

**Report for UGC DEB Mini Project  
Titled:**

**Learning Strategies in ELT**

**FY 2015-2016**

**Principal Investigator:**

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**School of Humanities**

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**Placed before The Officer-in- Charge, School of  
Humanities for kind perusal.**

*S. Bandyopadhyay*  
31st March 2017

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Mini Research Project in ELT - 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Memo no AC/ 650 dt 03-03-2016.

No of Projects Undertaken – 1 (2015-2016)

Project Cost – Rs 25000/-

Actual date of commencement – May 2016

Due date/ Actual date of completion – April 2017

Project Report: Topic: **Learning Strategies in ELT**

**Abstract**

The project is on *Open and Distant learning*, (concerned with area no iv, 'Learning Strategies', specified by UGC-DEB), i.e., identification and generalization of learning strategies of individual distant learners. The project mainly based on survey method includes observations of the individual learner for the academic year 2016-2017.

Reflections on practical teaching and teaching-learning experiences of the learners are included for the NSOU ELT students.

Today, language teachers at secondary level manage large multilevel classes (100-125 students) and research on learning strategies is a necessity for generalizing the patterns of language acquisition, which can complement the learners from every batch. Since the methodology adopted is sample survey, the learners were asked to fill in information in the questionnaires specifically designed for the purpose at different junctures of the learning process. In order to have a sense of progress in the learning process and identify one's own learning strategy the learners were asked to keep diaries of the courses and reflect on their learning experiences.

The information gathered from the survey would be classified into what the students can and cannot perform in English. The conclusion is based on data-led and evidence-based reflections of the research. The research seeks to explore how learning strategies can be more effective and how it can make a difference in terms of 'good language learning'. The research would encourage a data-led approach as professional data along with appropriate tools for aiding and promoting practitioners.

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**Introduction**

The research on Learning strategies in ELT was conducted on NSOU ELT students of the academic year 2016-2017 and 2015-2016 in the courses MAELT Part –I, MAELT Part – II, DELT and CEC. Data was collected through the questionnaire (attached at the end of the report), classroom observation, classroom participation and Student feedbacks. The data was then analyzed according to their frequency of occurrence and measured according to mean and standard deviation. The responses from the learners and data on learner's perspective highlight the following:

1. The Autonomous learner
2. Strategic support in bilingual ELT classes at different proficiency levels
3. The role of the teacher – less than that of an instructor – more than that of a facilitator
4. Intrinsic motivation – self study and self access
5. Strategies for content learning

**The autonomous learner** – Autonomous learning is an integral part of ODL, a strategy which learners from the formal mode are introduced to at the beginning of the programs. At NSOU, ELT learners make decisions on learning goals, learning methods, learning progress and learning achievement. The **Learning goals** which are aimed mostly are: a) to be able to carry out English Language Teaching in a most effective way, b) to discover better ways of teaching English, c) to improve English language skills and communication skills, d) to get a better teaching job, e) to enhance teaching skills, f) to learn more about English language, g) to acquire knowledge for research work in future, h) to acquire professional skills, i) to get employed, and j) to acquire knowledge for opening a language study center in future.

**Learning methods** or strategy preferences matching the learning needs. For ELT, the application of the learning is in different contexts, where the learner has the autonomy to make decisions on the learning of many others. For this reason, the strategy preferences for personalized learning techniques are: i) practice on sample language interactions and situational dialogue for verbal interaction, ii) cooperative learning in small groups, iii) participations in group discussions (within the classroom context), iv) participation in reflective activities (on what's learned through google group), v) listening to lectures in PCPs, vi) utilizing multimedia resources (watching audio-visual resources), vii) create a plan for learning (collecting reference material, asking clarification questions), and viii) rote learning (memorization).

In order to shift from 'teacher dependent' learner to autonomous learner, learners are encouraged for independent thinking. In the process, they adopt measures for their **Learning progress**, such as the following: i) interactions with peers on classroom activities, ii) reading course materials, iii) creating visual pictures to support

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understanding, iv) evaluating the clarifications on course content, v) preparing on the performance in an activity. The autonomous learner includes a plan to monitor self learning or focuses on **Learning achievement**. This includes a) evaluating how well a particular content has been learnt, b) exposure to the new concepts and ideas about language while working with language forms and patterns, and notice their form, meaning and use.

