

Short Communication

Use of media as an instructional tool in English Language Teaching (ELT) at undergraduate level

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The present scholar's experiments in the class room related to the media using the print media while teaching English at the undergraduate level and the students' enthusiastic response has been the source of inspiration for the present paper. Here is an effort to concretize unplanned language teaching experiment into a well planned, syllabus-oriented and academically productive package.

Key words: English Language Teaching, media, undergraduate and students.

INTRODUCTION

It was observed that most of the students in the trial class improved in their comprehension skills as well as their vocabulary after reading newspapers, magazines, journals, articles and other printed materials provided by the teacher. Students enthusiastically responded to the transistor carried by the teacher and the occasional trips to the TV room. It was heartening to note that all of them irrespective of their medium of instruction showed tremendous interest in listening and watching programmes. It was observed that those students who had the opportunity to listen to the news on radio and TV showed an increased awareness of Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) in their spoken English. It was also noticed that there was a deep sense of joy and fulfillment among the students because they got an opportunity to enjoy learning English language without being conscious of grammar rules. All of them enjoyed themselves while learning from these sources and quite happily narrated how they used media in order to learn English.

Therefore, it is not surprising that many teachers feel strongly about the role of media in an educational setting. Several teachers believe that the print media will also

help in developing the reading and writing ability of the students by supplementing the text books with realia.

Many language experts claim that introducing the real world into the classroom automatically prepares them for the natural use of the language in umpteen different situations in life.

"A teacher who is attempting to teach, without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn, is hammering on a cold iron." – Horace (1840)

The survey shows that most of the English language teachers feel that they are not able to use media in the class even though they want to do it due to lack of infrastructure and other related problems. Though most teachers consider media to be a very useful tool they are not supportive of the idea of using them in the classroom, the reason cited by them is that the media is not a part of the curriculum. Moreover, the students are more interested in preparing and passing the examinations and they consider that a teacher's duty is to complete the syllabus; as such, the scope to use media has become

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rather limited.

In the course of the interaction with the teachers and the employers, it has been found that many of them found that the news papers are very useful in mastering languages including their mother tongue. Some of the adults who were interviewed said that they had formed the habit of newspaper reading as youngsters and the habit helped them read and write English and also to express their unique thoughts in a foreign language. It has been noticed that there is an element of pride in using the language of the British and it certainly adds to the sense of 'self worth' which is so important for an all-round success in today's world. The media, if used in the educational setting will complement the teaching-learning process. It will make the English language teaching better and more effective, and will also 'enhance the students' ability to understand and experiment with the language.

In fact, media can act as a facilitator in the teaching-learning process. It has immense potential as an instructional tool. It has been observed over the years that classroom teaching has become monotonous because of the traditional lecture method where in the teacher is the centre of the learning process. A teacher has to understand that the 21st century students 'have a limited concentration span' and therefore, it is necessary to bring in colourful and interesting material into the classroom to involve each and every student in the process of language acquisition.

"Learners are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge; they approach each learning task with a set of personal beliefs, motivations and conceptions about the subject area". Kember and Murphy, (1990)

It has been repeated time and again that teaching being a dynamic process, the curriculum should also be dynamic. It has been confirmed by the teachers that the prescribed text books alone cannot guarantee the required language learning. The teachers also feel that they should involve the students with the world outside and encourage the creativity of the learner through exposure to the media (Agnihotri and Singh, 2012).

It is observed that the students are not at all motivated to learn English. The teachers are of the view that they cannot do much because the students are only interested in getting good marks in the examinations. Moreover, teachers claim that the students don't attend their English classes regularly; instead they choose to go for private tuitions. The aim of such students is to get notes from the instructor, memorize it and write the contents in the examinations. Many teachers hoped that if media was introduced in the classroom it might bring back the enthusiasm in the students and motivate them to learn the language. The questionnaires circulated have revealed that there is a distinction between the English medium students and the regional medium students. The teachers feel that the English medium students are capable of learning faster as their exposure to English

language is much more than their counterparts. Since most students are not motivated to learn the language, they are not interested in following any kind of guidance/ advice given by the teacher, except copying down notes that will help in passing the examinations. The constant focus on examinations has ruined the whole business of pedagogy, the teaching learning processes. Once the focus shifts from the exam, then automatically everything will change. It is said that mostly students come to the class for the sake of attendance and not to learn the language.

It is observed that the student teacher ratio in each class is hampering the bond between the teacher and students. It is said that in a General English class where there are about 100 to 150 students, the teacher cannot be innovative. So the gap between the teacher and student persists (Patil et al., 2012). The students have no opportunity to interact with the teacher and the teacher is also not in a position to motivate the students to learn the language. Learning is a two-way process and the constant exchange of ideas makes the classes interesting. This unfortunately is lacking in the present scenario. A teacher should be friendly with the students and try to maintain a "healthy relationship" with his/ her students. As a result, his/ her students don't hesitate to come up with their doubts as they know that the teacher will treat the problems very sympathetically. It has been observed that materials used in the classroom should be sensitive to the external environment as well as the history and culture of the land (Khanna and Gupta 2012). Teaching should engage the student in problem solving tasks which encourage a multiplicity of approaches.

CONCLUSION

This leads to the conclusion that introducing innovative material like news paper advertisements, sports news, film reviews, tourist pamphlets and many others authentic materials can create a sense of curiosity which can be exploited for transferring the language skills effortlessly. The shift from the text books to more exciting material can become a motivational force to push the learner towards the target language.

Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests

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