The Basic Principles of Learning English

Arturo G. Palaming

Head, English General Requirement Unit Department
Sur University College
Sultanate of Oman

Abstract: Although opinions differ regarding the many aspects of learning English – how it takes place, what the best means of promoting it are, and many other matters pertaining to it, it is an accepted fact that learning does not take place. That learning English does not take place is universally and unanimously agreed. Learning English occurs in and out of school in all working hours, and is continuous from birth until the death of any normal individual. Psychologists have come to agree that trial-success learning, conditioning, and insight are valuable as phase of the learning process if and when they are used appropriately. It is certain that all learning has to do with change going on within the organism. How these changes are facilitated depends in great measures upon the goal or, the purpose of the learner and the differentiation and integration of the factors of learning situation that make possible the attainment of the desired goal. The achievement of worthy outcomes, whether these are the forming of connections or habits, changing behavior, or the developing of insight or understanding, is not dependent upon the realization of any one point of learning but upon the application of the principle that fit a specific learning situation. Although each of the different theories of learning English gives somewhat different explanations of the learning process, they have all certain elements in common. From the different studies and theories formulated were developed general principles governing learning which are fundamental to teachers and teaching. In other words, the different theories of learning English point to important goal – that is growth of the student in terms of integrated knowledge or behavior, understanding skills, and attitudes. They are essentials and tools to the student’s growth and development.

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The concept of new learning English may be better understood if explained in terms of learning principles rather than in a set off laws or fixed methods and procedures. From the different studies and theories formulated were developed general principles governing learning English which are fundamental to teachers and teaching. Principles of learning English are guides to the effective operation of conception of learning. Some of the guiding principles of learning English which are fully well established and quite important in teaching.

Learning English as an association process – the oldest and most common method of studying the process of learning is through a study of the association of ideas, stimuli, and responses. Even the ancient Greek attempted to describe mental life in this fashion. Aristotle considered learning English as an association of ideas following the laws of similarity, contrast, and contiguity. He believed that people learn and remember those things which are alike, which are striking because of their difference and which occur together in space and time. Association as a method of learning English and remembering continues as an ever present part of education. Parents teach their children to associate spoken words, letters with sounds, words with ideas, and ideas with each other. If one were to compose a list of all school activities during the day, a good part of them would be characterized by kind of associative activity. As a matter of fact, the very newest forms of automated teaching and programming of information rely heavily upon this basic view of how learning English takes place. Not until the turn of the present century, however, did learning as a process of association, received experimental analysis.

Learning English as an active or dynamic process - Learning English takes place only through self-activity. This statement is based on the theory of self-activity by Froebel – that one learns only through his own self-activity. A student learns to do a thing by actual doing, not by memorizing the rules or by watching others. In other words, we do not learn singing, oratory, or painting, by standing as passive witnesses. The individual learns exactly the reactions he practices, or he learns what he experiences. It can be stated, therefore, that the learning process is essentially experiencing, reacting, doing, and understanding. The recognition of the principles of self-activity shifts the focus of...
thought from external factors to the learner himself. The principle does not demand activity alone, but all sided activity of the whole self. The principle of self-activity is the great and fundamental principle in all education. Self-activity is a requirement of all learning and of all mental, physical, emotional, and growth and development. The speed is in direct proportion to the amount of activity that is aroused during the process; hence, it can be established that action promotes learning. This principle requires that students should participate in planning, executing, and evaluating tasks. It is on this fact that activity programs in school are based. To be effective, learning English must be an active process regardless of the philosophy of the school, whether progressive or traditional. Directing student-learning experiences is the teacher’s major responsibility. The creative teacher will never be so naive as to assume total responsibility for formulating, explaining, and illustrating the so-called learning experiences. As a general principle, it can be said that learning English is best when it utilizes the theory of self-activity. Learning is an active, dynamic, and adjustable process.

**Learning English is a process of integration.** Learning is best when integration occurs in the learning process. Integration is a process which operates in the unifying of separate items into a perceptual whole. Through integration, related experiences are organized or tied together into bonds of greater meaningfulness. It includes the ability to perceive similarities and to organize dynamic system into a unified whole. Some learning products are themselves an integration of similar elements. However, it can be said that integration alone is not the whole of learning. Integration takes place concurrently with differentiation. Integration and differentiation are not independent processes that operate separately without regard to the other processes. Differentiation is one part of learning – a kind of preparatory process during which the learner is engaging in the process of integration. The function of differentiation is to distinguish meaning from parts or situation in order to promote understanding from parts or situation in order to promote understanding. Discovering relationships between the situations is an important aspect of the integrating process. The more effective the integration, the more functional will the learning is. The teacher must select appropriate learning experiences of the students to associate learning into a larger and larger whole. Learning English tends to unify individual experiences because the learner acts as a unit in his learning. The past experiences help by furnishing organized materials, concepts, meaning and relations through the process of integration.

