

# THE SHIFTING ROLES OF EYL TEACHERS IN THE DIGITAL NATIVE ERA: TO ENCOURAGE AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

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## **Abstract**

The advancement of technologies has caused two distinct generations called as Digital Native and Digital Immigrant. This two generation has made a shifting role for teachers in education, not to mention children education. Children nowadays to belong digital native generations, meanwhile not all teachers are. Consequently, as teacher need to realize the need of having applicable strategy to keep up with the technology advancement and fulfill the learners need and preference in learning. Therefore, this article would like to propose ideas on the applicable practices in regard with the technology advancement in Digital Native era with Digital Native learners of children.

**Keywords :** *Technology advancement, Digital Native, Digital Immigration, Shifting roles, Teaching Strategies*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Children learner are often more enthusiastic and lively as learners (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). They want to please the teacher rather than their peer group (Joan Dean, 1984). They will have a goal in doing an activity even if they don't quite understand why or how. However, they also lose interest more quickly and are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find it difficult. Children learner do not find it easy to use language to talk about language; in other words, they do not have the same access as older learners to meta language that teachers can use to explain about grammar or discourse. Children learners often seem less embarrassed than adults at talking in a new language, and their lack of inhibition seems to help them get a more native-like accent. But

these are generalizations which hide the detail of unpack the generalizations to find out what lies underneath as characteristics of children learner as language learners. The important differences do arise from the linguistics, psychological and social development of the learners, and that, as a result, it needs to adjust the way we think about the language we teach and the classroom activities we use. Although conventional language teaching terms like 'grammar' and 'listening' are used in connection with the children learner classroom, understanding of what these mean to the children learner who are learning them may need to differ from how they are understood in mainstream language teaching. (Joan Kang Shin, 2006).

Children learner learning is seen as central to effective teaching. Successful lessons

and activities are those that are tuned to the learning needs of pupils, rather than to the demands of the next text-book unit, or to the interests of the teacher, a learning-centered perspective from 'learned-centered' teaching. Learner-centered teaching places the child at the center of teacher thinking and curriculum planning (Cameroon, 2001).

In fact, today's children learner also represent the first generations to grow up with new technology. Computers, video games, digital music players, video cams, mobile phones, and all the digital devices, such as email, internet, and computer games have become parts of their daily life (Mark Prensky, 2001). With the classroom completed with computer set in helping the teaching and learning will also promote the learning itself. It increases learner motivation and reduce learner anxiety (LeLoup and Ponterio 2003); engage learners (Egbert et al. 2011; Felix 2008); promote learner autonomy (Gonzalez and St. Louis 2012); aid in retention (Mayer 2009; Paivio 2006), particularly where certain criteria—such as when imagery is perceived as strange, funny, or interesting—are met (Isola et al. 2011). In short, new technologies have been such a defining feature in the lives of younger generations that they determine a fundamental change in the way young people communicate, socialize, create and learn. Consequently, this environment and the total volume of their interaction with the technology, they think and process information fundamentally and differently from their teachers. These differences go further and deeper than most teachers aware or realize. As a result,

there is a gap generation between teachers—who represent digital immigrant- and children learners—most of them are digital native- . It reflects the single biggest problem facing education today that Digital Immigrant teachers, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.

Indeed, digital immigrant's teachers apprehend the needs of today's children learners are changing as well as roles of teachers. Consequently, EYL teachers have to face more intense challenges with children learners today than teachers did thirty years ago. EYL teacher should be aware of what roles and effective ways in deal with the unique learners. They encounter in classrooms practice for teachers' role is to adjust with the condition and characteristics of a teaching –learning environment (Entwistle, McCune & Hounsell, 2002). In fact, the conditions for teaching are being rapidly influence d by the use of digital tools for pedagogical purposes, and governmental strategic planning documents express high expectations about the positive effects that technology will have on teaching and learning (Norwegian Public Reports, 2000). This paper aims at giving information on how the shifting roles of teachers in digital native era and the teachers' strategy toward the shifted roles applied in the classroom discourse that is teachers are not to be authoritative ones in the classroom but they are more as controller and facilitator, who provide assistance and encouragement to meet the students need to be more autonomous learner.

### **Digital Immigrant Teachers versus Digital Native Learners**

Digital immigrant ones learn technology for a certain purposes, they learn it because they are demanded to know how the technology is used. For example the students have to operate the power point, because they need it for their presentation or they are forced to be able to find the sources of references for their study in the internet to complete their assignment. In other words, digital immigrant learn technology because they need and use it. Contrary to the digital immigrant, digital native use and live with technology in their life. It is not them who need the technology, but technology requires them to activate it.

