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The Effectiveness of Interactive Teaching Strategies in Teaching English Language

ABSTRACT

English is an international language that is very important in all fields of interaction all over the world. Many countries pay more attention for developing teaching and learning English as a second language, especially in the early years that are considered a turning point in the process of learning/teaching English. Teaching English as a second language contains the process of teaching four main skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading. These basic skills require some additional English elements such as pronunciation, grammar, structures, and vocabulary. Amongst all these basic or secondary elements of teaching English, still the communicative and interactive strategies of teaching English, as a second language, are the most influential. Interactive strategy has the ability to engage both teachers and students in the educational process. This engagement can be performed through various techniques and strategies. That is why, the present study aims at introducing a full account of interactive strategies in teaching English language through defining and discussing the effectiveness of interactive strategies. Defining and discussing the influence of interactive strategies is performed through discussing the impact of interactive strategies on the process of teaching English as a second language, especially on the elements of memory and activation.



Introduction:

Teaching English has not been an easy task. It is met with several challenges that make it an extremely difficult process. Several strategies and methods have been put in place to help enhance teaching English. One of the main limitations of teaching English is the fact that some of the teaching methods used are out-dated (Sofi, 2015, p.14). The teaching and learning of the language are largely geared towards passing the exams rather than enabling the students to have a basic knowledge of the language (Rahman and Alhaisoni, 2013, p. 115). The teachers are also not accorded the necessary training that is needed to effectively teach linguistics (Khan, 2011, p. 3). Thus, they focus on making students pass exams rather than teaching them how to understand, comprehend, and apply a second language.

Due to the gap in the teaching methods applied in English classrooms, the present research aims to contribute towards improving the methods of teaching the English language. No other ages in the history of teaching English as a second language have teachers witnessed this great interest in teaching methods as much as they do in ours. Thus, it is necessary to discuss and analyze the possibilities and challenges of the promising methods of teaching English. In the last half century, scholars have witnessed great interest in language teaching methodologies as they aimed at achieving the best performance in the process of teaching English as a second language. In spite of the variety of methods, each one of them has a deal of insufficiency as each individual method focuses on certain points whereas it neglects other important points.

Teaching method is a wide set of principles, pedagogy, techniques and management strategies, which aims at establishing the best performance for both teachers and students at classrooms. Some of these methods adopt teacher-centered approach to learning, whereas others adopt student-centered approach to learning. Thus, it is necessary to discuss and analyze the possibilities and challenges of one of the most promising methods of teaching English. Through different methods of teaching English, teachers have to choose the method which treats the problem of acquiring the language for each student. However, in many teaching communities, there is a redundancy use of Grammar translation method and audio-lingual method. Both these methods create a gap since they do not pay attention to communicative competence.

The main problem of the process of teaching English is achieving communication, in other words, they do not have the dare to speak English. Consequently, the two above mentioned methods cannot deal this problem. Thus, the study tries to find new possibilities, which can develop the process of teaching English as a second language through using the best methods through discussing and analyzing the new creative methods of teaching English, namely interactive strategies.

Methods of Teaching English as a Second Language:

There are many studies which have discussed and evaluated methods of teaching English as a second language (Cochran, 1952, p.4) Whereas few studies have focused on the definition and the general principle of dogme method, there are no researches have tried to test the mechanism by which

dogme method is run, and to what degree dogme is an influential form of active learning (Xerri, 2012, p. 63). Unlike traditional methods of teaching English, such as grammar translation and audio-lingual, dogme method depends on the visual element in teaching English.

Moreover, there are no previous researches which have tried to test the effectiveness and possibilities of applying dogme method. Lisa Dold has discussed dogme method in terms of “thinking out of the box” and freeing from traditional methods of teaching (2012). Additionally, some educationalists have divided dogme method into sub-classes. Each sub-class has certain principles and techniques. All of these techniques and principles aim at better process of teaching English as a second language. Other educationalists have emphasized that this new method must be dealt with a practical way rather than theoretical one, in other words, the focus is on “dogme classroom management” (Bertrand, 2003, p.4). The most skills which are rapidly and efficiently improved through dogme are speaking and listening. Consequently, it breaks the ice between the learner and the language due to its communicative practical approach.

