

Cognizance of Language Learning Strategies - The Need of the Hour



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Abstract: *Over the years it has been found that the competence of the learners in English at undergraduate level especially in professional colleges is found wanting. The course materials offered at various levels (school, college and undergraduate level) though are often well researched, the communicative competence among majority of students is often found wanting. Text books have been revised, teachers have received orientation, and however the challenge still persists. In this context an overt training course in language learning strategies will help to improve the quality of learning that takes place in the classroom. There has been a shift of emphasis in the present curriculum from teaching, with a focus on equipping the learner with essential language skills and giving the learner the confidence to use the language effectively in real life situations. With this shift, the teacher/ learner roles have also undergone a change. The learner's role is envisaged as a negotiator of learning experience and of the teacher as a facilitator, manager and a researcher. Learning English as a service language should be the focus of any curriculum and teachers should have more interactive sessions which will enable the learners in language acquisition. The paper discusses how these strategies of learning will help in enhancing the teaching/ process of learning in the classroom.*

Keywords: *Communicative competence & language learning strategies*

I. INTRODUCTION

We are aware that at undergraduate level in professional colleges, in terms of language use we get students with mixed abilities. This makes the task English learning more demanding and diversified for the learner's and the task of facilitating learning more challenging for the teacher. If the learners are sensitized to their ways of learning, they can use these ways of learning to their optimal potential for learning English. To put it in other words the learners awareness of the "the process is as important as the product of learning." (Keith Morrow 1981:62) This awareness of the process of learning and a constant effort to improve this process can be called 'using a learning strategy.' With this shift of emphasis from the product of learning to the process

of learning to make the learner self-reliant and to make learning more and more self-directed the process of learning needs to be understood by the student so that h/she can take upon him/herself the responsibility of employing learning strategies. Thus LLS plays a vital role in language learning.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Research in the field of second language learning and teaching in the early seventies saw a shift from its concern in the methods of teaching to the process of learning a second language with the emphasis on learner characteristics. This shift has been gradual but very significant, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching and greater emphasis on learners. Parallel to this new shift of interest 'how learners process information' has been the primary concern of researchers dealing with second language or foreign language learning. The paper gives a detailed account of the development of language learning strategy theory, research history, characteristic features, and importance of Language Learning Strategies.

III. RESEARCH HISTORY OF LEARNING STRATEGY OF LANGUAGE THEORY

Hosenfield's (1977) found that successful readers use contextual guessing based on inductive reasoning. Cohen and Apek (1980) focused their attention on the strategies that facilitated vocabulary learning. They used anecdotal reports of the students as a tool for analysis. Wended (1987) added a meta cognitive dimension to the LLS used by second language learners. Wended's research brought new insights to the meta cognitive knowledge of second language learners and the regulatory process they adopt while planning their strategies. Andrew Cohen feels that "Second Language Learning Strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together they constitute the steps or actions selected by learners either to improve the learning of a second language, the use of or both." (Andrew Cohen 1996.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

The term Language Learning Strategies though referred differently like 'learners strategies' (Wended & Rubin 1987), 'learning strategies' (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) and 'language learning strategies' (Oxford, 1990) has a number of basic characteristics in the generally accepted view of LLS. To understand the characteristics of LLS, the opinions of various researchers should be looked into.

Manuscript published on 30 September 2019

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This shows that all the opinions of various researchers on the characteristics of LLS are not very divergent

V. IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Learners use different learning strategies while performing the tasks and processing the new input they face. LLS are good indicators of how learners approach tasks or problems encountered during the process of language learning. Hence developing skills in these three areas like meta cognitive, cognitive and socio-affective can help the language learner build up learner independence and autonomy whereby he or she can take control of his or her own learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

Therefore an understanding of LLS is essential for all L2 teachers who aim to help develop their student's communicative competence. Besides developing students communicative competence LLS are important because research shows that training students to use LLS can help them to become better language learners. The importance of learning strategies cannot be denied and there is a need to see if training the learners in the use of strategies helps them to develop communicative competence.

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