

HOW TO BE A GOOD LANGUAGE TEACHER

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Abstract

There are two crucial questions about the study of language teacher. The first question is “How is a good teacher?” The second question is “How is a good language teacher? To answer those questions, it should be understood that teacher is a usual creation of God. Like an English proverb says “there is no one perfect so, the teacher maybe will do the mistakes. The teacher maybe has some weakness . This writing tries describing some facts about teachers as general, and introducing the reader about how is going to be a good language teacher.

Key words: language teacher, qualification, competence, and criteria

1. Introduction

Teacher’s work is a very good work. A professional teacher is a learning agent who has suitable roles; facilitator, motivator, encourager, teaching and learning engineer, and motivator for students .As a professional man power, teacher means that teacher’s work only done by whom has qualification, academically, competence, and educator’s certificate. The teachers play an important role in the realm of education is inevitable. Much of the responsibility in regard to the success and failure of the education in general is put on the teachers’ shoulders. When there is something wrong in education, teachers tend to be concerned. Sometimes they are regarded as magicians who can convert poor students into the bright ones. Much is expected from the part of teachers. As a consequence, there are many roles that they have to play. If we go to extreme, teachers are expected to be perfect persons, academically, and personally. It is assumed that qualified teachers will be able to do their jobs better and the output in the part of the student will be better as well. For this reason, they are hoped to upgrade themselves from time to time towards better qualification. This writing will elucidate some facts about teachers in general, and characteristics of good teachers, those of the bad ones, the roles of teachers, and some good practices to be done by teachers.

2. Some Facts about Teachers

Before going to the discussion of how to be a nice language teacher, it is better for us to look at some facts about teachers in general. Compared to other occupation requiring a similar level of educational preparation, the profession of teaching employs more people.

In China, there are more 12,000,000 teachers compared to other professions. In India, there are 10,000,000 teachers compared to 1,000,000 engineers, and 50,000 medical doctors. In the

United States of America, there are 5,000,000 teachers compared to 3,000,000 engineers, 700,000 lawyers, 400,000 computer specialists, and 250,000 medical doctors. In Indonesia, there are more than 2,800,000 civil servants who work as teachers; it is about a half of the total of the civil servants.

Despite the big total number of teachers, there are some conditions that are not so favorable and suitable in the profession of teaching. Here are some of them:

- a. The teacher training programs are established at a time when the educational system is expanding. However, at some point the pace of school expansions will slow. The established programs will continue to produce the same number of teachers as in the past, while the recruitment of new teachers slack off. As a result there is a surplus of in the number of qualified teachers.
- b. There is a decline in the relative status of the institutions that train teachers, or increasing proportions of those who teach come from lower status of secondary and higher educational institutions.
- c. The proportion of females among teachers increases till a threshold of 75 percent at the primary and 50 percent at the secondary level is reached.
- d. While teachers have been historically recruited from higher status families, at least in the case of males, they increasingly come from farm and blue-collar backgrounds.
- e. The academic achievement of those entering the teaching profession declines relative to those entering other professions. Teaching becomes less attractive to the most promising and ambitious young people, especially in the male sex. Schools or educational institutions experience increasing difficulty in recruiting the most able and ambitious members of society.
- f. The salary or payment of teachers is relatively smaller than those of other profession such as lawyers, bankers, artists, people's representative council members, or medical doctors, whereas the responsibility of teachers is heavy enough to do. In Indonesia, a senior teacher has 3,000,000 – 4,000,000 rupiahs every month. In the United States of America, a junior teacher has 26,000,000. In Malaysia, a junior teacher has 5,000,000-11,000,000 rupiahs and a senior has 7,000,000-39,000,000 rupiahs every month. In United Kingdom, teachers have about 60,000,000. In Japan once tried to increase the salaries of teachers up to 50 percents. There, a junior teacher has 11,000,000 rupiahs more and a senior has 28,000,000 rupiahs. Besides the salary, teachers also have an extra salary 5% twice a year in June and August, regional allowance, supporting family allowance, commuting family allowance, head teacher allowance and head teacher instructor allowance, club activities instructor allowance. It had a drastic effect on the educational qualifications of those entering teacher's training school and educational faculties.