**Learning English is a process of growth and not apart from development.** This principle is based on the philosophy of John Dewey “that education is growth; and on Gestalt theory ‘that learning is a process of development”. Learning is one kind of growth which involves progressive improvement in behavior and which results from experience and maturation. Growth is a product of the interaction of the organism with its environment. The child grows as a whole, as unified organism, as an individual in a world of things, people, and ideas. Education and learning are aspects of growth in physique, mentality, emotional control, and social personality. Modern psychology holds that growth of the child from birth to adulthood is a continuous and gradual process that cannot be divided into separate stages. Although growth is continuous it may be somewhat more rapid at certain stages than at others. For examples, the child during the first year of his life grows in height more rapidly than in any subsequent one year period. Development therefore is not a uniform process that is general in character but rather the composite of the whole series of specific growth processes. Thorndike stated that the capacity to modify responsible is a general characteristic of a whole life process and that the capacity continuous throughout adult life with only a slight lessening in degree.

**Learning English is goal-seeking or purposeful.** Purpose or goals is essential to all effective learning. Goal-seeking is one of the dynamic factors in learning. Real learning takes place only when the learning situation fills a need to satisfy a purpose of the learner and goals that constantly give direction and destination to the learning activity. When the learner has a knowledge and understanding of the goals to be achieved, he will know how to direct his energies and attention to realize them. Goals which are clearly stated and defined improve both efficiency and motivation. Learning English to be effective must be related to needs, wants, interest, and desires. Each normal child is capable of learning anything which is related to the attainment of personal goal. This goal can be object which serves to satisfy some psychological drive, or it may be merely that attainment of some situation possessing secondary value. Both the teacher and the students should have knowledge of the goals to be achieved in any learning situation. It is, therefore, necessary for the teacher to do her utmost to make the goal evident whenever possible. The goal, in order to be most advantageous, should be purposeful. Goal-seeking is a legitimate aspect of learning. This principle centers the purpose in the learner rather than in the teacher. To form purposes and act upon them is inherent in all desirable learning. The goal to be accomplished must be clear and understood by the students. Only when the goals and related means are clear can the individual anticipate the probable consequences of the action. Thus the teacher must work with student goals or purposes if more desirable learning is to be achieved. Since all learning is goal-seeking, it seems evident that each student is capable of learning anything which he can relate to the achievement of a personal goal.
Learning English is creative. Creativeness is defined as the ability to express oneself through writing, the arts and crafts, music, or other media of expressions. Under this concept all children are endowed with creative ability to some degree, and this potential is capable of development through learning experiences favorable to creative expressions as desirable aim of education, and strives to guide children into learning situations which will stimulate creative thinking and doing. Learning is effective when the child free to create his own responses to the situation he faces. This creativeness is a characteristic of all human learning regardless of the inherited capacity of the individual. An individual facing a life situation is the capacity of the individual. An individual facing a life situation is the primary unit in the learning process. When the individual is free to make his own originality, then and only then will creativeness be possible. It can be concluded that an individual learns best when he is free to create his own responses in the situation he faces. The individual or student facing a life situation is the primary unit of learning. A child’s conception of meeting a situation is always looking into it, never back upon it. Facing it means that it is before him. It is not a thing of the past. In other words, he grapples with the total situation until such time as the refinement of goals leads to more purposeful behavior movements. Working one’s way through a situation in these circumstances is creating, since no previously learned behavior patterns can never be used without modification. The creativeness is a characteristic of all human learning.

Learning English is a process of discovering and exploring – Learning achieves effective results by a process of exploration and discovery. It starts with the desire to reach a solution to a problem at hand. It proceeds by an experimental, intelligible, varied attack in the endeavor to achieve the wish for a solution. In other words, learning English is an affair of discovering and seeing the point that one wants to discover and see. It must be remembered that learning is not caused by brute repetition. Experiments have shown that the degree of learning English achieved has surprisingly little relationship to the number of repetition. A great deal of repetition of facts learned goes without producing any learning anymore ever does is accomplished by exploration and discovery under the urge of strong desire or will to learn. Learning depends on will. Halfhearted learning, or learning without push, can never yield authentic results. It has been shown experimentally that aroused will will learn has a transforming effect on learning.

Learning English is understanding – The goal of effective learning English is understanding. Purposeful and functional learning is well aided by meaning and understanding derived from experience. To experience is to attach meaning. Learning itself is a quest for, and discovery of meaning. All effective learning culminates in some kind of insight or understanding. The meaning attached to any situation comes from experience related to it. This principles call for the use of student’s past experience or background in learning. All earning should go on in meaningful situations and should point toward results in terms of understanding and clarification of meaning. The business of effectiveness teaching is to organize learning situations and classroom activities in which learning will be as meaningful as possible. The process of learning English is always an attempt to solve problems by grasping relationship, or by understanding. Whenever learning goes on effectively, its outcome is control brought about by an understanding of intelligent response. The teacher should always try to help the learner to achieve the best possible understanding. Likewise, learning should be organized so that the outcome will understand. Likewise, learning should be organized so that the outcome will be understood.

