INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

In India there is a broad spectrum of linguistic background, comprising many languages and scores of dialects. English itself continues in everyday use in large number of families but it is not the same as Standard English. The multilingual context offers a variety of problems to the teachers of English.

Today’s world is a world of rapid technical change. Innovations come out of an ever increasing pace. Due to tremendous progress in information and communication technology, the scenario of contemporary teaching techniques is entirely changed. The teacher of 21 century should shed traditional concepts and techniques of classroom teaching and should adopt the recent and innovative teaching techniques. English language teachers must be innovative, imaginative, and resourceful and have thorough knowledge of the subject and adopt new techniques to change socio, economic status of the country. Due to globalization the world is changing rapidly, hence a teacher has to improve and update knowledge of innovative techniques to meet the demands of changing era. Various innovative materials and strategies will assist for the betterment of students. The present paper explores the use of innovative techniques for teaching English to learners. Novel methods such audio video aids, mimicry, group discussions, dialogue construction, enactment of drama would pave way for learning the language and boost the confidence of the learners.

KEYWORDS: Innovative Techniques, Second Language Learners, Miming, Role Plays, Simulations

INTRODUCTION

In the modern neo-liberal scenario of India, the necessity of competence in English has become increasingly vital. The globalization has necessitated the learning of English Language in an international perspective. Moreover the text materials on the subjects of technical education, science and medicine are available in English. The advance of multinational companies in all sectors of economy such as production, distribution and service sectors require personnel with a fair degree of language competence. In this backdrop, the necessity of acquisition of not only spoken English but also written English has become the need of the hour. Salman Rushdie, the renowned novelist says that the English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago. And it grows from many roots. No one community can claim sole ownership over the English language, which has gone genuinely global. In this precept it is high time to have a holistic approach to learn and teach English as second language.

English language learners who are academically proficient in their first or native language represent differing levels of academic experiences, abilities and interests in addition to their language proficiency. Some students read above their grade levels; others struggle with daily instruction. Some have highly supportive home environments for language and literary development; others live without access to books or literary rich environments. Many English language learners spend most of their academic life with teachers who speak only English and who are not prepared to fully understand their varying needs as English language learners. In order for today’s teachers to meet the challenge of educating a richly
diverse generation of children, they need to learn a great deal about second language acquisition and effective pedagogy for English language learners through pre service teacher education programmes and in service professional development opportunities.

It is an acclaimed fact that teaching and learning a foreign language can’t be reduced to the direct teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax. The contemporary models of communicative competence show that there is much more to learn in a language. Teaching requires creativity, there are lots of different methods, strategies and techniques that can be applied and brought into classroom. Any teaching technique or method including portfolio based instruction will not be successful if students are not engaged in the process. Techniques are closely related to methods and approaches. Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistic defines:

Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learnt (the approach) imply different ways of teaching English and different methods make use of different kind of activity. (56)

With the advent of new millennium, trends have been changed and consequently new challenges have to be addressed with new language teaching which can conveniently be used in English language teaching with the most suitable, reliable and homely examples of real life situations. This new spirit has generated a new point of view to adopt whatever is available round us and make use of familiar materials for the English classroom where by the learners have a sigh of relief after having readily involved themselves in the subject with genuine interest and commitment.

The needs of the students must be addressed in a better and easier way to make sure of themselves about their learning the language. The traditional methods which most concentrated on vocabulary structures undoubtedly helped many a generation which strove to learn that way. In order to meet the demands of the learners to their fuller satisfaction and teach the language, one has to adopt the new approaches, strategies, methodologies and techniques and adapt them to learn to the new changed scenario of the need based soft skill. Teaching and learning may be considered as two mutually defining aspects of the same process for the teacher is not just a giver but also a receiver and the learner is not just passive recipient of made to measure packages of knowledge but also an active participant. Looking at this teachers and learners are both participants in an interaction activity which has been traditionally called teaching learning. Teaching and learning take place all the time, everywhere. For human beings’ interaction with objects, animate and inanimate goes on. What we find going on in educational set up is an attempt to capture, finalize and recycle in capsule forms an ongoing, natural, interactional process. What we call transmitting or pumping information or knowledge from a full vessel into an empty vessel; the human vessels are never full and never empty. So every teacher in his own way must create an atmosphere which should help learners learn how to learn. What is needed is exposure to language by many ways and means. As S. K. Verma would rightly put it, “language is created a new by each learner by putting together bits and pieces of environment raw material” (79).

