The Role of Counselling in English Language Teaching

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Abstract - Counselling plays a significant role in bringing out a remarkable change in an individual’s personal and professional life. It has entered a number of domains including education. As human problems are mushrooming day by day in this hi-tech world, there is a dire need for finding solutions to those problems. It is counselling that comes to one’s aid to solve one’s problems that are psychological and personal. In English language teaching and learning too, there are multiple problems encountered by teachers and students as well. This paper discusses how counselling is indispensable to English Language Teaching (ELT) for finding solutions to problems faced by English language learners. Exploring the relevance of counselling to ELT, it also seeks to highlight the benefits of integrating it with ELT. It brings out the need for introspection of English language teachers to provide counselling to students. It enumerates various counselling skills, and presents an account of problem-solving method in ELT and eight approaches to counselling.

Key words - Counselling, ELT; Introspection; Problem-Solving Method; Fully Functioning Person; Self-Autonomy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The results of the twelfth standard public examinations were published in Tamil Nadu, India on May 9, 2013. Eighty eight percent of students passed in the examinations. According to the press reports, soon after the announcement of results, ten students attempted to commit suicide, and some of them were saved. Even some of the students who passed in the examinations were alleged to have attempted suicide. A student who scored one thousand and sixty three marks out of two thousand was reported to have committed suicide. The reasons are said to be that they did not score marks either according to their expectations or as expected by their parents. It has become a recurring event in the recent years, and it is only a revelation of the tip of the iceberg of stress and problems faced by students. A challenging question that appears in one’s mind is whether education today has truly pruned and prepared the students for facing their life in future. The answer seems to be highly negative when one looks into the problems of students. At this juncture, it is to be remembered where there are problems, there is a need for counselling.

Though counselling is not professionally practised by all human beings, it is part and parcel of everyone’s life. It is true that a professional counsellor, as defined by New Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005), is “a person who has been trained to advise people with problems, especially personal problems” (p. 347). However, counselling can be perceived in every walk of life in one form or the other. Having a start at home, it branches out into all other spheres. Parents counsel their children; the elders counsel the youngsters; the teachers counsel the students; the religious gurus imbued with spiritual wisdom counsel their disciples; and thus the list goes on and on. In today’s educational environment, students face multiple exigent problems. As English has become an international language, there is a tremendous need for learning it in this globalized world. In this regard, a number of students encounter scores of difficulties in learning English language. Hence, apposite counselling for students by teachers would definitely enable those students to get relieved from those difficulties and to learn English without any fear or hesitation.

2. MEANING OF COUNSELLING

The New Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005) defines counselling as “professional advice about a problem” (p. 347). Counselling refers to “professional guidance of the individual by the use of standard psychological methods such as collecting case-history data, using various techniques of personal interview, and testing interests and aptitudes” (“Counselling”, 2004). The counsellor’s goal is to orient the individual toward opportunities that can best guarantee fulfilment of his personal needs and aspirations (“Counselling”, 2004). According to Donald A. Biggs (2000), in psychology, counselling referred to a ‘scientifically respectabe’ way of dispensing personal, social and educational information or advice. In the early twentieth century, it had an allusion to a generic kind of helping relationship that included good advice. Teachers, friends and ministers were involved in counselling or helping. After the World War II, definitions of counselling were derived from professional orientations (pp. ix-x). In ELT, the teachers are required to be good counsellors in order to succeed in the mission of making
the students learn English. Even though they are not specialized in psychology or counselling, they should have the basic skills of counselling in order to make the target students proficient in communication skills in English.

3. THE GOALS OF COUNSELLING

A lesson on counselling in the book entitled Formation of Youth (2008) brings out essential ideas, which enable a client to discover for himself his strengths and weaknesses. Counselling aims not only at helping the people understand and accept themselves as “they are”, but also at helping individuals reach a state of self-autonomy (pp. 223-224). The goals of counselling are mainly of two types—immediate and long-range. The immediate goal is to obtain relief from the problems. The long-range goal is to make the client a ‘fully-functioning person’ (p. 237).

