

Teaching Activities Enhance Speaking Skills A Study based on Transitional Students in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract--- The current paper displays the failure of traditional methods used in the English language classrooms which are purely teacher-centred and do not allow the students to be competent in English. It is because, in the teacher-centred classrooms, the students remain as mute spectators. They cannot be communicative in the classroom. Indeed, this condition has to be reconstructed and lifted through various teaching strategies. Learner-centred classroom has to be adopted for the efficient and effective communication of the students. This paper tries to convey the factors associated with the environment of English language teaching situation in higher secondary schools. The education policy has been developed among the schools but the teaching and learning strategies remain the same in typical classroom teaching. The eminence of language education in schools and colleges in the current era shows a dreadful picture. The proficiency of the teachers in English language and the exposure to the materials and language are the main concern in English language learning as well as teaching. This article uncovers the utility of executing the methodology of language teaching through various tasks or activities for the higher secondary and higher education students in the classroom. This paper analyses the concept in regard to the English language learners in transition with reference to the activity based language teaching in the classroom environment.

Keywords--- Competence, Learner-centred, Classroom Environment, Activity Based Language Teaching, Teacher-centred, Higher Secondary Students, Transition, Methodology of Language Teaching.

I. INTRODUCTION

English plays a major role in educational system and in the country. It is the administration or official language, and made as a mandatory subject in schools as well as colleges. The demand for English as the medium of instruction made to bring it as a subject even from schools. The styles and strategies of language teaching and learning are the significant elements that help the students to determine and enhance their language learning skill. In learning a subject or a new language, the pupils prefer various learning style and approach such as video, audio and analytic types. The important thing is to encourage the students, by creating awareness among them regarding the significance of English and then gradually helping the students to attain their goal. The basic objective should be to make the students independent. It is up to the teacher to make the students realize that gaining competence in

English shall hold the master-key to success. This article gives an account of the problems faced by the students during the higher secondary and college education regarding language learning.

English Language Teaching in Tamilnadu promotes at every level of education. In Tamilnadu, the practice of English language teaching is largely based on the Grammar-Translation Method. This method uses mother tongue to teach or explain grammar on the focus of structural pattern of the language (Nunan, 1988). It is certain that, English language teaching in Tamilnadu has not benefitted or developed from the Grammar-Translation Method, which is one of the traditional and oldest methods. In the aspect of language acquisition, the curriculum or syllabus have to scrutinize the effective learning approach to be adopted in the classroom. In second language teaching and learning, the speaking skill has an important role for creating an impact to develop the skills. According to Chaney, speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts” (Chaney, 1998, p. 13). The prominence of learning English has been underestimated in a way that, teaching to speak is taught only through repetition of dialogues or by rote memorization. Teaching speaking skills is considered to be important because it develops the students’ communication skills and makes them prepare to be confident in facing personal as well as social circumstances. The language education is about the basic language acquisition, the summaries of the learners and the environment of learning takes place in language teaching-learning. Thus, the paper exposes the inconsistent conditions of the language curriculum which place these second language learners in a poor situation.

II. TRANSITIONAL STUDENTS

Transition is the state of change from one place to another. The students encounter transition, through the change of location, area or place, or by the change or transfer from school to college or university. In schools, there are different students who have undergone various conditions regarding language learning. Students who learn the subjects through vernacular medium, learn English language by rote memorization, even the school teachers support memorizing the language for studying it rather than learning. The other students, who learn the subjects through English medium of education, doing the same for scoring good marks.

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In a way, not all the students memorize the language which is based on the educational background of the respective students, such pupils have a backup over the language. Hence, the students with different abilities in language learning, when they move to college, they face a completely new environment which is different from that of school. The transitional students realize the organisational functioning to be new between schools and colleges. In this state, they find it difficult to adapt to the situation. This phase leads them to various difficulties which requires sufficient time to adapt to the environment

III. TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS FOR THE STUDENTS

Teaching the speaking skills for the students encompasses:

- Teaching basic sounds and the sound structure of the language.
- Teaching to use the language's rhythm, stress and intonation appropriately.
- Teaching the usage of proper words and sentences for communication, to be used in the suitable circumstances, audience, subject matter and social setting.
- Teaching to classify their views and feelings in an expressive and coherent order.
- Teaching to use the language as a tool to express principles and judgements.
- Teaching to use the language without any struggle and pauses is considered to be "fluency" which have to be taught effectively. (Nunan, 2003)

IV. TAMILNADU BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

In 1910, the Board of Secondary Education in Tamilnadu was established and is under the control of Department of Education, Government of Tamil Nadu, India. The State Board schools in Tamil Nadu assess the pupils' progress through the board examinations, from which one is conducted at the end of class X and the remaining two are conducted at the end of class XI & XII. The scores of the XII board examinations have been used as the eligibility in colleges or universities for admissions.

V. MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN TAMILNADU SCHOOLS

The common medium of instruction in Tamilnadu schools is Tamil and English. Generally, in private schools, the medium of instruction is English. On the other hand, the majority of schools run by the government provides Tamil medium. Kendriya Vidyalaya, which is run by the central government has dual medium of instruction that is Hindi and English.

VI. TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) IN TAMILNADU

The third world countries that is the countries which have an inconsistent and unstable economy are struggled to attain the knowledge by realising the prominence of English

language education. English language teaching encounters many struggles and challenges which remains as an unsolved problem even the Indian curriculum planning and language policy failed to solve the problems of the students practically. Dr. M. Ilankumaran in his article, *Trends in English Language Teaching: A Novel Perspective*, rightly says that according to the Indian scenario "Rigid curriculums and huge syllabi continue to threaten students who speak regional dialect but love to excel in English." It is indeed, apt to the case of Tamilnadu.

In a second language teaching environment, it is considered essential to teach instructions in four elementary language skills that is listening, spelling, reading and writing. The language curriculum has to indicate the aspects and ideas of different skills at various stages. It also has to offer strategies for the training of instructional materials and indicate language teaching methods in various language teaching condition. As far as the structure of the syllabus is concerned, a syllabus designer has numerous options to choose from various types of syllabus. They are communicative, structural, grammatical, notional, situational, etc. These types of syllabi have their own advantages and disadvantages.

The primary means of English language curriculum for the students of higher secondary level is

1. To develop the communication competence in English with understanding and clarity on the basis of everyday situations.
2. To cultivate the aural skills to understand the formal and informal expressions, and includes the understanding of the language spoken at the regular speed.
3. To develop the aptitude to grasp various sorts of materials at sensible speed.
4. To improve the capacity to express his/her thoughts precisely and informally in composed English.

To attain the objectives overhead, it is essential to use the prescribed reading materials used in the class. Proper time has to be devoted to the students for general reading. These would enhance their self-reading experience of language. It motivates them to write articles and books by themselves. The teaching of reading comprehension skills enables them to use (i) vocabulary (ii) pragmatic details and (iii) grammatical clues.

The private schools in Tamilnadu offer education in the English medium of instruction. The parents also send their children to the private schools in the local area. As a result, the state government of Tamilnadu has also started offering English medium of instruction in education as an option. On the contrary, private schools collect high amount of fee which prompts the children with the poor family background to choose government schools. Generally, in schools as well as colleges English is being taught as a second language all over the country including Tamilnadu. Competency in English language is essential for career and recognition.



Despite the years of learning English in schools and colleges, the teaching ways and methods does not help them in attaining the proficiency. It is because the teaching methodologies used in both school and college classroom remain obsolete and vague. The other factors include teaching and evaluating on the basis of information oriented in the classroom.

VII. THE PLACE OF ENGLISH IN CURRENT CURRICULUM IN INDIA

The Act of Parliament accepted English as the Associate Official Language in 1963. Kothari Commission (1964-1966) has placed English in the School curriculum. In most of the Indian states, the school curricula have been framed based on thereferences of Kothari commission. In India, English is taught as a practical efficacy and as a link language chiefly for knowledge and understanding. The native medium students are not well exposed to the language. They were taught English as the only subject and not as language as they learn their native language subject. Those students may have sufficient understanding and knowledge on the subject but they lack their confidence to express it for communication purpose. They also feel alienated when they meet different levels of students at tertiary level performing well in the class and feel discouraged and do not show themselves confidently during debates, discussions, interviews, and other vital day-to-day communications. If proper exposure is experienced by those students, it will be helpful for them to develop their skills in language learning without any complex.

