ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY IN ENHANCING LEARNING SKILLS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

English majors are becoming more and more aware of the value of learning the language. However, a significant issue for many English majors in English learning is inefficient English learning. One of the main causes of this issue, in accumulation to the linguistic context, is the absence of a useful policy manual. In this study, 35 English students are questioned via a questionnaire regarding their English learning and method used to determine whether or not the employment of the language learning approach is beneficial to the students'reading abilities. The majority of students, it has been discovered, employ learning techniques when studying English.Additionally, the most beneficial tactics for students' English include cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. In other words, using learning methodologies can improve the reading skills of middle school students. This research suggests that professors must consistently mentor students in learning methods, particularly in the training of cognitive, metacognitive, and social skills, in order to improve students' competency.

KEYWORDS: Language learning techniques, English learning techniques, and English major

INTRODUCTION

The application of English is the ultimate purpose of learning it. India's reading English instruction quality has significantly increased in recent years. However, because of the effect of the conventional middle school English instruction method, students have experienced significant barriers and challenges while attempting to communicate with one another in English. Additionally, the Ministry of Education's 2007 guidelines for middle school English classroom teaching declare that the objective of middle school English instruction in India is to

"cultivate students' broad English application capabilities, especially listening and reading skills." to equip students with the language skills necessary for efficient written and verbal communication in their future professional and social interactions (Hou& Jiao, 2018).In order to develop and enhance students' skills, it is necessary that middle school foreign language training move away from the mechanical classroom that previously focused on linguistic drill and instead gives students effective instruction in learning processes.

Numerous studies on second language acquisition techniques have been conducted internationally and in India. Since the middle of the 1970s, research on learning tactics overseas has become more prevalent. Good language students of all ages share seven traits, according to Rubin (1975). First of all, a good language learner is a willing and precise guesser, or, to put it another way, a good guesser is someone who efficiently acquires and stores information. Second, they have a great desire to interact with others or to gain knowledge through interaction. Thirdly, they frequently lack inhibitions, which means they are open to making mistakes in order to learn and share.Additionally, a good language student is ready to attend to form, which means they are continuously searching for linguistic patterns. A good language student also prefers to practise their pronunciation, construct sentences, and start conversations with other students in the target language. In addition, a good language student keeps an eye on both his own and other people's speech. They pay attention to meaning last but not least.

Review of Literature

An effective language learner is aware that focusing solely on a language's grammar or on its outward appearance is insufficient (Rubin, 1975). Wenden, Cohen, O'Malley, Chamot, Oxford, and others started researching learning techniques for picking up a second language after then (Lu, 2013).

In India, research on language acquisition techniques first started in 1984. (Wen & Wang, 2004). WenQiufang and Wang Lifei (2004) noted that India has made significant advancements in the study of English learning methodologies. The findings of more than 30 years of research include empirical studies on Indian students in addition to introducing the theory of language learning strategies and its research context (Gu&Zang, 2017).

These studies primarily concentrate on the following areas: vocabulary learning strategies (Gu, 1994; Wu & Wang, 1998; Zhang, 2001), relationship between communication strategies and English grades (Level) (Wen, 1995; Wang, 2002; Li & Zhang, 2018), and study on the relationship between communication strategies and learning outcomes (Wen, 1995; Peng, 2014). (Wen, 1995; Li &Liu,2015). According to Wu and Wang (1998), Indian students employ a range of techniques, such as metacognitive and cognitive techniques, to learn English vocabulary.When it comes to listening techniques, metacognitive strategy instruction can successfully aid students in enhancing their listening abilities (Chang &Hao, 2016). The research, particularly in the areas of phonetics, intonation, and grammar, is significantly uneven when it comes to learning strategies for reading, listening, reading, and writing language abilities. Research on social and affective techniques is still in its infancy.

There hasn't been any actual research done yet on how Indian pupils deal with anxiety. Studies on vocabulary acquisition techniques are superior in comparison (Wen & Wang, 2004). Additionally, there is anabsence of comparability among the various studies, and more research is required to regulate the association between the usage of learning strategies and language achievement or level (Zheng, 2011). Only 3% of papers between 2000 and 2009 focused on strategies (Jiao, 2013). The utilisation of learning strategies and English proficiency have been the subject of numerous research over time. However, it is uncommon to find studies on the connection between English reading competence and English learning methodologies. Only a few studyhas so far been able to clearly show the type of association (Wang, 2014).

Research Question

The purpose of this article is to provide answers to the following two research questions by surveying 35 English students about how they learn and read English.

(1) How are language learning methodologies being used in the real world by English reading students?

(2) Does the employment of the language learning methodadvance the reading abilities of English major students? Which language learning techniques are more beneficial, if yes?