Like Grammar translation approach, Audio-lingual method emphasizes on language form, without taking into considerations the communicative approach or the real meaning. Additionally, it depends on stable pattern with no space for creativity. Moreover, student role becomes very passive (Larsen and Freeman, 2013, p.28).

Based on the behaviorist theory for military purposes, audio-lingual method was used to teach the soldiers the least necessary verbal communication skills (Danesi, 2003, p. 9). Behaviorism is the analysis and understanding of human and animal behavior with giving more importance to reinforcement and punishment (Baum, 2017, p.68).

Audio-lingual method pays more attention to the direct learning of language through communicative approach, with a rare use of mother language in order to overcome the problem of mother language interference. However, this communication is very negative as it focuses on repetition. Additionally, the student's role is passive.

The audio-lingual method is still used nowadays, though normally as a part of individual lessons rather than as the foundation of the course in order to overcome the weakness of its principles; however, the method still has many problems. Furthermore, the modern use of method witnessed immense dependence on language labs. Language lab introduces acceptable authentic material to students, such as audio-visual aids.

In spite of the exerted efforts to renew and adjust the method according to the most recent techniques of teaching, the method still ineffective and lacks the flexibility of modern methods. The behaviorist approach to learning is abandoned as many scholars proved that it has many weak points, moreover, it does not pay attention to communicative approach as it reflects poor one-way communicative process, in which the student's role is very passive. The method is teacher-dominated method (González, 2008, p. 47-50).

Unlike, traditional methods of teaching, the dogme method, focuses on the students as the main pillar of the process of education. Neglecting,

the stiff material and published textbooks, the dogme method focuses on conversations as the major technique for language teaching.

The New Zealand internationally well-known academic and ELT trainer, Scott Thornbury, sets a list of principles of the method including interactivity, engagement, dialogic processes, folded conversations, emergence, affordances, the learner's voice, freeing the classroom of published materials, and using authentic materials. Jo Bertrand, Teacher, Materials writer, British Council Paris describe dogme class room as “far removed from the preconceived idea of a lazy teacher” (p.4). Additionally, he describes the mechanism which is followed in dogme classrooms mentioning that “The students aren't seated behind desks” (p.3) asserting that the atmosphere of the method must be relaxing.

In this regard, it is necessary to find new possibilities and methods which enable the students of English as a second language to learn English effectively, without redundancy of theoretical materials which affect the practical use of language in a bad manner. Thus, the purpose of this study is to test and investigate the effectiveness of the mechanism by which dogme classes are run in order to find new possibilities in teaching English.

In dogme, lesson plans involve students' division into smaller groups. Then, they choose a certain topic to discuss. This communicative process is a very effective for listening-speaking practice which breaks the ice between the students and English as a foreign language. After that, the students will be asked to choose a spokesperson from each group in order to write some selected notes about the topics they discussed. Here, the teacher's role is not passive as he will guide the students and discuss them.

The Effectiveness of Interactive Strategies in Teaching English Language:

As most teaching strategies represent rigid and sometimes boring techniques, interactive strategies increase learning's motivation and make the process of learning more effective and more communicative. The main goal of interactive strategies is to increase students' interest in the learning process and to turn them into active participants in the lessons. Interactive activities provide more benefits than simply fulfilling educational objectives. Teachers can simply add this type of exercise into classroom to help students to enhance their communication and team-work skills. Moreover, interactive strategies can enhance students' creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities.

Simply, interactive strategies of teaching English aim at making the students actively involving in the process of learning through three four sub-classes: 1) teacher-student interaction; 2) student-student interaction; 3) applying audio-visual sets; 4) hands-on drills. These sub-classes will lead to enhancing 'long-term memory' for students. Interactive strategies also improve students' interests, knowledge, and team-work spirit. Senthamarai (2018) argues that interactive strategies enhance the teachers' role in classroom:

Teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgment to review the suggested strategies and decide on the most appropriate for meeting the needs of their students and deliver the essential content in a resilience and

wellbeing, drug education or road safety context. (p.35-36).

