



A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING APPROACH AT SECONDARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

It is clear that the prevailing strategies at the secondary level are said to be sufficient to meet the needs of the learners. But some alterations are also desirable. Because the learners are on the threshold of lateral thinking and it is certain that they will be able to cultivate their own style in all their performances with a further modifications in the development of their verbal intelligence. These problems highlight the importance of an urgent need for a change in our present educational strategies. The Multiple Intelligence is based on the notion of phrenology, studies on the strengths, weaknesses and the idiosyncrasies of his or her mental profile. Apart from the traditional concepts of perception, there exist different kinds of mental powers such as language music or vision. According to this new approach, the students will have an all round development and it helps to enhance their emotional as well as intellectual level. Again it enables them to live in tune with the social changes. So this new approach is named Constructivism. In the recent method, learning is happening not by imitation, but by recurrence. So, the teacher has to take up a co-learner's role in the language teaching and also in other subjects. Here the skill oriented approach is replaced by knowledge level oriented approach.

INTRODUCTION

It seems that the present educational system needs a thorough change in its implementation of learning methodologies. A detailed and in-depth study on these areas is imperative to have an immediate solution to these problems. There have been many other problems enlisted as the part of the new methodology. The core inadequacy in the learning process is in relation with the learners. At present, it seems that the language learners are far away from the phonological and syntactic aspects of language. Many factors are cited as reasons for it. The primary function of language is communication. In a school the learners are expected to learn the language and communicate effectively. Instead, they suffer on account of the irrational aspects of the new methodology, with respect to its implementation and practicability. The new system suggests a holistic approach towards the learning process. So, the teachers are supposed to tackle with the role of a co-learner and help them to enter to the myriad learning processes. Then the suggested outcome is the enhancement of the multiple intelligences in a

JAYAN THEKKEPPAT

1Page

learner's brain. The term "Constructivism" upholds the statement that a learner can generate language through various discourses with a class room atmosphere. Here the learner tries to rise up to the ZPD level with the scaffolding by the teacher and also by the external influences. So, theoretically and also at practical level, there are chances for proper cognition and internalization of situations. But, here, the argument is that many of these discourses lack proper planning and they often neglect the phonological and syntactic aspects of language. The prime reason is that the teachers find it very difficult to convey the form and structure of a language; rather they choose the socio-cultural aspects of various discourses. Hence, in the absence of proper back ground, experience and motivation, the learners fail to achieve what they ought to. Theoretically, the learners get less opportunity to enhance their verbal or linguistic intelligence by which they may get acquaintance with the phonetic, syntactic and semantic aspects of language. It is quite obvious that phonology and syntax are closely related while semantics and pragmatics include inputs from other intelligences.

According to the linguists , "most children in Kerala fail in auditory discrimination for they experience difficulty in decoding a rapid string of phonemes; they not only have problems in comprehension, but may also articulate improperly. Some others are having difficulties at the semantic level also; given sentences to imitate, they are forced to affect simplifications". These problems are to be checked and find solutions found at a national way. In order to make this venture possible, the academicians and the teachers have to take the Multiple Intelligences and the so called discourse method under their keen observation. The language teachers are taking painstaking efforts to be successful .In order to achieve this ultimate goal, some innovative strategies are desirable.

The linguists opined;

"writing is also a mode of communication. The inadequacies in the learning processes often trouble the children in writing something by themselves. Here, the learner forgets the fact that learning must be in deed and not mere lip service. Reports prove that the preconceived concepts perceived by the teachers make the situation severe, and seemingly pave way for the degeneration of language. Recent reports suggest that the teachers confuse or identify the teaching of grammar with the teaching of writing. The students have not been taught adequately either precision or systematic arrangement in the written representation of facts. The learners have comprehended how to write with mechanical correctness. One may still have to learn how to write with significance and validity".

As the linguists opined, "the teacher of English appears to attempt to place the emphasis up on writing, rather than on writing about something for someone. On account of these reasons, the students of English fail in large measure to learn the nature or the significance of clarity or precision and of organizations in the written representation of facts. The children learn the



grammatical correctness reasonably well. But most of the learners are affected by their anxiety on spelling, punctuation and observation of the rules of syntax. They do their activities in a mechanical way, quite oblivious of the fact that they are communicating". These are all the visible outcomes of the prevailing learning activities at secondary level. Here the argument gains momentum and these factors kindle the spirit for inventing new strategies to alleviate the learning problems at their cognitive level. Regarding reading habits also, the reading teacher is actually making the amazing effort to get the learner to read reading.

