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Video: Enhance your ICT presentation skills in class

Presenting to pupils is something teachers do on a day to day basis, yet many are still nervous about incorporating ICT into their presentations.

Lise meets Joe Dale, a middle school French teacher, who is already using ICT technology to enhance his own presentations.

After observing one of his classes, Lise returns to her own classroom to put the presentation technology she has learned into action.

Watch the video 'Enhance your ICT presentation skills in class' at

<http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/63-video-enhance-your-ict-presentation-skills-in-class/>

News: What the Multi-Billion Dollar ESL Industry Doesn't Want You to Know!

The following excerpt has been retrieved from

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2010/07/prweb4236504.htm>

“ESL Expert David Redman offers free weekly webinars on Starting an Online Teaching Business! The free how to teach online Webinars encourage people to get started teaching online. The ESL industry wants people to go overseas to teach English, but with today’s technology teaching English from your home is available for almost anyone. Even experienced teachers question how to teach online, but these webinars help show people, how to start teaching online to some of the over 800,000,000 million students worldwide that are studying English.

(PRWEB) July 9, 2010 — Almost everyone in America knows someone that has traveled overseas to a job making good money teaching English. But what the Big ESL industry doesn't want people to know is that ‘any native English speaker can teach English to students worldwide without ever leaving their home!

“The big ESL industry wants people to go overseas and work at their schools, but with today’s technology people can run their own teaching businesses from home to ESL students anywhere in the world!” says ESL Teaching Expert David Redman.”

Read the complete news story at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/63-news-what-the-multi-billion-dollar-esl-industry-doesnt-want-you-to-know/>

ELT Conferences and Workshops, August 2010

The following four conferences are taking place in the month of August 2010.

- ESSE 10 – SEMINAR 12 ON SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE AND STYLE, ITALY – AUGUST 24-28
- 11TH ENGLISH TEACHING CONFERENCE, CHILE – AUGUST 12-14
- THE 8TH ASIA TEFL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, VIETNAM – AUGUST 6-8
- III INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' DEVELOPMENT, COLOMBIA – AUGUST 4-6

Get detailed information about each event from <http://eltweekly.com/elt-events/>

ELT Research Article: ‘Teaching Literature through Language: Some Considerations’ by Abraham Panavelil Abraham

This article “Teaching Literature through Language: Some Considerations” is submitted by Abraham Panavelil Abraham (Ph D), Professor of English, University of Nizwa, P.O.Box 33, P.C 616, Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman.

Abstract

Teaching literature through language calls for active involvement of both the teacher and the taught. Here, the focus is on teaching literature and the medium is the language. The context and form of a literary work brings forth meaningful discussion and enjoyment. The paper will discuss the importance of teaching literature in the language teaching and learning process, the question of choosing an appropriate literary text and some strategies for teaching literature by creating an awareness of linguistic possibilities and sensibility

I think aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity.

– George Eliot, 1866/1967: 9-10

A linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and not conversant with linguistic methods, are equally flagrant anachronism.

- Roman Jakobson, 1960: 377

1. Introduction

Language through literature is a subject that has been discussed among academicians for quite some time. However, the notion of literature through language may raise a few eyebrows. Many universities around the globe offer a number of literature courses as part of the undergraduate program. Teachers who teach these courses often use the traditional

method of lecturing on topics like theme, characterization, plot, motifs etc directly without giving any emphasis on the stylistic/linguistic aspect of the literary texts that they teach. Of course, students must be taught literature and it must be taught by creating an awareness of linguistic possibilities and sensibility. It is in this context that the idea of literature through language becomes relevant. Teaching and learning literature through language demands active involvement of both the teacher and the taught in bringing the literary text to life. The medium is language and the context and form of a literary work arouse interest in the meaningful use of that medium. This, in the words of George Eliot is "aesthetic teaching". Here, the role of the teacher is crucial. His/Her role is to support the students' efforts to establish intensive relationship with literary texts without interfering too much in their act of creating meaning.

It is heartening to note that many academicians nowadays consider the importance of literature in language teaching. The time has come to realize that the ultimate objective of teaching and learning literature is the study of words, idioms and syntax at the highest level of thought and imagination. It is an exercise depicting as to how words and sentences are made and molded in order to communicate what the writer wants to say. It is not literature through literature that is to be emphasized, but literature through language. In this paper, an attempt will be made to explain why teaching literature in the language classroom is important, what are some of the criteria to select suitable literary texts for students and what are some of the strategies that may be adopted while teaching literature. Robert Frost's poem "Stopping By Woods on A Snowy Evening" will be used as an illustration.

