Strategies Employed for Teaching Language Learners.

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<u>Introduction</u>

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The process of learning can be very tedious especially when dealing with a language. Various studies have been done on the same but no conclusive method has been arrived at that is assumed to be completely effective. Due to this in any learning situation, the employment of various techniques has to come into play to assure that every individual in the class and character is catered for in facilitating the studying process. This paper will try to look at the various methods used in learning including the various concepts that have been in application. Besides this the methods that are used in teaching will also be reviewed including how they should be applied. Hence this paper will shed an insight into the learning process and how it can be improved by trying to discover some of the constraints and the solutions that can be employed in such situations. For one to effectively learn English, he or she must be able to effectively write, speak and listen in the language to facilitate communication (Wallace et al, 2004).

According to Sildus et al (2010), one of the most important aspects of learning English as a second or foreign language is writing. This means the students in class have to master this as part of the various aspects of communicating in learning English. This can be achieved by the use of various deconstructing and reconstructing techniques for the texts to allow them to improve. Moreover in doing this it will aid in constructing of sentences in the aspect of verbal communication. Moreover this will come into play in the relating to various aspects in the environment. In doing this the students will eventually develop the skills to assist in accessing a broad range of ideas needed in situational communication and writing.

1. Literature Review

Most of the students who are taking learning classes especially those who are taking the English language as a second language (ESL) may encounter various problems. To begin with most of them producing English words and in trying to communicate normally is not the issue, the issue arises when trying to figure out when the message is being relayed. The issue of grammatical errors that arise may include vocabulary and various aspects of the language. This makes communication very difficult as figuring out what is being said becomes a problem. Due to this, the students should be engaged in various activities that will lead to the development of accuracy. This will be done in the process of correction that is done in a group format or in some cases a student to student basis (Barcroft, 2004).

 According to Beare (2011), in the course of interaction among the students, an important aspect of communication is developed especially in skills that are related to the cognitive aspect. This plays a part in generating ideas; another method is brainstorming as this is also efficient in the generation of ideas and while organizing the students in the group. The use of the ideas generated through this process if used in a prolonged period will lead to a positive effect and the development of effectiveness in the language being learned.

2. Strategies Affecting Learning

There are various issues that affect the ability of a student to learn, these include moods, stress and emotions. This will hinder the progress required hence a method should be created that will have logic but also set the sequential steps needed in achieving the progress that is required. Moreover

some of the students may have a preference for planning and organization; in that they prefer it when there are steps that are put in place to facilitate progression. Due to this notion most of such students may be unwilling to take a step towards learning unless they are directed. Due to this the teachers also have to come up with a method to be used in the dealing with the same issue among the learners (Mason, 1999).

2.1. Another type of students are the auditory type, these are students that prefer to learn by the use of instructions and other activities that are given through the oral process. These types of people learn best through the employment of listening than speaking or following the instructions that have been given. In such a case these students encounter the problem of reading as the preference of oral instructions can impede the reading technique due to inability to decode the information that is given. The important aspect to note in such students is that they have the ability to grasp a lot in the lecture session hence the need for this consideration when giving the learning the process (Christmas, n.d.).

3. Methods Employed in Learning Process

Audio-lingual Method

This is a method that came into being in the 1940s and was mainly involved in international affairs. The method employed mainly focuses on the oral communication. The method is very positive in the acquisition of listening and speaking skills. The method is aimed at drilling the students in the use of various patterns in the construction of sentence patterns. The method has a

basis of conditioning in helping the learners respond to certain stimuli appropriately and this is achieved through the shaping and reinforcement. The method does apply various principles in the learning like development of reading and writing competence by the use of speaking and listening competence. In addition the development of the skills becomes a habit formulation as the use of other languages becomes highly discouraged while in class. Before a response is achieved, the students have to undergo practice session for certain language patterns to be learned. This is done by the process of drills done repetitively until the utterances are done without any errors. Moreover the method is used in learning the more normally used everyday sentences while the vocabulary is taught by the employment of other methods like objects and pictures. This is done with an association being made with various ideas that can be related to. Hence this method made constant drilling of the students followed by positive or negative reinforcement a major focus of classroom activity (Cotter, n.d.).

4. Total Physical Response

According to Sammons et al (n.d.), this is a method that was designed mainly for the ESL situation but is applied in various aspects. The method is based on the fact that language is based on coordination in that the learning will be done by the involvement of the physical activity. Its premise is that the human brain can relate biologically to any language depending on the action preceded. The basis is when the learning of a second language takes place will depend on the process of breaking codes. This is first through a long period of

internalizing followed by comprehension and production of an output. The method involves a positive response to commands that involve some form of physical movement. The method rose into prominence in the 1970s but since the reception on the mainstream has been quite low.

