MICRO TEACHING SKILLS BASED SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Learning a second language means learning its vocabulary, suggesting that knowing a lexical item means knowing a number of things. Learning strategies are procedures undertaken by the learners in order to make their own language learning effective. Teaching strategies are procedures undertaken by the teacher in order to make teaching as effective and interesting as possible. The present paper discusses the goals of strategies in learning a language. It also focuses on a few Second Language Learning Strategies highlighting Microteaching Skills, Questioning Skills and Multi Skills Approaches,

Acquisition of a language is an incremental and perhaps recursive process that involves the integration of various kinds of knowledge along with gaining different levels of ability to make use of that knowledge in communication.

Strategy can be understood as a 'means of achieving a goal'. There are different kinds of strategies and they differ from person to person. Strategies assist language learners as well as language teachers. It is essential for classroom teachers to be aware of different strategies employed by individual learners. Strategies can be talked about mainly in two ways. They are learning strategies and teaching strategies.

Learning strategies are procedures undertaken by the learners in order to make their own language learning effective. Teaching strategies are procedures undertaken by the teacher in order to make teaching as effective and interesting as possible. The present study has taken into account both the strategies in order to facilitate learning. In the process, the teachers are enquired about what strategies they follow, to what extent and in what manner. Oxford defined learning strategies (LS) broadly as Operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information (8).

These early definition from the educational literature reflect the roots of LS in cognitive science, with its essential assumptions that human beings process information and that learning involves such information processing. Clearly, LS are involved in all learning, in spite of the content and environment. LS are thus used in learning and teaching maths, science, history,

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languages and other subjects, both in classroom settings and more comfortable learning environments.

Vocabulary is typically taught in lists and a high priority is given to accuracy and the ability to construct correct sentences in the Grammar-Translation Approach**.** Prabhu mentions that traditionally, English was taught by the grammar translation method. In the late 1950s, structurally graded syllabi were introduced as a major innovation into the state systems for teaching English (10). The idea was that the teaching of language could be systematized by planning its inputs, just as the teaching of a subject such as arithmetic or physics could be. The structural approach was sometimes implemented as the direct method, with an insistence on monolingual English classrooms.

By the late 1970s, however, the Behavioral-psychological and philosophical foundations of the structural method had yielded to the cognitive claims of Chomsky for language as a "mental organ". There was also dissatisfaction within the English teaching profession with the structural method, which was seen as not giving the learners language that was "deployable" or usable in real situations, in spite of an ability to make correct sentences in classroom situations.

In retrospection, the structural approach as practiced in the classroom led to a fragmentation and trivialization of thought by breaking up language in two ways: into structures, and into skills. The form-focused teaching of language aggravated the gap between the learner's "linguistic age" and "mental age" to the point where the mind could no longer be engaged. The emphasis thus shifted to teaching language use in meaningful contexts.

British linguists argue that something more than grammatical competence was involved in language use; the term "communicative competence" was introduced to signify this extra dimension. The attempt to achieve communicative competence assumes the availability of a grammatical competence to build on, and indeed the communicative method succeeds best in the initial stage, introducing variety and learner involvement into classrooms where both teachers and learners have confidence in their knowledge of the language, acquired through exposure. However, for the majority of learners, the issue is not so much communicative competence as the acquisition of a basic or fundamental competence in the language.

Later, input-rich theoretical methodologies such as the Whole Language, the Task-Based, and the Comprehensible Input and Balanced approaches aim at exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the mind.

It is said that some deliberate learning strategies such as word part psychoanalysis, learning using word cards, and dictionary use are also valuable shortcuts as far as learning vocabulary and vocabulary growth are concerned. Nation also notes that learners need to acquire a few important vocabulary learning strategies such as guessing from context, using word cards, using word parts, using mnemonic techniques, expressing the keyword techniques and making use of dictionaries. (Nation: 2001)

Hedge (2000) also mentions that despite the traditional methodology, recent studies have greatly focused on vocabulary learning and teaching containing the following issues:

- Learners' mental lexicon is organized.
- What strategies learners use to acquire vocabularies.
- How some words are easier to learn than others?

