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AN ANALYSIS UPON IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: A REVIEW

AN INTERNATIONALLY INDEXED PEER REVIEWED & REFEREED JOURNAL

An Analysis upon Importance of Effective Strategies of Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language: A Review

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Abstract – Teacher is the pivot of civilization` as said by Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, every teacher has the primary goal to shape the future of his/her learners. His/her role begins with the student in particular and culminates in society in general. In order to attain perfection in any given field one need a guide, teacher or a coach to mentor in the stages of learning. More specifically the teacher of English has more responsibilities on his/her part to teach the content in respect of grammar and pronunciation for accuracy and fluency body language in respect of decency and to train the students in a committed and devoted manner and transform into competent students to face challenges in career capture and life settlement. The present paper discusses the different approaches in language teaching and defines different learning strategies and emphasizes the importance of learning strategies. This paper concludes with the best learning strategies adopted by the good learners in learning English as a foreign or second language.

No one can dispute the assertive position of English as a communicative language. It is enjoying status of medium of instruction as well as compulsory subject in Pakistan. But it is facing numerous problems in learning. The failure rate of the students is increasing which is deplorable. The failure in this subject means the failure in the public examinations. The concerns about the situation can be observed by all the stakeholders. Many factors have been indicated that are responsible for creating obstacles in learning English. Results point out that students of the context desire to learn English but numerous factors stand on their way of progress that need to be eradicated for the better future of this language.

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INTRODUCTION

Every educational system has certain objectives which aim at bringing about desirable changes in pupil. In order to bring about those changes, the institutions arrange learning experience. The success of learning can be judged only in terms of the changes brought about by this experience. This is a learning experience and evaluation.

Thanks to the globalization in all the fields, it necessitates the learning of a language which is international. Undoubtedly, English has become a world language rather than the language of only the English speaking countries such as the UK and the USA because the number of the people who use English as a means of communication exceeds much more than the number of the people who speak it as their mother tongue. In the case of English in India, more than two centuries, India has been directly and indirectly had influence of the language , English on all the fields, such as Education, Medical Science, etc.

Text materials relating to the subjects of Science, Engineering and Technology as also Medicine are available only in English. Moreover, all over India, there is no single language to unite the whole country. Since, in India, several languages are spoken and also one set of people are reluctant to learn one common Indian language, we have to borrow a new non-Indian language.

Considering the above facts, learning English, the universal language, as a Second Language, becomes inseparable branch as also unavoidable in Indian education system.

This is a study of the contribution made by second language learning experience to the professional knowledge and beliefs of teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). The study was motivated by the author's noting, over many years of teaching ESL to adults and of educating ESL teachers, that there is no requirement that such teachers have any proficiency in a second language, or any experience in second language learning. An investigation of the

role of second language experience of ESL teachers appeared to be warranted in view of the fact that the author had observed greater levels of metalinguistic awareness among beginning teachers of ESL who did have second language experience than among those who did not.

English is a language used to reach across the borders and bridge the gaps. It is used to communicate anything from microchip to oil. Due to increasing importance of communication in English, we as English teachers need to teach language skill with a multifold onus. There is a requirement to learn language skills to fulfill the ever growing demands of English. The methods and approaches adopted or followed by teachers in the past to teach English language was constantly evolved.

Along with the regular curriculum, it is very important for a budding professional to develop soft skills. They are part of communication skills. They form an important feature of learning process, more so in learning and teaching a language. Many professionals in the BPO, medical transcription, IT and ITES add to the importance and relevance of English in every walk of life. In the past students were introduced to English in their sixth standard. They were not given enough exposure to the language skills. The emphasis was on subjects like mathematics, physics and chemistry and got very little opportunity to use the language within as well as outside the school. But in the present day scenario as English has turned into a universal language its presence and value in the world has expanded enormously compared to the past decades.

