Teaching Strategies for ESL Students

Lirui Liu

University of Manchester, U.K

Abstract: ESL is a widely famous program which determines to help students to learn English as a second language to enhance their communication practices. The program is aimed to help non-native students to build their English. Various strategies are used by the instructors but the most effective strategy is called TBL (task-based learning) and this strategy has proved to be effective for the learning and teaching experience of both the teachers as well as students. The students are indulged in various productive tasks that help them in enhancing their second language. Another approach that has been proved successful while teaching the students about grammar and its concept is called PPP (presentation-practice-production) strategy. This strategy has been analyzed as an innovative method of teaching students about grammatical concepts by giving them drills and various activities. Finally, another strategy that has been suggested as productive for ESL programs is Language Experience Strategy which helps the students in learning the English Language by reflecting on their past experiences.

1. Introduction

The term ESL is an abbreviation used for the phrase English as a Second Language and this program is a widely popular program that aims to help students learn English coming from backgrounds where English is not the first language. ESL students are generally those students who have migrated to English speaking countries or are pursuing their education in western countries through an exchange program where English is the national language. ESL programs are specifically designed for the students to help them effectively learn English so that they can easily communicate and present themselves in front of an audience. The following report aims to provide a descriptive analysis of a teaching strategy used by teachers to teach the students about English as a secondary language. The major aim of the essay would be to highlight the history, theories, teaching, and learning strategies used by teachers and their practical implementation in the class when conducting ESL programs. The research report is divided into various sections, with the first section describing the topic being discussed in the report, the next section will highlight some of the past studies and research that have been conducted on the topic, after that, an analysis will be presented on the ESL strategies adopted by the teacher, in addition to this the report will provide an evaluation of the practical implementation of the teaching strategies in the learning curriculum and finally the last section will provide some of the recommendations that can help in enhancing the teaching practices regarding ESL.

2. Previous Studies and Theories

The growth of English as an important communication skill in the corporate world has become one reason why it is of utmost importance to non-native English speakers and would therefore enroll in language courses. The TESL First Annual Panel in Ontario published that ESL and English as a Second Language teaching in Ontario, Canada dated from the Post-World War II era when large numbers of immigrant soldiers were involved. Consequently, the Ministry of Education was responsible for raising the need for a language program for newcomers. One and a half-decade later ESL was primarily taught in community colleges in the province to train the students for a citizenship test. According to Pittsburg's Public Schools, ESL or English as a second language is a standardized English language learning curriculum for non-native speakers and is also called English as a foreign language (EFL) (Abbasi, 2011). The classes seek to encourage non-native English speakers to succeed academically in the language. ESL teachers apply different teaching strategies to their students in each school, especially those who take regular ESL classes (Cho and Larke, 2010). Some of these requirements and methods include either a full-day class or a particular part of the class program and are eventually led to classes in the field of material and school settings with native English speakers. Depending on the field of education, there are various teaching techniques.

In today's ESL classrooms, the grammar-translation method has moved away from the method of grammar-translation to communicative language education. In contrast with the method of grammar-translation which focuses on syntax, lexis, phonetics, and phonology and semantics, content-oriented methods – such as the use of literature in linguistic learning – "give authentic input to language learning" and deal with things relevant to learners (Allison and Rehm, 2007). Due to its authenticity and meaningful context, students find these methods more motivating. They also promote cultural and intercultural awareness, which is important in the global age. They also offer students extensive and intensive reading, sociolinguistic or pragmatic knowledge and grammar and vocabulary, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking skills.

Similarly, Oxford proposes two forms of integrated skills training, content-based teaching, and task-based teaching, where the former stresses language learning of content while the latter emphasizes the execution of tasks using communicative language (Chen and Yang, 2017). The empirical reality however is that the ESL theory is often not written in the light of the practical needs of mainstream students. Although the integrated approach is favored in the domain, the fact is that the program remains based on non-ESL students.

3. Analysis of Esl Learning Strategies

According to Carless (2002), the teaching of English as a second language can probably achieve fluency and accuracy if tasks are to be an integral part of education. Every word must be based on its meaning and practical usage in teaching the English language. Tasks come into the picture – they allow words to be used in a way that is grammatically correct and accurate. As stated by Ghazali et al., (2009) tasks are used to help students understand their context and the way they are used in real-life situations. As such, the meaning and usage of words are studied, avoiding grammar and fluency errors. The emphasis is on the involvement and the message itself.

