

Creating an Awareness among Students about the Importance of English Language

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to investigate the characteristics of the English language, and how it has developed to become the global language. It is observed in this study that often students, in school as well as in college levels are not given the proper orientation about the significance of learning English; hence they develop a lukewarm approach to learn English. Most of the students start learning English without getting information about its' importance, as a result they are least interested in learning the language and treat it not only as unnecessary subject but also as the most difficult one. The sample of this study was taken randomly from the students who study in the College of Education. A questionnaire was given to the students to examine their awareness about the importance of English language. The analysis of the questionnaire showed that most of the participants are not aware about the significance of English language. It is recommended to build language awareness among students to help them to gain a positive attitude toward the English language by developing the confidence in them to make an attempt to learn this global language. By becoming aware of the strategies that can be used to learn English, students may become more active and responsible for their own learning. Learning more about language in general may help the student develop an appreciation for the target language.

Keywords: Creating awareness, global language, English, importance, orientation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today English language is neither the language of the upper class well educated people nor the patrimony of Anglo Saxons but it is a universal language. Now it is a universal public property. By the British colonial train, it travelled almost the entire world, came in touch with myriad people, and enriched itself as the world's number one language. This study is conducted to investigate the need to create the awareness among Saudi students about the importance of the English language.

The Global Language:

A global language is a language that has got a large number of speakers in all over the world. It is a language which is learned by many people as a second or a foreign language. It is also characterized by the number of speakers (native or non-native speakers), its geographical distribution, and international organizations and in diplomatic relations. In this respect, major world languages are dominated by languages of European origin. The historical reason for this is the period of expansionist European imperialism and colonialism. Among the different languages of the world, English is the most widely spoken and written languages of the world. Today, English occupies the prestigious place of an International language. It is utilized by the largest number of the people of many nations in all the five continents in the world.

Language Awareness:

To some extent even today teaching English language has focused on teaching grammar and vocabulary. English language learning is seen in terms of a new rule of grammar and new set of word meaning that has to be forced in the students' mind. Teaching language structure is certainly necessary for the students but they also need to know what can be called the pragmatic awareness, as it is very important to give information about language use in the target culture, because sometime the situation is to sound more polite than to form a correct form. Thus, the term language awareness

includes both language structure and language use. It is also of crucial importance to encourage the view of language as social interaction and this mean to regard culture. Culture here is not in the sense of arts and literature, but in the sense of everyday behavior. Language in general is symbols connected together to form sentences which help people to communicate and deal with each other. Language has a great importance to facilitate things in life. , the main aim of this study is to determine and develop the students' awareness about studying English language and to inform them that possession of effective English language skills is considered to be vital for university students who want to make fruitful careers in today's highly competitive modern world, so that they could apply the acquired skills consciously in their day to day life.

A. Components of Language Awareness:

According to Tulasiewicz, W and Zajda, J (1998) language awareness blends content about language, language skill, attitudinal education, and meta-cognitive opportunities.

All these allow the student to reflect on the process of language acquisition, learning and language use. All four of these aspects of language awareness need to be integrated into the existing subject areas. A focus on language awareness is a key aspect of creating student-centered classrooms, and assists the teacher to present material accordingly to student readiness. Language awareness covers a wide spectrum of fields. For example, language awareness issues include exploring the benefits that can be derived from developing a good knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them. It interests also include learning more about what sorts of ideas about language people normally operate with, and what effects these have on how they conduct their everyday affairs. Building language awareness involves helping students gain a positive attitude toward the English language by developing the confidence to make an attempt or take a risk. By becoming aware of strategies that can be used to learn English, students may become more active and more responsible for their own learning. Learning more about language in general may help the student develop an appreciation for the target language (English). Another aspect of building language awareness involves integrating what has been learned in other classes to English class, or borrowing what was learned in the English classroom and applying it to other courses.

B. The use of various activities to increase Students' awareness about Language:

There are some activities that teachers can do in the class in order to increase students' language awareness:

1- Making open-discussion:

The teacher can open a conversation by asking the student about how many language they can speak and how well they speak each of them. This might help the students to know the importance of each language.

