

A Paradigmatic Shift in E.L.T, Empowerment Of English Classroom Independent Learning Strategies

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Abstract

This paper envisages the methods of Independent Learning Strategies in acquiring English language skills whereby English classrooms can be enriched in empowerment rather than to resort to old rote methods by way of teacher centered paradigm. The shift in English Language Teaching is paradigmatic in the sense the revamping of earlier methods is the order of the day. With the help of the electronic gadgets available, the methods planned in this paper are going to be a reality. The authors specified the objectives, furnished the definition of the term, gauged the evolution of E.L.T in brief and discussed the possible strategies with suitable illustrations wherever necessary. The strategies proposed are the outcome of classroom experiments and investigation giving scope for further work in this regard.

Introduction: Learning is an activity willingly undertaken by a learner. Though learning is natural on the part of the human beings, it needs motivation at the early stages of learning. This fact stresses the need for a teacher to motivate the learners. Since knowledge is ‘not taught but it is learnt’, it is the primal, sanctified and onerous responsibility of the teacher to create suitable atmosphere for learning in classrooms. The students perse, are endowed with the faculty of learning. The duty of the teacher is to provide a congenial atmosphere for learning. The independence on the part of the learner ought to be guided so as

to be compatible to the aims and philosophy of the education. The students should be encouraged to discover the mechanics of language as the faculty is a gift to him. So, there is the need for promoting 'Independent Learning' among the taught. As an expert, the teacher connected with language teaching has to be at it always planning for the acquisition of knowledge by striving of the learner but not by copying from guide as it is being done now-a-days. Hence, there is the need for formulation of 'strategies for Independent Learning in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Objectives:

1. The objective of the presentation is to promulgate study skills among the language learners.
2. The knowledge of other branches especially content subjects like science and mathematics can be tapped for arriving at the strategies.
3. Reasoning common in science and mathematics is very much useful for the strategies to be planned. The substitution and establishment of function and classification leading to analysis is the basis for the acquisition of the mechanics of language learning. In other words we need to establish connectivity with content subjects as far as synthesis, analysis and classification are concerned.

Definition:

A strategy is a plan for the easy way of approach like a bridge over the waterway. It decreases distance and saves one's energy and time. Language acquisition needs such shortcuts. Hence, there is a need for strategies while utilizing main methods and material in language teaching.

It may sound obscure and strange to dream of learning on one's own part. The need of the teacher is always stressed upon. In this atomic age, time is so precious that we cannot help learn from all sides. Even the computer, it is afraid, may replace the teacher. So the independent learning has become the order of the day. In olden days too it was the student who devised the learning skills the use of acronyms, mental drawings, allegorical images and comparison and contrast on his own. Methods differed in order to achieve the goals. This speaks of independence in learning.

As far as strategies are concerned, we call upon the methodology. The material produced on the basis of a method has become a text. Now the need for 'student prepared text,' mentally though for the time being is to be prepared for the acquisition of language skills. He has to classify observing the data, establish relationships, using physics (which

includes metaphysics or thought). Reasoning will lead him to the formulation of the rules of the mechanics of English Language. The cause and effect will be of a great help for the learners to arrive at a general principle.

Thus, the phrase 'Independent Learning Strategies in language learning' in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular is the manifestation of scientific approach and it needs special attention.

Evolution of Language acquisition in ELT-

The introduction of English as a subject of study was based on the very skills required for the acquisition of mother tongue in that, literature was the basis of learning the skills of language. The paradigm shift was never thought of those days as English Language was limited to the objective of reproduction of one's ideas in writing by giving importance to referring to books in the library along with the need for expression mostly in writing as there were no communicative facilities. So English either created an elite society identical to English society or produced clerks and communicators in writing for running the administration which was in the grim grip of the insolent British authority. As a result only the language pundits of the vernacular or Sanskrit could make a mark in 'English Language Learning'.

The dire necessity of English Language communication skills fell during the two world wars (especially in World War-II) stressed the need for quick learning methods to be evolved. The short cut methods were sought after. Eventually the traditional grammar method had undergone a sea change and the 'Methods' began to be evolved on war-footing.

NoamChow sky'sTransformational Grammar has opened a new era and the applicability of the already laid down principles of grammar faced questions based on utility and scientific communication and interpretation. As a result the traditional literature-based-materials (texts) were limited in number.

The Era of Information Technology

The Globalization has ushered in and it underlined the need for intrapersonal communication in groups and at individual levels. Lord Macaulay once said 'Poetry dies when the society is civilized' wisdom dawns upon us. The communication skills are the need of the hour. We are expected to project our feelings and thoughts in the common language understandable to the folks and pundits alike. The evolution of branches of study also stressed the significance of simple, straightforward precise and ready expressions through communication.

