



A comparative study of learning English as a second language between physically disabled and normal learners

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to analyze the difference and mechanism of learning English as a second language between the physically disabled and normal learners at Elementary level. It was a mixed method research study that included both qualitative and quantitative data. Two types of tool were used to collect the data. The quantitative data was collected by using a questionnaire having 30 close ended items and the qualitative data was collected by four open ended questions, from the 40 teachers of both types of schools. The checklist was made for observation of both type of students' classroom. 20 classrooms were observed by the researchers. The collected quantitative data set was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20) and qualitative data sets were analyzed qualitatively. Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis results were deduced and based on the results findings were produced. The findings helped to recommend certain measures to solve the problems in learning English as a second language by physically disabled and normal learners.

Keywords: NL (normal learners), PDL (physically disabled learners), STM (short terms memory), LTM (long term memory)

1. Introduction

Language is the most powerful mean of communication. It is the most effective way of communication since the creation of man. It is a great way to express one's thoughts and emotions. All human being use language for expressing their views but some are those who find it difficult sometimes impossible to use language for expressing their needs and wants.

English language has gained much importance. It has now become the international language and the language of science and technology. Now, it is compulsory to learn English language for gaining success. It is really important to have pace in learning English. English language has given much importance and everyone tries to learn it. It is difficult to learn even for normal Students but very difficult for those who are having some disabilities whether they are physical or mental. Learning English is difficult for normal students and challenging for physically disabled students. Both types of students face difficulties but their difficulties have different nature in actual. Both types of learner face difficulties in method of teaching and physical environment. Their teachers also face different types of problem.

English is important for men, women and children. In this era the world has conquered the treasures of knowledge. At this time Man has conquered not only this world but it has also started its journey to discover the secrets of universe. All the facilities are provided with the tool of education. By studying day and night, researchers have made fabulous discoveries. Because most of these scientists and researchers are those who use English language, so English became the international language due to their supremacy. So in this time "To Learn English to Survive" is the motto of all whether they are normal or physically disabled people. In

this article the researchers tried to explore the problems in learning English language from both types of students and the mechanism of learning English language as a second language.

1.1 Statement of the problem

English language is not a local language whose importance could be denied. It has been accepted as an international language. Normal people are learning it easily with little or no difficulty, but the same phenomenon is not an easy task for the physically disabled people. The language learning facilities provided to physically disabled learners (PDL) in Pakistan are not in liaison to the opportunities provided to PDL in developed countries of the world. The current study attempted to explore the opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses related to English language learning among normal and disabled language learners.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions are used in the current study

1. What was the learning mechanism and strategies of learning English as second language between physically disabled and normal at elementary level?
2. What are the difficulties faced by physically disabled and normal learners in learning English as a second language at elementary level?
3. What is the difference in learning English as a second language between physically disabled and normal learners in learning English as a second language at elementary level?

1.3 Significance of the Study

English is important for men, women and children. In this era the world had conquered the treasures of knowledge. At this time man had conquered not only this world but it had also started its journey to discover the secrets of universe. All the facilities were provided with the tool of education. By studying day and night, researchers had made fabulous discoveries. Because most of these scientists and researchers were those who used English language, so English became the international language due to its supremacy. So in this time “To Learn English to Survive” is the motto of all whether they are normal or physically disabled people. The role of this study was to highlight the problems faced by physically disabled learners as compared to normal learners in learning English as a second language. What difficulties were there for both types of learners? To study and took equal part in positive activities of study was the basic right of all irrespective of normality or disability.

Furthermore, the study tried to suggest as well as showed the ways to resolve the problems faced by physically disabled people in learning English as a second language. It had also been observed that which teaching methodologies were used to teach both types of learners. In the last their disability was not the hurdle for them in the way of studying and learning English as a second language.

2. Literature Review

Learning English as a second language by the physically disabled people requires to be taken up as an enterprise which calls for scientific Study. According to Adnan & Hafiz (2001) ^[9]. The term ‘disabled learners’ in this paper is used to define students whose access to education is restricted due to their physical or mental impairment” (p656). This issue becomes more important when the responsibility of well-being of physically disabled people and making them fit for a normal life rests primarily on the shoulder of the society and the state alike. The present study aims to identify the strategies and techniques which could help in the development of an effective style of learning English as a second language between physically disabled and normal students.

This issue is not just important for Pakistan but also for other countries as Adnan & Hafiz (2001) ^[9]. Explained in their paper the importance of physical education.

