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ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH GAMES

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ABSTRACT:

Nowadays there are controversial views regarding the acquisition, learning of languages by children. It is commonly agreed that language is learnt through imitation, especially as per behavioral theories. This implies that both first and second or foreign languages are learnt in the same way. They say, learning languages irrespective of whether they are first, second, third or nth follows the same steps.

The **purpose** of the study is to point the main ideas of English language learning using games. The objectives are to study the problem of teaching learning English as a foreign language, to study trends in teaching a second or foreign language, to study related to a language games and different language games used in the classroom for teaching English as a foreign language; it was also examined the impact of language games on classroom interaction

The **methodology** includes literature review related to the topic; methods of analysis, classification, and comparative analysis.

The most important **results** are understanding how children learn a language, basics of EFL teaching-learning, comparing monitor and input hypothesis, some theories such as accommodation theory, multiple intelligence, different types of interaction through language games.

It is **concluded** that it is necessary to make EFL learning enjoyable, playful and stress free. The best way to do this is to introduce the new language through games. When using games for educational purposes in a classroom setting is accepted as fruitful and beneficial, you can begin to devise language games of different types. Games for teaching EFL have a number of advantages in addition to the teaching language elements.

KEY WORDS:

English, Acquisition, Language Game, Interaction, Classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays there are controversial views regarding the acquisition, learning of languages by children. It is commonly agreed that language is learnt through imitation, especially as per behavioral theories. This implies that both first and second or foreign languages are learnt in the same way. Learning languages irrespective of whether they are first, second, third or nth follows the same steps.

The **purpose** of the study is to point the main ideas of English language learning using games. The objectives are to study the problem of teaching learning English as a foreign language, to study trends in teaching a second or foreign language, to study related to language games and different language games used in the classroom for teaching English as a foreign language; it was also examined the impact of language games on classroom interaction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are linguists who believe that learning a second or foreign language is never the same as acquiring the first language (L₁) because the knowledge of L₁ will always interfere with learning a second language (L₂ or foreign language (FL) (House, 1997, Cameron, 2001). At the time of learning the SL, children are slightly more mature because they have already learnt one language. It is necessary to go deep into this matter and understand how children react to a new language, how they think about it, process it and acquire it.

Language learning theories are based on philosophical approaches. Approach refers to “theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching” (Richards, & Rodgers, 1986, p.16). The very first theory proposed was the Nativist theory. According to this theory, language acquisition is a biological matter.

There is a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) fitted in the human brain that enables human beings to acquire the language /

languages to which he is exposed. According to this theory, there exists a universal grammar that is common across all languages and part of the genetic make-up. This theory was proposed by the famous linguist Noam Chomsky.

No doubt, different methods of teaching a SL in a classroom setting are based on relevant theories. Conventionally, the grammar-translation method was widely used in classrooms. SL was taught through S₁ by translation. Rules of grammar were explained and learners computed the rules and constructed sentences. The grammar translation method emphasizes written work and does not include spoken communication or listening (Kim, 2008).

The teacher dominated the class and one-way transfer flowed from the teacher towards the students. Students were passive learners and not actively involved in the learning process. The method turned out to be dull, mechanical and meaningless. Students had to memorize long lists of words and rules of grammar. The focus was on form rather than function. Students were unable to use language for communicative purposes. The greatest advantage of grammar-translation method is accuracy but it was decontextualized. This method was replaced by the Communicative Approach.

I support the idea that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) comprises both a means to teaching language and the aim of teaching (Daisy, 2012). CLT is based on Hymes’s concept of communicative competence which is an extension of Chomsky’s concepts of linguistic competence and performance. It is not enough for the learner to be competent in linguistics or grammar alone to use language in a given cultural social context. Therefore, the situation in which language must be used becomes relevant for language teaching.

Howatt (1984) stated that “The Communicative Language Teaching stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for

communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching” (p. 27).

In the light of this approach, both instructional and learning goals are aimed at communication. It assumes that language does not occur without a social context. Based on this concept, therefore, both language teaching and learning should be accomplished in its context. Learning emphasizing communicative competence is now commonplace in the world. CLT emphasizes fluency at the cost of accuracy.