It is clear that the prevailing strategies at the secondary level are said to be sufficient to meet the needs of the learners. But some alterations are also desirable. Because the learners are on the threshold of lateral thinking and it is certain that they will be able to cultivate their own style in all their performances with a further modifications in the development of their verbal intelligence. Hence a thorough study of this area is very crucial in the present educational milieu.

In the changing educational scenario, as everybody knows, many methodologies have already been implemented with success. Each methodology has, of course, its own advantages and disadvantages. The traditional approach which focuses on the learner's ability to comprehend and memorize ideas is rightly termed linear approach, and in this method, the teachers had been displaying their caliber in language competency. But the learners are benefited a little. Many reasons are attributed to this. The first and the foremost is the conventional idea about "the teacher – pupil relationship." The teacher was acting as an embodiment of knowledge and obviously she/he neglected the role of the students in the learning process. So, the students got only the optimum input, that is, they received the best on their cognitive level. At language level, the prime importance was given to the development of a particular skill. On account of these drawbacks, the traditional approach could not improve the knowledge level of the learners. So, the learner's brain was presumed to be 'a repertoire of random information'.

For the last many years, we have been departing from the age old lecture method and thereby denouncing the dominance of the teacher. Recently, we have got a new outlook on education, especially in the language learning process. According to this approach, the students are not at all the passive listeners and instead they have a dominant role in every teaching process. On analyzing the course books designed for high school students, one gets a glimpse into a new direction. According to the recent developments in the language learning process, the teachers are supposed to direct the students by giving ample scope for their aptitudes.

In other words, one can say that the age old lecture method was linear and mainly based on imitation, not on recurrence. So, the recent method also calls for some changes in order to make it more effective.



These problems highlight the importance of an urgent need for a change in our present educational strategies. So, instead of being an embodiment of every activity, the teacher has to act as a guide to the student's learning process, and the students have to delve deep into their knowledge level. That means a modification is needed. This approach can be termed 'holistic'. It means that all the four skills are to be developed together with the learner's knowledge level. Here, we look for the need to understand the learner's knowledge level also, and it is imperative to know the ideas related to Multiple Intelligence (M.I). Introduced by Harvard Gardner, which aims at the development of language learning processes.

The Multiple Intelligence is based on the notion of phrenology, studies on the strengths, weaknesses and the idiosyncrasies of his or her mental profile. Apart from the traditional concepts of perception, there exist different kinds of mental powers such as language music or vision.

A creative individual is one who regularly solves problems or fashions products in a domain and whose work is considered both novel and acceptable by knowledgeable members of a field. Here the Multiple Intelligence is related to developmental psychology and it focuses on the observation of different domains of the modules of the mind and to delineate the different constraints at work in the realm of mind.

The Multiple Intelligence theory is apparently similar to that of its British counterparts like Charles Spearman and the American counterparts like Thurston. It is opposed to Piaget's contention that the accuracy of the child's response is important in an activity. This paved way for the decline of I.Q. factor. And according to Vygotsky, intelligence test fails to yield any indication of an individual zone of proximal development (ZPD). And Piaget's scheme restricted to the class room activities and half hearted towards the discoveries of the new problems in the mind.

In comparison to IQ test, Multiple Intelligence has many added advantages. The know-how and know-that aspects are also applicable in intelligences. The former one is necessary but the later is relative in respect to the different cultural milieu. And the intelligence exists primarily not as physically variable entities but only as a potentially useful scientific constructs.

According to the modern approaches, the majority favours Chomskian principles, his statement that children are born with some innate knowledge and an idea on how to decode and speak their language or any natural language.

The modern researchers have found that there is a close relationship between intelligences and domains. Nearly all domains require proficiency in a set of intelligences and any



intelligence can be mobilized for use in a wide array of culturally available domains. And the field seems very important at this juncture, i.e., a sociological constructs includes the people, institutions, award mechanisms and so forth that render judgments about the qualities of individual performances. So the trio; intelligence, domains and field are imperative in the studies of human mind. The creativity of a learner emerges from the interactions of these three nodes. Each individual is influenced by his competence, his culture and field that make him competent. According to modern theories, one cannot master a domain unless one is willing to enter in to its world and to accept the disciplinary and epistemological constraints. And pupil embodies his culture's current understanding of the domain. The biological foundation of intelligence lies basically on the notion of the flexibility of human development and helps for the development of human intellectual capacities also. So it is imperative to have a glimpse in to the pragmatic relevance of Multiple Intelligence. This study is very crucial in the ongoing process of learning because the teachers and the students are witnessing a paradigm shift in the methodologies for learning English Language at the secondary level.

According to the modern research, human beings possess "Computational Mechanisms". It is said that a mind consists of a number of specific and fairly independent computational mechanisms and he or she is influenced by the cultural milieu.

