

# Teacher Roles in Learner-Centered Communicative EFL Instruction

## 学習者中心のコミュニカティブな英語授業における指導者の役割

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### Abstract

The recent interest shown in learner-centeredness in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Japan revolves around a redefinition of the roles of students and teachers. In the learner-centered EFL classroom students are seen as being able to assume a more active and participatory role than is usual in the traditional teacher-centered EFL classroom. This paper is concerned with a parallel redefinition of teacher roles in learner-centered communicative EFL instruction. Teachers need to welcome their new functions as facilitators, information-gatherers, decision-makers, motivators, counselors and so on. Becoming an EFL teacher and teaching in a confident, competent, creative and ethical manner is a challenging and complex learning process, where teachers can learn from their teaching experiences, question the educational values, evaluate their own practice and develop their teacher-learner autonomy.

**Key words :** Communicative Language Teaching, learner/teacher autonomy, learner-centeredness, teacher roles

### 1. Introduction

Though C. Rogers is not traditionally regarded as a “learning” psychologist, he and his colleagues and followers have had a significant impact on our present understanding of learning, particularly learning in an educational context. The focus is away from “teaching” and toward “learning.”

The goal of education is the facilitation of change and learning. Learning how to learn is more important than being “taught” something from the “superior” vantage point of a teacher.... Teachers, to be facilitators, must first of all be real and genuine, discarding masks of superiority and omniscience. Second, teachers need to have genuine trust, acceptance, and a prizing of the other person—the student—as a worthy, valuable individual. And third, teachers need to communicate openly and empathically with their students and vice versa. (Brown 2000 : 89-90)

Rogers’ emphasis on learner-centered teaching has contributed to a redefinition of the educational process. In adapting Rogers’ ideas to EFL learning and teaching, we must make sure that learners understand themselves and communicate this self to others more freely, and that classroom activities and materials ought to utilize meaningful contexts of genuine communication with persons together engaged in the process of becoming human beings.

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This paper aims to consider teacher roles in learner-centered communicative EFL instruction in Japan. As an EFL teacher educator at a Japanese university, I need to encourage pre- and in-service teacher trainees to develop their teaching abilities by integrating theory and practice, which will lead to the promotion of their professional autonomy.

## 2. Purposes of national curriculum standard reform

In 1998 the Curriculum Council (Kyoiku Katei Shingikai), an advisory to the minister of education, stressed the concept of autonomy and encouraged not only students but also individual schools to develop their autonomy and act independently in response to various social changes. The purposes of national curriculum standard reform are :

- a) To help children cultivate rich humanity and sociality as a Japanese living in the international community
- b) To help children develop ability to learn and think independently
- c) To help children acquire basic abilities and skills and grow their own individuality with plenty of scope for educational activities
- d) To encourage individual schools to show ingenuity in developing unique educational activities to make the school distinctive (*The 1998 Curriculum Council's Report*)

With regard to EFL education, it aims to foster learner autonomy in language learning and particularly to develop students' practical communication abilities for understanding information given and intentions shown by others as well as expressing their own thoughts and judgments effectively. The key words in the new study guidelines announced in 1998 and 1999, and introduced in lower and upper secondary schools in academic years 2002 and 2003 respectively are : deepen understanding of language and cultures through learning foreign languages ; foster positive attitudes toward communication with foreign people ; develop practical abilities for cross-cultural communication ; and integrate different language skills. In the new ELT context in Japan, where communicative competence and learner autonomy are highly valued, it is clear that the notions of teacher roles should be more strongly stressed in the learner-centered EFL classroom.

## 3. Communicative Language Teaching

In a historical development of research on teaching English as a foreign/second language, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) appeared at a time when British language teaching was ready for a paradigm shift. CLT was developed particularly by British applied linguists and language educators in the 1970s and 1980s as a reaction away from grammar-based approaches such as Situational Language Teaching and the audiolingual method. CLT is an approach "which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence which seeks to make meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activities" (Richards and Schmidt 2002).

The contrast between what for want of better terms we have called "traditionalism," and CLT, is shown in the following table in relation to theories of language and learning, and in relation to objectives, syllabus, classroom activities and the roles of learners, teachers and materials (Nunan and Lamb 2001 : 31). Whether a classroom is characterized as "traditional" or "communicative" is determined by the relative emphasis and degree to which the views listed in the table underpin what happens in the classroom rather than on the exclusive adherence to one set of views to the exclusion of any other. The difference lies, not in the rigid adherence to one particular approach rather than another, but in the basic orientation.

