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The English Language Teachers' Association of India was registered on August 7, 1974 by the late Padmashri S. Natarajan, a noted educationist of our country.

Periodicity

Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT) is published six times a year: in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Contributions

Articles on ELT are welcome. Share your ideas, innovations, experiences, teaching tips, material reviews and resources on the net with your fellow professionals.

Length: About 2000 words maximum

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Objectives of the Association

- To provide a forum for teachers of English to meet periodically and discuss problems relating to the teaching of English in India.
- To help teachers interact with educational administrators on matters relating to the teaching of English.
- To disseminate information in the ELT field among teachers of English.
- To undertake innovative projects aimed at the improvement of learners' proficiency in English.
- To promote professional solidarity among teachers of English at primary, secondary and university levels.
- To promote professional excellence among its members in all possible ways.

The Journal is sent free to all the registered and active members of the Association. Our Literature Special Interest Group brings out a free online quarterly journal, *Journal of Teaching and Research in English Literature*.

Our consultancy services include teacher training and bi-monthly meetings on current ELT themes relevant to the Indian context.

We host annual, national and international conferences and regional programmes on specific areas relevant to ELT today. Delegates from all over the country as well as from outside participate in them, present papers and conduct workshops.

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

(A Peer-Reviewed Journal)

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EDITORIAL

Without a doubt, we are living through one of 21st century's greatest historical events, full of uncertainty, fear, and strangeness. As the government struggles to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with a prolonged lockdown for schools and colleges, we teachers across the country are bracing ourselves for the 'new normal' in education while exploring how digital education and virtual learning can be expanded and made more accessible. Team JELT deserves appreciation for showing the country how as a teacher of English we can build a technological backbone through digital competency to weather this crisis and to enter a new era of teaching and learning in a digital world.

This issue of the Journal carries a research article 'Student-led seminars in an ELT classroom: An experiment' by Kshema Jose. The article discusses student-led seminars (SLS) as a strategy designed to increase student participation in a teacher education class. The structure builds students' sense of responsibility and accountability for their learning, and it helps them to enhance their understanding of what it means to meet learning targets.

An article by C Praveen titled 'Coping with COVID-19 based disruptions in educational institutions' reviews the current educational scene in the context of the Pandemic, which affects institutional leaders, teachers, and students, and proposes ways of overcoming the current COVID situation.

As a patient may come from any geographical area, the paramedics must understand a common language, which is English, of course. The paper, 'English for empowering paramedics by Vidhya Lokesh aims to explore the practical usability of innovative learning models and their potential to channel the required development successfully. This article aims to delineate the

basis of a framework for innovation in the medical field and provide useful guidance for relevant researchers and practitioners, and could guide local community educators too.

Dhareppa Konnur's 'Use of online videos towards developing communicative competence' provides a platform for teachers of English to cater for learners to meet the needs of the present-day communicative world through 'computeracy'.

'The English Advantage' by Kiran Shetty begins with the various schools of thought which explore how languages are learned. Jalson Jacob, in his paper 'Building better readers: The role of reading strategies' suggests practical remedies to make reading a meaningful academic activity.

'Motivation in second language learning' by L C Deepa traces the development of motivation in second language acquisition. From this account, we see that the role of motivation has always been central to language learning, and that the development of our understanding of this role has mirrored the development of our understanding of the psychological and cognitive aspects of second language acquisition.

We have the regular feature 'Grammar Guru' by Dr. V. Saraswathi, who has discussed 'dangling modifiers' interestingly. Then, Dr. K. Elango presents his 'Reading activity – text structure'. Its objective is to enable readers to familiarize themselves with how writers organize their texts for an enhanced and faster understanding.

I thank ELTAI for allowing me to edit this issue of JELT as a guest editor. I enjoyed it. Your suggestions and feedback are welcome.

Stay Safe by following social distancing. Happy Reading.