The mission is a series of different tasks or events with corresponding problems that are involving both students and teachers in an action in intellectual and communication study as indicated by Honigsfeld and Dove (2010). The six tasks are "list, sort, compare, solve problems, share experience and create tasks". The consequence of these activities is a "full list or draft mental map, information sorted according to particular criteria, identification of differences and similarities, solutions to issues, exchange of opinions and attitudes" and the end product that the audience will appreciate.

This method consists of three phases – work, task duration, and language emphasis (Carless, 2002). The three stages have various activities, each of which has corresponding objectives. These phases are important for the learning process of each ESL class in a TBL environment. These three distinct phases were carefully developed by Carless (2002) to create a supportive environment for acquiring and studying the English language.

As Carless (2002) suggests, a task may take the form of a puzzle, a test, a game, an interactive activity, or a list. An intermediate level task can be easy to ask students to collect, form into groups, and list the items they purchase during food shopping. Although the task is basic, it is interactive since each student contributes one or two to the list they make. Teachers should be as imaginative as they can in easy and complex tasks. Tasks come in different styles to help students find the right terms for their tasks. "Tasks of various kinds may be designed for any subject or appropriate text" (Carless, 2002). Concepts can also be personalized or sustainable. International language is an example of a subject. Students will be asked to offer globally famous English terms. As suggested, these are the words the students know. These terms are then separated into categories like, say, animals or vehicles. After that, students would be asked to compare their notes with those of the other groups to take care of the terms, not in their list. This allows students to improve their vocabulary while also improving their social skills.

Task-Based Learning has a range of benefits. One of them is that when this technique is used, learning the English language is so much simpler because it lets students learn each word based on its usage and meaning. It also allows students to use them in real life, making them flawless and fluent at the same time grammatically. It could be useful for higher-level students who would presumably consider it suitable for their future careers. However, since the latter may find it challenging and unacceptable for their daily lives, it may be disadvantageous for those at intermediate levels. According to Johnson and Chang (2012) when one aims to learn at a higher level, learning the English language using the TBL method is not suggested. It is because it is claimed that in a maximum environment, TBL encourages pidgin. It was suggested that from more or less teacher help or interference to more peer engagement, student autonomy, and student initiative should be the logical progression of learning (Johnson and Chang, 2012). However, with the latter, the TBL method seems to start immediately.

Link (2014) also argues that many non-native English speakers who teach ESL adapt the method of TBL in ways that are inconsistent with its values and that they often turn it into the method of development of presentation practice. It should be noted that while the TBL approach is focused on research into second-language learning and teaching ideas and theories, the Presentation-Practice-Production method allows teachers to implement grammar rules or vocabulary objects, expecting students to manipulate the decontextualized phrases before writing or performing something, which is subsequently tested for accuracy (Link, 2014). In the Link (2014) research, it was found that both native English speakers and non-native English speakers appeared to apply the TBL method incorrectly. They found that while TBL is converted into language practice activities or conventional grammar instruction by non-native English speaker teachers, native English speaker teachers convert it into CLT (communicative language teaching), which is delivered as PPP. Link (2014) therefore suggest that ESL teachers undergo continuous professional development in the TBL process, both to help them build an understanding of their attitudes and expectations and to help them translate the theories of TBL into successful practice.

On the other hand, the Language Experience approach encourages the use of known language and familiar experiences for the creation of texts. Min (2013) describes this approach as "a whole language approach to teaching that encourages reading and writing by transcribing the experiences of a student, with the transcription then used as the student's reading material". It is based on the premise that students are capable of writing stories even if they are not quite ready (Min, 2013). It

was created in response to phonics-based programs and uses a top-down reading approach in particular. It also requires fundamental variations, namely the story of personal experience and the story of group experience. This technique facilitates the integration of writing with reading, listening, and communicating in the classroom, according to Min (2013). It was stated that teachers who use this approach assume that the process of writing is more important than the output; therefore, they encourage students to use drafts and reviews in their writing, to explore subjects, and to gather ideas from their own experience (Min, 2013).

