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SECOND LANGUAGE: LEARNING AND TEACHING

Learning a second language is a long and complex understanding. Your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting. Total commitment, total involvement, a total physical, intellectual and emotional response are necessary to successfully send and receive messages in a second foreign language [1].

There are common learning regularities of a second language as the model of practice when students are studying German, French or other languages on the basis of English:

-the problem of interference not only from the side of a mother tongue but the first language or the second one. Interference has all the linguistics level of a language (phonetics, lexical or grammatical). But in every step it cannot affect on the development of speech of a second language.

-transference is also has a positive affection of a mother tongue or the first language or a second one. It is when the studying of a second language is connected with the first language [2].

Before the student can plan ways of improving of a language, he wants to know exactly what he does well and what needs improvement. One way to find out his present level is to do a diagnostic test. A diagnostic test is just one way to find out about your English. The English language tests can be difficult and many students studying English as a second language prepare for a long time by attending a special class. The advantage of taking the test is that it will be easier for students to learn the language. The next question: "How can I do on improving my English?" is different for everyone. Some students find that although they know a lot about English grammar. It is difficult to use it when talking and writing. It is also important to make sure that some exercises are suitable for students' level.

Are there enough classes to be sure you will be in a class that is right for students? Some smaller language schools for example don't have enough students to organize classes at many levels. That is not to say that smaller language schools are not good and sometimes they have fewer people in one class. Students need to ask themselves whether the course covers all the skills they need to work on. If they are preparing to go to university they may want to choose a course that focuses on academic English and teaches skills such as note taking, listening to lectures, writing essays etc. If they have difficulty in speaking and understanding the local accent, then they should choose a course that spends a lot of time on these skills. Some universities and schools can offer courses for Business English or English for other study or work areas. It is always a good idea to have a look at the course book. Have a look at the last pages to see what the goal level of the course is.

There are also setting language learning goals what you want to learn. For example: I want to understand the lecturers when they talk fast. My goal is to be a better essay writer. Goals help people understand why they are learning a language in a particular way and what they hope to be able to do at the end. Goals may relate to language skills. What kinds of speaking do you need to practice? May be you can speak in conversations with friends but find it difficult to do class presentations. May be your listening skills are quite good when you are watching TV but you find it difficult to understand native speakers when they talk to you at normal speaking speed [3].

There are many reasons why students find goals helpful. For one thing goals are a way of being in charge of your learning. Instead of just going to a class and hoping that the teacher will do a good job, you think about what and how you are learning. Goals are also important as a way of helping you organize your time. Students who speak English as a second language often think other people won't understand them. They say: "My English isn't very good. When I speak it's hard for people to follow. It's better if I keep quiet". It is easy to think that nobody understands you but there are two answers to that. If the student doesn't speak then he will never improve. It's better to have someone say: "I beg your pardon", so that you can try again than to

keep quiet forever. The second answer is this. Even in their own language everybody has times when people don't understand them. It's a part of communication [4]. Just try saying the same thing in a slightly different way. How do students decide their goals? There are three main ways of deciding on good goals: ask senior students, do quick needs analysis or take a test. One common way of deciding goals is to talk with students who have already gone overseas to study. Here is one answer: Lecturers won't tell you exactly what to write in essays. You have to find out for yourself. The answer led the student to set this goal: I want to find out what makes a good essay in the subjects I'm studying. Another senior student said: I hope you can read fast because there is plenty of reading to do at university. As a result the student wrote: I plan to find a short course on how to read fast and still understand what I read.

Another way is to do quick needs analysis: Can I understand many different accents? Can I talk freely to native speakers who speak at normal speed? Do I know the vocabulary of my area of study (e.g. words related to business or science)?

