

“The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards.”

Anatole France (1844 – 1924)

Primary School English Teachers

Each of us has had our preference of teachers. We disliked some of our teachers and some were favoured. How nice to be taught by an ideal teacher! But does an ideal teacher really exist? What is he/she like? What does he look like?

The status of a teacher can have a great power. Thanks to the teacher the learner of English can end up with a totally different approach to English. He may end up with a wish not to touch English any more or, on the contrary, may want to go on studying English after the course has finished. It's the teacher who may influence a positive attitude to English learning. However, this does not imply that teacher's role could be raised above the role of a learner.

As the learners are different also the teachers vary from each other a lot. There are teachers who are real **explainers**. Such a teacher knows his subject very well but he/she suffers from lack of methodology knowledge and sometimes doesn't distinguish between important and unimportant facts. He/she mostly wants to transfer all his/her knowledge to children and devotes the lessons to explaining and lecturing. Learners are not personally involved or challenged.

There are also teachers who could be called **involvers**. They know the subject and they also have studied methodology. During the lesson they try to involve the learners actively because this is what modern methodology wants them to. They have a clear control over the classroom.

Enablers may be teachers who beside their knowledge of the subject and methodology are aware of how individuals and groups are thinking and feeling in his/her class. He/she encourages pupils in their learning. Such a type probably is the most suitable for learner training.

The last type is a good one for developing learner's ability to be able to take charge of their own affairs. The types cannot be taken for granted as the teachers vary a lot, and each one is an individual struggling to be himself/herself.

The traditional role involves the teacher too much harmfully contra learner's outgrowth. Then the teacher takes too much control of the whole class, makes decisions, does most of the talking, gives answers and in fact is the most active person in the class. Not much is left then for a pupil. The learner just sits there, getting bored, listening to (or ignoring) long explanations which may get uninteresting.

It is crucial for the learner to experience things himself. **The teacher** is just a counsellor, supporter, mentor, instructor and a guide. He/she **is expected to**:

1. Provide learners with the information,
2. Make learners aware of large number of learning strategies,
3. Give guidance to individual pupils,
4. Encourage learners to create,
5. Negotiate with learners,
6. Make pupils come to their own conclusions.

To cope with all the demands mentioned above the teacher has to overcome a lot of dangers. He/she himself may get bored, he may do the same things again and again, he might not be able to bear so many demands, and he may get tired, or suffer from **burn-out effect**. What kinds of **prevention** can be done by teachers?

1. Relax! Teachers expect too much of themselves and of their pupils. If you are realistic in your expectations, you won't be disappointed.
2. Allow some mother-tongue use. Using the second language for several following lessons might be exhausting, and the teacher mustn't look tired. On the other hand children expect mother tongue in some emotional situations.
3. Listen and be adaptable. Be prepared to switch to another activity as soon as you notice that the method chosen doesn't work smoothly in your lesson.
4. Go to a conference or a special seminar for English language teachers. Meeting other colleagues who enjoy their job and have the same problems works as a nice refreshment.
5. Observe your lessons mutually with good colleagues.
6. Give private lessons.
7. Read professional books and magazines to discover new approaches and attitudes.
8. Think positive and don't be too hard on yourself.

Concluding the information mentioned above we can maintain that a successful English course demands not only a constant teacher's hard work but also the learner's diligence and willingness to learn. A good lesson, at first glance, may bring the impression that the teacher doesn't do much leaving much responsibility for pupils. However, looking beneath this illusion we discover that the teacher actually has done a lot. This "lot" covers not only his/her lesson plan and the class management; it covers his/her long-lasting preparation for this demanding job and his/her prior experience. A quotation by Sellar and Yetman might perhaps "raise" our optimism at the end: *"For every person who wants to teach there are approximately thirty people who don't want to learn."*