SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE AND COMPATIBLE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Education is a part of social system, and a class is a miniature society. Students belong to different socio-ethnic , cultural groups and economic strata. Therefore, variations can never be neglected in the context of education. As most of the English language learners come from different sections of the society, the strategy of teaching should also vary in order to attain the conceived targets. Therefore, socio-pedagogic strategies need to be evolved and implemented. This paper examines the backgrounds of the learners and proposes certain tips to be incorporated in the learning process especially at lower level.

KEYWORDS

Education, Miniature Society, Socio-Ethnic Groups, Socio-Pedagogic Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as a system which interacts with many other systems. Among others socio-economic and ecological factors can't be ignored for many reasons while considering to evolve a general framework of curriculum. Teaching English as a second or foreign language catches attention of most of the planners, policy makers and curriculum designers because it is simply impossible to ignore one's socio-economic status. It has always been debated that those who come from a fairly good background they are generally found better in at least speaking than their counterparts. Thus, Victorian model of education is quite important from pedagogic perspective.

Socio-cultural and economic dimensions are integrated aspect of education because each child who joins educational system belongs to a society and culture, and he has an economic status. The components of the social factors are: the environment, movement in the society,

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interaction with different communities etc. On the other hand, economic factors include: earning, nature of the job and even status in the society.

Socio-economic factors

The socio-cultural perspectives may be related to the individual's role and individual's interactions in the form of different social and community related activities that ultimately lead to an all round development especially the psychological dimension. Vygotsky (1978, p. 90). The child's environment is emphasized by both Bruner (1960.pp32-34) and Vygotsky. Both emphasised the social nature of learning, development of skill through the process of scaffolding. The concept of scaffolding is very similar to Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development, and it not uncommon for the terms to be used interchangeably. Scaffolding involves helpful, structured interaction between an adult and a child with the aim of helping the child achieve a specific goal.

Nature vs Nurture

Most modern child development theorists including Bruner accept that both a child's biology and his environment play a role in ongoing growth and development Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological systems theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. He states that as a child develops, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. This can arise as the child's physical and cognitive ability become stronger. So, the idea that the surrounding of the child may affect positively or negatively is the main focus of Bronfenbrenner's theory (1990). The concept of 'nurture' was supported by Jerome Bruner as well.

A child is born with certain inborn potential which may not develop to full extent unless the child avails himself of the facility of healthy environment in which he can enjoy social exposure. But, in order to move freely and confidently in a given surrounding needs good economic status. Therefore, children belonging to socio-economic disadvantage may face educational disadvantage before they can't practice what they learn theoretically in the classes.

Considerations for curriculum framework

If we consider the theoretical perspectives of socio-economic and ecological theories the following would be the guiding principle of the development of a curriculum framework at a lower level.

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Knowledge of Ecological and Human System

The following dimensions of life are found extremely relevant in the field of curriculum development. In this connection, the pedagogues have to look into the matter if the children are having favourable conditions that support growth and change such as: food and nutrition, shelter, hygiene healthy environment etc.

Victorian Education: A Teaching model

Ecosystem is an important consideration in the field of education. In this connection, Victorian model of education was proved to be very effective. Ecosystem includes the following: ways environment provides for the needs of children. Keeping the socio economic and ecological factors in view, it was proposed to start 'early parenting services' in Victoria. It was of a novel type and such an initiative received applause in the area of education for the economically weaker section. The programs include the following services: day stay, residential services, group and home-based monitoring are quite significant. In addition, secondary support services are also extended in which the focus is on the health of the kids in association with family wellbeing. (www.cyf.vic.gov.au)

The Victorian education services were initiated by the different centres/schemes:

-        EPCs in Victoria include Tweddle , Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre, the Queen Elizabeth Centre etc.,

-        Child and Family Health Service,

-        Victorian PASDS providers include Baptcare, Child and Family Services Ballarat, City of Greater Geelong and many more.

Parenting services

There is now a growing need of providing early childhood safety, stability, development and the attachment relationship between an infant and care are critical elements for establishing the foundation for effective learning.

Agents of changes

A need was felt to improve the early parenting services to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families throughout the state of Victoria. Critical service drivers/agents to bring desirable changes include:

• a significant increase in the healthy birth rate in Victoria,

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• a new understanding of the benefits of early parenting services which may exert an impact on waiting times and leading to increasing demand for current services.

Diverse cultures and Learning

It was noted that in Victoria, migration was noticed that there was considerable increase in families coming from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and similar countries. These community groups are not properly represented in early parenting services. Therefore, an urgent need was felt to review the relevance, cultural aspect, availability and feasibility of these services for such communities.(ibid)

Effective service requirement

As we know that there are many such families which are unable to avail the benefit of comprehensive and different integrated services. The most effective way of improving outcomes for children requires a collaborative and coordinated service response such as early parenting services, child and family services and other health and community services in addition to educational provisions.

