

# My Teaching Philosophy with Particular Reference to Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Nehal Ahmad<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English Language, College of Science and Arts, Alnamas University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia

\* Nehal Ahmad, E-mail: nehalmau@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

*It has been due on my part to share my own teaching philosophy with my colleagues in the University in general and other language instructors engaged in this noble profession. Needless to say, creating our own teaching philosophy is an innovative practice and it should be a meaningful part of us as second/foreign language teachers since it states our teaching/learning vision and wisdom, observations, experiences, goals, beliefs, level of professionalism and self-development among many other things. However, in real life situation, we do not often implement all our innovative ideas that we possess in our teaching philosophy. The main objective of the present study is to share my decades of experiences as a language instructor as a student of linguistics as well as an English language instructor.*

## **Keywords**

*teaching philosophy, innovative motivational strategies, need to rethink, effective teaching, reading comprehension*

## **1. Introduction**

Believe in action; not in beautiful words and expressions.

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language in monolingual country like Saudi Arabia have always been a topic of debates, discussions and bone of contention among linguists, litterateurs and language pedagogues since decades. The complexities in foreign language teaching and learning sparked enormous heated arguments in the past and at present too and created a situation that demands the need to re-examine and re-evaluate the total foreign language educational programme and also our approaches to language teaching- learning in particular and language testing and evaluation in general. There has been an increasing concern and consensus that the Saudi English language learners (specifically their competency in L2) must be looked upon as its most valuable resource in the national growth. Needless to say, in the field of education, understanding of all the subjects is fully depend upon one's competency in the language in which the courses are designed. Many subjects like Computer Science, Sciences etc. are taught through the medium of English i.e., L2. The Competency of the



students in such a context and situation is supposed to be the backbone of the educational edifice. Therefore, the students learning various subjects and courses have to come up with the minimum essential requirements (or minimum competency level) in the concerned language. It is an established fact that if the language in which the instructions are imparted in the class or (in which the courses are designed) are strong then it will have a positive impact as well as healthy growth on the learners' personality. Language learning is intimately connected with the personality of an individual learner. It is because of this reason that nowadays the importance of "systematic evaluation" in language teaching and learning is being given due importance in the educational set up by the experts of testing and evaluation.

Philosophy as an independent discipline pursues questions in every dimension of human life, and its techniques apply to problems in any field of study. Before teaching any course, it is imperative on the part of the language instructor to begin by well-defined course as well as educational objectives that is the ultimate goal of any language education programme. The language teacher should be very clear at the outset.

In its lifetime, the profession of second/ foreign language teaching has undergone many changes in the entire world. Early attempts at language teaching almost entirely lacked a theoretical base. In the 20th century, however, two sets of language teaching methods emerged; the first set borrowed theories from psychology, linguistics, and sociolinguistics whereas the second set was based on individual philosophies of method developers.



Teaching any language as foreign language should not be taken lightly. It needs consistent efforts on the part of the teacher to assess his teaching time to time and its impact on the learning outcomes. A language instructor must be an honest and a true nationalist in teaching his students because the students are the backbone of their country. It is true that a teacher certainly

wants his students to learn the fundamental contents of the prescribed courses. However, beyond that, a good teacher would also try to foster critical thinking, facilitate the acquisition of life-long learning skills, and prepare students to function effectively in the present global era and consequently develop problem-solving strategies. When the teacher possesses a clear idea about his teaching/learning objectives, he/she can discuss and apply methods, approaches, strategies, techniques in order to achieve or work toward those objectives. It is here where a teacher can display his knowledge of learning theory, cognitive development, curriculum design, etc. The teacher has to put forward specific strategies, techniques, exercises, and include both what he/she used in the past and are planning for future courses. It is pre-requisite for him to tie these directly to his teaching objectives and discuss how each one is designed to achieve that purpose at the end of a semester. My prime focus in teaching is on learning. My teaching goal is to facilitate learning in the class, encouraging and motivating students to learn. Needless to say, learning is primarily the student's responsibility, whereas teaching is my

responsibility. My focus is on helping the target group to learn, rather than just dispensing my knowledge to them in the class. It is a big responsibility on my part to create a sense of natural teaching/learning environment in the classroom. There are two necessary things for effective teaching: knowledge of the contents listed in the syllabus and ability to communicate it in the class. The teacher's knowledge of the instructional materials is not enough to be effective in teaching it; likewise, communication skills also do not contribute to the learning in the sense that the teacher must have a clear-cut idea about the concepts in order to let the class acquired in a very natural way. A teacher cannot be a true unless and until he/she creates a natural resembling to the native language acquisition atmospheres in the class and he/she is well versed in the topics/contents. In academic discussions, there is a very common saying that a teacher has no right to enter into the class without preparations. I support the preceding contention. A teacher must be well prepared before entering into the class. This creates a sense of confidence while teaching. The teacher's confidence definitely facilitates an effective and a natural learning in the class. If a teacher loses, his/her confidence in the class there would definitely prevail an uncomfortable teaching and learning situation in the class.

In the recent two decades, with the development of the scientific technology and the increase of the international exchange, foreign language teaching has experienced an unprecedented reform, which will surely bring about a series of changes in educational thoughts. Teaching method—a central issue dominating foreign language teaching for about two centuries, is losing its previous appealing power among researchers and language teachers. The emphasis that teachers and researchers are laying on has shifted from “How to teach” to “How to learn”, resulting in the prevalence of the “Learner-Centered” in the field of foreign language teaching. However, the most challenging problem is being faced all the foreign language teachers is how to achieve the goal of centering on learners. As a result, more and more researchers and language teachers are paying great attention to some factors related to learners themselves, among which the more salient ones are learning styles—“cognitive, affective and physiological traits that are relatively stable indications of how learners perceive interact with and respond to the learning environment” (Keefe, 1979, p. 4).

It is a fact that individual quality of teachers differ from each other. The highly experienced and qualified teachers are essential for the proper and efficient functioning of a foreign language educational programme and for enhancing the quality of learning. Research supports this notion that a good teacher and actions to be taken on his part in the classroom play a vital role in provoking effective and efficient learning on the part of the students (Markley, 2004). Although effective teachers in general may share some characteristics, there are certain qualities that differ among them depending on the subject matter they teach. Some researchers believe that it is the nature of the subject matter that makes language teachers different from teachers of other fields (Hammadou & Bernhar, 1987).

What makes a teacher effective has been a subject of prime importance to many scholars concerned with education. In 1957, secondary-school principals in New York were asked to nominate effective

teachers of academic subjects. The most frequently mentioned qualities were: subject-matter mastery, motivation, dedication, co-operation, sense of humour, creativity, efficiency, control, discipline, standards, promptness with reports, methods and generosity with personal time for students (Calabria, 1960). Effectiveness in teaching was reported to be directly related to mastery of subject matter in the selected teaching field. In addition, a long apprenticeship of teaching in one's academic field was thought to be a necessary pre-requisite for effectiveness.

Feldman (1976) analyzed seventy two studies on characteristics reported by college students as associated with ideal teachers and as important for effective teaching. Across this large body of researches, he found the following characteristics to be consistently associated with superior college teachers or teaching: stimulating interest of the learners; being clear and understandable; being knowledgeable in subject matter; being prepared and organized for the course and being enthusiastic about the subject matter and teaching. Friendliness, helpfulness, and openness to others' opinions were traits that students said they preferred in teachers especially when they freely described their ideal or best teacher.

## 2. Literature Review



The purpose of this literature review is to examine theory and research that has addressed what constitutes effective pedagogy for the acquisition of a second/foreign language in a classroom context. The review of the literature strongly indicates how important the teachers' philosophies in teaching English as a foreign language are. Learning is a personal act, not just for the student but also the teacher (Hattie, 2009). Research has demonstrated that students often live in a personal and social world of their own within the classroom, with their teachers often not understanding this (Nuthall, 2005). As a result many students are not reaching their full potential. "In most teachers' minds, the criteria for successful learning are the same as the criteria for successful classroom management" (Nuthall, 2005, p. 916). Those involved in teacher education, and specifically pre-service teacher education, need to be fully mindful of this assertion.

"Teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices tend to fit together". As Lopes and Santos (2013) said. They did a study to measure the relation between teachers beliefs, goals and practice. The participants were 279 from primary school teachers in Portugal, they used questionnaires, some of them were sent by email and other filled inside the schools. The findings revealed teachers usually have a misunderstanding about the difference between believes and goals and sometimes it overlap with practice.

