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Language Learning Assignment

PART A

Pedagogy of Language Learning

Foreign language teaching requires application of the best pedagogical practices on the part of teachers. This can be achieved by developing effective and efficient lessons and incorporating the most updated methods of language learning in their course. On the other hand, there is a considerable need for motivation for the second language acquisition on the part of students in order to keep them interested and positive about the language they seek to learn. The research work and studies conducted in the field of L2 acquisition, methods of teaching and motivation have shown that the latter is dependent on the former.

Suggested Language Lessons

With these rules and basic principles in mind, the following is a set of three highly recommended language lessons that incorporate simple language learning activities and would make language learning more interesting, effective and less boring.

- **Lesson Plan One –**

NAME: Learning the language from a Cultural Perspective

Class Objectives: The overall purpose of this lesson is to create an environment so that students feel like the language is being learned not in the classroom but in the community where it is spoken.

Connection to Course Goals: Learning about the culture of the second language increases motivation to learn that language. An increase in motivation increases the interest of students and helps a student learn the language with an open and receptive mind.

Introductory Class: The students would be informed regarding the importance of learning the culture of the second language and the daily class activities and progress reports.

Activities: Simple language activities included in this 30 minute lesson may include a combination of the following:

- Discussions about the culture of the target language and cross-cultural differences. (10 minutes)

- Inviting native speakers of the second language in the classroom to convey knowledge about their culture and helping in bridging the gap between the first language and the second language. (10 minutes)
- Watching the commercials and artwork of the target language (5-8 minutes)
- Lessons about the non-verbal cues generally understandable by the native speakers of the language. (5 minutes)
- Carefully planning classroom and school display to aid in language acquisition and learning, (Planning in advance, before the commencement of class)
- Encouraging the students to create art material incorporating geographical and cultural element of the language in order to support not only literary but also presentation, communication and creative skills. (Homework assignment)

Learning Outcomes: The lesson one focused on the cultural aspects of the target language would develop an interest and high level of motivation among the students. They will also be reconciling the differences between their own culture and the culture of the target language. All these activities and lessons will make the L2 acquisition a lot more fun and interesting, rather than being seen as a boring compulsory subject.

- **Lesson Two –**

NAME: Developing a connection between foreign language and past experience learnt in native language

Class Objectives: This lesson is necessary because second language learning is often seen as important with respect to academic and instrumental purposes. Rather it should be seen as a creative learning activity that takes place with the help of your first language as a reference point (as explained in part 2 later). The lesson would be focused on practical learning activities that require active participation from students of all degrees of competence to observe, listen to, talk with and be supported by other students.

Connection to Course Goals: Languages are mostly taught in schools and institutions using the traditional method that involves a lot of translation from one's native language to the target language along with the knowledge of the rules of grammar. The latest studies in the field of language acquisition have shown that these methods of teaching are no good for a person who is learning, say English, as a foreign language, or as a second language. In fact, some of these exercises can be outright harmful for the students (Gray, 2004). Lesson two incorporates more modern and effective approach

incorporates the simple activities that trigger the natural speaking and listening abilities of the student, and also help them in acquiring the language in the most effective way (as explained in Part B).

Activities: This lesson would include some or all of the following activities:

- Group discussion on particular topics between students of varying language competence and abilities under the supervision of the teacher
- Encouraging pupil to learn greetings and common classroom language in the target language, without discouraging the use of native language
- Tell popular short stories known by most of the students in the foreign language. This will tell them how an idea and experience that they have already learnt in their native language is conveyed in the foreign language.
- Distribute crossword puzzles and matching quizzes. This will not only develop pupil's interest but also help them in building vocabulary lists.
- Teach simple words and nouns with the help of physical objects. For example, a chair, an apple, a pot, a glass of water etc.
- Teach verbs and adjectives with the help of diagrams and graphical presentations.
- Occasional Scrabble sessions.
- Let the students compare the concepts and forms being taught in the foreign language with that in their native language. DO not discourage the use of L1 (native language).