2- Language Variation or Dialect:

Using the Internet as a resource, the teacher can collect a variety of pronunciations by English speakers such as Canadian, American, and Irish and play them for the students. The purpose of this activity is for students to recognize and value different dialects and "accents". Using a world map to point out where these different speakers live, the students can explore the range of use of the English language around the world.

3-Tasks:

Possible tasks that increase language awareness are many, ranging from trivial games to serious intellectual problems. Various activities suitable for language awareness classroom include rhyming, word play, tongue twisters, crossword puzzles etc...These activities naturally intertwine. Doing a crossword puzzle may lead to talk, while talking may lead to closer observation of a particular point in language and behavior.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to raise the students' awareness to the importance of English language, so that the students can deal with it not only as a normal school subject but also as an affective subject that should lead to progress. This study also intends to investigate the characteristics of a global language, and the reasons for choosing English language as an international language so as to draw the students' attention to the significance of studying it and the advantages of mastering it.

3. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive and analytical method was adopted in this study. To collect reliable adequate data a questionnaire was used for the students who study in the College of Education in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The survey was conducted on hundred (100) students to collect the data.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaire reflected the views of the students who completed their basic studies in Saudi government schools. Now they are undergraduates' students.

TABLE 1. Awareness among the students about the importance of English Language

| SN. | Question | Yes | No | Maybe |
|-----|---|-----|-----|-------|
| 1 | Did you ever think before why English language is chosen as a global language? | 23% | 67% | 20% |
| 2 | Do you have information about the origin of English language and how it has developed to become so important? | 9% | 81% | 10% |
| 3 | Did the school explain to you the importance of English language when you were a beginner? | 0% | 86% | 14% |
| 4 | If your answer is "No" do you think your attitude towards studying English language will be better if you are aware about its importance? | 92% | 0% | 8% |
| 5 | Do you think the mass media has role in making English language an international language? | 66% | 8% | 26% |
| 6 | Do you think tourist and travelling have role in making English language an international language? | 91% | 0% | 9% |
| 7 | Do you think there are other languages that will be global languages? | 69% | 11% | 20% |
| 8 | Do you think there were international languages before the English language? | 47% | 32% | 21% |

The result of the Table-1 reveals that most of the students are not aware of the importance of English language as 86% said that their schools have not explained them at the beginning and 92% of students said that their attitude towards studying English language will be better if they are aware of its importance.

TABLE 2. Opinion of Saudi students about the languages that they think will be the global language beside the English language in near future

| Language | Percentage |
|----------|------------|
| Arabic | 31% |
| French | 27% |
| Russian | 13% |
| German | 11% |
| Chinese | 12% |
| Spanish | 6% |

Table-2 shows the opinion of Saudi students, only 31% think Arabic and 27% think French will be the global language beside the English in near future. The chances of other languages like Russian, German, Chinese, and Spanish are all the more bleak to compete with English as the global language.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- The students should be aware about the objectives and strategies of learning English language. Introductory lessons about the characteristics and significances of English language should be given to the students before starting their normal English classes.
- 2- Exposing students to the language outside the classroom by providing them with various activities and encourage them to use the language in the various aspects of the life.
- 3- English language must be taught in all the departments in the college and the students should be informed that English is the global language and the globalization has made it the most important language. So it must be learnt for their social life.
- 4- Follow modern learning theories that focus on the student as an important factor in the educational process, because learning is based on the learner mainly.
- 5- Introducing English language in Saudi Arabia from the primary stage or kindergartens so that students are exposed to the English language in a young to have solid foundation.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study indicated that most of the students are not interested in studying English because most of them are not aware about its importance in their social and cultural life. They don't have information about the origin of English language and how this language has developed to become so important. Schools' curriculum doesn't explain to students the importance of English language as a global language when they began studying it, so they treated it as a normal subject, not even as a language. Many families also thought that English language may prove as threat to their national language (Arabic). From the results of the analysis of the questionnaire, most of the students think that their attitudes towards studying English would be better if the schools explained to them the importance of English language and they would develop a positive outlook to learn the English Language. Hence it is clear that it is imperative to create an awareness among the students at the very initial stage of their learning about the importance of English language so that they can not only study it with interest but also should make efforts to use it fully to enhance their career opportunities.

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