METHODOLOGY

The method of literature review related to the topic was used. I have reviewed articles, books, websites etc. about the various theories of language learning, studies on the use of games for teaching language and studies about English as a second or foreign language. This includes a review of the main language learning theories. Methods of analysis, classification, and comparative analysis were used in the paper.

RESULTS

To my mind, it is important to find out how children learn a language. Since the need to learn other languages besides the mother tongue has emerged, a lot of literature has been written about second language learning. Most researchers agree that second language learning can never be the same as first language acquisition. This is the chief difference they make in the terminology that while a first language is acquired, a second language is learnt.

This is so because when the first language is acquired, the mind is a blank slate, whereas the knowledge of the first language is bound to affect the learning of another language. Yet, some researchers believe that learning the first and second languages follows the same pattern.

The process of first language acquisition cannot be alike to the learning a second language. While the former is an

unconscious process, the latter is mostly a conscious and deliberate effort. Hence, it is necessary to understand how children acquire the first language and how they learn a second language. The process of language learning in both the cases is important.

EFL Teaching-Learning

In the late nineties some new methods of language teaching were introduced, mostly as a reaction to the Grammar-Translation method. This led to Total Physical response (TPR) in later years. No single method is suitable for every learning situation. For different settings, different methods have to be adopted and integrated.

Gradually researchers saw the need to teach spoken language and phonetics for achieving correct pronunciation. Conversational dialogues took the place of word lists and grammar rules. The deductive approach gave way to the inductive approach. Meanings were taught through associations in the target language instead of translation. This led to the Direct Method or Naturalistic Method.

Translation was forbidden and students could learn at their own pace. “These principles provided the theoretical foundations for a principled approach to language teaching, one based on a scientific approach to the study of language and of language learning. They reflect the beginnings of the discipline of applied linguistics – that branch of language study concerned with the scientific study of second and foreign language teaching and learning”. (Richards & Rogers, 1986, p. 8)

In the 21st century we see a rise in communicative methodology. The aim is to develop communicative competence. The interactive approach is recommended by school boards and universities. The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for

language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language.

For example, practising question forms by asking learners to find out personal information about their colleagues is an example of the communicative approach, as it involves meaningful communication. Classroom activities guided by the communicative approach are characterised by trying to produce meaningful and real communication, at all levels. As a result, there may be more emphasis on skills than systems, lessons are more learner-centred, and there may be use of authentic materials.

Dolle and Willems (1984) investigated the role of teachers in communicative approach. They observed that although the teaching process becomes interactive, there are greater demands from the teachers. The verbal and non-verbal behaviour of teachers gains importance. Whong (2013) argues that CLT has been broadly accepted as an appropriate approach to language teaching. Language pedagogy has shifted from 'structure' to 'meaning'. The writer has presented ten characteristics of CLT and explored them from a linguistic point of view.

The conclusion is a call for a renewed focus on the understanding of language for language teaching expertise. Guangwei (2002) attempted to import CLT in the Chinese context but it failed to make the expected impact. The Chinese culture of learning proved to be the most important potential constraint. The researcher argues that CLT and the Chinese culture of learning are in conflict in several important respects, including philosophical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, perceptions of the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, learning strategies encouraged, and qualities valued in teachers and students.

The socio-linguistic theory of language learning is based upon the CLT approach. The purpose of playing language games in the classroom is to initiate interaction and communication among learners. Hence, this

approach is important in this study. It directly influences the socio-linguistic theory.

In a recent survey of sociolinguistics and language teaching, McKay and Hornberger (1996) divide the field into four related areas: 1) studies of language and society—how large-scale social and political issues affect language use in a particular society, 2) studies of language variation – how the “same” language varies from speaker to speaker, from place to place, and from situation to situation, 3) studies of language and interaction – how language is used in face-to-face communication, and 4) studies of language and culture – how particular cultures privilege some kinds of language over others.

