

Teaching a Second Language in Schools and the Challenges of the Instructional Process

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ABSTRACT

Proficiency in a second language has become crucial for international communication, career progress, and academic growth in today's globalized society. Efficient second language training is becoming more and more important in educational institutions as worldwide engagement and access to global information keep on expanding. Even though foreign language instruction receives a lot of emphasis in educational institutions, many students still struggle to communicate successfully in everyday situations. This circumstance suggests that the process of instructing languages faces a number of instructional, technical, and psychological obstacles.

Along with analyzing the reasons why students frequently fail to acquire practical communicative competence after years of language study, this article looks at the key variables that affect how well second languages are taught in classrooms. Teaching methods, teacher preparation, assessment systems, learning materials, integration of technology, and socio-psychological settings in the classroom are some of the important aspects of the learning process that receive special attention. The study shows that while communication skills like speaking and listening receive relatively less attention, linguistic proficiency and writing exercises continue to be the main focus of language training in many educational environments. This article examines the effects of motivation, self-confidence, and educational settings on language learning in addition to methodological and institutional issues. Students can overcome anxiety about interacting and engage more fully in language acquisition when an encouraging learning atmosphere is created where errors are seen as normal parts of the learning process. Another crucial element that can boost students' enthusiasm and offer more chances for language exposure outside of the classroom is collaboration between educators, families, and education institutions.

Keywords: Linguistic proficiency; teaching process; communicative competence; learning materials; global education system

1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language proficiency in the modern era is valued not only as an academic advantage but also as an important component of social, professional, and cultural integration. In a globalizing world, the

expansion of communication tools and the acceleration of information flow have made learning foreign languages a necessity. Knowledge of a foreign language expands a person's educational opportunities, increases competitiveness in the labor market, and enriches an individual's cultural outlook.

The foundation of language learning is primarily laid during early childhood. According to psychologists, children's ability to learn languages is higher at a young age, and the knowledge acquired during this stage tends to be more lasting. For these reasons, schools prioritize teaching a second language alongside the native language. A second language refers to any language that an individual learns after their native language. Within the education system, however, the second language is generally understood as a foreign language. Second language teaching aims to develop four main skills in students:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Each of these skills plays a significant role in the development of a student's communicative competence. Although acquiring each skill requires a certain amount of time, with proper guidance and effective methods the learning process can be made both engaging and motivating, encouraging learners to study independently. At the same time, the professionalism of the teacher plays a key role in helping students understand and master the required skills in a shorter period of time and with greater ease (Lessow-Hurley, 2003).

Observations show that many graduates, despite having studied a foreign language for years, still experience difficulties using the language effectively in real communication environments. The reasons for this difficulty are multifaceted and are related not only to the organization of the teaching process but also to the structural characteristics of the education system, teacher training, assessment mechanisms, and socio-psychological factors.

The fact that teaching strategies do not completely conform to contemporary language acquisition techniques is one of the primary causes of this issue. While the primary goal of language acquisition is the growth of communication abilities, the teaching procedure frequently places an emphasis on memorizing of grammar principles and written exercises. Because of these factors, learners may be able to identify certain grammatical frameworks and finish exam activities, but they frequently struggle to apply this knowledge in real-world communication contexts. A gap between theoretical comprehension and real-world application stems from this circumstance (Springer International Publishing, 2017).

2. METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

2.1 Overemphasis on Structural Knowledge

Prioritizing the formal framework of the language—that is, syntax and linguistic units—over their practical application in everyday conversation is one of the most prevalent issues in second language instruction. Language is often taught in instructional environments as a system of abstract rules that need to be acquired and committed to memory. Because of this, students frequently study vocabulary lists, grammatical arrangements, and written assignments without completely comprehending how these components work in interaction in the real world. As a result, learning becomes quite scientific and disconnected from language use in everyday situations (Resources in education, 1992).

Learners may make some improvement in their capacity to read and write when language is taught primarily through technical exercises and isolated morphological explanations. However, their listening and speaking skills are often still inadequate. Although they may be able to recognize language patterns on paper, learners may find it difficult to participate in impromptu discussions, articulate their thoughts coherently, or grasp spoken language in everyday contexts.

