

A Glimpse at Language Teaching Principles and their Implementations

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching has been influenced by several theories and beliefs. This article illuminates several fundamental principles which have enlivened the practice of second language teaching for decades. Some famous principles of second language teaching have been chosen based on their grant impact upon language teaching and learning. They are recognized to be a compilation of many theories and practices.

Bearing in mind that the provided principles may be regarded as the best in the field, most of them do not dictate what and how to teach, but they give teachers complex models from which to construct teaching activities and improve themselves as educators. As a result, the discussed principles are not to be seen as rigid or prescriptive formula; rather, they are mainly provided as a framework or guidelines which can be followed for better language teaching and learning.

PRINCIPLES AND THEIR RATIONALE

Pedagogy is most successful when learner differences are acknowledged, analyzed, and accommodated in teaching. Therefore, a successful teacher is one who actively responds to the differences, helps all students discover and develop their talents or strengths and facilitate maximizing students' potential (Lei, 2010).

Based on this knowledge, applying certain principles to teaching that gives students multiple options for taking in information and making sense of ideas is vital. According to Harmer (2001, p. 57) “ if [teachers] are fluent at making these changes, [their] effectiveness as teachers is greatly enhanced.”

Choosing a method or a combination of methods does not mean that the teacher does her job and students must learn based on this decision. Some aspects of learning do not have their way to many methods and, therefore, we need to bring them to the surface and draw enough attention to them. Students' learning styles can be given here as an example of this essential concern.

One of the objectives of these principles is to make language learner a better designer for his/her own learning experience, so he/she becomes able to fulfill his/her dreams. Attaining this objective necessitates careful consideration from the part of language teachers.

BROWN'S PRINCIPLES

Brown's (2001) principles of language pedagogy incorporate the principles of CLT and motivation, as well as notions of acquisition, learning and acculturation developed by Krashen and Schumann (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p.57). The following is a brief description of these principles.

Principle 1: Automaticity

‘Automaticity’ is the spontaneous and subconscious acquisition of any language to which a child or an adult is exposed (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p.58).It takes place in a communication rich environment.

This principle suggests the need for teachers to create a learning rich, English speaking environment and minimize low levels of anxiety for automatic acquisition to take place.

Principle 2: Meaningful Learning

‘Meaningful Learning’ is about the need to promote learning through meaningful understanding rather than rote learning. According to Brown (2001, p. 57), ‘Meaningful learning will lead to better long-term retention than rote learning.’

Principle 3: Anticipation of Reward

The need to praise achievements and give positive feedback to motivate students is the core of this principle. More positive and lively classrooms and more engaged relationships which tend to incorporate positive feedback are seen as the central part of language teaching.

This reflects Skinner’s argument (1957, cited in Brown, 2001, p. 58) that ‘the anticipation of reward is the most powerful factor in directing one’s behavior’.

Principle 4: Intrinsic Motivation

This principle has to do with providing tasks and materials that are intrinsically fun or motivating. The development of intrinsic motivation involves affective processing, which stems from students’ desires and needs (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p.59).

Principle 5: Strategic Investment

‘Strategic Investment’ is about the need to focus on the role of students in the methods teachers employ in learning languages.

Teachers’ tendency to dominate the class with little opportunity for learners to take a role in their own learning hinders the possibilities for strategic investment. Fortunately, in recent years, as Al-Jadidi (2009) states, ‘the focus has shifted from language teachers to the role of the learner and the methods that the learners employ to internalize and perform in the language.’

Principle 6: Language Ego

It is about the need to treat learners with care to help them develop sense of identity as speakers of the target language. This principle can be promoted through more personal engagement with students as individuals and focus on meaning because the tendency to focus on accuracy rather than meaning, thereby giving more negative than positive feedback, leads to neglect their ‘language ego’. The teacher should, therefore, show patience and empathy in order to maximize the development of their ‘language ego’.

Principle 7: Self-Confidence

This principle has to do with promoting students’ self-esteem in learning the target language. It stems from the fact that self-esteem is the key to a successful learning experience. If a person believes in his/ her ability to accomplish a task, then he or she will successfully achieve this goal.

Principle 8: Risk-Taking

All learners of a foreign language are challenged to take risks in their learning. The focus on meaningful language and authentic materials and opportunities for problem-solving activities encourage risk-taking.