In the field of education, digital immigrant teachers do not communicate as what the learners do; learners tend to have their own styles of language usage which is different from what the teachers do. When teachers are not able to accommodate the learners' preference of learning style, learners tend to have no willingness to pay attention on what the teacher said. Teachers are no longer the one who know everything, since learners can have more instant information immediately when they consult to their gadgets. It is evidence that the learners' preference does change the way teachers assume about their way of teaching and the way their learners behaving toward the teaching itself. In some extent, it can be good that the learners become more independent in accommodating their needs, but some reasons their respect to teachers are greatly decreasing.

When learners are more sophisticated in

conquering the technology, they are able to have their own ways of developing the use of the technology itself to accommodate their need and preference in learning. Learners are becoming more independent. However, there is a need to monitor what they are doing in the learning. Teachers are the assigned to develop their competency to keep up with the rapid changing of the technology advancement evolve in the teaching and learning process.

It is true that the content like reading, writing, logical thinking, understanding writings and ideas of the past are important; but now its form are changing, they are no longer presented in thick printed books, but it can now be easily visible in a soft digital copy that is more practical and portable to be carried anywhere. In the contrary, the future content includes digital and technological. But while it includes software, hardware, robotics, nanotechnology, genomics, etc. it also includes the other components like ethics, politics, sociology, languages and other things related to them. The problem is then arise, teachers who are majority of the digital immigrant are not ready to face shifting roles in teaching. They are not capable enough with the technology advancement. Schools can actually have regulations to let learners make use of the computer and any digital devices which already been prepared by the school. But then it will not be applicable anymore when it cannot keep up with the changing and rapid advancement of the technology itself.

### **Shifting Roles of Teacher**

As an early childhood teacher, we will be challenged to find new experiences to share with

children learner, guide children learner, and not to lead them, and move in a direction that interests the child. As the development of the technology applied on every aspects of teaching, it is highly encouraged us to implement developmentally appropriate practices, to establish child-centered programs, and to value the importance of what teacher do. As this new era unfolds, it is a must for teacher to prepare themselves for new roles and responsibilities. The roles of the teacher below are provided how the changes of development of technology on early learner that may also shift the role of the teacher. Those are;

#### 1. Communicator

We are all inherently social beings. Teachers are also social being who seek contact with others and along with this contact, come the exchange of thoughts and ideas (Blasé, J & Blasé, 2006). The communicator role is probably the least developed in our profession. Because of time constraints, one often "just do the job"; and seldom have the opportunity for professional conversations. Therefore, teachers must make an effort to talk to one another on a regular basis. In addition to talking, teacher need to listen. Listening should comprise half of the communication process, but it always seems to be less. By minimizing the use of listening, teachers send hidden messages to the children learners indicating that their thoughts are more important than the learners.

#### 2. Facilitator

As facilitators of learning, teachers need to give up some of the control that accompanies the conventional role of "teacher." (Blasé, J &

Blasé, 2006). The role of facilitator is time consuming and requires additional planning and research hours to seek out the most current information about children learner and learning and to reflect on how educational theory relates to particular programs. Instead of being dispensers of knowledge, teacher should serve as guides to the children learner in our care. Therefore, the facilitator is deeply interested in the classroom environment—how it is set up and how it affects individual children learner.

#### 3. Coach

As coaches, teacher facilitator function as encouragers who give suggestions, provide options, and observe classroom activity (Killion, J., 2001). The children learners come to the teachers when more or new information is required, and teachers become responsible for developing a sense of community and cooperation, while bringing out the best in each player.

#### 4. Model

This role may be the most significant one teacher undertake (Killion, J., 2001). Today's children learners seldom accept something as fact. Because of the multitude of experiences they are exposed to at an early age, they seem to be more sophisticated, more alert, and certainly better able to question adult practices. Therefore, it is vital that teachers, as the adults give examples of what we want them to do. For us to model the kind of behaviors we expect from children learner, we will have to ask ourselves some hard questions, including: "What do I believe?" "How much of what I believe can and should be passed on?" and even, "Do I have

prejudices that come through in hidden ways?"

#### 5. Keeper of the Watch

Teachers watch over the classrooms and children learner to ensure that all is running well and to manage the amount of time spent on certain classroom activities. Let us take a look at how careful teachers have used their time and being good time keeper. They may come up with numbers of questions; who controls it? What does strict adherence to a schedule say to children learner? Are teacher giving them the message, even at this early age, that the quality of work or depth of thought is not as important as finishing the work in a prescribed amount of time? Are we saying that the process of learning must be broken up into time blocks? Do teacher actually discourage some children learner from choosing certain centers because they know that they won't have time to experiment? (Killion, J., 2001).

