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Title : SOUND STRATEGIES FOR VALUABLE INNOVATION: EFL
Teachers as Psychologists

Abstract:

In the process of language learning and teaching, there are a lot of paradigms contributing to the variability of contexts such as teaching and learning styles, programme' characteristics and learners' needs. The foreign language teacher faces challenging situations where he is supposed to come with wisely. The leader teacher may play the role of a psychologist, for instance, it is generally acknowledged that how a teacher as a psychologist thinks, may be understood by looking at his conception to the teaching/learning process, his teaching methods, his relationship with learners and the learning outcomes. Just as the teacher is a person, this person may become a psychologist of his learners within a classroom setting. This 'reflexivity' will be our main concern in the present talk.

Key-terms

Teachers as leaders, teachers as psychologists, EFL context, New Understandings.

Introduction

As language teachers, sometimes a feeling comes to our minds that our lesson did not really succeed notwithstanding the careful planning, good preparation and knowledge of the subject. Teachers often ask themselves questions like: “where is the problem?” is it related to the teaching performance? Or is it because of the learners’ interests and motivation? Or because of other influencing factors? Answers to these questions might be crucial for a better teaching experience.

Experts and language teachers have been facing many challenges over the last years in an attempt to improve the educational practice and design more significant, efficient and enjoyable courses for learners and teachers alike. The teacher may act as a coach, as noted by Morley (1991:507), who:

....characteristically supplies information, gives models from time to time, offers cues, suggestions and constructive feedback about performance, sets high standard, provides a wide variety of practice opportunities, and overall [sic] supports and encourages the learner.

Teaching English as a foreign language necessitates more than providing teachers with a “how-to” bag of tricks to be replicated in the classroom, but rather it requires some basic understandings of some affective variables which may be of great help in either empowering learners’ self to become competent language users.

Accordingly, the teacher is called upon to perform a number of tasks in the language learning process. Besides, the teacher also has a

great role to play in creating a relaxed atmosphere to lower the learners' anxiety and feel confident which result progress in language learning. Teachers may reduce classroom anxiety by making the learning context less stressful (Dörnyei, 2001), encouraging learners and keep them wanting to learn more and more. In order to maintain and increase the learners' self-confidence, Dörnyei (2001:130) believes that teachers should:

...foster the belief that competence is a changeable aspect of development and can be promoted by providing regular experiences of success. Everyone is more interested in a task if they feel that they make a contribution. A small personal word of encouragement is sufficient.

Teachers as Psychologists:

In addition to the recognized roles teachers perform daily in the classroom, teachers should bring into the classroom his sense of care towards his learners, i.e., he should be a psychologist in the classroom. To do that, the following designed strategies are recommended to EFL teachers to maintain their learners' psychological status in the classroom:

- ❖ **Encourage Moderate Risk Taking:** it is often noticed that many students fear failure and therefore, being afraid to take risks. Good teachers encourage such students to be reasonable risk takers. Such risk taking, however, often produces increased achievement (Clifford, 1991). For instance, students seem to have no chance to improve their pronunciation skills if they refuse to

try to speak, fearing that their efforts will be unsuccessful; improvement can occur only after students try to express themselves.

- ❖ **Highlighting Enhancement over Doing Better Than others:** a strategic teacher needs to put emphasis on his learners' performance in accomplishing their goals. Such an approach calls for a fascinating challenge of the motivation of all students to keep them interested (Ames, 1984; Nicholls, 1989).
- ❖ **Supporting Cooperative Learning:** is, in fact, a far more challenging task to establish in the classroom. Beyond competition, students may be encouraged to cooperate with one another, with emphasizing constantly positive effects on achievement. It is generally acknowledged that students often learn more when they work together with their peers (Johnson & Johnson, 1975). The most motivating situation is one in which students actually receive rewards based on how well their fellow group members perform, creating great incentive for students to work together to make certain that everyone in the cooperative group is making progress (Fantuzzo, King, & Heller, 1992).
- ❖ **Making Tasks Interesting:** educational researchers have identified many specific approaches to motivate academic effort and achievement. Learners pay considerable attention to the degree of interest of the content of a task; sometimes adequate material grabs students' attention and help them be active. For instance, listening to a song in an oral expression session is create more fun by having the students learn in an interesting way. This later produce a suitable atmosphere of learning in

which students find the experience intriguing rather than boring, and this results their progress.

❖ **Increasing Students' Self-Efficacy:** Self-efficacy has gained increasing prominence as a key mediator of regulatory and motivational processes (Bandura, 1977, 1986), it positively affects self-regulation and cognitive engagement while performing a task and has been linked to improvement and success. Learners with positive self-efficacy believe they can accomplish tasks successfully. High self-efficacy motivates future effort hence; it is important that students believe in their capacities and develop a sense of challenging themselves.