Dr. Neeru Tandon

Student-led Seminars in an ESL Classroom: An Experiment

Kshema Jose

ABSTRACT

A large majority of students who complete postgraduate programs in English, ELT, or English literature, go on to become teachers/ trainers. Yet very few courses taught on these programs help students gather the pedagogic experience required to make a successful transition from ‘student’ to ‘teacher’ so that they become comfortable in the classroom (Atkinson, 2001) and deliver effective classes (Young and Bippus, 2008). This paper evaluates the efficacy of student-led seminars as an instructional method to help student-teachers acquire content knowledge and gain pedagogic competence. The paper reports how the ‘Training-to-train’ course delivered to semester III students on the MA program at EFLU, Hyderabad, was redesigned to introduce student-led seminars to encourage students who lacked teaching experience engage better with course contents. This paper discusses in detail the different parts of a modified version of student-led seminars that can be implemented by ESL teachers to facilitate students’ acquisition of complex concepts through experience and reflection.

Keywords: Student-led seminars; pedagogic competence; collaborative learning; peer-teaching; critical thinking.

Introduction

Most postgraduate programs in English, ELT, or English literature use a variety of teaching methods and techniques such as group discussions, presentations, whole-class lectures, tutorials, seminars, etc. to teach a wide range of courses in literature, language education, and linguistics. The fact is, a large majority of those who graduate from these programs go on to become teachers/ trainers and yet very few courses taught help students gather pedagogic experience and form insights into teaching practices while acquiring content knowledge. Both educationists and researchers argue that it is essential for students to be readied early on in their academic career to make a successful

transition from ‘student’ to ‘teacher’ so that they become comfortable in the classroom (Atkinson, 2001) and deliver effective classes (Young and Bippus, 2008). Bullock (2011) reports that most student-teachers find it difficult to apply theory learned in class in actual teaching contexts and argues why students need to be given multiple opportunities to construct professional knowledge of teaching.

Rationale and background

In addition to reading literature, analyzing theories, and critiquing prose and poems, we have to make the students ready to opt for a career in teaching English (which includes teaching English literature, linguistics, and/or

English language teaching). That is, we need to help the students gain pedagogical competence. Teaching courses (for instance, courses like *Principles of English Language Teaching, Developing oral communication skills, Designing instruction materials, etc.*) that help students understand classroom communication and practice, and pedagogic competence will not suffice. Due to a total lack of, or deficits in, work experience, students find it challenging to understand multidisciplinary and complex concepts such as student-centred learning, multiple intelligences, and learner autonomy, that form the crux of most pedagogic competency building courses. This paper proposes that content expertise and teaching experience should be treated as mutually inclusive – developing teaching experience can facilitate a better understanding of content in novice students. And high levels of awareness of core concepts can in turn help students deliver effective teaching. Both are essential for making our students ready for the teaching profession.

Besides, the paper describes how students can acquire highly-specialized knowledge and skills required to deliver high-impact teaching through the student-led seminar method. The paper reports in detail how a *Training-to-train* course delivered to the semester III students on the MA English program at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, was redesigned to introduce student-led seminars to help students who lacked work experience engage more meaningfully with course contents. It was observed that, by the end of the course, students demonstrated a better understanding of the use of language for

effective communication and deploying techniques to match teaching objectives and learner needs.

What are student-led seminars?

Student-led seminars (SLS) follow different formats. However, the basic component of all SLS formats is students making a presentation to peers on a given topic followed by a whole-class discussion. SLS works loosely around the *peer-led team learning* approach proposed by Gosser et al. (2000) where students teach other students in small groups.

When students make a presentation to teach a concept to their peers, they,

- | explain the concept in their own words,
- | identify and use examples to illustrate the concept,
- | relate it to familiar concepts,
- | describe its application in real-life contexts, and
- | indicate its relevance to personal interest.

In addition to facilitating an understanding of pedagogy, student-led seminars illustrate the Feynman learning technique – if you want to learn a concept try teaching it to someone. Teaching a concept to someone who lacks knowledge of that concept helps one understand that concept better (Maurer, 1999). [Richard Feynman (1918–1988) was a Nobel prize-winning physicist.]

Student-led seminars (SLS) are thus different from presentations where students read out carefully written reports in front of a class based on a topic chosen by the teacher. Such presentations are passive and do not expect

or permit peer interaction.