Language should not be seen as merely a set of structural components, in line with contemporary conceptions of language instruction. Rather, it is seen as a dynamic system that evolves via communication and interacting with others. Activities such as discussions, role-plays, group work, and real-life communication tasks can help students integrate their linguistic knowledge with practical language use.

2.2 Parental Involvement and Home Support

Giving parents advance notification of the objectives and anticipated results of the course is an important methodological consideration. Given that children spend a large amount of time in the home and frequently pick up numerous attitudes and behaviors there, parents are essential to the educational process. Parents may offer better assistance when they comprehend the instructional strategies and the goals of second language acquisition (Department of Public Instruction, 1977).

Learners' motivation and involvement might be positively impacted by parental awareness. For example, parents who recognize the value of communication-based language acquisition might encourage their children to read basic texts, view instructional videos, listen to foreign language content, or engage in conversation at home. Additionally, cooperation between families and educational institutions can improve the atmosphere for learning as a whole.

3. TEACHER COMPETENCY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The specialized training of teachers is a major issue in the teaching of second languages. A foreign language instructor needs to be more than just proficient in the language; they also need to be knowledgeable in contemporary methodology, competent in psycho-pedagogy, and capable of handling interaction within the classroom. Teaching languages is a challenging didactic approach that calls for knowledge of how children learn, how motivation grows, and how to build inspiring educational settings (New Hampshire State Department of Education, 1987).

However, in some situations, educators frequently use conventional, instructor-focused teaching strategies. The instructor frequently controls the learning process in these classrooms by giving explanations while the students are only passive consumers of knowledge. The capacity of learners to actively interact, pose questions, or make meaningful use of the language is restricted by this method. Active participation, practice, and interaction are necessary for language acquisition. Individuals must frequently use what they have learnt in real-world and conversational situations for language acquisition to be successful (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, 1993).

Subject teachers should plan an annual final event, such as an open lesson or extracurricular activity, to encourage students' active participation and reinforce their learning goals. Presentations, role-plays, performances, language contests, and project demonstrations in the target language are examples of such events. These activities boost students' confidence and excitement for studying the language in addition to giving them a chance to use their language abilities in a genuine communicative setting.

4. ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS AND LEARNING MATERIALS

4.1 Limitations of Examination-Based Assessment

One of the main issues with teaching second languages nowadays is the assessment system. Evaluation techniques frequently struggle to measure students' language proficiency in a thorough and impartial manner. While speaking and listening abilities are frequently not objectively or methodically assessed, examination-based evaluation approaches frequently place an emphasis on reading literacy and grammatical awareness. Because of this, learners may get good marks even when they are not very good at communicating in everyday settings (Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1984).

It is crucial to create more equitable evaluation methods that take into account all facets of language competency in order to solve this problem. A more realistic image of students' language skills can be obtained by combining oral exams, listening exercises, presentations, and project-oriented evaluations.

4.2 Selection and Quality of Teaching Resources

The choice and appropriateness of teaching resources is another significant aspect of teaching second languages. The approach to learning may become robotic and less significant if teaching materials are inappropriate for students' age, interests, and language skill levels. Content-rich, culturally relevant, and grounded in real-world language usage are all essential components of successful language learning resources (Wiley, 2019).

Expanding the use of real texts, interactive exercises, and audiovisual materials is crucial in this respect. Students are exposed to natural language patterns and phrases that are often employed by native speakers through authentic resources, which include newspaper articles, brief films, interviews, podcasts, and real-life conversations. Learners' participation and engagement may be further increased through interactive activities including role-playing games, group discussions, problem-solving exercises, and digital learning resources.

5. TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

In today's educational setting, the use of technology in language instruction is unavoidable. There are new ways to make language learning more adaptable, accessible, and customized thanks to digital resources, online platforms, and interactive apps. Students may practice various language skills, access genuine language resources, and participate in learning activities outside of the typical classroom environment thanks to technology (Springer International Publishing, 2023).