It is true that professional development programs and activities to enhance teaching and learning have been a feature of the academic culture of many colleges and Universities throughout the world for nearly four decades. During this time, there have been significant changes in the teaching environment in the colleges/ universities. Pedagogical understandings have developed leading to more varied teaching methods, technology has provided unprecedented opportunities of access and enrichment,

academic staff have engaged in dialogue and reflections on their teaching, and ethnic and cultural diversity has demanded new understandings and skills of academic staff. More recently, a growing awareness that university students of the 21st century expect educational experiences which cannot be met by the teaching methods of 45 years ago has motivated higher education institutions to take action to raise the quality of teaching and enhance the student learning experience (Hanbury, Prosser, & Rickinson, 2008). Countries such as Norway, UK and Sri Lanka, have even gone as far as making pedagogical training of university teachers compulsory as one step towards quality assurance (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004).

The literature review seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. Despite innumerable approaches/methodologies used in teaching English as a second/foreign language, the difficulties faced by the target group are still unresolved.
- b. The scholars have approached from different corners and ways to minimize the difficulties of the second/foreign language learners but are still unsolved.
- c. What are the factors that are responsible for the unease in the target language?
- d. What are the effective as well as innovative instructional strategies that can be applied in teaching/learning?
- e. What are the innovative motivational strategies that are useful for the class?
- f. What are the varied and new circumstances encountered by the language instructors in their practical life situations, i.e., class?
- g. Why is the performance of the target group not up to mark?
- h. Why are the prescribed objectives of a course not achieved at the end of a language educational programme?
- I. Why are the educational objectives not achieved in terms of “Bloom’s Taxonomy of Education” at the end of a language educational programme?
- g. What are the best ways to teach English as a foreign language?
- j. How can instruction best ensure successful language teaching/learning in the class? etc.

These are not easy questions to answer, both because there are many competing theories and individual philosophies offering very different perspectives on how instruction can promote effective language learning and because the empirical research does not always afford clear-cut findings. The author of the present paper carried out this study in the light of these research questions. These research questions have been directly or indirectly compelling me to express something and share these with those engaged in foreign language teaching profession in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In answering these questions, we draw upon our personal experiences and are especially centered upon what it means to be a teacher and to be a student in this context. To be effective as a teacher within higher education institutions it is necessary to bring a scholarly approach to the ongoing development of “extensive professional skills and practices and high levels of disciplinary and other contextual expertise” (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010, p. 111).

### 3. Objective of the Study

Globalization and reform movements as recently witnessed throughout the world invite waves of change influencing aspects of human life, including the language and culture of communication and exchange (Canagarajah, 2005). English language has occupied the status of lingua franca in the entire world. The world literatures in different major professional fields such as Computer Science, Science, Technology, Commerce, and Education, Business administration are now being heavily produced in this language. Keeping in view the significance of the English as a foreign language there is an increasing demand for effective teaching and learning of English. Effective English language skills are seen as vital for the workforce of countries that seek to participate actively in the global economy and want to have access to the information that forms the basis of social, educational, and economic development (Burns & Richards, 2009).

The language instructors teaching English as a foreign language in various colleges, universities and other educational institutions here possess the unique opportunity and responsibility to make the future a better place for their students. They should not only enter into the class and teach but also impart a vision to the target group that emphasizes appreciating worldly literature and developing effective self-expression and writing skills are vital to their personal fulfillment, both intellectually and vocationally.

The main purpose of this study is to share long personal experiences in the area of second/foreign language pedagogy. Moreover, sharing vision, innovative ideas, pre-requisites for creating a relaxed and congenial class environment, effective strategies and techniques based on the decades of long observations and experiences as the teacher of foreign language in the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The researcher feels that a language instructor should be innovative, speculative, and critical as well as result oriented in the foreign language teaching profession. I have noticed and noted in the practical classroom situation that many theoretical aspects do not work and change in accordance with situational needs and demands. As a result, it is advisable to the teachers to be in quest of finding the better techniques, approaches, reformulating the existing one.

I have been fortunate enough to have a wide variety of teaching and learning experiences as an undergraduate and post-graduate student in the Department of Linguistics at the Aligarh Muslim University, India. Teaching undergraduates and post-graduate have been gratifying not only in my success in introducing students to a world of critical inquiry, but also in the way in which addressing my students' difficulties with analytical writing and thinking has revitalized and refined my own research and writing.

Keeping in view the problems of learning a new language, the language instructors, educationists, linguists, pedagogues throughout the world have been trying to discover something new apart from the existing strategies, tools, methods approaches, styles and so on and consequently many others carried out their efforts in order to ease the difficulties faced by the learners in learning the target language. They looked at it from their own perspectives as well as in the light of their own specialization. A quest for the

best way to teach assumes a kind of simplicity about teaching and learning. It is a well-established fact that the teaching in the class is used to accomplish a variety of different educational aims and objectives prescribed in the syllabus and curriculum. It is used to help the target group to acquire immense knowledge of various subject matters and is aimed at students from all sorts of backgrounds, with varying degrees of competence and at different levels mental and intellectual maturity. Those who are in teaching profession share a wide diversity of backgrounds and have adequate experiences. The hosts of factors that influence teaching makes clear that there could be one or even several best methods, approaches, styles, or practices. However, a tentative approach to pedagogical methods feels counterintuitive. Once instructors realize that something that works with his personal teaching styles, innovative motivational strategies, methods, approaches, contents, instructional materials, remedial teaching materials. They feel to share with those who are engaged in this noble profession. It is quite natural to recommend those things to others. The present study fully supports the preceding contention. I felt many times during my teaching career that decades of educational researches have failed to find that definitive set of best practices. I gave a serious thought to it and was always in quest of acquiring something innovative and effective for my disciples. According to second language researchers, acquiring a second language/foreign language is a difficult and complex process (Collier, 1995; Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

#### 4. My Teaching philosophy Discussed and Explained in Detail



The teaching of English is a specialized area where the potentialities of a teacher are highly required. However, generally it is not taken into consideration by most of the individuals. Some people feel that anybody can teach English a foreign language. This perception towards teaching a new language is fully wrong. To be effective as a teacher within higher education institutions it is necessary to bring a scholarly approach to the ongoing development of “extensive professional skills and practices and high levels of disciplinary and other contextual expertise” (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010, p. 111). The language instructors offer a rich and illuminating philosophical and practical understanding of learning. After a long quest in finding out the best ways in teaching, we raise the question: “What is the best way to teach English as a foreign language to the Arab students?” This is a challenge and facilitates a teacher in the quest of the best way to enhance the learning experience. Furthermore, this opens up teaching to a diversity of approaches and adds richness to pedagogical researches. It entails moving away from reliance solely on approaches that simply “re-present” contents, such as lectures, contents, instructional materials and online Blackboard learning management systems, to interactive classrooms where space is created for the students to enter into their own engagement with the subject in a shared pursuit with the teacher, resulting in more effective teaching and learning. A philosophy of teaching includes a teacher’s conception of teaching and learning and an explanation of how the teacher teaches. It also includes explanation why the teacher teaches in a certain way and outlines his/her basic teaching methodology. The philosophy of teaching demonstrates that the teacher

has certain values and has been reflective about the quality of his/her teaching. My teaching philosophy is based largely on my decades learning and teaching experience.



Both as a teacher and as a learner, I appreciate the importance of individualized instruction. Since the classes are small, allowing plenty of time for one-to-one teacher/student interaction. By getting to know each student as an individual, I am able to customize instruction. This is always more satisfying for student and teacher.



The interaction and participation of my students are the vital part of my teaching philosophy. According to Vygotsky (1962, p. 22), “interaction is essential to the development of individual thought.” Firstly, to foster interaction among students in the classroom, I often initiate small group work and discussions, which give more students the opportunity to speak and can be particularly beneficial to students who are the backbenchers and are more reluctant to in front of the teacher and the students in the class. It is a fact that the students who work together also have the opportunity to learn from each other. If the students are working together and possess a team spirit will allow them for an exchange of ideas and perspectives. This helps the weaker students to learn more from their peer groups/class fellows and help these students to improve.

Secondly, I pay attention to the backbenchers who always try to hide their faces from the teachers in the class. I instruct them to shift their place of sitting in the next class in order to make them more alert in the class and let them feel that the teacher is serious and more concerned about teaching and learning and consequently about their future. This strategy gives confidence to the students in the class. At the end of a semester it was found that the weaker students improved a lot. The teacher should assure one thing in the class that all the students are given equal opportunities to interact and learn.