4. THE NECESSITY FOR COUNSELLING IN EDUCATIONAL REALM

4.1. Why Counselling for Students?
There are multiple reasons why counselling is required for today’s students. Some of the most notable reasons are discussed below.

4.1.1. Commercialization of Education and its Drastic Impacts on Students
The commercialization of education has become a recent trend in India, and it has led to an enormous increase of private schools, public and private universities. Commercialized education means that students are paying more for education, and commercialized educational institutions are profit-oriented. The students of lower classes cannot have an easy access to education because of its higher cost (Arvind, 2011). As rightly observed by Yashpal, in India, there is mushrooming of private engineering and management colleges, which have largely become mere business entities (Babu, 2011, p. 7). The study made by Narayan (2005) authenticates the same view that “…the bulk of the education sector in India, especially higher education has been privatized on the sly without much of a debate!” (p. 17). In the West, particularly in the US, the private providers of higher education are philanthropic and charitable, and thus they are service-oriented. On the contrary, the private higher education institutions in India are allowed as a matter of routine and they are profit-oriented (Narayan, 2005, p. 17).

A survey of ASSOCHAM (The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India) reveals an increase of 160% in the cost of sending a child to school in India, particularly in the last eight years. It is reported that more than three crore children in India study in private schools, and annual school expenses for a single child excluding the tuition fees rose from Rs. 25,000 in 2000 to Rs. 65,000 in 2008. However, the average annual income of fairly well off parents did not increase more than 30% in same period. A survey made among 2000 working parents across nine Indian cities namely Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, Dehradun, Pune, Bangalore, Kolkata, Chennai and Chandigarh says sixty-five percent of respondents claimed that more than half of their salary was spent on their children’s education. Fifty percent of parents felt that schooling was a strain on their family budget. Sixty percent respondents affirmed that education had become a business in India (“Costly school education in India”, n.d.).
The reports given above showcase clearly that it is privatization of education, which has paved the way for commercialization of education that has exerted drastic impacts on people. The main motto of majority of the private schools and colleges is to make an enormous amount of money. Therefore, they would like to attract maximum number of admissions to their educational institutions. In order to accomplish this aim, one of the ways they adopt is to make the students score higher marks in examinations. They do not concentrate much on students’ language skills, life skills, emotional skills, analytical skills and personality development that are imperative to face their future, and on moral values that are necessary to lead an ethical and good life. In other words, they concentrate much less on the holistic development of students. Therefore, students encounter many problems in their lives.

4.1.2. Too Much Focus on Marks and Lack of Concern over Students’ Holistic Personality
According to Dutta (2013), after the twelfth standard public exams were over in Tamil Nadu, the career counsellors were completely occupied with attending frenzied calls from parents. It was reported that eighty percent of parents asked the counsellors to guide their children into becoming doctors and engineers. Ragini Jain, one of the career counselors, stated that parents wanted their children to become doctors and engineers without taking into consideration the aptitude of their children. In counselors’ view, children’s career is more of status symbol for parents. According to Om Goswami, another career counselor, a girl had scored only 55% in her twelfth exam and yet her parents forced her to become a doctor.

In fact, one of the serious diseases that have infected the minds of many parents in the State of Tamil Nadu in the recent years is craving for making their children either engineers or doctors. One of the primary reasons why many parents are obsessed with the thought of either engineering or medical field is that they are oblivious of the ocean of job opportunities available in other domains other than engineering and medical fields. The parents, after the schooling of their children, do not often permit their children to take a course in higher education in accordance with their wish. Right from the start of schooling, the thought of engineering or medicine is imprinted in the minds of many children. What is required for admission to engineering and medical colleges is very high marks in the twelfth standard public examination. The marks become primary and the actual skills become secondary.
In India, the marks in the tenth and twelfth standard public examinations are believed to be quite important, and the marks in the twelfth standard are blindly believed to decide the students’ future. Therefore, when students come to these classes, they are asked to focus only on studies and on obtaining higher marks. For instance, certain schools of Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu in India are known for making the students score very high marks in the tenth and twelfth public examinations. Therefore, quite a lot of parents from different parts of the State of Tamil Nadu compete to send their children to these schools and are ready to spend any amount of money, believing that their sons and daughters would score excellent marks especially in twelfth standard and thereby they will be able to get seats in engineering or medical colleges. It is quite manifest in the news report given by Ananth (2013) in The Hindu which states that parents thronged the state rank-producing ‘Super Schools’ in Namakkal for admission into Plus One which is also called the eleventh standard. It is reported that parents from various districts waited in long queues from as early as 2 a.m. with the hope of getting their children admitted to the ‘Super Schools’.

