

## Strategic Language Classroom Pedagogies for Addressing Diverse Learner's Linguistic Needs

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper targets to assess the instructional strategies adopted by English language teachers confront the many challenges encountered during teaching experiences especially where linguistic diversity is a reality. The paper was guided by ascertain individual instructors belief actions that dictates inside the language classrooms instructional activities. Rationally, the study cognized that language teaching is a complex process especially in classrooms is characterised by linguistic diversity. In addition, learners have varied linguistic abilities and therefore require special attention of every language teacher. The investigation was carried out amongst one hundred and twenty teachers of grade four drawn from Wareng Sub-County which is largely cosmopolitan in UasinGishu County. In order to obtain results selection was done amongst the respondents randomly and schools were stratified accordingly for purpose of authentic selection. Teachers selected responded to questionnaire administered to them. Detailed interviews were carried out with the selected language teachers who gave data that were analyses qualitatively. The study found that teachers in Wareng Sub-county of Uasin Gishu County employ various linguistic instructional strategies to deal with the issue of students having diverse linguistic needs in language classrooms. Majority of the teachers in the sub-county explore active sense-based environment among the pupils in the teaching of listening or speaking while others separate learners based on their ability to read.*

**Keywords:** Instructional Strategies Employed, Teachers, Language Classroom, Addressing Learners, Diverse Linguistic Needs

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Two strands are brought into focus in language pedagogies within the second language teacher education. The first is the focus on teacher technical skills obtained from pedagogical orientation. The second is the language teacher knowledge base that informs his classroom practices. According to Richards (2008), the two foundations posit a linguistic problem. He made a distinction a teacher has knowledge content and knowledge how. Accordingly, a teacher who has undergone language teaching education, trainings will definitely attain the knowledge base based on the topics or contents offered. This acquisition is well structured and will be a guideline in delivering instructions in the language classrooms. Appropriate methodologies would be applied to address the topics of the content learned. This will therefore be purely academic and professional. The basic assumption was that such teachers have the machinery within their knowledge to conger every and any classroom linguistic challenge. That was not the reality, within the classroom, there are range of diversities especially from the learners need that might challenge the teacher' knowledge content. Therefore the rationale for strategic teacher styles including the belief principles was made in the current study. It was evident that teacher's maxims have not been addressed in Richards' study and thus the reason for the current study. (Bartels, 2005).

Freeman (2002) posits that central to *knowledge how* reflects facilitative language steps and guides in the classroom. The teacher and learner role is put into focus. *Knowledge how* is what enables the teacher to transit the content of language using the most appropriate means based on the teaching nature. Juxtaposed with other studies such as Richards and Burns (2008), there is need that the knowledge content impacts on learners if it is going to include the processes of instructions and instructor-learner and the maxims, conceptualizations and content which guides teaching. This agree with Richards and Farrell (2005).

Commenting on the relevance of the natural content knowledge in language instruction, Freeman (2002) argue that the content knowledge was a product of other fields of study other than pedagogies. Language instructors in the classroom play pertinent role in meeting learners language needs and challenges. They use their content language, their maxims to recognize such needs. This role are key apart from utilising the method or materials to use, in order to improve quality instructions (Akbari & Karimi, 2010). Modern. Second language acquisition research has pointed out that the SLTE knowledge content aims at arriving at how best can language be known to the learner rather than the meaning of language. (Miller, 2004; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Norton, 1997). The teacher is currently the custodian of the principle, techniques of implicit knowledge, and in his own way impart knowledge and skills to language learners of diverse linguistic abilities. (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

### 1.1 The Nature of Teacher-Learning

Diversity of language learner is the key. The focus is on the nature of techniques and methods to be employed to meet such needs. The foundational perspective on the nature of teacher-learning foregrounded the question of improving the effectiveness of language teaching in a classroom experience through appropriate techniques. Initially, the general thinking was that Teacher-learning was viewed as an inborn cognitive issue; this was what was held by the nativist. Consequently what the mentalist research wanted to find out were limited to what the teacher do within the classroom and what he failed to do in order to enable the learner to master the language. (Freeman, 2002)