VIII. CURRICULUM IN HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

One of the main reasons for the poor standard of English among the higher secondary school students is the lack of clear policy. The teaching and learning of English have been changing. Though English is taught as a compulsory subject, only the pass mark is taken into consideration. The Government has decided not to consider the marks of English as essential for admission into a university course. Thus, the students give more attention in scoring more marks in other subjects than in the language. Moreover, the examination system in the country encourages the students to memorize the subjects. According to the situations in school, only the pass mark is considered enough in English. The language and speaking skills are totally neglected. The teachers also never motivate the students to write on their own from the idea they have learned. So, the students go beyond on mugging up and producing it on the exam paper.

In India, there are ordinarily different types of schools regarding English language teaching. English medium schools, while teaching mother tongue merely as a subject, keep it as the medium of instruction for all the subjects. Even though English has been made compulsory in many schools from early stage to the higher level, the question arises about the change of learning English from one level to the next. At this stage, the students of second language move towards to experience the practical source of learning English. Thus, the method of teaching decides the quality of the school.

English language teaching varies according to the different standards. As a result, it produces the children with poor as well as good English language. As the students were motivated to memorize the subjects for achieving good marks, they lack the power of communicating in English fluently. The higher secondary school students do not realize the fact that the good command over English is necessary for getting good jobs. The lack of exposure to communication creates an inferior feeling to communicate in English. The learners of English feel difficult to acquire the language. The school and college experiences exist with different kinds of students; students from rural and urban areas, students who had their studies from Tamil medium to English medium. The other problem that the students fail to acquire the competency in English is that the language is taught by the rules and learnt by habit of memorizing it.

Thorndike's theory which was afterword supported by Woodworth can be used to develop the vernacular medium students to speak English. This theory gives an opportunity for the transmission from listening to speaking skill to the particular degree. There are equal elements like the usage of pronunciation, vocabulary, comprehension, etc. These elements are indistinguishable in both the skills. The aims, interest and habits in the conditions also enable the process of learning.

In the language learning field, communicative approach is the recent invention which helps the students to develop their communicative skills. It also escalates the fluency and accuracy of the language. This approach helps the native medium students to develop their language learning skills. Communication and interaction is possible through this approach. Thus, the pupils indulge in various activities based on this approach which is important in developing their speaking skills in English. Although the English text book covers sufficient activities of communication, there is no adequate attention paid by the trainers and learners. If proper care is taken towards the students through these activities using this approach, it helps them to develop their communication skills. Furthermore, the pupils have to be trained in communication with collection of jargons, articulation and confidence. These elements help them to improve their day-to-day English communication during the course of their life.

IX. GENERAL PROBLEMS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Generally, the English language learners encounter the problems in speaking English confidently and fluently. In the case of students at tertiary level, they face the new environment which cause them fear and dilemma. In college, an individual meets different ability of students hailing from different board of schools. In this circumstance, the students who have poor intelligence in English language cage themselves by being an introvert. The influence of the native is the main factor in this circumstance. This condition stops them from learning English because of their lack of confidence.



Apart from being an introvert when they try to acquire the language, they face complications such as poor vocabulary, poor listening facility which are the negatives for good speaking, family's low educational background, educational system without much focus on speaking skill and no provision of separate English speaking classes in schools. This is one among the factors affecting the students at tertiary level in learning English. Speaking is vital and basic method of communication in society. Speaking well has a vivid influence on individual's life.

- **Defective Teaching Methods** are one of the reasons but the fact is ignorance of the teachers in applying the teaching method in the classroom causes disinterest in learning among the students. Thus, the teaching becomes ineffective.
- **Passiveness to New Procedures and Techniques** is another reason where some teachers fail to apply these procedures in teaching language because of the ignorance.
- **Crowded Classroom** leads the teacher not to pay attention to the individual student. English teachers encounter a number of challenges in controlling the big classrooms.
- **The Syllabus of English** is purely based on the examination point of view and does not motivate the learners in developing their communicative skills which confine them to learn it in the perspective of examination.