These schools, on the contrary, have no regard for students and parents. That is why, K.R. Nandhakumar, the State General Secretary of Tamil Nadu Nursery, Primary, Matriculation, Higher Secondary and CBSE Schools Association, as revealed in M. K. Ananth’s news report (2013) on “Super Schools should be transparent, change attitude”, insisted on the “need for (Namakkal) Super Schools to be transparent and change their attitude and approach towards parents and students.” According to Nandhakumar, on one hand, “Private schools in Namakkal are known for consecutively producing many state toppers in the Class 12 Board examinations,” and on the other hand, “…they have a step motherly attitude towards parents by closing their gates to the parents, not respecting them and fleecing them with exorbitant fees that are manifold times more than the fees prescribed by the government. Parents are also not allowed to see their wards when they wanted to ensure that they were doing well”.

Since these schools often produce State toppers, many parents would like their children to study in these schools, but these schools pay more attention on students’ exam results and thereby on making exorbitant money. Their concern is not development of students’ holistic personality. Students studying in such schools become subject to too much stress caused by excessive focus given on studies. That is why, in reaction to the death of a student named Mohanraj in one of the super schools in Namakkal, Nandhakumar claimed that “the schools will also be urged to appoint a psychiatrist and adequate counsellors (based on the student strength) to monitor students and interact with those who are lagging behind in education and in their routine” (Ananth, 2013).

4.1.3. Wrong Measures to Educate the Students

One might wonder how students from the private schools, particularly those in places like Namakkal, Tamil Nadu, usually score high marks. When one begins to scrutinize how students are made to get higher marks, the information one gets is quite deplorable. Mostly, intelligent students are admitted into these schools. Those students can fare well in studies even without much help of teachers. Furthermore, the same subject is taught for two years. That is, when students are in the eleventh standard, they are not taught the syllabus meant for the eleventh standard, rather, the twelfth standard syllabus is taught. When they come to the twelfth, again the same syllabus is being taught. This is what happens to the tenth standard students too. Another tragic thing is that the tenth and twelfth standard students studying in these schools are completely imprisoned in the schools. Students should get up early in the morning and start studying. After the breakfast, the study hours continue until they go to school. After spending the time from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. in the classes, they are asked to stay in school for special classes, followed by study hours, which, with a little break for bathing and supper, continue until students go to bed. The most pathetic situation is that those students cannot go for any festivals and celebrations or any other entertainments. Classes are conducted even on Sundays and government holidays. The students are turned into mere mark-producing machines. This is what happens in most of the private schools. Students from such schools do score good marks, but lose their creativity, emotional balance and other life skills that are indispensable to face their life. One of the biggest tragedies of such an imbalanced education is that students from such schools, which serve as merely mark-producing industries, are not able to face even small failures or problems in life. Those students depend upon only their memory, and like a computer or machine, they reproduce what is fed in their mind or what they have memorized. They never exercise their mind to think creatively and do greater things. In terms of counselling, they do not become fully functioning persons.

