

Exploring New Ideas to Learn : Ways to Language Mastery

Abstract

Knowledge of a language, its origin and teaching are through learning situations. Basically, a language is skill oriented learning. Learning a language involves some efforts in this direction such as oral work, writing habits, dictionary, diary keeping, reading library stories and journals etc. Learning a language goes beyond the typical idea of learning grammar and vocabulary. To truly claim a language as own involves mastery of pronunciation, construction and the ability to speak without thinking. Without this mastery, the speaker will always sound like a non-native speaker and if the goal of language mastery is for business purposes, this non-native image can possibly add a negative perspective and affect success. The fastest way to learn a language and achieve this fluent level is to learn it like a child, and this involves a full immersion program.

The present paper will focus upon some important qualities of learners. Paper also examines the steps of learning and find out quintessential for successful learning. It covers skills of learning language and use of modern technology in acquiring this skill. It also highlights on learning styles and helpful strategies in program of learning. Learning a second language involves much more than learning the words and the sounds of a language. The paper examines the barriers for language acquisition. Some other limitations are analyzed about language mastery and possible solutions will be listed out in the conclusion.

Introduction

The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as we continue to live - Mortimer Adler

The development towards future can only be possible by learning. Learning involves knowing needs and goals about self. It is a process of transformation. The mantra of transformation is "I want to be more than I now am." To transform one also implies commitment, dedication, motivation, diligence, hard work and desire etc. So a feeling is required to reach to the goal i.e. learn by learning. Path for most effective learning is through knowing oneself, capacity to learn, the processes which have successfully been used by one in the past and interest in the knowledge of the subject one wish to learn.

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Qualities of learner

Language learning comes by practice of four basic skills - Listening, speaking, reading, writing. These skills go with understanding. Strategies of learning and using a language should match ones interests, strengths and challenges. Use the Internet and technology as an environment makes one's task fun and interesting. At the beginning memorization and repetition are important.

Listening and understanding

The skill of listening is developed by teachers using various techniques, devices, methods and approaches. A learner is asked to listen to a story, dialogue, debate, discussion, instruction for identification or imitation or performing activities, description, narration etc. A learner listens to these with understanding. And thus he learns language. Abilities to recognize English sounds without errors draw meaning from what is heard, and respond in action as reaction to hearing are developed. For achieving

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this one should Practice listening, use the language lab, listen others carefully when others in class speak, exercise drills etc.

Speaking - Communication competencies dominate the world today. For learning speaking a profuse training of elements of phonetics-speech mechanisms, English vowel and consonant sounds and their symbols, phonology (syllable, phoneme etc.) and prosodic features (stress, pitch, intonation, RP, etc.) is required. Teachers can present fun with words, exchange greetings, present key vocabulary on cards, show picture or real objects or symbols, involve learners in joint projects or group work, motivate to reproduce the structures taught or converse in English using correct pronunciation, appropriate intonation and moderate speech.

Reading - Reading makes a person a ready wit. It is acknowledged that self study is best study. For making the learners skilled in the art of all types of reading (loud reading silent reading, intensive reading, extensive reading, supplementary reading, library reading), all these plans should be executed. The materials of teaching reading are blackboard, flashcards, pictures, actions, substitution tables and language games. The methods of teaching reading are alphabetic method, syllabic method, word method, phrase method, sentence method, story method and phonic method.

Writing - Writing requires complete control on hand and wrist. It is understood in two ways-the mechanics of writing, the art of composing. Proper pronunciation marks and spelling are other aspects of writing. One can write on special issues. The use of pictures (photographs, drawing, posters cartoon, advertisements, diagrams, charts and maps) provides a variety of activities in the class. A simple sketch on the blackboard and another sketch give learner opportunities for comparison and contrast.

Vocabulary - A learner should be inventive in acquiring new words, a habit of developing new words should be developed by the learner and memorizing is also an important part of it.

There are "Ten Commandments" for good language learning :

	Teacher's Version	Learner's Version
1	Lower inhibitions	Fear not!
2	Encourage risk-taking	Dive in
3	Build self-confidence	Believe in yourself
4	Develop intrinsic motivation	Seize the day
5	Engage in cooperative learning	Love thy neighbour
6	Use right-brain processes	Get the BIG picture
7	Promote ambiguity tolerance	Cope with the chaos
8	Practice intuition	Go with your hunches
9	Process error feedback	Make mistakes work for you
10	Set personal goals	Set your own goals

By every step one should not worry about what one cannot remember, or cannot yet understand, or cannot yet say. The only thing is learning and improving. The language will gradually become clearer in one's brain as new connections are made, but this will happen on moving to a new schedule and spend enough time with the language and enjoy it. That is the greatest guarantee of success.