Preliminary work in this field is focused by Benzon 2016 ^[6] that disabled are marginalized due to their intersecting identity. Every human has unshared characteristics so it is very important to know these unshared characteristics. It becomes more difficult and complicated when the learner has some kid of disability. Chu and Flores (2011) ^[8]. Stated: The process is complicated even further by the multiplicity of factors that influence student performance (e.g., proficiency in the native language, prior instruction, and English literacy). Therefore, it is essential that educators understand the unique characteristics of each individual ELL so that they can appropriately identify those who have learning disabilities. (p244)

It is an admitted fact that School-related stress is the most prevalent untreated cause of academic failure in our schools. There are several types of stress in the educational system. Separation anxiety, test anxiety, and teacher behavior are only a few. For the learning disabled child, along with the aforementioned stressors, there are additional sources of school stress. They lack confidence which is the key

problem for all aforementioned problems. “The fundamental problem for many of these learners is their lack of confidence in their language ability, which affects their participation in class activities, and in developing appropriate study skills strategies.” (Gallardo *et al.* 2015) ^[12]. A person with some disability thinks that he is unable to do anything. Sometimes a person who is disabled from one sense i.e. speaking, hearing or seeing, may be sharp in some other sense. “In some ways, disabilities do not “disable” people but, instead, empower them to be “extra able” in music (Abramo, 2012 p.39)”. Learners with disability are to be treated with extra love and care. Teaching such learner is a challenge for teachers. A little harsh word can disturb student mentally which eventually affects learning. At the same time a teacher can buck up the students using simple polite words or praising their little efforts as Benzon (2015) wrote “On another occasion she was reprimanding older pupils for not working hard enough, explaining that if they were in a ‘normal’ school, they would: ‘receive far less one-to-one support and be expected to work much more independently’. (p.244)

2.1 Techniques of language leaning

Different techniques are used nowadays to make learning easier for the students and different types of methodologies are being used to serve this purpose fruitfully. Anybody can use mobile phone for the purpose of learning and in such way one even does not need anybody’s help to teach them, it can be the best method of teaching (Shu-Chen Cheng, 2010) ^[14]. There are many difficulties faced by teachers to teach the learners of second language. Many methods have been invented and the search is going on. Researchers are researching day and night to cope with this issue and reach the standard and easiest way to teach them. The computer assisted studies are now being used to meet the requirements. Computer assisted learning is very helpful for the teachers as well as learners for learning second language and to encourage the learners and enhance their proficiency of all language learning skills (Wang, 2014) ^[16].

2.1.1 Role of stimuli

Language has a central significance since a man came to earth. For learning a language a signal is needed which is known as stimuli. In the same manner for learning a second language an artificial stimulus is needed. In new dimension of language learning an artificial stimulus is created to learn grammar. This stimulus is working best in the field of language leaning and it can create a natural learning environment. It is the best way to test and manipulate the results and learning can be best learned by this (Plante *et al.* 2002) ^[7].

2.1.2 Special classroom setting

To teach a learning disabled learner there should be a special classroom setting. And such learners need some extra care to teach. An artificial classroom setting were made to teach the children and they were given an artificial grammar set, then they were tested whether they could differentiate between new and old grammar sets and order or not. Infants recognize it in few minutes (Plante *et. el.* 2002) ^[7].

2.1.3 Confidence enhancement

Proficiency in language is one of the major sources which

can build up the confidence and also decreases the anxiety. Proficiency can be measured in both types of students. Measuring proficiency involves all the four skills as (Chaitra M. Hardison, Louis W. Miller, Jennifer J. Li, Amber N. Schroeder, (2012) ^[1] all the scales of measuring performance involves speaking, reading, listening and writing. Because in learning a language all these skills are pace.

2.2 Language learning in disabled learners

2.2.1 Mentally impaired learners

There are many studies made in the field of cognitive process. Learners face many problems in learning the language. Cognition process involves in learning the language as well as second language, cognition means the mental process like thinking activities, understanding and the memorizing. So cognition can be used as an umbrella term for language learners. A person can never understand the difficulties and cognitive problems of learner unless he fills his shoes. There is development in this process still there is in finding the clear difference in fables and facts (Lundberg, 2002) ^[11].

2.2.2 Short term memory loss mentally impaired

L/LD children cannot get language as easily as it is learned by normal students. There is a controversy in this regard. It is an ambiguous issue that whether an impaired child learns language as a normal child or not. Recent researches are focused on making the Short Term Memory, the working memory in language learning disabled children. Short term memory is the memory that does not go deep inside brain and remains at surface level and it is not dependent on permanent knowledge information. While working memory is a continuous treasure and concocting knowledge. There is a significant relation in language disorder and academic grades which include reading and writing too (Plante, 1997) ^[13].