In more than a decade years of teaching experience, I have found English language classroom, a great challenge. Countries like Peru, China, Japan etc incorporate English as a foreign language in their school educational system because English is not required much outside the classroom. On the other hand, English is taught as a second language in countries like Sri Lanka, India, United Arab Emirates, etc in an English medium school where students-young and adult are prepared to use English outside the classroom as essential to succeed. English teachers deal with a number of issues such as students" age, sex, race, attitude, intelligence factor, confidence level and motivation. Teachers have to handle the language classroom carefully without hurting the sentiments and the shortcomings that may make a student feel low in front of others. Thus teachers have to work out a teaching methodology that may bring out the maximum for students to grasp the contents easily and make the teaching-learning sessions meaningful. In recent years, language teachers and researchers have focused their attention in observing and developing approaches and strategies that leads to an effective learning process in acquiring English as a SL. In order to make learning process smooth and effective, language teachers have to design various teaching methods out of their personal teaching experience and training. There are various language teaching techniques that help students to understand more clearly and participate in the learning process more actively. Sometimes more than one technique is combined to make an ESL classroom meaningful.

POSITION AND ROLE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

English through a foreign language has always occupied a unique position in the educational system in India. Despite of the fact that it received a great setback after independence, it continues to be a major language having a prestigious position in our society. After independence, it received a hostile treatment not only at the hands of our political leaders but also some eminent scholars. Mahatma Gandhi opposed educating the Indians in English because it deprived them to of their national respect and resulted in slavish behavior.

There were however, some people who advocated the urge of English for oblivious reason. English had been the medium of instruction, the language of administration and law; and the main vehicle of communicate with the rulers. Its abolition, therefore, would have had an advance effect on education and governmental administration. Maulana Azad and C. Rajagopalachari both realized that abolition of English would be a great setback to the cause of Education in India. Pt. Nehru also voiced these fears when he said that English acted as the major window for the Indians to the world and its closure would spell peril for our future.

It was 1950 when the language controversy got intense. With the commencement of our Constitution, on 26 Jan 1950, it were unanimously decided that English should continue as the official language for fifteen years.

The specification of fifteen years was crucial for developing Hindi as a substitute for English; it was believed that after this period both the states and center would be able to dispense with English for good. But the imposition of Hindi on Non- Hindi states, particularly Madras (now Chennai) and West Bengal, resulted in clashes in these states. They argued that the removal of English would mean isolation from the main current of the knowledge of science and technology. The official languages Commission"s Report stated in 1955.

The commission realized the unique position that English occupied here. In the same report, it was argued that English could be used as a second language for specific purposes „for the appropriate personnel."

Short history of English teaching in India begins with the arrival of the East India Company instituted by British. With the coming of the British, English came to India. English was the language of rulers and, for this reason, become the language of those who wanted to

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try to be equal with masters socially and professionally. During earliest period (1765-1813), the British rulers never thought of teaching English to Indians because were frightened of teaching their language as they had lost colonies in America by giving English education. However, the situation began to differ after the battle of Plassey. As the traders decided to establish educational institutions so that they could win over the people whom they had started to rule. They opened institutions of classical learning, namely Calcutta, Madras (1781) and Banaras Sanskrit College (1791). Thus, the teaching of English was begun by the English rulers. English is the state language of two states in eastern India, Meghalaya and Nagaland. It is the main medium of instruction at the postgraduate level, and it is taught as a second language at every stage of education in Uttarakhand states of India.

LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACHES

As a language teacher it is very important to know yourself and your students. Not only your subject matter is important but also your students" cultural background and other personal factors- emotional and psychological are equally important. Language teachers have experimented with certain language teaching methods in isolation or combination and found one or more than one method effective and worth using. I hope this paper will help ESL teachers to gain an insight into developing an appropriate teaching material and selecting an effective, suitable teaching method that can practically be implemented in the classroom.

The context of English language teaching and learning has changed and the focus is on communicative competence. Language teachers have adopted and followed different methodologies which are discussed below to teach the language skills.