Then, he adds that interactive approach of teaching is not only a part of the process of teaching, but the whole teaching process must be interactive as he argues:

The whole class session should be interactive, with a balance of contributions from teacher and pupils. It should serve and not detract from the objective. Model the technique a number of times before you expect the children to use it effectively. Support pupils who will be less confident by rehearsing, priming or pairing them. Consider the space you will need if pupils are to move around comfortably. Consider how you will distribute, collect, store and protect resources. (Ibid 38)

Hence, interactive teaching must be available in all steps of teaching starting from the step of warming up till the process of feedback. Consequently, the teacher is able to create the motivation of learning through turning the process of teaching into a student-based process.

Here an important question emerges: how can a teacher apply interactive strategies during his classroom? Applying interactive strategies of teaching can be achieved through: 1) encouraging students to participate in classroom activities; 2) using questions, discussions, and simulative activities; 3) teachers' participation and monitoring these activities (Liu, 2017, p. 280).

These strategies cannot be achieved without using certain activities that cope up with these strategies. Audio-visual tools of teaching are the key devices through which a teacher can apply interactive strategies. Interactive strategies represent the modern modes of teaching that copes up with modern technology and digital-approaches of education. Hence, Eshonkulova argues:

The use of modern teaching methods leads to high efficiency in the teaching process. It is advisable to choose these methods based on the didactic task of each lesson. While maintaining the traditional form of teaching, enriching it with a variety of methods that activate the activities of students lead to an increase in the level of mastery of students. (2020, p. 356).

In interactive strategies, teachers utilize digital tools to perform better teaching-learning process an educational environment that copes up with modern technology. For example, PowerPoint slides are the most popular tool teachers use in the classroom these days. PowerPoint slides make the lecture more fascinating, lively, and effective. They also aid in the introduction of new ideas in a simple manner. Thus, usages of interactive strategies, especially through audio-visual aids help students to enhance memory for a longer period of time. Here, interactive strategies transmit the same meaning as words, but they provide clear concepts, which aid in the efficacy of learning (Bagila, 2019, 128).

Integrating technology in the classroom, as a part of interactive teaching, allows students to have virtual or vicarious experiences. For example, if the teacher wants to teach about the pyramids, it is probable that not all of the students in Egypt have seen the site, but teachers can bring this historical site virtually using interactive strategies which depends on audio-visual aids.

In interactive strategies, the use of audio-visual aids helps teachers maintain classroom discipline because all of the students' attention is focused

on studying. This interactive session also fosters critical thinking and reasoning, both of which are essential components of the process of interactive teaching. Thus, interactive strategies give opportunity for successful communication between teacher and students. One of the main difficulties faced by EFL learners is the lack of motivation, a lack of exposure to the target language, and a lack of pronunciation by the teacher, and such difficulties can be overcome by interactive strategies of teaching as interactive communication and audio-visual elements increase students' motivation and make the process of teaching more interesting (Mathew and Alidmat, 2013, p. 91). In this regard, Rachmavita elaborates the importance of using modern interactive strategies that utilize visual elements:

Motivation is an internal and external process for individuals, which creates an enthusiastic attitude in carrying out learning activities or certain other activities. In learning, motivation is needed for each student to achieve the desired learning goals. One of the things that can increase student motivation is to use appropriate learning media. (2020, p.5).

Thus, lack of motivation and enthusiasm of learning, interactive strategies can make them enthusiastic and curious about something, they learn. For students, traditional verbal lessons can be tedious and boring. On the other hand, the utilisation of audio-visual materials provides intrinsic incentive to students through enhancing their curiosity and stimulating their interests.