These non conventional materials consist of problem solving exercises, miming, role playing, simulation, games and other items which create interest as well as encourage learners. Non conventional exercises promote interaction and communication and this enhances the process of language acquisition.

The communicative movement has significantly influenced course design and instructional materials in the recent years. In order to produce effective communicative materials a lot of efforts are required on the part of material producers. A material producer has to study and analyze the needs of learners and browse through number of pages those pieces which would arise learner’s interest and curiosity. According to Krishnaswamy and Sriraman the supplementary activities suggested by the text must encourage learners to read intelligently, respond critically and write creatively so that the
ability to use the language in situations other than the ones in which it was learnt can be tested in a meaningful way. The following practices may help in improving communication of students obliterating hesitation:

**ICE – BREAKING EXERCISE**

Klippel has Said

When people have to work together in a group, it is advisable that they get to know each other a little at the beginning. One of the prerequisites of cooperation is to know one another’s names. The second one is having some idea what individual members of the group are interested in (123).

A Number of Exercises can be Given

- Photographs of different professionals can be shown for identifying their profession. It is expected that learners should express their views on these professionals.
- The other exercise can be given to prepare learners for the above communication tasks. The learners have to listen the instructions that they have to follow. Then they have to exchange sheet with another.

**GAMES**

Games which are task based and have a purpose beyond the production of speech serve as excellent communicative activities. The aim of all language games is for students to use the language; however during game play learners also use the target language to play, persuade and negotiate their way to desired results. This process involves productive and receptive skills simultaneously.

Games offer students a fun filled and relaxing learning atmosphere. After learning and practicing new vocabulary, students have the opportunity to use language in a non stressful way. While playing games, the learner’s attention is on the message, not on the language. Rather than paying attention to the correctness of linguistic forms, most participants will do all they can to win. This eases the fear of negative evolution, the concern of being negatively judged in public which is one of the main factors inhibiting language learners from using the target language in front of other people. In a game oriented context, anxiety is reduced and speech fluency is generated thus communicative competence is achieved. Some of the games are mentioned below:

- Competitors assemble a 20 piece jigsaw puzzle of a world famous landmark (such as the Eiffel tower, Mt. Fuzi, the great wall etc.) Then they describe puzzle image in five sentences to complete the task.
- To promote interaction among the learners guessing game activity can be given. Learners are asked to describe themselves on a paper without mentioning their name, fold the paper and put in a box. The teacher can ask them to come one by name and take a chit and read the description and guess whose description it is. Here the learners are given clues to use different expressions such as I am very sure it belongs to … I think it is…
- Participants pick and listen to a tape randomly selected from a provided stack of tapes (the recording contains a spoken excerpt of a well known children’s story, such as the Snow-white, the ginger bread man etc.). After listening to the entire excerpt, competitors correctly identify the title of the story from a provided list.
DISCUSSIONS GAMES

To improve the atmosphere in the class and help the learners to cooperate better with each other discussion games can be used. The learners have to present views on the topics. The main purpose is to make the learners talk and stimulate their imagination, curiosity and interest.

MIMING

Klippel has Said

The mimes are done in pairs or groups; in one case individual learners have to perform their mimes for the whole class…. Pair or group work reduces stage fright to a certain extent and can be used as a starter. … Finally miming exercises are useful because they emphasize the importance of gesture and facial expression in communication. (136)

This exercise can be performed as a pair work by exchanging one’ sheets with the partner’s sheet and read the instruction given there. The learner has to mime the instruction given before the class. In a pair work exchange of sheets with partner’s sheet and reading of instruction can take place. The learners mime the instruction before the class. Guessing game activity can be taken up. Everybody except partner will guess the instruction on which the fellow student is miming.