2. Why Literature?

Beyond the sentence are both a challenge and an opportunity. Surely, literary texts give us much aesthetic, intellectual and emotional pleasure in that the writer often seeks to express his/her vision of human experience through a creative, emotive use of language and this in turn provides much impetus and motivation for the students to learn the

language. Learning Literature not only improves the basic skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking but also other language areas like vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. One of the pre-requisites for language learning is that students should have a feeling for the language which can be achieved through creative and critical use of literary texts where they can experience language in use. For such experience to facilitate language learning, "the language experience needs to be contextualized and comprehensible" (Krashen 1985, 1993, 1999) and the learner needs to be motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged (Arnold 1999: Tomlinson). Literature provides such rich experience to language learners and gives ample opportunities to develop their interpretative power- an important asset to language learning. It also provides a rich source for both teachers and students of shared experiences that can stimulate discussion. Literature also can introduce the students to the varieties of English; it can be a source of linguistic and communicative enrichment, and it can be a powerful source of inspiration and motivation from which students may develop an interest for practical criticism.

Moody (1971:7) is of the opinion that literature also helps students improve their listening skills. The various topics in literature give students a chance for discussion which encourages oral practice. And often, a literary text is read out in full or in part by the teacher, or a record or tape version of it is played for the purpose of bringing out its rhythmic quality and stimulating interest. Thus, when used orally, Literature can develop the students' listening ability.

According to Obediat (1997:32), literature helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient in English, as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners. Collie and Slater (1990:30) point out four main reasons for using literature in a language class - literature is authentic material, it is helpful in cultural and language enrichment and

finally students will have a lot of personal involvement. According to Maley (1989:12), the themes that literature deals with are common to all cultures in spite of the different approaches of the writers – death, love, human relationship, belief, nature etc and they are relevant to all human beings at all times. In short, literature is authentic material that can generate a new creative learning experience in the class and the students in turn will come out as competent learners of both language and literature.

3. Choosing an Appropriate Text

One of the challenges teachers face is regarding the selection of a suitable literary text for the students. The types of literary texts that can be used are plenty. However, a teacher should be extremely careful while choosing the text that s/he wants to deal with in the classroom. The needs of the students, their motivation, interest, and cultural background should be taken into consideration while selecting a literary work for the classroom teaching. First of all, the teacher should enjoy the text that he/she chooses. It is also important to select a text of an appropriate length. Texts need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension. Shorter texts may be easier to use within the class time available, but longer texts provide more contextual details, and development of character and plot. According to Sage (1987: 87) lengthy texts might pose "the question of how to maintain students' interest". Extracts from a novel, abridged versions of a play or a novel and selected poems can be used in the classroom.

The most important criterion is of course to select texts that stimulate interest in the students. According to Brumfit (1986: 32), "of equal importance, however, is the choice of texts that lend themselves to student discussion and personal experience". Different themes will, of course, have different degrees of popularity at different levels. For example, a play like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with its theme of youthful passion, might interest students a lot. However, a text chosen should be culturally significant and appropriate. This is especially important while choosing texts for those students from the Gulf region.

Duff and Maley (2007: 12-13) believe that teachers can cope with many of the challenges that literary texts present, if they focus on some of the questions like:

- Is the subject matter interesting to the students?
- Is the level of the language suitable?
- Is it the right length for the available time?
- Does it need a lot of cultural or literary background knowledge?
- Is it culturally appropriate?
- Can the text be used for language learning purposes?

4. Integrated and Communicative Teaching Approach

One of the important strategies a teacher can adopt in the class is an integrated approach of teaching literature through language where the students are involved full well. In this method, language skills will not be taught in isolation but in an integrated way, incorporating a set of text- based, student – centered activities which as Collie and Slater (1987: 8) suggest "add fresh momentum into the teaching of literature by stimulating students' desire to read and encouraging their responses". Teaching literature should involve pre-reading tasks, interactive work on the text and follow up activities. Activities like predicting, gap filling, creative writing, role-playing, integrating spelling with vocabulary etc can establish the necessary connection between language and literature which eventually make the teaching and learning of literature a very productive and enjoyable enterprise. These activities not only create a challenging environment where the students try to put their mettle in the best way possible, but also call for a great deal of attention on the part of the teacher who becomes a facilitator, blending in himself/herself the "intuitive response of a practicing literary critic and the analytical tools of a practical linguist" (Dutta: 522). Roman Jakobson's important statement quoted in the beginning of this paper implies that language, the medium through which a writer brings out his/her

creative output claims a closer attention than most teachers of literature are willing to devote.

