

TEACHERS – WHO NEEDS THEM?: ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This purpose of this paper is to invite language teachers to look at their teaching practices, and to investigate whether they are promoting or hindering the process of learning. It is unlikely that any teacher will want to identify personal practices that act as a barrier to learning, though most will acknowledge a strong possibility that their students will meet with counterproductive teaching practices at some time in their educational careers. When we consider the importance of affect in the classroom, and the ways in which affective barriers to learning are set up (e.g. anxiety, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, lack of self-esteem, negative attitudes to learning), it becomes apparent that the classroom educator needs to be proficient in establishing a positive and productive learning environment, as well as being a “learning expert”, empowering students in terms of self-direction, self-assessment, learner training, and self-access skills.

Teachers thus have a very active role to play in learning, but this role is one of facilitator, counsellor of autonomous learning, and visiting consultant in the language workshop, promoting the process of learning through a humanistic approach, and employing alternative assessment tools as a means and as an end.

1. Introduction

EFLⁱ teachers can find themselves in a world devoid of context, with “hard” results difficult to quantify in terms of improved language ability; a world in which their defined function is to transmit a system of formalised knowledge, which will enable students to enter high school or university, or to obtain a visa to an English-speaking country. Such a dehumanised situation leads to attitudes to teaching exemplified in comments such as “I’m just a language teacher”, “We must remember that our job is simply to test language” and “Language teachers are not counsellors”ⁱⁱ.

The first part of this paper asks if it is professionally tenable, or even pedagogically feasible to be “just” a language teacher – to teach “just” language. If this is the “whole truth” about language teaching, then few language teachers will be able to justify their existence with concrete evidence of having been the instrument of improved linguistic proficiency or communicative competence in their students. In such a situation, it is valid to pose the question of whether the presence of a teacher in the language classroom has a positive influence on the learning process that goes on there: “What do students learn from the teacher that they cannot learn by themselves?”

The second part of this paper investigates the role of the educator in the classroom further. It is argued that, having dropped the dubious “modeller of correct language” and “transmitter of desirable information” concepts, the teacher has a responsibility to construct and maintain a holistic, humanistic learning environment (a life-skills workshop), in which he/she is a consultant, encouraging and empowering students to grow into responsible, creative, and critical-thinking adult members of society.

Part 1

2. Then and now

When investigating the effect of second language instruction, some twenty years ago, Long (1983) concluded that the presence of a teacher in the classroom made a slight difference in terms of grammatical accuracy on the part of the students - not a huge endorsement for teachers or teaching methodologies at that time! Since then, theory and research have progressed in a number of fields, such that the learner-centred classroom (cf. Tudor, 1996) is now a *sine qua non* in TEFL literature. A brief summary of these findings follows:

Affect: Stern's claim that "the affective component contributes at least as much and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills" (1983, p. 386) is supported by a large body of recent cross-disciplinary research showing that affective variables have significant influence on language achievement.

Alternative assessment: In the shift in educational theory from transmission of knowledge towards transformation of knowledge, and to integration of knowledge with existing personal constructs and meanings (Kohonen, 1999, p. 280), assessment has taken on new affective goals in which the personal growth of the learner is becoming increasingly important (Ranson, 1994, p. 116). This implies a re-evaluation of the methods used in language testing (Weir, 1998, p. 9).

Autonomy: Holec sees the prime objective of language teaching as helping the learner "acquire the linguistic and communicative abilities heⁱⁱⁱ has defined for himself" (1980, p. 28) (cf. Nunan, 1996, p. 14; Sinclair, 1996, p. 150), a subsidiary aim being to enable the learner to acquire autonomy by him/herself (cf. Trim, 1976; Voller, 1997). In this view, autonomous action "is an act of learning, and not of teaching, done by the learner and not the teacher. This reversal of the educational situation poles involves redefining all the functional components of that situation" (Holec, 1980, p. 40). Gremmo (1995) observes that work in the 1980's and 1990's has shown autonomous learning to be a fruitful approach in all aspects of language learning, and in all parts of the world.

Learner-training: Attention to learner training aims to encourage students to take control of the language learning process (Weaver & Cohen, 1998, p. 70), based on the assumption that conscious (aware), responsible, reflective, skilled learners will be more successful language learners than their untrained peers (cf. Sinclair & Ellis, 1992, p. 211). Another goal is to *prepare* them for independence, in the belief that "everybody has the right to develop the capacity for taking charge of his or her own affairs and that this development is a basic function of education" (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989, p. 3).