Learning Outcomes: The students will be able to connect their life experiences (not just the words learnt in their native language) in the second language. They will have a basic grasp of the nouns, verbs and adjectives and simple rules like singular, plural, homophones, and antonyms.

- **Lesson Three –**

NAME: Reading in Second Language

Class Objectives: Learning a new language by reading in that language can be really fruitful, as it increases the motivation for second language acquisition. Reading sessions included in this lesson will include classroom dialogues and scenarios and be supported with other effective teaching techniques such as Corrective Feedback.

Connection to Course Goals: With short reading and listening sessions, the students will be able to enhance their basic language skills.

Activities: Activities during this lesson would normally include the following:

- Reading sessions with the classroom from story books, poetry with graphical representation and beginner level novels (15 minutes).
- Listen and read along sessions that require pupil to listen to a recording and read the subtitles or teleprompter (8 minutes).
- The above activity should be followed by the listen and repeat along session (without subtitles). (5 minutes).

Learning Outcomes: This lesson would enhance the reading and speaking skills in the foreign language, and also acquaint the students with proper pronunciation.

The detailed discussion along with the information about the educational context and academic importance of learning through these suggested lessons are presented in Part B.

PART B

The discussion with respect to the above presented language lessons and justifications for the recommended teaching style are presented below.

Language Learning - Vision Not as a Subject but as a Social and Cultural Event

Lesson One would be focussed on the higher primary level classes as these students would need to have basic understanding of the second language. Students in these classes would not be homogenous with varying degrees of competencies and different socio-economic levels. There won't be any students with disabilities so special arrangements are not required.

In trying to understand the acquisition of L2 as a language we need to see it not just as a subject, but as a deeply social and cultural event; and that's what makes language learning different from other academic subjects. The elements of language learning as a subject include the understanding of lexical terms, vocabulary and grammatical rules (as in the repeating pattern of the language distinguishable by the brain); whereas it is also socially bound requiring the language learner to integrate several elements of the culture of the second language (Gardner, 2001). L2 motivation researchers have widely supported this approach, which has led to the inclusion of social and cultural dimension in the language learning and studies. This has also introduced the concepts of multiculturalism, language globalization, power relations between different cultures and social groups in the study of L2 motivation. This, in fact, also explains why it was the social psychologists who first initiated the researches into L2 motivation.

Various studies have shown that the students who are most quick and motivated to learn a new language in ESL and EFL contexts are those who possess high level of integrative or intrinsic motivation, which means to say that they admire the culture of the target language, like the people speaking that language, inspire from the dominant personalities of that culture and wish to integrate into the target society without any difficulty. To quote Lambert, an integrative orientation means a desire to learn the target language due to "a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group" (1974: pp. 98). As a teacher, I would try to improve the instrumental motivation in students which means the interest of students in learning L2 when it is going to bring him/her benefits such as a good academic career, better job etc.

Developing a Connection between Foreign Language and Past Experience Learnt in Native Language

This is the central idea around which the lesson two would revolve. This in part involves resolving the issues faced by the language learners who are forced to speak in the second language and translate from their native language and learn the grammatical rules of the target language. This lesson would probably be best for the students in second year of the primary level. Student sin this class would all have the simialr level of undertsanding of the second language. Attention on the students who are trying to learn Englishas a Foreign language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL).

To understand this we will focus our From day one in the school, these students face a number of challenges trying to learn English as an L2 (EFL and ESL). In many schools and colleges the use of their native language (L1) is considered unacceptable as it supposedly hinders the learning of English as L2. Use of L1 is mostly considered a negative classroom practice and students can even be penalized for its use in classroom activities in some schools and colleges around the world. According to Phillipson (1992), this type of pedagogic behavior can compromise the way in which student's think and shape their identity. Always censuring the use of L1 in the classroom also sends the message that the language itself, and not just language, but the L1 culture as well, is not acceptable.