**2. Strategic support in bilingual ELT classes at different proficiency levels** – students with different learning strategy provide support to the development of strategies for learning in a multilevel class. The ELT class is generally multileveled because of the different teaching contexts of the learners. The class medium is bilingual (English and Bengali), where the percentage of use for the good learner is 80% and 20%. An important step is planning ones learning. From the data collected by questionnaire method, ELT students stated that they plan their learning beforehand. To a certain extent this would be attending PCPs in rotation and collecting class notes, photocopy materials later. Thus although the students are located at a distance, and have few occasions of face to face interaction, they are well connected in groups. Organizing the material in terms of exam preparation is an essential part of the planning. They are often selective in learning concepts and ideas. However some students are exceptions. For them attending all PCPs are a necessity, as they would want to learn as much as possible on second language teaching and explore their application in classroom contexts. They focus on self assessment and share their knowledge in the PCPs.

The ELT course is a platform for the learners to share and activate their prior knowledge with the new content. The good learner look for patterns to formulate rules, create charts, use pictures or imagery for comprehension and prepare lists on the materials. In the multilevel class, the teacher has multiple roles for providing support to strategic learning.

**3. The role of the teacher – less than that of an instructor – more than that of a facilitator**

The ELT courses at NSOU are Post Graduate teacher courses. The one to one relation between students and instructor is of various kinds. The learner is always in the tension of profession, family and studies. The teacher has to support the learner throughout the course, so that the learner can complete the program successfully. Without this support, learners tend to drop out of the course. The good learner is not prepared to accept individual learning. They prepare a list of questions on the lectures and seek satisfactory answers on their queries. An important role of the teacher is to find the strategies of learning of the individual learner and put them to use in the classroom.

**4. Intrinsic motivation-** is a strive towards a goal for personal satisfaction. There are no recognitions for intrinsic motivation other than the activities that can be designed for the class. Deci (1975:23) defines these activities as "the ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself." Learner motivation is based on the

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learner's subjective experiences (teaching experiences) i.e., their willingness and personal motives to engage/improve their professional skills. ELT learners show a high degree of intrinsic motivation as they study language with a desire for further personal development and with a need to be better teachers. According to Oletic and Ilic (2014), these needs are "autonomy (in deciding what to do and how to do it), competence (abilities and skills by which we manage to control our environment) and relatedness (relationships we develop through our interactions with others). This internal force for learning is enjoyable and rewarding when the learners can apply them in their own teaching contexts. Intrinsic motivation arises since ELT classroom is dominated by discussions on learners own everyday interest, which they seek to solve from interpretations in the classroom. These vary from teaching methods to student feedback, from administration to classroom situations, from needs analysis to syllabus content.

**5. Strategies for content learning** – improving performance by choosing a difficult response i.e., choosing to practice writing, looking for clues in the material before consulting a dictionary, preferring personal discussions with tutors on course content, preferring discussions on application of the theories to practical situations, and using a computer in the learning process.

For personal discussions on course content, the students avail online student support service. For reflected activities, and group discussions on the classroom activities, students learn from discussions with fellow learners. For practical applications of contents, students discuss with tutors with the PCP sessions and on special lectures. For exam preparation students prefer rote learning i.e., simple copying, repeating silently or aloud, and memorization. Good results are a prerequisite for many of the ELT learners. The learners are keen to work on the assignments and term end papers and take effort in preparing answers/ notes consulting reference materials, audio-visual materials and classroom learning experience.

The ELT students, who are already into teaching for a number of years, come to the PCPs with an objective of creating a bridge between what they know and what they will learn from the new content. Students are encouraged to draw visuals on discussion topic (Venn diagrams, visuals) so that the new knowledge can be related to known experiences. Students also learn from the discussions and questions presented in the content along with concepts and principles. Thus they integrate the new material with the material already known.

Questionnaire

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Academic Session 2016-2017

Name:

Course:

Study Centre:

Contact Number:

There are two types of questions below – Yes/No questions and multiple choice questions.

1. For Yes/No questions, strike off the response which is not relevant.
2. For the multiple choice questions, tick the appropriate option/s.