It can be seen that teachers seldom see the whole picture and have too many roles. Although things may look good at a glance, something may be wrong on the inside. Ask ourselves, "How often do we stop to reflect on why a child has chosen an activity or how he or she came to an end product?" Videotaping classroom activity can give enormous insight into how children learner responded to materials and what events preceded certain behavior.

#### 6. Storyteller

Many children learners come from backgrounds where family stories are not passed on or valued. Even in homes where children learner are given rich learning experiences, quality time and the opportunity to know and

learn from extended family members are limited. If storytelling is a skill that is being lost, perhaps the classrooms are the perfect arena to reintroduce that talent (Larner, M., 2004)

#### 7. Researcher

Early childhood professionals are in a perfect position to help further our knowledge base about educating young children learner (Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & Pallock, J., 2001). Teacher have massive amounts of information about the way children learners learn, but lack knowledge on how particular populations react in a specific environment. These things cannot be determined anywhere except in existing classrooms. Using data from authentic situations will help build new bodies of knowledge.

In order to envision new roles, it is essential that teacher free themselves from old stereotypes that might limit what teacher do with and for children learners. The concepts of teacher and caregiver present a picture of one who is in control; of one who dispenses knowledge; and of one who serves as the central figure in a program. In truth, the central figure of any program should be the child. Therefore, teachers must continually re-examine and re-define what teachers do and how teacher see themselves.

The roles identified here may rule as the impact of the technology advancement. As the teacher, that the children learners who have been taken as digital native learner may have different ways in learning both in the class and outside the class, meanwhile, as the teacher who have been included as the immigrant of digital era may lead

into confusion and the feel of being left with a significant differences to the children learners in which they have adopt themselves and tend to be more autonomous in learning.

### **Teaching Strategy toward the Shifting**

Regarding on discussion above, children learners are more autonomous in learning. But when children learners use technology, teachers often think about demonstrating, troubleshooting, or monitoring turn taking. They tend to give less attention to interacting with children learner to booster positive learning approaches and increase children learners' knowledge. On the other hand, exemplifying education using technology by practically apply the technology through active engagement, group participation, interactivity and feedback, and connecting technology in with the real-life contexts can help teachers to be gradually digital native ones. Also, by doing so, children learners are able to meet the established learning goals more often, work more effectively , and use higher thinking level than when the learners are assigned to work on the problem-solving alone without the teacher' assistance (Barbuto et al. 20003; Yelland & Masters 2007).

The following are teacher's strategies used in regard to the role shifting in the digital era:

1. Supplement activities with visuals, realia, and movement

Children learners tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy. In addition, children learner are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in the physical and the tangible, as Scott and

Ytreberg (1990) describe their understanding comes more easily by activating their senses.

2. Move from Activity to Activity

Children learners have short attention spans. For young children, it is a good idea to move quickly from activity to activity. Do not spend more than 10 minutes on any one activity because children learners tend to become bored easily. As children get older, their ability to concentrate for longer periods of time increases. When teachers mix up the face of the class and the types of activities used, children learners will be more likely to stay focused on the lesson, thereby increasing the amount of language learning. (Scott, Wendy A. and Ytreberg, Lisbeth, 1990).

3. Teach in Themes

When the teachers plan variety of activities, it is important to have them interrelated in order to support the language learning process. Moving from one activity to others that are related in content and language helps to recycle the language and reinforce children learners' understanding and use of it. However, moving from activity to activity when the activities are not related can make it easy to lose the focus of the class. If children learners are presented with a larger context to use English to learn and communication, then achievement of language objectives should come more naturally. Thematic units, which are a series of lessons revolving around the same topic or subject, can create a broader context and communication rather than on language structure.

4. Use stories and contexts familiar to the children learners

When choosing materials or themes to use, it is important that you find ones that are appropriate for children learner based on their language proficiency and what is of interest to them. Because children learners are just beginning to learn content and stories in their native language in school and are still developing cognitively, they may have limited knowledge and experiences in the world. This means that the contexts that teacher use when teaching English, which may be a completely new and foreign language, should be contexts that are familiar to them. Use of stories and contexts that they have experiences with their L1 could help these children learners connect a completely new language with the background knowledge they already have. Teachers could take a favorite story in the L1 and translate it into English for children learner learners or even teach the language based on situations that are found in the native country, especially if the materials the teachers have represent English-Speaking environments that are unfamiliar to the children learners.