❖ **Adopting A Motivating Classroom Atmosphere:** Effective teachers strive to create a motivating classroom environment. According to Wiley et al. (2003), there are two types of environments; the physical and the psychological one; teachers need to consider both to promote engagement and learning. *Physical Environment*; involves building a comfortable and inviting place for learning, with many educational materials readily accessible for students. For example, in dealing with pronunciation, charts and diagrams, videos, tape recorders and the use of laboratories can support the teaching/ learning process. Additionally, variation in choosing the activities may in all probabilities enhance learners' improvement. For instance, introducing new topics in classroom discussion, changing the shape of the classroom (U-shape), and encourage students be creative. As far as the *Psychological Environment* is concerned, it is based on the assumption that teachers need to promote *community* in their classroom, i.e., the teacher establishes

frequent connections to students, motivating, supporting and encouraging them.

❖ **Classroom management:** The classroom management of efficient teaching/learning process is said to be one of the most important components of successful teaching. Classroom instruction is complex and coherent aiming at meeting the needs of the whole class while matching to the abilities and interests of individual students with different learning styles and personalities. Teachers need to be aware of classroom management strategies, instructional strategies, motivational techniques, and a variety of theories of learning which results at its core the development of self-regulated students.

❖ **Teaching Cultural Aspects of Communication:** When being aware of the target culture, learners' self-confidence will raise because effective communication requires not just the mastery of individual sounds and the accompanying aspects of pronunciation such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. It also depends on speaking habits of the target culture such as gestures, posture, and eye contact. EFL learners need to be aware of such cultural aspects of speech. Here, it is compulsory for the teacher to familiarize his learners about the following questions: - What do facial expressions convey? Are they the same in all cultures? Do they matter? - What gestures are used (e.g., to greet, wave goodbye, indicate agreement, non-comprehension, etc.)? How do gestures vary from our culture to the target culture? Should we use gestures to communicate? How often should one gesture in conversation? What happens if we do not use gestures? Do men and women gesture in the same way? Such questions

and others make learners develop certain degree of self-confidence when speaking.

Therefore, being aware of how teaching may be successful based on psychological knowledge is crucial for teachers, since teachers do much to motivate their students through supporting words, classroom organization and management, and cooperative learning, i.e., teachers are engaged in a complex orchestration of psychological variables to make the learning process as successful as possible. Bearing the above principles in mind, teachers may in all probabilities attain effective teaching.



The Confident EFL Learner: Strategies and Skills

Self-confidence is one of the vital dimensions that may help learners progress, thus, as EFL teachers, a range of techniques should be adopted to regulate learners' psychological wellbeing and be more confident. Self-confidence comes from accomplishment when one successfully completed a task at a time he feels confident about his achievement. If learners believe in their own capacities, and would like to develop their self-confidence, the next techniques may be of great help:

1. *Use Self-Assessment to Build Confidence.*
2. *Define Your Goals.*
3. *Think Ahead to a Major or Career.*
4. *Be an Active Learner.*
5. *Know Where to Find Help.*
6. *Inform Yourself.*

7. *Organise your time.*
8. *Become an active reader.*
9. *Talk positively to yourself.*
10. *Get Involved.*
11. *Motivate yourself to learn.*
12. *Assess Your Strengths and Weaknesses.*
13. *Discover and Use Your Learning Style and Adapt to Others'*
Styles as explained below:




If your style is:	You learn best by:	Your preferred instructional mode is:	To adapt to other styles you can:
<p>Visual</p> 	<p>reading, observing, looking at diagrams and other graphics, watching a demonstration</p>	<p>a PowerPoint presentation or lecture/discussion supplemented with visual aids or handouts</p>	<p>recite from your notes to add an auditory mode to your review</p>
<p>Auditory</p> 	<p>listening to others explain, instruct, or discuss</p>	<p>a live or taped presentation or lecture, class discussion in which you can express your ideas and listen to others</p>	<p>take notes to add both tactile and visual modes to listening</p>
<p>Tactile-kinesthetic</p> 	<p>engaging in hands-on or physical/motor activity</p>	<p>any activity that allows you to manipulate things or move around; for example, computer-aided instruction appeals to you, as does working in a group</p>	<p>add a visual mode to studying, make diagrams or charts of information you want to learn</p>

Figure 5.4. Understanding Learning Styles Preferences (Kanar, 2011:33)
 14. *Develop Critical Thinking and Learning Strategies:*

CRITICAL THINKING	TASKS TO DO	LEARNING STRATEGIES NEEDED/USED
Making decisions	Decide when to study. Decide what's important. Select courses. Decide what to study.	Set up a schedule. Read for main idea, details, key terms. Know requirements; use resources. Review notes, old tests, assignments.
Solving problems	Solve math problems. Avoid procrastination. Reduce test anxiety.	Record problems and solutions on note cards. Make and follow a schedule. Practice relaxation techniques.
Reasoning	Write a speech. Follow an author's ideas. Compare theories.	Make an outline. Look for patterns of organization. Make a chart or information map.
Knowing how to learn	Learn from reading. Learn from listening.	Locate, understand, interpret information. Use listening and note-taking skills.
Thinking creatively	Compose an original piece of work. Develop a project.	Keep an "idea" journal. Combine ideas in unique ways.