1	<p>Why did you choose this course of study?</p> <p>a) To enhance own skills</p> <p>b) To get a better job</p> <p>c) Promotion</p> <p>d) Any other reason.....</p> <p>.....</p>	
2	<p>How will this course help you in your professional life?</p> <p>a) To get employment</p> <p>b) For promotion</p> <p>c) To get a better job</p> <p>d) Any other.....</p>	
3	<p>Why did you choose the distance mode?</p> <p>a) No regular institution situated near the place of residence</p> <p>b) Seats not available in regular institutions</p> <p>c) Less expensive</p> <p>d) Inability to attend regular classes due to present service</p> <p>e) Family problems</p> <p>f) Any other reason.....</p> <p>.....</p>	
4	Did you receive the printed materials on time?	Yes/No
5	Is the academic calendar available to you?	Yes/No

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6	i. Were you given any guidelines or instructions on using the materials effectively (i.e. for understanding content and completing assignments)?	Yes/No
	ii. If yes, were they in the form of a) a handbook b) face to face guidance	
7	<del>d) telephonic communication.....</del> Did you attend any orientation/induction programme after the admission? If yes, was it helpful for you?	Yes/No Yes/No
8	Do you have access to information and communication technology (ICT)?	Yes/No
<b>COURSE MATERIAL</b>		
9	If you find some difficult words in the material, what do you do? a) Skip the word b) Look for clues in the material itself c) Ask somebody d) Consult a dictionary e) Any other	
10	Do you prefer cooperative learning i.e., verbal instructions in small groups as your learning strategy?	Yes/No
11	Do you practice sample language interactions or situational dialogue for verbal interactions for your learning process?	Yes/No
12	How did you find the listening comprehension activity today?  ←—————→ Very minimal    slight    About average    Better than normal    Outstanding	

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13	Do you think your performance in the activity would have been improved by ..... a difficult choice of response .....more practice	
14	A better choice might be, ..... writing, ..... role play, ..... drawing, ..... music, ..... dialogue, ..... personal discussion, Others.....	
15	(You may tick more than one option) Do you: only listen to lectures  a) ask clarification questions b) participate in group discussions c) participate in reflective activities d) interact with peers for communicative classroom activities e) interact with multimedia resources, i.e. a. watch video cassettes/CDs b. listen to audio cassettes/CDs	
16	Which of the following things did you do before coming to the sessions? (You may tick more than one options if needed)  a) Read course materials b) Attempted self-check questions c) Contacted tutors to clarify course content d) Prepare a list of questions that you wanted to ask e) None of the above	



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Audio-video Materials		
17	Did you receive the audio-video materials that were part of your course? (Tick the kind of materials that you received) a) Audio b) Video c) Audio-visual  If yes, did you use these? (Tick the kind of materials that you used) a) Audio b) Video c) Audio-visual	Yes/No
18	Do you create visual pictures to support understanding, i.e., imagine a scene that is being described in a text?	Yes/ No
19	Do you include a plan for your learning, monitor your learning that is taking place, and evaluate how well a particular content has been learnt?	Yes/ No
LEARNING STRATEGY		
20	Do you learn by rote-learning i.e., simple copying, repeating silently or aloud in different voices?	Yes/ No
21	Which items of language do you get into memory?  Words    Word Groups    Grammatical patterns    functions	
22	Do you expose yourself to the new language (English) while working with language forms and patterns, and notice their form, meaning and use?	Yes/ No
23	What do you enjoy using? ..... a computer    ..... a library    ..... A dictionary    ..... A grammar book  .....a language club    .....English newspapers, magazines, books  ..... some one else's class file with notes in it.	

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#### Conclusion

The data collected for the research covers 50% of the student population of the academic year 2016-2017. If more information is collected then the frequency of the responses of a particular category may change. Thus the research needs to be checked on a few batches for consistency of the findings. The teacher's role from the learner's perspective is very demanding and not confined within the facilitator – instructor category. Along with the learner's, from time to time, the teacher needs intrinsic motivation as well to deal with the varied heterogeneous class representations. Even though learning strategies has been in research for the last few decades, research on the second language learner and the learning in our contexts has shown new findings that need to be researched further.

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