CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The fifth and concluding chapter of the thesis summarizes the research study and discusses its findings. It also analyses their implications for the teaching of English to Limited English Proficient students. It puts forth suggestions for further research in the area and highlights the limitations of the present study.

The research study was started by formulating a hypothesis. The research tool used in the study to collect the data was chosen. The literature on the research topic was surveyed to understand the existing literature on the research topic. Then the field study was planned and conducted accordingly. The findings of the study are given below.

6.2   THE MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Language learners seem to be using strategies similar to those identified in the research studies on learning strategies.

2. Some students are able to and some are not able to apply the strategy taught while performing the given writing task.

3. The study gave an insight into the methodology to be adopted for the strategy training. The researcher has already discussed that the use of strategies depend upon various factors. One major factor affecting strategy use is the lecture mode of teaching.

Each of these findings is discussed below

1. In the research study that was conducted learners reported using certain language learning strategies. The researcher used a task independent questionnaire to make the students aware of the strategies they use. The students were interviewed and taught to introspect to report on the learning strategies they use.

2. Some students were not able to integrate the strategies to the language tasks. This would be because they are not interested in learning English. This is a major problem that ELT practitioners have to take cognizance of and urgently address the issue by suitably changing the syllabus, methodology and the testing procedure. Some students expected more controlled and guided language tasks for a longer period of time, before they were allowed to work on their own.

3. The study makes it clear that early learning experiences play a pervasive role in later language learning situations. The students' language learning histories reveal that they were heavily conditioned to learn from the teacher. They were dependant on the teacher for the explanation of the study material, wanted the teacher to use the mother-tongue to help them understand, and waited for the teacher to give them notes, guides or readymade answers to the questions most likely to be asked in tests and examinations. The students have transferred this learning experience into the college classroom and expect their teachers to teach in the same way. The students cannot tolerate any changes made with this teaching method.

The students lack the willingness to approach the task independently in the class room. They provided answers in a group, minimized participation by keeping quiet, absented themselves for class, sat in the last desk, and did not maintain eye contact with the teacher. All these behavioral and attitudinal problems prevent ELLs from learning in the classroom.

Understanding the kind of language skills that are required in college and the requirements of an examination system that requires students to exhibit their learning in English makes them highly demotivated.

The study enabled us to arrive at a profile of an English class at the tertiary level in India. The problems faced by the teachers and learners in such classrooms are a hindering factor for effective language learning to occur. However, as the ELLs in the study were trained in isolation, the students did not have the feeling of humiliation among their peers. The teacher-fronted interactive methodology was more conducive for using the strategies and for the strategies to be taught by the teacher, rather than the teacher-fronted lecture mode.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.3.1 Usefulness of Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are useful tools for students because they open up more reliable and less frustrating routes to success in language learning.

The potential appeared to exist for both students and teachers to profit from familiarization with language learning strategies. Strategy training can be conducted through modification of teaching procedures like making it an interactive classroom, defining the strategies and teaching the learners to use them rather than making changes in

curriculum and materials which is an uphill task, given the current teaching situation in India.

6.3.2 Discovering and Teaching Strategies

Much has to be learnt in the area of discovering optimal learning strategies for successful acquisition of a second language. But this remains a very exciting and promising area of pedagogical research at the present time.

Describing the language learning strategies to a learner is insufficient. Learners must be taught their value and also be taught how to use it for a language task

> We certainly know that simply describing these strategies to a learner with examples is likely to be no more successful than describing grammar and expecting them to generate fluent language on the basis of that knowledge (Grenfell and Harris 1999, p38).

6.3.3 Universalization of Strategies

After examining what the good language learner does and the possible strategies students use we need to universalize these strategies. This is one area of applied linguistic research that has attracted the teaching community for the pedagogical implications it has. There is an obvious inference that if the teachers can understand better the learning process then they can construct pedagogic conditions to facilitate it. They can teach others what to do in order to facilitate their learning. This is an indication of how a teacher might shape learning from a strategy point of view. This emphasis on 'learning to learn', by the learner rather than simply being taught is an

approach to language learning from a different direction. Here the role of the teacher changes from teaching the language to teaching the student to learn.