In an integrated approach, a teacher ceases to teach and instead he becomes a participant and guide who works with his/her students. Here, the classroom activities may be divided into three categories viz. "Pre- Reading Activities", "While- Reading Activities" and "Post- Reading Activities". Pre-reading activities are kind of warming up which can provide a forum to elicit from students their feelings and responses to ideas and issues in a prescribed text. "While- reading activities" aim at helping the students to experience the text holistically by developing a fruitful interaction between the text and the reader. Post-reading activities encourage students to reflect upon what they have read and they generate thoughtful discussion on different issues related to both language and literature arising from the text.

In what follows, I shall try to enumerate some strategies for teaching a poem in an undergraduate class. The selected poem is Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (Appendix)

(A) Pre-Reading Activities

Before students read the poem, it is useful to involve them into activities that will create the right attitude for receptivity and enjoyment with the result that they are inspired to read the poem again and again. The activities involve the students who will be asked to make use of their experience of life and their imagination and intelligence which will enable them to guess what may happen in certain situations. The title of the poem, illustrations, keywords, warmers, language exercises are some of the tools that may be used in the classroom for generating inferences.

(i) Title

The title of a piece of literary work is important, as it tends to indicate the subject/theme of the text. The teacher announces in the class the title of the poem that s/he wants to discuss and without giving the poem ask the students to infer what is likely to happen in the text. After writing the title "Stopping by Woods on A Snowy Evening" on the board, the teacher may ask a range of questions to elicit responses from the students:

1. Is the title of the poem a sentence or a group of words?
2. What do you understand by woods?
3. What is the difference between "wood" and "woods"?
4. Give some examples of nouns that give you one meaning in the singular form and another meaning in the plural form?
5. Do you have woods in your country? Name them
6. Can you predict from the title what is likely to happen in the poem?
7. Is the poem going to be a description of the woods?
8. Is the poem going to describe some incident that took place in the woods?

At this juncture, students can be asked to work in groups, pairs or individually. The teacher may collect the answers and share with the students the different responses that they have given. With this activity, the teacher can generate interest among the students who will also bring forth inferences on the poem. In this way, students will have an opportunity to use their imagination and intelligence.

(ii) *Illustration:*

Having discussed the title, the teacher may now give a pictorial presentation of the poem. Such an activity can provide important clues for predicting the content of the poem. There are many texts that have front- cover illustrations including pictorial representations of the contents. Alternatively, the teacher (if s/he has artistic talent) can draw a picture based on the poem or take the help of an artist friend. An illustration of the

poem, "Stopping By Woods..." should show a forest with a lake where the water is frozen as it is winter time. Near the lake there is a traveler who has stopped his horse and watching the beautiful scene. The horse has harness bells around its neck. The teacher asks the students to derive as much information as possible about the background/setting of the poem by closely examining the details. While students go through the illustration, the teacher may ask some questions like:

- What could be the time in the forest- evening/night/afternoon/dawn?
- Why do you think the traveler has stopped his horse in the forest?
- Do you know what is a "farmhouse"?
- Is the traveler afraid?
- What must he be thinking?
- What do you think about the lake? Why is it frozen?
- Is it a beautiful or frightening site? Explain

These questions, prompting further involvement and responses, bring students one step closer to the text and encourage them to read and understand the poem better.

(iii) *Warmers*

One line warmers can be picked up from the poem or chosen from maxims, proverbs and quotations that are closely related to some aspect of the theme or content. Warmers facilitate open discussion and help elicit inferences about the content of the poem. The teacher, choosing some related warmers, distribute them to students and asks them to explain the idea contained in them. In order to elicit more interest in understanding the poem the teacher may choose the following one-liners:

- The woods are lovely, dark and deep
- Man's heart away from nature becomes hard

- A thing of beauty is a joy for ever
- There is pleasure in the pathless woods
- For every promise there is a price to pay
- Miles to go before I sleep
- The fear of death follows from the fear of life
- A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time

Students may discuss the above in group, or in pairs and the teacher can ask them to write briefly about what they have understood from the warmers. The warmers help the students to formulate ideas on a more concentrated level about the possible meaning of the poem.

(iv) *Keywords and expressions*

The text sometimes gives clues for predicting its theme or motif through the vocabulary used. It is, therefore, useful to pay some attention to the structure, organization, selection and collocation of lexical items in a literary piece. They usually appear in the form of key words/expressions sentences or lines and the students will be able to judge what the atmosphere within the text is going to be. In this case, the teacher can present a list of lexical items from the poem and may ask the students to prepare a mental picture of what they have imagined/understood from the connotative implications of the given words and expressions.