Nowadays, technology represents the main device through which interactive learning strategies can be applied. However, some teachers have technophobia which results in inability of using technology as a tool for interactive teaching. In this regard, Anas and Musdariah argues:

The availability and affordability of ICT tools for language teaching, becomes a daunting task for most ESL teacher. The teachers' technophobia hampered them from the actual use of technology and its integration in language teaching and learning. A look at this issue is simply necessary to take into account to encounter the teacher's reluctance in utilizing technology as a medium of instruction (Ibid 52).

Thus, using technology cannot be appropriate for all teachers. Here, an important question emerges: Are technological sets the only way to apply interactive teaching at classrooms? Interactive teaching is more than technological way of learning. In other words, teachers can apply interactive teaching using simple ways. To make this point clear, interactive teaching can be applied using very simple ways that may not require any tool. The following table elaborates the different tools of interactive teaching. One of them requires technological sets such as audio-visual tools, whereas the others require more simple tools:

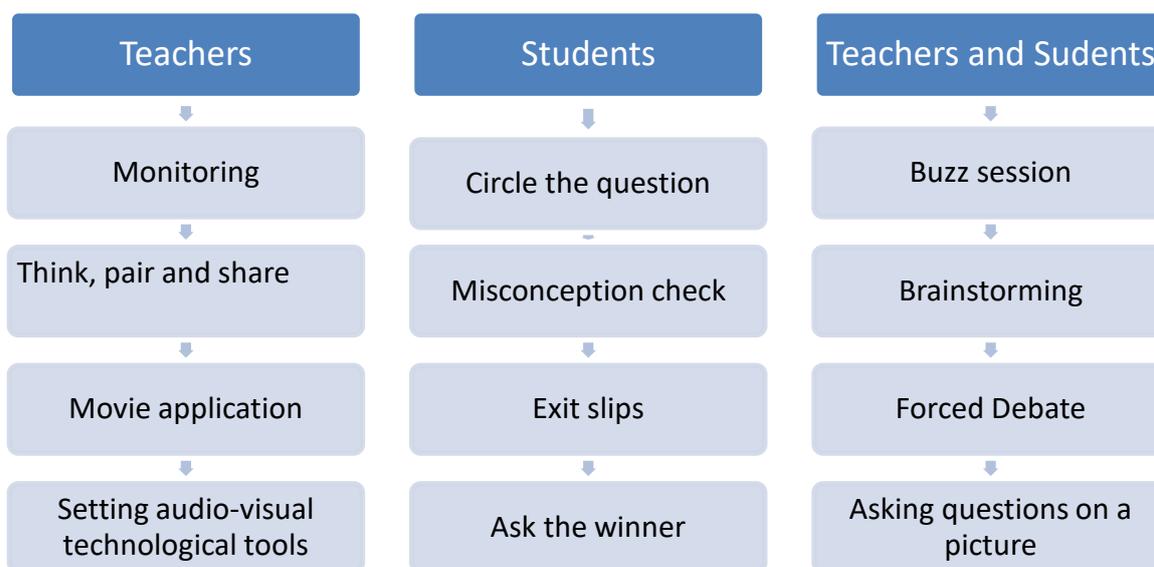
Interactive teaching using technology	Interactive teaching using simple audio-visual tools	Simple Interactive teaching (Does not require technological sets nor audio-visual tools)
Movie Application	Crossword puzzle	Thinking, pairing and

		sharing
learning games in Google Classroom	Scrabble	Brainstorming
Television.	Cards	Buzz session
Slide projectors	Songs	Exit slips
Headphones		Misconception check
Listening to audios		Circle the questions
PowerPoints		Ask the winner
		Pair-share-repeat
		Forced debate
		Pick the Winner

(Table 1):

Thus, one of advantages of interactive strategies is the flexibility of applying it either within the communities of moderate teaching budget, or within the low teaching budget as interactive strategy does not necessitates many tools and aids.