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I believe that interaction and motivation play one of the most pivotal roles in L2 learning. According to Long (1981), modified input and interactions that L2 learners most encounter are the ones that lead to meaningful learning and facilitate second language acquisition. In other words, through interaction learners will be more exposed to comprehensible input, which then can lead to meaningful learning of the language. However, in order to facilitate the students in the class to have active and meaningful interaction, target group's own desire to want to learn the language is necessary. Brown (2007) also states that the intrinsic motivation principle is the strongest reward that a person can have since it stems from their own needs, wants and desires, and it is self-satisfactory. For this reason, language instructor needs to develop classroom materials that can satisfy their students' own needs, wants and desires. However, it should be notified in here that even for those who are highly motivated to learn a second language at first, their motivation might not sustain. Dornyei (2000) points out that the mental process changes over time depending on various internal and external influences that the individual faces, which implies the necessity of teachers' endeavor to assist the students in maintaining their motivation.

As student of linguistics and an instructor of English language, I keep good rapport with my students. We must not have good rapport only in the class but also outside the class too. The language instructor also needs to know their students outside the classroom. This facilitates acceptance, comfort, and a safe environment for sharing and exchanging of ideas and thoughts. I learn easily my students' name and call them by their names. I have full intimacy with them in academic and non-academic matters. This creates confidence in the minds of the learners and consequently pays attention to the teacher's instruction in the class.

#### *4.1 Freedom in the Class*



At the outset, with help of the target group I create a relaxed a congenial atmosphere of teaching and learning in the classroom, where students can express ideas freely and develop their self-confidence as a student of a foreign language. Additionally, I hope that through these techniques students will find the course interesting and exciting. When students are more interested in a course, they are also more likely to be motivated to reach their learning goals. At the end, my goal in teaching is to help students to reach their language learning goals.

The teacher should be quite patience and adopt a neutral policy towards his class. He should keep himself away from any kind unnecessary arguments, justification to and fro in the class. Students who feel ashamed or defensive about their home cultures tend to clash with a teacher who they may see as attacking them or their cultural heritage. Schuman's Social Distance theory proposes a framework by which the perceived superiority or inferiority of a culture will put up obstacles to language learning and acculturation. I generally in and outside the class foster healthy student-centered cultural exchange among peers, which may reduce social distance.

A second/foreign language cannot be learned properly unless and until it is extensively used in and outside the class. I believe that students learn a language by using the language. Because of this belief, my classroom has a student-centered approach. The learners are actively involved in language use through activities, group discussions, debates, participations and games. During the course of teaching, I follow Gardners theory of multiple intelligences and relate my course description as well as my lesson plans. I believe that a variety of lesson plan activities demonstrates that a teacher embraces a variety of learning styles. Technological resources and content areas are all incorporated in teaching. Collaborative and cooperative learning is integrated into my lessons. This teaches students communication skills and the ability to work as a team.

#### 4.1.1 Gardner's Multiple Intelligences



Educational institutions have often sought to help students develop a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences provides a theoretical foundation for recognizing the different abilities and talents of students. This theory acknowledges that while not all students may be verbally or mathematically gifted, the learners may have an expertise in other areas, such as music, spatial relations, or interpersonal knowledge. Approaching and assessing learning in this manner allows a wider range of students to successfully participate in classroom learning.

It is worth to point out that Gardners theory of multiple intelligences should also be taken into account during the course of teaching. It will help the varied students who possess multi-dimensional spheres of learning as well as multi-faceted aptitude of the peer group. Howard Gardner of Harvard has identified seven distinct intelligences. This theory has emerged from recent cognitive research and "documents the extent to which students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways," according to Gardner (1991). According to this theory, "we are all able to know the world through language, logical-mathematical analysis, spatial representation, musical thinking, the use of the body to solve problems or to make things, an understanding of other individuals, and an understanding of ourselves. Where individuals differ is in the strength of these intelligences—the so-called profile of intelligences—and in the ways in which such intelligences are invoked and combined to carry out different tasks, solve diverse problems, and progress in various domains." Gardner is of the opinion that since different courses/disciplines are presented in innumerable ways so learning must be assessed and evaluated through a variety of means.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences 1) Verbal-linguistic intelligence (well-developed verbal skills and sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and rhythms of words) 2) Logical-mathematical intelligence (ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns) 3) Spatial-visual intelligence (capacity to think in images and pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly) 4) Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skillfully) 5) Musical intelligences (ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timber) 6) Interpersonal intelligence (capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations

and desires of others) 7) Intrapersonal (capacity to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes) 8) Naturalist intelligence (ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals and other objects in nature) 9) Existential intelligence (sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence such as, What is the meaning of life? Why do we die? How did we get here? (Source: 13rd ed. online, 2004). It is advisable that the language instructor try to incorporate these learning styles put forth by Gardner in his teaching. It is to be concluded that a peer group possesses distinct styles of learning and aptitude (bents of minds). It is also a fact that the educational theories, teaching strategies, and other pedagogic tools in meaningful and useful ways to better address the needs of the target group. Gardner himself asserts that educators should not follow one specific theory or educational innovation when designing instruction but instead employ customized goals and values appropriate to their teaching and students' needs. Addressing the multiple intelligences and potential of students can help instructors personalize their instruction and methods of assessment.

#### 4.2 Learners' Self-Centered Approach



I am of the opinion that students learn a L2 by using that language. This facilitates the classroom as a learners' centered approach. In such a class, the students are actively engaged in language use through many class activities, interactions, discussions, questions and answers etc. The students are interacting in the classroom with their partners and learn from each other. This is one of the important aspects of my teaching philosophy. Generally collaborative and cooperative learning is integrated into my class. This enhances the leadership quality among the students and consequently teaches students oral skills and the ability to work as a team. The researches in the past in the area of Linguistics and language pedagogy have pointed out that the students acquire interpersonal language skills at a much faster rate than the language necessary for academic success. This is why I believe in focusing on classroom language development in the classroom. Verbal interpersonal academic language skills are enhanced and encouraged through classroom discussions. However, at the same time communicative skills of the students are not ignored. Keeping in view the seriousness of the students and requirements of the target language in their future practical life situations, I give importance to "Literacy" throughout my teaching and learning programmes. This is because in today's modern, technological and global era literacy skills are pre-requisites for success in academia and society. Students read and write about various topics relating to their own wishes and desires.

My philosophy of teaching English as a second/foreign language comes from my own personal experience as a student, researcher, and teacher. My beliefs regarding teaching English as a foreign language evolve the following general ideas:

- 1) The second/foreign language should be used as much as possible in the classroom by the language instructor. The native language of the students should be avoided as much as possible. Instead of grammar translation method, direct method and audio- lingual method, total physical response method,

Eclectic method etc. should be used in the class. This way teaching will let the whole class to think in the target language.

2) The teacher should make the importance and use of the second/foreign language clear to the students.

3) The teacher should make the class full of fun and enjoyable for the students rather to make it very formal because formal class in nature gives birth to anxiety and stress among the students. The interaction of the teacher with the students in a in the classroom in a very natural way will be more interesting and meaningful. Some scholars talked about play way method for learning a target language.

4) During the course of teaching and learning the teachers should involve the students as much as possible. The teacher should make an eye to eye contact with the students in the class.

5) It is also important for the teacher to create a communicative environment in which all the students can participate and be involved in active communication such as group discussions, interacting individually to the students in terms of questions and answers activities. The activities that learners do in the classroom should be related to what the learners are supposed to be able to do with the target language in the real world.

During the course of teaching, I learn new things; I expect to constantly modify my teaching methods in a search of the most optimal way to help students acquire a new language. The ultimate goal of any student should be to effectively communicate his/her ideas in the target language. My main objective is to create a comfortable and friendly environment and to present instructional materials with enthusiasm in order to keep students engaged, by having them actively participate in the lessons, by writing on the board, by reading examples in front of the class, by having them explain ideas and grammatical concepts to the class in their own words. I told my students to avoid bookish language while writing and speaking. It promotes self-expression among students.

The present study deals with my teaching philosophy with particular reference to Reading Comprehension skill. As a student, I have come across many experienced great teachers as well as the expert of language pedagogy. In my experience, excellent teachers have to be passionate about their subject and striving to instill this same passion in their disciples. They have to establish a positive class atmosphere by investing time in building a good relationship with their students and encouraging active class participation. Moreover, teachers should not just expect respect from the students, but should treat them with the same kind of respect. The class should feel that the teachers is interested about their future. This will foster the confidence in the minds of the students about the course.

My teaching experience began in the field of Linguistics and Language Acquisition. I taught English as a second language for adult learners for 15 years. The experience not only familiarized me with different approaches to teaching language but forced me to constantly adapt my teaching methods in order to respond to the contextual needs of the students. As a result, my teaching philosophy stresses

the importance of a variety of pedagogical approaches that can be easily implemented to create an efficient and enjoyable learning environment.