2.2.3 Effect of hyperlexia

Disorder is something out of order or wrong in a person which may lead to disabilities. But while studying it is noticed that there are some disorders which are good in some sense or other. Hyperlexia means to speak vocabulary more frequently before age of five. And it is really a good disorder found in early age of some children in this case. But such children have poor comprehension skill which is the actual problem in learning a foreign language. For their poor comprehension skill and production of language in mother tongue becomes the reason that such children read, write, speak and listen second language with difficulty (Artzer, 2000) ^[5].

2.3 Role of Inheritance

Language learning involves the heritage. In language learning the genes are responsible. Any defect in gene becomes disability in language learning process which could be any i.e. disability in reading, writing, listening or speaking as Hardisan M.C ET. El. said that usually heritage is the source of language acquisition. (Chaitra M. Hardison, Louis W. Miller, Jennifer J. Li, Amber N. Schroeder, (2012) ^[1].

2.4 Role of Instructor

The role of teacher or instructor is remarkable in the

language learning process. Apart from methodology there are many other responsibilities of an instructor in teaching a foreign language which mainly involves the communication. The responsibility is solely on the instructor how he makes his students learn a language. In basic communication the instructor's responsibility is to broad the speaking proficiencies of learners (Walker, 2004) ^[15].

2.5 Language Learning in Normal Students

Language learning is a complex process. It is a long process in which many challenges are to be faced and when it comes to the second language it becomes Pandora box. People having other language than English face much more difficulties in this process. English is the international language hence it is compulsory for everyone to learn it. All whose first language is not English can face more severe condition, it affects academic grades as well as reading, speaking, writing and listening (understanding) proficiency. Those children keep English as second language face a lot of challenges and difficulties, it affects their academic achievement and reading proficiency too (Jo Ann M. Farver, 2009) ^[10].

Language learning is a continuous process and it is very important process. But it can be a cause of anxiety and tension. Sometimes learner does not dare to speak second language in fear of insult as (Arnold, Seeing through Listening Comprehension Exam Anxiety, 2000) explains that there is a probability of negative anxiety in early stages of learning which enhances negative attitude towards classroom and if student face such condition repeatedly it may lead to a negative impact on the language learning itself. Self-esteem if gets hurt it becomes a major cause of hurdle and anxiety. The fear of committing mistake make a student disable in spoken context as it directly attacks psyche of learner. Second language learning classes focuses on communication which make it a negative class room because foreign language leaning learners feel their selves very uncomfortable in using immature vocabulary and ideas of target language (Arnold, Seeing through Listening Comprehension Exam Anxiety, 2000) ^[3].

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

In this research mix method framework is used. It is the best suited method for this research. It is also considered as a best method to conduct a research. It does not leave any loop holes behind. Data is collected both qualitatively and quantitatively and questionnaire is chosen as a tool. Observation is also done by making checklist.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the research include the students and teachers of both physically disabled students and Normal students are included from Bahawalpur district at elementary level. 10 classrooms have been observed by the research of both the sides. Furthermore, questionnaire has been given to 40 teachers in total from both the sides.

3.3 Instrumentation

Questionnaire and observation checklist has been used by the researchers to conduct the current study. Researchers used questionnaire for teachers which was divided into six sections that include vocabulary, reading skill, writing skill, oral communication, grammar and attitudinal issues. Each

sections comprises of five items. Four open ended questions were added in the questionnaire to know about physical environment and problems faced by teachers. These questions also include the suggestions faced by teachers in teaching both types of learners. Observation checklist has been made same as questionnaire instead of four open-ended questions. The researcher observed the class rooms with the help of observation checklist for a week.

4. Findings

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers have put forward the following results that physically disabled learners are preferred to be taught by games and activities as compared to normal learners. They are mostly taught by activities like group activities, pair and peer group activities etc. Normal learners' classrooms are not completely teacher centered but disabled learners' classrooms are. In normal learners classrooms teachers give free hand to learners and on the other hand physically disabled learners are much pampered and their class is totally teacher centered. Physically disabled learners face more psychological problems as compared to normal learners because they face much more external and internal issues. They feel that they have actually the deficiency in one sense or other. This is one of the reasons that physically disabled learners face more problems psychologically as compared to Normal Learners. Physically disabled learners do not have fully equipped classrooms. They are facing problems about the teaching material and audio visual aids. They are having shortage of machinery. They have deficiency of special types of dictionaries for blind learners. Teachers are not even given a proper curriculum. Teachers are facing the problems of physical environment. Number of teachers is also not up to the mark and the teachers have to deal with large number of learners. Normal learners are having extra-large classrooms so they face less attention. Normal learners are facing problems in physical environment. The size of room is not according to number of students. The number of students is too high and they could not be given extra attention rather due attention. Students also face the problem of lack of furniture. They also have different background and this becomes a problem for normal learners as they feel inferiority complex. Teachers of both types of learners also faced problems in handling learners because teachers are not enough in number. Some suggest that learners should be given Islamic studies so that they get aware of their religion especially it should be given to physically disabled learners as it is not in their studies. Both types of learners' teacher suggested that special training should be given to parents of learners to give them awareness