5. Behaviorism

This is based on the view that a learner is essentially passive unless the response is aimed at stimuli in the environment. This implies that the learner or student must start on a clean slate and will respond to either the positive or negative reinforcement. Hence the probability of development of antecedent behavior is likely to occur again. In this case positive may indicate the introduction of stimuli to influence while the negative implies stimuli is withheld in the quest to achieve the response that is desired. In this case the learning behavior is viewed as a change in behavior on the side of the student. This method basically calls for rejection of the structuralism while it is an extension of logical positivism. At the same time the approach does precede the aspect of cognitive view of the world. In this context when a learner encounters new situations they will recognize it as a problem that needs solving, this is followed by the analysis and tries to identify the various elements that are involved in the new situation. The next step involved is comparison of the new situation or problem to one that has been previously encountered in an attempt to differentiate the two. In the process a method will be formulated to be used in solving the problem and once the plan is tested and works it is used but if it

does not work then it's abandoned and a new approach formulated (Mason, 1999).

6. Cognitive Approach

This has a sharp contrast to the idea that is promoted by the Behaviorists in that learning cannot be compared to behavior as this is only an outward manifestation of the change that is occurring on the internal basis and is the outcome of a learning process. Hence they state that the internal changes that are occurring cannot be observed. Hence the cognitive view of learning states that is double in nature in that one side is made up of social behavior that has a codified and patterned behavior while on the other side it is an abstract of logical system that can be compared to mathematics. Despite the differences it does agree that it involves the doing the right thing and at the right time in order to achieve the appropriate behavior. The cognitivism rose into prominence in the 1960s and it focuses on the inner mental activities in the human mind as a valuable part in the quest for people to understand when trying to learn. In this case it states that various processes like memory, knowing, and problem-solving abilities need to be explored. It also states that humans are not only programmed animals but also respond to environmental stimuli where rational beings require active participation for the learning to occur. In the process changes in behavior may occur but this will be an indication of the changes occurring inside due to the learning process taking effect (Rao, 2007).

7. Acquisition and Learning

According to Krashen there is a distinction that arrives between

acquisition and learning. The claim for this is due to the approach that is used in the getting of knowledge towards learning a language. On one hand the approach to getting knowledge where in the older days the learner memorized the rules of grammar and a list of vocabulary. According to this that was the definition of learning; this can be a conscious process demanding effort and attention to the task that is in hand. Therefore learning has the same utility that allows students to put checks on the output in order to ensure it is correct. Moreover, the learning rules can have passive sentences that will not be placed in construction or usage where it will be available in general discourse. This means that there will be no interface between the learning and acquisition of language. Hence this can be concluded that learning for humans is multi-faceted as it involves both conscious and unconscious. In some instances the knowledge can be explicitly modeled or vice versa. Hence the learning process happens as a result of the input they receive and the experiences that accompany this input. This seems to concentrate on getting the adult student to consciously learn items of language in the isolation of the exact opposite of this process (Wallace et al, 2004).

7.1. In summary learning does not directly assist in the acquisition and acquiring a language is more successful and lasts longer than learning. Hence input is a term used to mean the language that the students hear or read moreover the input that is used needs to include the language that has already been used and as well as a new one. By doing this, the input should be higher level than the students are capable of using but at the same time capable of

being able to comprehend.

8. Task Based Learning

This is an approach that is used in learning of languages and this is achieved by the performing of a series of activities in the steps towards a successful task realization. The focus in such situations is the learning of various language items through the use of non-contextualized vacuum to using language as the vehicle for authentic real-life needs. In the process of working towards realizing the task, the language in employment is immediately used by the learner hence making the learning process more authentic. In the framework of task based learning, the language that will be selected is normally not pre-determined but is more of a chance that is given to the learners with assistance from a facilitator in order to meet the tasks and its activities. However the issue with this method of learning is that it heavily relies on the knowledge the learners have in using skills for deduction and independent analysis in the exploitation fully. An example that can come into play in a work session in which they are required to prepare a meal together and everyone is expected to contribute. In so doing a great deal of language will be needed in the sharing of ideas under the theme of food because a lot of issues need to be discussed like the menu, the buying of food has to take place and allocation of tasks to be performed by each individual discussed (Byram, 2004).

8.1. In such an approach the motivation for communication becomes the driving force as the emphasis to get things done come into play. In the process the hesitance that occurs normally in trying to communicate is put away as they

need to communicate in order to achieve the set down goals. In the set up the learners are exposed to the language they would normally use in such approaches. In such situations all the materials that are used are extracted from real life situations unlike other situations where they are made in a classroom situation hence creating a better learning environment. This method was adapted from the Willis framework (1996) and the focus is mainly done in the final task. This task is defined as an undertaking that is authentic to the needs of the learners. In most situations today the tasks that will be given tend to have a reflection to the work of the learners in order to make them more efficient (Richards, n.d.).

