

Analysis of the Second Language Learning and Teaching through Cognitive Constructivism

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Abstract: Learning of the language starts from the childhood but the acquisition of first language and the learning of the second language is different. The first language acquisition is easier than the second language as we are always in contact with the first language. The second language needs effort for its accommodation, assimilation, and application. The cognitivism and constructivism theories of Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner laid stress on the facilitation of the learning by the processing of the existing knowledge and the construction of the new information. The cognitivism and the constructivism approaches enhance the acquisition of the second language. It is not only the linguistics namely lexical, morphology, syntax, phonetics that helps in the learning of the second language, but the involvement of the sociocultural aspect also plays an important role for the application of the language in the real-life situations. This article focuses on the analysis of the learning and teaching of the second language through the cognitive constructivism strategy. The cognitive constructivism strategy motivates the learner to construct the new knowledge based on their prior information and their sociocultural environment. This strategy helps the learner to retain the new knowledge and to apply this newly acquired information in the real-life situations.

Keywords: Teaching-learning, Cognitivism, Constructivism, Knowledge, Second Language

Since ages, there is always a search for the best method of teaching and learning. The ancient Greek philosopher, Plato (427 B.C.) had given his valuable thoughts and views on teaching and learning in his famous work on philosophy of education-*The Republic*. There are various learning theories proposed by the theorists that come under the three categories of the perception of learning-teaching. The umbrella terms that categorise the theories are Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism. This paper aims to analyse the use of cognitive constructivism strategy to facilitate the learning and teaching of the second language. The objective of this study is to develop the confidence and self-learning among the students. It will also raise the conscious control of the learning and enhance the competence of the learner.

The learning of the language comprises of the acquisition of the four competencies namely, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The three basic steps of learning are comprehension, memorisation, and application. The second language learning needs the attention and the active participation of the learner. The teacher plays a pivotal role in the development of the student. The teacher acts as the facilitator and the guide. He facilitates the

learning of the language through various techniques for the cognitive learning by the student. The teacher is the only one who can identify the level of the knowledge of his student and initiate the process of learning by the student.

According to the Peter Principle (1969), the teacher can plan a teaching strategy on the basis of the four stages of competence proposed by American educational theorist Laurence Peter. The four levels of competences are as follows: the first level is Unconscious Incompetence where the learner neither knows what to do nor how to do; the second level is Conscious Incompetence where the learner is aware of the gap in his knowledge, but he does not know how to do it. Then comes the third level of the competence which is Conscious Competence where the learner knows how to do and what to do but it requires the effort and attention. The last level of competence is Unconscious Competence, here the learner can do the task after repeated practice. Thus, the teacher needs to bring the student to the level of Unconscious competence through the repetition exercises in order to enable him to memorise and develop the skill naturally. The Unconscious Competence will help the students in the further application of the skill in the real-life situations. This competence enhances the auto-performing of the skill.

The teaching strategy of the second language concentrates on the enhancement of the self-learning by the student. The teacher motivates the student to learn to learn and to know to do. The use of the innovative tools for facilitating teaching and learning of the second language depends on the level of the student and his sociocultural environment. The various techniques are used to develop the unconscious competence in the student. Once the task is accomplished by the learner through the application of the skill already practiced, the sense of motivation and confidence develops in the student. The unconscious competence enhances the participation of the students to perform the task. The teacher must develop the understanding of the student to know what they do not know in order to develop their interest to learn and strengthen their knowledge.

The teaching and learning strategies are designed on the basis of the learning theories proposed by various theorists. All the strategies planned for the effective conduction of the teaching and learning depends on the justification provided by the principles of the theorists. (Fleischman, 2006). The teacher proposed the course in alignment to the requirement of the students depending on their level or development. Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development focuses on the development of the child and the learning strategy. He proposed the four stages of cognitive development which describes the acquisition of the knowledge from childhood to the adulthood. According to Piaget, the development is prior to the learning while Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist says that social learning precedes the development. According to Vygotsky, the social environment is an integral part of the cognitive learning. The sociocultural environment helps in the assimilation and acquisition of the knowledge. The self-directed and collaborative learning are an asset to the learning of the second language. Jerome Bruner theory of Constructivism emphasises on the learning of new ideas on the basis of the prior knowledge. The learner responds to their existing knowledge and constructs the new ideas. Thus, the theorists have researched all the aspects of the learning and teaching in order to make it more comprehensive and autonomous.