The process syllabus: In the process paradigm, the emphasis is on *how* to learn rather than *what* to learn, and the learning item (*task*) (Long & Crookes, 1993, p. 9), is a means of *using* the language (in contrast to language *usage*: cf. Widdowson, 1978) in order to *learn* the language (Allwright, 1984), and has *meaning* for the students. This meaning becomes internalised as linguistic competence, as the *process* of understanding is explored through use of *authentic* texts and *real-world* situations

(Nunan, 1989), in which students perform and reflect on 'real' use of the target language, fostering learning in a cyclical, ongoing manner. The process syllabus reflects attention in applied linguistic theory towards a number of student-centred issues:

- i) processes of language learning;
- ii) strategies and techniques used by language learners;
- iii) effects on interaction and learning which result from varying forms of classroom organisation and activities;
- iv) feasibility of on-going syllabus content negotiation between teachers and learners);
- v) learner reinterpretation and accommodation of new knowledge and capabilities through the sharing of ideas in group-work.

Roles of teachers and students have thus changed radically since 1983, and the contemporary learning environment has little place for the view of the teacher as dispenser-of-information, or the student as an empty vessel into which that information can be poured. In this sense, "teacher" ("One that teaches; especially: one whose occupation is to instruct", Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary) is an outmoded concept, and the passive student a thing of the past. Instead, humanistic and holistic principles, which have been at the foundation of education since its inception, have combined with recent research to redefine the teacher's role as counsellor and learning resource. If there is a need for his/her presence in the classroom, then it is as a respected guest in a language-learning workshop; someone who can be accessed on an individual basis, and who can assist learners in defining, reflecting on and achieving their learning goals.

3. Educational principles.

Putting aside perceived impracticalities and administrative restrictions, most teachers, when asked about their role in society (and in the classroom), would agree with the following quotes:

The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives. *Robert Hutch*

The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery. *Mark Van Doren*

The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher. *Elbert Hubbard* (quotes from Escotet international Link)

Why is it, then, that the language classroom so very often negates such ideas?^{iv} Are the practicalities of teaching really incompatible with generally-espoused educational concepts, or is it that unreflective teacher-control and propositional syllabi (Breen, 1987) are to blame? It is public domain that learning is not linear, that students have their own learning agendas and do not *learn* what the teacher *teaches* (Allwright, 1984), and that the logistics of *what gets learned* in a lesson cannot be predicted (Allwright, 2000, p. 13^v). Yet observation of many so-called "communicative" classes often reveals learning environments that are surprisingly autocratic. If the teacher is not holding forth at the front of the room for the majority of the

lesson, asking static, one-way language-as-code questions specifically designed to prevent meaningful interaction, then he/she will be dispensing commands reminiscent, in the assumptions underlying them, of a Sergeant Major at a Boot-Camp:

“Listen to me.” (“I need to direct all of you now, so that you can learn how to do without my directions later. I have decided what you all need to learn and how you should learn it, and I have judged that everyone must learn the same thing at the same time, so you need to understand what I want you to do.”)

“Today we will learn” (“I will teach an aspect of linguistic code, and probably give you a test on it as well, even though Morrow [1979, p. 145] shows that knowledge of the elements of a language in fact counts for nothing unless the user is able to combine them in new and appropriate ways to meet the linguistic demands of the situation in which he/she wishes to use the language”).

“Follow my instructions.” (“I know that I am repeating what is written in your textbook, but I can’t trust you to understand by yourselves.”)

“Begin.” (I have stopped talking for a while, so please interact now.”)

“Stop what you are doing and listen to me.” (“I have something to tell you which is more important than task-completion or individual discovery, and must be transmitted to everyone at the same time.”)

One must ask where “the art of assisting discovery” (see quote above) is to be found in such a classroom. How can this be termed “communicative” or “learner-centred”, when the teacher is defining, controlling and dispensing value judgements on what is learned by whom, when, and in what manner? What valuable learning experiences are students gaining from such treatment? Where is negotiation of meaning, social interaction, promotion of self-confidence and esteem, learner autonomy and learner-training? While autonomy is not to be imposed (Bassano, 1986, pp. 13ff), neither is it nurtured by being withheld or “taught”: (cf. the “explicit” school of learner-training: Brown *et al*, 1983; Duffy *et al*, 1986).

Given the lack of literature supporting such classroom practices, we must ask ourselves where they originate from and why they persist. In searching for answers to these questions, it is informative to take a brief look at the origins of institutionalised education.