Literature Review

The role of socio-economic factors in second/ foreign language learning is being researched around the globe. Munoz (2008) defended the strong association between socio-economic status (SES) and achievement by exploring the fact that students from different social backgrounds have access to different types of schools leading to good/bad performance. In addition, SES, affects final language learning outcomes but also has an influence on motivation to learn. (Fan, 2011).

The relevance of socio-cultural factors in language learning was dealt with by Gardner (1985; Gardner and Lambert, 1959), who presented a detail analysis on the significant effect of parental encouragement and praise on students' motivated behaviour.

The factor of parental encouragement has also been studied in a number of studies (Atay and Kurt, 2010; Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009), however parental involvement may be indirectly connected to the SES factors.

Carr and Pauwells (2006) in Australia and Gayton (2010) in Scotland found that students from lower social classes having no opportunities to travel abroad displayed less favourable foreign language learning attitudes. A study by Lamb (2012) revealed that students in rural areas in Indonesia had a significantly lower level of broader exposure than learners of English in modern cities.

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The effect of social context on self-related beliefs in English language learning (L2) motivation has been recently investigated in Lamb (2012) in which he found that students in rural areas of Indonesia held significantly less-favourable views of their Ideal L2 selves than the students from urban areas had less explanatory power in motivated behaviour for rural learners.

Another important construct in the field of language-learning motivation is motivated behaviour, which is usually seen to consist of effort and persistence (e.g. Csizér and Do¨rnyei, 2005; Do¨rnyei, 2001, 2005; Gardner, 1985, 2006).

Living in poverty meant that families were less likely to provide enriching cultural or educational experiences for their children. Many students' chances of academic success were reduced due to poverty (Altschul, 2012, p.13). Parents' socio-economic status (SES) had a strong and positive effect on children's achievement. Students from higher socioeconomic status, experienced greater parent involvement in their education (Vellymalay, 2012), which enabled these students to receive the necessary skills, knowledge, behavior and values that were needed by their children for academic success. Children whose parents were better educated, made more money, had higher-status jobs, and lived in two parent families tended to attain higher levels of education than other minorities.

It can now be concluded that the review of literature shows the connection between SES and learners' achievement in English, however the case can not be over generalized.

Methods of the study
The following was the design of the study:
Tools used

A questionnaire for the teachers was developed and used to elicit primary data to support the hypotheses that there are variations in the class, and corresponding strategies are important.(Appendix-A)

Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the item analysis, it was found that most of the respondents were in agreement to the idea that varied socio-economic status of students demand different teaching strategies based on social and economic variations. (Appendix-B)

Conclusion

Having seen the relevance of certain theories as mentioned above, the aspects of consideration while framing a curriculum, we can point out socioeconomic background is an important factor in school attainment. Factors including monthly income, parents' educational

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background, social class, interaction and exposure, environment exert significant impact on education. Proper strategic education can gulf the gap if any to a great extent in the case of socioeconomic disadvantage. (Zentella, 1992, pp 211-226). We can bring out desired changes in the school culture to deal with the factor of diversity. (Winfield & Manning, 1992, pp 181-214). In addition, socio-pedagogic strategies like mentoring and support system can yield much better results.

Curriculum development is a tedious process as curriculum is the entire blueprint of the curricular activities that specifically includes course outline, teaching and learning. Unless the objectives are clear, and the textbooks are available one can't teach properly. And, if proper teaching doesn't take place, the learning outcomes will be at stake.

The teaching-learning strategies depend on the course material that is chosen and developed after an intensive research of the psychological aspect (developmental and cognitive) of the personality. A curriculum developer must look into the socio-economic background the target learners for whom the target curriculum has been designed and made available. It is because of the fact that learners from different background tend to learn in different ways. (Dunn, R. (1989, pp 40-42). There are many factors that a developer of the course and an instruction consider while achieving the curricular target conceived by the planners and the course developers.

Implications

The following scenario has been conceived regarding students with socio-economic disadvantages. Curricular and co-curricular strategies to cope with the problems follow:

If students are from different cultural background, the teacher may employ differentiated instruction as a strategy of teaching.

The assumptions would be:

-No two students are alike.

-No two students learn in the same identical way.

-An enriched environment for one student is not necessarily enriched for another.

On the basis of the above pedagogic points the following activities will be integrated with the classroom activities:

- Setting and practicing specific activities, make close observations, assign different activities, facilitate each of them, observe and follow up. Differentiated lessons should be made available for the following reasons:

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-A different lesson is not given for each student each day.

- the lesson doesn't lead to chaos,

-differentiate lessons are not only for students who demonstrate a need for acceleration.

