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Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

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Innovative Methods for Communicative Language Teaching

B. Zulaiha, M. Phil.

The aim of this paper is to discuss and introduce methods to enable the students to communicate well through English and to make the class a student-centered one. Teacher's main role in language classrooms is to help students to become able and efficient communicators. Teachers' role is to direct them towards the mastery of all the four skills. The paper also describes the viewpoints of learners and instructors.

From my personal experience I suggest the following allotment of time in the class:

- Teacher Talking Time (TTT) - 20%
- Student Talking Time (STT) - 80%

Minute to Minute Programme in Classroom Teaching

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(i) Introducing the subject – [10 minutes] with the following idea:

- From particular to general
- From concrete to abstract
- From personal to general

(ii) Textual Reading and Explanation and Talking on the Topic – [20 minutes]

which may include:

- Reading the text: Students should be encouraged to read the text aloud.
- Explain the meaning of words including technical word terms with respect to the content of the lesson.
- Students' involvement in reading
- Teachers' Repetition in explaining
- Questions presented to the students and answers provided by them.
- Finding spelling and pronunciation errors

(iii) Interaction – [10 minutes]:

- drills in Pair
- debate
- role Play

The following important tasks should be pursued to encourage the students.

- Though the students may be poor in linguistic knowledge, we need to provide adequate information and repeat the information with examples.
- Allow them to use native language
- Errors need to be tolerated at least in the beginning of the course.

(iv) Conclusion [10 minutes]:

- Teachers' evaluation must be based also on fluency.

Group Work or Group Discussion

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Group work can be organized as effectively when there is cooperation and collaboration. Collaboration is an opportunity for the students to learn from one another and negotiate meaning and improve their social skills. This will create new insights during discussion. This task includes:

- Accommodation of one another's perspectives
- Equal contribution
- All the perspectives are included in the conclusion
- Teachers involvement with all the presentation of all the participants. Do not ignore any student.
- Understand the communicators' background, personal relationship and personality, etc.

It is not like cooking and bringing different dishes to the table but it is like cooking together in one place.

Beyond Watching Video

Many teachers adopt the technique of screening movies in English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms. But is there any learning taking place? The answer is yes, when students are provided with background knowledge such as those given below:

Pre-view: Ask students to make predictions based on the title of the work and names of characters.

While Viewing: Stop the programme now and then encourage the students to answer questions such as what is happening. Ask them to imagine what will happen. Let them report on these, even if you ask only a few students.

Post View: Ask them to write a review or an appreciation of the movie watched to increase their language skills.

Even if you have no access to the internet, but do have the film, there are still several activities you can use in the EFL classroom. My basis for using films in the EFL classroom, developed by my former colleague Elizabeth Mejia at Washington State university, is the "Six Critical Scenes" method. If students understand six scenes, they will understand overall film (Scacco 11).

Reflective Teaching

It is a reflection of one's own teaching practice which helps improve the teacher's practice. Video recording is a good stimulus for critical reflection. Videotaping is not at all difficult or strange these days. Video recording will help teachers to

- observe
- analyze and
- discuss their methods of teaching.

Re-examining the performance by watching the recorded video helps to respond to both strong and weak aspects of teaching. Video recording method will help in self-viewing for the pre-service teachers to reduce anxiety. If students are also encouraged and trained to follow this method, it will make the process a regular part of their future reflective process.

Steps to be followed:

- preparation for teaching
- self-viewing for the first emotional response
- repeated self-viewing and reflection after a period of time
- viewing the recording with a friend
- viewing the recording with a supervisor

Anecdotes too!

Anecdotes are stories of personal experience which people use to make a point to entertain others while conversing. In Shakespeare "All the World's a Stage", anecdotes play an important role in everyday human interaction. Emotional components of an anecdote may be as follows:

- sadness
- happiness
- excitement
- embarrassment

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- amusement
- disappointment

Anecdotes help develop 6 elements in classroom teaching. The various elements of anecdotes can certainly be useful while teaching a language. Labov (1972) and McCarthy (1991) researchers in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis respectively have identified six narrative elements of anecdotes which are given below:

Abstract: One can start it as “Have I told you this?”

Orientation: Scene, place, time and people involved must be introduced

Complicating events: Interesting turning arose when a statement like “Men are Men Always” is uttered.

Resolution: What happened at the end – “finally he died.”

Coda: Turning the attention of the audience – Story is over, comeback.

Evaluation: One has to tell or realize, why it was worth telling?

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) Practice in the Class

Mobile is used “everywhere by everyone”. But how can it support learning English? When students’ interest is “mobile,” why not teacher turns her/his interest towards “MALL” (Mobile Assisted Language Learning)?

SMS & Notes

The instructor can ask students to take notes in classroom teaching or create notes after class hours and send these to the instructors by SMS and save the received notes as text files.

Camera

To capture an image or to shoot an incident and save the same in the gallery will help the students to view and describe the still pictures. For motion picture, they can be asked to write a script based on the situation or to translate the language of the clip from native language to English.

Free Programme Software

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Installation of programme software will help to recognize words in picture. Handwritten copy can be sent as text and shared with all.

Voice Recorded

To record the voice of the instructor in the classroom and collect language samples from TV and radio.

Flash Card

Installation of flashcard software will help to create vocabulary list. It can be used to play guess games. Modules can be prepared according to the subject with choice and answer. Time should be set 30 to 60 seconds automatically and can be reduced to 5 to 10 seconds to speed up the viewer's guess work. However, do not rush. Our goal is not to test the speed but to encourage fluency.

Problems in Adopting these Techniques

- lack of access
- cost of mobile and network services
- noise and disruption
- privacy consideration
- increased teacher's workload

All the above ideas help us to offer numerous opportunities to learn language by using the tools which the students are intimately familiar with. And these are welcome additions to the language teaching method.

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