3.1. New wine in old bottles

When the Phoenicians created symbols that represented isolated sounds or sound clusters (Gardner, 1993, p. 127), a writing system was born which enabled the creation of literary, historical and philosophical corpora in various societies (e.g. Greece). At this time, young people needed to acquire literacy skills, and schools which came into being to satisfy this need, concentrated on memorisation of important texts (mainly religious), both as a means of achieving literacy, and of inculcating ideas and practices seen as important for the survival of the community. Teaching thus initiated a tradition of regular drills, rote memorisation, and recitation. Since that time, educational philosophy, language-learning theory and political beliefs have developed, and schooling seeks to provide three kinds of knowledge: i) notational sophistication (written language and written numerical and notational systems); ii) inter-disciplinary concepts (key ideas, concepts, frameworks); and iii) forms of exposition and reasoning (different kinds of knowledge across disciplines) (Gardner, 1993, pp. 131-32), though the means of transmission of these knowledge systems and the infrastructure within which the transmission occurs, has tended to remain the same. The nature of society has also changed, with rapid changes in technology, communications and employment conditions,

making the meta-skill of learning-to-learn more important than knowledge (Pemberton *et al*, 1996, p. 1). Finally, the human species faces responsibility for environmental disasters and extinction of untold life-forms, including potentially, its own:

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.
(Wells, 1920, vol. 2, ch. 41)

Educational and social needs have thus changed, but the means for addressing them have not, despite the fact that outcomes are typically unsatisfactory: “an ordinary degree of understanding is routinely missing in many, perhaps most [college] students” (Gardner, 1993, p.6). Such a situation is directly relevant to language learning, in which the majority of teaching “methods” that have been proposed and implemented (to be replaced by the next method) have focussed on the teacher as transmitter of linear, quantifiable knowledge, and the learner as passive recipient. One such approach is the “three Ps^{vi}” method of language teaching, a method that has been discredited for some time (White, 1988; Skehan, 1996; Mohamed, 1998, p. 65), yet which still continues to be taught in teacher-training establishments, and remains popular with short-term teacher-training courses, by virtue of its simplicity and ease of transferability.

4. Where are they now?

Before considering alternatives to traditional roles and practices, it is instructional to think back to our own university, high school, middle school, and elementary school times:

- What images come to mind?
- Can we identify any learning experiences?
- How did we feel about the language lessons?
- What memories do we have of our teachers?
- What did our teachers give us that we still remember?
- How effective were their strategies?
- Do learning experiences stick in the memory, or the people who catalyse them?
- What influence did our teachers have on our learning and on the life for which they were preparing us?

What, then, are the enduring memories of our school times? Was there a flash of light when we met $e=mc^2$? Did the walls collapse around us when we found that $a^2 = b^2 + c^2$ in an isosceles triangle? How about when we heard Beethoven or read D.H. Lawrence for the first time? Were we guided through a wonderland of higher-order concepts that we couldn't have learnt simply by staying at home and observing people in their workplaces, or by going to the library and reading the relevant books? Can we really say “This person taught me all I know about geometry” or “This teacher taught me about my social responsibilities”? Do we remember the insightful practitioner who revealed everything about reflexive verbs, or are our memories more about positive emotional and affective modelling?:

It is quite possible that the deepest, most satisfying aspects of achievement, and the most profound effects of education, both in positive and negative terms, are entirely unmeasurable ... What if we held educators accountable for the quality of the memories they gave to their students, rather than for averages on national tests?

(Van Lier, 1996, p. 120)

5. Summary

Having considered the effectiveness and relevance of teachers (historically and personally), it is instructive to consider justifications for the traditional teacher/student relationship, along with appropriate responses:

1. The teacher is needed to model the target language.
If discrete language-modelling is desirable, then it is best achieved in the audio-visual library, where students can listen to and replay relevant cassettes and videos. If the student has been motivated to access the resource by him/herself, the activity will also have meaning and purpose.
2. The teacher is needed to transmit the linguistic code.
Attempts to teach tertiary students (in Korea) what they have not learnt during six years of grammar-based tuition in secondary education is not only meaningless, but an insult to the students and to their previous teachers.
Any course can only cover a small part of the language, and attempts to transmit “the whole language” can only fail (Dickinson, 1978; Dickinson & Carver, 1980).
We cannot predict what students will learn (Allwright, 2000, p. 13).
3. The teacher is needed in order to make sure students learn what they need to learn.
Studies into needs analysis have shown that “most needs analysis procedures do not begin to handle the leap between needs analysis and methods/materials selection or development” (West, 1994, p. 14), and that students and teachers should explore learning needs together (Bloor & Bloor, 1988, p. 66-7).
4. The teacher is needed in order to evaluate students correctly.
This statement follows from the assumption that language can be learned by studying its parts in isolation, that acquisition of these parts can be tested and will successfully predict performance levels, and that the learner can be relied on to reconstruct the parts in meaningful situations when necessary. It also assumes that students cannot be trusted to carry out evaluation by themselves, even in informal, day-to-day settings in which learning is enhanced by self- and peer-assessment (Harris, 1997, p. 13; Hill, 1994, p. 214; Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 134).
5. Without teacher-control, the students will go crazy; no learning will take place at all.
Behind this statement is fear of losing the autocratic power that teachers have cherished for so long; a fear of trusting the students to take care of their own learning; a belief that students don’t want to learn how to access the affordances that are appropriate to them (Van Lier, 2000, p. 252); that the teacher’s role might disappear in the climate of cooperative social interaction which “produces new, elaborate, advanced psychological processes that are unavailable to the organism working in isolation” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 61). The statement is self-confirming, since a learning environment based on the unquestioned rule of the teacher will indeed degenerate into chaos when teacher-control is withdrawn. Students who have not been involved in decision-making about their own learning, who have not been allowed to develop in terms of autonomous learning, who have not been trusted with responsibility to self-assess, or respected as fellow human beings, and who therefore lack the confidence and motivation to learn, cannot be

expected to suddenly become responsible and autonomous.

6. We need to supply students with the knowledge base they will need in their professions. As Rogers pointed out half a century ago (1951, p. 115), “education from the neck up” has produced highly qualified individuals who have had no training in managing their emotions, in social awareness, or in the sort of responsible attitude which enables them to refuse bribes, to avoid corrupt practices, or simply to keep the promises they made when being ordained into their professional community. We must ask if education that focuses only on the knowledge base has ever fulfilled its goals and responsibilities.

Part 2

6. An alternative vision

Returning once more to the reflective mode, let us imagine the teacher as a consultant, a guest in the learning environment, surrounded by groups of students working on meaningful learning projects that they have devised in consultation with their expert guest. Assessment is also self-devised, providing information about students’ learning achievements. Maybe the class is working on a newspaper, or a drama, accessing the teacher as an academic and linguistic resource. In this learning environment, the tables have finally been turned. Content is meaningful, students are active, assessment has its true role (cheating is not an option), error-correction happens on demand (often in a group context – peer-correction), and students study what they see as valuable. When evaluating these students, the teacher does not write “This learner is at this level of proficiency”, but rather “This learner has developed these holistic and linguistic learning skills, and will be a collaborative, responsible, trustworthy member of society. He/she can be trusted to do his/her best at all times.”

Such a vision is most often criticised for reasons of “impracticality”. After all, it is all very well to advocate mutual respect and unconditional trust, and to remonstrate with teachers to give up their autocracy, but how is this to be achieved in reality? A good starting point in this respect lies in the ten basic propositions “crucial for language teachers”, proposed by Williams & Burden (1997), and in the humanistic view of learning, propounded half a century ago by Rogers (1951):

1. There is a difference between learning and education.
2. Learners learn what is meaningful to them.
3. Learners learn in ways that are meaningful to them.
4. Learners learn better if they feel in control of what they are learning.
5. Learning is closely linked to how people feel about themselves.
6. Learning takes place in a social context through interactions with other people.
7. What teachers do in the classroom will reflect their own beliefs and attitudes.
8. There is a significant role for the teacher as mediator in the language classroom.
9. Learning tasks represent an interface between teachers and learners.
10. Learning is influenced by the situation in which it occurs. (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 204)

1. Learning is the process of changing behavior in a positive direction.
2. Learning is an experience that occurs inside the learner and is activated by the learner.
3. Learning is the discovery of the personal meaning and relevance of ideas.