Figure 5.5. Using Critical Thinking and Learning Strategies (Kanar, 2011:46)

15. *Think Creatively and Critically:*

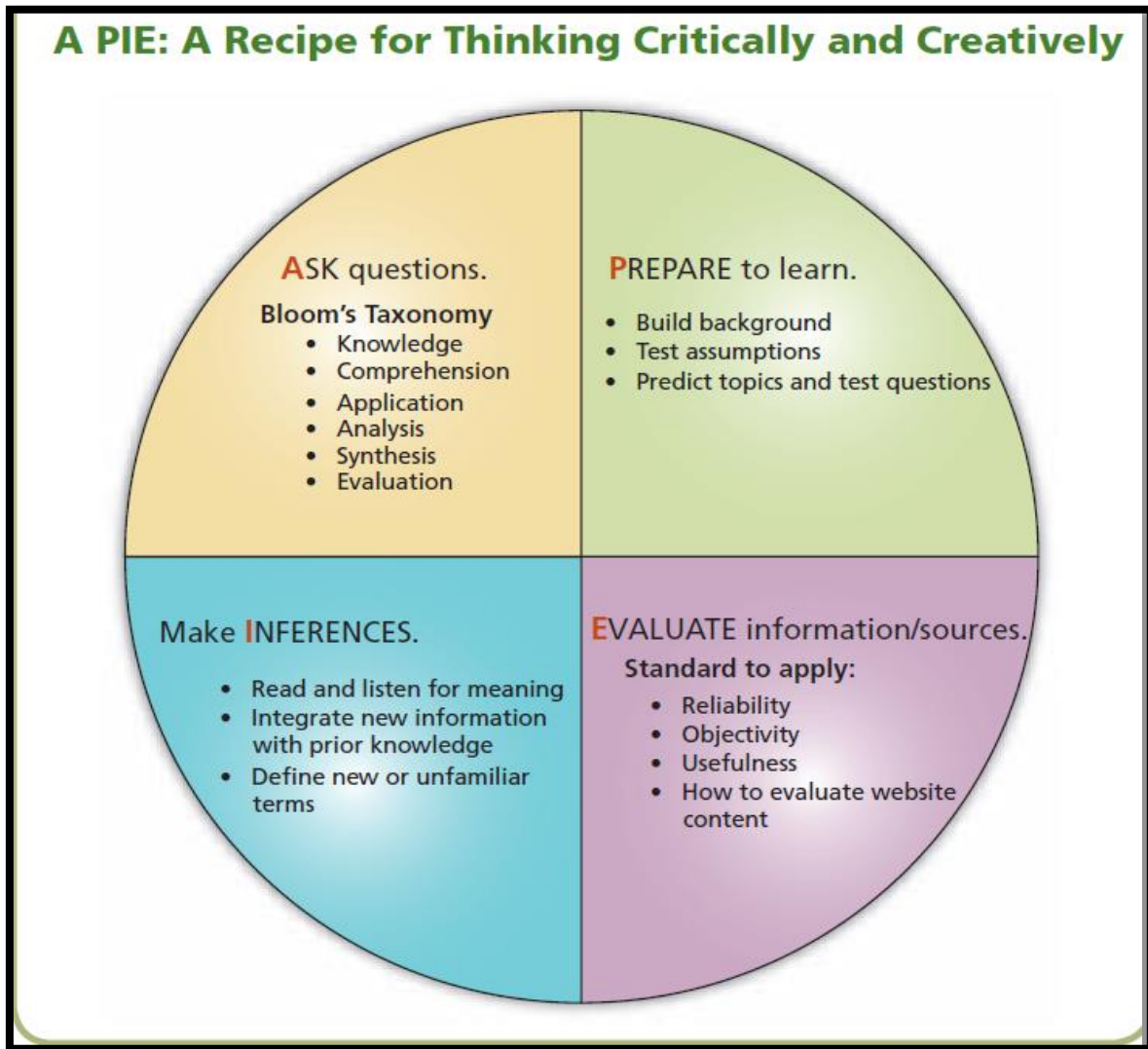


Figure 5.6. A Recipe for Thinking Critically and Creatively (Kanar, 2011: 61)

Adopting these principles, a teacher may check the learners' self-confidence degree. As it is a very complicated task, researchers such as Brown, 2000 and Kanar, 2011 attempt to tackle this issue by considering learners' achievement.

Conclusion

Self-confidence, self-esteem, self-concept, self-image, anxiety, motivation, language learning achievement, and other concepts are all

key-concepts that should be coupled within the classroom setting to frame the relationship between learners' psychological health and some aspects of EFL language processing.

This paper depicts scenery of a theoretical framework to hopefully understand the place of psychology in language learning; its abundance of truly creative and humanistic goals supporting and encouraging positive self-confidence in EFL language classrooms as well. A great number of researchers believe that many teachers intuitively understand the importance of maintaining their students' psychological health. However, without offering a specific guidance, teachers may be at a loss as to how to provide this support while at the same time accomplishing more conventional language teaching goals.

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