Phases of a student-led seminar

The SLS method described in this paper has five parts:

1. Pre-SLS

Model seminars demonstrated by the teacher: In the first month of the *Training-to-train* course (where SLS, as reported in this paper, were used) the course instructor modelled six seminars. A few core concepts were taught during these seminars to ensure students' foundation-level knowledge. The instructor-led seminars demonstrated the structure of SLS and helped students gain familiarity with the seminar format.

At the end of the month, the students were asked to form groups of three. Presentations can also be individual or in large groups. An advantage of group presentation is that the ensuing discussion has more direction, participation and purpose because there are more people to lead. They were then given a list of topics for seminars and each group was asked to choose topics that appealed to them. Topics can also be teacher-assigned. An advantage of teacher-determined topics is that the discussion can further students' critical thinking skills since they may be called on to present or defend a topic that they do not fully support.

2. Preparing for SLS

Students locate resources and start intra-group reading: Three weeks of the second month were assigned for this stage. In addition to the books and references given by the course instructors to understand seminar topics, students were encouraged to

locate and share within-group additional resources to learn more about the topics. All students read the various sources, prepared notes, interpreted, and reflected on topics as a group.

Inter-group sharing of resources and discussion: Even though a chronological schedule for seminars was in place, all groups were required to do their preparatory reading at the same time. This was to facilitate discussions among groups. In week four of the second month, each group was asked to discuss their topic with other groups. These inter-group discussions helped students learn about other topics, draw links with multiple concepts from other topics, and reflect on their topics in greater depth. It was observed that the nature and extent of collaboration increased over time and many groups succeeded in incorporating elaborate additions from other groups' topics.

Building the seminar outlines: During the same week, groups were asked to structure their seminars using the following template:

- a. Pre-seminar materials (reading, videos, audio, or print tasks) to be given to peers before the seminar.
- b. Content for a two-hour seminar accompanied by a single PowerPoint presentation for all three presenters. Content to be chunked into three segments of 15–20 minutes.
- c. Three interactive breaks at the end of every chunk for while-seminar activities like debate, quiz, discussion, role play, problem-solving activity, case study analysis, and task design.
- d. A post-seminar consolidation activity.

- e. A handout listing important points to be given to all students at the end of the seminar.
- f. Exit slips for immediate classroom assessment of students' understanding of the material. (Evaluation of exit slips was done by the course instructors.) [Exit slips are informal assessments to gauge student understanding of the topic taught. They are collected as written responses from students at the end of a seminar. Questions can range from factual, reflective, evaluative, or application-oriented. Read more at: https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/exit_slips]

Once each group was ready with all six items listed above, the next stage was consulting the course instructors.

3. *Pre-seminar discussion*

A pre-seminar discussion with the course instructors is crucial to ensure that students have comprehended the topic and its various concepts rightly. This step is also important to guide students with designing seminar tasks and/or vetting the activities they create. These discussions also functioned as seminar rehearsals since they helped students plan the better organization of classroom space and fine tune their teaching techniques.

However, the most beneficial use of pre-seminar conversations with the course instructors was that the students gained access to a lot of *rich teacher talk* (Hakuta, 2016). Content competence alone does not guarantee effective delivery of what is learned; teaching effectively requires a different kind of language. It was the pre-seminar consultation with the course instructors that gave the

students the metalanguage required to deliver their seminar topics. Teacher talk also provided students the real-world examples to describe cognitively challenging concepts (Roskos, Christie and Richgels, 2003). It was observed that these examples got reused during seminars as well as during post-seminar whole-class discussions. It was also noticed that the richer the pre-seminar teacher talks were, the lesser was students' performance anxiety.

4. *The actual seminar: each group delivered their SLS at this point.*

5. *Post-seminar assessment*

Assessment of each SLS was performed in two ways: (a) course instructors evaluated whole-class understanding of content taught by each group using exit slips [see point (f) above], and (b) course instructors gave feedback to each group regarding the seminars delivered.

Teacher assessment of whole-class using exit slips was introduced to bring about a change in student perception that the SLS is only a means for assessing presenters' performance. Teacher assessment of content learned motivated the listeners to pay close attention and participate actively; it also made the presenters feel responsible and ensure peer learning.