4. Learning (behavioral change) is a consequence of experience.
5. Learning is a cooperative and collaborative process.
6. Learning is an evolutionary process.
7. Learning is sometimes a painful process.
8. One of the richest resources for learning is the learner himself.
9. The process of learning is emotional as well as intellectual.
10. Learning fuses work and play.
11. Learning is a 'religious' experience.
12. The learner is a free and responsible agent.
13. The processes of problem solving and learning are highly unique and individual.
14. Teaching is learning. (Rogers, 1951, p. 115)

If we take these statements as our creed, then it is evident that the teacher-centred classroom must not persist, whatever the administrative constraints on student-centred learning. If we also accept research findings that autonomy is desirable, that students possess individual learning beliefs and perceptions that drive learning, and that the "effect of affect" (Scovel, 1978) is more important than cognitive learning, then teacher-reflection on lesson-content and learning achievement must focus on new parameters. Instead of asking "What did I teach today?" or "What did the students learn today?", teachers must ask searching questions about their teaching approach and the principles underlying it:

1. Am I promoting holistic education?
2. Am I giving my students learning skills and life-skills that will enable them to become responsible members of society?
3. Do my lessons consist of discrete sentences, yes/no and wh-questions, articles, prepositions, conditionals, and relative clauses, plus inductively or deductively presented pedagogic "grammar points", with structures generally presented one at a time (occasionally in contrasting pairs), using guidelines laid down by Palmer (1917/68) as a basis for selection, rather than empirical evidence?
4. Do I use structurally and lexically graded dialogues or reading passages (Widdowson, 1978; Crystal, 1981; Ventola, 1987)?
5. Do I model *usage*, rather than *use* (Widdowson, 1978), mixing different functions of language which happen to be encoded using the same form?
6. Do I try to teach the whole grammatical system, though few learners need it all?
7. Do I recognise that learners do not acquire structures in isolation but as parts of complex mappings of form-function relationships?
8. Do I use instructional sequences which do not reflect acquisition sequences (Lightbown, 1983; Pienemann, 1987)?
9. Do I understand, for beginners, at least, "the inadequacy of full native-like target structures as a unit of analysis in syllabus design"? (Long & Crookes, 1993, p. 15).

7. Practical solutions

7.1 Portfolios

Alternative assessment methods (learner journals, peer- and self-assessment, portfolios, learner-conversations, teacher-learner interviews) offer the language teacher a means of promoting autonomous, holistic and responsible learning, and have the added advantage that

they can supplement conventional curricula. Portfolios (and associated project work) satisfy and arise from contemporary learning theories, providing a practical means of assembling student work, interpreting evidence of student performance, and assessing student performance relative to instructional objectives. If we revisit Rogers' description of learning (section 6), we find that portfolios can act as agents of behavioural change (items 1 & 4), they are concerned with personal meanings and ideas (items 2, 3 & 8), they can be cooperative and collaborative experiences (item 5), they grow over time and reflect the personal nature of learning (items 6, 7 & 11), and they allow the learner to present his/her own formative learning experiences (items 12 & 13). There is both process and product in this exploration of learning and assessment, and consequently infinite scope for development of ideas in the direction of self-directed project work. By containing examples of work in progress, formal products, and "ratings or other evidence of student knowledge relative to specific objectives or purposes" (Valencia, 1990), portfolios can reflect the current status of the learner's educational journey.

Portfolio-related issues have been investigated by a number of authors, and interested readers are referred to the wealth of literature that is available (cf. Jongsma, 1989; Pikulski, 1989; Simmons, 1990; Valencia, 1990; Wolf, 1989). For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to note that:

- i) portfolios have the potential to provide teachers and students with a rich source of information about the development and progress of students;
- ii) they allow for reporting in a holistic and valid way;
- iii) the information they contain is taken from actual student work;
- iv) portfolio assessment focuses on what students learn, rather than on isolated facts and figures;
- v) both formal and informal data can be included in a portfolio, evaluating student learning in a comprehensive and authentic manner.

7.2 Projects

Thus, portfolios can be used to promote personal and academic awareness in traditional situations, presenting a bridge towards the project syllabus, itself a means of applying humanistic and holistic principles in the classroom. Dewey and Kilpatrick, writing in the first half of the 20th century, laid the theoretical and practical foundations of learning by and through experience, seeing the educational project as a "whole-hearted purposeful activity" (Kilpatrick, 1918), taking place in a social environment upon which it has a significant impact. Project-based syllabi exemplify process and task-based ideas by being "collaborative, avoiding competition, and lending themselves to analysis of global goals into sub-components which are then delegated to sub-groups, who take responsibility for completing them" (Skehan, 1998, p. 273). They have a strong process dimension, but they are also notable for the product which emerges from the process (e.g. oral presentation, drama, written report). This product is seen as part of the process continuum (a means rather than an end), useful for the feedback (and therefore opportunities for assessment) which it gives to the learners concerning their progress, as well as functioning as a "sort of public record of the project, of which the participants have ownership, and which will give the project some durability" (Skehan, 1998, p. 273, cf. Willis, 1996).