My inspirations for classroom activities come from observing other teachers' classes, Workshops, Seminars and Conferences, and from inventing my own techniques based on my understanding of the students' proficiency levels.

One of the tenets of my teaching philosophy is the importance of students' interaction as well as active participation of students in the classroom. This is achieved through the development of activities that are innovatively created and implemented in the class. Some suggestions also come from the students in the class and these suggestions come directly from the students' own practical experiences and the difficulties that L2 presents to them on a daily basis. Another important aspect of my teaching philosophy is to approach language learning with the synthesis of reading, writing and speaking. Students are therefore encouraged to exercise their knowledge in different ways, providing them with greater ease in real-life situations.

I believe that as the students' abilities develop, the students can concentrate on more complicated parts of grammar and work out the finer points of language that make communication an art as well as a science. This includes improving one's listening and reading abilities (receptive skills) in addition to speaking and writing (productive skills). However, the four primary skills of language learning viz; reading, writing, speaking and listening should be part of the teaching and learning process at the outset. It is important to incorporate each of these facets into learning vocabulary and grammar. It is quite difficult task for the teachers to create student's interest in and willingness to gain the knowledge. There has to be a desire to learn and do the work that goes along with learning. I attempt to make class and interesting so that the student enjoys the learning process and in turn enjoys English. It is vital that students practice with the new language as often as possible and in as many ways as possible. This could be activities in class, watching TV in the new language, speaking/talking or writing to new friends, reading in that language, reading newspapers and magazines etc. Each different method of interaction helps the student in many ways and contributes to further cementing the language into the learner's mind. Finally, my approach to learning English is to focus on vocabulary and grammar, and to practice as much as possible in various ways. Each area of learning needs to be incorporated at the outset. There is a famous Chinese proverb "I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand".

As a teacher, I seek to help my students make this connection through improving their linguistic and communicative abilities in the target language. I believe that it is important to adapt instruction to the needs and particular contexts of students in my classrooms, and I try to selectively draw from a variety of philosophies and methods to meet these different needs. Students may have different goals for taking a course, and different learning styles, such as visual, auditory, and tactile kinesthetic learners (Gardner, 1985). Keeping in view the preceding contention I bring my own philosophy of imparting the lessons,

open a new Pandora's Box of learning in the class, and consequently let my students learn and acquire the target language in different ways such as lecture, discussion, activities, group work, etc.

#### 4.3 Interaction and Participation in the Class



Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition enabled me to answer many questions related to English as a foreign language teaching, and one of his statements that "language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill".

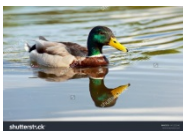
I found it correct in practical classroom situations. I follow this contention. I believe that second language acquisition requires meaningful, natural interaction and target language are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying for the mutual intelligibility. As a teacher, I keep the following points my in mind while teaching in the class.

Teaching English as a foreign language to the native speakers of Arabic requires a language instructor broad knowledge in the field of science and technology, business and computing, career and vocational education, mass media and communication, society and environment, philosophy and ethics, psychology, computer science, medicine, etiquette, literature, geography, history, culture, art, sports, recreation etc. I relate my acquired knowledge and understanding of various issues to life experiences to various topics, and I discuss those topics with my students in the classroom. Such academic activities as it was felt largely expand target group's knowledge about the world and improve their primary language learning skills. These students develop their imagination, creativity and critical thinking skills. These students study in-group and they acquire knowledge from each other.



Language is a part of our thinking, therefore, my task is to develop learners' thinking skills. I force my students to think about a question, problem and consequently try to ask my students critical thinking questions and answers at all the levels. Some of my questions can be challenging in content or in form;

some other questions and quizzes can be difficult because students' vocabulary is not rich enough. In a semester for the level-I students I prepare responses to some of the most challenging questions by using yes/no or embedded questions. I use pictures, drawings and diagrams that help students to give the correct answers in an interactive session in the class. For instance, the duck in the water, the cat under the chair is drinking milk and the farmers in the field, the mouse is eating bread, etc.



I feel that language teacher should also be good in drawings. Responses to these questions are generally right in the handout. For the students of level- 1 onward I put more emphasis on words' meanings for comprehension of the texts and passages. The students at this level show that they have understood the facts and can interpret them. Students are compelled to classify, compare, contrast and illustrate. Keeping in view the educational objectives, for the levels-7 and 8 students my teaching focuses on

drawing and directing the learners' attention to higher order ability such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. At this level, students learn to solve problems by using previously acquired skills and experience. They learn how to classify, contrast, compare and categorize these facts; in addition, they solve problems and evaluate results.

Points to consider:

1) As a student as well as a teacher of English and Linguistics, I have the utmost confidence that every student is able to strive for success in their academic performance. In order to realize that, I try my best to promote growth by employing creativity, stressing the importance of education as well as giving my students the freedom to think and discover knowledge. I provide to my students the choice of freedom of writing in writing skill paper in the form of freedom of writing. Moreover, I also encourage and appreciate that every student is unique worth for me and so ant ideas, opinion, criticism and suggestion from them should be encouraged and taken into consideration. I have strong belief that rigidity and an authoritarian of the language instructor will only create a distance between a teacher and a student. This will hinder the real progress of teaching and learning.

2) As a teacher, I will try to create a comfortable learning environment based on respect instead of fear. In order to achieve that, I must build strong rapport with my students so that all of us can learn in a conducive and congenial teaching/learning environment. A foreign language must be learnt without any stress and fear.

3) Likewise, communication is apparently an important key to an effective teaching and learning process. My students are my main priority and I am aware that each of them has different level of proficiency in the target language. I believe that by creating a student-centered learning, my students will be able to take charge of their own learning with little assistance from the teacher. This will inculcate a sense of responsibility in them in terms of achieving their learning objectives/goals.

4) As a teacher, one of my roles would have been to coach and facilitate my students throughout the learning process by providing effective materials concerned information and giving useful guidelines in order to achieve their learning target.

5) As a teacher, I am open to new ideas and suggestions therefore I would like to be more involved in educational as well as academic activities, attend educational academic talks and participate in regional, national and international seminars, workshops, extension lectures to further expand and refresh my knowledge.

6) There is a common saying that a teacher has no right to enter into his class without preparations. I have to be well prepared for every lecture, course contents, chapters etc. by planning my time and materials efficiently to ensure that a successful lesson takes place.

7) Last but not least, I encourage my students to explore every opportunity to utilize the authentic resources around their environment. In order to achieve this, I would vary my teaching styles while at the same time encouraging critical thinking skills among my students. I think that learning should not only be limited within the four walls. I will try to make my class more lectures relevant and appropriate

the class so that they can relate whatever they learn in the classroom with the “real” life situations. At the end of the day, my students should be able to have self-confidence, good interpersonal skills and knowledge applicable to day today life once they have mastered the crucial comprehension skills to survive out there.

In a time bound language educational programme, every teacher develops a philosophy, which governs his approach to the facilitation of learning. I feel that my experience as a student has greatly contributed to my learning skills as a teacher. While working in Central Institute of Indian Languages, (CIIL) Mysore-India I have been able to face and interact with so many different renowned scholars of Applied Linguistics and second/foreign language pedagogy. I also got the opportunities to attend various academic fora.

8) First, I strive to ensure that all of my class interactions are conducted on a solid basis of mutual respect. All human beings desire to be respected by their community of fellows at all levels and at all times. In my effort to minimize obstacles to learning, I seek to promote a positive, mutually supportive atmosphere in the classroom. In the foreign language classroom, for example, I will often not just introduce a new vocabulary word but discuss its etymology, morphological analysis and the way in which its meaning may have changed over time. I will also illustrate the usage of a new term with examples so that the term never seems too abstract or obscure.

### **5. Salient Aspects of My Teaching Philosophy**

In my personal philosophy of teaching, I believe that it is important to be consciously aware of the theory behind what I teach as well as the way that I teach. It is very empowering for me to understand the theories associated with my field and to be able to reflect those theories in my teaching approach. While considering second /foreign language acquisition theory, my personal teaching philosophy is based on social constructivist and critical pedagogic approaches to language acquisition. Some of the more salient aspects of my teaching philosophy include the following aspects:

- 1) The learner’s already acquired knowledge
- 2) The social functions of language
- 3) Whole language approach
- 4) Individual creativity
- 5) Maintaining rapport
- 6) Teacher self-reflection

#### *5.1 The Already Acquired Knowledge of Target Group*

It is well known fact that the students come into the classroom with little pre-existing acquired knowledge that contributes to the teaching/learning process, whether linguistics/or English. As a teacher, I attempt to discover and exploit students’ already acquired knowledge at the outset by surveying my students’ linguistic knowledge and personal experiences. Then I encourage my students to capitalize on their strengths and experiences in order to develop their English language learning



skills/abilities. For instance, I realized during my teaching in this college that the students in general do not have adequate or required knowledge of English grammar, majority of the students do not possess communicative competence in the target language. The main reason is that the students in the main English course come from poor “Madarsas” (Islamic schools) background and do not possess satisfactory skills and minimum required knowledge and competency in the target language. I therefore tend to focus more and more on grammatical aspects of English with these students and consequently spend more and more time developing communicative skills/abilities of the students in and outside the college.

