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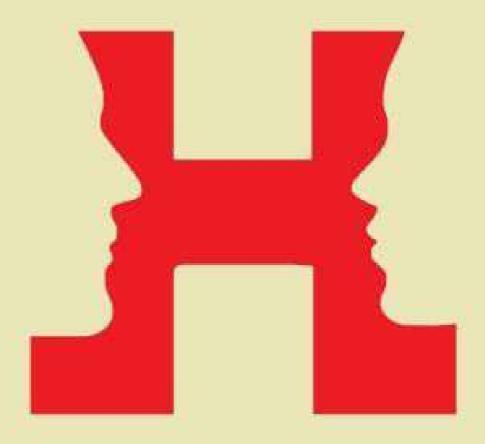
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Dr Kalyan Gangarde

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BOOK 2

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AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING STRATAGEMS AND ITS TESTING AND EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Dr. Jobi George
Principal, Bhiwapur Mahavidyalaya,   Bhiwapur Post, Nagpur District,
Maharashtra State, India. Pin: 441201

ABSTRACT: Apropos English language teaching, no method of teaching is complete in itself without authentic testing and evaluation strategies. There are two distinct ways of assessing the progress made by students in respect of learning English; test and examination. When the former is intended to assess whether the lessons taught have been absorbed, the latter is meant for assessing whether the students have achieved the set benchmark. In the present education scenario, more emphasis is given to the evaluation of a student. Needless to say, the level of a test is assessed on the basis of neutrality, legitimacy and consistency. Dependability of a test is ascertained by its steadiness in consequences. In fact, a test which imparts varying results is not dependable. The growth of a beginner in respect of language learning is often judged with the help of test or examination. Some of the significant forms of tests adopted for enhancing the English language proficiency of students are Placement Tests, Diagnostic Tests, Achievement or Progress Tests and Proficiency. The ultimate objective of any English language teaching method is the learner's perfection in all the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

KEYWORDS: Apropos, stratagems, rigorous, benchmark, syntax, articulate, steadiness, proficiency, sustainable, innovative, scholastic, non-scholastic, legitimacy, consistency, terminology, loopholes, assimilating, decisive, improvisation

Apropos English language teaching, no method of teaching is complete in itself without authentic testing and evaluation strategies. There are two distinct ways of assessing the progress made by students in respect of learning English; test and examination. Though these two methods are used for the purpose of assessing the achievement made by students in learning English language, there are certain differences in these two methods. When the former is intended to assess whether the lessons taught have been absorbed, the latter is meant for assessing whether the students have achieved the set benchmark. In other words, a test is exactly connected with teaching whereas an examination is usually linked with assessing the level of accomplishment. Towards the end of the teaching programme, the progress of students is assessed for the purpose of promotion from one level of learning to another level by conducting examination.

Evaluation is somewhat a higher form of assessing the overall development of a student. However, test is one of the diverse methods of the evaluation process. In the present education scenario, more emphasis is given to the evaluation of a student. It is a constant and steady process. It can be done at proper intervals to assess the regular performance of a learner. The scholastic and non-scholastic

accomplishments of a student are put to rigorous assessment. Under the scholastic evaluation method, the abilities of the student in listening, speaking, reading and writing are thoroughly evaluated. However, the cleverness of the student, his hobbies, mental aptitude, his inclination for reading and innumerable other faculties are put to assessment under the non- scholastic approach. Both the evaluation methods enable the teachers to keep watch on the overall development of a student. Similarly, these two methods enable the teachers to assess the strength and weaknesses of the learners. Just as identifying the strength and weaknesses of the learners, tests help us to identify the strength and weaknesses of the teachers also. Some of the benefits of conducting tests are;

a. To identify the strength and weaknesses of the students.
b. To assess the efficiency or inefficiency of the teacher to teach the fundamentals of the language.
c. To recommend sustainable remedies to rectify the weaknesses of the teachers by evolving innovative teaching strategies.
d. To train the teachers to set targets before the learners.
e. To transform students' study culture so as to enhance the quality of teaching.
f. To facilitate the learners to move to the next level of learning.
g. To enhance the proficiency of teachers.
h. To judge the usefulness of diverse activities performed.

Needless to say, the level of a test is assessed on the basis of neutrality, legitimacy and consistency. An authentic test is often said to be impartial in nature. Dependability of a test is ascertained by its steadiness in consequences. In fact, a test which imparts varying results is not dependable.