5.1 Interpretation of Research Questions and Discussion

5.1.1 Learning Mechanism and Strategies of Learning English as a Second Language between Physically Disabled and Normal Learners

Vocabulary learning among both types of learners is teachers centered. It has been found from the interpretation of data that to deduce meanings from the text is rarely adopted by the teachers of PDL and it is frequently done among NL. The use of dictionary is very often done in PDL but it is frequently done in NL. Teachers use dictionary and make students learn the use of dictionary in NL. It's been observed that there is also shortage of special dictionaries for blind learners. A clear difference has been found from

the data collected that there is a lot of use of different games and activities in PDL then NL. The strategy for teaching PDL in this way is much different from NL. It is found that in both types of learner's teachers help students to understand figurative language, furthermore it has been found that it is more frequently done in NL to use phrasal verbs and other different words in sentences but it is not as much frequently done in PDL.

Reading Skills

A clear difference is seen in reading strategies between both types of learners. Games and warmer techniques are being use in PDL but not in NL. Pair work and discussions far more used in and students are being involved in different games by teachers and this too is more frequently done in PDL rather than NL. Text for theme, supporting details and general subject facts, its cause and effect is more analyzed by the teachers in PDL and NL do it themselves. That is why it is much more practiced in PDL, it means PDL classroom is much more teachers centered. Most of the times in NL students are asked to read text by themselves than in PDL. Students are asked to read other text like; news-paper and other than to text books to collect information by NL. That is the point the difference lies, students are given much authority in NL as they can do it by themselves, in PDL, and the students are being much more pampered. They are not as much provided by such extra material. Blind learners are not provided with special books while it is also found dumb learners could not learn aloud but perceive it. More frequently, PDL are asked to read the text silently for the purpose of skimming and scanning in classroom by the teacher. In NL they are not most of the time asked to do it rather they are asked to do this practice often. It is not done in classroom frequently.

Grammar

It has found a much unexpected difference that PDL are more frequently asked by the teachers to solve grammar related questions, on the other hand in NL this practice is done frequently. In both types of learners students are helped by the teachers to understand the text. The grammar related aspects of English language are to inculcate by the teachers with the help of different activities and games. This strategy is mostly done in PDL but not in NL. The strategy to teach by activities and games to inculcate grammar aspects by NL are practiced often but frequently by PDL. The example is given by the common life to check and relate the grammar related questions about previous knowledge is practiced by NL almost always by the teacher as compared to PDL. It is frequently practiced in PDL.

Oral Communication

It is found that PDL are always taught to react in different situations by the learners, they are taught how to react in anger, pleasure in apology and in regret, they are taught always to give appropriate reaction in different situations and how to express themselves. Teachers of NL do this practice often as compared to PDL. Learners are involved in activities and games always in PDL and are often done in NL. Teachers of NL agree that they teach students phonology including pronunciation and transcription, but it is often done in PDL. Deaf and dumb cannot practice pronunciation, remaining is taught these things by the teachers. In PDL, the learners are often invited by the

teachers to summarize what they have been taught, teachers of NL agree upon it that they frequently call their students to give feedback about topic and summarize that and give their view. Teachers more frequently call the NL to solve questions related to oral communication as compared to PDL.

Writing Skill

The teachers of NL more frequently give their students a mind map to write by themselves as compared to PDL. The NL teachers give their learners writing skill related questions to solve more frequently than PDL means they are not put in interactive learning as compared to NL. PDL are not as frequently directed by the teacher to solve questions from text book as NL. The teachers of PDL always analyze elements and parts of story essay and letters etc. as compared to NL. NL frequently does this practice. The NL teachers are made to have narrative persuasive or expository argumentative etc writings are guided by the teachers frequently as compared to PDL. PDL often do this practice. It is found that the students of PDL are very much encouraged by the teacher to write in their own way, and to produce their own language by engaging learners in different activities and by giving them different authentic materials, this practice is always done in PDL, on the other hand NL are frequently encouraged in this way in such practice.