4.1.4. Counselling as a Significant Need for Students

An interesting TV programme entitled “Nerpada Pesu” was broadcast on May 9, 2013 on Tamil TV channel Pathiya Thalaimurai wherein four experts namely Dr. Kalanithi, Former Vice Chancellor of Anna University, Chennai, Dr. Malathi, an educationist, Dr. Anbudurai, a psychiatrist, and Dr. Vijayan, correspondent of Zion Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Chennai, discussed and debated on +2 exam results issued on that day. They explained why some students — both those who pass and those who fail — decide to put an end to their lives, enumerating various problems involved in educational system. Some of their important views concerning the problems of students are the following:

- The educational system, as held by Dr. Malathi, has failed to make the students self-autonomous and fully
functioning persons. It has many drawbacks and makes the students concentrate too much on marks alone. There is pressure right from the top. The school authorities pressurize the teachers to produce hundred percent results and make the students score high marks. They hike the salary of teachers if only they produce the results, and they are not concerned about the development of other skills of the students. Furthermore, the number of students in every classroom is very high. Therefore, the teachers are unable to pay individual attention to each student. The management authorities, the parents and the students are very much obsessed with marks alone, and least focus is given on the overall development of the students. In this way, the educational system has failed to make the students accept even small failures. That is why, some students go to the extent of committing suicide. Furthermore, too much concentration is given only on some subjects like engineering and medicine. The humanities and many other areas are neglected. Value education is absent. School and college system has become a commercial centre. That is why, students have a lot of stress about their life and future.

According to the report of Dr. Kalanithi, there is no policy in the present educational system to engender the holistic development of students. Many students, who took 200 marks out of 200 in Mathematics in the twelfth standard, have failed after having joined the college. The main reason is their dependence upon their memory alone. The entire future of the students is decided by the exams held for six or eight days. This system is not correct. Instead, continuous assessment is very much required. Furthermore, the holistic development of students that includes co-curricular activities and other club activities is very much required. Students who come from schools in Namakkal get easily seats in engineering colleges because of their high marks. However, after coming to college, their output is much less, because they lack overall development and life skills.

In the view of Dr. Anbudurai, the students need to be given freedom to choose the subject they want to study. They should, before choosing a subject, examine themselves whether they will be capable of studying the subject with success. Attention should be paid not on mere pass percentage but on the quality of the pass percentage and also on employability, soft skills, right decision-making and the like. This should be practised right from the beginning of school education. The students should be given proper counselling in this regard.

There is a need for emphasis not on marks but on the holistic development. This view was stressed by Dr. Vijayan.

This discussion of the experts divulges the fact there are various problems in the educational system, which pave the way for multiple problems and stress of the students. At times, some students, who are unable to accept even small failures, commit suicide. Therefore, counselling is pivotal to make the students understand themselves, their potentials and worth, face their life bravely and live out their life meaningfully. It is necessary to make the students fully-functioning persons.

4.2. Why Counselling in ELT?

There is a need for counselling in English Language Teaching because many learners find it more difficult to learn English. Based on several years of experience in teaching English mostly for students from vernacular medium schools and for the first generation students, and based on participation in national and international conferences on ELT, a study on students’ difficulties in learning English was made, and consequently, several problems were identified. Some of them are discussed below.

4.2.1. Fear of Students

The biggest problem, which every learner of English has to overcome, is the fear of speaking English. This fear stems from the fear of making mistakes in speaking. That is, the fear of making mistakes impels the learners to become nervous and to lose their confidence in speaking English fluently (Marcelo, 2012). This problem is faced by the Indian students too. Students are unable to learn English because of their fear of speaking and writing it wrongly. In other words, they feel afraid that if they commit mistakes in speaking English, the listeners will mock at them or will form a negative opinion about them. Thus, they begin to lose their interest in learning English.

4.2.2. Inferiority Complex

When the students from vernacular-medium schools face the students from English medium schools, and when they find them speaking English fluently, they develop a sense of inferiority complex, which eventually prevents them from learning English. That is, the students from vernacular-medium schools tend to feel that they are inferior to the students from English medium schools.

4.2.3. First Generation Students

Today, a number of first generation students have begun to go to schools and colleges. They have English language-learning atmosphere neither at home nor in their surroundings. Most often, the only place where they could practise English is the classroom. Some teachers use bilingual method to teach English. In such case, the students’ exposure to speak in English becomes minimal.

