RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING METALINGUISTICS SKILLS TO IMPROVE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN CLASSROOM SITUATION

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the ideas for enriching the language learning by teaching metalinguistic skills. The only skills that focused here is syntactic, morphology and pragmatic for understanding a language and its importance. Activities is also provided in this article that can be helpful for classroom teachings.

INTRODUCTION

Language as a communication system is thought to be fundamentally different from and of much higher complexity than those of other species as it is based on a complex system of rules relating symbols to their meanings, resulting in an indefinite member of possible innovative utterances from a finite number of elements.

Language primarily as the mental faculty that allows humans to undertake linguistic behavior: to learn languages and produce and understand utterances. English is learnt as a second language in almost all over India. English is a more acceptable lingua franca. English has been widely used as the medium of instruction through various stages of educational process. As Parasher(1979) in a study of *language attitudes of educated Indian bilinguals* found that English wads preferred to regional language as the language of higher education.

For the past few decades many efforts have been carried out for improving their language acquisition. But there is some linguistic impairment in the process of English. In other words learners need to learn hoe language works in addition to acquiring language skills.

Young learner's need to develop metalinguistic skills and the ability to think about and manipulate the structural features of language. (Tunmer, Herriman and Nesdale, 1988,p.136)

Metalinguistics is the field of study that places in the forefront the language based monitor writers use to control five linguistic dimensions: phonology, syntax, semantic and pragmatics.

The term 'Metalinguistic' was devised to cover aspects of linguistic science dealing with the relation of linguistic behavior (language) to other human behavior.

As previously stated metalinguistic ability is divided into four broad categories (Tunmer, et.al.,1988)

- Word

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- Syntactic
- Pragmatic
- Phonological

Pawtowska, Robinson and Seddoh (2014) and Varghese and Venkatesh (2012) describe metalinguistic skill use in each of these language domains.

Phonological metalinguistic skill include recognition of phonemes that comprise a particular language, how sound combine to form words.

Syntactic metalinguistic skills manifest in judgments of sentence types and word order in sentences and also subject- verb agreement.

Pragmatic metalinguistic skill allows one to determine if a message is said out of context is inadequate or does not maintain contextual relevance.

Morphological or word metalinguistic skills determines the appropriate use of morphemes.

Of these metalinguistic skills phonological skill have received most attention. Because most of them believe that phonemic or phonological awareness is powerful for learning the language. But this paper have chosen to focus only on enhance the learning process by teaching morphological, pragmatic and syntactical metalinguistic skills.

SYNTACTICAL AWARENESS

Syntactical awareness is knowledge that is utilized to judge syntactic correctness. Roth.et.al (1996) found that it may have highest influence on learning language.

Learners with good syntactic knowledge are skilled enough to try different pronunciation of words with uncommon spellings until they find the one that make sense 'in terms of language structures'. For example 'ough' is different pronunciation in dough ,cough and rough. In order to identify these words one must have the knowledge of syntactic awareness.

Children become more sensitive to semantic and syntactic features in reading as they mature and have more opportunities to use language. (muter and Snowling, 1998).

In a classroom teaching one must develop syntactical awareness through teaching. For example how writing can be used to non-native speakers to develop the formal structure by introducing them to write dialogues by giving them a real life situation and the teachers ask them to read aloud in the class and correct them. This makes them to rectify their mistakes and develop their skills in the areas that they make a mistake.

MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS

It is the knowledge utilized to judge morphological correctness, its use in examined conjunctions with that of meta syntax.

The conscious ability to understand and manipulate small units of meaning (morphemes) to produce and decompose complex words (Carlisle, 1995) has also been identified as an important predictor of word reading skills(Deacon, 2012; Carlisle & Nomanbhoy, 1993; Kim et al., 2013; Kirby et al., 2012, Roman et al., 2009; Sigston et al., 2000)

Give learners exercises like change into derivational form, morphological analogy test to improve their morphological skills in a specified language.

For example;

a) Zip: zips: Dog: _____ (Dogs)
b) Shipped: Ship :Reached: _____ (Reach)

PRAGMATIC AWARENESS

It is the ability to use language appropriate in social contexts (Halliday, 1975, 1977; Snow et al., 1998). Moove (1995) says that there are two areas that are problematic for poor readers. By teaching children to tune in to the structure of language, children's reading skills will be strengthened, teachers can introduce the concept of text structure including the structure of narrative text and uses of language through teacher read aloud and shared reading.

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Read aloud the text helps the learner to learn the language. Read aloud helps to develop scheme and invite learners to be engaged. Shared reading actively engages readers in reading process. It should contain a good story and have situations that learners can relate. It should contain memorable language. Shared reading helps to investigate the providing scaffolding and modeling. The learner's prior experience with syntactical structures of written and spoken language will be helpful in understanding pragmatic awareness.

Teachers should provide conversation exercises, provides a lot of modeling and explicit feedback to learners and show how to converse with one another.

CONCLUSION

Learners must develop metalinguistic skills or awareness to think and play with language apart from its meaning. In India, many children failed to acquire basic skills. Teaching of metalinguistic skills improves their language skills. Teachers can support the learners by teaching these skills and guiding them. If the time is devoted to metalinguistic skills learners will learn the language early and effectively.

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