3. The Good language Teacher

In spite of the unsuitable and unfavorable facts about teachers in general, teachers should do their best to be professionally competent in their jobs. As a reference for teachers, there are general principles that nice teachers may have in common. The principles may be ideal in nature, yet the teachers can develop themselves to get closer to the principles. Prodromou in Thomas Kral {1994}, conducted a survey on qualities of a nice language teacher, and those a bad one. These, qualities are viewed from the part of the students involved in the survey of language class, from intermediate to advanced level. Based on the survey result, there are 36 notes for language teacher. Here is the list of qualities of a good language teacher:

- 1} friendly
- 2} explained thing
- 3} gave good notes
- 4} knew how to treat someone who sits at a desk for six hours
- 5} Let the students do it by themselves
- 6} group work
- 7} We did the lesson together
- 8} took out things we know
- 9} Talked about her life
- 10} talked about problems of the school
- 11} talked about other subject
- 12} played games
- 13} told jokes
- 14} she was one of us
15. didn't push weak learners
- 16} asked students opinions, there was a dialogue
- 17} she was like an actress, pretended a lot
- 18} she was educated
- 19} she knew psychology}

- 20} used movement to make meaning clear
- 21} she made sure everyone understood
- 22} she was funny
- 23} she got close to students
- 24} she believed in me, made me believe in myself
- 25} she had a personality of her own
- 26} she was very experienced
- 27} she made grammar clear
- 28} she tried to communicate
- 29} she gave advice
- 30} she talked about personal problems
- 31} she gave me a lot of books to read
- 32} she used questions a lot
- 33} she asked all students questions
- 34} social work---it was her job
- 35} she was more like a comedian
- 36} we did experiments

According to the above characteristics, it may be concluded that a good language teacher should have the following headlines like stated in Undang-undang Republic of Indonesia Number 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, namely: have four competences; pedagogical, personality, professional, and social competences . For the next, it may be underlined that a good language teacher should have :

- 1} knowledge of language as general
- 2} knowledge of language teaching or second language teaching methodology
- 3} knowledge of other subjects
- 4} knowledge of evaluation/testing

- 5} concept of education
- 6} concept of teaching
- 7} concept of general psychology
- 8} concept of learning psychology
- 9} knowledge of evaluation/testing
- 10} authority over the classroom
- 11} empathy with students
- 12} appropriate attitude to error

4. The Bad Language Teacher

Besides the nice qualities, it is also necessary to know the bad qualities of a language teacher. The following are the qualities of a bad language teacher according to the students involved in the survey conducted by Promodrou, 1994:

- 1} very strict
- 2} didn't let us speak
- 3} gave us a text to learn and checked it
- 4} gave marks all the time
- 5} she was fixed in a chair
- 6} always above our heads a[dominate}
- 7} shouted {for no reason}
- 8} gave a lot of tests
- 9} force us to do things
- 10} didn't discuss other problems
- 11} started the lesson immediately
- 12} didn't smile

- 13} she stared at you and you couldn't say a word
- 14} her test were too difficult
- 15} we were not prepared for the test
- 16} she just showed us a grammar rule and we forgot it
- 17} shouted when we made mistakes
- 18} bad tempered
- 19} talked and talked
- 20} she spoke flat
- 21} she just said the lesson and nothing else
- 22} there was a distance from us
- 23} believed the students were all the same
- 24} we didn't do experiments
- 25} believed students all knew the same things
- 26} like machine
- 27} treated kids like objects
- 28} she was rigid
- 29} sarcastic and ironic
- 30} only lessons, didn't discuss anything else
- 31} avoided answering questions
- 32} you couldn't laugh, you couldn't speak
- 33} she was a teacher, I was a student
- 34} she had a black list and said "you, you, you"
- 35} she had a little book with the marks in
- 36} no communication
- 37} she made me feel anxious

38} she said we weren't well prepared

According to what was said by the students above, about the good and bad characteristics of a language teacher, may be subjective and there may be some overlapping. However, it is very useful to observe certain general principles that nice language teachers may have in common. These general principles can serve as a starting point for the teacher who has lost confidence in her ability to fulfill her own potential. Of course the bad ones should be avoided hard by all language teachers. Unless the teachers practice the nice ones, they will have trouble to teach the students in the classroom.