4.2.4. Hurdle from Peer Group

Some students do have flare for learning English. As directed by teachers, they would like to speak and practise English language with their own classmates or friends. At times, some of their own classmates or friends attempt to spoil their interest by asking unwanted questions and by mocking at them.

4.2.5. Lack of Awareness

Some students do not realize the importance of communication skills in English. They are unaware of the competitions and the challenges that are awaiting them in
their future, and of the requirements and skills that they should have in order to get good placements. These are some of the problems faced by the students in the process of learning English language in India. The immediate goal of counselling in ELT should be to make the students get relieved from their fear, nervousness and other problems explained above. The long-range goal of counselling in ELT should be to make the students confident and proficient in communication skills in English. The students should be made to become self-autonomous in communicating in English.

5. THE PROBLEMS FACED BY TEACHERS

In the present system of education, it is a highly challenging mission to serve as committed teachers. Earlier, the relationship between teachers and students was very healthy and lasting long. The teachers enabled the students to develop social skills and moral values. On the contrary, today, “with parents and schools giving priority to academic performance of students, the student-teacher relationship has taken a backseat...teachers blame it on the pressure of the education system” (“Academic pressure deals teacher-student ties a deadly blow”, 2012). Furthermore, today, teachers, particularly English language teachers in Indian private educational institutions are not freely permitted to do their primary job of teaching and forming the students for a better and healthy society. Instead, in addition to their heavy teaching schedule, they are profoundly loaded with special classes and clerical and non-teaching works, which breed nothing but enormous amount of stress and burden to teachers and students.

Another biggest problem is the strength of the class. Those days, teachers were asked to do only the duty of teaching. Their work was much less. In colleges, for example, the strength of the students in undergraduate classes was between 20 and 30, and in postgraduate classes not more than 20. Therefore, the teachers were able to read a lot and update their knowledge, and they had a lot of time to spend for every individual student. Thus, they were competent to maintain quality in education. As a result, there was no need to talk about quality. Conversely, today, the number of students, both at schools and colleges, ranges between 60 and 75 in every class. There is a rapid increase in teachers’ academic and clerical work, and in the number of activities in private educational institutions. Consequently, the quality has drastically come down. They talk about quality education, which has become a myth in the present educational system. In the name of enhancing the quality of education, what has been actually enhanced is the work-pressure of teachers and students, which has resulted in the increase of their physical and mental problems. Thus, teachers are discouraged to pay individual attention to every student and they have no time to inculcate life skills and social values in him/her.

In the past, “the teachers were treated as a God (Guru Brahma)” (Majumdar, 2011, p. 72). Nowadays, in many private educational institutions, the teachers are not treated with dignity and respect. They are treated as mere slaves. The employers’ mind is always preoccupied with profit. To maximize the profit, the employers try to extract maximum work from teachers, but they pay very poor salary to them. The remuneration drawn by teachers at unaided private schools and colleges is not at all commensurate with the amount of work done by them. In those private unaided schools and colleges where somewhat descent pay is given, the teachers become subject to enormous work-pressure, stress and often ill-treatment. The employers are least concerned about the welfare and health of teachers. They do not take into account the problems and difficulties faced by teachers, and nor do they take any measures to solve their problems. The reason is that relationship between employers and teachers at many private educational institutions is like master-slave relationship. If anyone raises questions, he/she will be chucked out of the institution, or he/she will encounter several problems in the workplace.

Another predicament faced by teachers is that students, owing to the influence of media and modern gadgets, have become more disobedient, disrespectful, irritable and aggressive in today’s society. Nowadays, some students have the courage of even murdering their own teachers. It is obvious in the news report given by R. Sujatha (2012). According to the report, a teacher was stabbed to death by a 15-year-old student at St. Mary’s Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School, Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu. The boy did not fare well in his studies. It was the practice of teachers to write remarks in the diary about the performance of the students. The teacher had made notes about his poor show. This had angered the boy. During the police enquiry, the boy said he had watched the Hindi film Agneepath and was influenced by the hero who took revenge on those who falsely implicated his father.