Watch ...woods...fill up with snow

Frozen lake

Harness bells

The only ...sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flakes

Miles to go before I sleep

Students may be asked to discuss these in groups or pairs as being done earlier and they may be able to recreate the imaginative world depicted in the text. The teacher can prompt some questions which may be of help for the students to come to certain conclusions:

- Why is the narrator watching the woods?
- Are the woods filled up with snow? What is the reason?
- What do the "woods" represent? Something good or bad?
- What do you understand by the expression "frozen lake"? Why is the lake frozen?
- The wind is described as "easy" and flakes are "downy"- Why?
- What do you think the poem is about? Does it convey a message?

The activities discussed so far are meant to elicit inferences from the students regarding the poem that they are going to learn. These activities will create a lot of interest and curiosity in the mind of the students and inspire them to read the poem closely. At this juncture, the teacher can ask the students to open the text and engage them in the following While- reading activities

(B) *While-reading Activities*

After doing the pre-reading activities, students are ready to read and study the text that they are supposed to deal with. Here, they are going to develop a purposeful interaction between the text and its readers. The following While-reading activities can be tried out in the class:

- Listening to a good reading of the text

- Reading of the text
- Language Exercises
- Checking against the inferences made about the text in the pre-reading activities

Students often enjoy listening to a text either on a tape or when it is being read out loudly by the teacher in the classroom. It is, of course, very advantageous if the teacher has a good voice quality and a dramatic sense while reading the text. This will help students to "feel" the language, its rhythm, intonation, sounds etc. If the text is long, the teacher can read some of the interesting sections which will encourage them to read the whole. ``

Now, it is the turn of the students to read first, silently and then loudly individually, in pair or in group. The teacher can then ask them to mark some of the difficult words or expressions in the text and help them to find out the meanings.

From the reading, students will be happy to note that they have formed some clear ideas about the poem before actually going through it.

(C) Post-reading Activities

Post-reading activities are meant to create a suitable situation for the students to express their reactions to reading the text. These will not only deepen their understanding of the text but also generate interest in the creative use of the language. Some of the post-reading activities are:

(i) Comprehension Questions

These questions are meant to assess how far the students have understood the text. The teacher may ask the following questions regarding the poem:

- What are "harness bells"?
- Why does the horse shake his harness bells?

- What other sounds alone can be heard in the woods?
- Why does the poet mention these sounds?
- "My little horse must think it queer" – What does "it" mean here?
- Can the horse think like a human being? Why does the poet give this quality to an animal?

Students may be asked to answer the questions orally or in writing and the teacher can go through the answers and if necessary improve upon them.

Other subsidiary questions may also be asked to know whether the students have understood the poem wholly:

- Who is the narrator of the poem? Is it the poet?
- What do you understand by "poetic persona"?
- Explain what a lyric poem is?
- Is the poet speaking to some one or himself?
- Do you know what soliloquy/monologue is?
- Why does the poet use the Present tense all through the poem?
- Why has the poet repeated the last two lines?
- Explain some of the figures of speech in the poem?

At every stage the teacher is required to give guidance/explanations to the students in answering the questions. They also may be asked to make use of the Internet and Library facilities available.

(ii) *Language Exercises*

A variety of language exercises can be introduced in the class at this juncture. These exercises may be either element-based, focusing on particular areas of language or skill

based, focusing on any four skills of language learning. Some of the language exercises that may be carried out with regard to the present poem are:

- Giving antonyms of the selected words and phrases and change certain lines into passive voice (example: "He will not see me stopping here")
- Change the use of present tense of the poem into past tense a different version of the poem.
- Studying structural peculiarities of the poem (Example: Inverted structure "Whose woods these are I think I know". Ask the students to put the line in the usual prose order. Or repetition of the line "And miles to go before I sleep")

(iii) *Memorizing*

Memorization is a useful pedagogical tool especially regarding poetry. It is not as some say a "rote exercise". On the contrary, memorization allows the students to 'feel' and experience language. It is a profound source of 'spiritual nourishment'. If the poem is very lengthy, some interesting lines or stanzas could be memorized and it is a very fruitful and rewarding experience.

(iv) *Creative Activities*

Re- writing exercises and role playing are two creative activities that the teacher can introduce in order to enhance the students' understanding and appreciation of the poem for the improvement of their expressive and receptive skills.

