

Integrating the Broadcast Media in Teaching Strategies of Learning ESL in Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper calls for a broader partnership between the media and education essentially, integrating the broadcast media in teaching learning strategies to students of ESL in Malaysia. Given the relevant motivation, employing language learning strategies enhances and facilitates second language learning by making learning easier, faster, interesting, self-directing and ensures improved competence and performance. Studies have proved that motivation is closely related to second language learning as it stimulates both high frequency and appropriate use of language learning strategies. Our major concern in this paper is to emphasise that, we can integrate the media especially the television and Radio to teach the appropriate use of language learning strategies among the ESL Malaysian students. The broadcast media in Malaysia can be used in both creating awareness as well as teaching students on using language learning strategies appropriately and provide them with the required motivation for positive attitudes towards English language learning.

Keywords: Learning strategies, Motivation, Broadcast media, English as a second language

1. Introduction

It is quite evident that, the field of education over the last four decades witnessed gradual but significant paradigm shift from teacher-centred to learner centred. This means putting less emphasis on teachers and greater emphasis on the learners. Many studies (Rubin 1981 & 87; Tarone 1983; Wenden 1986; Cohen 1990, 1998; O'Malley and Chamot (1990); Ehrman & Oxford 1989; Wenden & Rubin 1987; Oxford & Nyikos 1989; Oxford 1990, 93, 94 Green & Oxford 1995) evolved as a result reflecting on various definitions of learning strategies, their classifications, relevance to second language learning and how it can be used to improve second language effective learning.

Teachers were seen as the central figures in classroom language learning, their explicit linguistic expertise also seen as the key to the success of their students. The learner can achieve positive academic success with the necessary motivation and the application of appropriate learning strategies sometimes even without personal contact with the Teacher. In a study, Noor (2000) observed that apart from the rudimental classroom teaching, learners and learning strategies are also essential in ESL acquisition. According to Pauline and Gibbons (1993), informal learning environment also plays a very influential role in the development of proficiency in English particularly as it concerns the everyday language essential for basic communication. This is indicative that, the student should be encouraged and be directed or redirected appropriately in employing appropriate learning strategies. According to Lee and Bill (1997) the main reason is that second language acquisition is psycholinguistic in nature and is a continuous process as such much has to be done to achieve effectiveness. However, paramount in second language learning is the positive attitude and the use of appropriate learning strategies. In fact, learner's readiness is central in learning because it involves the state of preparedness, the state of being willing to do something additional to assist in the learning activities. It therefore means the learner is quite the centre of attraction.

Understanding the importance of the learner's readiness and attitudes toward what is being learned; Noor (2000) observed the need for the teacher to understand his student; stressing that, understanding the type of learner and how the learner thinks about what s/he learns enables the teachers to manoeuvre the teaching in accordance with the learners' behaviours, expectations and preferred ways of learning. It means therefore, it is essential to understand how the Learners think and react to what they are being taught so that the proper method of teaching is applied by

the teacher. The focus in teaching ESL nowadays is on helping students to acquire some important basic concepts and tools that will enable them develop independent learning strategies to start learning the language on their own since it is not possible to teach everything.

The learner therefore should be motivated to apply learning strategies so that the desired output can be achieved. So you teach the learner to learn to learn by himself such that he will apply deep learning strategies as opposed to surface learning strategies. Deep learning strategies are employed primarily for understanding the meaning of tasks and for satisfying the learner's curiosity, it targets long term memory. It allows for mastery and retrieval of information even after a long time. Surface learning strategies on the other hand, is often more of cramming and memorisation and is employed just for the sake of passing examinations and test. Many students of ESL opt for surface learning strategies just to graduate with good classes but with little mastery of the subject matter hence they find it difficult to use the second language to communicate.

2. What is learning strategies?

According to Tarone (1983) learning strategies is a deliberate attempt by a learner to develop his/her linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language. Similarly, Dansereau (1985) specifically looked at learning strategies as deliberate behaviours and thoughts used by learners in order to assist them in acquisition, retrieving and use information. However, to Weinstein and Mayer (1986) learning strategies can be defined as such behaviours and thoughts which a learner engages in during learning a second language which are intended to influence the learner's encoding process". In a revised definition however, Mayer (1988) defined learning strategies as the behaviours of the language learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information. Oxford (1990) also sees learning strategies as those specific actions used by the learners so as to ensure easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable language learning to new situations. In addition, Chamot (1993) observed that, learning strategies refer to those techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate their learning process and recalling of both linguistic and content aspects of information. It means therefore, that learning strategies can facilitate the internalization, retrieval, and or use of the target language.