1.   **Grammar translation method:** This method was used by the teacher to teach young children where teacher explained every word to students in the native language to make him understand and learn English. But in this method there was at least one disadvantage. Both the teacher and the student concentrated more on 11 rather than 12. In this method English language class seemed to be 11 class rather than l2 class. Students got only limited benefit through this method. Unfortunately this method is still in use in many rural schools throughout India. This method is also supported by the methods used to teach mother tongue in our schools.

2.   **Bilingual method:** This can be declared as the favorite method in our schools. Most teachers follow the bilingual method to teach the students in Indian schools, where the teacher first of all explains the entire English sentence in 11 and then asks the students to perform activities in English. Here it used to be a main assumption that only the teachers have the freedom to take the help of 11 and students are not supposed to use it. However, this constraint is found mostly on paper, not in the classroom when a student is in the process of composing his or her English sentences abundant help through the use of mother tongue sentences is provided. This method does not help fluency and naturalness in language expression. Thus this method became beneficial to students in learning the second language only up to some extent.

3.   **Direct method:** Earlier, teachers used to follow the direct method to teach Indian students mostly in private schools, which usually charge a higher tuition fee, etc. These teachers will stick to the practice of using only English, without depending on 11. Here teacher is not supposed or authorized to use any single word from 11. This forced seclusion made students from many families with no past history of learning or using English face great difficulty in understanding certain words and their meanings. But this method turned to be more useful for the students to learn language than any other method as this method creates more encouraging language environment for students in the class room.

All the above methods have their own advantages and disadvantages, where the students learned English only as a subject rather than as language. They were also unable to put their learning into practice due to lack of a favorable environment. In addition to the above constraints, the teachers used to have very limited teaching hours, mostly from three to six hours per week which are not enough to teach the language elaborately giving emphasis for the basic elements of language. It has become examination-oriented only. Another limitation seen in Indian teachers is that some of the English teachers are not familiar with the latest developments in ELT pedagogy.

Challenges before the English language teachers in India are apparent and enormous. They should be able to cater to the practical needs of learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and also to retrieve information all over the world. The challenges visible before the English language teachers are diverse and it is the need of the hour to equip the English language learning strategies which should be integrated with the approaches and methods of language teaching.

4.   **The Audio-Lingual Method :** is orally based just like The Direct Method. However it does not focus on picking up a vocabulary by using it in a situation like the Direct Method but drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. Teacher wants students to use the target language communicatively and in order to do so want students

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to over learn the target language. The teacher provides with models for the students to imitate accurately and as quickly as possible. This way the students form new habits in the target language overcoming the old habits of the native language. Teachers provide with tapes of model speakers and students imitate the teacher's models.

5. The Silent-Way Method : came into existence when the idea of learning a language by forming a set of habits was seriously challenged in the early 1960s. Linguist like Caleb Gattegno"s looked at language learning from a learner's point of view by studying the way babies and young children picked up the language. Gattegno"s Silent- Way method is similar in certain aspects with Chomsky's Cognitive Approach proposing that speakers have knowledge of underlying abstract rules, which allow them to understand and create novel utterances. In other words, students are responsible for their own learning. They are initiators of learning and capable of independently acquiring language. This method gave importance to the learning process and not teaching. Students were expected to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings and for this they were expected to develop independence from the teacher and develop own inner criteria for correctness. Teacher should give students only that what requires in promoting the learning. Students are expected to utilize what they already have and actively engage in exploring the new areas of the target language.

6. The Communicative Approach : came into lime light in 1970s when Linguists realized that students may know the linguistic usage but are unable to use the language. It became very clear that students should learn to perform certain functions such as inviting, declining, praising etc in a social context. It means being able to communicate students did not require linguistic competence but communicative competence that taught them what to say, when to say, how to say and whom to say. In this method the teacher's role is to establish situations to promote communication. Students interact a great deal with one another in a given context.

