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EXPLORING METALINGUISTIC BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SMART CLASSROOMS

Article Particulars

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Abstract

Metalinguistic awareness is one's ability to know the forms and structure of language along with the correct usage of that language. This article focuses on the metalinguistic awareness of the learners in a classroom. It also speaks about how one acquires the metalinguistic knowledge in a smart classroom with the use of various technologies. It focuses on the four skills of language as well as on the linguistic components which includes phonology, morphology, syntactic and semantics. The paper mentions about the power of internet and technology in smart classrooms that help to boost the confidence in learning language skills and linguistic components. Using technology for the teaching of language creates interest among the learners to learn language in a more proper manner in any context. Smart classroom technologies became one of the powerful tools to teach, to motivate and to make subjects more interesting such as language. Various soft wares in language learning assist learners to develop their linguistic ability along with improving their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Thus the paper concludes by mentioning the widespread application of the technological devices which help in better language learning to take place actively in a language classroom in the present scenario.

Keywords: *Metalinguistic awareness, metalinguistic knowledge, language learning, language acquisition, integration of technology, smart classrooms*

Introduction

Language education is a challenging and complex task when it comes to foreign language education but in the present scenario the researchers convey that it has been ruled out by smart classrooms through e-learning technologies. Learning a new language is of utmost importance for better future. There are number of course sites that serve content which is live or in video recordings for foreign language proficiency exams such as TOEFL, YDS and IELTS for foreign language education in the academic area. It emphasises the need for metalinguistic awareness of the students where they

are expected to know all forms and structures of language along with its usage. Thus, when students are able to use metalinguistic awareness in a right manner then they are similarly able to practice metacognitive strategies for better and effective learning. *Metalinguistic awareness* requires a keener than normal conscious awareness of language. Metalinguistic awareness is an important ingredient in learning to read, spell and understand words (Donaldson, 1978). Metalinguistic awareness is a cognitive dynamo. At maximum potential, it includes increased awareness of phonemes and syllables and rhymes/rimes, of meaning-bearing morphemes, words, and phrases, of syntax, word referents, and appositives, of denotations, connotations, and lexical ambiguities, of homonyms, synonyms, and antonyms, of slang, dialect, and jargon, of academic language and figurative devices like metaphor, imagery, personification, and more. Metalinguistic awareness refers to the understanding that language is a system of communication, connected to the rules and forms the basis for the ability to discuss different ways of using language. With the knowledge of metalinguistics one can have better language acquisition but smart classrooms play a major role in the enhancement of the students for better language education.

Metalinguistic Awareness

In the past few years it has been found that different aspects of human consciousness has been studied expansively within areas like philosophy, cognitive science and neuro-sciences. According to Bowey (1988) linguistic awareness is the "accessible knowledge concerning the structure and function of language". He also adds as linguistic competence cannot be learned directly, in the same way linguistic awareness cannot be learned directly. He defines linguistic awareness as the ability of an individual to reflect or manipulate the structures and forms of language. He mentions when a structure of content in language is focussed more rather than the meaning then the content are metalinguistic in nature. Thus it can be said Metalinguistic awareness emphasizes on the system of how language is used rather focussing on the intended meaning. Gombert (1992) pointed out that metalinguistic is the conscious management of the language objects. If an individual is aware of the metalinguistic components then the person can have control over the usage of language forms and structures. Metalinguistic and metalanguage activities are the subfield of metacognition concerned with the usage of language. Hence the persons aware of metalinguistic abilities are able to reflect, monitor intentionally, plan their own way of comprehending and production for the processing in using the language. The activities includes any sort of linguistic components such as phonological (metaphonological activities), syntactic (metasyntactic activities), semantic (metasyntactic activities), or pragmatic (metapragmatic activities). Jessner (2006) mentioned metalinguistic awareness refers to "what learners know about language through reflection on and manipulation of language." If an individual is aware of

metalinguistic, then the person is having the knowledge of language usage. It has been found that metalinguistic awareness has a long history in research on language learning and its usage. Koda (2007) says when a person is aware of metalinguistic, the individual rises to a certain level of understanding the language and also engage in metacognitive practices for using language in relevant context which he termed as "explicit representation" where the individual is aware of linguistic components which includes syntactic, phonological and morphological activities.