2.1 The importance of learning strategies in ESL

Although various opinions have been given by scholars on the importance of learning strategies, one is convinced that Language Learning Strategies (LSS) are integral variables in achieving competence in second language. Littlejohn (1985) for example suggested that LLSs may in turn be an important emotional motivating factor that gingers the learner to achieve deep mastery of tasks. Similarly, Nunan (1988) also supports the idea maintaining that, learners need to be acquainted with efficient learning strategies, with a view to assisting them to identify their own preferred ways of learning.

A study by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) reveals that the task of an L2 teacher involves helping his students adopt appropriate LLS and also nurture them to develop their own learning strategies and use them. Similarly, Vann and Abraham (1990) observed that both 'good' and 'unsuccessful' language learners can be active users of similar LLS, except that unsuccessful learners often lack metacognitive strategies essential for encouraging them to assess the task and bring to bear the necessary strategies for its completion. Teachers are therefore to facilitate and guide the learner in selection and application of language learning strategies.

In order to actualise the application of learning strategies, Rubin (1987) enumerated quite a number of activities as strategies to effective learning, maintaining also that, certain learning strategies/activities apart from contributing indirectly towards effective learning (in the case of L2 learning) they also create the situation otherwise would have been created only through interactions with natives. This may come in a form of initiating a direct listening to conversation with fellow students or teachers or native speakers, either through the radio, TV stations, online sites or other means available and such further activities like watching movies or reading extra books, novels, short stories, magazines, newspapers in the target language. However, employing learning strategies is dependent upon the motivational orientations of the ESL Learner.

2.2 Motivation and Language Learning Strategies

The impact of motivation generally on academic achievements should not be overemphasised. It is clear that, a motivated learner integrates his knowledge and beliefs with positive and successful behaviours. Stripek (1998) observes that, the state of being motivated covers behaviours stemming from desires. We can therefore configure that, learning strategies are dependent on motivational drives. Also given the fact that our approach to teaching is now learner centred then the need to carefully examine the attitude of the learner is sacrosanct. To this end, Gardner (1985) maintains that, learning a second language is dependent upon the learner's social-psychological make-ups as well as the motivations. This means that, we need to know the social- psychological preparedness of the learner, his motivational orientations as well the condition under which learning the second language takes place.

We need also to understand that, motivation plays a key role in L2 learning and that much of human behaviour depends in much a social context which is linguistically manifested. Hence psychologists and educationists have for long viewed the close-link between motivation and learning in generally and language in specifics. In the words of Pintrich and Schunk (2002) learning and motivation are two interwoven variables. Similarly, Sacchanand (2002) observing the relationship between motivation and independent learning, posits that, the new dimension in learning which emphasises, "knowing how" than "knowing what" signals that, the learner has to learn to secure, use, and relate information to the changing world, which is difficult to be achieved except through positive motivation. Research findings (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002; and Po Yin Lai et.al, 2010) have also indicated the connection between intrinsic motivation and achievement goals. The study compared the motivational orientations between 786 males & 595 females Korean secondary school students based on the variables of intrinsic motivation and mastery. The results proved that, those with higher motivations achieved higher than those students with lower motivation to learn. Eburu (2010) argues that, in the 21st century in which a new paradigm shift is witnessed, the learner is been oriented towards life-long learning and is discouraged greatly from been spoon-feed. The shift in learning paradigm depicts that "knowing what" is discouraged as opposed to "knowing how" which is widely encouraged. Sacchanand (2002) supports the 'knowing how' ideal of the 21st century learner. This is because the 21st century learner is been strategized to learn how to secure, use and relate information to the fast-changing world and keeps his motivation high hence applies strategies to learn. Similarly, Maybee (2006) emphasises that independent learning enhances learning and support students academically and provide the necessary abilities needed even after graduation. According to Barnard et.al (2009) because the learner is already equipped with learning skills he offers answers as to what; when; and how to study and over-come the limitations of time and place.

Mat K. T et al. (2009) who studied the effect of motivation in relation to second language learning strategies indicate that students with higher motivation demonstrated richer repertoire strategies and more frequently than their less motivated colleagues. Mat et.al used 457 form 4 respondents from 13 religious secondary schools in Terengganu, Malaysia. Sidighi & Zaratsan (2006) also studied the effect of motivation on the use of language learning strategies among Iranian EFL University students using 126 respondents, comprising of freshmen and seniors majoring in English translation. His findings reveals that, the learners with higher achievements were those with higher positive attitude due largely to the motivation and those with lower attitude attracted lower achievements and frequency in strategy use due to negative motivation. In fact, memory and cognitive strategies of the respondents were less used compared to affective, social, compensation and metacognitive strategies.

