Research Paper Education

Enhancing Memory of Secondary School Children Through Mnemonic Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Mnemonics has wide varied scope in enhancing the student memory. It can help the students to easy recalling and easy retention of what they learn. The information stored in the memory can easily be recalled if a proper learning strategy is followed by the students. Many of the learning theories state the importance of association of familiar instances with any new learning. Such proper association facilitates a linear relationship between the new learning element and the familiar instance which act as a scaffold to hold the new information. Mnemonics can be used as such a learning facilitator which can help the students to easily learn and easily retain the new information being learned. It not only fosters a healthy learning among the students but also serve as a powerful teaching tool to arouse interest and curiosity among the learners. This paper addresses the mnemonic learning strategies which can be used in the secondary school classrooms to enhance the memory capabilities of the students.

KEYWORDS | Mnemonics, memory, secondary school children

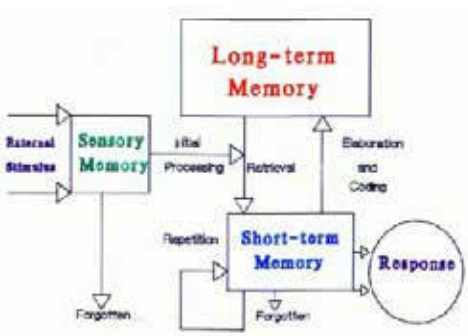
INTRODUCTION

Mnemonics is taken from a Greek word *'Mnemonikos'* meaning 'aiding the memory'. As the word suggests the mnemonics is a particular learning strategy which involve a series of well planned and systematic steps for enhancing and increasing the memory capacities of humans. Although the practice of it is a little tough to start with, the regular practice of it can undoubtedly increase the retaining capacities of human beings. This method or strategy is thus an apt and appropriate strategy to be followed in the secondary classes where the children need to memorize a lot of information. Such an effective practice can hence upgrade the level of children and enhance their retaining capacities. The strategy can help the children to take in or encode the message or information in such a way that it will be very much easier for them to decode or retrieve the same information in any other situation. Research studies prove that the first method of encoding new information is very important in retrieving the same information at a later time. The first encoding through any mnemonic learning strategy helps the children to easily decode the information at a later time. The mnemonics associate a new learning element with a deep rooted familiar element which has been stored in the long term memory of the children thus making the memory of the children strong and clear.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally, the most widely used model of information processing is the stage theory model, based on the work of Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968). The key elements of this model are that it views learning and memory as discontinuous and multi-staged. The stage theory model recognizes three types or stages of memory: sensory memory, short-term or working memory, and long-term memory.

Figure 1. A stage model of memory



Sensory memory represents the initial stage of stimuli perception which is associated with the senses. The transfer of new information quickly to the next stage of processing is of critical importance, and sensory memory acts as a portal for all information that is to become part of memory.

DEFINING MNEMONIC STRATEGIES

Mnemonic learning strategies just serve as a best method in retention and thus enhancing learning capacities of children. It is not based on any philosophy of education. Neither has it belonged to any philosophy of teaching. It is also not an all round teaching tool or method or any type of curricular approach. It is just some specific steps that can serve as an effective aid to enhance memory and retention capacities of humans. So it can be efficiently used among children since they need to memorize many facts for their academic progress.

Mnemonic strategies can thus help people or children to remember thing better. The main aim of mnemonic strategies is to recall the facts of any lesson for which memory is needed. So they need to be very specific and precise. They are just memory techniques and not a technique to comprehend about new information.

Mnemonic learning strategy can help the student to memorize better but there are many other things that a student need to do in his school for getting good grades. Mnemonic strategy is only to memorize facts which are only a part of the student success.

Thus mnemonic techniques if used properly can enhance the learning potentialities of the students. It can serve as a motivator to enhance the opportunities of children to avoid stressful learning conditions.

GENERAL LEARNING TECHNIQUES

There are many methods and techniques which can be followed to enhance the memory of the children. Below are given some common techniques through which the students can easily retain and later recall any information they have learned.

1. Attention grabbing

The students learn more effectively if they properly attend to the teacher's class. The teacher must provide ample situations in which the students feel interested and curious about the material discussed in the class. Use of more AV aids or teaching through interesting stories can grab the attention of the students.

2. Extending memory
The students learn better and fast if they get enough practice lessons to work on and if they jot down the events in their learning. Thus the teacher should provide opportunities which can be helpful to the children to extend their memory capacities like homeworks, assignments, diaries etc.