Table 1 Changing views on the nature of language and learning : Traditionalism and CLT

Teaching	Traditionalism	CLT
Theory of language	Language is a system of rule-governed structures hierarchically arranged.	Language is a system for the expression of meaning : primary function-interaction.
Theory of learning	Habit formation ; skills are learned more effectively if oral precedes written ; analogy not analysis.	Activities involving real communication ; carrying out meaningful tasks and using language that is meaningful to the learner promote learning.
Objectives	Control of the structures of sound, form and order, mastery over symbols of the language, goal—native speaker mastery.	Objectives will reflect the needs of the learner ; they will include functional skills as well as linguistics objectives.
Syllabus	Graded syllabus of phonology, morphology, and syntax. Contrastive analysis.	Will include some or all of the following : structures, functions, notions, themes and tasks. Ordering will be guided by learner needs.
Activities	Dialogues and drills ; repetition and memorization ; pattern practice.	Engage learners in communication ; involve processes such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction.
Role of learner	Organisms that can be directed by skilled training techniques to produce correct responses.	Learner as negotiator, interactor, giving as well as taking.
Role of teacher	Central and active ; teacher-dominated method. Provides model ; controls direction and pace.	Facilitator of the communication process, needs analyst, counselor, process manager.
Role of materials	Primarily teacher oriented. Tapes and visuals ; language lab often used.	Primarily role of promoting communicative language use ; task-based, authentic materials.

According to Nunan(1989 : 13), for some time after the rise of CLT, the status of grammar in the curriculum was rather uncertain :

Some linguists maintained that it was not necessary to teach grammar, that the ability to use a second language(“knowledge how”)would develop automatically if the learner were required to focus on meaning in the process of using the language to communicate. In recent years, however, this view has come under serious challenge, and it now seems to be widely accepted that there is value in classroom tasks which require learners to focus on form.

Grammar is accepted as an essential resource in using language communicatively.

It is difficult to offer a definition of CLT, which is a comprehensive approach based on a firm foundation that the goal of language education is communicative competence. CLT aims to develop communicative competence by learners’ active involvement in a meaningful context, and values the process of learning as well as the product. For the sake of simplicity and directness, Brown(2001 : 43) offers the following six interconnected characteris-

tics as a description of CLT :

- a) Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.
- b) Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
- c) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
- d) Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.
- e) Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.
- f) The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

#### 4. Communicative competence

As mentioned above, the goal of CLT is “communicative competence,” which was coined by a sociolinguist Hymes (1967, 1972). Communicative competence is not so much an intrapersonal construct seen in Chomsky’s early writings, but rather, a dynamic, interpersonal construct that can be examined by means of the overt performance of two or more individuals in the process of negotiating meaning.

In Canale and Swain’s (1980), and later in Savignon’s (1983) definition, four different components, or subcategories, make up the construct of communicative competence.

##### (1) Grammatical competence

This competence is mastery of the linguistic code, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological features of a language and to manipulate these features to form words and sentences.

##### (2) Discourse competence

This is the ability to interpret a series of sentences or utterances in order to form a meaningful whole and to achieve coherent texts that are relevant to a given context. While grammatical competence focuses on sentence-level grammar, discourse competence is concerned with intersentential relationships.

##### (3) Sociolinguistic competence

This is the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language/discourse. This type of competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction.

##### (4) Strategic competence

This construct is exceedingly complex and is described as the strategies that one uses to compensate for imperfect knowledge of rules—or limiting factors in their application such

as fatigue, distraction, and inattention. In short, it is the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication through paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, as well as shifts in register and style.

In incorporating earlier work on communicative competence, Bachman (1987) described communicative language ability (CLA) as consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use. CLA consists of three components: language competence (organizational and pragmatic competence), strategic competence, and the psycho-physiological mechanism. In Bachman's model, organizational competence corresponds to Canal and Swain's grammatical and discourse competence, but sociolinguistic competence seems to have wider connotations as a major element of pragmatic competence. Strategic competence is so pervading a concept that Bachman (1990) regarded it as a completely separate element. Strategic competence provides the means for relating language competence to features of the context of situation in which language use takes place and to the language user's knowledge structures. Strategic competence is a set of general abilities that utilize all of the elements of language competence—and of psychomotor skills as well—in the process of negotiating meaning.