Language acquisition and use take place in a social context. Hence, SL researchers must understand the relationship between the two. In Iraq, English is not the native language. Hence, cultural variations and cross-cultural issues are bound to arise. From this point of view also, the socio-linguistic theory is more relevant to this study.

The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis states that there are two independent systems of second language performance; acquisition is the result of a subconscious process similar to children's mother language acquisition and requires life-like second language interaction, which gives more importance to communication and not accuracy.

On the other hand, learning occurs through formal instruction and is a conscious process, which leads to knowledge of the target language. Learned knowledge makes it possible for learners to read and listen more so that acquisition can take place. The Natural Order Hypothesis suggests that second language learners seem to acquire the characteristics of the target language in the same natural order as the first language. Contrary to intuition, the rules which are easier to state and to learn are not necessarily the first to acquire. It is

observed that the natural order is independent of the order in which rules have been learned in class and may not be the same.

Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor Hypothesis states that a learner's learned system acts as a monitor to what language is being produced by the learner. That is, while only the acquired system is able to produce spontaneous speech, the learned system is used to check what is being spoken. This checking or monitoring occurs before or after the interaction is made, but not simultaneously. The Monitor Model thus predicts faster initial progress by adults than children, as adults use their monitor when producing statements in the target language before having acquired the ability for natural performance, and adults will input more into conversations earlier than children.

Input Hypothesis

The Input Hypothesis states that only understandable input will produce acquisition of the target language. It is implied that learners must be exposed to input that is higher than their actual level of knowledge of the target language in order to produce a result in the acquisition of the target language. In some instances where learners do not possess that higher level of input, the development and improvement of the target language will not occur. The Affective Filter Hypothesis affirms that the learner's emotional state acts as flexible filters that freely permit or obstruct input necessary to acquisition. It is said that adolescence and puberty are not effective periods for second language acquisition due to the hormonal changes that occur during that development period.

Accommodation Theory

The Accommodation theory implies the way learners may adapt their speech in multilingual settings. This theory suggests the way learners adjust their way of interacting with people of different culture with different languages in order to facilitate communication. It also states that is the way

the learner's social group identifies itself in the target language community. If these two groups do not have a positive effect on one another, or they do not connect and identify themselves with each other, there will be a consequence in the acquisition of the second language. When learning a new language, learners need to feel that they are part of this new culture and that they feel a cordial welcoming from the new group. If none of these intentions are met then learners will not have an effective and productive learning acquisition process.

Social identity is another sociolinguistic issue that has a great impact in second language competence. Social identity is the way in which learners understand themselves in relation to others, and how they view their past and their future. Structural inequalities can limit learners' exposure to the target language as well as their opportunities to practice it. The input that learners acquire could be received from different sources such as the teacher, textbooks, individuals, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, etc. And if these resources are not accurate in their language transmission, then the input might not be logical to the learners, and the learners' intake will be erroneous, which will result in the failure of language competence.

In conclusion, numerous linguists believe that there is a 'Critical Period' in which humans can acquire language. The theory proposed by Lenneberg about a limited time in which language can be acquired is supported by large amounts of research. Although many challenge this hypothesis with the theory of 'Universal Grammar', both are unproven.

Studies have determined that invalid conversational interaction affects the acquisition of second language, which in result could decrease the pace of language acquisition. Invalid interaction is the product of inaccurate input, which could cause a decline in the learners' participation and motivation to produce language properly. The role of instruction has been

examined as the role of focus on the grammatical forms of language in instruction.

Many factors such as internal or external factors can modify the way learners acquire and learn the target language; the above stated factors can obstruct second language acquisition competence.

However, learners can manipulate and be capable of attaining the knowledge of the second language if their perspective of the target language is adjusted. Learners with low motivation and low language confidence will have high filters which will obstruct the achievement of second language acquisition. There are other variables in second language acquisition process. Aptitude refers to the ability and capacity that a learner has towards the language. It also refers to the attitude the learner possesses towards the target language, how the learner feels, the posture he (she) has towards the target language.