Importance of Strategy Development

Use of technology -

Language learning is incomplete and ineffective without the technological aids (computer, tape-recorders, TV, DVD/VCD). Many aids as CALL, web-based learning, interactive learning had come out as the technology boon. In English, technology includes cameras, audio equipments, computer technology, video equipments, overhead projection devices, scanners, printers, CD equipment - almost any device that can access, present, manipulate and communicate words, sounds and images to enable us to create meaning. English teachers have always used some technology but the explosion in digital technologies has opened up new and exciting possibilities. The World Wide Web has opened a whole new world of opportunity to those who need or want to learn English. Instead of being required to go to regular classes and study with a teacher in a traditional setting, which many do not have time to do; those who want to learn English can now do so from the comfort of their own homes on the computer. In this world of globalization computer assisted language teaching provides for individualized language teaching motivates students to go through a unit or course through its varied presentation modes and by instant feedback, encourages learners to proceed with lesson. There is a tremendous saving of students, teacher's time. Testing in language learning often expects one to write, speak, etc. Computers are adaptive to students changing performances and relate the learning to suit their cognitive potentials. However, computers can never replace teacher as the human aspect is vital for learning and behaviour of the effective domain can only be developed by the teacher.

Introducing technology into the learning environment makes learning more student-centered, encourages cooperative learning and stimulates increased teacher/student interaction positive effects on student attitudes towards learning and on student self-concept. Students feel more successful in school, are more motivated to learn and have increased self-confidence and self-esteem when using computer-based instructions. Positive changes in the learning environment brought about by technology are more evolutionary than revolutionary. These changes occur over a period of years, as teachers become more experienced with technology.

Methods of English Teaching

A method is a tool. In the terms of getting the students working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important. However, a teacher should acquaint with the methods of teaching a language.

In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, foreign language learning was associated with the learning of Latin and Greek, both supposed to promote their speakers' intellectuality. At the time, it was of vital importance to focus on grammatical rules, syntactic structures, along with rote memorization of vocabulary and translation of literary texts. Late in the nineteenth century, the Classical Method came to be known as the Grammar Translation Method, which offered very little beyond an insight into the grammatical rules attending the process of translating from the second to the native language. Nevertheless, this approach to language learning was short-lived and, only a generation later, gave place to the Direct Method, posited by Charles Berlitz. The basic tenet of Berlitz's method was that second

language learning is similar to first language learning. In this light, there should be lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation, and little if any analysis of grammatical rules and syntactic structures. The Direct Method enjoyed great popularity at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth but it was difficult to use, mainly because of the constraints of budget, time, and classroom size. Yet, after a period of decline, this method has been revived, leading to the emergence of the Audio-lingual Method. This method was based on linguistic and psychological theory and one of its main premises was the scientific descriptive analysis of a wide assortment of languages. On the other hand, conditioning and habit-formation models of learning put forward by behaviouristic psychologists were married with the pattern practices of the Audio-lingual Method.

The need for communication has been relentless, leading to the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching. Having defined and redefined the construct of communicative competence; having explored the vast array of functions of language that learners are supposed to be able to accomplish; and having probed the nature of styles and nonverbal communication, teachers and researchers are now better equipped to teach (about) communication through actual communication, not merely theorising about it.

At this juncture, we should say that Communicative Language Teaching is not a method; it is an approach, which transcends the boundaries of concrete methods and, concomitantly, techniques. It is a theoretical position about the nature of language and language learning and teaching. This approach developed out of a need to have students communicating for real. It is based on the theory that children acquire language rules by using language rather than through the study of grammar. It involves creating situations where the students have a genuine need to say something, just as children do. The communicative approach often refers to speaking activities; however the other skills can also be practised in a communicative way. The essential element is to ensure that there is a reason for carrying out the task other than just practicing language. PPP stands for presentation, practice, and production. Presentation involves, as the name suggests, presenting a language point. This is usually done by the teacher. New concept of was developed a task-based lesson, the teacher sets a task for students to do that involves the use of language not yet studied in class or language studied previously that the teacher wishes to revise. ESA stands for engage – study – activate. Engage involves getting the students' attention or interest, getting them involved. If students are involved or engaged, they are more open to the learning process. Study as the name suggests involves focus on a language point. The involvement of the whole person in the learning experience is central to the humanistic approach. Activities are used that involve students talking about their feelings and experiences. The principle of this method is that grammar and vocabulary cannot be strictly divided as is often the case in traditional teaching methods. Language is made up of lexical items using grammar to support them rather than being made up of grammatical structures incorporating lexis. Lexical items are words or chunks of words, which have their own meaning. The syllabus is organized according to collocation. Collocation refers to words that are frequently used together, i.e. make a phone call, and make an appointment, heavy rain, by accident.

There are other approaches to teaching also. A teacher should choose the method according to the level of learners and his own ability to use method. It is also true that a teacher can't abide by a particular method through out the period. A teacher should look at the course book she/he about to use and see what method is appropriate for the

particular lesson and for the particular level or group of the students.