## 5. Learner autonomy

In recent years, the importance of developing learner autonomy in Japanese education has become one of its more prominent themes. In spite of agreement of its importance, there remains a good deal of uncertainty about its meaning and application for English language teaching (ELT). When attempting to promote autonomy in EFL education in Japan, the following definition, adapted from Sinclair (2000: 7-13), appears to be one of the most comprehensive definitions of learner autonomy:

- a) Autonomy is a construct of capacity.
- b) Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning.
- c) The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate.
- d) Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal.
- e) There are degrees of autonomy.
- f) The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable.
- g) Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent.
- h) Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process, i.e., conscious reflection and decision making.
- i) Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies.
- j) Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom.
- k) Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension.
- l) The promotion of learner autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension.
- m) Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures.

Learner autonomy, which is stressed in educational reform in Japan, seems to be expected to have a social as well as individual dimension. Interestingly enough, more attention has recently been paid to this aspect of autonomy in the West. One of the familiar defini-

tions of learner autonomy is as follows :

Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a social responsible person. (1989 'Bergen definition', cited by Dam, 1990 : 17)

Furthermore, Ryan (1991) sees the achievement of a sense of autonomy as one of the most fundamental needs and purposes of human beings. Another fundamental need is for what he calls "relatedness", that is, for "contact, support and community with others." If this contact with others is felt to be "instrumental or controlling," it can lead us to lose our sense of autonomy. However, if the contact is supportive, it does not interfere with autonomy but facilitates it. Ryan uses a term that is especially significant for my study : "autonomous interdependence". Ryan's ideal "facilitating environment" for autonomy includes the following factors : concrete support through the provision of help and resources, personal concern and involvement from significant others, opportunities for making choices, and freedom from a sense of being controlled by external agents (Ryan 1991 : 227).

Focusing on the cognitive side of psychology, Little (1996) affirms that the argument concerning how learner autonomy can be developed in pedagogical practice assumes psychological dimensions, but that it is also inescapably political because "the psychological argument challenges traditional educational structures and power relationships." Little and Dam remark (1998 : 7) :

The learner must take at least some of the initiatives that give shape and direction to the learning process, and must share in monitoring progress and evaluating the extent to which learning targets are achieved. The pedagogical justification for wanting to foster the development of learner autonomy rests on the claim that in formal educational contexts, reflectivity and self-awareness produce better learning.

I, too, have practiced the concept of learner autonomy under banners such as "humanistic language teaching," "collaborative learning," and "learner/learning-centered instruction."

## 6. Teacher autonomy

Although Japanese teachers of English have gradually come to notice the importance of developing learner autonomy in ELT, teacher autonomy has not yet been much discussed in Japan. Little (1995 : 179) refers to genuinely successful teachers :

Genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploiting the freedom that this confers.

In line with Little (1995) and Benson (2000), McGrath (2000) suggests that teacher autonomy may be viewed from two different but related perspectives : teacher autonomy as self-directed professional development and teacher autonomy as freedom from control by others.

### (1) Teacher autonomy as self-directed professional development

One way of defining teacher autonomy is in terms of control over one's own professional development. A number of strands come together in this first perspective on teacher autonomy : the teacher as researcher (Stenhouse 1975) ; action research (Nunan 1989, Hopkins 1993, Wallace 1998) ; the concept of the reflective practitioner (Schön 1983/1987, Wallace 1991) ; and the teacher development movement (Head and Taylor 1997). What unites

these different strands is a view of autonomy as self-directed professional development.

In Japan teacher autonomy as self-directed professional development is a main goal that should be much more emphasized in pre- and in-service teacher education. However, as Mcgrath(2000)suggests, in our enthusiasm for this perspective on autonomy, Japanese teachers of English need to be aware that it requires of teachers a certain level of preparedness—attitudinal and technical, and that it requires efforts and ways of thinking that have not been emphasized in previous educational contexts.