Bearing in mind that there are not many chances for risk taking in highly structured lessons and a focus on rote learning, teachers are recommended to encourage learners to take risks in their attempts to use the target language both productively and receptively. Self-confidence and a strong language ego lay the ground for risk-taking. Therein this principle is interlinked with the two principles mentioned above.

Principle 9: The Language-Culture Connection

Making explicit connections between language and culture is crucial for language learning.

Emphasis on the grammatical forms and structures of the language, rather than discussion and dialogue and the habit of references considered culturally offensive may hinder learners from an important facet of learning a language (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p.61).

Principle 10: The Native Language Effect

This principle has to do with the effects of learners' native/ first language on acquiring and or learning the new language. In other words, it is about the interference of the mother tongue in the second or foreign language, causing errors in the process of learning the target language.

Principle 11: Inter-Language

Inter-language is the process of internalizing chunks of language, vocabulary and grammar structures. Error feedback is a necessary part of inter-language development. Focusing on fluency may contribute to the developmental processes of learners' inter-language and enhance acquisition. However, balance must be struck between focusing on fluency and providing the feedback necessary for inter-language development.

Principle 12: Communicative Competence

Giving equal attention to language use and fluency in the context of authentic communications is the core of this principle. It aims at facilitating learners' understanding and preparing them to encounter the real world outside the classroom.

OTHER EDUCATORS HAVE THEIR WORDS, TOO

Brown's principles have received wide agreement among second and foreign language educators. Al-Jadidi (2009, p.59) states 'Brown provides one of the best-known contemporary accounts of the pedagogical principles and methods of second language learning and acquisition in all their complexity.'

There are others, however, who have suggested related principles. One of those is Malcolm Knowles; a pioneer in the study of adult learning. According to Peterson (2010), Knowles observed that adults learn best when they understand why something is important to know or do, they have the freedom to learn in their own way, learning is experiential, the time is right for them to learn and the process is positive and encouraging. By these important observations, therefore, he set five constructive principles for teaching adults. These principles can be demonstrated as follows.

Principle 1: Making Sure that Students Understand "Why"

This principle points out that students need to know why they are doing specific things if we want them to learn. This has to do with their motivation to learn which is likely to be reinforced after explaining the importance of doing or following a specific thing. Teachers may explain to the students why they need to focus on specific points in the language process, for instance.

Principle 2: Students Have Different Learning Styles

Not all students are alike. Thus, there are three general learning styles or sensory preferences, as some prefer to call them: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

According to Scrivener (2005, p. 64), learners have different sensory preferences; some respond best to hearing things (auditory), others to seeing them (visual), while others learn best when they can touch and feel tangible, physical objects (kinesthetic). That is to say, if teachers want to involve all their students and help them benefit from the presented materials, they have to design or adapt their methods to suit those sensory preferences. The materials chosen should be carefully selected to meet such needs and perspectives.

What is important to mention here in Peterson's (2010) words is that 'most people use all three styles while they're learning, and of course, this is logical since we all have five senses, barring any disabilities, but one style almost always is preferred.'

Principle 3: Allowing Students to Experience What They are Learning

Experience can take many forms. According to Peterson (2010), 'any activity that gets your students involved makes the learning experiential. This includes small group discussions, experiments, role playing, skits, building something at their table or desk, writing or drawing something specific – activity of any kind.'

Once the teachers show the students how to do or answer an activity, they should give them time to do it on their own. When they make mistakes, they should not interfere unless students ask. Giving them the time to correct their mistakes and allowing them the autonomy to go at their own speed would lead to better understanding and foster the learning process.

Principle 4: 'When the Student Is Ready, the Teacher Appears'

No matter how hard a teacher tries, if a student is not ready to learn, he/she will not. Readiness is so important in the learning process. Therefore, it is the teacher's job to listen carefully for teaching moments and take advantage of them. According to Peterson (2010), when a student says or does something that triggers a topic on teacher's agenda, he/she should be flexible and teach it right then. If that would cause a problem on the schedule, the teacher should teach a bit about it rather than saying flat out that they will have to wait until later in the program. By then, the teacher may have lost their interest.

Principle 5: Encourage Your Students

One of the teachers' jobs is being positive and encouraging. Giving students time to respond when the teacher asks a question grants them a sort of fulfilment and support. They may need a few moments to consider their answer. The teachers ought to recognize the contributions their students make, even when small, and give them words of encouragement whenever the opportunity arises. Such deeds lead to better learning.

