

## The Linguist as an Effective EFL Teacher: A Pedagogic View

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### Abstract

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*An English linguist has the ability of mastering the theory of the foreign language and how to apply his knowledge for the construction of well-formed sentence. However, he may disregard certain teaching requirements that stimulate his students to better interact in class and hence use the foreign language effectively. Accordingly, we believe in this study that the problem of teaching and learning the foreign language lies not only in the amount of the linguistic knowledge to be mastered but in the organization and application of that knowledge to a practical situation. So, this paper analyzes and describes some pedagogic criteria that help the linguist in teaching English effectively. These criteria are: stimulating and interactive classes, enough knowledge on various teaching techniques, significance of using an eclectic teaching approach, the distinction between language usage and language use, instilling in students self-confidence and attention, the significance of well-organized, clear, coherent and useful content, and last what learners really need while they are learning the foreign language.*

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**Keyword:** Linguist, language use, pedagogic view

### The Problem and Its Significance

English Linguists have the ability of mastering the theory of language and how to apply their knowledge for the construction of well-formed sentences. However, they may disregard certain teaching requirements that stimulate their students to better interact in class and hence use the foreign language effectively. In this regard, de Lopez (1989:71) asserts that "The problem lies not only in the amount of information to be mastered but in the organization and application of that knowledge to a practical situation". Since the term Linguists refers in this study to all those who teach language courses in English and other language departments, we try in this paper to analyze and describe some criteria that help the linguist to create interactive and stimulating classes in English .

### Language Usage and Language Use

The linguist should provide his students with a clear distinction between language usage and language use. The first of these is the citation of words and sentences as manifestations of the language system.

The second is the way the system is realized for normal communicative purpose. Thus, knowledge of use must of necessity include knowledge of usage, but the reverse is not the case. It is possible for someone to have learned a large number of sentence patters and a large number of words which can fit into them without knowing how they are actually put to communicative use. (Fries 1961:277).

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Both the manifestations of the language system as usage and its realization as use have meaning but the meaning is of different kind in each case. Words and sentences have meaning because they are part of a language system and this meaning is recorded in grammar and dictionaries. The term signification is used to refer to the meaning that sentences have in isolation from a linguistic context or from a particular situation in which the sentence is produced. This is distinguished from what is called value which is defined as the meaning that sentences take when they are put to use in order to perform different acts of communication. Thus, the linguist should be concerned with the teaching of both kinds of knowledge, i.e. knowing a language means both knowing what signification sentences have as instance of usage and what value they take as instances of use.

However, students who have acquired a good deal of knowledge of the usage of the English language find themselves at a loss when they are confronted with actual instances of use. This is especially true in cases where English is taught as a foreign language as is the case in Jordan.

The teaching of usage does not appear to guarantee the learning of use since the latter is represented as a necessary part of the former. As a result, it would be sensible to design language teaching courses with reference to use. Exercises in particular aspects of usage would be auxiliary to the communicative purposes of the course as a whole and not introduced as an end in themselves. In a powerful article, Hutchinson (1990:39) marks the return of grammar to teaching syllabus but insists that it has to be taught in such a way that it has to be put to use.

Furthermore, to the linguist, usage simply refers to linguistic events which are to be described at all levels and in all contexts. Thus, all of the English language and every linguistic event constitute data to be described and analyzed. In addition, the linguist should make a clear distinction between the spoken and the written language. He should never allow his students to write just the way they talk. Consequently, students can have adequate competence and performance in both the speaking and the writing skills of the foreign language. The following sections provide the criteria for a successful teaching situation.

### **An Eclectic Approach**

The most appropriate approach for teaching is that which combines the best features of the audio-lingual and the cognitive code approaches. (Ingram, 1975:289). Among the valuable constituents of the audio-lingual approaches are:

- 1- The emphasis is on perceptual and motor skills. ( )
- 2- The insistence that the units presented for imitation and practice should as far as possible be actual units of utterance rather than isolated sounds or words.
- 3- The insistence that grammar should be presented as sequential syntactic patterns rather than as tables because chains that become established by practice must be those which are directly relevant for using the language.