Gombert (1992) said awareness on metalinguistic components may result in cognitive products or symbolic objects which a child can perceive and manipulate frequently in an easy manner which will lead in the development of thought and metacognitive behaviour. Hence, metalinguistic awareness refers to the development in children knowledge of using language and its structures properly which can be shown by their achievement in exams.

The metalinguistic awareness of the children should be investigated from the early school years. In the early stage the children are exposed to new skills in their mother tongue such as learning to read and write, use language and acquainted with new forms of language and also learn a new or foreign language that is English. So it is necessary for individuals to have awareness on linguistic elements.

A. *Phonological awareness*

It is the ability of an individual to differentiate between the sounds of a word and also having awareness on syllables. It is believed that if an individual is aware of phonology then he/she can distinguish one word from the other and so it will help one to read and write properly. They will be able to monitor and regulate their own learning.

B. *Morphological and syntactic awareness*

It helps an individual to understand the words which cannot be further divided but suffix and prefix can be added to that. A learner here is alert of using appropriate use of words and is aware where to use suffix and prefix to make the sentence meaningful. Learners having syntactic awareness can infer meanings of strange words and can arrange words to create a meaning.

C. *Lexical awareness*

It is the ability of an individual to make usage of proper grammar, words and vocabulary.

D. *Pragmatic awareness*

It is the awareness of using language, words, expressions which can be appropriate for different contexts. It says how a learner can use language in different contextual and social factors.

Metalinguistic Knowledge and Language Acquisition

In the present scenario it is being observed that language teaching is mainly stressed on the communicative ability rather than putting emphasis on the formal knowledge of language. Hence, the teachers fail to develop the competence of metalinguistic among children which make them backward not only in understanding language but also restrict them in having fluency over it and proper usage of language. Bloor (1986) thus pointed out this can be one of the big reason or problem in teaching foreign language to the students at the university level. James and Garett (1992) found that students sense metalinguistic knowledge in two ways. Firstly, they think it is a person's sensitivity to have conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life. Secondly, it refers to the ability to state linguistic and grammatical rules where grammatical concepts and functions can be described. Students think metalinguistic knowledge is the combination of 'grammatical sensitivity' and 'inductive language learning ability' and other two variables 'associative memory' and 'language coding' together makes the concept of "language aptitude".

Metalinguistic Knowledge

It is the knowledge of a person when one is able to use metalanguage i.e., the use of language based on linguistic terminology (e.g. syntax, morpheme, subject and verb). It is a kind of activity when the signifiers of language become signified (Ilaria Venuti, 2015). It means when one is having metalinguistic knowledge he/she is able to encode and decode the gap between communication in any contexts. Benveiste (1974) pointed out metalinguistic ability is the possibility of raising oneself above language, of abstracting oneself from it, of contemplating it, whilst making use of it in ones reasoning and observations.

Language acquisition is based on the neuro-psychological processes (Maslo, 2007). Language acquisition is opposed to learning and is a subconscious process similar to that by which children acquire their first language (Kramina, 2000). Hence, language acquisition is an integral part of the unity of all language (Robbins, 2007). Whereas Language learning is a conscious process and it is the product of either formal learning situation or a self-study programme (Kramina, 2000). Hence, language learning is an integral part of the unity of all languages (Robbins, 2007). Language acquisition and language learning helps in the development of an individual (Vygotsky/ Piaget, 1934).

Language Learning: Concept

Language learning is the way to learn a second language or a foreign language. To learn language one should be aware of metalinguistic components such as phonemes, syllables, homonyms, antonyms, synonyms, morphemes, syntax, referents, appositives, denotations and connotations along with the four skills of language learning (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing). Byram (2002) pointed out

language teaching is the way to provide learners with "inter-cultural competence" as well as "linguistic competence". Though learning a foreign language is a complex and challenging task, it becomes easy with the smart classroom technologies. The linguist Noam Chomsky (1957) suggested language learning is an innate capacity of a learner. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted all language learning is based on social interaction and it is one of the core subject at any level of education.