Contrary, teacher learning has been taking a new trajectory. There seems to be a favour to take cognizance of move towards a socio-cultural view of teacher learning. This alone is not adequate until attention is geared towards teacher cognition being the bedrock behind any teacher activity. In addition to the two, teacher identity in language teaching is again focused for its role in teaching and teacher-learning (Richards, 2008). The foundation of teacher learning was to determine the cognitive process involved and to appreciate the situated and social nature of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this continuum, learning emerged from interactions and, participation of the learners in a given situation. The perspective, brings a teacher as a means of constructing information and knowledge through getting involved in social context and initiating learning by setting needful social activities. This latter type of knowledge, sometimes called 'practitioner knowledge', is the source of teachers' practices and understandings.

A shift of paradigm is noted, the language teacher plays a role main role was to make visible the kind of teacher knowledge by making it candid, conceptualizable and retrieval. This agrees with of Freeman (2002). Teacher education must serve two functions; It must teach the skills of reflectivity and it must provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience' (p. 11). In practical terms, this view of teacher-learning has led to a focus on the classroom as a community of learners engaged in social practices and the collaborative construction of meanings.

### 1.2 The Role of Context

In the modern views of teacher-learning, which draw on socio-cultural learning theory, focus is on dialogic and collaborative theory as advanced by (Richards and Burns, 2008). The focus is on language classroom that emphasises on identity constructions. Language is a used by individuals in the society as a means of identity. Speakers of the same language will who use it at the same level will always attain a sense of belonging. The social processes of a classroom that contributes to the ideals of identity and how they contribute to language learning is the context of the teacher' practices. The basic premise of Socio-cultural language learning strand was on the belief that language learning is situated. This implies that learning takes place in a given contexts that determines how language learning becomes successful. The role of the learner in this strand plays a pivotal position in language-learning processes. Individualized needs of the learner shape the depth of learning through their pragmatic language use, the discourses they engage in, the collaborations they make and the materials they use.

According to Johnson (2006), Second language teachers are responsible in making decisions on the best practices to teach second language even when the learner is within a complex historical, cultural and social context. In this context language teachers are believed to be creators and negotiators of contingent knowledge and learning will rejuvenate from social interaction within a community of practice.

Richards (2008) has posited that different contexts create different potentials for learning. Most teachers had different orientations in their language training collages. Few if any collages in this case have curricula incline to language learner's diverse needs. The collage programmes are tailored around the ordinary learner of the language. The classroom situation poses a different context that challenges the initial teacher context. The ideal language classroom was a context for patterns of social participation that can either propel or inhibit language learning. In another view the learning occurs through the practice and engagement of language teaching that encompasses induction to a society of language practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) agrees on the outcome of language learning from a similar interest collaboration in developing new skills. In this context emphasis is on organizational settings that is socially constituted. This context will allow learning to emanate from classroom experiences and teaching activities and is expatiated with interaction with mentors, fellow teachers and relationship with experienced teachers in the school.

### 1.3 The Shift of strategies

Significant shift in language strategies have been witnessed over the years. These changes in classroom experiences are iced by the technological advancement that influences learning and notwithstanding the evolving modern teaching methodologies. Reexamining of classroom language teaching strategies have also been iced with emerging trends in language pedagogies. This has brought forth the shifts in language strategies.

The initial modern strategy and most explicit in language teaching is the integration of technology into the classroom. Utilization of gadgets such as smartphones, tablets, and computers is a trend that cannot be overlooked. The teachers have the role to enable the learners have access to a plethora of online resources that are learner enabled. Secondly electronically enabled learner's access language learning apps, and interactive platforms. Teachers' have access have embraced these technological tools to create engaging and immersive learning experiences for their students. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) applications, for instance, enable learners to practice language skills in simulated real-world environments, enhancing their language acquisition process.