ROLE PLAY AND SIMULATIONS

Simulations are simplified patterns of human interactions or social processes where the players participate in roles. Role plays comprise of short scenes which can be realistic as in pretending to interview a celebrity. In group work, the class can be divided in a group of four to five persons. Choose one person as a group leader who will be playing the role of an educational consultant and other will be playing the role of job seekers.

BRAINSTORM

In brainstorm, the students are given a single stimulus which serves as a clue for large number of responses. The stimulus may be a question with plenty of possible answers like what do you do when…?The advantages of this technique are that it provides a large volume of productive language practice on the part of the learners relative to the contribution of the teacher and that it allows students to compose utterance at convenient level for them. The wide range of possibilities are open to participants and the fact that many of them are original and entertaining means to tend to be motivated to contribute and activity usually move forward briskly with a high density of learner’s participation.

USE OF NEWS PAPERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Jon Chandler and Mark stone have rightly remarked that newspapers are a valuable but often underused classroom resource. There is a breadth of coverage in them, which means there is something of interest to almost all readers. In large classes with few resources, newspapers, even the cutting and clippings are the most useful teaching and learning aids, they can be more used of successful learning in many ways. It gives a visual context. In the classroom language teachers can use newspapers to teach a wide range of topics from the alphabet to grammar structures, vocabulary, conversation techniques and skills including skimming and scanning on one hand and listening, speaking, reading and writing on the other. And thus newspapers can be treated as an object for linguistic dissection and analysis. Moreover the additional advantage is that it instills a sense of confidence with a feeling of familiarity in the learner who uses it. Thus news papers are good source for these materials as they are all contextualized, well illustrated real news items, containing a variety of materials that
conforms to the psychological needs of the pupils. Language learners find newspapers motivating because they offer interesting, relevant, topical and varied information.

**USE OF INTERNET**

With the focus on language, communication and culture English language teachers are continually searching for better ways of accessing authentic materials that will improve their students’ knowledge and skills in the targeted areas. As the technology of internet has transformed communication around the world, it is natural that it should play a major role in a multi media language laboratory for developing English language skills. E-mail is the most commonly used internet application today. English language teachers can integrate e-mail based activities into curriculum. The search engines such as google and yahoo takes one to sites that enables one to correspond with native speakers of the English language. Today’s e-mail software can handle text in a wide variety of languages and can include word processed files as attachments. The software also allows us to send sound and images as attachments that enhance the context of the written communication. British Broadcasting Corporation is doing an excellent job in providing regular on line lessons on English language learning. Technology has advanced to such an extent that there are sites which provide on line language laboratories giving listening and speaking practice with recording facility for feedback. A web camera can be a very important tool for on line video conferencing which can be used to interact with native and non native speakers. One such application is Internet relay Chat which enables synchronous conversation among participants in different parts of the world.

Though technology can’t be a substitute to the classical method of language teaching yet it supplements the basic training system. The teacher is very much on the scene and has a massive responsibility. At the same time the teacher has to make learners understand that their aim is not mastering technology but language itself. It is the teacher who identifies the weaknesses of the learners, provides them with the correct guidance, motivates them, inculcates confidence in them and makes language learning experience a real joy.

Other roles assumed for teachers are needs analyst, counselor and group process manager. As an analyst the teacher has to take into account the students’ perception of his or her learning style, learning assets and learning goals. The teacher counselor is expected to exemplify an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and hearer interpretation through the use of paraphrase, confirmation, feedback. As the group process manager, it is the teacher’s responsibility to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities. Guidelines given by Littlewoods, Brumfit suggest that during an activity the teacher monitors, encourages and suppresses the inclination to supply gaps in lexis, grammar and strategy but notes such gaps for later commentary and communicative practice. At the conclusion of group activities, the teacher leads in the debriefing of the activity, point out alternatives and extension and assists groups in self correction discussion.

Much study has been made on exploring different theories relating to methods, methodologies, approaches, strategies but they have not yielded any lasting solutions to the problems of English language teaching and so much has to be attempted towards exploring materials in teaching language skills in a more efficient way. Whatever may be the methods and approaches, the most pragmatic and the desirable thing seems to explore the possibility of using the underused and valuable materials which will definitely facilitate the learning and teaching of language skills.

**REFERENCES**