### *5.2 Comprehending the Functions of Target Language in Social Contexts*

It is essential in any second/foreign language programme that a language instructor should focus on the proper and correct use of the target language both in speaking and writing. Keeping in view this particular aspect in mind, one has to devote time in discussing the various linguistic genres and discourses that exist in society and emphasize the importance of these notions during my teaching.

### *5.3 Focusing a Whole Language Approach to Teaching in the Class*



I design my lesson plans mindful of the whole language approach to language instruction by incorporating oral and written language skills into activities that encourage social interaction and are personally meaningful to my students.

### *5.4. Motivating the Students' Creativity during the Course of Teaching/Learning Process*

I believe that the quality of teaching has a significant impact on students' behaviour and motivation. Motivation is an unconscious, psychological process that varies by individual over time, and its degree usually depends on attitude. Both attitude and motivation are also social processes and they are influenced by individual experiences and cultural background of students. In my opinion, motivation can be generated through effective curriculum, good learning materials and innovative motivational teaching strategies. The teacher must gain the students' attention by supplying them with stimulating activities and using a range of teaching strategies.



Students' motivation can be a difficult task for the teacher. My students usually perceive the contents of my lessons as relevant to their objectives. I try to design learning objectives in such a way as to make them achievable and to continually build my students' confidence. I motivate students by using various strategies such as learner-centered activities, cooperative learning, informal assessments and open communication. I also explain to my students why they need to learn certain things.

There are two basic categories of problems that I usually need to solve: general problems related to communication, and specific problems related to language teaching and learning. General problems are common to teachers of all subjects: class participation, homework, complaints, cheating and sometimes behaviour management, such as aggressiveness. Specific problems are related to peculiarities of a

course: ways of teaching speaking, reading, listening, writing, material design, testing and assessment. All language teachers have to deal with both categories of problems at schools, colleges and universities.



I believe that a true learner is not satisfied until he has shared all his knowledge with his class partners and others. Teaching is a consistent, two-sided process of learning and sharing. I often learn from my students by getting feedback from them. In addition, I believe it is important for me to talk with my colleagues to get support and feedback, to learn from their experiences, to be open to new methods and strategies, and to seek out professional development opportunities at various academic platforms. In general, I think that teaching should be organized in such a way that whatever the teacher offers is perceived by his or her students as a valuable gift but not as a hard, repulsive duty.

It has been noticed in second/foreign language teaching programme that the students' creativity is normally not encouraged or promoted by the concerned teachers. The learners' potentialities must be utilized during the course of teaching and learning. This ignored aspect in particular must be given due importance in teaching and learning. As a teacher of English and Linguistics I believe that creativity is perhaps one of the most under-utilized human characteristics in the context of a foreign language learning. The language teachers must intermittently remind the students in and outside the class that creativity is an important aspect of writing and speaking. It is important in writing as a factor in paraphrasing, developing and combining ideas, bringing new ideas while writing paragraphs, essays, letters, E-mails, applications, stories and finally helps in avoiding plagiarism. This is a fact that creativity also plays an important role in oral production because even with a limited vocabulary, creative use of language will help facilitate meaning. A creative student makes his own way in communication. It also promotes a smooth functioning of the communication. The students who are creative can manage their communication goals. They can communicate their ideas and feeling in one way or other way. Keeping in view the preceding contention, I encourage my students to utilize their own hidden potentialities and use the language creatively to express themselves. It would be quite beneficial for the students in the near future. While evaluating the writing skill test papers, it was found that the strategy worked well.

## 6. Maintaining Rapport with the Students in and Outside the Class



While teaching a foreign language it is sine qua non on the part of the teacher to maintain good rapport with his students in and outside the class. The teacher-student rapport is very important in building a successful classroom environment as well as effective teaching and learning. It is advisable for the language teachers to pursue building positive relationships. A good and positive relationship is to be built with the students to maximize effectiveness of the environment of the class. In the light of the

available literatures and findings of the researches in terms of good rapport it is obvious that positive classroom rapport plays an important role in maintaining a congenial atmosphere for the teachers during teaching in the class. In Haslett's study (1976), several hundred high school students and college students ranked a set of teacher behavior aspects in order of importance. Teacher/student rapport was rated the most important factor in both the high school responses and the college responses (Haslett, 1976). The priority of analyzing student-teacher relationships has not just been because of curious researchers, however. As one study states, "an instructor's behavior dictates the type of learning environment that is constructed, the type of relationships that bloom, and the academic outcomes that students achieve" (Frisby & Martin, 2010, p. 160).

Researchers analyzing student-teacher rapport have attempted to use it to predict numerous aspects of the classroom. Instructor rapport has been shown to predict student participation, affective learning, and cognitive learning (Frisby & Martin, 2010). Researches in the future have proved that negative rapport with students will have adverse impact on teaching/learning. In such a situation a teacher cannot effectively perform in the class. Choosing to not craft positive relationships with students can lead to disruptions that would be otherwise avoidable. According to Ryan and Patrick (2001), "promoting performance goals was related negatively to social efficacy with teachers and peers, academic efficacy, and self-regulated learning, and related positively to disruptive behavior" (Ryan & Patrick, 2001, p. 448). In contrast, the positive rapport in and outside the class will definitely have a positive impact on learning as well as on the future of the students. Diero (1997) states "People like people who think highly of them. Students like teachers who think highly of them" (p. 198). This simple point effectively summarizes why an environment of positive rapport is beneficial to the classroom. Teachers in Kentucky and Russia believed students were more motivated when relationships were free of hostility and when the student believed the teacher liked them and the student liked the teacher. (Hufton, Elliot, & Illushin, 2003, p. 372). A positive classroom rapport plays a multidimensional role in the academics as well as in many spheres of student's life. In a more recent study, Sanders and Jordan (2000) found positive teacher-student rapport may have improved student school behavior, increased classroom preparation, and reduced student engagement in maladaptive behaviors (Sanders & Jordan, 2000, p. 65). Similarly, Ryan and Patrick (2001) noticed that "students' perceptions of teacher support, and the teacher as promoting interaction and mutual respect were related to positive changes in their motivation and engagement" (Ryan & Patrick, 2001, p. 437).

Rapport is an important aspect of classroom pedagogy. It is mainly concerned with the teacher-management skills rather than his/her knowledge and teaching skills.

Having been specialized in applied linguistics, I am quite familiar with theories of second language acquisition and their pedagogical applications. However, both my studies and my experiences/observations have taught me that there is no single, approach, method or idea that guarantees effective and result oriented language learning in the class. Instead, I believe there are many

ways, techniques, strategies etc. to effective teaching and learning, no one of which works for everyone.

### **7. Teachers' Self-Created Congenial Teaching/Learning Atmosphere in the Class**



A language teacher should create informal teaching/learning environment in which the learners enjoy learning and gain confidence in their own abilities. Many students feel a fear psychosis before entering into their class. The teacher must ensure the students enter the language classroom with a sense of inhibition. While it is true that students have differing levels of proficiency and ability in language learning skills, the teacher should encourage his students to participate as much as they can and to learn as much as they can. Creating simply a positive environment in the classroom is not enough to assure successful learning. Students also deserve clear explanations of the materials, and thoughtful activities and discussion. It is particularly important to set a high standard for class activities and discussion in a language class.