Interactive strategies can be also categorized according to the participants' strategies. There are some activities that are performed by teachers only, whereas others are activities that are performed by students only. In addition, the best effect created by interactive teaching can be made by the activities that are performed by both teachers and students. The following diagram elaborates these three categories:



(Diagram 1):

Again, the variety of the activities depend on interactive strategies assert the efficiency of applying this method in any circumstances. Moreover, these activities can be applied by qualified and non-qualified teachers due to their simplicity.

One of the most important effects of interactive teaching approach is enhancing memory and activation in teaching English. Based on the power of human mind, teaching/ learning English necessitates a strong and long term-memory. This memory aims at making links and relations between the words of the context. Using memory for enhancing teaching English requires

many procedures and techniques such as spacing, pacing, apply, cognitive depth, organization, imagining, and substitution, and flexibility in order to confirm the practical use of language. Only interactive approach of teaching English can reinforce memory.

Using interactive strategy for enhancing memory can be achieved through mental imagery (visualizing things), mnemonics, elaboration, rehearsal (Bower, 1970, p. 501). In addition, enhancing memory can use many tools such as cards, audio-visual aids and others that can be interrelated to the audio-visual approach of teaching.

Interactive strategy of teaching enhances the simulation of visual memory that removes the stress and facilitates the process of learning English as a second language. Memory also is a flexible and funny way for learning and most of the tools used by this approach are available and cheap. Moreover, some strategies that depend on memory such as making cards can be designed by the students themselves. That is why this strategy is funny, flexible, and applicable.

Activation in language learning is a concept which is defined by Gall-Crail and Zerwekh as a “cognitive strategy that reflects repeating, practicing with sounds and writing, practicing the new language in a variety of authentic situations, using reference, and so forth” (2002, p.60). Thus, it is regarded as generative process of producing the language. In teaching English, activation is based on the long-term memory besides activation of other linguistic elements that are associated with the vocabularies. This mechanism can achieve its better results through using interactive strategy as it asserts on the concept of activation through engaging both students and teachers in the process of learning.

Interactive strategy enhances activation through making links between similar and overlapped concepts of the language such as making a hierarchically relation between the vocabulary. Through depending on activation for enhancing teaching English produce creative and real time vocabulary. Here, it is worth mentioning that activation mainly depends on applying the language through making it more practical rather than theoretical. In other words, the teacher using his source book gives the learner the main hints and words leaving the students apply and produce the language. The main part of the process of activation in interactive teaching implies major procedures including asking questions, storytelling, and sometimes translation. Students ask these questions and narrate the stories for “generating” new words and expression. Consequently, students will be able to produce the linguistic structures in real-life situations.

Outcomes:

The study has reached several results regarding the efficiency of using interactive strategies of teaching either if they compared to other methods and strategies, or if they were dealt with individually. These outcomes are:

1. Interactive strategies can be applied in different teaching environments.
2. Interactive strategies can be applied in both developed and developing countries.

3. Interactive strategies can be applied by teachers, students, or both.
4. Interactive strategies can be applied by simple teaching aids, as well as they can be applied by complicated audio-visual aids.
5. Interactive strategies can be divided into technology-driven strategies, strategies that use simple audio-visual aids, and strategies that do not use any tools.
6. Interactive strategies reinforce students' "memory".
7. Interactive strategies reinforce students' "activation".
8. Interactive strategies increases students' motivations for learning.
9. Interactive strategies help teachers to maintaining classroom discipline because all of the students' attention is focused on studying.

Conclusion:

To sum up, interactive strategies of teaching can achieve the maximum positive effect of the process of teaching English as a second language. Interactive teaching has the ability to engage both students and teachers in the educational process. Interactive strategies utilize many simple audio-visual sets. Consequently, it can be applicable in both developed and developing countries. Interactive teaching can also enhance the elements of memory and activation in the process of learning as it emerges students' mentality through using various tools and activities. Thus, interactive strategies represent the modern modes of teaching and learning as it make the processes of teaching and learning more effective and more practical. As a final point, due to the importance of interactive strategy of teaching, the present study suggests more studies that associated with comparing the influence of interactive strategy of teaching and other teaching strategies.

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