The traditional one-size-fits-all approach to language teaching has given way to personalized learning methodologies have been induced to replace the old approaches such as one size fits all approach. This approach closely will definitely address learners diverse needs. Teachers take note that learners have different learning styles, preferences, and paces of learning. As a result, language teaching has become more learner-centered, with teachers tailoring their instruction to meet the individual needs of each student. Adaptive learning systems,

powered by artificial intelligence, analyze learners' strengths and weaknesses and deliver customized learning pathways to optimize their language learning journey.

The ideal classroom activities have shifted towards communicative language teaching with a view to revolutionized language classrooms. Communicative methodologies have taken the places of initial grammar-translation method, which focuses on rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. Instructions in communicative approach give precedence on communicative competence. Language learners are given opportunity to participate in real-life communication activities. These activities are role-plays, classroom discussions, and classroom debates, with a view of improving their speaking and listening skills. This emphasis on meaningful interaction fosters fluency and promotes effective communication in the target language.

### 1.4 Identifying Linguistic Abilities

The current study noted the differences in learners' linguistic abilities and found the need to identify the necessary pedagogical issues. Consideration of learner differences is important in language learning. Marcia (1985) provides guidelines to assist teachers. Learners' variability are in different ways.

- i. Teachers have the task to differentiate learners who have holistic language learning styles and can learn best when given large experiences or little teacher attention. By so doing such learners can gather and restructure relevant structures. These categories of learners demonstrate analytical style and learn best by formulating and testing hypothesis or rule. Definitely, those who lack these abilities have exhibited diverse needs.
- ii. Learning experiences for different age groups are distinct. It would be obviously difficult to have a homogeneous class. Teachers have the obligation of considering the extent of linguistic forms. The young learners will require little or explicit grammar instruction. The teachers will be tasked to prepare and facilitate the adults or adolescent learners with some explicit focus on forms.
- iii. Teachers are tasked to identify individual learner's language proficiency level. These proficiencies will determine appropriate linguistic strategies to be utilised in these classrooms. The level of learners' language acquisition will be the factor for consideration in this case. Where a teacher have well linguistically endowed and thus advanced language experience, the teacher will need to strategies a more form related strategic feedback and correction in order to progress.
- iv. Language learners' Education background is another variable in determining a teaching strategy in a language classroom. Learners who are not literate would not benefit on strategies that rely on form or formal grammar. This being the situation, elementary grammar is required during language instruction in order to avoid learner frustrations. Those who are fairly educated will require strategies that will accord them with opportunities to interact and utilise linguistic experiences at their disposal in addition a clear focus on form would be appropriate for them.
- v. Learners' linguistic needs are determined by their goals. Language teachers have a task to determine each learner's linguistic goals. Some learners need language for survival communication or formal accuracy communication. Formal accuracy communication is of little value if the learner wants to function as an academician, diplomat or business executive. The list that Marca (1985) provided above played a key role in the current study especially in formulation of themes for discussion with the participants on the ways that they utilised in identifying learners needs.

## 2. MATERIALS & METHODS

The study was carried out in UasinGishu County Wareng Sub-county, Kenya. The study was deemed suitable in any locale where English language teaching is practiced since it is possible that instructional problems and teacher maxims exist in virtually all schools. In order to monitor data collection effectively, WarengSub-county was thus the appropriate area of the study. Wareng has forty-five secondary schools and one hundred and ten teachers of English.

The study adopted the qualitative research approach based on interpretivism research paradigm with the ontological belief that the world is dynamic and is constructed by people in their interactions with each other and a wider social system. The study adopted this design because it allows a researcher to probe a situation in details, yielding a wealth of descriptive and explanatory information. Interpretivist paradigm gives a researcher deeper insight on the responses as the researcher is also a participant and surveys also facilitate the discovery of unexpected relationships. Because the researcher observes virtually everything that happens in a given situation, he or she learns beyond those originally chosen for study.

The author used both simple random sampling and stratified sampling procedures to identify the schools and teachers who would participate in the study. Slovin's formula  $S = P / \{1 + P(e^2)\}$  was used to determine appropriate samples for the study, where

S = desired sample size  
P = total population;  
e = error tolerance (in the proposed study a margin error of 0.05).