My teaching as well as research experiences in the area of language pedagogy guided me a number of things that teacher should try to accomplish for his students in the class. These are:

- the teacher should speak at appropriate volume in the class
- the teacher must make an eye contact with individual students
- the teacher delivers at a good pace
- the teacher apprised with the clear cut idea about the course and delivers clear explanations
- the teacher makes good use of black board including clear writing
- the teacher establishes good rapport with students in and outside the class
- the teacher encourages the students to ask questions and/or make contributions
- the teacher answers student questions' well
- the teacher appreciates the students' questions
- the teacher gives respect to all the students
- the teacher commands respect and attention of students
- the teacher organizes instructional materials and activities well in advance
- the teacher displays good understanding/knowledge of material in this area
- the teacher delivers valuable instructional materials of interest to students
- the teacher explains clearly structure of lecture or exercises in advance
- the teacher clearly states his expectations of students
- the teacher never uses a biased language.
- 

### **8. Factors Responsible for the Unsatisfactory Performance of the Students in the Target Language**

The poor performance of the students in the foreign language can be attributed to a variety of multidimensional factors. It has been observed and noticed during class instruction that there are various

factors responsible for the poor performance of the students in English as a foreign language. Some of these factors are attributed to demographic variables that pertain specifically to the target group themselves, such as gender, age, motivation, attitudes, aptitude, anxiety, autonomy, learning strategies, and learning style, most are external and outside the learners' control. These external factors are particularly represented by sociocultural factors, such as the influence of Arabic as the first language, religion, culture, and society; instructional variables, such as teacher behavior and teaching styles, the curriculum, and the teaching methods etc. The shortcomings and limitations of the technological resources also hamper the teaching and learning process. The language instructors in general feel are not satisfied with outcome of the students' performance at the end of a foreign language education programme. Nevertheless, they have been doing their level best to improve them. English students have often been described as having generally low achievement in English as a foreign language (EFL) (Al-Khairy, 2013a; Alrabai, 2014a; Alrahaili, 2013; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Elyas & Picard, 2010; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013; etc.). The government of Saudi Arabia have been doing maximum to upgrade the proficiency level of the students in English studying in colleges, Universities and other language institutions in the kingdom. Despite the enormous efforts of the Saudi government to improve English teaching and learning in the country, students' English proficiency remains unsatisfactory and far below expectations (Al-Johani, 2009; Khan, 2011; Rajab, 2013).

## 9. Reading Comprehension



Reading is an extremely important skill. It is by reading that an individual learn about different subjects from the primary level up to higher level. Reading is also an excellent way to improve the target language. Here, it is imperative to know what makes texts difficult and how a student can improve

in understanding them. The knowledge of limited vocabularies prevents students from comprehending a text.

Reading comprehension refers to the ability of an individual to read text, process it and comprehend its meaning. It is a fact that the ability of a student to understand a text is influenced by his traits and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. The understanding of the students cannot be said well unless and until they draw conclusion, significant, facts, reason for an event to occur. Thus comprehension involves combining reading with thinking and reasoning.

### 9.1 Defining Reading Comprehension

Defining Reading Comprehension was one of our first steps, and we define it as: the way students get the required information from a passage which has to be done as efficiently as possible (Grellet, 1981). The biggest problem is that when students read a text they are so worried about understanding every single word that they do not get the general idea from the passage. That is one of the reasons that led us

to want to help our students improve their reading comprehension skills. Reading must be done for two main reasons (Grellet, 1981):

- For pleasure, or for information—it means, that you only read when you have to find out information in order to do homework, research, etc.

### *9.2 Reading Comprehension Sub-Skills:*

Reading comprehension has a number of sub-skills that can be used in order to have a better comprehension of the text that do not necessarily need to follow a pattern. In other words, they can be developed in any order. These ways of reading are as follows (Grellet, 1981):

- Skimming: it means to quickly run one's eyes in a text to get the essence of the passage.
- Scanning: it means to quickly go through a text to find a certain piece of information.
- Intensive reading: it means to read shorter texts, to extract specific information.
- Extensive reading: it means to read longer texts, mainly used for one's own pleasure, and it involves global understanding.

### *9.3 Students' Difficulties in Understanding a Text/Passage*



Researchers, linguists, applied linguists and pedagogues are of different opinions so far as the difficulties of the students' comprehension of target language vocabulary is concerned. It has been a cause of disagreement among them since decades. Linguists were mainly concerned with the structures of the native and target language. They stressed in their researches that the mother tongue interference is one of the major problems in learning a second/foreign language. A language teacher must compare and contrast the structures of L1 with the structures of the L2 at various levels of language viz; phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and lexicon in order to find out the structural similarities and dissimilarities.

The publication of Robert Lado's famous book entitled **Linguistics across Cultures** in the year 1957 marks the real beginning of modern applied contrastive Linguistics. Lado on the first page of his book quotes Charles C. Fries, an American structuralist who took the lead in applying the principles of linguistic science to the teaching of English. On the role of contrastive linguistics, Fries says, "The most effective materials are those that are based upon the scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner". Lado supports this contention with the following words". Textbooks should be graded as to the grammatical structure, pronunciation, Vocabulary and cultural content. And grading can be done best after the kind of comparison." These assumptions are fully, practically confirmed and valid which come from the works of researchers and linguists who had done their research works on the effect of close contact between languages in bilingual situations. The Arab students commit mistakes in English phonology due to the interference of Arabic language, for instance English /p/ sound is replaced by Arabic /b/ sound. Arabic phonology does not contain /p/ phoneme. The Arab students need extensive drill in a Language Laboratory to overcome such phonological difficulties.

It has been practically observed that in any second language learning programme the immediate problems of the learners that a language teacher randomly comes to perceive and realize is the mother tongue interference. This interference is caused due to the structural differences between L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub>. Keeping this in view contrastive linguistics came into being. The proponents of contrastive linguistics were of the opinion that mother tongue interferes while learning a second language. This interference phenomenon has been observed more commonly at the phonological level because phonology is language specific. It is also a universal fact that no two languages have the same way of organizing their phonological features.

Lado (1955) talked about patterns of difficulty in vocabulary teaching. He highlighted key issues related to words, the native language factor and about patterns. He even analyzed Spanish, French and Mexican patterns of difficulty in their respective vocabulary items. He stated that while dealing with vocabulary one should take into account three important aspects of words—their form, their meaning and their distribution—and one should consider various kinds of classes of words in the function of the language. He said that the forms, meaning distribution and classification of words are different in different languages. He revealed that these differences might lead to vocabulary problems.

Pavicic (2003) dealt with a way to improve students' abilities to explore, store and usage of vocabulary items. He determined the role of vocabulary teaching and how a teacher could help their learners. He laid emphasis on self initiated independent learning with strategies, in which formal practices, functional practices and memorizing could be included. He said that the teacher should create activities and tasks to help students to build their vocabulary and develop strategies to learn the vocabulary on their own.

#### 9.4 Diagnosis of the Students' Difficulties in Comprehending a Text



The language teacher should diagnose the actual difficulties faced by the students in comprehending the target language text. These problems are probably as follows:

- there is a possibility that the text has innumerable unknown vocabulary
- there is a possibility the text has long, complex and complicated sentences
- there is a possibility the text is concerned about a topic the students know nothing about that
- there is a possibility the text is about a topic the students find boring
- there is a possibility the text has small print, long paragraphs, no pictures
- there is a possibility the text has not been written properly
- there is a possibility the students are feeling tired, bored and exhausted in the class
- there is a possibility the minds of the students are distracted
- there is a possibility the students don't know the important cohesion markers
- there is a possibility the students don't know why they have been asked to read a particular text

#### 9.5 Strategies to Comprehend a Text





There some important strategies that will help our students to read and understand. The teacher should make aware of their students about these. These are:

1) The students must have clear-cut objectives in mind in reading the purpose of reading a text:

The way the students read a book or a text depends very much on their reasons for reading it. The students should be enthusiastic to know an event in the said text.

2) The students must choose the appropriate reading speed: Students often take a long time to do their work because they read everything slowly and carefully. Often, however, one of the following speed-reading methods will be the best choice:

**Skimming**—this is reading a text quickly to find out what information it contains. You should skim when, for example, you want to check if a text has the information you need to answer some questions or write a project. It is often enough to look at the first (and last) sentences in each paragraph.

**Scanning**—this is reading quickly to find a specific piece of information. You should scan when, for example, you are looking for the answer to a question which you know is in the text.

3) The students must have some adequate background information: If possible the students should try to get some background information in order to supplement and enhance their comprehension. The students' background information plays an important role in understanding a text. The more background information the student has, the easier it will be to understand the text. You can sometimes get background information from the text itself. Many writers include a conclusion or summary; if you read this first, it may give you a good start.

4) The students must take into consideration the entire information available in the book: It is true that a good textbook is well organized, with titles, sub-titles, introductions, summaries or conclusions. Nowadays many textbooks also have pictures with captions. The teacher should instruct the students to look carefully all these first before reading a text.

Another aspect of good writing is that each paragraph has a topic sentence. A topic sentence is a sentence, usually the first one in a paragraph that contains the main idea of the paragraph. If you concentrate on understanding the topic sentence, this may help you to understand what comes next.

5) The students must have adequate vocabulary: Needless to say, more the students read the materials either related to his course or outside the course it will help them to improve their overall comprehension in the target language. The habit of reading itself is the best way to improve vocabulary.