Re-writing activities may be 'free' or 'controlled'. In the former, students enjoy the freedom of expressing, in their own words, what they have understood from the text. Here they can write a parallel poem using the same theme in a different background, may be a local one. In controlled or guided writing exercises, students are given guidelines.

They may be asked to summarize the poem in a fixed number of words, or to rewrite the text with a different ending.

In role playing, students are asked to assume different roles. Such activities help students gain self confidence and self esteem. In the case of the poem under study, one student can play the role of the poetic persona, who is the narrator of the poem and the other the traveler on horseback. There are numerous poems that the students can perform with the guidance and encouragement from the teacher. Frost's other poems like "The Death of a Hired Man", "Mending Wall", "The Road Not Taken" are a few examples.

5. Conclusion

There are umpteen strategies and methods for teaching literature in the class room. The strategies described in this paper are just a few. They can be applied in the case of teaching any other genres in literature- a short story, a novel or drama. Whatever strategies a teacher adopts in the class, the aim is that students gain a fuller understanding of the text and have linguistically and conceptually prepare themselves to study it for interpretation and evaluation. Using the strategies discussed above, students learn how to make predictions and check them against the details in the given text. They also learn how to derive meaning of a text and form a semantic chain from the key words, examine how language is used to describe a setting and create desired effects, analyze how to assess them, and also find out ways of transferring the text and reconstructing its specific and literal meaning. Thus, with awakened language sensitivity and improved literary insight, they gain the ability to read a literary work critically as a creative expression with aesthetic sensibility. In short, they have learned "literature through language".

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Appendix 1

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

**Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.**

**My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.**

**He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.**

**The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.**

About Abraham Panavelil Abraham

Abraham Panavelil Abraham is a Professor of English teaching at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman. He also taught at Gujarat University, M. S. University of Baroda in India and Sana'a University, Republic of Yemen prior to joining the University of Nizwa. He has over 35 research papers published in reputed journals and volumes including two books- *Sherwood Anderson and the American Short Story* and *A Brief Biography of James Reaney*. His current research interests are teaching of English as a Foreign Language in the Gulf countries, Post Colonial Literatures and Arab/Muslim writings in English.

Research Article: 'TBL: a focused approach in teaching ESL' by Dr. G.A. Ghanshyam

A global language, a universal medium of communication, a bridge between cultures; there are as many epithets as forms of English that represent the face of contemporary global communication. With so much importance attached to a language that reverberates with colonial connotations, English has certainly to face several detractors. From being given a cold shoulder as a foreign language to being viewed as an enemy to indigenous culture and identity, the language has had to confront many obstacles in its journey to the current position of universal language.

In India, English came with the colonial rulers and stayed back long after the colonial masters left for their home shores. Accorded official sanction as the second language of the nation, it still has to deal with prejudices, contempt and hostility. The result is a general disinterest and complacency towards the learning and growth of the language except for acquiring the stipulated 17/25 passing marks or for landing up a job in the education department struggling with a shortage of well trained expertise in the language. The general scenario of the primary and secondary education excluding those of elite schools in terms of English language is pathetic and appalling. In many public schools the job of an English teacher is given to any Tom, Dick or Harry provided the person has an English medium background or the person has taken English as a subject in the under graduate class, irrespective of the fact that the person might be from some other field of study having no expertise or training in language teaching. The sort of education the students receive at this crucial primary and secondary level is open to speculation and the problem that it creates at the tertiary level of higher education is clearly understandable.

As college teachers we have to daily grapple with the problem of a maximum number of students who have zero knowledge of the basics let alone speak or write a complete

meaningful sentence. Higher education also represents a sorry state of affair where ELT is concerned. Apart from the general level of students excluding a minor percentage from elite schools and CBSE backgrounds, it has to make do with poorly trained teaching staff. The imbalance in the level of students' knowledge coupled with irregular and untrained staff is further aggravated with a syllabus that is mostly obsolete having been followed since years with no evaluation of its effectiveness and upgrade. Students either lack an interest due to its low level or simply are not equipped to handle the language.

Today when India has become a hot destination for multinationals, BPO jobs, outsourcing, and is also viewed as a hub for trained professionals in various fields, it is the students who are losing out despite their skill and expertise owing to a lack of communicative ability in English. Language is for communication, verbal as well as non-verbal but the syllabus that is followed (case study: Chhattisgarh) in higher education can hardly claim to be formulated for the purpose. Apart from being outdated it has nothing to offer to the students in terms of motivation and practicality. The syllabus classified into three levels of study in a graduate class: first year, second year and final, concentrates on culture in the first, science in the second and has a mixed content in the third. The course in fact seems to have failed to recognize or has completely ignored the very basic aim of ELT; and that is learning of the language. "Despite efforts during the last four decades or so ELT at the university level is not yet marked by a spirit of dedicated professionalism." (Mohan 58).