The Language Experience Approach consists of five stages, the first of which is when the teacher and student discuss the subject to be used for the dictation (Mukoroli, 2011). This step helps the student and the teacher to share views and observations, contributing in turn to the improvement of the language abilities of the student (Mukoroli, 2011). To construct a simple reading material, the second step is when the student dictates a story to the teacher who records the sentence. In the third step, before the student becomes acquainted with the story, the student reads the story several times, with the teacher's assistance if appropriate. This increases the reading comprehension skills of the student, which is made easier by the fact that they are reading content they created. The student learns individual story words and other reading skills in the fourth stage, which the instructor reinforces by doing activities that are relevant to the story. In the fifth stage, students switch from reading their dictionary to reading other authors' materials, helping them to gain confidence and skills in the reading process (Mukoroli, 2011).

4. Practical Application of the Teaching Strategies to the Curriculum Area of English

An example of applying the TBL approach is pair-work in speech class where students are paired together and are asked to demonstrate agreement or disagreement about social life issues in the form of opinions (Nordin et al., 2013). This activity helps students to acquire the four skills needed for English proficiency, namely receptive skills (i.e., listening and reading) and constructive skills (i.e., speaking and writing). Students who are confused in learning grammar find the speech class more interesting, as teachers prefer to focus more on the meaning than on the grammar.

The teaching of proper grammar to students is, on the other hand, an example of the PPP method. In this approach, the instructor defines a grammar point (i.e., present), provides lessons and exercises to practice the point (i.e., practice), and encourages students to incorporate the point in the student's writing (i.e., Produce) (Ng and Ng, 2015). More precisely, the Produce section can be used by asking students to compose a five-paragraph essay, which is intended "to model organizational principles".

On the other hand, the use of dialogue journals to improve the writing of ESL students is an example of applying the Language Experience Approach (Nam, 2010). Dialog journals use an interactive approach when students can compose their entries, read their teachers' answers, and participate in a written discussion. This ongoing written dialogue means that the students have a real audience for their writing and that they interact with the teacher for a real reason (Mu, 2005). Furthermore, dialogue journals encourage students to select their subjects for their submissions, ensuring that they are culturally acquainted with those subjects and are interested in them. Finally, because these journals are not graded, students are free to concentrate on the process of exploration and discovery in writing without the fear of making errors in their language experimentation. It also encourages all students to take part in the event and to write at their level.

5. Recommendations

A great number of specific challenges and difficulties are posed by teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). Educating speakers of other languages means that a teacher can interact with a

variety of cultures, learning styles, educational experiences, and, of course, the difficulty of working through a potentially challenging language barrier, whether teachers are teaching in a classroom abroad or one of the many ESL systems. Despite these difficulties (or maybe partly because of them), demand for ESL teachers is at an all-time high at present. With the international importance of the English language constantly increasing and an increase of non-native English speakers here at home, professional teachers are required to provide a healthy and comprehensive ESL education. Here are some of the guidelines that will help teachers develop their methods for teaching and learning.

5.1 Groupwrok Integration

For students of any age, learning a foreign language, even though its origins are familiar, is a very challenging challenge. It is much more challenging to master it alone. Teachers need to get them to work in pairs or larger groups to make ESL learners feel safe practicing their new language so that they can help each other (O Bryan and Hegelheimer, 2007). Lessons become fun, and it becomes more natural to communicate and learn English when students can work together and peer-teach through it.

5.2 Maximizing Oral Contact

In the classroom, a teacher should make sure to keep an oral focus. While both writing and reading are important, it helps to embed the sound and feel of the language in the mind of a student by requiring students to speak as often as possible. It also encourages them to understand verbal signs. It is crucial to the overall success of ESL to develop a comfort with speaking English in front of other individuals (Oxford, 2002). The earlier they learn to begin verbally speaking, the quicker and more productive the task will be.

5.3 Using a Diverse Schedule of Lesson

Students from an array of cultural and educational backgrounds will join ESL programs. Students can learn differently, as in any classroom. Keeping a diverse lesson plan will help teachers in catering various aspects related to their English teaching and it can also allow them to make their teaching more presentable and engaging for multi-cultural students (Ting and Gilmore, 2012). To build a detailed lesson plan, blend reading, writing, observing, and listening with oral emphasis.

5.4 Integrate Cultural Lessons to Personalize

Having the English language meaningful and personal makes the students become involved in the lesson plan and internalize it. To teach the language, use their personal experiences and histories. Teachers should ask them to tell the class what they did the past weekend, what their family is like, what their home is like, something that helps them think about their personal experiences can help them become more excited about the words and phrases they are learning and using (Wei, 2006). Teachers should ensure that, while making it important to their community, they teach them. They will help the students find the language fascinating and fun by doing so.