3. Associating learning to familiar elements
Students can learn fast and they can easy retain the information if the new information is properly liked with the previous known facts in their long term memory. Hence the teacher should provide the students with situations wherein the new learning elements can be properly clubbed with the previous known materials.

4. Use of interesting aids
Proper use of appropriate aids can help facilitate a positive learning transfer among the students. The usage of aids must be in such a way that it must be apt and appropriate to the learning situation.

5. Minimizing diversions
The teacher must be focused to the content of transaction. The teacher must not present unwanted topics which may make the children deviated from the concerned topic of study.

Student as an active listener
The teachers must make sure that their students are not passive listeners but active responders. More the children respond and react to the classroom discussions, more will be the memorizing in the students.

Promote critical reasoning
Teachers must be always problem posing. They must encourage the students to reason on a particular topic or matter. Such reasoning strategies in the class room can foster in the students enhanced memory and interest.

Setting SMART goals
Teacher should always set SMART objectives. That means the objectives set by the teacher should be specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable and timely. The teacher should train their students in such SMART goal setting.

Practice SQ4R technique
The teacher should always follow this SQ4R technique in which surveying, questioning, reading, reciting, recording and reviewing is given importance. This method tells the importance of practice in learning. The more the student practices, the more he learns.

Promote creativity and interest
Opportunities must be provided by the teacher to promote the creative thing abilities and interest generating elements of the learner. Such a situation can effectively act as an efficient aid to their memory.

All these are effective learning strategies through which the memory capacities of the students can be enhanced. The important thing is that the techniques prove to be successful if both the teacher and the students are actively involved in the learning process.

SPECIFIC MNEMONIC TECHNIQUES
The keyword method.
Mnemonics can be efficiently used in acquiring foreign language vocabulary. The key word method means associating a key word or any specific word which can act as an aid to enhance the retaining capacity of any word in a foreign language.

For example: 'lago' is an Italian word which means lake. To memorize the word 'lago' in Italian the teacher can show a picture of a log in a lake and just say remember 'a log in a lake' for 'lago'. So the student can easily study and later recall that word.

The pegword method.
Peg stands for any support or a thing in which something hangs. Similarly pegword here means the same thing a peg or a support to hang a new word. This can be helpful to memorize a series of events or dates. It can thus help in easy retention and easy recall of the whole series later on.

For example: learning numbers in the primary classes is through rhymes.

'One two: buckle my shoe,
Three four: knock at the door,
Five six: pick up sticks,
Seven eight: lay them straight.
Nine ten: a big fat hen'

Here each number pair is associated with a peg word or an associated word on which the number series hangs or rests. Since the rhyming of it and because of the word association the children can easily learn counting the numbers in order.

Letter Strategies
Here the learning material can be remembered through the order in which the material is to be learned. Usually this method is practiced widely to remember formulas, rules etc.

For example: To help children learn the secondary science lesson of Oxidation and Reduction, letters can be easily combined as OIL RIG which means Flow of electrons in oxidation, it loses and in reduction, it gains.

Sentence Strategies
Here the learning material which is to be learned is compiled in to sentence that can be easily remembered by the students. This is also an effective and common mnemonic learning strategy.

For example: To learn the levels of taxonomies in secondary science, one can remember it as, 'King Philip Can Order Five Greek Salads' means 'Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Family, Genus and Species'

Loci Visualizing Strategy
Here the learning of events happened in past can be visualized as a story in a familiar place where each familiar place indicates the events happening at different time periods or different places.

For example: In order to study about the sequence of 'Indian war of Independence' the teacher can ask the students to imagine the familiar places and objects in their school and associate each place with the sequence of happenings in Indian war of Independence.

Training Independent Strategies
The teachers can help students to enhance the memory capabilities of them through different techniques according to the individual differences. Many methods and techniques can be followed by the students according to their interest and attitude.

LIMITATIONS
The initial development of such a mnemonic technique is really a tough and difficult task. It cannot be made applicable to each and every child as the memory capacities of every child are different from one another. This mnemonic technique cannot be aptly used among the children with learning disabilities. Every time uniqueness must be brought about by the teacher since the mnemonic teaching requires a lot of creative and innovative thinking from the side of the teacher.

CONCLUSION
Students are to be well taught by the teachers. It is the duty and responsibility of a good teacher to train the students and develop among them higher learning capacities and memory retaining abilities. The efficient usage of mnemonic techniques

can make the students strong in their content area and hence serve as a helpful tool in the student academic achievement. Thus the technique if used properly can not only enhance the memory capabilities but also the student progress.

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