated because of the focus on learners’ autonomy using the new media, it has recently gained much attention and focus. This view is supported by Müller-Hartmann (2007 p. 168) who stated that

the new technology did not replace the teacher, but put him in the midst of designing the new living environment, allowing him to develop professionally, conjointly with his partner teacher(s) abroad, in the process of these intercultural projects

Because of the continuously emerging and developing ICTs, and because the use of technology in education cannot be effective unless teachers are aware of their new roles (Kramsch, 1993), teachers are required to develop some skills. The latter are manifested in four main models as shown in the following table:

*Table 07. Models of ICT competence for teachers (O’Dowd, 2013 p.05)*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Skills pyramid for successful online FL teaching Hempel and Stickler (2005) | Technology standards performance indicators for teachers ISTE (2008) | ICT competency standards for teachers UNISCO (2008) | E-moderator competencies (2003) |
| - basic ICT competence  - tech competence with software  - dealing with constraints of the medium  - online socialization  - facilitating communicative competence  - creativity and choice  - own style | - facilitating and inspiring student learning  - designing digital-age learning experiences and assessments  - model digital-age work and learning  - promote digital citizenship and responsibility  - engage in professional growth and leadership | - educational policy  - curriculum and assessment  -pedagogy  - ICT (technical) competence  - organization and administration  - teacher professional development | - understanding of online processes  - technical skills  - online communication skills  - content expertise  - personal characteristics |

In addition to these ICT skills, O’Dowd (2013) claimed that telecollaborative teachers should 1) aim at developing ICC, 2) be themselves interculturally competent to be able to collaborate with other teachers within the project, and 3) relate telecollaborative tasks to those tackled in class during a long-term period. He posited a model of telecollaborative teachers’ competences that contains four sections: organizational, pedagogical, digital competences and attitudes and beliefs, with a total of 40 descriptors. To develop these competencies, O’Dowd (2015) valued sociocultural approaches to FL teacher education where emphasis is put on the relation between training periods at university and realities of language classrooms.

Nevertheless, teachers may be afraid of their new roles in telecollaboration because of the pitfalls of technology, changing the role they have accustomed to, and not being able to control their learners online (Müller-Hartmann, 2007). However, teachers’ role does not require them to control their learners, and their active participation within online interaction is not necessary. Hence, their role encompasses the organization of the exchange (selecting the partners, the tool and preparing learners), developing, sequencing and implementing real-world tasks that are meaningful (following a task-based approach), setting objectives and time constraints, and evaluating the learning outcome (O’Dowd, 2013; Müller-Hartman, 2007; O’Dowd, 2015).

In preparing learners, teachers should make sure that learners are not frustrated by the use of a particular ICT tool (Dooly, 2007). ‘Electronic literacies’ i.e. skills related to computer use, connectively and knowledge about online behavior should be considered to guarantee learners’ benefit from online language learning (O’Dowd, 2007). Besides, learners should be sensitized towards differences that may occur in their online interactions and may lead to misunderstanding and stereotypes (O’Dowd, 2015).

Kiddle (2013) reported that although it has been claimed long ago that “technology will not replace teachers, but teachers who use technology will replace those who don’t” (p. 190), teachers still resist the use of technology for a variety of reasons. The latter may include:

* Extent of the curriculum that needs to be covered during the year,
* Time constraints,
* Time required for preparing ICT-based activities,
* Availability of infrastructure,
* Amount of quality content,
* Lack of in-classroom teacher support,
* Lack of participation of teachers in decision-making,
* Need for professional development, besides
* Difficulty to keeping pace with the rapid proliferation of information, software tools, and devices (p. 191).
  + 1. **The Role of the Learner**

In CALL and the era of Social Media, learners are claimed to have four main roles: “active participants”, “researchers”, “ethnographers”, and “authors”.

Learners’ role shifted from passive recipients of the information given by their teacher, to active participants who are responsible for their own learning; they work independently and collaboratively with peers, teachers and other users of the language around the world, they interact with other to create and negotiate meaning. They can search for information in different sources, collect it and compare it to construct meaning and generate a rounded understanding. As ethnographers, learners observe human interactions, and collect information about the human behaviour, cultural artifacts and attitudes. Then, they reflect on these experiences and note them. The availability of journals, forums, blogs… has given learners the opportunity to act as authors; they can write about their interaction and learning experiences and share them with others (Le Baron-Earle, 2013).

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