



Multisensory Approach in Teaching English Language

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ABSTRACT

After gaining independence from British rule in 1947, English remained the official language of India. From then since it continues in the school education system through the three-language formula of the Kothari Commission. Despite the presence of English in the school curriculum for a long time, still, the current National Achievement Survey shows a different picture of the status of English in Indian classrooms. Various methodologies have emerged throughout the course of time; however, the proficiency level of students in English language acquisition remains unattained. Considering English as a second language, it is imperative to acknowledge that the active engagement of students in the language learning process is essential for accomplishing the objective of imparting functional language skills. Maria Montessori, who was a perceptive observer of the learning processes of children, observed the existence of epigenesis of intellectual functioning, which implies that the experiential roots of a given schema, or learned behaviour, will lie in antecedent activities that may be quite different in structure from the schema to be learned. Montessori, (1912) guides educators to embrace themselves through the techniques which foster multisensory experience. Such experience enriches the learning and motivates the learners This paper proposes a viable solution to teach the English Language through a Multisensory approach.

Keywords: Multisensory approach

Introduction

Status of English in the current scenario

In the current scenario, the status of English holds significant prominence on a global scale. English has attained the stature of a lingua franca, serving as a common means of communication among individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It is widely acknowledged as an international language for various domains, including education, business, technology, and diplomacy. Moreover, as per the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

for school education, language serves not only as a means of thought but also as a tool for acquiring various forms of comprehension. Language education aims to enable effective communication while simultaneously fostering aesthetic expression and appreciation. In line with the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, the primary objective of the education system is to achieve universal foundational literacy in primary schools by 2025.

However, according to the recent national report on benchmarking for oral reading fluency and reading comprehension, (known as the Foundational Learning Study 2022) conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), only 17% of students can correctly read 0 to 14 English words with comprehension within one minute. Conversely, on the higher end, 33% of students can correctly read 54 or more English words with comprehension within the same time frame. These findings are representative of all the thirty-six states and Union Territories (UTs) that participated in the study. Despite English having a longstanding presence as the third language in the Indian School Education system, the overall proficiency in language acquisition remains disappointingly low.

Challenges of Teaching English

Teaching English in India poses several distinctive challenges due to the linguistic diversity of the country, encompassing approximately 19,500 languages. Educators face difficulties in addressing the varied language backgrounds of students and catering to their individual language abilities. Many students have limited exposure to English beyond the classroom setting. Additionally, the lack of immersion in an English-speaking environment hampers students' language acquisition and fluency. Another concern to consider is whether teachers possess the necessary competence to provide an environment, conducive to English language development. English language teachers in India may encounter challenges associated with their own language proficiency and training. Not all teachers possess a strong command of English, which can impact their effectiveness in teaching the language.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, socio-economic disparities in India contribute to unequal access to quality English language education. Students hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds often face resource limitations, including inadequate access to textbooks, technology, and English language learning materials. Many schools in India experience large class sizes, posing a hurdle for teachers in providing individualized attention to each student. Limited interaction time and difficulties in assessing individual progress further impede effective English language instruction.

In order to tackle these challenges, it is imperative for teachers to adapt their teaching approaches to accommodate the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of their students and cultivate an inclusive learning

environment. Throughout the world, a variety of methods have been extensively utilized for the instruction of English as a second language. These encompass the Grammar-cum-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Suggestopedia, Silent Way, Total Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching, as well as lexical and Task-based methods. Moreover, numerous emerging approaches are presently under exploration to aid English language learners, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Extensive research studies have been conducted on teaching approaches in English, emphasizing their pivotal role in classrooms due to their direct impact on students' learning experiences and outcomes. Effective teaching approaches facilitate the active engagement of students in the learning process. By fostering student engagement, motivation, focus, and interest in the subject matter are more likely to be cultivated. It is important to acknowledge that each student in a classroom possesses distinct strengths, weaknesses, and prior knowledge. Hence, effective teaching approaches encompass the provision of differentiated instruction, thereby tailoring the instructional methods to accommodate individual student needs.