When students do something notorious or commit something wrong, teachers are unable to control them or even advise them to mend their manners because of the recent laws in favour of students. As held by S. Srinivas Reddy, correspondent of a school, “when teachers reprimand children in schools, parents come to the school the next day and complain about the same. There are instances where parents have used abusive language against teachers in public. Children learn from their parents and they think that it is okay to disrespect them” (“Academic pressure deals teacher-student ties a deadly blow”, 2012). Hence, teachers begin to ignore such students and their life, and they concentrate only on academic performance.

With all these problems, it is not an easy task for teachers to form the student community for a better society. In this context, English language teaching becomes doubly difficult, because on one hand, English language teachers have their own problems discussed above, and on the other hand, the students have their own problems, which have already been discussed. Despite all these problems, English language teachers, on their part, should take effort...
to counsel the students and should enable them develop their English language skills and thereby confidence and life skills.

6. THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING COUNSELLING WITH ELT

The following are some of the benefits of integrating counselling with English Language Teaching:
- The English language teachers’ proper counselling will help the students overcome their fear of learning English.
- It will motivate them to learn English very fast.
- It will create in them self-confidence that is very essential for personal growth and for developing communication skills.
- It will make them have self-esteem, which will promote a positive attitude towards themselves to learn the target language without any hesitation.
- Finally, it will help them find out their potentials, and will make them self-actualized persons.

The English language teachers should encourage the students to speak in English. They should not discourage the students if they commit mistakes while speaking in English. In other words, they should focus on fluency rather than accuracy in the beginning stage. They should create a lot opportunities for them to speak in English.

7. INTROSPECTION NEEDED FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS BEFORE COUNSELLING THE STUDENTS

The English language teachers, who would like to advise or counsel the students concerning the development of communication skills in English, should, first of all, have a kind of introspection or self-examination about themselves. The following questions will enable everyone to have a better introspection.
- Who am I?
- What is expected of me as an English language teacher?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses?
- What efforts do I make to strengthen my strengths and weaken my weaknesses?
- What are the hurdles that prevent the students from learning English?
- To what extent, do I take interest to know and understand the problems of students in learning English?
- What are the strategies do I adopt to make my students learn English?
- To what extent am I committed to my teaching?

When the English language teachers reflect on these questions and answer them, they can become good counsellors too. As pointed out by Manthei (1997), effective counsellors are those who continually strive to know themselves better. Counsellors must be committed to personal growth (p. 38).

8. THE COUNSELLING SKILLS

Heap (2004), a professional counselling expert, lists the following as the important counselling skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The counsellor must</th>
<th>So that the client can</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen</td>
<td>Develop his/her thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not judge</td>
<td>Feel safe and respected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pay attention</td>
<td>Know you care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accept the client’s feelings</td>
<td>Know he/she is not being judged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the client’s world and feelings</td>
<td>Know you are with him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about the client</td>
<td>Get the best help possible</td>
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As regards ELT, teachers are the counsellors, and students are the clients. The English language teachers, by developing the skills mentioned above, can counsel their students to learn English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counsellor should not</th>
<th>This will make the client</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve the problem for the client</td>
<td>Dependant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give advice</td>
<td>Dependant or hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belittle the clients’ concern</td>
<td>Withdraw or attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid painful areas</td>
<td>Be frustrated</td>
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Besides having these skills, the English language teachers, in order to be good counsellors, should have the following qualities too:
- They should be humane.
- They should be empathetic.
- They should be patient when the students commit mistakes while attempting to speak in English.
- They should identify the real situation of a student for a particular way of behaving.
- They should reward the students for the efforts they make to speak in English, for example, by the way of appreciation, etc.
- They should have a follow-up of the students’ performance.
- They should have friendly attitude towards students.