The various observations made by Harry Cross and Paul Hirst reveal ideas related to the Multiple Intelligence field. According to it, particular abilities are the manifestations of the same intelligence. In the case of complex tasks, the modular or domain specific abilities may interact in its execution.

Howard Gardner says that the human cognition is basically unitary. Individuals are evaluated, based on their intelligence. We are a species that has evolved to think in language, to conceptualize in spatial time, to analyze in musical ways, to compare with logical and mathematical tools to solve problems using our all body and parts of our body to understand other individual and to understand ourselves. Each is susceptible to capture in a symbolic or notational system, use in personal and in idiosyncratic ways. All learners are endowed with these intelligences. So, these areas are to be identified and developed by the teacher. This is what is meant by a holistic approach.

According to this new approach, the students will have an all round development and it helps to enhance their emotional as well as intellectual level. Again it enables them to live in tune with the social changes. So this new approach is named Constructivism.

Introduced by Vygotski, Constructivism aims at the construction of a situation or process or activity that leads to the construction of the language. Vygotski advocates that there is a current level for every student, and with the urge stimulated by the teachers' inspiration,



she/he can rise up to the zone of proximal development. Hence the learner undergoes a number of processes and attains the ZPD level.

So, in order to rise from the current level to the ZPD level, one has to consider the Teacher's role and the Learner's role in the learning strategies.

In this new approach, the teacher's role is secondary. she/he has to direct or scaffold the students. In other words, "scaffolding" is the main duty of the teacher. All these processes are to be undergone by the learner her/himself. So, a learner has to go through firstly an exercise and secondly through an activity and finally s/he gets a refined form of that exercise. This is called Discourse Method. The discourse method can be explained with an illustration.

Assume that the teacher gives an assignment to the students. It has to serve a three-fold function. Firstly, each student has to write her/his own ideas on that particular topic and share it with his friends (pair work). Then s/he discusses it in her/his group. Later the student has to present the refined item. Finally the teacher displays the model one. So, each student can have an analogy with the displayed model. In fine, one can say that the student starts learning from her/his current level of knowledge. The one and only duty of the teacher is just to create an urge among students for learning a language. So, with the scaffolding, the student undergoes the following processes: Individual work → pair work → group work → final product (a refined one).

Here, what happens is that the student's current level increases by sharing her/ his ideas with her/his friends and then in group. So, they get a refined product out of these processes and it gives them a broad outlook. A student can thus enhance her/his emotional quotient along with his I.Q, which will equip her/ him to cope with the changing needs of the society. So, this knowledge acquisition happens not by imitation of certain things, but by co-operative learning or collaborative learning.

In the recent method, learning is happening not by imitation, but by recurrence. So, a product evolves according to the mental level of an individual or internal process of an individual. So, the teacher has to take up a co-learner's role in the language teaching and also in other subjects. So, 'recurrence' means that a learner grasps ideas not by imitating it, but by internalizing the content and it ultimately leads to the molding of a refined product. So, it seems that the new method will enhance the level of English language. Here the skill oriented approach is replaced by knowledge level oriented approach.

CONCLUSION

Many arguments can be put forward to denote the significance of the study on verbal intelligence. Many novel styles of writing are being experimented in our literary world. The media language sidelines the minute aspects of language and takes vocabulary and diverse forms of syntactic patterns in to the main stream. When the students get in touch with these referential areas, they rather misinterpret the phonetory and the syntactic structure of language, and ultimately it leads to the abuse of language. Apart from these, the text books suggested for the high school students, seem to display the idiosyncratic ways of communication. Perhaps this would affect the learner's internalization of different situations. In a language words are the representation of the things that a learner has in mind. So they must be able to move their minds along with the representation and able to help the learners to comprehend the different forms of syntactic patterns in English language. All the features such as the articulation, production and interpretation of the language aspects must be in a clear and coherent manner. Then only they can be natural in expressing their personal feelings and emotions. These view points are likely to strengthen the potentiality of each learner. Apart from these, the teachers are in an urgent need of pacifiers to their perplexed minds and to find solution to their many biased concepts regarding art and creativity. It is a fact that the teachers seem to differentiate the creativity from intelligence in all the learning processes. Perhaps they might have a false notion that 'creativity' is an alien word to the learner. Many other teachers seem to possess an idea that writing is an art and it cannot be taught. This would hamper the creative aptitudes of the learner. Here these arguments strengthen the fact that it is high time to propose innovative strategies in the area of developing verbal intelligence along with other intelligences. So some innovative strategies are needed ne for the purpose of genuine understanding of English Language.

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