However, in India, particularly in government schools, the predominant adoption of the Grammar translation approach and bilingual method in classrooms, is observed. It is noteworthy that the most prevalent and favoured method of learning in this context is memorization, regardless of whether the content pertains to literature or language. Unfortunately, such an approach merely promotes rote learning and reproduction, preventing learners from attempting to utilize English in authentic real-life situations. In this regard, learners only acquire a superficial grasp of the form of the language, rather than attaining a comprehensive understanding of the communicative content across all three interconnected language levels: phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Multisensory Approach

A multisensory approach in teaching involves engaging multiple senses simultaneously to enhance learning and memory retention. It recognizes that individuals have different learning styles and preferences, and by incorporating auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, and tactile elements into instruction it aims to provide a more comprehensive and effective learning experience. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2004) defines multi-sensory as 'using visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modalities, sometimes at the same time'. Kinaesthetic refers to perceiving through touch and an awareness of body movements.

A multisensory approach integrates different senses, such as seeing, hearing, touching, and moving, to reinforce learning. For example, students may listen to a teacher's explanation (auditory), observe visual aids or demonstrations (visual), engage in hands-on activities (kinaesthetic and tactile), and discuss concepts with peers (verbal). This way the attention and

engagement of the learner increased. Children need to use many sensory modalities to explore their environment.

Multisensory approaches to reading are based on the idea that many students learn best when the material is presented in several different modalities (Preston, 1998). Children should be encouraged to move around, touch, smell, and, when appropriate, taste objects because, it has been found that the more senses involved in investigating an object, the more likely they are to develop ways to remember the objects or recall their experiences (Carbo et al., 1986). By appealing to multiple senses, a multisensory approach can increase students' engagement and participation in the learning process. It adds variety and stimulates interest, making the learning experience more enjoyable and interactive. Research suggests that multisensory learning promotes better retention and recall of information. In the research, Improving Letter and Word Recognition

Using a Multisensory Approach by Dalecki, Carolyn G, it is observed that the inclusion of multiple sensory modalities during reading makes words more memorable, and more deeply myelinated into memory. Students see, pronounce, and hear the words in the process, creating a representation of words with their own movements. Thus, how information is presented is an important factor in the learning process. When multiple senses are involved in the learning process, connections are formed between different neural pathways, leading to stronger memory consolidation. Students are more likely to remember and retrieve information, later when required to produce.

Learners distinguish themselves from each other by their learning styles. These styles are acquired over a period due to various socio-cultural factors. Some of them can be field-dependent or field-independent, convergent, or divergent, risk-taking or cautiousness, and reflection or impulsivity. Moustafa, (1999) paper examines how learning styles theory is related to multisensory approaches to teaching addresses the reading styles method and the multisensory approach and explains how educational programmes utilising these approaches have been successful in raising student accomplishment.

All learners should not be clubbed together and treated as if they form one homogeneous group. For instance, Skehan, (1989) observes that field-dependent learners have greater communicative competence, greater conversational resourcefulness, and greater negotiation skills than field-independent learners.

Multisensory teaching recognizes that students have different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic. By incorporating multiple sensory modalities, it caters to a wider range of learning preferences. Accommodation of Learning Styles is possible by using this as a method of teaching English.

Research 'Teaching a foreign language using multisensory structured language techniques to at-risk learners: a review' by Richard L. Spark support the use of multiple sensory techniques to teach the

phonology/orthography, grammar, and vocabulary of the foreign language as well as reading and communicative activities in the foreign language. Teachers can use various strategies like flexible grouping, tiered assignments, and individualized support to ensure that students receive the appropriate level of support based on their abilities and readiness.

In the research, on Multisensory Approach in teaching English Skills, Sreen Jubran concluded that students were more engaged in learning when they were given a chance to use all their senses.

Conclusion

These research studies highlight the positive effects of a multisensory approach in teaching language. Particularly in areas such as emergent literacy, reading skills and language learning. It is important to note that the effectiveness of any method depends on various factors such as the teacher's skills, learner motivation, resources available, and the context in which English is being taught. Active engagement of learners with the learning environment plays a crucial role. The multi-sensory approach has been used successfully with dyslexic children. It's important to note that while the multisensory approach can be beneficial, its effectiveness may vary depending on individual learners, specific teaching methods, and the context of language learning. Implementing this approach effectively requires skilled and knowledgeable instructors who can create meaningful multisensory activities and integrate them into the language curriculum.

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