### (2) Teacher autonomy as freedom from control by others

A second and equally common sense of teacher autonomy is “freedom from control by others.”Breen and Mann(1997 : 140)comment on some of the systemic limitations on freedom of action in western societies :

A common experience among many teachers in western democratic societies in recent times is the growing sense that the locus of control over their work is shifting away from themselves and their immediate institutions to centralized bureaucracies. This trend is manifest in explicit intrusions upon a teacher’s previous work experience in terms of formalized systems of accountability, the introduction of top-down predesigned assessment and curricula frameworks, and employment conditions overlaid with enterprise bargaining which many teachers perceive as entailing greater insecurity and more work for less reward.

As implied in the above quotation, McGrath(2000)suggests that constraints on teacher autonomy can be broadly categorized under the macro(decisions taken outside the institution, over which teachers will normally have no control)and the micro(institution-internal decisions, which the teacher should be in a position to influence). For instance, broad policies on language in education determine the languages that can and cannot be learned in schools. On the other hand, rules and regulations, certification, examinations, curricula, the physical and social organization of the school and classroom practices set broad constraints on content and methods of language learning. In Japan many EFL teachers are worried about these constraints and they fall into two basic categories, those who do not take the kinds of independent action that we associate autonomy, and those who have demonstrated the capacity and freedom for self-direction. Teachers’ freedom to be self-directed is inevitably affected by the extent to which their actions are controlled by others. In order to be free from others, teachers have to be able to act autonomously.

### (3) Teacher-learner autonomy

Teacher education is the field of study which deals with the preparation and professional development of teachers. Freeman(2001 : 72)states :

...the term teacher education refers to the sum of experiences and activities through which individuals learn to be language teachers. Those learning to teach—whether they are new to the profession or experienced, whether in pre- or in-service contexts—are referred to as teacher-learners(Kennedy 1991).

The term teacher-learner refers to the person who is learning to teach and focuses on the learning process in which he/she is engaged.

Furthermore, Smith(2000)suggests that teacher autonomy can be defined at least partially in terms of the *teacher’s autonomy as a learner*, or more succinctly *teacher-learner autonomy*, making use of already familiar definitions of learner autonomy such as the following(Smith 2000 : 90) :

Learner[here, teacher-learner]autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge

of one's own learning in the service of one's needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a social [ly] responsible person. (1989 'Bergen definition,' cited by Dam, 1990 : 17)

As Smith (2000) points out, one leitmotif of recent work in the field of teacher education may be that learning constitutes an important part of teacher training and teacher development. Freeman (2001 : 79) remarks :

Focusing at this level of on the learning process, as distinct from the delivery mechanisms, is changing our understanding of teacher education in important ways (Freeman and Johnson 1998). This shift is moving L2 teacher education from its concern over what content and pedagogy teachers should master and how to deliver these in preparation and in-service programmes to the more fundamental and as yet uncharted questions of how language teaching is learned and therefore how it can best be taught.

As teacher-learners EFL teacher trainees need to enhance their own readiness, capacities, and control in relevant areas of teacher-learning autonomously and intrinsically. Little (1995 : 180) suggests that "language teachers are more likely to succeed in promoting learner autonomy if their own education has encouraged them to be autonomous." Teacher-learners should consider the nature and extent of their own autonomy, in the same way as they might wish to assess their students' autonomy in the future.

## 7. Learner-centered instruction

This term applies to curricula as well as to specific techniques. It can be contrasted with teacher-centered instruction, and has received a variety of recent interpretations. Learner-centered instruction includes :

- a) techniques that focus on or account for learners' needs, styles, and goals.
- b) techniques that give some control to the student (group work or strategy training, for example).
- c) curricula that include the consultation and input of students and that do not presuppose objectives in advance.
- d) techniques that allow for student creativity and innovation.
- e) techniques that enhance a student's sense of competence and self-worth.

Discussion of learner-centeredness are often complicated by the fact that the term is used to express at least the following four related, but none the less distinct, perspectives on language teaching (Tudor 1996 : 271-273).

### (1) An approach to activity organization

Learner-centeredness relates to a way of organizing classroom activities. The basic idea is that learning activities will be more relevant if it is the students, as opposed to the teacher, who decide on the conceptual and linguistic content of these activities. It also assumes that students' involvement and motivation will be greater if they can decide how activities are structured.

