

ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC NEEDS: TEACHING LANGUAGES TO DISABLED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Language teachers in the middle part of the twentieth century witnessed the “birth” of a disciplined approach to second language learning and teaching, but the nascent profession was hard put to come up with viable answers to questions about learning the foreign language.

KEYWORDS: abilities, Physical Disabilities Characteristics Students, language learning.

INTRODUCTION

The students' abilities in their subject-matter fields, in turn, improve their ability to acquire English. Subject-matter knowledge gives them the context they need to understand and know English of the group. During the classes students show how the subject-matter content is expressed in English. The teacher can make the most of the students' knowledge of the subject matter, thus helping them learn English faster. People learn languages when they have opportunities to understand and work with language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting. In this view, ESP is a powerful means for such opportunities. Students will acquire English as they work with materials which they find interesting and relevant and which they can use in their professional work or further studies. The more learners pay attention to the meaning of the language they hear or read, the more they are successful; the more they have to focus on the linguistic input or isolated language structures, the less they are motivated to attend their classes.

As a researcher, I have always been interested in learning about the instructional strategies that work for students with learning disabilities, for English language learners, and for students in general. Adults must work harder than disabled students in order to learn a new language, but the learning skills they bring to the task permit them to learn faster and more efficiently. The skills they have already developed in using their native languages will make learning English easier. Although you will be working with students whose English will probably be quite limited, the language learning abilities of the adult in the group are potentially immense. Educated adults are continually learning new language behaviour in their native languages, since language learning continues naturally throughout our lives. They are constantly expanding vocabulary, becoming more fluent in their fields, and adjusting their linguistic behaviour to new situations or new roles. That's why teaching English for specific needs is more difficult cause of we should explain the topic again and again. According their ability, we should teach any foreign languages.

Language acquisition of disabled students is the process by which children and adults learn a language or languages, is a major field of linguistic study. First-language acquisition is a complex process that linguists only partially understand. Young children have certain innate characteristics that predispose them to learn language. These characteristics include the structure of the vocal tract, which enables children to make the sounds used in language, and the ability to understand a number of general grammatical principles, such as the hierarchical nature of syntax. These characteristics, however, do not predispose children to learn only one particular language. Children acquire whatever language is spoken around them, even if their parents speak a different language. An interesting feature of early language acquisition is that children seem to rely more on semantics than on syntax when speaking. The point at which they shift to using syntax seems to be a crucial point at which human children surpass apes in linguistic ability. Although second-language acquisition literally refers to learning a language after having acquired a first language, the term is frequently used to refer to the acquisition of a second language after a person has reached puberty. Whereas children experience little difficulty in acquiring more than one language, after puberty people generally must expend greater effort to learn a second language and they often achieve lower levels of competence in that language. People learn second languages more successfully when they become immersed in the cultures of the communities that speak those languages. People also learn second languages more successfully in

cultures in which acquiring a second language is expected, as in most African countries, than they do in cultures in which second-language proficiency is considered unusual, as in most English-speaking countries. The two main, well documented findings of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research of the past few decades are as follows:

1. second language acquisition is highly systematic
2. second language acquisition is highly variable

Although these two statements might appear contradictory at first sight, they are not. The first one primarily refers to what has been called the route of development the nature of the stages all learners go through when acquiring the second language. This route remains largely independent of both the learner's mother tongue and the context of learning (e.g. whether instructed in a classroom or acquired naturally by exposure). The second statement usually refers to either the rate of the learning process, or the outcome of the learning process how proficient learners become. We all know that both speed of learning for disabled students and range of outcomes are highly variable from learner to learner: some do much better much more quickly than others.

Before we expand on these findings a little more, it is important to note that, traditionally, the concern for rate of learning has been the center of teachers' and learners' attention. This is because it has obvious pedagogical implications: if we understand what makes learners learn faster and progress further, then maybe we can be better teachers or learners. However, these two lines of enquiry are both part and parcel of the same endeavor, which is to understand thoroughly how learners learn. In fact, understanding the route learners follow, and therefore having clear expectations of what learners can achieve at given points on the developmental continuum, is crucially important for both learners and teachers.

Such study leads us, for example, to a better understanding of the significance of errors in the learning process. Producing them need not be seen as necessarily problematic (in fact, some errors can be evidence of a more advanced linguistic system than the equivalent correct form: for example, learners will usually produce rote-learned formulaic questions such as 'where's X?', e.g. 'where's the ball?', in which 'where's' is an unanalyzed chunk, before producing the developmentally more advanced 'where the ball is?', the second stage in the development of the interrogative system before the final stage in which 'where is the ball?' is produced correctly. Teachers will also be less frustrated, and their learners too, when they become aware that teaching will not cause skillful control of a linguistic structure if it is offered before a learner is developmentally ready to acquire it. Now, of course, if we can speed up progression along the route that research has identified we need to understand how to do so. But understanding this route is inseparably bound up with clarifying the question of rapid and effective teaching to students with specific needs.

The robust research findings regarding the systematicity of the route followed by the second language learners do not have straightforward implications for language teaching, however. One logical possibility might be that curricula should closely follow developmental routes; this is not sensible however, given

- (a) the incomplete nature of our knowledge of these routes,
- (b) the fact that classrooms are typically made up of learners who are not neatly located at a single developmental stage, and
- (c) the fact that developmental stages typically contain non-target forms.

Other possibilities are that curricula should be recursive with inbuilt redundancy, and that teachers should not expect immediate accuracy when teaching a new structure, or that they should give up on closely prescribed grammar curricula and opt instead for functional and/or task-based syllabus models. Many teacher's language educators have actively welcomed the role of 'facilitator' rather than 'shaper' of development, implied by such models.

Physical Disabilities Characteristics Students with physical disabilities are limited in the functioning of parts of their body. These disabilities include cerebral palsy and muscular degeneration. Physical disabilities exist independently or appear together with other disabilities, such as cognitive delay and learning disabilities. These students are often restricted in their daily independent functioning, their mobility and in their balance and motor control. **Implications Cognitively**, students who only have physical disabilities have average to above average intelligence and their learning potential in English is age appropriate. With the appropriate modifications these students can and do reach the benchmarks of the English Curriculum. Students with physical disabilities can use assistive technology or other technological facilities. The teacher must take this

into consideration when planning the lesson. When the lesson includes activities that require movement, the student or homeroom teacher should be consulted as to the student's capability to take part in the activity and whether special assistance is required. In cases where there are additional disabilities, teaching should be adapted to the nature of the specific disability. Behavioral Disabilities Characteristics Students with behavioral disabilities are generally characterized by difficulties in self-control, hyperactivity or hyper-introversion, deficits in attention and concentration and problems with organization. Not all students necessarily reveal all these symptoms.

Teaching language to students with specific needs is more difficult than to teach to healthy students. If we explain to students once time but for disabled students, we should explain twice or more. By the way we pay attention to teaching methods too. Cause of the disabled students need more and more attention.

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