9. PROBLEM-SOLVING METHOD IN ELT

As mentioned by Munro, Manthei and Small in the introduction to their book, Counselling: The Skills of Problem-Solving (1989), in counselling, there are various models of problem-solving. They claim that among those models, the five-step approach of Dixon and Glover is very simple and useful. This approach involves the following factors:
- Problem definition
- Goal selection
- Strategy selection
The teachers should first identify the problems faced by the students in learning English. Then, they should set a goal to fulfill their task of making the target students speak in English. To fulfill this goal, the teachers must select the right strategies, and should orient the students toward those opportunities that can best guarantee fulfillment of their personal aspiration of acquiring English. Then, they must make sure that the selected strategies are implemented. Finally, they must make an evaluation of their entire performance.

10. EIGHT APPROACHES TO COUNSELLING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In the introduction to his book, Dictionary of Counseling (2000), Donald A. Biggs identifies nine approaches to counselling according to their goals. Of them, eight approaches that are easily applicable to ELT are the following:

- **Adlerian:** to provide encouragement to develop socially useful goals.
- **Existential:** to help clients identify obstacles that block their freedom.
- **Person-centred:** to provide a climate for clients to engage in self-exploration.
- **Gestalt:** to help clients gain awareness of their present experiences.
- **Transactional analysis:** to help clients examine early decisions in their lives and to make new decisions.
- **Behaviour:** to help clients learn more effective behaviours.
- **Rational-emotive:** to help clients apply the rational method for solving the personal problems.
- **Reality:** to help clients evaluate their present behaviours in terms of their effectiveness in meeting goals. (p. xvi)

These approaches can be applied to English language teaching and learning. As regards the first approach, many students are hesitant to speak in English because they are not encouraged. The teachers have the responsibility to encourage the students particularly the slow learners, and they must help them set the goal of learning English within a particular period of time. In the context of existential approach to counselling, the students have a lot of problems and blocks that prevent them from learning English. Some of those problems have been already discussed. The teachers, with a continuous observation of the target students, should find out their problems. They should make those students recognize those problems so that they may, in future, take measures to overcome them. To make the students identify the barriers to their learning of English, the teachers, as suggested by the person-centred approach, should create a climate for the students to engage in self-exploration, so that their actual problems in learning the English language can be identified by them. This would consequently enable the teachers concerned to help the students to get freed from their problems. The Gestalt approach involves helping the clients gain awareness of their present experiences. This approach too is relevant to English Language Teaching (ELT), wherein the clients are the students. The teachers should take the role of the counselors and should make the students aware of various opportunities and facilities that are available at present to learn English.

The teachers, as pointed out by the approach of transactional analysis, should help the students examine their early decisions regarding learning of English. After having helped the students to get rid of their nervousness and fear of learning English, the teachers should help them form new decisions (for example: to spend half an hour to one hour every day to learn English; to speak in English everyday at least for fifteen minutes; to learn five new English words everyday; to read English books and newspapers regularly, etc.). Through behavior approach, the clients are helped to learn effective behaviours. Applying this approach to ELT, the teachers can help the students to change those behaviours, which serve as obstacles to their learning of English. As counsellors, the teachers should enable the students to learn effective behaviours, which would help them improve their communication in English.

The rational-emotive approach involves helping the clients to apply the rational method for solving the personal problems. To English language teachers, it would mean that they should, based on their experience and depending on the need and ability of the students, suggest various useful methods to the students to learn English. When the students have learned various strategies of learning the English language, they should be helped by the teachers to apply the relevant methods and suggestions to solve their problems of learning English.

Finally, the approach of reality is also relevant to ELT. This approach enables clients to evaluate their present behaviours in order to find out to what extent those behaviours are effective in meeting the goals. In the context of ELT, the goal of students is to develop their communication skills in English. In this sense, teachers should help students evaluate their present behaviours to find out to what extent they are effective in meeting their goal of learning English. They should also make them aware as to what extent they should develop their communication skills in English to face the competitive world.

CONCLUSION

The various points that have been discussed so far reveal that the English language teachers are required to develop their counselling skills in order to accomplish their responsibility of making the target students acquire communication skills in English. Furthermore, the
teachers’ right counselling to students at right time would enable them to discover their hidden potentials and make them develop those potentials. Thus, the students, in accordance with their interest, can be made to prove their mettle in different fields.

REFERENCES


Author’s Biography

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