X. CURATIVE MEASURES FOR THE DIFFICULTIES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT COLLEGE LEVEL

- The curriculum for the students have to be updated so that the students search for materials in library or internet.
- For the natural and real language learning, authentic materials such as magazines, newspapers, advertisements etc. have to be involved in the classroom teaching.
- Apart from grammar translation method, the teachers have to teach through TBLT (Task Based Language Teaching) and CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) because continuous teaching makes them feel boring. In this case, these activities interest them to learn the language.
- Using different methods of teaching in class paves the way for effective learning. There are varieties of language teaching methods which have to be used widely. The language teaching methods include direct method, audio lingual method, grammar translation method, oral approach, communicative language teaching, etc.
- It is significant for a teacher to cultivate a rapport with the class which creates an impression of approachable perspective towards the teacher.
- Apart from teaching the students, making a daily conversation improve their language skills.
- The students may have complex ideas within themselves which stop them from learning the language. In addition to this, the students experience

different barriers in language learning, this situation can be avoided by using the formal delivery of language without using the regional dialect.

- Mistakes are possible during the course of learning which have to deal with care without punishing or embarrassing the students. Correcting the mistakes has to be handled subtly.
- The teachers have to motivate the communication skills by making an interactive classroom teaching which cultivate their confidence and get rid of their socio psychological complications.
- The pupils in the classroom have to be treated equally without any bias, not only by being approachable to the intelligent and average students. Teachers have to maintain the healthy relationship with all students in the classroom. The slow learners have to get more care from the teachers.
- Punishments have to be avoided in and outside the classroom, as it would affect the students psychologically.
- It is in the hands of the teachers to create the teacher-friendly environment. A teacher has to motivate the students to communicate in English thereby they will get enough chance for that.
- The teachers have to make the students participate in peer learning, and other activities to develop communication skills. Thus, the teacher can lead the students to feel at ease from the transitional dilemma.

XI. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

The succeeding points are the significant basis for teaching and learning a language.

Importance of habit formation

Language learning is a skill or a creativity and not a wisdom or intelligence. The foundation of the skill or creativity is indeed practice, on the other hand, the basis of wisdom or intelligence is knowledge. A skill like painting and singing cannot be acquired without any continuous practice. It also applies to learning a language. A child acquires his/her mother tongue over constant practice and repetition. The same way of language learning applies to the foreign or second language learning process. Palmer says, "Language learning is essentially a habit."

Significance of oral work

The advanced techniques and methods of teaching stress the prominence of oral work. It is of being the succeeding points;

- Generally, people learn their vernacular language first by mastering over speech. Correspondingly, the learning of a foreign or second language has to initiate with speech rather than reading and writing first.



- In language, speech is considered to be the primary thing and writing falls secondarily. The speech representation is primary because, the illiterate folks also know to speak their language, even though they could not write or read it.
- Repetition of speech is the fastest way to initiate the process of language learning because the effort of a learner is just to repeat the words of others. The pupils acquire a sense of accomplishment which is an inducement for their further development.

XII. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- The first language acquisition is indeed based on the subconscious process of learning and on the other hand second language is a conscious process.
- Learning the first language is indeed an informal activity, and the second language learning resides on the formal activity.
- First language learning depends on the attitude in the process of learning and in second language learning, it depends on the aptitude.
- Repetition is used to understand the grammatical feel in the first language and second language acquisition is based on understanding the grammatical rules.

XIII. PROBLEMS IN LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

Students face numerous challenges in learning English as a second language. They commit errors in grammar, pronunciation, usage and vocabulary. They also encounter the interference of native language in the usage of English. Even the language policy that is the curriculum is concerned to be one of the problems affecting students from acquiring the language. Comparing to the students of urban areas, the rural area students have poor exposure in learning language whereas the urban students are exposed with a lot of utilities to learn the language. So, the opportunities become rare in the case of the students from rural areas. The main hurdle for learning English is that there is no acquainted atmosphere to learn the language. There is no exposure outside the classroom. In other words, the students do not understand the instant necessity to acquire the language. Besides these problems on the part of students, the curriculum also play a major role in the attainment of the language. MirzaeiRizi (2014) et al. states that the poor teaching and learning problems of English language can be identified in Iran and India.

The students, when they move to tertiary level realise the need of the fluency in English, look forward to develop the language. On the contrary, the fact is that they do not know where and how to start to improve in it. In many cases, students do not show their interest to learn the language in English classes. Many other students fail to learn it without comprehending the strategy in it where some students accomplished it successfully. The fact is that strategy is not taught in schools as well as in colleges. (Akbari, 2014) Teachers fail to teach them the effective methods of learning the language in the classroom. Thus, it ends up with

mugging up the language. It has been claimed that autonomous learning is vital for language learners for the following three motives. The first reason is that because of the difficulty of task in learning, and the second reason is that self-learning would stimulate the learning efficiency of the students. The third motive is that the learners develop their interest in the course of learning.