### (2) The humanistic perspective

The humanistic movement stresses the importance of qualities such as understanding, personal assumption of responsibility, and self-realization. From this perspective, language learning is seen as an activity which involves students as complex human beings, not simply as language learners. Language teaching should therefore explore students' affective and intellectual resources as fully as possible, and be linked into their continuing expression of life.



**(3) Practical necessity**

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in learner autonomy and self-direction in language teaching. In part at least, this arises from the needs to cater for language teaching in situations where a traditional classroom-based approach is not feasible. There can be a variety of reasons for this :

- a) Students may not have sufficient free time to follow a traditional course.
- b) There may be insufficient demand for a given language to justify setting up a standard teacher-led course.
- c) Budgetary restrictions may place limits on staff-student contact time.

Faced with real-world constraints of this nature, the teaching profession has looked for new approaches to teaching which allow students to attain their goals with less direct teacher support.

**(4) The curriculum design perspective**

Writers such as Brindley (1984) and Nunan (1988) have suggested that curriculum design can be seen as a negotiation process between teachers and students. In this view, decisions regarding the content and form of teaching can be made at classroom level via consultation between teachers and learners. There would seem to be a number of basic ideas which, in one time or another, underlie most discussions of learner-centeredness. These are :

- a) Goal-setting can be made more relevant if students can contribute to the process on the basis of their own experience.
- b) Learning is more effective if methodology and study mode are geared around student preferences.
- c) Students get more out of learning activities if they have a say in deciding their content and in organizing the activities.
- d) Learning will, in a general sense, benefit if students feel involved in shaping their study program.

**8. Teacher roles in the learner-centered classroom**

In a learner-centered communicative approach to ELT, students are expected to assume a more active and participatory role than is usual in traditional teacher-centered approaches. Logically, however, student roles cannot be redefined without a parallel redefinition of teacher roles in the learner-centered classroom.

There are two main roles that teachers perform in most traditional modes of teaching :

- a) **Knower** : the teacher is a source of knowledge in terms of both the target language and the choice of methodology ; the teacher is a figure of authority who decides on what should be learnt and how this should be learnt.
- b) **Activity organizer** : the teacher sets up and steers learning activities in the right direction, motivates and encourages students, and provides authoritative feedback on students' performance.

In the learner-centered classroom teachers should welcome their new functions as information-gatherers, decision-makers, motivators, counselors and so on. New teaching capacities include identifying students' needs, interests, and learning styles and strategies, conducting training on learning strategies, and helping learners become more independent. In the learner-centered classroom our starting point is not the textbook but the learners. There should be always ongoing dialogue between teachers and learners. There are a vari-

ety of roles that teachers are expected to play.

**(1) Information-gatherer**

In response to students' ever-changing needs, teachers constantly collect information about them, analyze their language behavior, and observe ongoing interactions. Also, language teaching is a complex social and cultural activity. Teachers need to understand students within their socio-cultural context, asking the following questions : "How motivated are my students?" "How mature are my students?" "What are my students' cultural attitudes to language study and to the roles of teachers and learners?" "Are there any external constraints that place limits on learner direction?"

**(2) Decision-maker**

Teachers make decisions on a moment-to-moment basis. Their knowledge of learning theory and educational practice allows them to plan flexible learning experiences and to respond sensitively to learners of differing language ability levels and varying backgrounds, interests, and needs. While providing the necessary linguistic and emotional support, teachers encourage students to use their abilities to the utmost. As for involving learners, Tudor (1996 : 279) suggests that teachers may find it helpful to draw up a list of decisions they have to make, and then select from this list the areas where their students seem most likely to be able to make a sensible contribution to decision-making. Such a list might include : course structure, goal-setting, choice of methodology, choice of materials, activity selection and organization, evaluation and so on.

**(3) Motivator**

Teachers motivate students to acquire English. They arouse and maintain their students' interests by constantly assessing the needs and goals of their students and tailoring their instruction accordingly. They provide stimulating, interesting lessons that respond to the emotional, cognitive, and linguistic needs of the learners. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998 : 215) offered a set of "ten commandments" for motivating learners, based on a survey of Hungarian foreign language teachers. All the following items focus on what the teacher can do to stimulate intrinsic motivation.