Smart Classrooms: Concept

English language learning or foreign language learning has become one of the preferred languages for communicating globally. The modern buzz word in the present day schools, colleges and universities is the "smart classroom" concept. It includes technologies in the classroom such as PC',s laptops, interactive smart boards, overhead projector, internet facility and mobiles for effective instructional delivery and other devices such as speakers, mirroring devices, smart pad key boards, smart pens, camcorders, digital cameras and cloud systems. All of the smart classrooms should have smart-pads, laptop or desk-top computers, an electronic white board, and an electronic teacher desk, a beam projector, and a projector. It should also have camcorders and digital cameras. Research shows positive changes in students' attitude and the effectiveness with which they study in smart classrooms.

Smart Classrooms and Metalinguistic Awareness Building

Technologies in the smart classrooms have transformed the world into "global village". English is a preferred language globally. Smart classrooms have helped to integrate voice-recognition and compute-vision to support language learning. A smart interactive white board supports the learning of language as it helps in interaction and conversation in the classroom. It also helps to present new linguistic elements which can build up their metalinguistic knowledge. The linguistic components which include phonology, morphology, syntactic and semantics in a broader sense should make one conscious of its forms and usages. Hence, one should be cognizant to the forms, structures and usage of language. The specific aspects of linguistic components such as phonemes, syllables, homonyms, synonyms, antonyms, morphemes, syntax, word referents, appositives, denotations, connotations, spellings, grammar and vocabulary and pronunciation. Therefore, to acquire such linguistic skills among learners a smart classroom having multimedia setting is very much essential.

Smart classrooms will always help learners develop awareness on the metalinguistic components with the use of different technologies. A smart classroom will help the students to boost their confidence in language learning. Garett (1992) pointed out that researchers and practitioners find ways in incorporating technology in education, with language learning one of those fields. Uluc (2012) argued that the influence of technology has 'permeated into all facets of our lives, including educational setting."

In the present scenario, smart classroom technologies have become one of the powerful tools to teach, to motivate and to make subjects more interesting. Internet connections in the classroom can assist teachers "what to teach", 'how to teach', 'when to teach", and thus the widespread application of this devices helps in better language learning to take place actively.

Smart classroom for language learning have a special corner known as "virtual studio", where students can have role-playing activities which will help them to communicate in a better manner. It also consists of extensive reading method where students can easily learn the forms of language which includes vocabulary, reading, grammar and writing. OECD's report on 21st Century skills (2002) emphasizes on "Internet" and they also mentions that internet is not only a source of authentic material in English as it helps to come across vast source of information in the form of articles, write-ups, blogs, forums, course materials and many more. In a smart classroom a teacher is able to get connected with the students with the help of technology which can be called as e-learning platform where teachers can send assignments to the students through e-mail and can also have online exams with the help of tools like Google forms, Plickers. To develop the language skills of students in a smart classroom many e-learning tools such as Moodle, You-tube, Skype smart-boards, Spelling Bee, Podcasting, blogs and forums can be used.