Among the valuable components of the cognitive approach are:

- 1- The emphasis is given to the need for learning forms in association with meaning, and
- 2- The fact that it utilizes the capacity and the need of the learners for understanding the underlying abstract system of the language. To achieve this, we need linguists as efficient and proficient teachers of English. (Corder, 1975:10f).

### **Clarity**

Whenever the statements of linguists are explicit, they can easily be understood and applied by student. Any vagueness in the linguist's vocabulary, terms, structures, ideas, etc. may block the necessary interaction with students. In this regard, the example chosen by the linguist should relate to student's level of understanding, their background knowledge, their educational level, their interests, etc. Also, abstract phenomena and terms should fully be explained and supported with examples.

Accordingly, Dirkes (1981:80) stresses that inexperienced teachers often ask learners to generate example and applications without help. Contrary to that, an efficient teacher (here, the linguist) continually provides his student with opportunities that enhance interest, understanding and interaction throughout the effective interchange of communication.

### **Usefulness**

The criteria of usefulness of the terms, structures and ideas used by the linguist play a vital role in making students achieve conscious understanding of the forms and constructions of the English language. Teaching English linguistics should deal with these observations and abstractions that match students' understanding and application. Otherwise, students will face difficulties in making the necessary generalization in the foreign language. (Widdowson, 1978:74).

### **Coherence**

Effective learning depends on the material being coherent and meaningful to the learner. The task of the linguist is to choose and present the linguistic aspects that make students fully attend to the linguistic thoughts given in class. (Fontana, 1981:144).

### **Organization**

Organization of the material to be taught by the linguist takes into account psycholinguistic and pedagogic considerations. Well-planned lessons coupled with detailed explanation can facilitate the linguist's way of teaching as well as achieving the required communication and interaction in class. As a result, students feel attentive and comfortable since the linguistic items, rules, and examples are presented in logical order. This will, in turn, make the linguist avoid any confusion and misunderstanding of what is going on his lecture in class. (Protherough et. Al., 1999:196).

### **Attention**

The TEL linguist can use various devices for attracting student's attention such as asking for clarification or an example, using simple and clear language, changing some abstract examples to concrete or factual ones, using vocabulary and structures that create competitive and positive attitudes among all student, etc. (Hanks, 1971:227).

### **Self-confidence**

The linguist should create in students the necessary self-confidence while they are handling the theory, patterns and structures of the English language. Simplification of terminologies and the flow of examples provided by the linguist can highly facilitate student's understanding, interest and interaction during the lecture. Harmer (1986:42) argues that the chief task of the efficient teacher is to give students the appropriate confidence by providing them with opportunities of success and showing personal belief in their mastery over the linguistic aspects of English.

### **The Learner's Needs**

The linguist should be aware of the following needs of the learners:

- 1- Linguistic needs which denote enough knowledge of the English language in order to express themselves with ease.
- 2- Psychological needs which mean that students are happy to use the language in chorus or under the teacher's supervision. Also, the teacher should select activities which will arouse interest of the learners and make them use the language. He should keep in mind that language is enjoyable to teach, to learn and to use.
- 3- Cognitive needs which mean providing the learners with something to talk about: a topic, a theme, a problem of some kind, etc. (Byrne, 1976:75) .

### **The Linguist and the Acquisition of English.**

Smith (1976:370) is of opinion that English can be acquired through deep analysis and description in terms of its own unique components –its sounds, forms and constructions. Thus, the effective teacher of language must know all the significant classes of sounds (phonemes) of the foreign language and how these group themselves into words, constructions and sentences. However, the process of showing the forms and positions which signal differences in meaning is of secondary significance. The most important aspect is to present and have students collect and examine the real language – the material not ordinarily brought to the classroom for analysis like prose in periodicals or books of reading.

The Linguist and the Teaching of Grammar The TEL linguist should provide his students with the essential explanations in the form of general statements which account for the widest possible range of facts. This is fundamental for English language teaching. A good example of the explanatory force of transformational theory in the area of syntax and phonology concerns the phenomenon of BE contraction. Consider the following sentences:

- \* John is richer than Bill is.
- \* John is richer than Bill's.

(The asterisk indicates that the sentence is ill – formed).