- a) Set a personal example with your own behavior.
- b) Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- c) Present the tasks properly.
- d) Develop a good relationship with the learners.
- e) Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence.
- f) Make the language classes interesting.
- g) Promote learner autonomy.
- h) Personalize the learning process.
- i) Increase the learner's goal-orientedness.
- j) Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

**(4) Facilitator of group dynamics**

Teachers have strong skills in group dynamics that help them to provide efficient classroom routines and smooth transitions. They organize instructional tasks logically and understand how to use different types of grouping (including individual, pair, small group, and large group work) to encourage specific types of learning. While there are differences among the models of cooperative/collaborative learning (CL), Johnson and Johnson (1999) and other researchers suggest that the following are key elements of CL : positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills, and

group processing. CL should be evaluated as a culture-sensitive approach to developing communicative competence and learner autonomy.

**(5) Provider of opportunities for communicative and authentic language use**

English is not just a series of word lists or grammar forms, but a living language for communication. Teachers provide students with materials from video clips, casual conversations, newspaper extracts, interview-type activities, photographs & pictures, maps & charts, and so on. To help students understand and use authentic language, various types of language assistance are provided by the materials. Teachers bring objects from the real world into the classroom, invite native speakers to class, and arrange field trips for students so that students encounter a variety of native speakers.

**(6) Counselor**

Teachers know when to serve as counselors. They provide emotional support just when it is required and help learners feel secure and confident about second/foreign language learning. They recognize psychological problems that may hinder their students' progress acquiring English and help students overcome these difficulties. Teachers monitor students' learning progress regularly. The feedback that they provide learners is timely and constructive. Students value the incentives that teachers regularly provide.

**(7) Promoter of a multicultural perspective**

Teachers expect their students to take a multicultural perspective. They encourage students to be tolerant of cultural conflicts, to respect those of diverse cultures, and to avoid stereotyping others. Through team-teaching with a native speaker, teachers develop various materials for cross-cultural communication. They need to remember a healthy balance between the necessity of teaching the target culture and validating the students' native cultures.

**(8) Reflective practitioner and researcher**

A reflective practitioner is a professional practitioner. The notion of "reflective practice" places as much emphasis on teachers' own evaluations of their practice as on the planning and management skills into which such evaluations feed, and has spawned a considerable volume of theory and publications devoted to its elaboration and promulgation (Schön 1983, 1987 ; Wallace 1991 ; Mitchell and Weber 1996 ; Loughran and Russell 1997). Reflection is not just about self-improvement and self-development but also about understanding and questioning the contexts in which teaching and learning take place. One of the fundamental purposes of reflective practice is to improve the quality of teaching and learning in educational contexts. Critical reflection questions the means and ends of education, and needs to be a judicious blend of sensitive support and constructive challenge.

The interdependence of reflective research and teaching is a foundation stone of EFL education. Precisely because research into student learning has studied and described the conditions that are necessary for changes in student understanding, it provides a promising source of ideas for EFL teaching. These insights help us to decide on the best ways to organize the curriculum, evaluate teaching in order to encourage improvement, and plan satisfactory programs for helping individual teachers teach better.

## **9. Conclusion**

For a learner-centered approach to work well in the EFL classroom, students will have to learn more than just the target language. They will need to learn about themselves as language learners. Thus, in addition to a given level of language competence, students

should learn a course with a better understanding of language and of themselves as both language users and autonomous learners. This is clearly an educational product, and helping students acquire it can be very rewarding for teachers in both personal and professional terms.

Setting up an autonomous learning environment that is learner-centered puts certain demands on teachers as well as students. Learner-centered instruction adds a number of responsibilities relating to the development and channeling of students' human and experiential potential. Teachers who envisage adopting a learner-centered approach should think carefully of the implications of this choice in terms of the extra work and responsibilities it entails. The same applies to department heads or educational bodies who might wish to experiment with a learner-centered mode of teaching on a larger scale : appropriate teacher education and ongoing support are essential.

Becoming an EFL teacher and teaching in a confident, competent, creative and ethical manner is a challenging and complex learning process, where teacher-learners can learn from their teaching experiences, question the educational values, evaluate their own practice, and develop their teacher autonomy. Teacher autonomy involves ideas of professional freedom and self-directed professional development. In order to foster autonomy among learners, teachers should be both free and able to assert their own autonomy in the practice of teaching.

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