5.5 Limit the Utilization of Dictionary

Try to restrict a glossary or dictionary to the amount of time students spend consulting. It is good to ask students to memorize terms and phrases, but make sure that much of the class time is taken

up putting these words and phrases into practice instead of merely reciting words from a dictionary (Zhang, 2011). This can become tedious and repetitive, and offers no meaning to make the lesson important.

6. Conclusion

An English language learning course for students who are non-native speakers of English is ESL or English as a Second Language. This can be immensely helpful to individuals as it encourages them to succeed in their future careers and academically. There are many ESL teaching strategies; one of the most well recognized and studied is the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach of Carless. To help students have a more engaging and productive ESL learning experience, this teaching approach means that activities are crucial. Tasks, in this sense, are specified for a communication purpose as a collection of activities. The Presentation-Practice-Production technique, on the other hand, is often used for teaching grammar in which the instructor introduces grammar concepts or rules that students practice through drills and exercises and then apply to more formal activities in the English classroom. Finally, the Language Experience approach makes use of the experiences of the students in helping them to learn the English language.

References

[1] Abbasi, A.M. (2011). A survey of teaching strategies in ESL classroom.

[2] Allison, B.N. and Rehm, M.L. (2007). Effective teaching strategies for middle school learners in multicultural, multilingual classrooms. Middle School Journal, 39(2), pp.12-18.

[3] Carless, D. (2002). Implementing task‑based learning with young learners. ELT journal, 56(4), pp.389-396.

[4] Chen, D. and Yang, X. (2017). Improving active classroom participation of ESL students: Applying culturally responsive teaching strategies. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 7(1), pp.79-86.

[5] Ghazali, S.N., Setia, R., Muthusamy, C. and Jusoff, K. (2009). ESL Students' Attitude towards Texts and Teaching Methods Used in Literature Classes. English language teaching, 2(4), pp.51-56.

[6] Honigsfeld, A. and Dove, M.G. (2010). Collaboration and co-teaching: Strategies for English learners. Corwin Press.

[7] Iwai, Y. (2011). The effects of metacognitive reading strategies: Pedagogical implications for EFL/ESL teachers. The Reading Matrix 11 (2), 150, 159.

[8] Johnson, M.A. and Chang, D. (2012). Balancing Act: Addressing Culture and Gender in ESL Classrooms. Journal of Adult Education, 41(1), pp.19-26.

[9] Link, S., Dursun, A., Karakaya, K. and Hegelheimer, V. (2014). Towards Better ESL Practices for Implementing Automated Writing Evaluation. Calico Journal, 31(3), p.n3.

[10] Min, Y.K. (2013). Vocabulary acquisition: Practical strategies for ESL students. Journal of International students, 3(1), pp.64-69.

[11] Mukoroli, J. (2011). Effective vocabulary teaching strategies for the English for academic purposes ESL classroom.

[12] Mu, C. (2005). A taxonomy of ESL writing strategies. Redesigning Pedagogy: Research, Policy, Practice, pp.1-10.

[13] Nam, J. (2010). Linking research and practice: Effective strategies for teaching vocabulary in the ESL classroom. TESL Canada Journal, pp.127-127.

[14] Ng, C.F. and Ng, P.K. (2015). A review of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of ESL learners. International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics, 1(2), pp.98-105.

[15] Nordin, N.M., Rashid, S.M., Zubir, S.I.S.S. and Sadjirin, R. (2013). Differences in reading strategies: How ESL learners really read. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 90, pp.468-477.

[16] Bryan, A.N.N.E. and Hegelheimer, V. (2007). Integrating CALL into the classroom: The role of podcasting in an ESL listening strategies course. RECALL-HULL THEN CAMBRIDGE-, 19(2), p.162.

[17] Oxford, R.L. (2002). Language learning strategies in a nutshell: Update and ESL suggestions. Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice, 4(3), pp.124-132.

[18] Ting, C. and Gilmore, L. (2012). Attitudes of preservice teachers towards teaching deaf and ESL students. Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online), 37(12), p.67.

[19] Wei, M. (2006). A Literature Review on Strategies for Teaching Pronunciation. Online submission.

[20] Zhang, H. (2011). A study on ESL writing anxiety among Chinese English majors: Causes, effects and coping strategies for ESL writing anxiety.