In the deep structure of the first sentence, there is a constituent rich (i-e-rich, in this representation) which is deleted by *er than* in surface structure. Here, the principle is as follows:

Finite forms of *be* cannot be contracted if the constituent immediately following *be* in deep structure has undergone deletion; they can be contracted if there is on deleted constituent following *be* in deep structure. This, as a result, proves the grammaticality of the first and the ungrammaticality of the second.

### **The Linguist and the Teaching of Vocabulary**

Linguistic theory suggests a number of ways in which lexical items might be presented to the learner. For example, should verbs be taught before nouns because they carry more information? Should the verb *offer* be taught in conjunction with *accept* and *refuse* rather than all three separately or according to some other principle? Should items be presented according to the minimum number of distinctive features which differentiate them (e.g. *punch*, *kick*) or the maximum number (say, *hippo* and *astrology*)?

The linguist should immediately recognize that the choices, accordingly, are compounded by the important consideration of whether active vocabulary acquisition should precede or follow passive acquisition. It is the task of the linguist to choose one or more of the many methods in which vocabulary items might effectively be presented to the learner. Such a fact is implicit in linguist theory (Van Buren, 1975:148ff).

### **Conclusion**

Linguist nowadays appreciate the efforts and the contributions made by methodologists who have facilitated the various devices of conveying knowledge to students for carrying out better communication and interaction in class. Although they have considerable knowledge of linguist theory and its application for the construction of well-formed sentences, they may disregard some pedagogic criteria that help a lot for teaching and learning purposes. Thus, they owe a lot to the experts in education concerning the adoption and the use of many stimulating and systematic teaching devices. Also, a lot of practice is the major means of improving the level of students in mastering the foreign language skills.

Linguists should always provide with the most up-to-date techniques of teaching English. These techniques should be so stimulating and interesting that they can effectively exploit the teachable moments of students i.e. the moments when students are quite ready to learn. This can be achieved if the linguist has the capacity of instilling in students interest, comment, questioning and desire for communication.

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### خلاصة

يمتلك اللغوي القدرة على استيعاب النظرية اللغوية وكيفية توظيف اللغة لتكوين جمل مبنية بشكل صحيح اي تامة المعنى والتركيب الا انه بحاجة الى الالمام بالمتطلبات الاساسية في طرق التدريس الحديثة والتي تساهم بشكل فاعل في تحفيز الطلبة على فهم اللغة الاجنبية واستعمالها بشكل دقيق . وبما أن مصطلح اللغوي قد يعني مدرس اللغة الانكليزية فان هذه الدراسة تهدف الى تحليل ووصف بعض الاسس والمعايير التي تساعد اللغوي على تدريس اللغة الانكليزية بشكل يتسم بالواقعية والتفاعل وتعزيز الثقة بالنفس . اذ يجب أن تكون لدى اللغوي معرفة واسعة باساليب التدريس المختلفة وصولا الى طريقة توليفية شاملة التي هي حاصل تحصيل كافة طرائق واساليب التدريس السائدة وبهذه الطريقة يتمكن الطلبة من استيعاب المادة اللغوية وتتعزيز لديهم القدرة التواصلية في مجال اللغة الانكليزية . تبحث الدراسة في أهمية وضوح الاصطلاحات التي يستخدمها اللغوي وملانمتها لمستوى الطلبة وميولهم وثقافتهم أما الظواهر اللغوية المجردة فينبغي على اللغوي توضيحها وتعزيزها بالأمثلة ذات الصلة بالمعرفة المسبقة للطلبة . وكلما كانت المفاهيم والتركيب اللغوية منتظمة ومتناسقة وذات معنى كلما ساعد ذلك على تعزيز الثقة بالنفس لدى الطلبة وجذب اهتمامهم نحو استيعابها وتطبيقها بشكل أفضل . وتتناول الدراسة أيضا مهمة اللغوي في كيفية تحقيق اكتساب اللغة لدى الطلبة وضرورة الربط بين المفاهيم اللغوية واستعمالها هذا بالإضافة الى إعطاء بعض الشواهد على كيفية تدريس اللغوي لمادتي النحو واستيعاب المفردات باللغة الانكليزية .