In an ELT class the biggest hurdle that an English teacher has to face is the lack of motivation amongst the students. Student centred approach to ELT is a boon that aids the teacher to effectively overcome the obstacle. When the student is empowered and a justifiable balance maintained between guidance and freedom, the learner gets motivated to take positive steps towards language learning. The resultant expertise over the language and confidence gained thereof from individual achievement goes a long way in the overall progress of the student.

Another important aspect that interests the learner is the viability of the course in practical life. Today's world is a highly competitive world and there is no scope for failure. Unless the student is confident that the acquirement of the language skills is going to help and improve upon his practical life, he will try to avoid it, as is usually the case.

Language should be accorded the same status as the other main subjects. The present competitive world is based upon the world of communication or soft skills. Expertise in a particular field is hardly sufficient today unless it is supplemented by a sound and effective command over soft skills. So, language is as important as any other subject in a professional or degree course.

When we focus our attention on the present course followed in colleges in Chhattisgarh, we find hardly any scope or space for improvisation and development of language skills- verbal as well as non-verbal. The course of all three levels of graduation comprises of text based lessons covering topics that hardly hold any interest for the students and their life, a few exercises on vocabulary, composition and grammar. Local markets are flooded with language guides of dubious quality that encourage the students to bunk language classes and are also largely responsible for the poor quality of language skill amongst them.

Language is the life and soul of communication. As such the syllabus that aims to teach language should not be made a handmaid to teach the students culture or science. Communication should be the goal set to achieve for any language course. Every graduate student should be trained and equipped to have a basic level of competence in the usage of English language in his personal and professional life outside the language classroom and after college.

Pondering over the dismal situation of ELT, various experts and linguists, teachers and trainers have come up with innovative and effective approaches. One method that has

gained widespread acceptance and mobility in contemporary times is TBL or Task Based Learning. Distinguished from Text Based Learning, TBL as the name itself explains is more student oriented and practical in approach.

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach which offers students material which they have to actively engage in the processing of in order to achieve a goal or complete a task. Much like regular tasks that we perform everyday such as making the tea, writing an essay, talking to someone on the phone, TBLT seeks to develop students' interlanguage through providing a task and then using language to solve it.

(<http://www.tblt.net/> Published by admin on 05 Mar 2008)

TBL equips the student with the necessary basic language skills and a task or problem or project is introduced that involves the active participation of the students to use their language skills in accomplishing it, just as they will do in a practical situation in life. The language classroom is a preparatory place that prepares the student to use what knowledge they have acquired in the class outside the class in actual life. TBL is an effective method for preparation and practice that the student will use in later life.

Grammatical and linguistic knowledge imparted to the students through well defined course structure will also miss the target of enhancing communicative ability of the learner unless their knowledge is put into practical use. Tasks should be incorporated into the language syllabus based on the knowledge, needs and requirements of the learner in mind. Even simple activities like filling up a bank form or writing an application or resume can be done by the students as part of their project work or task because maximum numbers of students are incapable of performing them accurately. Tasks should basically aim to enhance the ability of the learner to procure and produce meaning rather than form. To quote Nunan, TBL gives more prominence to meaning than to the grammatical form. In fact according to him a task is a:

. . . piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language [English] while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end. (Nunan 4)

The points to be kept in mind while implementing TBL in Indian classroom are the level of the students and the environment; topics that the learners' can relate to; aims to be achieved and most importantly task design. Before undertaking a TBL approach in ELT and designing the task it is necessary that the tasks are practical in approach, help in the development of language skills and communication ability of the learner, are learner centred and interactive, involves project work and oral as well as written tasks.

Topics to be considered:

Sports

Cinema

Games

Hobbies

Holidays

TBL should involve the aforesaid topics that are close to a student's life and interest that they can relate to without much difficulty.

Tasks that can be incorporated:

Interview

Dialogue

Reports

Role Play

Creative Writing

Practical Projects

On the topics mentioned above a number of tasks can be incorporated. Students can prepare reports, summarize or write stories. They can utilize their oral communicative skill through role play, dialogue delivery, presentation or mock interview session. Emphasis should be given on practical tasks or projects that relate to real life situations. Tasks can be performed within the stipulated time period in the classroom or as a part of work outside the class in the form of projects or home task.

