

NUANCES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING
– A GLANCE

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ABSTRACT

Creativity in teaching is the need of the hour. As teachers of English, we need to use creative ways to encourage reluctant learners. With the progress of civilization and innovation in Science & Technology, our teaching approaches cannot remain static. These days teaching at most levels, from primary to university has been reduced to a mechanical exercise, where teachers merely provide the information and the learners swallow it only to reproduce it in undigested form in the examination. Teaching in the modern era is marked by a spirit of change and innovation as in any other field; teaching is no more a monologue but a dialogue. With a shift from teacher centric approach to learner centric approach, the teachers of English have started altering their teaching methods to meet the needs of the learners by providing them an opportunity to think, inter-act and present their point of view. English, having gained the status of global language, it's now become the passport for a better career. Hence, to prepare students face the challenges outside the class room creative language teaching and learning is indispensable.

Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and Innovation are the two sides of the same coin. While creativity is the ability to think in different ways, innovation helps in putting the new ideas into practice. English language teachers are now experimenting different techniques leading to much improved approaches for honing and enhancing the skills of the learners in the acquisition of English language. The teacher's role is redefined from the image of an instructor to that of a facilitator who brings out the best from the learner. Learning experiences thus turned into an enriching process of creative learning made possible through an active interaction between the teacher and among the learners. This paper discusses few approaches which would make the teaching-learning process creative and innovative.

Developing oral language skills

The most difficult part for the language learner is the articulation of correct speech sounds, the use of appropriate vocabulary and developing good fluency. Using statements appropriate to the situation requires cultural knowledge of the language which is also pertinent to keep a conversation going, without any barriers to communication. Very often we observe the learner using in-appropriate language without any awareness of the contexts or cultural nuances of the people they are communicating with. The best thing to do is to expose the students to reading aloud in pairs with more focus on fluency. The activity can be carried out with the prescribed text. The next step is to focus on activity based learning.

Activity Based Approaches

To make learning rich and interesting small activities have to be introduced in language learning. Generally learners show interest in group activities. Use of words and sentences for communication among the members of the group and those which aim at accomplishing some language related tasks have to be devised. The activities should be such that they give more scope for listening to different conversations, in developing one's vocabulary and the skill of speaking. If the lessons are not activity based, teachers should adapt activity based approach while teaching them. For instance, vocabulary may be isolated and be introduced as a pre-reading task. Similarly a couple of unique structures may be highlighted to make the learner familiar with such structures. This can be assigned as group tasks or pair work followed by the students performing the objectives in the form of a dialogue or a small skit. The activities should be given in an informal way so that learners are less inhibitive and remain their natural self to a large extent. The prime role of the teacher in this approach is to co-ordinate various activities which give room for collaborative learning making the class more interactive. Activities such as language games, Brainstorming sessions, and Abstract pictures can be adopted with the objective of improving learner's vocabulary. Activities like chain stories improve the listening and speaking skills of the learners. Performing these activities the learners will be able to achieve what they set out to achieve

Language Games

All study; no play makes Jack a dull boy! A maxim rightly insists that the games are no less important tools in developing the skill of a learner. They are motivational tools in the language class room. Games having fun make the learner attentive in acquiring skills better than through any other tool like fill-in the blanks, worksheets etc. While incorporating games into English language class room, the teacher has to analyze the difference between the games played only for fun and the games which impart content and language skills. Games make winners and losers and they may leave pressure on students. Still the teacher has to convert the pressure into a positive competition that motivates to learning the target language. Some tips – Following tips may motivate the students to acquire appropriate language skills through educational games.

- Game must be simple.
- Rules of the game should be catchy
- Duration of the game must be short
- Size of the group should be small
- Interactive playing should be incorporated
- Giving the scores to build competition
- Giving bonus points in due course
- Cheering and clapping all through the game

Role Plays

The students are given role cards that contain information about the role, where the student has the flexibility to add more information to it. This will motivate the students towards a more creative involvement in the learning process. Role Plays also give students an opportunity to prepare for ‘real life’ situations. Talking about real life becomes monotonous and if the learners are provided with a chance to imagine different situations, it adds to their interest in the learning process. In addition the activity gives a chance to use language in newer contexts and prepares them for new topics too. Students may have difficulty in composing their thoughts in English using appropriate grammatical structures and words. It’s here the teachers as facilitators should give prompts wherever necessary encouraging students to guess and produce appropriate utterances. The teachers can expose the learner to new

structures by encouraging them to give a variety of responses rather than the usual set of responses a situation or a role may demand. The focus of the activity should be on producing a text of related sentences suitable for the role rather than on the production and practice of single sentence.

Mind Maps

Teaching can be innovatively done by the use of Mind Maps in the class. The advantages associated with this activity are that these maps can be made quick, easily remembered and reviewed because of their visual impact. Mind Maps can also be effective mnemonics and remembering their shape and structure can provide the cues necessary to remember the information within it. Learning and remembering are made more effective by using the full range of visual and sensory tools. Pictures, music, colour, even touch and smell play part in learning armory. Any information explained with the help of charts, graphs make a high impact on the mind and the teachers of English should try to visualize the concepts and show them to the learners. Teaching through Mind Maps not only brings in very high impact on the minds of the students about a concept but also helps in improving the innovative thinking of the learners.

Videos/Documentaries/Film Clippings

Yet another activity that enhances the oral skills of the learner is showing a short video or documentary. Learning English through films is an innovative way to match the verbal communication with that of the non-verbal communication involved in the language. Video is an exciting way to learn about many things like sounds, pronunciation, gestures, and intonation involved in learning English. Care should be taken while choosing the type of movie suitable to the English Class Room. It helps the students to listen to the pronunciation of the English actors. This fun filled learning experience may make them to get ready to imitate the pronunciation of the native speakers of English language. It should be then followed by oral activities where the students have to give the summary of it in English or discuss the subject shown.

Conclusion

Information and communication technology has brought in many innovations into the field of language teaching and has brought about a paradigm shift in English Language Teaching and Learning. The teachers as facilitators need to create a supportive environment, where a learner can comfortably experiment with the language. English language is an effective learning tool but not merely a subject in today's world of science and technology.

Books Reference

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