In spite of the fact that the institution of teaching-learning is in force for centuries, over the years it has failed to produce its desired objectives. The growth of a beginner in respect of language learning is often judged with the help of test or examination. However, the conventional method of examination has its own drawbacks. It is an undisputed fact that the so called system of examination is insufficient to check the intelligence of a learner. Under this system, the assessment process takes place towards the dead end of the academic session. Since the questions which appear in the question papers are subjective in nature, the learners are compelled to adopt the technique of learning things by heart. Over the years there have been drastic modifications in the very concept of examination. The activity of examination is basically intended to assess the learner's authority over terminology and the base of the learners' understanding of the grammatical structures.

Today, the mechanisms of tests and examinations are devised by teachers and Government bodies like boards and Universities. While framing these mechanisms, these agencies take into account many factors for the overall assessment of the learners. For instance, a learner's score on a test of translation from English into his mother tongue depends on many factors namely his aptitude to identify the terminology, his ability to understand the meaning, his acquaintance with syntax and his skill to articulate himself in his local dialect. However, in an examination system, the examiner could not involve all the faculties of assessment within the limits of five or six questions. This system enables the teacher to assess only a restricted portion of his knowledge base. But, this does not mean that the learner is poor in other areas of the text. The examination system ensures questions from a limited portion of the text, the learner could not fare all the questions satisfactorily resulting in comparatively poor score. On account of the shortcomings of the annual examination patterns, it is the very need of the time to

introduce the Semester System of examination all over the country. In most of the Higher Educational Institutions in India, the Semester System has already been introduced. The success of the Semester pattern of examination in these Higher Educational Institutions must boost the administration to extend the Semester pattern across India. In fact, the Semester System of evaluation ensures sizeable importance to periodical tests and home assignments. Subsequently, it has proved fruitful in the proper assessment of learners' aptitude and accomplishments. Due to its consistent assessment mechanism, the teachers are able to obtain regular feedback from the learners and accordingly they provide remedial teaching for improving the performance of poor learners. The Semester System also facilitates the learners to develop the habit of learning consistently. Under this system, the all-round performances of the learners are evaluated regularly. The basic objectives of language teaching are the development of faculties like the abilities of comprehension and articulation. The faculties of listening, speaking, reading and writing would facilitate the learner to achieve these objectives. Hence, the Government agencies should make the evaluation system the very crest of the teaching-learning process. Similarly, there must be appropriate testing mechanisms to assess the scholastic and non-scholastic growth of the learners.

Oral and written tests are of great use for assessing the scholastic accomplishment of a learner. Oral test has a decisive role to play in the enhancement of a learner's over all development in respect of English language. It is not at all necessary to conduct oral tests in annual examinations. Rather, conducting oral tests in annual examinations should not be at the risk of regular class tests. The process of conducting class tests at proper intervals would provide additional boost for the students to improve their oral skills. It is an efficient means to assess the learner's growth in respect of oral skills. Oral test involves faculties like articulation, swiftness and clarity of reading a book, understanding an oral expression, reciting a poem and responding to queries vocally.

When it comes to teaching English language in the Higher Educational Institutions, written test is of great value. Through written test, the English language teachers can test most of the objectives of teaching English. According to the level of the target group, written tests are usually categorized into four kinds-the objective type, the very short answer type, the short answer type and the essay type. All of these types have their own merits and demerits. Of late, the objective-type tests are widely held in different types of quiz competitions and intelligence tests leading to its popularity. Under this system, there is only one correct answer and the aspirant is asked to specify only one answer. The examiner, in no way, could influence the overall scoring of the candidate. There are a quite number of objective types of tests namely multiple- choice type, corresponding type, true-false type, completion type and so on so forth. One of the advantages of this type of test is that it covers comparatively a vast area of the curriculum in a short period of time. Where other forms of tests fail to produce considerable results in the application of knowledge, clarification of problems and expression of ideas, the essay type of test proves its vitality.   Similarly, short answer type tests demand short answers.   Some   of   the significant forms of tests adopted for enhancing the English language proficiency of students are Placement tests, Diagnostic Tests, Achievement or Progress Tests and Proficiency Tests. Under Placement Tests, learners are asked to come together right in the beginning itself. It deals with the common aptitudes of the learner rather than any particular skill. Placement test is rather short in nature. For instance, a teacher who intends to teach Russian language must have a clear understanding of the potentials of the learners before determining the programme of study. The learners' strength and weaknesses in learning English language are detected by conducting Diagnostic Tests. This test also

