

SOME REFLECTIONS ABOUT A GOOD TEACHER

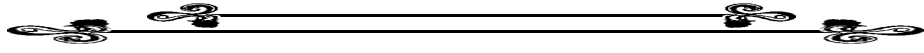
# SOME REFLECTIONS ABOUT A GOOD TEACHER

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*“Personally, I don’t know any name  
higher than a teacher in the world”*

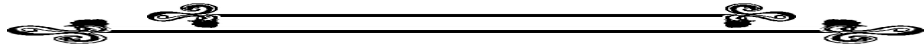
**Heydar Aliyev**

A friend of mine who is a dean at the faculty of International Relations and Foreign Languages asked me about what I was working at. I told him that, apart from other activities I was writing an article about teachers.

“Surely, we know how to teach languages, after all, people have been doing it successfully for two thousand years or more”, he noted.

Frankly, it is quite a fair conception but I want to write an article about good teachers, it is because views are somewhat mixed as to what teachers are and many different functions are ascribed to teaching. We want to observe good teachers’ activity not only in education generally, but in the classroom itself. Twenty-first century classrooms around the world have a wide range of equipment and technology available to them and there are so many wonderful possibilities open to teachers now. New software and hardware have appeared which the teacher could hardly have imagined possible. They may choose to adopt appropriate technologies that will ensure the classroom fit the students and vice versa. The thoughts quoted from the prominent scientists are for proof that the teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement.

Minister of Education of the Azerbaijan Republic Misir Mardanov writes: “According to the result of the reforms carried out in all countries, it was concluded that the direct and efficient



way of improvement of education passes through teachers' development." (2, p.3). As you see our opinions coincide. So we want to describe good teachers and identify who teachers are in class. But firstly, we want to mention reasons for learning English.

It is well-known all around the world that students of all ages are learning to speak English, but their reasons for learning to study English can differ greatly. Some students learn English because it is on the curriculum at primary or secondary level, but for others, studying the language reflects some kind of choice.

Some students need English for a Specific Purpose (ESP). Many students need English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in order to study at an English-speaking university.

Many people learn English because they think it will be useful in some way for international communication and travel.

The purposes students have for learning will have an effect on what it is they want and need to learn – and as a result will influence what they are taught.

Experiments by prominent scientists show that students at different ages have different characteristics, so the way the teachers teach them will differ, too.

It is evident that students learning abilities depend on their intelligences. According to J. Harmer, all have a number of different intelligences (mathematical, musical, interpersonal, spatial, emotional, etc.). However, while one person's mathematical intelligence might be highly developed, their interpersonal intelligence (the ability to interact with and relate to other people) might be less advanced, whereas another person might have good spatial awareness and musical intelligence, but might be weak mathematically. Thus it is inappropriate to

describe someone as being “intelligent” or “unintelligent”, because while we may not have much of a knack for, say, music, that does not mean our abilities is similarly limited in other areas (6, p. 16).

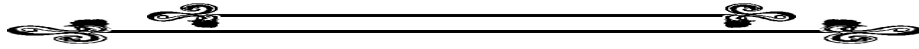
Experienced teachers know that different intelligences need different styles of teaching and try to жатер фор индивидуал дифференжес анд неедс.

It is often said that “good teachers are born, not made” and it does seem that some people have a natural affinity for the job. But there are also others, perhaps, who do not have what appears to be a natural gift but who, still effective and popular teachers are. In general, teaching is not an easy job, but it is a necessary one, and can be very rewarding.

But we think, teaching is more rewarding in Azerbaijan, because, we call all the famous and honorable persons respectfully “muallim” (teacher). Once, when I worked at school number 99 in Baku, I addressed our director of studies as Liliya muallima. She became confused and said: “Mir Gasan Seyidovich, call me Liliya Ilyinichna, please”.

One of our students who has been to the USA with FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) program noted that in the States the teacher’s work is not so highly appreciated as in Azerbaijan by the students. But in Azerbaijan the teacher is considered as an honorable one and as the paternal adviser for the student.

Some years ago, in preparation materials for my dissertation I recorded interviews with a large number of teachers, students and parents. Naturally I asked them “What makes a good teacher?”