OTHER RECENT PRINCIPLES

To have more recent perceptions in this area, one may refer to constructivist learning theory which emphasizes the central role of the learners in constructing their own knowledge (Ranjana,2022). In other words, the constructivist learning theory emphasizes the active processes that the learners utilize to gain information and master the target objectives (Yao-Zhong, 2003). Reyes and Vallone (2008) state that it provides new perspectives and guidelines that are relevant in all spheres of learning, including second

language learning. Al-Jadidi (2009, p.188) affirms that language teachers would benefit by incorporating the principles suggested by Reyes and Vallone (2008, pp.39-63); new learning builds on prior knowledge, learning is mediated through social interaction, problem solving is part of learning and learning is a process and teachers are facilitators of that process.

To apply the constructivist learning theory in language teaching, educators need to provide meaningful experiences for the learners. For instance, they need hands-on activities like involving them in interactive language games, role-playing, or creative writing exercises. Real-life contexts can also be offered to enrich the learners' experiences and enable them to be actively engaged in the learning process. Creating scenarios that mimic authentic language use like writing emails, creating advertisements, or conducting interviews can encourage the learners to effectively apply the language. Immersing them in doing activities online or in digital platforms can provide diverse and dynamic learning experiences. By doing so, learners will be exposed to a variety of authentic language materials.

Despite its effectiveness, the constructivist learning theory has several limitations including having varied implementation as there may not be consistency in teaching since each educator may approach it differently. There are also the assessment challenges associated with it as the conventional assessment may not align well with the constructivist approach. Other challenges that are associated with this theory include time consuming and lack of structure for the learners.

WHICH PRINCIPLES?

The selected principles should be used according to what we demand the students to gain. Teachers have to be flexible about which principles to adopt and, then, when they select their best principles, they need to be aware of how they can carry out those principles and how they implement them as they should be. Such decision, however, depends on the teachers' perceptions, their students' level and how they view second language learning.

IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICE

Since these principles are presented as best practice in second language teaching, adequate explanation should be offered for their implementation in the classroom. Although some examples are given when clarifying these principles, such illustrations will give a clear picture about how teachers would utilize some of these principles in their classes.

Hence, the pedagogical implications of these principles lie in the importance of recognizing and dealing with a range of styles and strategies that learners bring to the learning process and the need for attention to every individual in the classroom, for example individual versus group work. Teachers should choose between these two modes according to the intended objectives.

The implications of anticipation and reward for the classroom are clear through the immediate praise to students' appropriate behavior or correct response. This could be in the form of verbal praise, simple presents, or grades for good assignments. Peterson (2010) states that responding positively to students' risky attempts by praising them for trying lay the path for more risk taking and success.

Moreover, the teachers need to utilize interesting or funny activities that are likely to be intrinsically motivating. This can be achieved by noticing students' needs and desires. Using realia and technologies may help a lot in providing a sort of motivation in the classroom. Thus, instead of having to read a story aloud, teachers may bring realia, use the computer to produce sound effects or any other creative ideas.

Teachers should do their best to give the learners autonomy in the tasks they are engaged in. Group work

where students share thoughts and learn from each other provides space for different ways of learning. Many activities can be held using group work such as role-play, discussions, competitions, etc. Additionally, more skills in enhancing learners' confidence can be done by working from simple tasks to more complex ones. Besides, the teacher should treat learners' errors as part of their learning process and give feedback when necessary. The teachers should also encourage students to think in the target language as well as to pay attention to its functional and socio-linguistic aspects.

Teachers can foster various aspects of their students' communicative competence by using authentic materials as much as possible, exposing students to real-life and helping them meet their target language needs outside the classroom.

A FINAL THOUGH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The cornerstone of effective language education is provided by language teaching principles, which direct teachers in crafting engaging learning opportunities for their students. Within the classroom teachers may change their perspectives and utilize different principles from one stage to another bearing in mind how these changes are most appropriate at that stage more than other. By implementing these language teaching principles, educators can create a fulfilling environment in which students' language acquisition, cultural understanding, and overall language proficiency are more likely to evolve. Language teachers are encouraged to vary their applications of the teaching principles so that their students' language competency and skills are to be promptly enhanced and improved. In a nutshell, integrating these principles into language classroom is worth experimenting to facilitate learning the target language as well as a whole person development.

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