Age has also an influence in second language acquisition, as it is stated above adolescents might have an increase difficulty level when it comes to acquisition of language due to the hormonal changes, but at the same time they perceive language faster than adults due to their neurological development. As for adults, they become more appropriate for the study of a second language because of their maturity, but at the same time, their learning process struggles due to their developmental age.

Multiple Intelligence

The theory of Multiple Intelligence (MI) was proposed by Howard Gardner who said that there are eight kinds of intelligences. One of the set of intelligences is linguistic intelligence. It involves sensitivity to spoken and written language and an ability to use language to attain certain goals. Human beings born with linguistic intelligence are able to express themselves effectively, poetically and rhetorically. They can use language as a means to remember information.

Children who possess linguistic intelligence can be identified while they are engaged in games. Children engaged in the games will also experience special satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment when they are linguistically occupied in tasks and challenging activities.

Classroom Interaction

The utterances of teachers and students influence the nature of classroom interaction. For many learners in Iraq, the only exposure that learners, particularly EFL learners get is in the EFL classroom and the only source is the English teacher. Hence, the teacher plays a vital role in the classroom (Moon, 2000). Several studies have been conducted on teacher talk in the English classroom and its impact on classroom interaction.

Such a class is obviously teacher dominant. Students look upon the teacher as the only authority and source of the language. They show trust and faith in the teacher irrespective of the latter's knowledge and experience. As an example, ten types of functions of teacher utterances were identified. Most of the discourse content was made up of teacher explanation, teacher direction and teacher questioning. Nunan (1989) points out that questioning is the most common type of discourse through which teacher maintains control over classroom interaction.

Some questions are display questions that are questions to which the person asking the questions knows the answers. Some questions are referential to which the person asking questions does not know the answers. Display questions are more frequent in language classrooms (Brock, 1986, Johnson, 1995). But in the world outside, referential questions form a major part of conversation.

Hence, the concern is to investigate how far the questioning in classroom interactions influence language learning. There are several types of questions that initiate verbal responses in a classroom and constitute classroom interaction. There are

open questions, yes/no questions or cued responses. (The teacher makes a statement, then repeats it omitting the important word and the students say the omitted word in chorus).

Interaction amongst pupils

Pupil-pupil interaction is another kind of classroom interaction. Many researchers have studied the various patterns of interactions amongst students and the extent to which they affect language learning. A study conducted in primary school, Mroz et al. (2000, p 385) found that “pupils are being called upon to display their knowledge through responding to teacher-initiated dialogue and questions.” Hardman et al (2003) discovered the most common patterns of learner talks in a study conducted in England. They found that most students spoke only when they had to answer a question.

They also found that only 15% of the responses were more than 3 words and only 8% were sentences of more than 10 words. The key question is whether such scanty use of target language can lead to language learning. Young learners initiate very little talk. Sometimes, they ask questions for clarifying doubts or for seeking permission. In order to maintain class discipline, they cannot talk amongst themselves (Orafi, 2008). They prefer to answer in chorus, especially if they are shy but then it hampers their cognitive as well as linguistic development. Choral responses prevent them from interacting with language concepts (Pontefract, & Hardman, 2002).

When learners are confined to the role of respondents, they get little scope for producing lengthy language utterances (Tsui, 1995). There is a need to maximize and improve the quality of speech among students. When students talk, they understand the syntax of language and are able to enhance their communicative competence (Boyd, & Maloof, 2000). Teachers must create interaction opportunities in the classroom.

Pupil-teacher interaction

Pupil-teacher interactions have definite patterns. Pupil-teacher interactions take place in a classroom for specific purposes. The chief purpose is feedback or evaluation. Teachers are not only anxious but also required to test the achievement level of students. The success of students reflects the performance of teachers. It is satisfying for teachers to know that they have succeeded in their attempts to teach the students. Hence, teachers constantly ask questions in the classroom. Most of this questioning is for the purpose of formative assessment. Sometimes, questions are asked for fixing concepts or for understanding the existing level of students for planning remedial teaching.