The Meaning and Types of Language Learning Techniques

Different definitions of learning strategies are provided by numerous influential people in the field of second language acquisition. According to Rigney, learning strategies are methods that students employ to acquire, hold onto, and extract information and skills (Rigney, 1978). Learning techniques, according to Duffy and Roethler (1982), are implicit rule systems. According to Stern (1983), learning methods only include "the fundamental beliefs that language learners accept in their learning process." According to Oxford (1990), learning strategies are certain arrangements that a student takes to make learning simpler, quicker, more pleasant, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to other settings.

Additionally, according to Ellis (1999), "learning strategies are the techniques or steps that learners utilise to acquire inter-language." In a nutshell, language learning techniques are the practises that students undertake to advance their language acquisition. Learning strategies have been categorised by academics in the United States and overseas from many angles. Learning techniques are broken down into metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social-affective strategies by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). Management methods and language learning strategies are two categories of learning strategies, according to Wen (1995). Additionally, Cohen divided learning techniques into two categories: language learning techniques and language using techniques (1998). The strategies that are directly connected to language, such as memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensating techniques, are referred to as direct strategies by Oxford (1990).Indirect strategies, such as metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, are those that are not immediately connected to the language.

Memory techniques are those tactics and ways that can aid language learners in learning and memorization. For instance, English learners in India were compelled to memorise terms in order to increase their vocabulary. The most fundamental tactics are thought to be memory techniques. Cognitive tactics are mental techniques that help language learners comprehend a foreign language through a range of practical methods. These techniques come in a variety of forms, including summarising, evaluating language, and repetition.Cognitive techniques all serve the same purpose, which is for the learner to manipulate or modify the target language, notwithstanding their diversity (Oxford, 1990). According to Oxford (1990), when learners

lacked linguistic proficiency, compensating tactics might be useful in helping them acquire and use the new language. For instance, when pupils are unsure about how to utilise a new term, they opt to use body language as a substitute.

Reading's process and outcome are the subject of metacognitive methods, which involve self-monitoring and self-regulating behaviours. The learner's awareness and comprehension of their psychological state are what they are. In relation to a learner's emotional state, such as their emotions, attitudes, and values, we speak of their affective methods. The development of self-confidence as well as emotional and learning attitude control are very beneficial for students. Learners who attempt to practisereading English in a variety of social settings employ social tactics. Social skills can increase the amount of social interaction for language learners. As was previously said, language learning techniques are crucial for assisting students in identifying and successfully managing their cognitive learning activities, which increases the effectiveness of language acquisition.Oxford's classification, which is extensively utilised and involves thousands of students, is the main focus of this research (Ellis, 1994: 539).

METHODOLOGY

This study intends to determine whether or not the adoption of language learning methodologies benefits English major students'reading abilities by examining how English majors learn the language and their English proficiency. To be more precise, this research will answer the concerns presented above and offer beneficial insights for English teaching and learning.

Participants

English majors from the School in North India are the attendees. 35 pupils, all of whom were taught English by the same teacher in grades 2021-22, participated in the survey. These kids were selected for the survey because they are freshmen and sophomores, which allows teachers to evaluate their reading language proficiency. The outcomes will be more trustworthy. After their second year, sophomore students, in particular, almost no longer participate in regular classroom instruction. They must study independently if they want to further develop their skills. Therefore, assisting these students in creating efficient learning strategies now would greatly benefit their future English self-study.

Instruments and Procedures

In this study, a questionnaire and a test paper are used. The format and content of the test are primarily from a language instructor, making it more accurate and dependable than a casual quiz in assessing the student's English reading ability. A score of over 90 is considered outstanding, while one under 60 is regarded as failing the test. The full mark is 100 points. The methodology used in Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning served as the foundation for the questionnaire. This questionnaire is divided into two sections: questions concerning strategies and general information. It has been made clear to students that the questionnaire is only utilised for academic research and has no bearing on their academic performance.In the end, 30 completed surveys were totaled, and each one was valid.

Grades	$81-85$	$86-90$	$91-95$	$96-100$	Total
Total	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	7 (23%)	19 (63%)	30

Table 1 Test Results

We can see from the chart that more than half of the students received grades higher than 95, indicating that they have excellent English skills. In other words, there are more high-level speakers among the students than low-level speakers.

Category	Main idea
Memory strategies	Remember something (1-4)
Cognitive strategies	Employ the mental processes (5-7)
Compensation strategies	Making up for missing knowledge (8-11)
Meta-cognitive strategies	Organize and evaluate the knowledge (12-15)
Affective strategies	Manage the emotion (16-19)
Social strategies	Learn spoken English with others (20-24)

Table2. The Questionnaire's Organization and Main Content

The structure of the questionnaire was clearly displayed in the table. Every question has the following options:1 = Never or hardly, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always or Almost Always

Data from the questionnaire was gathered, entered into the computer, and examined using SPSS Software. There are 35 English majors polled, and 30 valid questionnaires are returned.