Hedge (2000) points out that linguistic studies focus on lexical system and acquisition studies focus on how vocabulary is learned. The idea of how vocabulary is learned is principally related

to strategies used by learners as well as approaches to teaching vocabulary. One of the principal controversial issues in vocabulary teaching and learning in the field is how to identify significant approaches and strategies to teaching and learning vocabularies, which result in longer and easier retrieval of the vocabularies.

A classification is available that considers three approaches to vocabulary teaching:
1) Incidental learning {i.e., learning vocabularies as the by-product of other activities as reading, listening, etc.}
2) Explicit or intentional instruction and
3) Independent strategy development (Hunt and Beglar, 1998; cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002).

As proven by many studies, teaching approaches and learning strategies are two main factors affecting learners' performance. Examining the effects of diverse modes of teaching vocabularies – incidental and intentional – on learners' acquisition of new vocabulary items might lead to influential and fruitful pedagogical implications on how to teach vocabularies. In terms of Hedge, (2002) such strategies can be either cognitive (i.e., direct mental operations to understand and store new words) or meta-cognitive (i.e., indirect strategies that facilitate the conscious efforts to remember new words).

Moreover, examining the relationship between learners' use of vocabulary strategy use and learning vocabularies may lead us to pay more attention to the role of learning strategies.

Language learning strategies are the tools used to solve a problem such as to- accomplish a task, meet an objective and attain a goal. Different strategies are applied for different purposes. For an instance, reasoning or guessing strategies are used to understand a passage. Memory strategies are used to remember the required information. Affective strategies are used to help the learner relax or gain greater confidence for profitable learning.

Microteaching Strategies

This technique was propagated by Dwight Allen in the year 1963 at Stanford University, California. Later, it spread to the developed countries like USA and UK. It was introduced by D.D.Tiwari at Government Central Pedagogical Institute, Allahabad in 1967 (69). According to Sharma, Micro Teaching is a technique which allows teachers to apply clearly defined skills through carefully prepared lesson in a planned series of five to ten minutes encounters with a small group of students. The following are some of the characteristics of Micro-Teaching Skills:

- It is a training technique
- Time, content and class size are taken in a minimized form
- One skill is practiced at a time
- Students participation is focused
- Immediate feedback
- Maximum transfer (70).

The study observes certain steps that are involved in Microteaching as follows:
1. Defining the skill: A particular skill is defined in terms of teaching behaviour to provide knowledge and awareness.
2. Demonstration of the skill: The selected skill is demonstrated.
3. Lesson plans: A short lesson is planned under the guidance of supervisor.

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4. Instructions: The planned lesson is instructed to a small group of 5 to 10 students for about 5 to 6 minutes.
5. Discussion: The students are allowed to discuss to provide feedback.
6. Re-planning: The students are encouraged to practice keeping in view the points of discussion.
7. Re-teaching: The re-planned lesson is re--taught to another group small group of students of the same class for the same duration to practice the skill.
8. Re-discussion: The students are allowed to discuss again through some suggestions and encouragement towards their performance.
9. Repeating the cycle: The cycle of same steps is repeated till the desired level of skill is achieved. (70)

Research on Microteaching has revealed that several skills can be taught through this technique akin to Questioning skill, Explaining skill, Illustration skill and stimulus variation skill. The present study intends to review the importance of these skills elaborately.

Questioning Skill

In fact, questioning is an integral skill of a good lesson exciting mental activity. According to Socrates, the teacher should present the subject matter in such a way that the learner recognizes the truth and identifies himself/herself with it. Moreover, questions are fundamental to the concept of learning (71).

Multi-Skill Approach

Usually, language learning at technical colleges' level has been based on:
a. The study of selected literary texts.
b. Lectures on these texts.
c. Dictating notes to the students on the expected questions (96).

Thus, the traditional methodology of learning language obviously has lacked the following framework according to Kripa Gautam:
- A reliable taxonomy of objectives.
- A detailed analysis of the means through which these specified objectives are achieved.
- An operational plan for achieving these objectives by following certain strategies. (61)

The language learning is a form of activity wherein, one learns a language through several activities. The students learn to speak by speaking, and to write by writing because there is no short-cut to learning. The more students are made to practice speaking and writing activities, the better chances of their acquiring the language. They should be provided plenty of opportunities to practice what they learn. Such practice should enable the students to use language independently and efficiently in real situations they come across later in life. Thus, the role of teacher should be an initiator, a supporter, co-coordinator, and guide for language learning activity on part of the student.

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