A number of people I questioned answered by talking firstly about the teacher's character. Some students even told me that they wanted not only to see a professional who had come to teach them, but also a personality as well. It is clear that the good qualities of teachers' character make them interesting and attractive. We wholly subscribe to the students' opinion. One 12 year-old interviewee Hasanzada Aysel I talked to answered to my question by saying: "Muallim, I love Nargiz muallima as a teacher and as a personality" (Nargiz Valiyeva is a teacher of "Azerbaijani language and literature" at school Number 8 in Nakhchivan city). It means we have to be able to present a professional face to the students which they find both interesting and effective.

One of the teachers I talked to said: "In my opinion the teachers need to be flexible when confronted with unforeseen events in lessons and part of teachers' skill is to absorb the unexpected and to use it to the students' advantage. In other words, teachers need to be able to think on their feet and act quickly and decisively at various points in the lesson. When students see that they can do this, their confidence in their teachers is greatly enhanced."

Another teacher I talked to opined that part of a good teacher's art is the ability to adopt a number of different roles in the class, depending on what the students are doing. If, for example, the teacher always acts as a controller, dictating everything that happens, there will be little chance for students to take much responsibility for their own learning. In this connection J. Harmer writes: "Being a controller may work for grammar explanations and other information presentation, for instance, but

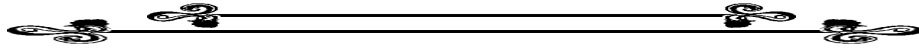
it is less effective for activities where students are working together cooperatively on a project, for example. In such situation we may need to be prompters, encouraging students... At other times, we may need to act as feedback providers (helping students to evaluate their performance) or as assessors (telling students how well they have done or giving them grades, etc.). We also need to be able to function as a resource (for language information, etc.)... and at times, as a language tutor (that is, an advisor who responds to what the student is doing and advises them on what to do next)" (6, p. 25).

It seems that part of our teacher personality, therefore, is our ability to perform all these roles at different time, but with the same care and ease whichever role we are involved with.

One of the students I talked to in my research said that a good teacher was someone who knows our names. In the first place, students want teachers to know their names rather than, say, just pointing at them. Of course, knowing students' names, knowing about students is important, because, at any age, they will be pleased when they realize that their teacher has remembered things about them.

According to J. Harmer, a significant feature in the intrinsic motivation of students will depend on their perception of what the teacher thinks of them and how they are treated... and of good rapport between the teacher and the class (6, p. 25).

Most teachers have some students that they like more than others. For example, we all tend to react well to those who take part, are cheerful and cooperative, take responsibility for their own learning, and do what we ask of them without complaint.



We think students generally respect those teachers who show impartiality and who do their best to treat all students equally and it is also a mark of professionalism.

One of the key problems is TTT (Teacher talking time) and STT (Student Talking Time) during the lesson. After much debate about the amount of teacher talk and student talk we decided to quote from J. Harmer. Here is what he writes: “If a teacher talks and talks, the students will have less time for other things, too, such as reading and writing. For these reasons, a good teacher maximises STT and minimises TTT” (6, p.38)

Connected with this problem, Professor J. V. Rogova writes: “Special investigations have shown that teachers are often too active during the lesson. Sometimes their activity takes 75 per cent of the lesson time and 25 per cent is left for the class. If there are 20 pupils in the class, each child has 45 seconds at his disposal, which is not so much for learning the language”... “In this case we cannot expect much learning on the part of the pupil. Of course in the initial lessons we cannot minimize the teacher’s participation in this bilateral process, and 1:1 may be considered a reasonable relationship, however the relationship should be gradually changed in favour of students, for every child to be able to have practice in speaking, reading, and writing” (Rogova, p. 234).

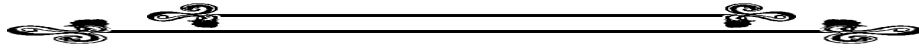
We think that the best lessons are ones where STT is maximized. Generally, good teachers use their experience to get the balance and ensure rational distribution of time during the lesson between the teacher and the class. So that favourable conditions may be created for the students’ learning a foreign language. Because the measure of good lesson is the student activity taking place, not the performance of the teacher.



Teachers have a different view of teaching in our day. In olden times, the idea was to cram a pupil's head with all sorts of information as quickly as possible, and then, after he graduated, it would all evaporate in a flash. In other words, an empty vessel had to be filled. The idea that it could be spilled as well didn't bother them at all. Nowadays a pupil is regarded as a bonfire which has only to be lighted, and from then on it'll burn by itself. It is possible if the students are involved in the language activities.