There are the answers: It's not enough to understand just the accent of the country because as we have seen, university lecturers come from all countries of the world and have many different English accents. Try listening to radio talks from many different countries of the world. If your answer is "No", try joining a university club so you can meet English speakers while you are doing something interesting. If the answer to the question: Do I know the vocabulary of my area of study? Is not well enough, look in the university bookshop for an Introduction to...book in your subject.

And there are some steps in writing a thesis:

- Decide on a topic: What subject interests you? Talk with a lecturer about possible topics. How will you find information on this topic?
- Stand reading: What reading lists do you already have on this topic? Where else could you get reading lists?
- Write a proposal: What does a proposal look like in your department? Are there any guidelines or examples available?
- Find and meet regularly with a supervisor: How does this department arrange supervision? Are students allowed to ask for a particular supervisor?

How often does the supervisor want to see you? How can you contact him/her?

- Collect and analyse your data: Where and how will you collect data? Which type of analysis suits the data best?
- Write up the results: Are there any examples of thesis in the library? Is there a seminar on writing up results? Who can help you with the proofreading?
- Hand in your thesis: Where exactly do you hand in your thesis? How is it supposed to be bound? How many copies do you need?
- Write an article: Can you write an article together with your supervisor?

Another reason for not speaking is shyness. It is difficult for beginners when all the students who speak English as their first language feel confident all the time but they don't. They can also worry about shyness. If everybody thought about problems of understanding and shyness in tutorials, there would be no interesting talk and less understanding of the whole topic. When the student speaks, people are interested in what he says more than how he says it. Speak clearly and say something short the first time if he wants to build up his confidence.

Some students prefer to learn one-to-one from a native English speaker even if that person is not a teacher. This method suits people who already have quite good English but want to improve their standard. It is particularly helpful if you want to get used to different accents. At the university many of lecturers will not all be from the country where the students are studying. Most universities have staff from all over the world. Other good places to put up notices are embassies and clubs of people from overseas who work in the place where students live. Learning one-to-one means when you can ask questions any time you like without stopping the class. It would be surprised if your teacher cannot answer grammar questions about the English language. A person with a degree in Engineering or Medicine say may not understand when you ask about the past conditional tense. As you probably know in your own language, there is a difference between being a language user and being able to describe the language. On the other side the person you find may be able to answer your questions about living in a particular city or country. Especially in the beginning

when you have just arrived in the new country it is important to go out and speak to as many people as you can get used to the accent. Listen to the local radio stations, watch the news and TV programmes, read local newspapers, join a sports club. People sometimes say to English language learners: “Whatever you do, do it in English!” However, we all need to be able to talk about serious things with someone who understands us. You don’t have to cut yourself off from everyone who speaks your own language. Other students from your country can be a great support.

In the case of the teacher there are sets of questions: What’s the teacher’s native language? Experience or training knowledge of the second language and its culture? Most important how do the teacher and the student interact with each other? Finally the most including of all the questions: Why are learners tempted to acquire the second language? What are their purposes? Are they motivated by the achievement of a successful career? By passing a foreign language requirement or by wishing to identify closely with the culture and people of the target language? Beyond these categories what other affective, emotional, personal or intellectual reasons do learners have for pursuing this great task or learning another language?

These questions have been posed in very global terms to give you an inkling of the diversity of issues involved in the quest of understanding the principles of language learning and teaching. Teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. Teaching is guiding and facilitating. It is eligible the students to learn, to have the condition for learning. Teacher’s understanding of how the student learns, will determine his philosophy of education, his teaching style, his approach, methods and classroom techniques.

As for the philosophy of education we can recall the theories of great educators of the past. Although historical; in nature, these theories influence today’s educational process. John Amos Comenius used to say: “Learning should be encouraged through the mother tongue or the dialect”. As far as Pestalozzi is concerned he thought a general method of instruction that would be based on the nature of teaching and psychological principles. According to John Locke: “Language is best learned through conversation not grammar”[5].

Saying in conclusion, teachers are responsible for the students, for their level of knowledge in the field of teaching language.

References:

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