6) The students should use dictionary properly and regularly: Some teachers are of the opinion that consulting dictionary all the time is not advisable at all because it takes a long time and can be very boring for the students. But teaching philosophy does not support this idea. I believe that the students should be instructed in the class intermittently about the significance of consulting the dictionary on a regular basis.



7) The students should learn the cohesion markers that organize text: When the students read the texts in their social science books, they will find that most good writers organize their writing with cohesion markers (also called transition words). These are words that connect different parts of the writing and help writers structure their thoughts. If they learn the important cohesion markers, they will find it easier to understand the text. The important cohesion markers: also, therefore, except, unless, however, instead, (al) though, furthermore, moreover, nevertheless, on the other hand, as a result, despite, in conclusion.

#### *9.6 The Students Must Choose the Right Place to Read*



A student cannot read in the same room with the television, videos along with his family members distracting him. They should try to find a peaceful and comfortable place with adequate light along with dictionaries and other learning materials nearby.

#### *9.7 Reading Habits*



Reading habit plays very important role in comprehending a text. The more the students read the more they comprehend a particular. I encourage and force my students to read and write a text every day as a strategy for enhancing their reading skill. Furthermore, I also tell them that while reading the students must consult the words' meaning in a dictionary. The emphasis is given in contextual comprehension of words' meanings. In this way, they can improve their reading comprehension skill as well as writing skill.

### **10. Significance of Learning Vocabulary in Language Learning**

"The limits of my language are the limits of my mind. All I know is what I have words for"—Ludwig Wittgenstein

Vocabulary is an essential component for successful communication in the second language classroom. While grammar is important, a lack of vocabulary may result in complete failure to convey a message. The Students' vocabulary is linked strongly to academic success because students who have large vocabularies can understand new ideas and concepts more quickly than students with limited one. The high correlation in the research literature of word knowledge with reading comprehension indicates that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). Comprehension is far more than recognizing words and remembering their meanings. However, if a student does not know the meanings of a sufficient proportion of the words in the text, comprehension in the target language is impossible. Vocabulary experts agree that adequate reading comprehension depends on a person already knowing between 90 and 95 percent of the words in a text (Hirsch, 2003).

The researches in the past regarding vocabulary teaching concluded that there is no prescribed method exist for the purpose. The language teacher either impart in the class directly or indirectly. National

Reading Panel (2000) in its analysis found that there is no one best method for vocabulary instruction and that vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly.

Direct instruction means teaching specific words, such as pre-teaching vocabulary prior to reading a selection. Another example of direct instruction involves the analysis of word roots and affixes (suffixes and prefixes). It is concerned with morphology (formation of words in a language). However, one cannot teach students all of the words they need to learn. Vocabulary instruction must therefore also include indirect instruction methods, such as exposing students to lots of new words and having them read a lot. Indirect instruction also includes helping students develop an appreciation for words and experience enjoyment and satisfaction in their use (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003).

Vocabulary also can be learned incidentally in the context of storybook reading or in listening to others. Learning words before reading a text also is helpful. Techniques such as task restructuring and repeated exposure (including having the student encounter words in various contexts) appear to enhance vocabulary development. In addition, substituting easy words for more difficult words can assist low-achieving students”.

## 11. Strategies for Reading Comprehension



To summarize, Researches in the past have identified six main individual components of reading comprehension strategies that are beneficial to the students. These are:

- 1) Prediction
- 2) Prior knowledge
- 3) Text structure
- 4) Visual representations
- 5) Summarization and
- 6) questions/questioning

Language is our primary communication tool. The most important part of that is getting a message from one person to another. I believe that in learning a language, vocabulary is one of the first and foremost things to learn, as well as one of the first things to focus on. It is imperative to point out here that meanings of the words must be learned in accordance with the appropriate contexts. Focusing on acquiring the words' meaning is my prime concern during my teaching. The idea is that the students cannot understand a text/passage without knowing the meanings of the difficult words. That is why before teaching a lesson I write as homework on the blackboard “Read the chapter 2 for instance carefully and underline the difficult words and then write their meanings from the dictionary”. The students also enjoy while consulting the dictionary in the class and at home. The second aspect is concerned with the proper pronunciation of the text/passage. The students are told intermittently in the class for the proper pronunciation of words, for which they are instructed to see the phonetic transcriptions given in the gloss in the dictionary. Moreover, the students are reminded on a regular

basis to be attentive and listen carefully when the teacher is reading a lesson in the class. The backbenchers are also reminded to sit in front of the seat and listen the teacher carefully. The other aspects like grammar are also given due importance.

### *11.1 Multi-Dimensional Aspects of Reading*

It is a fact that the more the students read, the more vocabulary they acquire. The quantities of the reading materials are strongly associated to the students' vocabulary knowledge. It is a fact that the students learn new words by encountering them in text, through their own reading. The teacher should encourage the students to read more and more reading materials apart from the prescribed textbooks so that they could find more opportunities for such encounters while reading. This will help in improving the students' vocabulary building and knowledge, which in turn improves their ability to read more complex text. "In short, the single most important thing you can do to improve students' vocabulary is to get them to read more." (Texas Reading Initiative, 2002). The students should read different types of texts at different levels, including text that is simple and enjoyable, and some that is concerned with their day today lives viz; newspapers, magazines etc.

### *11.2 Multiple Exposures to Words*

The growth of word knowledge is slow and incremental, requiring multiple exposures to words (Hirsch, 2003; Stahl, 2004). This does not mean simply repeating the word and a definition or synonym, but encountering the words in different contexts. How are words learned incrementally over multiple exposures? Every time we encounter a word in context, we remember something about the word. As we encounter a word repeatedly, more and more information accumulates about that word. "Vocabulary knowledge seems to grow gradually moving from the first meaningful exposure to a word to a full and flexible knowledge" (Stahl, 1999).

A student's knowledge of a word is beyond its definition. He also knows the multi-dimensional functions as well as the semantic offshoots of that word. Knowledge of a word includes knowing how it sounds, how it is written, how it is used as a part of speech, and its multiple meanings (Juel & Deffes, 2004). Stahl (2003) makes the distinction between definitional knowledge (similar to that included in a dictionary definition), and contextual knowledge (understanding how a word's meaning adapts to different contexts). In order to fully learn a word and its connotations, a student needs multiple exposures to the word in different reading contexts.

### *11.3 Direct Vocabulary Instruction*

The teacher while teaching reading comprehension in the class should promote "word consciousness" and familiarity with immense of words among the students. The word consciousness means having an interest and awareness of the words. Word consciousness involves awareness of word structure, including an understanding of word parts and word order. Students need to become aware of how written language is different from everyday conversation by drawing their attention to the distinctive structures of written language such as compound and complex sentence structures, phrasing within

sentences, how punctuation is used to signal phrasing, and paragraph structure. Word conscious students enjoy learning new words and engaging in word play (Texas Reading Initiative, 2002).

The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that vocabulary instruction leads to gains in reading comprehension, a finding that is not surprising given the strong relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension ability (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Effective techniques include direct instruction in specific words, pre-reading instruction in words, and learning of words in rich contexts, learning to use strategies to determine word meanings, and learning of words incidentally through wide reading. The Panel reported that words studied should generally be those the learner will find useful in many contexts. Also, repeated exposure to words in authentic contexts is helpful as is active engagement in learning words (National Reading Panel, 2000).

#### *11.4 Analyzing Word Structure: Teaching Word Parts*

When students encounter unfamiliar words they can use knowledge of (Morphology) word -formation (structure of the word, root words, suffixes and prefixes) to help determine the meaning. This is especially true when reading content textbooks because these texts often contain many words that are derived from the same word parts. For example, the Greek root “bio” (meaning “life, living organisms”) reappears again and again in our day to day life (e.g., biology, biologist, biosphere, biodegradable, biochemical, biofuel, biohazard). Another example is the prefix “mono” (meaning “one, alone, single”). If students are familiar with the meaning of the prefix “mono”, the prefix “poly” (meaning “many”), and the base word “theism” (meaning “belief in the existence of a god or gods”), they can determine that the difference between “monotheism” and “polytheism” is the difference between believing in only one god or many gods. Morphology is one of the branches of linguistics. It facilitates in comprehending the soul of the language and its structure.

Morphological analysis of a word draws the student’s attention to the individual units of meaning in the word, also known as morphemes. A free morpheme, or root word, can stand alone (e.g., cut), while a bound morpheme needs to be attached to another morpheme (e.g., -ing, un-), and two free morphemes can combine to form a compound word (e.g., airplane) (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004).

