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Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies- A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis on Multiple Intelligence Theory

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Introduction

We know that the mind and the body are interconnected. They are parts of the same system but each affects the other. To learn a language effectively, one has to know the science of neurolinguistics that is drawn on the behaviourist theories of learning. Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) is an alternative approach used in the language classrooms to yield a better result comparatively to other approaches. The "neurological style" highly influences the way we teach the second language learners.

What is "NLP"? NPL is a collection of techniques, patterns and strategies for assisting effective communication, personal growth and change and learning. It is based on a series of underlying assumptions about how the mind works and how people act and interact. (Revell and Norman 1997:14) Revel and Norman explained which *neuro* part of **N**LP is

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Ms. V. Dorothy Catherine and Dr. V. Anitha Devi
Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis on Multiple Intelligence Theory   61

concerned with how we experience the world through our five senses and represent it in our minds through our neurological process.

The *linguistic* part of N**L**P is concerned with the way the language we use shapes, as well as reflects, our experience of the world. It is believed that the way we speak language will help other people who want to change. The *programming* part of NL**P** is concerned with training oneself to think, speak and act in new and positive ways which brings out our potentials and reach the goal of achievement which was only dreamt previously.

This paper is an outcome of the classroom practice designed with the help of three ATMs. It is an inclusion of Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP), Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory and the Playback Theatre technique.

There is a saying, "Students remember learning experiences more vibrantly when emotion is involved."

Eldon Ekwall and William Glasser, the leading psychologists declared that the retention rates of learning dwell on 5% lecture, 10% reading, 20% audio-visual, 30% demonstration, **50% group discussion, 75% practise by doing and 90% on immediate use.** Hence it proves that drama and its techniques would assist the learners more in their learning. On this basis the Playback theatre technique was the best tool opted in the classroom for language teaching. It was used as a collaborated tool in the teaching methodology.

How Does the Brain Learn?

Engaging the students to learn during direct instruction in the classroom remained to be the first hurdle in language teaching. The time limit for a brain to learn through direct instruction is only 15 minutes for adolescent cadre. Consequently the input through our teaching must be brief and effective. The trainers must reinforce the input with various tasks. To regain the learner's attention for the next 20 minutes, fortify them with a variety of themes. One effective way of retaining the students vigorously was drama. The incisive technique from the field of drama adopted was the Playback Theatre.

Variety always remained to be the key to grab the learners' attention because the brain will desensitize its response after too many repetitions… By understanding the neurological processes of the brain, the educator can train the learner both verbally and non-verbally. In a diverse classroom, the students were with a variety of skills. Each person remained excellent in various skills. Some excelled in singing, dancing, painting, mono acting, public speaking, others in logical thinking, creating software, composing music, sports and a very few as passive listeners. As a trainer I made use of all these variety of skills through "Playback Theatre" to develop their language skills.

Drama in Education

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Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis
on Multiple Intelligence Theory 62

During the 1980s, Freire revolutionary theorist/practitioner of drama in education, was back in Brazil where he wrote and became involved in politics, serving as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo in 1984 (Roberts, 2000, p.6). Freire's ideas in regards to pedagogy are important to the field of teaching language through drama because he integrates the social domain with the work of language development. His approach is the opposite to what he describes as the "banking concept" of education. In the banking concept:

(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught;
(b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
(c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
(d) the teacher talks and the students listen – meekly;
(e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
(f) the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
(g) the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
(h) the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who are not consulted) adapt to it;
(i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students;
(j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the students are mere objects (Freire, 1969, p. 59).

Freire implies that in an effective education, the following model should apply:

(a) the teacher and the students learn together;

(b) the teacher and the students share their knowledge with each other;

(c) the teacher and the students exchange in intellectual dialogue

(d) the teacher and the students listen to each other;

(e) the material being learned and the learning process discipline both teacher and students;

(f) the teacher and the students make decisions together as outgrowth of dialogue;

(g) teacher and students act together;

(h) the students have a voice in choosing the program content;

(i) both teacher and students subordinate themselves to the authority of knowledge;

(j) the students are the Subjects of the learning process while the teacher is a guide.

An echo of the early practitioners of drama-in education can be heard in such propositions.

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Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis on Multiple Intelligence Theory   63

The moral force of Freire's approach stems from the following principles: As all aspects of reality are always changing, so also are human beings incomplete and engaged in the process of becoming. Unlike animals, human beings are conscious and have the ontological vocation of humanization. Thus, social evolution goes hand in hand with individual evolution. Social structures reflect the growth of individuals as in turn individuals impact society. No group, institution, or organization should impede the pursuit of humanization (Roberts, 2000, pp. 49-51).

For Freire, education implied a fair, ethical, and biased consciousness on the part of the teacher, not to be applied in any authoritarian fashion, but communicated through inductive reasoning and dialogue with a purpose. Based on his view, I adopted drama in my teaching.