Another type of interaction between teachers and students is instructions. Teachers often give instructions regarding projects or assignments and students respond to the instructions. Rarely, there is narration or story telling but during these sessions, students are mostly silent listeners. There is more scope for interaction during brainstorming sessions, group activities and complicated projects. In situations where the learners-controlled talk as in role play, storytelling, information gaps, or interviews and games a variety of sentence structures were observed. Conversely, when the teacher has control of talk, students restricted themselves to single word responses, short phrases and gestures (Cathcard, 1986).

Praising students or reprimanding them occasionally is another reason of communication. Interaction between teachers and students is related to academic matters. The education system in Iraq or in most countries for that matter does not provide possibility for teachers to interact with students on a personal level and one-to-one basis.

However, when games are played, the topics need not be related to the syllabus. Teachers must explain rules of the game, students can ask for explanations, there is

free exchange of speech, cheering, congratulating, and appreciating etc. which are closer to real life interaction.

Many studies have reported that classroom interaction can have positive effects on language learning. Active participation in interaction is associated with learning (Ellis, 1990).

Games in Education

Games pervade the lives of children. The fact that children like to play games so they can be utilized for educational purposes is not a new concept. Providing education through games (Kostikova et al., 2019) is similar to play-way method that is generally practised at the pre-primary stage. Play can be described as an activity that is pursued for sheer enjoyment, with no particular objectives or end – result in mind.

As far as children are concerned, the motive of play is fun. Besides the fact that it gives joy to players it has no other advantages; hence, it is often considered as a waste of time by adults. When children play, a lot of development takes place on their part unknowingly. Play leads to motor and physical development; it fosters imagination and creativity and provides ample opportunities to interact with the environment. Free play places no burden on the students.

As children grow older, they switch over to games. Since games have rules and specific objectives, children find them more meaningful. In games, the thoughts and actions of the children are focused towards achieving a goal.

Children can be kept active in the classroom in many ways. Special activities (Kostikova et al., 2020) are designed to keep the students involved in an interesting way. However, games are a better option for several reasons.

- Games are fun. Children enjoy them and find them interesting.
- Games keep children actively involved in the learning process.
- Games facilitate self-learning.
- Games help to build relationships

- Games provide scope for communication

- Games include other cognitive processes besides language learning like problem solving, decision making, analysis etc.

- Games promote social development as they include team work, leadership development etc.

- Games teach moral values like honesty, loyalty and faithfulness and selflessness. Participants are expected to be loyal and faithful to their teams.

- Many games involve physical activity and lead to physical fitness and gross / fine motor development, eye-hand coordination etc.

- Games help to shape the character of students through needs like dedication, commitment, responsibility etc. Each participant has a definite role to play in the game and he/she is expected to play it well. Hence confidence building is another advantage.

- Games are played amongst peers. Shy students are likely to open up in small groups among their classmates and overcome personality disorders. Shy students develop the courage to communicate in the foreign language because they do not feel conscious that they may commit grammatical errors.

- Children often assume roles in games, especially in the make-believe games. Role playing can have a cathartic effect upon students. This helps them develop mental balance and stability. It also complements emotional development.

- Language students are exposed to a variety of situations while playing games and provide varied experiences.

- Games can be combined with other teaching methods.

- Expanding cities and increasing traffic has brought restriction on games. There is lack of open spaces in urban areas for games. If games are organized in schools, students will not have to compromise with them.

- Games are always a better option than sitting at home and watching TV or videos or playing games on mobile phones or social networking.

- According to Piaget, children's games reflect society. Children learn the rules and regulations of society through games.

Thus, games have so many benefits besides being healthy, sportive language learning media.

Just as games have a number of advantages that are listed above, games can be an unpleasant experience in some situations. Games are played by children by forming groups on their own. Leaders emerge from the groups. Some leaders may be dominating and over powering.

All children may not be democratic. Sometimes, some children are left out of games or not given equal opportunities. They are denied the full scope they deserve. Judgment may become partial and biased. Hot arguments take place leading to physical fights. Quarrels and conflicts are an inevitable part of games. Rivalry may develop, progress and become dangerous. If games are not monitored and controlled by some authority, such problems may arise.