Hassanpur (1999) was an experiment on 102 respondent's science students studying English as a special course in Shiraz University. His findings reveal that, although the mean distribution of respondents with positive attitude was higher compared to those with lower attitude, the difference was $P < 0.5$, which signifies that no significant difference exist between the two categories of respondents. Sedaghat (2001) also used 109 University students majoring in teaching English & English literature from Shiraz Islamic Azad University & Shiraz University in which the study investigated the effect of attitudes, motivation and level of proficiency on the use of listening comprehension shows that, students with higher motivation used more LLs than those with lower motivation.

Wentzel (1998) rightly observes that interests in academic activities are found to increase the tendencies of learners to formulate goals that are achievable through strategic activities. Goldberg (1994) identifying with motivation in pupils as a determinant of effective learning reported that, children with intrinsic motivation in academic have higher self-perception in academics compared to children without intrinsic motivations. Attesting to this Mitchell (1992) added that, student's motivation in learning is central and fundamental to the overall success and quality of the

learning outcome. That is why learning strategies are seen as crucial not only in second language learning but even in bilingual education where mother tongue is initially used to develop literacy skills in addition to effective learning through adequate classroom participation by the child.

Studies involving language learners often reveal that good language learners seemed to possess unique abilities to succeed using adopted learning strategies. In line with this Noor (2000) revealed that, there is a close link between learning and motivation. This is basically because learning appears to be more effective, complete and more efficient especially when it is energized and directed by strong motivational factors. Similarly, Sankaran, S. R and Tung, B (2001) investigated on how learning strategies and motivation could positively influence academic performance especially in web-based and even the normal/traditional lecture settings. Their findings also revealed that, two types of learning strategies exist: Deep and surface learning strategies. Both strategies have been found to yield the desired goals as such classified as positive learning strategies.

3. Integrating the Broadcast Media in Teaching Strategies of Learning ESL

The Media according to Wentzel et.al (1994), includes the multi-media or different channels, be it electronic or print use to communicate in everyday life. The multiple channels includes, the broadcast media (the TV & Radio), the print media (newspapers, magazines, bill boards) the electronic; the Internet & web resources and their related social networks tool such as the iPod & the sophisticated hand phones. The media is therefore used as one of the marketing strategies. As a result of adequate advertisements using the broadcast media, yearly declarations of profits of companies amounting to billions of dollars around the world, including here in Malaysia are seen on different mass media. Such is the power associated with the media hence the patronage by the business world. This will continue as long as the business world has something new to offer the consumers. In our perspective we look at the media from the angle of providing the desired awareness to our students to use the learning strategies appropriately in order to succeed in their quest for communicative English language. Given the potentials of the broadcast media if appropriately integrated is a powerful tool in creating, sustaining needed awareness to the students about learning strategies as well as how appropriate to employ the strategies. If the media effectively create a positive outlook for goods and services to an extent that the business world generate unimaginable profits we are optimistic that the media also has the potentials, if integrated efficiently, to provide same services in educating our teaming Malaysian students how to attain English proficiency.

However, the major concern in this paper is to proffer that, through integrating the broadcast media especially the TV and Radio awareness could be raised and use of appropriate English learning strategies could be taught among the Malaysian students. Although the media may not be devoid of transmitting educative programmes there has not been a coordinated English language learning strategy teaching as seen done for the Sciences on, TV2, TV3 and TV7 television stations. This paper is particularly calling for deliberate, well-planned and executed media integration into the field of education especially to teach learning strategies and its application, emphasising on its relevance in the English language learning process. The pattern of this proposed programme should be well-designed in collaboration with experts from the relevant University faculties in Malaysia. Clear objectives, time and duration of the programme could then be drawn as well as the number of experts to be involved in teaching the target audience how to employ learning strategies to learn English. For example using Oxford's Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL); which has up 62 item strategy, with clear explanations and examples learner shall be able to employ to facilitate and improve their learning. Item by item the expert demonstrates how the strategies are employed. This continues to the last item on SILL. Adequate motivation such as revealing the socio-economic potentials of English shall also be integrated as the lessons go by. According to Noor (2005) the success or otherwise of a learning task partly depends on the level of motivation accorded the learner. Noor further maintains that, although motivation could not be said to be an all-round factor in learning but it has been proven to be an effective determinant of efficient learning. Motivating learners is no problem to an expert teacher. Assessment study could be conducted to evaluate the programme after the first quarter of the programme to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme and improve on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