5. The Roles of the Language teacher

This time being, the role of the language teacher is not as simple as it once was. From time to time observers or researchers are discovering new factors that may play a part in language teaching and learning. Today, knowledge of the linguistic structure of the language is only one of the requirements of a nice language teacher. Teachers should also have a broad background knowledge of the social environment that influences their students, different pedagogical approaches, methods, and techniques, social and cultural aspects of the language taught, and techniques for diagnosing certain psychological characteristics of students. In the scope of classroom activities, the roles of a language teacher are among others:

1} as an agent, e.g. the teacher helps students to solve their problems and distribute their rights

2} as a manager, e.g. the teacher gives instructions for students to get into groups

3} as a friend, e.g. the teacher chats with students over coffee or arranges a cinema, visit with the class.

4} as a model, e.g. the teacher asks the students to repeat a sentence or phrase after her.

5} as a monitor, e.g. the teacher goes around listening to pairs practicing a dialogue

6} as a counselor, e.g. the teacher advises students how best to approach a task.

7} as an informant, e.g. the teacher explains when we use the present continuous tense.

8} as a facilitator, e.g. the teacher provides material and guidance to enable students to work on their own.

9} as a social worker, e.g. the teacher says behind after class and discusses one of the student's personal problems which is affecting his/her work.

6. Other Good Practice

The following is some practices which may be useful for teachers to carry out, complementary to the nice characteristics above:

1} Teacher development

A language teacher has to develop and improve her knowledge of language teaching and learning from time to time. This can be done by subscribing to language teaching and learning magazines or journals, attending and being the participant or the speaker for conferences, seminars, and workshops, joining professional organizations, forming local or regional teachers' groups, inviting guest/native speakers to contribute lectures and workshops.

2} Teacher's position

The teacher's position in the classroom should be varied, depending on the teaching and learning activity. The way a teacher moves around the room at different points in the language lesson can have a significant effect on students' attention and concentration.

3} Classroom arrangement

If the desks in the classroom are not fixed to the ground, the teacher can arrange them in such a way that the students can listen to each other easily, and see the board and visual material the teacher may hold up. For general class work, a semicircular formation is best. A circular formation can be used for general discussion. With desks fixed to the floor, the teacher should encourage students work behind or in front of them, or a gangway to form groups of four, six, or seven.

4} Use of media

Use of media in teaching –learning process is very important. What ever media, e.g television, computer, lap top, LCD, tape recorder, and any cassettes may be used of supporting the language learning activity in the class room. It is to be the teacher's responsibility to ensure that conditions for language learning are achieved. Therefore, the language teacher should try seeking and using media at the class room level appropriately. They are adamant about the importance of the use of media in teaching-learning process.

5} Use of time

The teacher should be able to make use of the time available wisely. Here are some hints in relation to the use of time:

- Don't make students feel anxious about time
- Don't plan to do too much in a lesson {have an extra for a joke or anecdote}
- Don't wait too long for a student to answer the questions
- Tell the students how long they have for a particular activity.
- Warm the students one or two minutes before an activity is due
- Use the last few minutes to check that learning has taken place, and to summarize what the lesson has been all about.

6} Voice

When the teacher speaks in a monotone, regardless of changes in topic form, usually the students tend to switch off. So, it is necessary for the language teacher to vary the loudness and tone of her voice when the function of what she is saying changes. She may change her voice, e.g., in beginning the lesson, starting and stating objectives of the lesson, giving instructions, interrupting the students to point out something important, telling the students that time is over, explaining a homework or an assignment, summarizing what the lesson was all about, or closing the activity.

7} A teacher needs much to look at the class as she is speaking, allowing her gaze to travel gently round the class room without staring at any one student.

She has to look at the student who is speaking or expressing, occasionally letting her eyes rest on another student before coming back to the speaking student. She should avoid look up the ceiling, at the floor, through window, or at the wall as she is giving instructions or asking questions.

8} Compliment

A language teacher should be generous enough in paying compliments to the students who something correctly. The compliments can motivate and encourage them to do better. On the contrary, rude words or sentences have to be avoided although the students may make some mistakes.

7. Closing

In fact there is no formula for a good language teaching. Very different people make good language teachers for very different reasons. However, it is possible to observe certain general principles that many good teachers have in common. Teachers need to exert their efforts towards the ideal characteristics so that their main jobs can be more fruitful and enjoyable on the part of the students

As researchers find some more factors that play part in language teaching-learning, a language teacher should play more roles in doing her main jobs. In line with the development of knowledge, science, information, and technology from time to time, she has to be able to upgrade herself so that her professional competence in language teaching-learning is always up to date not out of date. Teacher education is lifelong.

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