This formula yielded a sample of 40 schools and 106 teachers. In order to ensure that the sample was adequately representative of the different school categories in the sampling frame, stratified sampling was used. The different school categories (zones) were considered as clusters each from which schools were selected to participate in the study. In determining the size of the sample from each stratum, proportionate allocation was used in order to ensure that the samples from different strata are kept proportional to the strata.

The data for the study was obtained using different instruments. These ranged from questionnaires, to personal interviews in obtaining, reinforcing and cross-checking obtained data. The data generated for the study comprised secondary (desk survey) and primary sources (field survey). Primary data are those obtained directly from the originators or main source. A questionnaire formed the major source of

primary data used in the study. Secondary data was based on past research work on this area of study. They were collected from Internet, textbooks, government publications, unpublished research work and journals.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in analyzing the data obtained. Descriptive statistics were employed; the data was organized, summarized and described using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of frequency counts distribution tables, graphs and pie charts that

facilitated description and explanation of the study findings. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to facilitate computations.

### 3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Instructional Strategies Employed by Teachers in a Language Classroom in Addressing the Learners Linguistic

**Table 1: Strategies Employed in Addressing the Learners Linguistic Needs**

Instructional strategies	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing		Mean	Std Deviation
Exploration active, senses-based on environment	57	53.3	32	29.9	14	13.1	4	3.7	1.6729	.84424
Separation of learners based on their ability	11	10.3	29	27.1	51	47.7	16	15.0	2.6729	.85535
A balance between active movement and quiet activities	32	29.9	13	12.1	45	42.1	17	15.9	2.4393	1.08313
Ongoing observation and assessment which informs the program	13	12.1	28	26.2	19	17.8	47	43.9	2.9346	1.09261
A balance between individual and group activities	21	19.6	31	29.0	28	26.2	27	25.2	2.5701	1.07381
Regular and supportive interactions with teachers and peers	19	17.8	77	72.0	11	10.3			1.9252	.52667
self directed hands-on learning activities balanced with teacher-directed activities	26	24.3	25	23.4	20	18.7	36	33.6	2.6168	1.18676

From Table 1, it was found out that 57(53.3%) teachers used exploration active, senses-based on environment to teach listening skills, 32(29.9%) speaking, 14(13.1%) reading while 4(3.7%) writing. Furthermore, a mean of  $1.6729 \pm .84424$  was obtained on the statement implying that majority of the teachers in the District explored active sense-based environment among the pupils in the teaching of listening or speaking.

On separation of learners based on their ability, it was found out that 51(47.7%) teachers used this strategy in the teaching of reading, 29(27.1%) used this strategy in the teaching of speaking, 16(15.0%) respondents used this strategy in the teaching of writing while 11(10.3%) teachers used this strategy in the teaching of listening. A mean of  $2.6729 \pm .85535$  was obtained indicating that majority of the teachers in the District separated learners based on their ability to read.

Further, 45(42.1%) teachers used a balance between active movement and quiet activities in the teaching of reading skills, 32(29.9%) respondents used this strategy in the teaching of listening skills, 17(15.9%) employed the use of this strategy in the teaching of writing skills while 13(12.1%) teachers used this strategy in the teaching of speaking skills of the pupils. It can therefore be inferred that majority of the

teachers in the District use reading and listening skills on judging active movement and quiet activities.

On the ongoing observation and assessment which informs the programme, it was found out that 47(43.9%) teachers used writing skills, 28(26.2%) respondents used speaking skills, 19(17.8%) respondents used reading skills while 13(12.1%) teachers used listening skills. From the responses, it can be shown that majority of the teachers in the District used writing skills on observation and assessments which inform the programme.

Similarly, on a balance between individual and group activities, it was found out that 31(29.0%) teachers used speaking abilities of the pupils, 28(26.2%) teachers used reading skills of the pupils, 27(25.2%) respondents used writing skills of the pupils while 21(19.6%) respondents used listening skills. It seems therefore that most teachers in the District used listening, speaking, reading and writing in balancing between individual and group activities in schools.

