Maximizing Teacher and Student Potential in the Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT
In traditional classrooms, activities and tasks were clearly a part of a pre-planned syllabus that had been previously designed and based on specific curriculum guidelines. Teachers, in answering the prescriptions laid down by these guidelines have found a difficult to be creative given the time and the demands imposed by them. In responding to admonitions for them to be creative, teachers have often resorted to bringing in randomly selected task for the sake of variety and to avoid monotony. In a learner-centered curriculum, learning tasks are selected for the purpose of raising learner awareness and development of strategies while at the same time working on items in the language that would lead to better fluency.
Keywords: Teacher, curriculum, language, strategies, and communicative approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers must be trained to recognize individual learning style and must know what learning strategies are. They must be able to conduct basic research to find out the styles and strategies of their learners and should keep in mind that the make-up of learners in one class is not necessarily that of another. Knowing that, they must then be assisted with the available resources that will help them raise the strategy levels of their learners. All too often, such resources and facilities are not readily accessible which leaves teachers to work out their own resources. For this, they must also be provided with appropriate training and time, all of which add up to high cost.

Another consideration is that a learner-centered class makes the teaching of large classes prohibitive, and especially so if teachers are made to handle more than one or two classes. This, in terms of administrative costs, would be highly inefficient. Furthermore, if one class is not necessarily like anoyher and each class would have specific needs that must be taken into consideration the problems of evaluation and standards could be mind-boggling. Even now, the tensions that come up between administrative and academic priorities are real and the implications of a learner-centered curriculum may be at some point, too difficult to work out.

The traditional methods, especially the Audio-Lingual, were very clear and specific as teachers either gave the sounds and patterns and students repeated and recalled. Communicative Methodologies were not as clear and there were so many techniques that teachers' reactions in many cases were " if you don't tell me what to do, I'll do what I want to do." Thus, in many classrooms, some teachers taught vocabulary most of the time, some taught the latest pop songs as a of teaching their students and using up class time, some restricted themselves to only structure, vocabulary or pronunciation taught in a

variety of ways-some of them long abandoned-and many simply prepared their students to pass tests. Others, comfortable with the ild listen-and-repeat drills that characterized the Audio-Lingual ways, decided to stick to that, feeling somewhat guilty about still doing drills when they were being encouraged to do pair or group work. After all, drilling taught them English, and wasn't that the methodology that helped them to be the language teachers they become? At least, in Indonesia, this seemed to be the case.

In the world outside, because the focus of communicative approaches was the learner's way of expressing wishes, feelings, ideas, information, and so on, researchers shifted from designing different methodologies to studying learner characteristics and their possible influences on their communication processes as they struggled along towards language acquisition. Intrigued by the success of some learners and the growing gap between them and those who did not seem to be getting anywhere despite the same starting point at placement, researchers wanted to know why. It was the query/doubt that paved/opened the way to research on learning styles and learner strategies.

What teacher trainees came to learn about learning styles-left versus right train abilities, for example, which the field of neurolinguistics passed on to teachers, and various types of learner characteristics, such as analytic and repetitive, or intuitive and risk-taking, were all a part of the tremendous motivation to do research and find out how people processed learning to communicate in a second language. Finding out was understandably slow because the workings of the human brain are not always-at least then-readily observable.

Studies focusing on learning styles and strategies began in the early 70s and 80s and are still going on to this day. In recent years, the research has again shifted somewhat to focus on teachers and not just learners. The argument for this is that some learners come equipped with learning strategies when they come to the classroom and some don't seem to, and it is the teacher who plays the key role in finding out what styles and strategies can be passed on to encourage more successful learning. So the teacher in classrooms where a learning strategies curriculum is predominant/main is no longer just a teacher but has also been encouraged to become a researcher.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the process of teaching and learning English there is always experience gained by either the teacher as an educator or the students themselves in delivering learning materials. Educators are happy if the material taught to their students is conveyed well, and vice versa if there is a wrong application it will make teachers and students disappointed. The Service Implementation Team pays attention to the mistakes in choosing teaching techniques that are not in harmony with the application of the methods and approaches chosen by the English teacher in delivering the material. This may be commonly done by educators, especially language teachers, in evaluating the teaching of foreign/English languages in their respective schools.

As teachers were bombarded by all kinds of syllabuses –notional and functional and different methodologies- TPR, suggestiopedia—as well as various approaches – counsel-learning, Silent Way, Natural-that would, hopefully, help them get students to communicate, the confusion increased, and resistance to new ways and methods become even sharper. Teachers and trainees were asked not only to learn, or at least get acquainted with all these techniques and methodologies-many of which were difficult to apply because of the lack of proper facilities and equipment, and most importantly, sufficient teacher training-and were then told that it was also their responsibility to apply whatever techniques were appropriate for their various classes. This, in many cases led teachers to apply "eclectic" (selective) methodologies, sort of a reaction more akin/alike to doing one's own thing in the classroom.

