



REVIEW ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue.2.,2016 (April-June)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

IMPORTANCE OF PARENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION IN THE TEACHING OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of an ongoing collaborative agenda throughout the working life of educational personnel teaching the English language to learners from multilingual backgrounds and some important strategies that parents and teachers can develop in order to make English language learning for their children/students effective and successful. It works towards helping parents appreciate the importance of their role in their children's education in general and language learning in particular. This paper advocates that constant parent-teacher interactions are extremely necessary and states that they are bound to be very fruitful. The paper also discusses the distinction between language acquisition and language learning and how when parents become involved in their child's training of the language there is perfect amalgamation of both *acquisition* and *learning*.

KEY WORDS: strategies, language acquisition, language learning, language proficiency.

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Given the baffling multilingual situation that the Indian population is thrown into, it is very likely that all teachers of English at some point in their teaching careers will run into students who do not yet have adequate proficiency in the English language to fully understand the academic content in their classrooms. This paper focuses on the importance of parent-teacher camaraderie in imparting English language proficiency to the learners which is so very essential for achieving success in life.

Many teachers find it difficult to deal with students who come from varied linguistic backgrounds. Research conducted over the past many years suggests that there is a definite increase in the academic achievements of children when their parents are engaged in their education. The same logic can be valid in the case of language learning as well. Educated parents equipped with good language skills must step in to help teachers incorporate certain strategies and resources conducive to children's academic development.

When children fail to perform well in academics and seem to struggle with learning to communicate effectively in the English language, parents tend to become frustrated. Instead they must begin to reflect on

ways they could contribute to their child's learning, they must work in partnership with the school to make sure their child would receive the needed help. Parents must not blame the teacher completely for their child's failure. If they do so, it only builds barriers. They must learn to trust and communicate with the teachers in a very friendly way and provide a good support system at home which would definitely help their children to learn with ease. This attitude helps the teacher accomplish his/her goal easily as well as quickly and the teacher's accomplishment in turn becomes the parents'.

Parents must from the very beginning try hard to imbibe in the child good reading habits. Exhaustive reading helps the child pick up the correct grammatical patterns and vocabulary of the language. They must help children realize that there is no escape from the English language if they really want to succeed in life. Parents must also teach their children to listen extensively to the standard pattern of English speech on radio and television. This exposure to the Standard Pattern of articulation helps in attuning the ears of the learners to the sound system of the English language. This training of the child to listen effectively is extremely important because much of how one speaks largely depends on what one listens to.

Teachers must on the other hand keep themselves abreast with the latest and keep on learning throughout their working life. They must realize, especially those dealing with younger ones, that their students look up to them as their '*champions*' and that whatever they speak is like the '*Gospel Truth*' to the child. Their speech is considered to be the *accurate model* no matter whatever they may say. Most children when corrected by their educated parents at home, refuse to be corrected because they strongly believe that their teacher is correct.

Sometimes teachers themselves fail to understand certain aspects of the nuances of English language. In such situations, educated parents aware of such details can come to the rescue of the teachers. They must let them know the correct forms in a very friendly and indirect way rather than being very overt with them or trying to put the teacher down. They must find means and ways of very tactfully getting the message across. On the other hand, there may be some parents who may need help from teachers to correct the grammatical structures and pronunciations of their children at home. Constant parent-teacher interactions result in learning from each other and are bound to be very fruitful. They are extremely necessary if both want to improve student performance.

Language acquisition is a subconscious process where a child learns as part of the process of his/her growing up. The mother never ever teaches her child its mother tongue explicitly with books and a blackboard. It is a process of natural assimilation. Language acquisition involves intuition and real interactions between people in the family and neighbourhood in different situations, where the learner is an active participant. It familiarizes the child even as it is born with the sound system of the language as well as its grammar and vocabulary. This is the way children learn their mother tongue, a process that effortlessly generates functional skills in the spoken language without any knowledge of the theory. The child is most comfortable while using his/her mother tongue. It is through this language that the child is able to argue, discuss, think and express herself/ himself best. It is the language in which the child even dreams!

The English language on the other hand is learned in schools as a second language after a first language is already established. Most often this is the reality in our country where a child who speaks a language other than English goes to school for the first time to learn the English language. It involves explicit instruction in the rules of the language which happens in the class room. The focus of this kind of learning is on the written form and the objective is for the student to understand the sounds, structures and rules of the language. Teaching and learning are technical and based on a syllabus, where children learn the theory with very little or no practice. A lot of time is spent on error correction and there's little room for natural spontaneity.

When parents become involved in their child's training of the language we see that there is perfect amalgamation of both *acquisition* and *learning*. Since many teachers of English impart instruction to a population of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, there should be an ongoing, integrated and collaborative agenda throughout the working life of educational personnel. Parents must begin to think of

ways they could work in partnership with the teacher to make sure the child would receive the needed help at home.

Teachers and schools often feel all of the responsibility for teaching the kids, if parents can appreciate that and lend a hand and present themselves as members of the team, an effective partnership can be created between the parents and the teachers which can transport the children into a bright future.

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