The other aspect is that the students' complexity in learning English consists of acquiring ample words and grammar rules which could only be memorized (Oxford 2001). The factors for the struggle of the English language learners may also be because of the different educational background. For instance, the students who hail from rural areas do not expose to wide range of the language. In the crowded classrooms, the students do not get individual attention which results in the lack of listening. It is because of the disinterest in learning. Some schools give less prominence to English subject comparing to other subjects. This stops one from realising its significance as a communication means in every field for survival. It is the fault of the educational system that the students are made to be prepared from the perspective examination. Thus, their concentration moves to getting the highest marks rather than learning it by comprehending the subject. In this way, they do not get any internal motivation. According to the Indian curricular setting, reading and writing skills are given importance rather than listening and speaking skills. This priority over the former skills make the students know the importance of the latter skills. The following are the activities that are suggested to improve the communication skill of the pupils in the classroom environment. Some suggestions have also been provided for teaching the oral language skills.

XIV. ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE SPEAKING

Several linguists and English language teachers recognise that, pupils learn to speak the language only by "interacting" with others through constant practice in the classroom environment. For the efficient speaking skills of the students, Collaborative Learning and Communicative Language Teaching work well to attain their aim in speaking the language. Communicative Language Teaching is generally centred on the authentic situations which involves real life communication activities. This method gives an opportunity for the students to interact in the target language. In short, the teachers of English create a situation for meaningful tasks, authentic activities and communication in the classroom environment. This occurs through discussions, tasks and activities to attain the goal.

XV. DISCUSSIONS

The learners are given time to discuss ideas and share thoughts among themselves to find a solution, after the content-based lesson. It is necessary that the discussion have to be guided by the teacher to maintain the flow of discussion. In this discussion, the students involve and disagree or agree to the points shared.



This can be made by categorizing students into groups with 4 or 5 members to each group.

Role Play

Role play is one of the activities, which is used as a tool to make the students speak. As the name of the activity suggests, the role of the students is to play the role assigned or taken. The teacher has to explain the role of the students and also the situation to speak before the students.

Simulations

Simulation and Role Play are similar in concept, but there is a slight difference in simulation in comparison with role play. The similar aspects in role play and simulation are, they have the same concept of activity by playing a role. The only difference which the simulation has is, it uses appropriate properties according to the role. For example, if a student is performing as a doctor, he has to take a stethoscope with him/her which justifies the role. Simulation is considered to be one of the best activities because, it not only entertains the students but also makes them fear free and develop their self-confidence.

Brainstorming

In brainstorming activity, a particular topic is given to the students to discuss ideas with in limited time. It is an efficient and effective activity, because it welcomes the students' ideas without criticism. This activity is either performed by an individual or by the group.

Reporting

Reporting is an activity where the students are given a homework. The homework may be based on the activities like to read a magazine or newspaper. Finally in the classroom, the students are asked to report it to their peers. The pupils are free to discuss the interesting parts that they encounter while reading.

XVI. SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS IN TEACHING SPEAKING

The following points are the suggestions for the teachers of English while teaching oral language:

- Provision of exposure to the students where they can independently speak the target language.
- Various opportunities have to be provided for the students with the authentic tasks and materials.
- Making the students participative in the various learning activities and also giving an opportunity for them to express their communicative skills with the reinforcement could help them to go on to the steps of progress.
- Learner-centric classroom is preferable for the students to actively participate and also indulge every individual to be communicative.
- The problems of the students have to be diagnosed and be provided with ample opportunities to rectify their communicative needs.

XVII. CONCLUSION

In learning the second language, it is crucial to teach speaking. The capacity to converse in English

competently and clearly pays the learner to achieve success in school and later in every level of life. Consequently, it is vital that the teachers have to focus on the different speaking abilities of students in the classroom. It is essential for the students to be aware of rote memorization which could hardly affect their language learning. Hence, with the act of various communication activities, speaking skills can be cultivated among the students. This way gives fun and effective deal in the course of language learning.

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