Basically TBL requires a certain degree of prior knowledge and a lot of planning. The task has to be well defined and thought out before execution; in addition the way to perform the task, clues, hints, required information and knowledge as well as the expected outcome or result needs to be recognized, defined and communicated to the students before embarking on the task itself. The students should be clear about the task and what and how they are required to perform it, as to achieve the pre-defined outcome. TBL thus involves three stages of development and implementation:

Pre-Task Stage

The stage involves planning of the task to be implemented and providing of the necessary inputs by the teacher to the students. The task is explained and discussed with the learner, giving him clues and hints as to its proper execution. Demo tasks can be undertaken jointly with the aid of the teacher for a better comprehension of the task and its aim. The

expected outcome of the task is clearly explained to the students so that they can work out in the proper direction.

As per the task designed and decided upon it can be an individual activity, group activity, class activity or home activity. The necessary aim has to be ascertained before the type of activity is decided upon.

Task Stage

The main task stage comprises of the student performing the task as decided in the prior stage. The teacher plays an important role. He is to observe and act as a facilitator and counsellor to the students.

The students complete the task accorded to them as per the guidelines provided to achieve the outcome. They chalk out the plans for presentation of the result in the form of a presentation/report/discussion/paperwork.

Post-Task Stage

The post task stage accesses the outcome of the task: mistakes are identified and rectified, task is evaluated through discussion and teacher guidance, task is repeated.

The stage also identifies the stages of error committed by the students, discusses their problem areas and endeavours to overcome the obstacles to effective communication and language learning that they are facing.

Problems addressed by TBL:

Motivation: Tasks should tickle the student's mind into alertness, raising curiosity and the interest to perform.

Learner Centred: Since the students are the one who perform the task with the teacher acting as the facilitator, the teaching process becomes learner centred and more students friendly.

Student-Teacher Interaction: Teacher-student interaction is enhanced particularly in the pre-task and post-task stage with their respective interactive sessions and discussions on planning and preparation, and then on evaluation, assessment and correction.

Language Form: With emphasis shifting more to the meaning than merely the grammatical form, students learn to use language form more completely; drawing on their latent knowledge of form and grammar in a meaningful context.

Practical Language Usage: Tasks are predominantly based on practical usage of the language that enhances the learner's ability to use their linguistic skill in real life situations and context.

Communication: TBL is a communicative approach to ELT, as such it greatly develops the verbal and non-verbal communicative ability of the learners practically.

Comprehension: Meaning being given a priority in TBL, the level comprehension is enhanced among the students for the task has to be clearly understood in order to be executed properly and give a comprehensible and complete outcome.

Spontaneity: Tasks may involve individual or group activity which requires spontaneous thinking and execution on the part of the students. Learners have to develop their thinking process to understand and execute the task.

Group Interaction: Whatever the form of task that is incorporated it involves group interaction as a part of the pre-task, task or post-task phase in the form of discussion, evaluation, repetition, etc.

Confidence: When the learner performs a task successfully it raises his level of confidence upon his accomplishment that further gives an impetus to the learning process as well as to his communicative ability and skill.

Decision Making: Since a task involves ways to perform, so it develops the decision making ability of the students when they decide how and in what way they will perform the task.

Independence: The teacher plays a relatively passive role in the task process. This enhances the quality of independence amongst the students encouraging them to think and communicate independently.

TBL is an active learning approach to ELT that breaks the monotony of a traditional ELT classroom totally dependent upon theoretical teaching and teacher oriented approach. The students work freely in an interactive and independent atmosphere; working out their own meanings, formulating their own approach to the problems and completing the task assigned. By shifting the emphasis on to the student, the learning process is made more students' friendly, interesting, active and practical.

The students are benefitted by a language learning environ that suits to their life and activities, areas of interest and concern. They learn to actively use the language learned, in practical real life situations that gives an added incentive to motivate them further in learning the language. In fact it has completely transformed the image of ELT through its innovative and practical approach. David Nunan analyzing the concept has put together the principles and practices strengthened by TBL:

- A needs-based approach to content selection.
- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
- The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom. (Nunan 1)

TBL or Task based learning links the language classroom to the world outside, playing the role of a bridge that connects the two worlds together and empowering the students to move across confidently from the former to the latter.

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Article: Portfolios in ELT

The following excerpt from “Portfolios in ELT” article has been retrieved from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/portfolios-elt>.

“Portfolios are a popular and effective way of motivating young learners, providing a fun way to review language and helping them to reflect on their own objectives, ways of learning and success.

A brief history of European Language Portfolios

What are Language Portfolios?