Through a variety of multimedia tools, digital technology enables students to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Online videos, instructional websites, language learning platforms, and interactive applications expose students to real-world language usage, aiding in improving their comprehension of vocabulary, pronunciation, and habits of communication. Additionally, students may study at their own speed, retake challenging assignments as needed, and get instant feedback on their performance thanks to technology.

Nevertheless, good learning outcomes are not always ensured by simply implementing technology in the classroom. Technological tools may become merely surface-level additions to the teaching process rather than significant learning resources if they are employed without explicit pedagogical objectives. Careful preparation, sensible digital resource selection, and alignment with the lesson's pedagogical objectives are necessary for the appropriate incorporation of technology. The instructor also serves as a facilitator, directing and guiding its use in line with educational goals.

6. SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Second language learning is significantly influenced by social and psychological variables. The emotional states, self-confidence, and learning attitudes of students have a significant impact on their proficiency in a foreign language. Fear of making errors is one of the most prevalent obstacles to speaking in a second language. Many learners are reluctant to take part in speaking exercises because they fear being criticized in front of the class. Students' eagerness to speak might be severely restricted by worry and self-doubt (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2009).

For language learning to be successful, a safe and encouraging learning environment is necessary. Learners are more likely to engage in conversations, voice their opinions, and practice the language more freely in a supportive classroom environment where they feel valued. By encouraging collaboration rather than rivalry, offering helpful criticism, and placing more emphasis on effort and advancement than perfection, educators might create such an atmosphere.

It is also critical to acknowledge that making errors is a normal and unavoidable aspect of learning a language. Instead of being seen as failures, mistakes should be seen as important teaching moments. The anxiety levels of learners drop and their readiness to speak rises when they are taught to view mistakes as a necessary part of their development. This viewpoint encourages a more dynamic and successful learning process, enabling pupils to progressively increase both their language proficiency and self-assurance.

Another important component of learning a foreign language is motivation. The curiosity of learners for acquiring a language grows when they recognize the usefulness of the language in everyday situations rather than only during classroom teaching. Additionally, the instructor's personality and level of expertise have a major role in how pupils develop an interest in a subject. An instructor who is passionate, encouraging, and driven may stimulate pupils and provide a great learning environment (Sears, 2015).

7. CONCLUSION

Even though foreign language instruction is heavily prioritized in educational institutions, a number of obstacles still restrict how successful an educational experience may be. Methodological approaches, teacher preparation, evaluation procedures, learning resources, incorporating technology, and socio-psychological elements are frequently linked to these difficulties. The growth of expressive skill is frequently subordinated to the memorization of grammar norms and theoretical information in language teaching. As a result, students may do satisfactorily on written exams but still struggle with communicating in everyday settings.

Therefore, the development of the four fundamental language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—should be the main goal of contemporary language instruction. In order to enable learners to actively utilize the language through engagement, teamwork, and real-world communication activities, verbal proficiency must be positioned at the core of the learning process. Students progressively gain fluency, confidence, and the capacity to successfully communicate their thoughts when they are given the chance to engage in the language in authentic contexts.

In summary, teaching a second language in schools is a complicated and multidimensional instructional procedure that calls for thorough preparation, cutting-edge techniques, and ongoing improvement. In the context of a world growing more interconnected by the day, knowing a foreign language is no more only an extra academic ability but rather a basic skill that promotes professional growth, communication, and cultural comprehension. Through the integration of digitally enhanced instruction, interactive and authentic materials, supportive learning environments, and modern teaching methodologies, educational institutions can establish conditions in which students not only improve

their language knowledge but also increase the skills and confidence required to utilize the language productively in daily life.

A comprehensive, multifaceted strategy that concurrently tackles methodological, psychological, and structural aspects is necessary for second language instruction to be successful. It is achievable to foster an atmosphere where learners not only acquire language proficiency but also cultivate the confidence, creativity, and cross-cultural awareness necessary to thrive in a multilingual and interconnected world when educational policy, teaching practice, and research collaborate.

DECLARATIONS

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