Discussion:

Gone are the days wherein the vernacular was taught or learnt thoroughly as to enable the learner to find an equal concept or word formulation in his/her mother tongue. He was a translator of ideas he first thought of in his own language. It has become a bane on the part of the student/learner for it did not help him gain speed in delivery, especially when he speaks, readily. Here we are prone to stress the importance of readiness to deliver one's ideas following the invaluable words of Francis Bacon; I quote: Reading makes a wise man writing, an exact man and speaking, a ready man'.

The pedagogical discipline is to translate these words into action by developing the three skills, namely, reading, writing and speaking. The very important skill of listening has to be made to be possessed by the justified use of teachers' model speaking and the use of other devices of information and entertainment--radio, TV, cinema and exposure to model speech.

The devices mentioned above have revolutionized the very teaching of language. Most of the time of the learners is stolen by these gadgets and so there is dire necessity of pooling the resources as a supplement to classroom activities.

At Functional Words Level:

English learners can be asked to define the function of a particular word or phrase so as to understand the sentence. Once the functional words are reckoned with, in their true perspective, it will be easy for the learner to understand the usage. An experienced teacher presents structures first, underlines the importance of subject, verb, object, complement chunks. He has to present before the learners very many examples of a category and the learner will be at its struggling. The learner is encouraged to come up with a rule for the examples and compare and contrast with other structures in which the order is changed. The following example can be taken up for practice.

The mother bought a doll for the baby.

s vt do prep ido

Having given ample practice in line with the structure shown above, an insight into the structure is formed and the learner can use the structure and come up with the sentences of his own framed on various other situations. The much craved for situational dialogues will be easy for them at a later stage.

The mother bought the baby a doll.

s vt ido do

Instead of giving a lecture on the rules of the D.O (the Direct Object) andIDO (the Indirect Object) and their placement, the teacher can elicit sentences of the latter structure in a good number. Whatever rule the learner arrived at is his own. There is a challenge in so doing and the intelligent students as well as the slow learners now stand on an even berth enjoying 'Discovery of Learning' which makes the learner further inventive.

Word-forms level

The books of grammar make an unwanted effort in supplying the declension plural, adjective and adverb form, the noun form of forms used for the use in different tenses and active and passive voice. If it is the case there would arise a need for the publication of a book in which all these declensions are to be registered. The spoon feeding mechanics hamper the activity of learnin

The dictionaries are to be referred to once the students have grappled with the function of a word. Even the affixes –prefixes and suffixes- can be learnt independently.

The learner will experience later that a ppt (Past participle form of a verb) acts as an adjective/qualifier e.g. a learned man and adds words to his vocabulary.

The passivisation taught bereft of the chapter 'The Tense' creates confusion. So an imaginative teacher juxtaposes passive voice along with sentences in the Active Voice. The contrast will impress the student/learner.

The Controller of the Examination declared results

The results were announced (by C.O.E)

The students/learners think of the prithy and short statement to convey easily to the persons connected with the waiting of results.

The Sequence of Tense (Direct and Reported Speech) too can be handled soon after the Tense, in order to mark changes in the Reported Speech.

Structural Approach

Too many technical words of grammar terrify the learners at the beginning. Having discovered the function of the words in structures situation ally important, he will long for their nomenclature willingly adding to the existing ones in his vocabulary.

Word and phrase Book

Every situation warrants a structure particularly suited to the occasion. Phrases, phrasal verbs, idioms, along with the new words are to be learnt in contexts. So an

imaginative teacher will insist on the maintenance of a word and phrase book according to the pattern indicated below:

S.No.	Word/Phrase	Dictionary meaning	Model sentence found in the passage read	Sentences of the learners own (at least three)
1	2	3	4	5

Antonyms and Synonyms

Thesaurus and Book of Opposite words are encouraged to be prepared by the students at their level. The marketing galore with ready made preparations can be discouraged at the learning stage below Post Graduation.

Conclusion

The language learner can be provided with some more devices and strategies making use of computer-supplied spelling, meaning, pronunciation and usage too if it is affordable. Learning is full with self help. It saves time and students can keep pace with the fast moving learning in all the realms of wisdom including English Language Teaching. Knowledge is learnt but it is not taught. Learning is a lifelong and continuous process. Independent Learning strategies are essential for paradigmatic shift in ELT in order to achieve empowerment of the English classroom.

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