Advantages of using them

The problems with Language Portfolios

Using Language Portfolios with young learners

A brief history of European Language Portfolios

Teachers and learners have been working with Language Portfolios since the mid 1990s, and between 1998 and 2000 various ELP models were piloted in Europe.

There has been much literature written about them and there are lots of interesting examples. In the year 2001, which was also the European Year of Languages, The Council of Europe launched ELPs throughout Europe.

Many adult and young learner course books now contain features of language portfolios such as passport activities and learner checklists while many classrooms have learner portfolios stored on their shelves.”

Read the complete article at <http://www.elweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/63-article-portfolios-in-elt/>

Article: 'Looking at Sri Lankn English with hindsight' by Rohana R. Wasala

The following excerpt has been retrieved from the article 'Looking at Sri Lankn English with hindsight' by Rohana R. Wasala (<http://www.island.lk/index.php>)

“As an ordinary citizen and an English language teaching (ELT) professional with some experience, I have no quarrel with the notion of Sri Lankan English/es or the idea of a standard form of it being advocated for teaching in our country, provided that the two basic questions of what Sri Lankan English is, and why it should be promoted are answered to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, authorities, and the general public), and the move supported on a principled basis. Unless and until this is done the current debate will prove to be much ado about nothing.

It is not that these questions have already been dealt with by those competent to do so; what is identified by linguists as Sri Lankan English is even being codified it is claimed. However, apparently, it is only now that public discussion of the matter with a real sense of seriousness is taking shape. This is the time that the future course of the whole exercise (i.e. the implementation of the Standard Sri Lankan English proposal) is to be charted.”

Read the complete article at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/63-article-looking-at-sri-lankn-english-with-hindsight-by-rohana-r-wasala/>

Article: ICT in ELT: Using BBC Learning English Content in ELT, Part 1

Note: To read this article with all the links it features, please go to <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/63-article-ict-in-elt-using-bbc-learning-english-content-in-elt-part-1/>

I teach communication skills to the students of Engineering, Applied Sciences and Pharmacy at Charotar University of Science & Technology where it is possible to have ICT tools in every session for helping students be better learners.

While teaching a course called Communication Skills – 1 to the students of Pharmacy in the academic year 2009-10, I made students sit in the computer laboratory of the institute for their practical session in Communication Skills.

For teaching them Grammar, Vocabulary & Pronunciation, I utilized BBC Learning English web contents. I preferred to use those contents because of three reasons:

1. The contents on BBC Learning English website are crafted and posted by ELT and ESL experts
2. They are highly relevant and explanatory
3. The contents are based on ongoing events in the world. For example, the current title of the BBC Learning English (Grammar, Vocabulary & Pronunciation) page is “Lindsay Lohan sentenced to jail”.

Now let us have a look at what the BBC Learning English (Grammar, Vocabulary & Pronunciation) page contains in it:

- Words in the News

- Ask about English
- News English Extra
- Pronunciation tips
- Keep your English up to date: Series 6.

The subtitles of the contents are:

- Nadal Wimbledon triumph
- Deal on Australian mining tax
- Russian response to spy allegations
- Indefinite articles – ‘an’ or ‘a’?
- Learn about Pronunciation
- Pronounce the sounds of English
- Quizzes about pronunciation; and much more.

How it helped?

Using BBC Learning English website contents helped me in three ways:

1. Improving the language of my learners.
2. Helping them remain updated with what is happening around the world.
3. Involving them actively into the process of learning Grammar, Vocabulary & Pronunciation, where Grammar is considered to be a dry thing to teach.

This week I have just given a brief idea about what I used. In next week's article I will be focusing on the way I made them do things in the laboratory and the results I achieved, and most importantly the students' feedback on this learning process.

Tarun Patel

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

- 1. Papers / Articles:** All articles should be computerized using double-spacing, including tables, references and footnotes. Submission of manuscripts should be done in electronic form only. Electronic version of the article/research paper should be e-mailed to the Editor, ELTWeekly at info@eltweekly.com.
- 2. Abstracts:** An abstract in approximately 200 words should assist the article.
- 3. Abbreviations:** No stops are needed between capitals e.g. ELT, IELTS.
- 4. Figures and Tables:** Tables should be numbered sequentially with Arabic numerals.
- 5. Notes:** Notes should be consecutively numbered and presented at the foot of the page.
- 6. References:** References in the text should follow the author-date system. The complete reference list should be given at the end of the article. They should be in alphabetical order.
- 7. Book Reviews:** Book reviews must contain the name of the author and title / subtitle of the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher and date of publication.
- 8. For Event Submissions:** Please submit your event details at least 30 days prior to the event.
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