On regular and supportive interactions with teachers and peers, 77(72.0%) respondents used speaking skills, 19(17.8%) teachers used listening skills while 11(10.3%) respondents used reading skills. The responses indicate that majority of the

teachers used speaking skills on understanding the regular and supportive interactions of pupils with their teachers and peers.

Further, 36(33.6%) teachers in the District used writing skills on self directed hands-on learning activities balanced with teacher-directed activities of the pupils, 26(24.3%) respondents used listening skills, 25(23.4%) teachers used speaking in teaching while 20(18.7%) respondents used reading skills. It can therefore be shown that majority of the

teachers used writing skills of the pupils addressing the learners' linguistic need on self directed hands-on learning activities balanced with teacher-directed activities in the classroom.

Furthermore, the respondents were requested to indicate in the questionnaire actions that informed their teaching to help learners with diverse linguistic needs. The results were as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Actions which Inform Teaching**

Actions	Always		Occasionally		Rarely		Do not have this principle	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Grouped learners according to their abilities	33	30.8	30	28.0	28	26.2	16	15.0
Consultation with experts	13	12.1	43	40.2	39	36.4	12	11.2
Referral of learners to specialist	16	15.0	9	8.4	57	53.3	25	23.4
Continued integrating the skills	26	24.3	61	57.0	14	13.1	6	5.6
Intensified remedial teachings	31	29.0	40	37.4	25	23.4	11	10.3

From Table 3, on the statement that learners are grouped according to their abilities, 33(30.8%) respondents always used this action to inform their teaching, 30(28.0%) teachers frequently used this technique, 28(26.2%) respondents rarely used this technique while 16(15.0%) respondents did not use this technique at all. It seems therefore that majority of the respondents always grouped learners according to their abilities.

On consultation with experts, 43(40.2%) teachers frequently used this technique, 39(36.4%) teachers rarely consulted the experts, 13(12.1%) respondents always consulted with the experts while on the other hand 12(11.2%) teachers did not consult the experts at all. The responses therefore show that majority of the teachers frequently consulted with experts to inform them of their teaching.

On referral of learners to specialists, 57(53.3%) teachers rarely used the technique, 25(23.4%) respondents did not refer at all, 16(15.0%) respondents always referred while on 9(8.4%) respondents frequently referred learners to specialist in order to inform them of their teaching. This shows that majority of the teachers in the District rarely referred learners with diverse linguistic needs to specialists to inform them of their teaching.

Furthermore, 61(57.0%) teachers continued integrating the skills of learners with diverse linguistic need to specialists to inform them of their teaching, 26(24.3%) teachers always continued integrating learners' skills, 14(13.1%) respondents rarely integrated the skills while 6(5.6%) respondents did not continue integrating the skills of the learners with diverse linguistic needs. It is clear that majority of the teachers in the District rarely continued integrating the skills while teaching learners with diverse linguistic needs in order to inform them of their teaching.

On intensified remedial teaching, 40(37.4%) teachers frequently used it, 31(29.0%) teachers always employed this technique, 25(23.4%) teachers rarely used the technique while 11(10.3%) teachers did not have this principle. The findings indicated that majority of the language teachers in the District

frequently used remedial teaching while teaching learners with diverse linguistic needs to inform them of their teaching.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study showed that teachers in Wareng District of UasinGishu County employ various instructional strategies to deal with the issue of students having diverse linguistic needs in language classrooms. Majority of the teachers in the District explore active sense-based environment among the pupils in the teaching of listening or speaking. Others separate learners based on their ability to read. Teachers also use reading and listening skills on judging active movement and quiet activities. In addition, the teachers use writing skills on observation and assessments which inform the programme and others use listening, speaking, reading and writing in balancing between individual and group activities in schools. Majority of the teachers also use speaking skills on understanding the regular and supportive interactions of pupils with their teachers and peers. Many of the teachers use writing skills of the pupils addressing the learners' linguistic needs on self-directed hands-on learning activities balanced with teacher-directed activities in the classroom.

The actions that informed teachers' teaching in the above cases included grouping learners according to their abilities, consultation with experts, referral to specialists, continued integration of skills and intensified remedial.

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