7. Content-Based approach : teaches something new using language as a medium. It focuses on what is being taught. Students are able to indulge in advance thinking while learning new information focusing less on the structure of the language. This approach is very student-centred as it depends entirely on the students" ability to use the language. Basically, it produces motivation in students.

INTEGRATING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES WITH LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACHES

Research shows that students do not learn a language at the same pace. The levels of competence for the learners are also diversified. Surely, the teachers cannot be held responsible for this difference in learning ability of the students in a classroom. However, they can motivate the students make sure that they become involved in the learning process. Learning is an activ3 process of translating new knowledge, insight and skills into behavior. Cawley and his associates have identified three domains of learning-cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The learners have their own preferences to learn by adopting either of these strategies suitable for their environment. These preferences are known to be an individual's own style of learning a language. The learning is usually accomplished more rapidly and retained longer if it is presented in ways that the individual prefers and on its competency to meet the learners` needs. Claxton and Murrell consider that is the teachers` instructional style and the students learning style match; there is usually a productive language learning environment. It is important that the teacher should be aware of the learning style preferences of the students and accordingly adjust his/her own method of teaching. Boylan points out that learning is more productive when teachers are conscious of the learning strategies they are going to apply in a language class. Subsequently, another significant researcher in this area, Davis, came out with the suggestion that students can be taught what strategies the teachers are going to apply in the language class, which improves learning efficiency no matter what style the teacher uses. As students practice a variety of activities, they become aware of various strategies that can be used. The language learning strategies are defined by many researchers. Some of them are as follows:

Learning strategies have been described as any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learners to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information. It was argued that learning strategies are intentional behavior and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to better help them understand learn or remember new information. Learning strategies were also illustrated as special thoughts or behavior that individuals use to help them comprehend learn or retain new information. Hence, learning strategies were seen as special ways of processing information that improve comprehension, learning or retention of the information(oxford 1990)defines language learning strategies as specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations. It is indeed a reflection of what the learner intends to do and the specific actions he can take.

As the knowledge of second language acquisition increased during 1970s, teachers and researchers concluded that no single method of language teaching and research findings would mark the start of universal success in teaching a second language. It was realized that certain learners seemed to be successful regardless of methods o teaching techniques. Certain people appeared to be endowed with abilities to succeed others lacked those abilities. Observations

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and research studies led researchers to describe good language learners in terms of personal characteristics, styles and strategies. They believe that good language learners`:

1. Find their own way, taking responsibility for their own learning.

2. Organize information about language.

3. Are creative, and try to feel the language by experimenting its grammar and words,

4. Create opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom

5. Learn to live with uncertainty by not getting confused and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding every word.

6. Use memory strategies to bring back what has been learned

7. Make errors work for them and not against them

8. Use linguistic knowledge including knowledge of the first language, in learning a second language

9. Use contextual cues to help them in comprehension

10. Learn to make intelligent guesses

11. Learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform beyond their competence

12. Learn to use certain tricks to keep conversations going

13. Learn certain production strategies to fill in gaps in their own competence.

14. Learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language regarding the formality of the situation.

COMMON FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHING/LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

There are so many factors that affect the teaching-learning process in India. The students in India can be categorized into two; the one is having the regional language as medium of study from the primary level and the other is having English as the medium of study. Hence, the problem of teaching English as a second language, to the Indian students starts from the pre-schooling.

Further environment and family background play vital role in success of learning process. For example, countries like India, where majority of the people are farmers, have the poor background in education. Moreover, the income of majority of the families is not adequate. Hence, the parents are not interested in giving good education background to their children. In contrast, they are willing to engage the children in some jobs in order to earn money. This is the very basic reason and the affecting factor in teaching.

Secondly, the infrastructure, viz. school buildings – class rooms, labs, etc. is not adequate as required. The first categories of the students are almost compelled to attend their classes under the trees even after several five year plans.