3.1 The Benefits of Using the Broadcast Media in Teaching and Learning

The broadcast media which includes the TV & the Radio offers unique opportunities for the teaching of learning strategies because of its accessibility and cost effectiveness. There is hardly any household in Malaysia that does not own a TV set or a Radio or both. In view of constant power supply no lesson can be missed on the basis of power failure. Other reasons for the choice of the broadcast media is that, it reaches a wider audience. We can equally record any lesson or episode for further listening or watching for easier recapitulation. The broadcast media creates motivation in the learners. A teacher at a time can reach thousands of students. According to Lightbrown and Spada (1999) when given the chance learners engage in quite meaningful activities such that it triggers group discussion among them. The TV and Radio offers that opportunity as learners listen or watch programmes they often share their experiences among their peers. The fact remains that in second language learning such as English; proficiency is gained easier where learners interact with native speakers, teachers or their peers. This means that, the TV and the Radio learning strategies programme will only augment what can be offered by the schools as we all know that schools alone may not be able to teach second language to the required oral and written competence.

In the intended programme, the instructor serves as the facilitator who provides all the necessary guidance required for appropriate employment of learning strategies in such a way as to offer all the motivational content of strategy use. Creed and Koul (1993) maintains that, the facilitator or instructor offers guidance to make linguistic features and content comprehensible. This applies also to the learning strategy instructor either on TV or Radio. The media is therefore integrated as a partner in progress as it creates room and triggers more group discussions among students especially when the targeted viewers meet in schools. According to Lammy and Goodfellow (1999) majority of the people prefer to watch and listen about issues than to read about it. In fact the print media is becoming less attractive in view of the spirit of so much pressure in places of work or schools and little time is left for leisure reading. Adding that, after an online or TV programme, learners engage in reflective conversation. This often assists in particularly in second language learning.

The fact also remains that such programmes of teaching the students learning strategies on television, if carefully designed, planned and carried out will enable the students to be around their television sets and may be in the midst of experienced parents who can complement the television programme by offering useful guides and motivation to the student. According to Wentzel et.al (1994) studies have revealed that, viewers attend more carefully to Television programme especially when guided by an instructor and or ask to view it deliberately for instructional purposes. Second language learning is quite a demanding task and often takes a longer time to attain mastery. The radio is an excellent yet affordable tool found to be useful in creating awareness, informing and educating its listeners and in the rural area is even referred to as the, “king” because it keeps the owner well informed. If properly harnessed, the radio offers the learner with the opportunity of having a teacher or instructor right on his/her bed. It makes learning interesting because after listening to the teaching on the radio the learner can brainstorm with fellow colleagues. The programme can as well be recorded if need be for further discussions. In this case, different and many strategies of learning ought to be employed to achieve success.

5. Conclusion

It is quite true that, the Internet is a very important tool in teaching learning today. However, it is also true that, not all families can afford the Internet facilities compared to owning a TV set and or Radio. It therefore means that, for those without the Internet, the TV and Radio can offer useful solace as they can serve as the better options. In this paper attempt was made to present what learning strategies means, its importance and objectives in the teaching and learning business. The paper also mentions the close impact of motivation on employing learning strategies. The Malaysian students can benefit a lot academically through the integration of the broadcast media into the teaching of learning strategies. This belief was echoed by Nunan (1988) where he stressed the need to provide learners with effective strategies of learning that would develop student’s independent learning strategies. These clearly indicate that if a learner understands the viability of LLS the difficulties encountered while learning the language will be mitigated. Littlejohn (1985) suggested that LLSs may in turn be an important emotional motivating factor that gingers the learner to achieve deep mastery of tasks. This could effectively be achieved using the broadcast media. A study by O’Malley and Chamnot (1990) reveals that the task of an L2 teacher among others involves helping his students adopt appropriate LLS. In order to reach as many learners as possible the broadcast media will be the best

medium.

5.1 Recommendations

This paper only highlighted the need to integrate the broadcast media in creating awareness and teaching of learning strategies believing that, where students are equipped, taught and motivated to employ learning strategies effectively; it helps them to learn to learn on their own. However, we recommend that there is also a great need for a careful planning by the appropriate agents of government responsible for educating the citizenry to liaise with the appropriate faculties and bodies to partner and make this idea a reality and a success. Technology should be used maximally as part of a well-planned agent of social change as it relates to students achievement. It is recommended also that, clear goals and expectations be set for the programme and all efforts should be made to ensure to provide benefits to Malaysians especially ESL learners. Hence, research should be carried out to develop the required strategies for the integration of broadcast media into the teaching of learning of learning strategies to Malaysian students.

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