If pupils are not involved in the act of communication in the target language and remain on the level of performing drill exercise, they soon lose interest in the subject and become passive at the lessons. One needs a lot of practice in the use of the language to master it. Consequently the problem arises how to enlarge the real time available for each pupil during the class-period to make him an active participant of the lesson, of the work done during the lesson.

Scientists, methodologists and teachers are searching for ways to solve this problem. In this connection Prof. Nuraddin Kazimov who discusses about the teacher and student activity during the lesson in his book "School pedagogy", writes: "The school practice shows that some teachers speak less during the lesson, and make their students speak more; but some do it conversely, they think more and make their students think less. And the result is different: the efficiency of teaching of those teachers who make their students work and speak more, but themselves are passive at the lesson, increases; but the effectiveness of teaching of those teachers who are active during the lesson and make their students work and speak less, decreases. Here there is a certain objective law: the more the extent of the



teacher's activity, the less the students' activity; the level of acquisition does not considerably increase, and vice versa, the more the students' activity, the less the teachers' activity, but the level of acquisition increases" (7, p.152).

Some words about correcting mistakes. In language study phases students, generally, do not always use correct English. They make mistakes, too, when writing or speaking.

Jeremy Harmer divides mistakes into three categories. According to him slips are mistakes which students can correct themselves, once the mistake has been pointed out to them. Errors are mistakes which they cannot correct themselves - and which, therefore, need explanation. Attempts are mistakes that students make when they try to say something but do not yet know how to say it (6, p. 96).

There are some ways of correcting pupils' mistakes. The teacher should use them reasonably and choose the one most suitable for the case.

Professor Rogova writes: "Our opinion is that the pupil who has made a mistake must try to correct it himself. If he cannot do it, his classmates correct his mistakes, if they cannot do so the teacher corrects the mistake" (11, p. 185).

Correcting students' mistakes is always a delicate event. "The teachers should correct students' mistakes without offending them," said one of the students with excitement. They have to tread carefully. If they do it in an insensitive way they may upset students and dent their confidence. Moreover, what is appropriate for one student may be quite wrong for another.

Being reliable about things like timekeeping and homework is also a mark of professionalism. It is very difficult to berate

students for being late for lessons if we get into habit of turning up late ourselves.

Apart from the abilities and skills, teachers need to be aware of the following. Firstly, they need to know a lot about the subject they are teaching. They should constantly develop not only their knowledge of the subject matter, but also their knowledge of pedagogy, psychology and linguistics. Secondly, they need to know what equipments and materials are available in their class and how to use them. And thirdly, they need to keep abreast of new developments in educational technology and know what they want to achieve and see what kind of techniques will help them to do this.

Peter Wilberg put this perfectly when he said: “The teacher’s primary responsibility is response-ability!!! This means being able to perceive the success or failure of what is taking place in the classroom, and being flexible enough to respond to what is going on. We need to be as conscious as possible of what is going on in the students’ heads” (6, p. 35).

An article of this length cannot completely cover the topic of keeping up to date as a Good Teacher... It is hoped that the suggestions outlined in this article can provide some assistance to teachers attempting optimally combine their own goals, and their students’ needs.

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## ХИЦЛАСЯ

Mirhəsən Eminov

Yaxşı müəllim haqqında düşüncələr

Məqalədə təhsilin keyfiyyətinin yüksəldilməsində müəllimin rolundan bəhs olunur. Qeyd olunur ki, müasir müəllim öz ixtisası ilə yanaşı pedaqogikanı, psixologiyanı, metodikanı dərindən bilməli, ən başlıcası isə fəal təlim texnologiyası üzrə bacarıqlarını inkişaf etdirməli və bir şəxsiyyət olmalıdır.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Миргасан Эминов

Размышления о хорошем учителе

В статье говорится о роли учителя в улучшении качества обучения. Отмечается, что современный учитель должен знать не только свою специальность, но и педагогику, психологию, методику, но, самое главное, он должен развивать умения об активных технологиях обучения и обладать высокими человеческими качествами.

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НДУ-нун Елми Шурасынын 02 декабр 2009-жу ил тарихли гялары иля чапа тювсийя олунмушдур (протокол № 3).

Ряйчиляр: 1. Филолозийя елмляри намизяди Ширмяммяд Гулубяйли

2. Филолозийя елмляри намизяди Жейран Гулийева