As we know that the teachers are the facilitators for the learners, Piaget's theory of cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding together facilitate the learning of the second language and develops the autonomy among the learners. The cognitive approach of learning the language motivates the student to acquire the knowledge through the comprehension of the ideas and further process the re-use or reorganisation of the acquired ideas for the memorisation and later this knowledge will construct the new ideas on the basis of the prior acquired knowledge. Once the new information is memorised, it becomes easy for the learner to repeat it in their activity of application in the real sense. The new acquired information is applied in the real-life situations. The sociocultural aspect of the environment that surrounds the learner enhances the acquisition of the new knowledge and the construction of the new ideas. Thus, both external and internal factors strengthen the learning process. According to the Social Constructivism theory of Vygotsky (1978), the sociocultural interaction ameliorates the cognitive and social development of the learner. Moreover, all these steps of learning – comprehension, memorisation, and application, are self-directed. The teachers, in all this process, serves as the facilitator and the guide. Thus, the cognitive constructivism (Jean Piaget, 1973) increases the potential of the student and the approach to the discovery learning. It develops the confidence and boost the creativity among the learners.

The learning and teaching of the second language focuses on the four skills of the language, and they are listening, speaking, writing, and reading. These four skills of the language are acquired through the understanding and learning of the various components of the language. These components are vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and pragmatics that is external factors -sociocultural aspects (real-life situations). The Cognitive Constructivism strategy of teaching -learning assists the learner to develop their new knowledge from their prior information. Thus, the prior information about the second language is related to the students who have already acquired some knowledge of that language. Here we can speak about English as the second language but if we speak about the foreign language and the student is learning that foreign language for the first time then the concept of the prior information about the language is not counted. In such cases, when the student is learning the language for the first time, the teacher has to work hard on the four skills of the language. The foremost component required for the learning of the language it is the vocabulary. The knowledge of the vocabulary is essential for the communicative process. Besides this, when the learner acquired the rich knowledge of the vocabulary of the second language, it becomes easy to construct the new ideas through the vocabulary achieved within the real-life situations. Schmitt (2000) accentuates that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language".p.55

The teacher as a facilitator develops the exercises of the language to encourage and motivate the learning. The cognitive constructivism proposes the problem solving and collaborative assignments, thus, motivating the learners to reorganise the information acquired earlier or the new information. The teacher involves the learners in the learning process through the discovery strategy of the written comprehension where they are required to answer the question of basic competence of what, where, who, when etc. This discovery strategy will initiate the reading skills. This strategy is also used for listening comprehension thus promoting the acquisition of the listening skill of the second language. The writing and

listening comprehension exercises develops the learning of the new vocabulary and the same acquired knowledge of the vocabulary is memorised when it is re-constructed in the real-life situations. Class discussions on any topic related to the real-life facilitate the vocabulary enrichment. Thus, the various assignments related to the cognitive constructivism are assigned to the learners for the learning of the language.

The application of the new information in different social environment shows the real progression of the student. The external factors help the student to give the different perspectives to the knowledge acquired by him and make him autonomous. Thus, the knowledge is the newly constructed information amidst the existing information. Vygotsky's theories emphasise on the role of the social interaction in the development of cognition. He believes strongly that the community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning". The use of the authentic documents for the second language learners provides the real knowledge of the language in that particular time. It increases the level of comprehension and application in the terms of writing and reading skills. The speaking and listening skills can be achieved in the real sense through the visual and audio documents of the advertisement and other real-life videos and movies. The students learn faster with the practical use of the second language. The exercises prepared by the teachers to foster the comprehension, memorisation, and application of the second language has to be designed in the manner that the learner work collaboratively and the social interaction among the students will increase the level of the learning. The learner must be able to deconstruct the existing knowledge and then reconstruct the new knowledge in the social interaction with the others.

Thus, the teachers and the students collaborative work in the teaching and learning process of the second language facilitates the acquisition of the language. The cognitive constructivism and the external factors support and encourage the students and the teachers in the teaching-learning of the second language. The second language learning is not only the mastery over the language, but it also opens the door for the culture of the second language and bring forth the understanding and acceptance of the culture and develop the sense of humanity for the target language.

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