Attitudinal Issues

It is found that the instructions in collaboration with special education are indicated and implemented in PDL more frequently than in NL. Different technologies for students with learning disabilities are adopted by PDL frequently than in NL. In NL, it is done rarely. PDL know about the instruments of teaching students with learning disabilities than NL. Students are integrated with learning disabilities into academic and special classroom activities by the teacher frequently by PDL teacher and rarely by NL. Teachers of NL always try to promote the positive attitude towards individuals with disability and it is frequently done by PDL.

5.1.2 Difficulties Faced by Normal and Physically Disabled Learners in Learning English as a Second Language:

Teachers of NL are facing difficulties about the difference in mental level of learners. They are facing difficulties about large number of students, students' personal problems and attitude which affect the learning, lack of attendance and negative behaviour or NL. Teachers are also facing problems about the lack of students' attention in activities, students are having a different background which is also a problem for teachers, and there is also shortage of subject specialist teachers for NL. On the other hand, teachers of PDL face a big problem of unavailability of curriculum and less use of mother language. The students are going through the problem of short term memory which is a big issue. It is also found that there is a great shortage of machinery for PDL. Students are facing different difficulties and need to be boosted up differently which is not so easy. The learners are having bad moods due to their disabilities, they are less cooperative. There is a gap between teacher student ratios. There should be more teachers in this sector. There are issues related to physical environment, the worse

weather condition, load shedding, lack of facilities are great challenges of physical environment faced by teachers of NL. Lack of subject specialist teachers is issue also an issue. Discipline in big size classrooms is a big issue that has been found. The teachers of PDL said that there is a shortage of audio visual aids; lack of facilities and the lack of appropriate machinery are highly considerable issues. There are old ways of teaching to PDL applied, there is lack of appropriate, suitable material and equipment, and there is lack of games and activities for PDL. Furthermore, a big problem of shortage of time, the teacher also said that students are having less interest and parents are not as much cooperative as it is needed in case of PDL.

5.1.3 Suggestions to Solve the Problems in Learning English as a Second Language between Physically Disabled and Normal Learners:

The teachers suggested that inclusive education is a problem which has to be focused by the teacher, the mental capacity of students is important. There has to be done counseling of students. There is great need of cooperation of parents, there have to be done awareness plans for parents extra time and attention should be given to students. Encouragement of students is very important. Furthermore, teacher training should be done, to deal with psychology of students and classroom size should be lessened in NL. The PDL teachers suggested that learners should be taught in mother language and Islamic studies should be promoted. Audio visual aids should be provided, teachers should be increased. One of the most important suggestions was given that there should be more interactions of PDL with NL. They should be encouraged; field related teachers should be inducted. Parents should be more cooperative. There should have to be equipped classrooms for PDL. There should be financial assistance, there should be a focus on rehabilitation program, the classroom should be bigger in size and student teacher ratio should be fixed in PDL.

On solution of challenges it is suggested that there should be career counseling, the students base should be focused and there should be addition of PG, nursery and KG, there should be focused, need base training should be done of parents of government school students. It is important that students should work hard and it is need of time to identify students' need of NL.

Curriculum should be developed properly, there should be less use of bilingualism, Islamic studies should be taught, special education centers must have computer labs, for STM students, there should be vocational training institutes, new teachers should be inducted, and parents of PDL should be guided. Government should improve psychological and medical facilities of PDL. Students are to be learnt financial skills, activity based practical trainings should be conducted, technological facilities should be increased and academies and physical activities must be promoted. Furthermore, seminars and workshops should be conducted for PDL. It is observed that these issues are hinders in bringing out the best results in learners and there should be taken some measures about the suggestions given above to cope up with these issues and to bring out the best results from both types of learners.

6. Conclusion

This study, "A Comparative Study of Learning English as a Second Language between Physically Disabled and Normal

Learners” is a considerable addition in the field of research. The differences in learning English as a second language is point out in this study. The teaching strategies are also discussed of both types of learner. Furthermore, by some qualitative questions it is tried to know that which difficulties are faced by both types of teachers in teaching. Physically disabled learners are preferred to be taught by games and activities as compared to normal learners. Normal learners’ classrooms are not completely teacher centered but disabled learners’ classrooms are. Physically disabled learners face more psychological problems as compared to normal learners. Physically disabled learners do not have fully equipped classrooms. Normal learners are having extra-large classrooms so they face less attention. The researchers also tried to develop some adjustability in normal learners regarding needs of physically disabled learners. The study concludes with few recommendations. Future Researchers can conduct research on Physical Environment of both types of learners.

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