#### *11.5 Effective Use of a Monolingual Dictionary*

The teacher should familiarize the students how to effectively use a dictionary. In the past, the practice of having students look up words, write down meanings/definitions, and memorize those meanings/definitions was the main strategy teachers used to teach vocabulary. At present we now know that having students follow this practice is one of the least effective strategies. The students now acquire the words and its meaning/definition in a multi-dimensional ways for instance accidental vocabulary learning through face book, twitter, mobile, I pad, I phones etc. In fact, there is a great deal of research showing that children cannot use conventional definitions to learn words (Scott & Nagy, 1997). That does not mean that students should not use dictionaries. I am of the opinion that the teacher should compel and encourage the students to use the dictionary as much as possible. The usage of a dictionary should be given priority in acquiring infinite words in the target language. At the same the

students must be taught how to use a dictionary and choose the right definition. Students may be confused by different meanings for the same word, or the wording in a dictionary entry may be too difficult to read or understand.

As noted earlier, to remember the meaning of a new word, it is better for students to reword the definition in their own words, to identify synonyms and antonyms for the word, to use the word in their own meaningful sentence, and to recognize that the word may be used differently in other contexts. The key thing to remember about using a dictionary is that research supports combining both the definitions of new words with the context in which the words are used (Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 2002).

#### *11.6 Summarization Facilitates in Comprehending the Texts*

Teaching students to summarize what they read is another way to improve their overall comprehension of text. Dole, Duffy, Roehler and Pearson (1991). Interestingly, research suggests that instruction and practice in summarizing not only improves students' ability to summarize text, but also their overall comprehension of text content. Thus, instruction in summarization can be considered to meet dual purposes: to improve students' ability to summarize text and to improve their ability to comprehend text and recall.

#### *11.7 Questions/Questioning*

We know that asking different types of questions associated with the students' understanding and recall of text, with the overall finding that students' understanding and recall can be readily shaped by the types of questions to which they become accustomed (Levin & Pressley, 1981; Rickards, 1976).

#### **Concluding Remarks, suggestions and some Recommendations:**



The discussions in the preceding section lead us to the conclusion that the language instructors and students of EFL may have overlapping and at times divergent perceptions about their teaching philosophies. I have developed my teaching philosophy based on my own observations and experiences, first as an undergraduate and postgraduate student and later as an instructor. I have concluded that our teaching and learning environment need a fundamental makeover. Furthermore, I am convinced that educators have the responsibility to reveal to their students their true inner beauty and inculcate in them a sense of pride in whatever they strive to achieve. In a foreign language education programme, programme my philosophy of teaching focuses that students are entitled to quality instruction in an active and stimulating learning environment. Students should experience frequent and repeated opportunities to act, react, and interact with each other in and outside the class. Language instructors' expertise, vision and wisdom are the most important resources for effective English language teaching. The pedagogical tendencies that have characterized second/foreign language teaching have been profuse and varied. As Stern (1983) points out, "The conceptualization of language teaching has a long, fascinating, but rather tortuous history", which Brown (1994) portrays as the "changing winds and shifting sands of language teaching".

The main purpose of a course in foreign language is to help the students use it in day today life accurately, fluently and appropriately for purposes of a successful communication through the development of primary language learning skills, the mastery and command of language elements, the growth of communicative competence, the inculcation of literary skills and the development of study skills. The very purpose of teaching English are modest and utilitarian. However, it has been noticed that the students at graduation level in general are not capable of accomplishing the prescribed learning goals in the target language. It is recommended here that the syllabus must be framed in accordance with the competency level of students. The natural learning is somewhere vanishing. There is a possibility that there may be some non-linguistic factors that are affecting the whole language learning processes. This indicates that the language instructors in general must speculate and give serious thought to the overall competence and proficiency of the students in the concerned language in order to ensure the better functioning of foreign language educational programme as well as the brighter future of the students. The students are the backbone of a country. Healthy teaching and learning will definitely give birth to healthy nation

Teaching a foreign language is an art and science. The language instructor should be speculative and self-evaluator about merits and demerits of his teaching and learning. The self-evaluation of one's own teaching methods, strategies, techniques are the essential aspects of the teaching and learning and will guide the teachers in the right direction. The teacher should be innovative in all respects and his efforts should always be to bring consistently and constantly the new ideas in the class in accordance with the level and standards of his peer group.

It is a fact that language instructors experience target group resistance when they introduce an instructional activity in the classroom. The students who are well motivated in learning want more opportunities to participating in free conversations, expressing their wish towards a more communicatively oriented approach. On the other hand, those that are not well motivated would prefer more emphasis on the traditional way of teaching and learning. The teacher should make a balance between them.

I believe that the teacher is teaching philosophy is under the process of continuous change during the course of teaching and learning. It will not remain static. I anticipate that my teaching philosophy will shift and adapt as I gain more experience in teaching English as a second/foreign language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Keeping in view the preceding contentions I expect that students will make significant progress in learning their target language, and their attitudes toward academic learning and the target language culture will remain positive.

Having been taught English and Linguistics for decades I have concluded that, regardless of one's own teaching and learning backgrounds, a teacher needs to keep an open mind about the different teaching approaches, methods, and techniques. I believe that as I gain more knowledge and awareness of application of latest technological resources in the foreign language pedagogy in teaching English and

Linguistics, my teaching philosophy will continue to evolve for the better in the near future for the my beloved students in the University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia.

I think all second/foreign language teachers would agree that we share a common desire and goals to help our students learn and understand whatever we impart in the class. I also think that each teacher should find a way to do this that fits with his discipline, while considering the needs and goals of the students. This is true whether the class at hand is a Level one or Level 8, or an advanced linguistics course. Being a teacher in the department of English, Faculty of Science and Arts-Bisha I adopt and use different strategies in accordance with the levels of students and different teaching situations. Furthermore, during teaching and learning my prime focus from the beginning to the end not only improving students' basic communicative skills but also teach and prepare them in such a way that they should be adjusted/fitted in their real/practical life situations in their future endeavor. Needless to say, as a student /teacher of English and Linguistics I noticed in the classroom that it is pre-requisite for an instructor to demonstrate enthusiasm for the target language from the beginning to the end, as the instructor's attitude directly affects the students.

Finally, as teaching is a process, not an activity, my teaching philosophy offers an invaluable reflective view on "how to" strive for the quality-based teaching in the class and consequently instructional improvement through remedial teaching materials. With these brief deliberations, I hope that my colleagues will express their valuable and intellectual comments so that I could I incorporate them in further editing and modifying the present research paper. I tried my level best to contain my personal teaching experiences in this paper. Your comments and suggestions will be highly appreciated. The present paper is by no means comprehensive and there are some limitations which may be addressed in the near future studies.

At finally yet importantly the students in general in Saudi Arabia need special attention with the cooperation of all the concerned persons from the grassroots level to the higher level. The competence of the students in the target language demands a systematic, extensive, and careful treatment of the underlying causes and contributing factors of this phenomenon. The academicians and language instructors are required to look into these issues from their own perspectives and do the maximum and best for the improvement of the language competency. A nation cannot progress in its true sense unless and until the quality-based education is provided to the young generation. These generations are the backbone of their own country. The experienced and qualified teachers are sine qua non to accomplish this task. The policymakers in the country must lay the cornerstone for necessary changes in Saudi EFL education outside the classroom and then move these changes into the classroom for implementation by teachers and learners.

The deliberations in this paper will definitely draw the attention of policy makers, curriculum planners, syllabus framers, linguist, educationists, experts of language pedagogy textbook writers, language teachers and whosoever associated with the foreign language education programme. It is hoped that the author's viewpoints, arguments, concluding remarks and suggestions in this study would be in the

wider interest of the country. This in turn will hopefully help them better evaluate the ongoing foreign language education programmes in a broader perspective. Keeping in view the low achievements of language learning-teaching scenario we may conclude that the foreign language education programme in its totality needs a fresh look the way in which it is going on at present. It also demands that the educationists as well as the expertise available in the area of language evaluation in the country to review, reformulate and thereafter give a serious thought to the whole on-going teaching, learning and evaluation process within the domain and perspectives of testing and evaluation in particular if we are to provide a quality based language education to the people.

The contents of the English language syllabi need revision and reformulations in accordance with the level of the students as well as the kinds of contents required for the better improvements and mastery of all the four primary skills of language learning and lower order skills at the initial stage and later on to develop the higher order skills.

There is a need for consistent and relentless efforts to address the problems of the learners in the existing foreign language educational system. For the general awareness of the common people, the government should initiate some foreign language learning awareness programme in the educational institutions on a regular basis. The aim and objective such programmes should be to spread the message of the importance of English in the scientific era. English is the world's most widely spoken language and is the language of science, technology, politics, and world business. In order to make contact with the people of this world we must acquire this language for the betterment of the Arab society.

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