Majority of the students are coming from village and also their parents are farmers and uneducated. If the nature fails, the survival of the farmers will be questionable. Hence, the students are mentally discouraged due to the family conditions. In the second category, the students are having enough background in basic education since their parents are educated and they do not depend on the nature much. Many of the students from second category are joining in English medium schools and hence, they do not find much difficulty in pursuing their higher education.

Moreover majority of the families of second category are dwelling in towns and cities and hence, they have easy access of quality education. But, the first categories of students are scoring good marks the examinations conducted. It proves that they are having good writing skill in English. The only thing is that they have to be given training in oral English communication also. Hence, a common programme for English Language Teaching must be framed in the pre-schooling itself.

PERCEPTIONS OF AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

Learner autonomy has been one of the most popular terms in the language learning field especially for the last three decades. A lot of researchers have been conducting studies to investigate various aspects of learner autonomy, and to bring practical suggestions to teachers to promote learner autonomy in their classrooms. One of the most important points emphasized by researchers is that the concept of learner autonomy can be interpreted differently in different cultural and educational settings (Holliday, 2003). That is, cultural and educational settings of the instruction affect how teachers and students perceive the concept of learner autonomy. In other words,

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students of a particular cultural background would not show the same level of readiness for learner autonomy as the students of another culture. Therefore, before making any attempt to promote it, students" perceptions related to learner autonomy should be investigated. (Yıldırım, 2008a; Yıldırım, 2008b; Benson, 2001).

Aiming to contribute to the literature on readiness for learner autonomy from a cultural standpoint, this interview-based qualitative study investigated four Indian ESL (English as a Second Language) learners" perceptions related to learner autonomy. The main aim of the study was to explore four Indian ESL learners" perceptions related to teacher and learner responsibilities in the language learning process and to get an idea of how ESL students in the Indian educational context perceive the concepts related to learner independence. More specifically, the study focused on Indian ESL learners" opinions related to teacher and learner responsibilities in the language learning process in order to better understand their perceptions of learner autonomy. It was hoped that the results of the study would provide guidance to teachers and researchers to understand the effects of culture on the interpretation of concepts related to learner autonomy.

Major reason for conducting this study was to contribute the relevant literature by describing a group of Indian ESL learners" perceptions of learner autonomy. As the perception and realization of learner autonomy changes depending on the cultural background, it is important to see the autonomy-related perspectives of different learners and teachers around the world. This study was an attempt to provide a small depiction of a group of Indian students" perceptions of learner autonomy. In order to better understand the effect of culture on autonomous learning perceptions and practices, more qualitative studies should be conducted with different groups of teachers and learners from different countries around the world.

CONCLUSION

In our country, as already said 75% of the students are from rural areas and they are coming through regional language medium schools. Hence, based on their background, we have to design the syllabus and adopt methods to test their English language proficiency. Therefore, it is necessary to go for a detailed discussion as to whether the existing curriculum is fulfilling the need of the hour and suitable to the students in achieving their goals, the present methods for testing the proficiency of the students are suitable and opinion and suggestions from the teaching faculties of the English language in technical institutions are to be obtained.

However, being aware of the characteristics, techniques and strategies of a good language learner facilitates students` language learning and help them enhance learning efficiency. In addition, with this knowledge and awareness, students` language learning can be improved through learner training by their instructors.

It is actually difficult to say which teaching method is effective unless used in a classroom of students with different need, learning experience, intellectual levels, cultural background and attitude towards learning English as a Second Language. Sometimes more than one method is used to bring out the desired results in the language classroom where communication becomes the key factor of teaching-learning process. Unless students learn to utilize the classroom method to express thoughts and feelings outside into the real world situations, the learning cannot be successful no matter whatever teaching method is applied in English as a SL classroom. Teacher- student role becomes the centre in bringing out the maximum within the limited time in a classroom.

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