Rather, it is felt that differentiated lesson is proactive, student-centered, and organic. It is based on the blend of whole class, group and individualized instruction. It considers a vision of success for our students. It also recognizes the variance in learning styles of our students and providing a variety of assignments within units of instruction. In addition, it allows students to choose, with teacher direction, the route to their learning.

It is believed that differentiated instruction strategy will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate proficiency in an area they already know and allow them to move forward. The proposed strategy is expected to provide multiple approaches to content (input), process (how), and product (output).

Specific case

Teaching Students having poor socio economic background:

Different strategies are often necessary when teaching children with low socio-economic status. While teaching students of low socio-economic status, it is important to remember that although they are students with the same rights and responsibilities as all other students, they also require some extra care and support. If you, as the educator, do not come from a background of low socio-economic status you may have to work hard to relate with these students and their families. It is important that you treat all of your students fairly and that you offer the support that is needed by each of your individual students.

Instructional strategies

The instructor should do the following in order to evolve a implement a strategy to teach the disadvantaged group of learners:

- He should watch the students, observes diversity, and avoid monotonous teaching.

- have knowledge about teaching methods for diverse groups of students, including those from low socio-economic status groups.

- build and maintain healthy professional relationships with the target students. In addition, the teacher should always be open to share with the students about any learning-teaching problems that they encounter in the school, at home that are likely to affect the expected performance.

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- he may arrange for extra time before school, after school or even during class time for students to complete their homework assignments and ask for help especially for those who can't finish their own.

- the concerned teacher should try to find ways to relate to the students and help them understand the importance of education in general and English in particular for how their social status and economic wellbeing.

- he should develop the overall personality of the child especially the communication skills.

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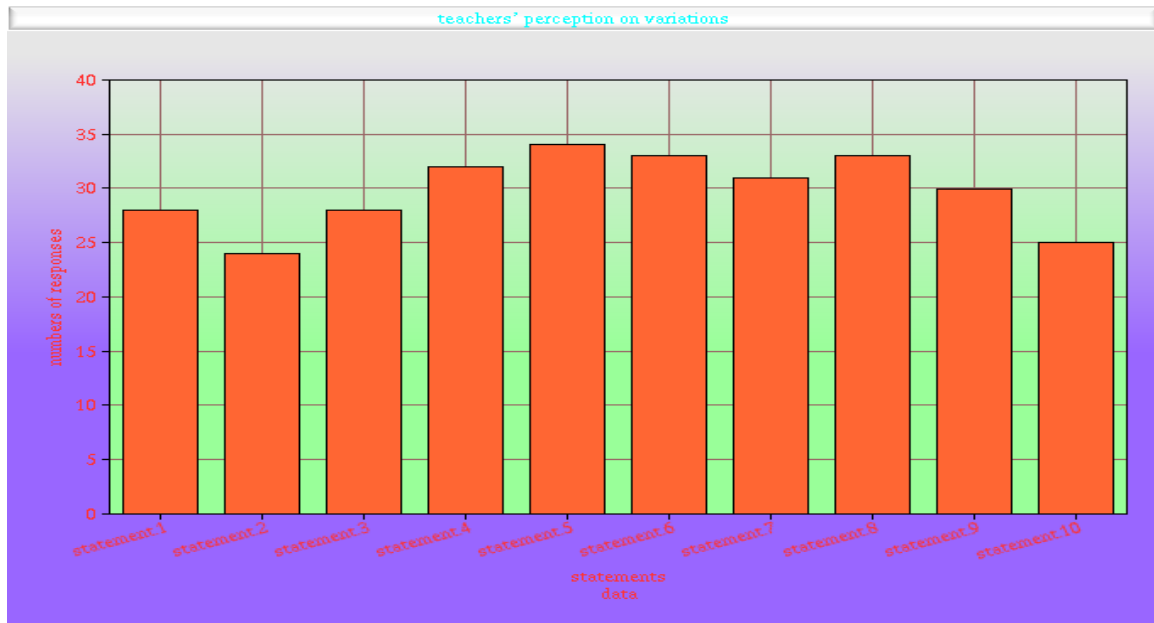
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Appendix .A

(Questionnaires for teachers- N=40)

S.N	Statements	agree	undecided	disagree
1	Socio-economic variations is a common phenomenon.	28	5	7
2	Students having better socio-economic status (SES) are more exposed.	24	6	10
3	Better SES students can learn easier than the counterparts.	28	6	6
4	There is an urgent need to bring low SES students to the main stream.	32	4	4
5	The teacher should boost confidence in the low SES learners.	34	2	4
6	The teacher should focus on child centred learning.	33	3	4
7	There is a need to gulf the gap if possible.	31	4	5
8	NGO's should handle such cases.	34	3	3
9	Institutions should facilitate by scholarships etc.	30	3	7
10	There is a need to offer parenting service like activities.	25	6	9

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Appendix-B

(Bar graph)

(showing perception of the sample teachers)

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