Whilst this pedagogic practice may be considered acceptable by some cultural standards and norms, some cultures may even view it as an English invasion and a means of retarding local identity (Kubota 2002). Some people see the learning of English as L2 as merely for educational and instrumental purposes while maintaining their local heritage and cultural norms and values (Jenkins 2012). Also, once the local language is banned from the classroom, it is harder (especially for lower grade students) to express their views and feelings in the L2 classroom setting as they are not much familiar with the new language. As a result of this they are unable to contribute and participate in the classroom activities which results in boredom and may even

the loss of interest in studies. Hence demotivation results from not being able to have full command in the foreign language (Do"rnyei 2001).

Students, especially those in lower grades, who have always communicated in their native L1, have all of their life experiences and cultural awareness in their local language. So L1 is the only reference point for them. Thus, in this monolingual situation, if they are presented with some content in L2, it would be very hard for them to form a reality based on their very limited understanding of L2. In such cases student's try to translate the words and phrases in their native language to get the total grasp of the language instead of trying to understand the true meaning of the content. This may hinder the learning practices and even demotivate students to learn L2. So the essential connection between the foreign language and past experience learnt in L1 are difficult to be formed by these students. As students struggle to make these connections, they find the process of new language acquisition very difficult and demotivating. So this method of teaching English as foreign language is very unproductive and makes the learning environment a little more uninteresting which may make the student feel bored.

Thus L1 should not be seen as a means of hindering or retarding the acquisition process of L2, but rather as a useful tool to provide motivation to the students and a useful means of communication. Similarly for learners at lower grades, it can help them to develop new meanings and explanations in L2 by activating the prior knowledge and experience in L1. The academic research dictates that the inclusion of L1 in day to day EFL classroom activities and communication in the class is completely normal and should not be discouraged. Teachers should realize that L1 is an integral part of students' life, their identity and the culture to which they belong. So as Cummins suggested "we need to investigate pedagogical ways of incorporating, not alienating L1" (Jenkins, 2012, pp. 03). So L1 should be used in productive ways to make the language learning process less intimidating for the students with the help of aforementioned activities.

As a teacher, my responsibility would be in employing a modern language teaching approach. The advocates of this modern approach argue that just as a child learns to walk all by himself without any special instructions but by watching and trying; they also learn to talk by listening and gradually starting to communicate with others. Thus in the same manner, the best way to acquire a second language or a foreign language would be in the same way you acquired your native first language – the nature's way!

It follows from this that a person never really focusses on the grammar and other technical aspects of the language while learning his first language, neither was he forced to learn the correct tense. It so happens that our brain is able to distinguish a rule from the repeating pattern of the language. With the passage of time the correct grammatical rule becomes an in-built language mechanism in our brains which works without having to think. If our language lessons are designed to interfere with this automatic rule building process, the student will never be able to learn properly the language and his brain will always respond slow in accessing the grammatical rule book as a result of which fluency in second language cannot be mastered.

Learning the Second Language through Reading

This lesson would be designed for all levels of the primary classes with students with varying competencies and knowledge. However the difficulty in each succeeding level would increase.

Reading is one of the most important components of communication. Reading is often one of the most basic skills that students acquire (accompanied with writing, speaking and listening) while learning a new language. Learning a new language often starts with reading in that language. However, compared to the hefty amount of literature available in the motivation to interact with others in a foreign language, only a meager amount of research and studies are found for motivation for reading in a foreign language. Setsuko Mori (2002) in "Redefining Motivation to Read in a Foreign Language" has presented a very extensive research study about the reading motivation. According to the journal article, "The data for this study was obtained from an original questionnaire, which largely drew upon Wigfield and Guthrie's (1995, 1997) theory of reading motivation in L1. The results of a statistical analysis suggest that motivation to read in English (as an L2) may be divided into four sub-components, namely:

- Intrinsic Value of Reading in English
- Attainment Value of Reading in English
- Extrinsic Utility Value of Reading in English, and
- Expectancy for Success in Reading in English." (Setsuko Mori, 2002, pp. 01)

Therefore an effective learning strategy would definitely incorporate a vigorous reading session in the class.

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