Mean score	Frequency	Evaluation
1.0-1.5	Low	Never
1.6-2.5		Usually not
2.6-3.5	Medium	Sometimes
3.6-4.5	High	Usually
4.6-5.0		Always

Table3. Descriptive Statistics

The scale described by Oxford is the basis for the analysis of these statistics, which is given in the above table (1990). According to Oxford's interpretation of averages, if the mean score is above 3.5, it is considered to indicate high use of that strategy; if the average score ranges from 2.5 to 3.4, it means that learners occasionally use this kind of strategy; and if the mean score is below 2.4, it means that learners do not typically use this kind of strategy.

Frequency	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Usually not	Never
Average scores	4.6-5.0	3.6-4.5	2.6-3.5	1.6-2.5	1.0-1.5
Number/Percentage	0	5(17%)	21(70%)	4(13%)	0

Table4. Frequency of the English Learning Strategy Use

The data shows that the majority of pupils' employ learning strategies when studying English reading.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Use of Students' Language Learning Techniques Generally

Strategy Category	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory strategies	3.20	.74
Compensation strategies	3.20	.70
Cognitive strategies	3.26	.81
Meta-cognitive strategies	3.15	.75
Affective strategies	2.90	.53
Social strategies	3.07	.68
Total	3.13	.53

Table 5 Use of Students' Language Learning Techniques Generally

Following data processing, table 5 can show the mean score (Mean) and standard deviation (SD) in each of the six categories for each participant. It is easy to see from the above table that all means for the six strategy categories fall within the range of 2.5-3.4 despite disparities in the level of use each strategy group (medium use).

We can observe from the above table that the overall average frequency of students using English learning techniques is 3.13, indicating that only sporadic use of English learning strategies is occurring among the subjects for the purpose of improving their English. In general, English majors consciously employ English learning tactics in their speech. The mean of cognitive strategies is comparatively the highest of the six strategy category means. In other words, cognitive learning procedures are most frequently employed among these. For instance, "I watch English TV shows, movies, or listen to English broadcasts,""I have memorised several fixed sentences and employed them in my study," and similar expressions. In other words, kids employ cognitive, memory, and compensatory techniques more frequently than the others.

In addition, learners use meta-cognitive methods somewhat more frequently than they do cognitive strategies, memory strategies, and compensating strategies. Affective methods are the least frequently utilised. Oxford (1990) believed that the mood and emotions of the learners

were the primary influences on the learning effect, yet it appears that middle school students struggle to use emotional tactics. Students claimed, "I feel nervous and I can't control myself when I speak English."

The Effects of Language Learning Techniques

We can observe from the table that P=.012 It implies that the application of language acquisition techniques might reveal the communication skills of middle school students. In other words, English major students'reading abilities benefit from the employment of English learning methodologies. The majority of students can employ learning strategies to some extent in the process of learning to read in English; the more learning techniques middle school students apply, the more proficient their reading in English is. The relative importance of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies is, respectively,.016,.004, and.038. These tactics are the most effective ones for improving students'reading abilities, according to studies.These methods can be used by students to describe efficient teaching techniques, create learning plans, and assess the success of their English reading instruction. The students should focus on mastering the proper use of these tactics if they want to increase the effectiveness of their reading of English.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study indicate that English majors only seldom utilise English learning techniques to improve their English, based on the information gathered from the questions intended to determine how the general use situation of English major students' language learning strategies. Their levels of use of cognitive strategies are highest relative to their levels of use of emotive techniques. This result is consistent with Lu's (2013) research. According to the analysis, English majors can gain from using English learning techniques. Therefore, it is essential for pupils to master certain efficient techniques. First of all, the results have already demonstrated the importance of incorporating language learning techniques into the study of English.The table also shows that the most effective ways for improving students'readingabilities are cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. As a result, it is crucial for teachers to emphasise to their students the value of learning these techniques. In other words, it's crucial to incorporate language learning techniques into the study of English.

For instance, teachers can encourage students to make it a habit to watch English-language television shows, movies, or listen to English-language radio broadcasts; assist students in learning some fixed sentence patterns and using them in their studies; and encourage students to try using English to express their ideas in both academic and real-world contexts. Second, pupils struggle to use emotive techniques to enhance their English reading. Teachers should therefore encourage students to talk and have the proper perspective on their reading blunders. Additionally, teachers are crucial in providing students with additional opportunities to speak English and engage in a range of practise activities. Students should foster an interest in reading English while managing their emotional states.Students should also make every effort to master additional English learning strategies and understand how they are supposed to be used.

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