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Effective Ways of Maintaining and Writing a Diary can Help in Increasing the Efficacy of Language Development

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Abstract:

This paper explores the use of a diary in developing a second language. In today's fast electronic world writing in pen and paper is going towards a verge of extinction. Learners are becoming more active in blogs, wikis, social networking sites...etc., which also helps them in learning new language but somewhere the creativity, emotions, thoughts and ideas are not getting organized & connected. In the Indian scenario, carrying a personal tablet or mobile to school is still not so allowed. A diary can hence be an effective tool for jotting down the new words being heard from anywhere and everywhere. A personal diary can also be a good way of 'self reflection' whereby a not so good, shy learner can express their thoughts fluently without the fear of others laughter or fun. It is also found that an effective use in maintaining & writing a diary can blossom up into a confident second language speaker and writer.

Keywords:

1. **Diary:** A Copy or a compilation of pages with or without dates being mentioned on it generally used for writing personal things like days experience, appointments...etc.
2. **Second language:** Here, it's in Indian context English, which is taught in schools as second language.
3. **Learner:** A person of any age, may/may not be a student of school/college/university, but active and willing to learn or develop English.
4. **Cohesion:** It refers to the linking relationships that are provided by different kinds of ties that bind connected writing.

Teachers often encourage language learners to create more opportunities to learn English outside classroom like reading short stories or getting involved in debates or dramas. Through these language activities, they hope that learners would develop a great sense of appreciation of English. There is evidence to show that exposure to such language use is key to successful language learning.

"I've been keeping a diary for thirty-three years and write in it every morning. Most of it's just whining, but every so often there'll be something I can use later: a joke, a description, a quote."

It's an invaluable aid when comes to winning arguments.

'That's not what you said on February 3, 1996; I'll say to someone'.—David Sedaris.

In the past, many people regularly kept personal diaries, where they recorded the day's events and their observation. Without diarists like Dorothy Wordsworth, Anne Frank and Samuel Pepys, we wouldn't know about the personal side of our history. Listening a new word from surrounding and Writing it down in the diary, speaking it afterwards and Reading it in the future are the four steps of broadening word stock and becoming a confident wrier as well as speaker.

Let us now introspect what, who, when, why & how maintaining and writing a diary effectively can play an important role in increasing the efficacy of language development:

What is a Diary?

'The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write a story, and writes another: and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it'.— James M. Barrie.

Originated in the late 16th century from the Latin root word *diarium*, meaning 'day', the word Diary is defined as a book in which one keeps a daily record of events and experiences. A Diary (also called journal) is a record (originally in handwritten format) with discrete entries arranged by date reporting on what has happened over the course of a day or other period.

Who should use a Diary?

'I can shake off everything as I write; My sorrows disappear, My courage is reborn'.—Anne Frank.

There is no particular age and time of writing a diary. All second language learner should write a diary, if not, at least keep the diary with them to wherever they go. A learner can start maintaining a diary in middle, starting or ending of the session; even a learner can start using a diary in the summer or winter holidays. *Learning is a never ending process* and hence a student studying in class six or in tenth or in college doesn't matters; even a student need not to be a English honors or Masters to write a diary. Therefore, a person interested to increase the efficacy of language development needs to write and use a diary effectively.

When should a diary be used?

'The best way of finding out what goes on in the learner's mind is by direct introspection'. – Bailey & Oschner.

An English language learner should be hungry for fueling their tank of vocabulary by enlarging the spectrum of new words. There's no particular time of using a diary or writing in it. Whenever a learner comes to know something new should then and there put it into the pages of diary. S/he should be very active listener and be very receptive to new words flowing in the environment. A learner at night before drossing, must sit for a couple of minutes and pen down the entire day's story.

Why should a diary be used?

'Writing is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose, or paint can manage to escape the madness, melancholia, the panic, and fear which is inherent in a human situation'. – Graham Greene.