5. Established Classroom Routines in English

Children learners function well within a structured environment and enjoy repetition of certain routines and activities. Having basic routines in the classroom can help to manage children learners. Notice that the communication is real and that a routine has been established. Once children learners become fluent with certain interactions, as in the example, you can

begin introducing more language into the daily routines.

6. Collaborate with other teachers in your school

As mentioned in (Teach in Theme) it is useful to find out what children learner learners are learning in their other classes, in their native language. Collaborate with other teachers in the classroom to make the learning experience richer for the children learner learners. Connect the lesson to the topics, activities, and stories the children learner are learning in their native language by planning relate thematic units that parallel the learning in other subjects. Since children learner learn language better when it is connected to their real life. It is a good idea to consider what else they are learning in a school day. Most children learner's lives revolve around home and school. So try to coordinate with other teachers to find out what is relevant to children learners; then add English instruction on top of that.

In regards to first and second strategies, teacher needs to consider the activity in terms of its variation, pace, media, and duration. For example in the activity, teacher can start with something that involve the whole class and then gradually assigned the activity for the smaller group of children. It is possibly, at the end of the activity, teacher can assigned individual children to complete the activity on their own. Relates with technology, teacher can use the video for example teacher want to introduce new vocabularies relates to body part, instead of looking of teacher moving and singing the song, teacher can display the video and let the children

imitate what they see on the video. Then, teacher can guide them repeatedly sing alone and move their body. Here, their senses are activated. They watch, listen, and move their body. Still related to the first strategy, that children having short attention spans, the activity done by teacher should consider the time limit, chance the activity at least every 10 minutes. It means that teacher do not need to complete the activity but teacher need to stop before the children get bored. As soon as the target learning can achieve, teacher can move to the other activity which have a little bit higher level of difficulties.

For the third and fourth strategies, teacher can choose the theme related to the stories there is going to be delivered to the children for example, when teacher want to deliver the stories connected to the animals, at the beginning teacher, can introduce kinds of animals which are going to be presented in the story by using flashcard or listening to the sound of the animals from audio and let the children learner predict or guess what animal it is. And then teacher can play the slide which represent the sound, so the children get the complete understanding about the animals. By doing so, teacher are preparing the children for the story they are going to have. The story can be presented through short videos which can be found on CDs or online media. Teacher should emphasize on the values related to children emotional development. While playing the short videos teacher can ask comprehension question and relate them to the children life. For example, if there is a quiet long and complicated sentences teachers can simplify it. So that children comprehend the message of

the stories.

The last two strategies will be much for affective when teacher can relate the language use in the fourth and fifth strategies into the children routines. When teacher simplify the language use it can directly be implemented into the classroom routines to strengthen the use of English. For better understanding, teacher can also relate the language use such as science, math, physics, or even history.

In short, shifting roles does not mean completely changing the role of teachers, but it refers the ability of teacher to apply strategies to connect among roles with the advancement of technology to apply in teaching and learning process in the class. In fact, not all schools are equipped with Computer Assisted Learning Device (CALD). What teacher can do is to maximize the use of simple technology products such as, television, computer, cell phone, or even an old tape recorder to be used in teaching and learning activities. The ultimate goal of doing the above strategies is to prepare the children learner to be more autonomous learner.

## **CONCLUSION**

Relates on technology, teaching English to children learners is more challenging. Teacher must understand the learning and the learners need and adjust their experience on technology and teaching accordingly. They need to be enthusiastic, supportive, open innovative, and willing to keep on learning. Teacher must make conscientious decisions about selecting appropriate strategies and about establishing and maintaining a positive and orderly classroom



environment. Using a variety of activities and teaching aids and assessing children learners appropriately will increase teacher's effectiveness. Reflecting on their teaching (what works, what does not work, how children learners respond to lesson and activities, etc.) will enable teachers to prioritize their children learners' needs and will promote the teachers' continues professional development and improvement.

The shifted roles applied in the classroom discourse that is teachers are not to be authoritative ones in the classroom but they are more as controller and facilitator. This shifted roles can effectively implemented through:

1. Supplementing activities with visuals, realia, and movement
2. Moving from activity to activity
3. Teaching in theme
4. Using stories and context familiar to the children learners
5. Establishing classroom routines in English, and
6. Collaborating with other teacher in classroom discourse

Based on the explanation above, relates to the goal of teaching learning for children that is to prepare children to be more autonomous learner, step by step, in children learning education, they applying the Montessori Education as the way to teach children learners. Montessori Education is one of way to build the characteristic and needs of children learners based on "what they want to do" because we do not teach "What to think" but "How to think".

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