Because, such is the case, methodologies-traditional and current-have also come under close scrutiny/formal research to find out how appropriate and supportive such methodologies might be in

encouraging the development and learner strategies. If, in the past, traditional curriculum were planned from the outside (either by the institution, the language department or some other authority) usually before classes began, with students playing passive or receptive roles, in learner-centered curriculum and syllabuses are designed based on " a collaborative effort " on the part of teachers and learners because learners, after all, are the ones who intend to get something for their money and should have their say in deciding on the content of the curriculum and how they would like to have it taught to them. These have all kinds of implications which will be taken up further on in this paper.

RESEARCH METHOD

Every individual learner has his or her own way of processing the information he or she needs so that committing to memory is carried out in the easiest and quickest possible way. If, for instance, I were to distribute a list of questions to ask you what actions you do to remember a piece of information and then you compared your answers with those sitting around you, chances are some of your responses would be the same and others would be different, but none would be probably have exactly the same profile.

Some of you would probably remember things better if you saw rather than heard them because you would be visual learners. On the other hand, some of you would prefer hearing the information, reading it would not help very much because your preferences are auditory rather than visual. Some of you might have problems learning something that is told you or that you read because you need to find out by doing or through hands-on experience, carrying out the activity contained the information through total physical involvement as in TPR activities or roleplaying. This is the that tactile and kinesthetic learners remember what they learn. You might be the type of person who would learn best by yourself while the other persons next to you might be the kind of learner who needs to study with people and who would feel unfocused when you cannot work with other learners.

Thus, every individual has a particular and unique style which in some ways may be innate/energy in the sense that the propensity for the development of such strategies may come with the genes, but strategies to a large extent/wide are shaped by environment. Individual learning styles can be affected by age, learning aptitudes/talent attitudes, personality, tolerance of ambiguity, and past experiences in learning other languages. Adult learners, for example, are much more aware of their expectations from a language class and can get very impatient when the class does not seem to be helping them to achieve their own personal goals. Learners who have had negative language learning experience in previous conditions may have little personal motivation for wanting to be in the classroom. Learners who are analytical tend/care to be comfortable with learning structure and memorizing long vocabulary lists while others get bored with activities that focus on language forms. They would probably prefer impromptu/unprepared well and improvised dialogues and free-flowing speech giving little notice to how accurate-or more likely inaccurate-their use of language might be. Some learners will remain silent, refusing to answer unless they are sure that their use of language is correct while others are not afraid to take risks and answer spontaneously. Others may get upset if teachers give contradictory or inconsistent explanations because they tend to lean towards precision while others don't give it much thought.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This implies that in the process of learning, most individuals carry out certain operations, conscious and unconscious, that impact either positively or negatively on their way of learning a second language. The power to learn a second language thus lies in the individual and it is the individual's choice to use and switch on or off, the different activities that take place in the language classroom

constituent to his or her learning styles and strategies. In most cases, I would think, particularly in Indonesia, learners are totally unaware or their styles and strategies nor do they realize that these can either deter/block or precipitate/hurry their ability to learn more quickly and in easier ways. Having been trained to process learning in a certain way, sometimes as early as childhood, learners, in general, stick to what they are accustomed to and are reluctant to explore, or most likely do not even realize that there may be other ways that would help and facilitate their ability to learn a second language.

CONCLUSION

Learning strategies are largely directed towards real and interpersonal communication, hence, the goal of communicative competence is more readily achieved. Learners who use strategies are better students in as much as they are more consciously focused on their learning and thus more willing to participate in activities that will help them towards fluency. They are highly motivated, have definite expectations and some idea about how they might be able to achieve their goals. In other words they are, to use a term that is quite popular today, proactive rather than reactive. They take the initiative to learn whether to do so by the teacher or not and these characteristics and attitudes may well continue even after they have gone beyond our classrooms. Furthermore, good learning strategies seem to extend to other subjects and not just language.

Can teachers help poorly motivated learners and those who meet with very little success by training them in language strategies? Can language strategies be learned? Enough research has shown that teachers can succeed and have succeeded in bringing about better learning by raising strategy levels and encouraging their use in the classroom. This is done by bringing in those types of activities that consciously focus on strategy training such as teaching students to memorize more easily through such ways as mnemonics, imagery, categorization, comparisons, reviewing, and the like. Many activities such as these are found in books although teachers may not aware when they ask students to carry out particular tasks that these are strategy-raising activities. Teachers which learners in a classroom would learn best. This is why teachers are being encouraged to conduct simple surveys in learning styles because different learners may prefer certain certain ways and more likely succeed if their styles are addressed in the classroom.

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