Improvisational Drama in Classroom Pedagogy

Theatre with groups that respond well to drama activities, putting on one scene or a short play can be both enjoyable and worthwhile. The majority of the young generation adore planning costumes, sets, props and so on. When full-scale staging is not viable, a prepared reading or staging of a scene in front of the class and with a few props can also be motivating and rewarding. Not neglecting that good play reading is not an easy task even in L1 the aim should be working through a whole play in such ways that deepen students' understanding of the text and the dramatic situation. A number of contemporary issues are usually easier to explore in the L2 juvenile milieu for the opportunities they offer both of useful language transfer and of insights into contemporary, social, political and cultural aspects. Whatever the choice of a subject matter may be in the classroom, the underlying teaching principle should be that there are no "wrong" answers - through pretending, animals can talk, participants can travel to outer space or the jungle, and the sky can be green while the grass is blue. Students should be free to explore and experience the topic in ways that foster their creative thinking and personal growth. Since there was liberty in the choice of topics and a need for innovative experience, I chose improvisational theatre especially the Playback Theatre for my experiment.

Design, Procedure, Assessment and Findings

Size

The classroom contained 45 students. These students were divided into 5 groups with 9 in each. The notion was that the larger groups would generate more creative ideas. The co-operative leaning method made learning more active. Peer assistance always clarified concepts for both the helper and the team member who was being helped.

Formation

The class was heterogeneous. Groups were divided on the recommendation of the trainer. The learners were not allowed to choose the group nu their own because the outcome

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Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis on Multiple Intelligence Theory   64

was not fruitful. It was in the hands of the trainer to structure the group well so that it withstands for the whole session. Based on the individual's interest, academic and extra-curricular achievement, ability, learning style and task orientation, the learners was assigned with the task. Random assessment promoted the idea that everyone was expected to work with the other without uncertainty.

Duration

Since the time allotted for communicative English class was 2 hours, the first 15 minutes of the hour was used for the trainer's introductory command on the task. 10 minutes was utilized to separate them into groups. The next 45 minutes was given to discuss on the issue and preparation. Use structures like roundtable, circle of knowledge, jigsaw, line-ups, paraphrase passport or tea party for discussion. This helps the trainer to manage the group with zero-noise. Once the concert was geared up, the teams were asked to present it infront of the class.

How Do the Learners Participate?

The brain loves novelty. Students cannot be stiffening up in a place for a long time. To make learning enthusiastic and more effective, trainers must first understand the anatomy of brain. The right hemisphere of the brain enhances expressiveness and creativeness and the left hemisphere enriches in logical thinking and language development. The language trainer must make use of the left and right brain's abilities in improving the underachiever's aptitude in sentence construction. Since the educators have liberty to explore various approaches and methodologies, one of the approaches adopted during the session was Gardiner's "Multiple Intelligence". Gardiner proposed a view of natural human talents labelled as "Multiple Intelligence model" in 1993. This model was proposed in general education and later applied to language education. His model was culture- free and avoided conceptual narrowness which was usually associated with the IQ testing model. He categorized this model into 9 as follows. They are verbal linguistic intelligence, logical mathematical intelligence, spatial visual intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalist intelligence and existential intelligence.

Empirical studies stated that examining the phenomenon of MI, teachers get a beneficial output from integrating the theory into ESL courses (Arnold, 2004 p. 119). Trainers can help the learners to achieve the required standards in learning English. Chen in 2006 gave the guidelines that the implementation of MI instruction into the curriculum would be beneficial to all students.

Design

The MI model was used as an approach and the technique incorporated in the classroom was "The Playback Theatre". This technique was first used in Australia among the prisoners and school children. The main aim to formulate this theatre was to bring out the

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Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis on Multiple Intelligence Theory   65

emotional grievance of each individual. One among the member utters a story from the group and the others hear the story. They prepare a drama on what they heard. Each member took up the role of a musician, singer, actor, scriptwriter, makeup man etc. Consequently everyone in the team tried to make the presentation as good as possible. So in a language classroom this technique was executed to mend the learner's communication verbally and non-verbally. Each participant was given a chance to project themselves in front of the class. This event stirred the learner's well.

Assessment

The above methodology was practised in the classroom for nearly three months. A slow and gradual development was seen among the learners. Initially some students were observed to be passive but after three sessions, they started to participate in the discussion. The students received a lot of encouragement to develop and use their particular intelligence. They were not stagnated with one particular skill but each time they took up different roles in the theatre. At times, the students were asked to design their own conclusion for the stories. This helped them to develop their lateral thinking too. Their development was assisted at the end of each session.

Findings

6 of 10 showed gradual progress in their oral skills. 2% of the group improved in their personality. 2% of the class were below the grade due to lack of attendance or participation. Their sign of development was encouraging for both the trainer and the novice. To conclude, the tree alternative teaching methodologies i.e. NLP, MI and The Playback Theatre helped the learners to learn the language especially the sentence construction exclusively.

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Ms. V. Dorothy Catherine and Dr. V. Anitha Devi
Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis on Multiple Intelligence Theory
66

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Ameliorate Linguistic Erudition Strategies - A Learner-centric Approach with an Emphasis
on Multiple Intelligence Theory   67