recommends the learners further syllabus for improving their existing loopholes in respect of learning English language. The third variety of test namely the Achievement Test or the Progress Test is used to assess the beginner's growth in relation to learning English language. It is also used to evaluate the level the learners have achieved in comparison to ordinary students in respect of English language. Finally, in Proficiency Test, the learner's earlier aptitude in a language is assessed before commencing the new programme of study. It does not have any set curriculum. Proficiency test takes into account the learner's authentic skills at the time of the initiation programme. The term proficiency denotes the learner's authority over the fundamentals of a particular language. Hence, what R.C.Gardner and W.Lambert say about the Proficiency Test is worth quoting;   "There is a link between general intelligence and second language learning ability"[1] Further, it is significant to quote P.Mimsleur's impressions about the Proficiency Test. According to him, in Proficiency Test, "A school learner's average grades in all school subjects, for instance, are often a good means of predicting how good he would be at language learning".[2]

From the above discussions, it is proven beyond doubt that in learning English language; the students should have the requisite amount of various skills. Hence, the success of the beginner in learning English language depends on the learner's ability in assimilating various learning abilities which are generally called language aptitude. As F.Genesee says, "Intelligence and language aptitude have generally been found to correlate test with the more academic language skills which are often stressed at school, such as reading or performing in grammar- manipulation tests". 3

The all-round development of an individual is made possible by imparting education. Hence, it is important to assess the characteristics of one's personality and conduct in respect of learning English. "As with cognitive factors, a number of personality characteristics have been proposed as likely to influence second language learning".[4] The English language learning aptitude of a beginner is governed by various factors like his ability to interact under different real life situations. Hence, "Other things are equal, learners with high self-esteem are liable to achieve greater proficiency in learning the language".[5] Further, the activity of English language needs perseverance. "Similarly, those who have greater tolerance for ambiguity score higher in tests of listening comprehension".[6] and "those with a high capacity for empathy perform better in pronunciation".[7] The assessment of a beginner's behaviour is carried out by the teacher on close observation i.e. inside and outside the classroom, in the library, in the laboratory, on the playground and so on so forth. One of the objectives of education is to enhance the social aspect of an individual. In this act, the teacher has a decisive role to play. An ideal teacher is supposed to test the amiability of each student. This can better be performed by adopting the following methodologies.

1. The overall involvement of a learner in all the activities of the institution is to be observed on daily basis.

2. The teacher should function as a facilitator. He should provide ample opportunities to the beginner to demonstrate his potentials on all fronts.

In addition to the innumerable teaching and evaluation strategies adopted for the purpose of assessing the growth of students in respect of learning English language, the teachers could also apply the unit approach in teaching and assessing the learner's progress. Under this method, the teacher has to divide the whole curriculum of the year into small units or fragments so as to encourage the learner to study at

ease the basics of English language. After the completion of each unit of two weeks or three weeks, the teacher should conduct tests to assess the overall growth of the learner. Instead of following the conventional mode of testing the performance of the learners towards the end of the academic year, we should encourage the unit wise teaching and unit wise testing of the learners.

The new concept of unit approach would revolutionize the very system of English language education in India. Due to constant evaluation of the progress made by each learner, the teachers can come to know more about the learner's growth and if found necessary, can support the learner for further improvisation. Similarly, under this system of assessment, the learners too come to know about their shortcomings and further they could seek guidance from the teachers. The ultimate objective of any English language teaching method is the learner's perfection in all the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Basically, teaching, assessment and remedial measures are the three important stages in any teaching-learning activity. If the teacher does any effort to discontinue the process of teaching once the test is over, the whole process of teaching would become futile. Instead of discontinuing the activity of teaching, he should suggest remedial measures according to the learner's performance in the test. It is intended to redress the learner's difficulties in respect of learning English. Here, the teacher is also asked to identify the mistakes committed by the learner and accordingly he must rectify the shortcomings. There may be different reasons for the learner's inefficiency to learn English. Once the problems are identified, the teacher has to work hard to evolve strategies in order to address them. The teacher can even try the lessons already taught. He can change his teaching method too. Sometimes, being identified the weaker learners; he could divide them into small groups and initiate rigorous training. The assessment method must be all-inclusive in nature in the sense that all the skills of English language learning namely listening, speaking, reading and writing must be evaluated.

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