Current Pedagogy suggests that there is no universally correct way to learn a language that can be regarded as optimal for every individual. But effective Writing and Maintaining a diary can help in increasing the efficacy of language development in the following ways:

1. **Improve the skill of Writing:** Rightly said by Bacon: *'Reading maketh a full man, Conference a ready man and Writing an exact man'*. Writing is the fourth skill in the hierarchy of language learning and is perhaps the most important skill in language development of learners. Maintaining & Writing Diary can:
 - a) Improve the *Mechanics of Writing* like Hand-Writing, Spelling, Punctuation, and Neatness & Appearance in a piece of writing..etc.
 - b) Increases the *Variation in the writing styles* like one can write shortly in a summarized manner for expressing his/her daily incident..etc.
 - c) Increases the *Coherence* that is the overall unity of a piece of writing. This unity is marked by qualities such as orderly presentation of ideas, a planned movement from one idea to another, proportionate emphasis on main and subordinate ideas, and thoroughness of treatment. Together these devices add up to what is called *cohesion*.
 - d) *Organization* in thought, ideas & expressions which helps to automation in *Fluency* in writing.
2. **Help in learning of Grammar:** Narrating the entire day's story helps us learn tenses, modals, preposition. Writing with expression helps in abrupt use of punctuation marks. Learning grammar doesn't stop here, while jotting down new words and sentences in the diary gives you the knowledge of usage of different types of sentences that a learner learns in the grammar classes of school which is one of the guiding principles in NCF2005, *'Connecting life outside the school'*.
3. **Vocabulary Enrichment:** Language learning starts from listening to the language from environment. An active learner must collect words from *Input Rich Communicational Environment* and pen down in his/her diary. This enhances the stock of words and expands the learners *Schema*.

4. **Creativity:** The learner reads novels, storybooks, magazines, browses blogs, Wikipedia's, and is 24x7 active in social media. His diameter of knowledge hence increases. So, in the form of a diary s/he gets a canvas where s/he can show all his/her creative inputs without any uneasy or fear of the world, s/he can open up and spread the rainbow of creativity.
5. **Turns a confident Second Language Speaker & Writer:** It is rightly said by some *Anonymous* that '*Practice makes a man perfect*'. Writing and maintaining diary, daily will turn up a learner into not only a very prolific, stylistic writer but will also lead to a Confident and grammatically correct second language speaker too.

How should a Diary be used effectively?

In relation to language learning, *Faerch & Kasper* best describe a diary study as '*A first person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events*'.

1. An active Learner should have a fresh diary with or without dates mentioned in it.
2. Then, s/he should divide the Diary into two halves; make the first half for writing of words being collected from the environment and the other half for writing the incidences happening in daily life of the learner.

- The first half should comprise the words that a learner learns daily or weekly or monthly. It's always appreciable if a learner tries to learn at least one or two words daily from the environment and jot it down with the sentences where the word comes. This helps a learner to predict the meaning and help him/her to recapitulate the incidences for future use.

20 th May 2015	20 th May 2015
<p>In Newspaper, Morning 7 a.m.: <i>Aided:</i> give assistance, helped. The Indian government aided the earthquake affected victims of Nepal.</p> <p>In the School's Morning Assembly: <i>Diligence:</i> Persevering determination to perform a task. Diligence is a great teacher.</p> <p>In School, English class: <i>Whipped:</i> move back. The cobra whipped his head back within a second.</p> <p>In Magazine while playing Word Games, 6p.m. : <i>Generous:</i> willing to give and share Synonym -noble, liberal and antonym-selfish.</p>	<p><i>Dear Diary,</i></p> <p>I am so thankful to God for blessing me with yet one more beautiful day of my life. The morning was the same starting with mom's usual scolding, eating and going to school. The science class was fun I could know that 'Prevention is better than cure' and hence doing experiments we should be careful. From today I have started writing diary and collecting new words that I hear and I tell you it's fun to know so many new words. Hoping to continue this. My day ended with buying a new dress for my upcoming summer camp. Am really excited for it! Fingers cross for tomorrow.</p> <p><i>Good knight!</i></p>

Fig.1: A format of two halves of a Class:VI studying Learner's Diary; the first half being the new words collected in a day and the second half being the diary writing at night.

- The second half will be a kind of summary writing of the day where the learner will practically be implying his skills of summarizing, creativity, and apply his/her knowledge practically.
- An active language learner should use the new words collected in writing the narrative of the whole day. A secondary school going student learns to write Notice, E-mail, Message, Essay, Article, Advertisement, Letter ...etc. He can implement these writing skills in narrating his/her daily experiences which will produce an innovative literary work with high creativity. Short and precise within one page diary writing is always recommended.

6. A learner can collect new words from various sources like listening to the father's prayer in the church, listening to the news channel, listening to the English teacher in the class, reading newspaper, magazine, journal..etc. Even new words can be collected while conversing with peers, walking down the roads and reading the advertisements...etc.

An active mind will always have an active soul, so a second language learner can develop his/her language by using a simple tool of daily life, diary, if used & managed effectively.

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