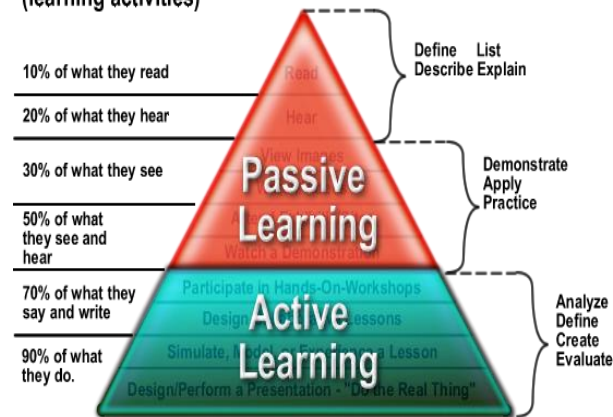
Types of learners

There are many types of learners. Sensory learners prefer concrete, practical and procedural information. They look to the fact. Intuitive learners prefer conceptual, innovative and theoretical information. They look for the meaning. Visual learners prefer graphs, pictures and diagrams. They look for visual representation of the information. Verbal learners prefer to hear or read information. They look for explanation with words. Active learners prefer to manipulate objects, do physical experiments and learn by trying. They enjoy working in groups to figure out problems. Reflective learners prefer to think things through, to evaluate options and learn the analysis. Sequential learners prefer to have information presented linearly and in orderly manner. They put together the details in order to understand the big picture emerges and finally, global learners prefer holistic and systematic approach. They see the big picture first and then fill all the details.

The biggest problem most people face in learning a new language is learner's own fear. They worry that they won't say things correctly or that they will look stupid so they don't talk at all. The major problems related with English language are lack of learner motivation, insufficient time, resources and materials, over-crowded classes, hesitation in speaking, pronunciation problems, problem of phonetics, lack of interest, no connection with the language, basics are not taught, lack of enthusiasm, feeling of inferiority, atmosphere is absent, easy literature is not available, proper motivation is not available, marks of English make no difference in their mark-sheet etc.

Competence in speaking skills is hard to develop, because it depends on a number of factors: age, aural medium, socio-cultural and affective factors. The affective factors like emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude, motivation, uneasiness, self-doubt, frustration, and apprehension are very hard for teachers to tackle, but the affective side of the learner is probably one of the most important influences on language learning success or failure.

People generally remember... (learning activities) **People are able to... (learning outcomes)**



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Way to acquire skill of language

The fastest way to learn anything is to do it – again and again until one gets it right. Like anything, learning English requires practice. One should not let a little fear stop one from getting what one want.

Use all of your Resources

Using as many different sources, methods and tools as possible, will allow one to learn faster. There are many different ways one can improve English. The internet

is a fantastic resource for virtually anything, but for the language learner it's perfect.

Surround Yourself with English

The absolute best way to learn English is to surround you with it. One should take notes in English; put English books around ones room, listen to English language radio broadcasts, watch English news, movies and television programs. Habit of speaking English should be developed. The more English material that you have around you, the faster you will learn and the more likely it is that you will begin "thinking in English."

Listen to Native Speakers as Much as Possible

There are some good English teachers that have had to learn English as a second language before they could teach it. However, there are several reasons why many of the best schools prefer to hire native English speakers. One of the reasons is that native speakers have a natural flow to their speech that students of English should try to imitate. The closer ESL / EFL students can get to this rhythm or flow, the more convincing and comfortable they will become.

Watch English Films and Television programs

This is not only a fun way to learn but it is also very effective. By watching English films (especially those with **English** subtitles) one can expand vocabulary and hear the flow of speech from the actors. Listening to the news will also provide knowledge of different accents.

Listen to English Music

Music can be a very effective method of learning English. In fact, it is often used as a way of improving comprehension. The best way to learn though is to get the lyrics (words) to the songs one are listening to and try to read them as the artist sings. There are several good internet sites where one can find the words for most songs. This way learner can practise listening and reading at the same time.

Study As Often As Possible

Only by studying things like grammar and vocabulary and doing exercises, learner can really improve knowledge of English language.

Do Exercises and Take Tests

Many people think that exercises and tests aren't much fun. However, by completing exercises and taking tests learner can really improve English. One of the best reasons for doing lots of exercises and tests is that they give learner a benchmark to compare future results with. By comparing score on a test one can realize just how much one has learned. Regular habit of doing this will make some progress with English.

Listen to English

One should speak on the phone or listen to radio broadcasts, audio books or CDs in English. This is different than watching the television or films because one can't see the person that is speaking to you. Many learners of English say that speaking on the phone is one of the most difficult things that they do and the only way to improve is to practice.

Have fun with language

The primary principle of English is to use. Just to utter a few words and sentences is not communicative competence which involves the ability to react mentally as well as verbal in communication situation. Language learning is an active development process which demands a higher degree of initiative from learners. Mechanically formed habits are skin deep, but language learning is that involves creative functioning of mind-giving sufficient credit to the learners intelligence.

Conclusion

All learning environments support the idea that learning is through action. They all support that cognition happens through communication and collaboration with others. They all support the use of technology to help in the

creation of such learning environments. It is through these new theories that learning environments, which support the development of these higher-level learning skills, can be created.

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