

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning are two inseparable aspects; they are closely interdependent. We teach in order that somebody else learns. Therefore, there needs to be harmony between the two, otherwise, it will be a complete failure. Ideally, it is the learning that determines the teaching and not the other way around. There can, after all, be learning without teaching, but one cannot claim to have taught unless somebody else has learned.¹⁾ This is what has tempted us to play down the importance of teaching. It is the learner who is supposed to get benefit from this process.

Learning a language is not simply learning about the language but more important than that is learning to converse in the language. Furthermore, an undeniable fact about a language whether it is a foreign or a native language is that it is a means of expressing concepts and fulfilling communicative functions. This important fact is often overlooked by many language teachers. Let us see the case of Indonesia. After years of study, i.e.

1) Earl W. Stevick, Teaching Languages :

A Way and Ways (1969) p. 16

three years at the Junior High School and three years at the Senior High School, most SMA leavers can hardly express even the simplest idea in English properly let alone use the language for real communication. They might know a large number of rules and vocabulary items but they do not know how to use them to express their intention. To find a solution to improve this unfavourable condition is not of course a simple matter. There are many factors responsible for this. Among them are the learner factor, the teacher, the size of the class, methods, approaches, techniques, time, facilities, material and environment. English teachers may start to improve this condition from any factor they like, but the writer intends to start from the teacher, especially his approaches toward teaching English.

We should remember that there are other functions for which our society, and our students themselves, demand that the teachers stand steadfast at the center of language education. At least there are five such functions :

1. Most obvious is the cognitive function :
It is we teachers who possess the information which our students are seeking about the culture and its language. To say the same thing more bluntly, we have what caused them to come - or to be sent - to the course in the first place.

2. Almost as obvious is the classroom management function : Our students and the society in which both we and they work expect us to take responsibility for how they use their time while they are with us. In placing this expectation on us, they rely on our training and experience with materials, schedules and techniques.

3. A third function has to do with practical goals. Our students and society have certain overall goals for language course. Sometimes these goals are listed very explicitly, and sometimes they are only half-conscious. We are supposed to take these long-range goals and translate them into goals that are weekly, daily , hourly.

4. The fourth function is personal or interpersonal. Because of our near-monopoly of information, procedures and day-to-day goals and because of the great power which society invests in the giver of final grade, the teacher is by far the most powerful figure in the classroom. Therefore he, more than anyone else, sets the tone for the interpersonal atmosphere. That atmosphere, in turn, may mean the students' non-linguistic, emotional needs are met, or denied, while they are in the language classroom.

5. Related to this fourth function, but centered still more closely on the person of the teacher, the teacher may or may not radiate enthusiasm for

the task at hand, and conviction of its value. This is more subtle than the other four ways in which the teacher is 'central' to the course, yet it is perhaps the most indispensable of the five.

These, then, are five respects in which the teacher may rightfully demand, and must rightly accept, the center of the stage in language instruction. The question now becomes, how can we reconcile the centrality of the teacher with the centrality of the learner ? Do these two ideas not conflict ?

Some people have sometimes talked and written as though an increase in the learners' initiative necessarily requires some reduction in the degree of control that the teacher exercises and vice versa. We have therefore concluded that all we can do is try for an appropriate balance between control by the teacher and initiative by the students. In recent years, however, people have come to believe that this is not so. They believe that there is a way to define 'control' and 'initiative', not widely inconsistent with everyday usage, which will allow the teacher to keep nearly 100 percent of the control while at the same time the learner is exercising nearly 100 percent of the initiative. This distinction has proved to be one of the more useful ideas that people have run across.

Some kind of control is necessary for the success of any human undertaking. So far as the writer can see, control by the teacher is legitimate even in 'progressive' or in 'humanistic' education. As the writer using the term, control consists of two essential elements. The first element is the structuring of the classroom activity : what are we supposed to be doing ? When is it time to stop what we are doing and start something else ? This part of control function is tied in with the first three of the ways in which we have said that the teacher is 'central' to a language class.

The other essential element of control consists in making it easy for the learner to know how what he has done or said compares with what a native would have done or said. In a foreign language the new learner is not immediately equipped to know these things for himself. The second half of control is most commonly exercised through what we call 'correction of errors'.

Seen in this way, 'control' is clearly a teacher function, at least in the early part of any course. As time goes on, students may become able to assume some of the responsibility for the first aspect of control.

The second half of control, like the first,

can also be shared. A primary purpose of any language course is to make the students independent of the teacher in knowing what can be said and what cannot. When this happens, the students may rightfully feel that he has become an adequate center in the universe of the new language, and can therefore accept the language itself as a part of his own universe. On the other hand, if this half of control is never adequately be shared, the student is likely to wander through the big world outside the classroom permanently dependent on the teachers and people whom he can treat as teachers.

'Initiative' used here refers to decisions about who says what, to whom and when. These decisions consist of choices among narrow or a very broad range of possibilities which are provided by whoever is exercising 'control'. Seen in this way, initiative and control are not merely two directions along a single dimension. That is not to say control on the part of the teacher does not interfere with initiative on the part of the students. When the teacher tightens his control of what is going on, he need not cut into the students' initiative; often, in fact, he will actually increase it. Similarly, insufficient control by the teacher may reduce or paralyze the initiative of the students.

When the student displays initiative in this sense, he is beginning to play an active, central, self-validating role in a world of meaningful action. But if the world of meaningful action which the teacher has provided is unclear, or half formed, the student will stick to simple choices and the alternatives. Exercising clear and firm control is not the only way in which the teacher can help the learner to take strong and satisfying initiative, however. In the previous page we have said that the teacher is central for setting the interpersonal atmosphere in the class and for conveying enthusiasm and conviction. These influence the student and his readiness to venture from behind his defense system, even more than clear structuring can. And clear structuring in congenial atmosphere will produce only limited initiative.

In the next chapters we will deal a lot with this approach and its application in teaching English as a second language especially in teaching communicative English. The writer chooses this communicative English-teaching because of the fact that Indonesian students can hardly express even the simplest idea in English properly although they have learned English for years. And also to answer the government demand that formal education in Indonesia should be learner - centered.

The writer realizes that this short analysis is far from perfect but she hopes that this will provide a great help for all fellow teachers throughout Indonesia.