9. Humanistic Approach in Teaching

Humanism normally does concentrate in the development of the child's self concept. This is in the aspect of learning will relate to the learners ability to understand the individual strength and weaknesses. In doing this the leaner is able to detect the areas that need to be improved in terms of learning. This will not be the end of it but will be aimed at achieving the progress needed that may be the ability to read, write and communicate well in the specified language. By doing so the person will be attaining the personal development that is desired. In this case the aim of applying this technique is to drive the leaner towards achieving the individual intrinsic reward of meeting the personal goals that have been set. Hence humanism is aimed at rewarding oneself and this relates in the learning aspect by achieving the goals that are desired. Community language learning, based on the educational movement of counseling learning, attempts

to give students only the language they need. Students sit in a circle outside of which is a 'knower' who will help them with the language they need. The approach is student-centered hence will be an aspect of social development as the progress will be performance oriented and it will lead to a discovery experience. Moreover the drive needed will be achieved through the students feelings and aspirations hence leading to self-determination. However the success of this method is dependent on the teacher's aim of good outcomes for the learners and capabilities on the side of the student in the quest to meet the targets (Marx, 2011).

10. Methods and Approaches

In current approaches in use they have some core assumptions that are applied, this include that the second language is facilitated when the learners are involved in interaction along with meaningful communication. For effective teaching in a classroom to take place the tasks that have been set must give provision in opportunities for students to negotiate meaning along with expanding the language resources at their disposal through the exchanges that take place on the interpersonal level. Meaningful communication can only take place if the students can process content that has relevance and purpose. In communication, the process is holistic and often will depend upon the use of several skills for effectiveness. The language learning process will be facilitated by both activities that will involve language use and organization as well as language analysis and reflection. The process of learning languages is a slow process that will involve creative use of language and trail and errors. Though

the errors in most cases are results of the goal of learning the new language and to be able to use it accurately and fluently. The learners in addition need to develop their routes to language learning, progress will be at different rates and motivations employed will also be different. For the learning process to be successful the effective learning and communication strategies have to be employed (Barcroft, 2004).

11. Visual Aids

These are mainly in the video format used as a task based activity in teaching and may have a basis on various shows. This will entail already written language that will be recycled by the students in the learning process. This will include a procedure that will have three stages; the first stage will involve the preparation of the expectations on their side so as to know what they are going to watch. This will include sessions of questions and brainstorming on the specific subject in relation to vocabulary that has been previously taught. The second stage will involve the actual viewing process in which the video is played in segments to allow comprehension and will include the use of activity worksheets. The final stage will involve a review of the whole segment in which the students will get the opportunity to learn the meaning of each segment and room will be created for questions to be asked along with the precise model of language that is required of the students. This will be a good way of getting another main source of language apart from the teachers (Beare, 2011).

12. In response to the part of the question "To what extent would they be

suitable for your learners in your language teaching / advising context."

12.1. My classes main focus is on communicative activities and the concentration on language as a means of communication. Moreover my aims are overtly communicative therefore a great emphasis is placed on training students to use language for communication.

However task based learning is on the whole my preferred approach and is most suitable for my students. After saying that it is difficult to select only one method which works all the time. In any one class there are always a number of different personalities with different ways of looking at the world. The activity that is particularly appropriate for one student may not be ideal for another.

My main two overriding principles are variety and flexibility. Variety means involving students in a number of different types of activities and where possible introducing them to a wide selection of materials, so that learning is interesting and never monotonous.

Flexibility comes into play for any number of reasons, mainly to avoid routine and monotony which may de-motivating. This danger can be avoided if the learning experience is permanently stimulating and interesting. This is difficult to achieve, but at least if the activities the students are faced with are varied there will be interest of doing things differently. If new language is always introduced in the same way (e.g. if it is always introduced in a dialog) then the introduction stages of the class will become gradually less and less challenging.

After all, most language teaching is designed to teach students to communicate so it is perhaps better to select a methodology in terms of the activities which will involve the students and to assemble a balanced program of such activities.

Therefore I try to base my lessons on what will interest and motivate the students. I concentrate on activities subjects and content which will benefit the students far more than concentrating on language skills.

13.   Conclusion

Languages have different aspects of it in the learning process, if one is to be considered as to have learned a certain language they need to have the ability to speak, read, write and respond in the language. The issue of grammar also arises hence just talking is not sufficient and students need to be aware of all these aspects. On the other hand the instructor must select an appropriate approach that considers the various issues among the students if they are going to be facilitated through the learning process. The stated theories and approaches have to be considered if the learning process is to be conducted successfully in order to overcome the issues that will emerge as it will assist in the positive intake of knowledge that will result in easier evaluation.

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