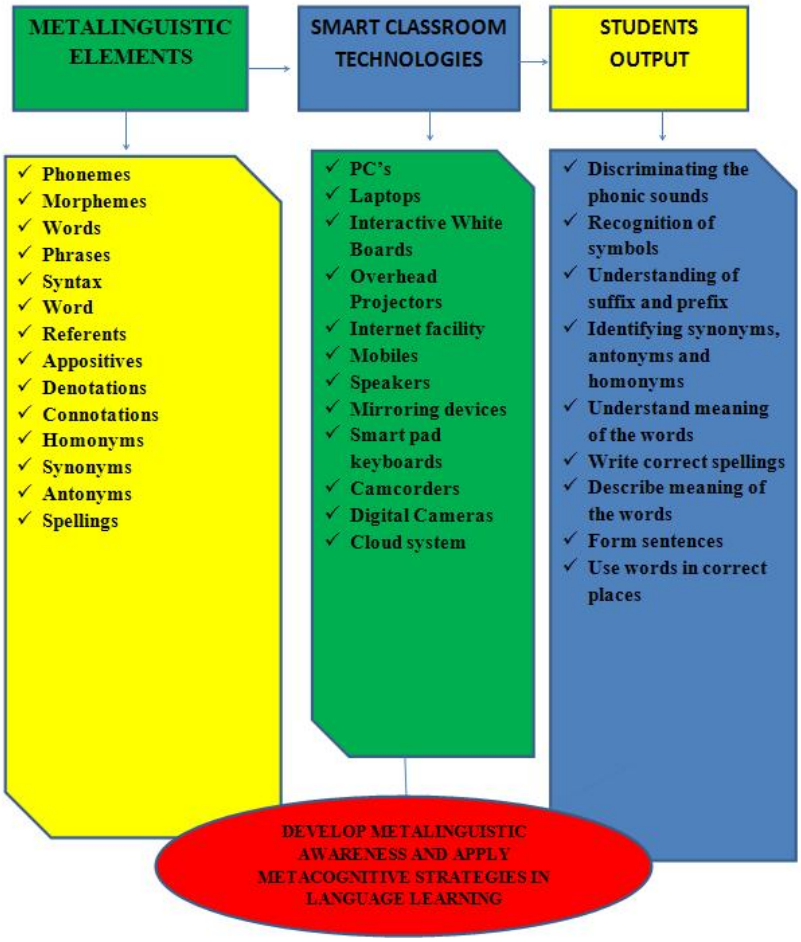
Research says that using such technologies for language teaching can bring effective learning among the learners. Soo and Nycow (1996) found using multimedia in English teaching can benefit the learners with different style of learning. Linda E. Reksten (2000) said a simple interactive video link would alleviate the burden of bringing realia into the language classroom. She also mentions in her paper that "Technology provide real life images, written text and voice of native speakers which will help to develop the natural language process such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. M. Rajeswar (2001) argued "Hypertext provides a number of advantages for language learning". Hence, usage of internet will provide vast information to the learner's which will help to broaden their language skills in English (Evans, 2009).

The Metalinguistic Elements to be taught in Smart classrooms is shown by a Model which will prove how a model Metalinguistic Based Language Learning in Smart Classroom will benefit students.

The linguistic components discussed earlier can be made cognizant in the students' mind. Using smart classrooms the linguistic elements can also be developed with the help of Podcasting, Interactive White boards, Power-point presentations and others which include audio, video and DVD files which can act as a stimulus for language learning of the learners. Software like Computer Assisted Language Learning helps to develop all the four skills of language. It helps the students by providing instructions and helps them to practice those language skills. A research study conducted by Lin (2010) found that a video-based CALL had positive impact on learning foreign language

verbs, nouns, and adjectives among students with diverse levels of proficiency. Research conducted by Sato (2013) found that listening to CALL audio software enabled faster vocabulary recall by the second language students. It helps to build all the four skills of the learners.

Fig 1 KUHELI's MODEL ON METALINGUISTIC BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING INTEGRATING SMART TECHNOLOGIES



In a smart classroom learners have the opportunity to interact with other participants and the pedagogy that goes together with the process makes it a good tool in learning language (Levy, 2009).Software like I- movies in the smart classroom helps the students to video record themselves by role-playing so they can practice foreign language pronunciation (McNulty, & Lazarevic, 2012). To improve the reading skill, Levy (2009) in his research has mentioned that technology provides the reader with assistance to better understand foreign texts while reading, by providing more material on the activity or exemplifying information to ensure the reader's learning. Plenty of reading material in the target language can be found on the Internet and those readings can be enhanced by the computer technology due to the vocabulary

building, text reading and comprehension. While reading, students can use the computer to look up concepts and other information which could help to strengthen the learning activity. Technology provides the students with automatic detection of grammatical errors, such as spell check among other auto corrections when writing in L2. Word processing software prompts students to make corrections when they are writing. The use of this technology promotes collaborative writing when writing is done through e-mails, logs or other formats where other students can review each other's writing and give feedback to each other (Levy, 2009). Thus knowledge of metalinguistic can be developed among the students in a proper way with the smart classrooms.

Conclusion

It could be concluded by saying that metalinguistic knowledge underpins linguistic proficiency when it is interpreted as linguistic acquisition. In other words, when it draws students' attention on the phenomenon of universal language with the help of technologies in a smart language classroom the students strengthen the knowledge of language, linguistic components and its usage. For instance, if someone's ear has been trained to listen for certain features in language he/she will be able to acquire a language just being exposed to a comprehensible input in a smart classroom. Hence, it will allow the student to autonomously progress in his/her linguistic proficiency and consciousness and have conscious use of linguistic elements in every walks of life.

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