7.3 Self- and peer-assessment

Alternative assessment (of which peer-assessment is one form) has appeared in recent years as a reaction to summative, norm-referenced testing, and as an expression of a desire on the part of educators to “assess students authentically and holistically” (Korean Ministry of Education Website, 2001). Justified largely by the same arguments as those for self-assessment (Dickinson, 1987; Assinder, 1991; Hill, 1994; Miller & Ng, 1996; Tudor, 1996; Harris, 1997), peer-assessment requires students to assess each other individually and in groups, and the results are used by teachers and students for reflection and further goal-setting. The projected benefits of peer-assessment for students are that cooperative experience of, and involvement in the evaluation process helps students develop affectively and ethically as well as cognitively, and raises their awareness of the learning process, thus enabling them to learn more effectively. Dickinson (1987) offers three justifications for self- (and peer-) assessment:

- i. assessment leading towards evaluation is an important educational objective in its own right. Training learners in this is beneficial to learning;
- ii. self-assessment is a necessary part of self-determination;
- iii. self-assessment is one way of alleviating the assessment burden on the teacher.

Peer-assessment is under-researched internationally, but a number of commentators have identified it as appropriate for test-driven secondary and tertiary education, claiming that it can help learners in such environments to become more active, to locate their own strengths and weaknesses, and to realize that they have the ultimate responsibility for learning. By encouraging individual reflection, self- (and peer-) assessment “can begin to make students see their learning in *personal* terms [and] can help learners get better marks.” (Harris, 1997, p. 13; Hill, 1994, p. 214; Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 134). Tudor (1996) states that critical reflection on the abilities of other learners with respect to a shared goal is a practical form of learner training which helps individuals to assess their own performance, and which reduces the stress of error correction through identifying them in others (Tudor, 1996, p. 182). Assinder (1991, pp. 218-28) reports increased motivation, participation, real communication, in-depth understanding, commitment, confidence, meaningful practice and accuracy when students prepare and deliver learning tasks for each other, and Haughton & Dickinson (1989) (cited in Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 135) found “a relatively high level of agreement between the peer assessments and the marks given by the lecturers” in their study of a collaborative post-writing assessment (cf. Fok, 1981). They found that students were:

- i) able to assess their own work realistically;
- ii) they were sincere;
- iii) they demonstrated a similar level of assessment to that of the lecturers;
- iv) the scheme did not result in a lowering of standards; and
- v) the students benefited in their understanding of and attitude towards assessment by taking part in the study. (Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 142)

Self- and peer-assessment in traditional language-learning settings are thus desirable and feasible for pedagogic, practical, and humanistic reasons, and peer-assessment is an effective means of involving learners in formative self-assessment (Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 134), with the presence of an audience in general having a positive influence on performance (Lynch, 1988).

8. Conclusion

An Israeli folktale tells of a party to which various members of the community were invited. It being normal for guests to provide wine, everybody took along their wine bottles and emptied them into the general vat of wine for consumption that night. However, people had also decided individually that it would not be noticed if their own wine bottle contained water. The result was a vat full of water (Taylor, 2000, p. 119). Language teachers, as educators, must ask to what extent they are taking water, labelled as wine, to the classroom. If we believe in humanistic practices, then we must model them in everything that we do (and do not do) in the classroom, and the learning environments over which we preside must change. If we subscribe to the view of the learner as agent of his/her own learning, then it is our responsibility to provide a learning environment full of learning affordances, and to assume the role of “language resource” in a learning-for-life workshop. If, on the other hand, we continue to stick to pedagogically unsound, historically ineffective, administratively convenient practices, then it can truly be said that the classroom is a better place without such teacher-figures:

A learning environment conducive to growth includes an atmosphere of trust, forms of interaction between partners, learning situations which stimulate encounters, and above all, learning arrangements which allow for creative ways of exploration by making contact with both the world inside the learner and the world outside. (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, p. 45)

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ⁱ English as a Foreign Language

ⁱⁱ Such comments are voiced regularly on teaching-based email lists subscribed to by the author.

ⁱⁱⁱ Quotes in this paper preserve the original gender references (e.g. “he”, rather than “he/she”) and spellings.

^{iv} This observation (and similar observations in this paper) is based upon the author’s 10 years of TEFL experience in Korea, and upon communications with TEFL colleagues in Korea.

^v Allwright has recently shown that learners often learn items that were not taught in class (Allwright 2000:12).

^{vi} Presentation, Practice, Performance