6.4   EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

In a teacher-centered class room many of the characteristics of the good language learners are discouraged. It is important to understand the process of learning before the implications of teaching can be realized. Research into learning strategies raises a question. If successful learners have a wide repertoire of strategies than their less successful peers, then it seems sensible to intervene and offer them the opportunity to acquire these tools. This explicit instruction increases the learners' range of strategies.

It is unrealistic to assume that simply telling students about possible fruitful strategies will ensure that these pass into their repertoire and can be drawn on automatically. They need to be given explicit training and reminders to use the strategies alongside a number of language tasks and materials likely to promote them. Once the learners are familiar with the concept of using strategies, these scaffolds can be removed. The teacher needs to consider the whole domain of learning strategies and what they imply for the theory and practice of modern-language teaching.

6.5   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study should be understood in light of several limitations of the research.

- The researcher was not able to carry out the final study with the same students of the preliminary study. This was because of the very short period of time available and due to the busy schedule of the students, as their semester examinations were fast approaching.

- The study was only focused on two strategies that would help the students develop their writing skills.

- The study was carried out only in an engineering college. The researcher did not study the use of language learning strategies by the students in an arts and science college.

- The training procedures can be revised and developed further. The study was not conducted over a continuous period of time. The effect of the training was not checked after a span of time. The research study was completed in less than a year. Macaro (2006) rightly notes that learning strategy instruction (training) appears to be effective in promoting successful learning only if it is carried over lengthy periods of time. The research problem needed to be investigated over a period of time so that it could be studied if the trained strategy could also be transferred to the other language tasks.

- The research study does not focus on transferring the learning strategies to other language tasks. Macaro (2006) feels that the transferability of language learning strategies should be one goal of learning strategy research.

6.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several directions for future research based on this study.

- Second Language Acquisition researchers seek to understand different learner characteristics and the various meta-cognitive, cognitive, social and affective processes involved in processing language input and using the

language for different purposes. With the increasing emphasis on learner-centered instruction and learner-empowerment, methodologists and second language teachers will continue their quest for more effective instructional approaches. This will develop the study on learning strategies and the effects of learning strategy instruction on achievement and language proficiency.

- A second area of future research is in the development of language teacher expertise for integrating learning strategies into classroom instruction. The evaluation of different models for teacher preparation in learning strategy instruction could lead to refining and improving current models. Studies need to be undertaken to identify the relationship of effective learning strategy instruction to teacher characteristics and experiences.

- Learning strategy research should continue for only through a better understanding of the learning and teaching process can more language learners achieve success. Strategy training can contribute to development of learner mastery and autonomy and increased teacher expertise, but additional research in specific language learning contexts is essential to realizing its potential to enhance Second Language Acquisition.

The LEP student can be helped by a concerted effort involving the practitioner and the researcher. Diverse research programs should be encouraged to actually describe and specify what is happening during the course on second language teaching and learning. The only way to provide for such extended instruction and practice in learning strategies is to involve

regular classroom teachers over a semester (a period of six months) or even more than that in the teaching of learning strategies. For this to take place, extensive staff development programs are needed in order to successfully implement a program of learning strategy instruction.

A heightened awareness of learner training among teachers is needed. Language teachers need to be offered training to offer strategy training to the students. As Pattanayak (1969, p1) rightly puts it,

> Language teachers lack the requisite training and the competence to effect innovation in the time-sanctified static teaching structure in a non-competitive seniority based academic system.

6.7   CONCLUSION

Good language learning begins with the learner and the activities in which they are involved, but the class room practice is most often determined by the teacher. Therefore good language learning involves some description of good teaching. Good modern-language teaching can happen only by a re-orientation practice in the language classroom. This re-orientation needs to be built on the understanding of the process of language learning and consequently language teaching. As Oxford (1990, p200) remarks, "One of the soundest reasons to assess your students' learning strategies is so you can provide training on how to improve those strategies".

The research study suggests that English language teachers can help their learners using strategy instruction. To achieve this teachers not only need to be trained in the methods of incorporating strategy instruction but also they need to be convinced that learning strategies can be effective for their students.