Learning English is a social process, integrating self with environment – Learning is the best when it is made a social process, integrating self with environment. In varying degrees each person influences others, and vice-versa. This principle is based on the philosophy of Spencer who said “that education is a social process and should therefore aim toward individual development and social efficiency. Each individual is a part of the whole which is of paramount importance. The aim of education must be broad enough to include both the welfare of the individual and the good of society. The true principle of learning can be evolved from an analysis of the meaningful relation of the learner and the materials of learning to the situation in which learning usually occurs. Effective learning requires a rich environment, replace with experiences. The child needs play, constructive manual activities, aesthetics activities and social activities, including the study of social life in all its aspects. Effective education furnishes the controlled environment for favorable growth and development. Environment influences the extent to which potential is realized. In order to control learning and make it productive, the teacher must control the environment in which it takes place. The school environment must be structured and controlled so that the important factors become meaningful and stimulating aspects of the teaching-learning situations. Because the teachers have not carefully considered the environment aspects of teaching and learning, many of them tend to overlook some of the most important aspects of daily instruction. The teachers have responsibility of meeting the social needs of the students. The teacher should put more emphasis in the development of desirable social attitude and emotional control that will contribute to their being adjusted and contended citizen of a democratic society.

Learning English transferable – Good learning transfers. Transfer depends on identical elements...
that are comprehended; that is upon meaning. The deeper and more comprehensive the meaning is, greater also is the transfer of learning. Rich meaningful learning transfers by its own momentum. Teaching for transfer must be concerned with the kind of responses desired and the areas of living in which their use is anticipated. This principle states that the teaching effectiveness is improved by selecting learning experiences similar to life situations in which learning take place. The rules of transfer ability apply to making learning functional in life as well as making its functional in the out-of-school life. The nearer school life is to real life the more surely will the good reaction transfer to life. Transfer is always the hope and invention of learning. There is no sharp distinction between transfer and application. If one cannot apply, use, or transfer what is supposed to have been learned, then surely that learning is a failure. Conversely, if one can transfer, use or apply what one has learned, this is the best proof that learning has taken place The crucial test of all learning is transferability to a functional situation. It can be said that the failure of transfer is the failure of learning. The teacher is the motivating force in effecting transfer of learning to the students. Likewise, the teacher has responsibility of selecting learning materials and the method of teaching that will bear some resemblance to later use. If transfer is to be accomplished, then both the teacher and the learner must meet some responsibilities.

**Learning English depends on context** – The effectiveness of learning depends largely on its context. The context of learning is the setting of learning materials in which it goes on. The right setting of learning materials is of vital importance for good learning. A good context for learning must be one with which the learner dynamically and strongly interacts. It must engage his interest, his will, and his active purpose. Studies have shown that an aroused will to learn has a transforming effect on learning. In other words, learning depends on will. The acquisition of a concept requires a context of actual concrete experience. The real point of concrete experience is when it gives the learning something to work and experience with something that can command his will and energy, and still keep his processes under control. Modern teaching makes a great deal of the principle of context, and one of its greatest contributions is the discovery of the ways and means of applying the principle in the best possible way. Such teaching is often considered different in kind from the routine of the textbook assignments and recitation which are the staple organization of the conventional school. Modern teaching should make use of the principle of context if effective learning is desired. To accomplish this objective, the context for learning must be organized in a setting of concrete experiences. The students will learn only what they feel a strong need to know and put to use.

**Learning English is a cooperative process** – An individual learns the best when he can share cooperatively in selection, organization, and management of the learning experiences with his classmates under the guidance of the teacher. Children of all ages welcome the opportunity to share in the selection, organization, and management of their own learning, or living. All schools which are sensitive to the needs of their students promote to the fullest this condition of good learning. The ability to manage one’s affairs intelligently is important for everyone, young or old. It is a condition of good learning that students be given more opportunity in planning and organizing their own school programs under the direction and guidance of the teacher. In this way they will learn the meaning and values of cooperative interaction between groups.

**Learning English is a process of change** – Learning is the heart of the educational enterprise. Learning is more important that attractive school building, administrative policies, integrated curricula, or even a happy teaching staff. The school may provide the facilities but after all, it is the students who will do the learning. Unless they learn, the program and personnel of the educational system have failed, and amount only to sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol. There is remarkable agreement upon the definition of learning as being reflected in a change in behavior as the result of experience. But we do need to know the conditions under which learning occurs, and the best means of maximizing desirable learning.

**References:**