DISCUSSION

To discuss the research problem, I state that reviewing previous studies constitutes an important step in any research initially. I conducted a review by referring to books, journals, newspapers and websites to understand the research done till date on the topic. The research problem enabled researchers to understand the precise position on the path of EFL teaching-learning. It also helped researchers to select appropriate data collection tools for the study. Different researchers have different points of view.

They are helpful to understand at what point I can stand in the domain. It is necessary to know the different perspectives. It gives an idea of the methods used for EFL teaching learning in different parts of the world. It increases the confidence of a

researcher that his assumptions are correct and he may safely precede with the study.

The research of small and big studies introduces a researcher to different tools and techniques for data collection that will prove to be useful for this study. It also enables a researcher to identify the gaps in knowledge that need to be filled up. The suggestions and recommendations made by other researchers lead me to my ideas that need to be addressed in the domain of EFL learning teaching in non-native English-speaking nations.

CONCLUSIONS

A review of literature related to this study has enabled to understand the position of this study clearly. The review has helped to set the theoretical background for this study. Most researchers have noted the trends in pedagogical practices for teaching English as a second or foreign language. The changed role of a teacher, from teacher to facilitator has led to activity-based learning.

The paper reviews some theories of language learning before proceeding to games. Studies related to trends in teaching English as a foreign language form the basis of this study. They are studies in detail. A large number of studies about the use of language games for ESL and EFL form the core part of this paper.

Learning a second or foreign language is tiring, stressful to young learners. It creates stress or burden on their minds. There is a fear of using the new language. It is necessary to make EFL learning enjoyable, playful and stress free as I stated. The best way to do this is to introduce the new language through games.

When using games for educational purposes in a classroom setting was accepted as fruitful and beneficial, researchers began to devise language games. The paper concludes that researchers all over the world have experimented with language games and implemented them successfully.

It has been found that language games can be used for teaching all aspects of language and language skills. It is necessary to select games for classes wisely and implement them systematically. I underline that teachers have opined that games bring

zeal in EFL learning and make learning active and participative on the part of learners. There are language games of different types. Games for teaching EFL have a number of advantages in addition to teaching language element.

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НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ ІГОР

АНОТАЦІЯ / ABSTRACT (in Ukrainian):

Сьогодні існують суперечливі погляди щодо засвоєння, вивчення мов дітьми. Існує поширена думка, що мова вивчається шляхом наслідування, особливо відповідно теорій поведінки. Це означає, що і перша, і друга або будь-яка інша іноземна мова вивчаються однаково. Вважається, що вивчення мов незалежно від того, чи є вона першою, другою, третьою чи наступною, йде тим же кроком. Мета дослідження – розкрити основні думки вивчення англійської мови за допомогою мовних ігор. Завдання дослідження – вивчити питання навчання англійської мови як іноземної, дослідити тенденції у викладанні другої чи будь-якої іншої іноземної мови, вивчити різні мовні ігри, що використовуються на уроці для викладання англійської мови як іноземної; також у дослідженні було вивчено вплив мовних ігор на взаємодію в класі. Була використана методика огляду літератури, дотичної до даної теми. У роботі використані методи аналізу, класифікації та порівняння. Найважливішими результатами є розуміння того процесу, як само діти вивчають іноземну мову, основи навчання англійської мови як іноземної, порівняння різноманітних гіпотез вивчення іноземних мов, деяких теорій, таких як теорія акомодатії, множинного інтелекту, різних типів взаємодії за допомогою мовних ігор. Висновок

полягає в тому, що, найважливіше, навчання англійської мови як іноземної необхідно зробити приємним, грайливим та нестресовим. Найкращий шлях це зробити – вивчати нову мову через гру. Коли використання ігор для навчальних цілей в класі сприймається як плідне і корисне, можна починати застосовувати мовні ігри. Мовні ігри бувають різного типу. Ігри для викладання англійської мови як іноземної мають ряд дидактичних переваг, окрім суто мовних і мовленнєвих.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА:

англійська мова, засвоєння, мовна гра, взаємодія, клас.

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