Post-seminar feedback to each SLS group was structured using the observed learning outcomes (SOLO) framework (Biggs and Collis, 1982). Holistic assessment of seminar structured around the following five levels of SOLO was imparted to each group:

1. Pre-structural – the seminar covered only the basics of the topic in a simple, linear fashion.

2. Uni-structural – the seminar did not adequately discuss all concepts of the topic; it focused only on one concept of the topic.
3. Multi-structural – students were able to present multiple aspects of the topic but these were presented independently/separately; the seminar was unable to present the interrelation among different concepts of the topic.
4. Relational – students were able to present the complexity and *integrativeness* of the topic coherently and lucidly; all seminar activities together led to creating an adequate understanding of the topic in peers.
5. Extended abstract – students were able to move their peers beyond a *relational* understanding of the topic and develop in them a deep understanding of the concepts related to the topic.

Course instructors need to ensure that post-seminar feedback is given within a week of the seminar.

Findings and conclusion

The student-led seminar method as reported in this paper led to content gain and delivery-based accomplishments. Responses to a questionnaire given at the end of the course showed that all students agreed that SLS allowed intense and personally meaningful engagement with various topics. 92% of students reported that they gained in-depth knowledge through the seminars, while 87% of students agreed that seminars increased their self-esteem, reduced performance anxiety, and improved their communication skills.

By giving students the responsibility to prepare and organize their learning, student-led seminars promote learner autonomy, collaborative learning, and critical thinking (Kurczek and Johnson, 2014). By giving students the additional responsibility of imparting their learning to their peers, student-led seminars impart pedagogical competence (Worth, 2013). The SLS model described in this paper explains how the traditional format of student-led seminars can be broadened to encourage the active participation of students by introducing inter-group sharing of content knowledge and whole-class assessment by the teacher.

This paper proposes that incorporating student-led seminars as an instruction method in ESL classes can facilitate a better acquisition of knowledge through pedagogic experience and reflection. The writer suggests that SLS has the potential to help students master difficult concepts. The more our students teach, the deeper their understanding of concepts. The paper also makes a case for using SLS to provide teaching experience for novice students who might be interested in a teaching career.

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Coping with Covid19-based Disruptions in Educational Institutions

C Praveen

ABSTRACT

In developed countries like the US, there are agencies to tackle disasters which minimize disruption and ensure continuity of the learning environments such as the Campus Resilience (CR) Program. The absence of such agencies in India has evoked a sense of urgency in institutions of learning and many are now struggling to cope with ways of addressing the disruption of academic activities owing to the Covid19 pandemic. The disruption in delivery of instruction has prompted actions from the flagship of school and college education in India. The NCERT, for instance, is assiduously planning a social distancing-cum-individualistic teaching and assessment plan. The UGC has given directives to universities to commence new academic sessions only from September instead of June and explore online teaching. How will such changes in view of the Covid shutdown affect the functioning of educational institutions? How successful will plans for online instruction be, given the digital divide existing among institutions as well as students? This article reviews the current educational scene, which affects institutional leaders, teachers, and students and proposes ways of overcoming the current unprecedented state of affairs. A feasible plan of action is proposed which could be implemented by institutional leaders. The article concludes with the affirmation that all planning can succeed only through continuous monitoring and review.

Key words: Disruption in education; institutional leaders; Covid-19 pandemic; online teaching.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has created a disruption in academic activities creating a crisis involving teachers, learners, institutional leaders, and parents. Such unprecedented disruption of the regular functioning of educational institutions has made meticulous planning and coordination of the various systems imperative. A well-rounded and effective educational practice is what is needed now.

While there is talk in the air of attempts in institutions to replace the 'chalk and talk'

mode with online learning, the digital divide and unfamiliarity with the new mode of instruction among teachers has become a major hurdle. What are the problems that have to be overcome? How can institutional leaders address the issue? This article attempts to answer such questions and proposes a step-by-step approach addressing the main stakeholders. It begins by proposing actions for those closely involved in the effective functioning of academic activities in educational institutions in the current situation. It is also hinted that prioritizing those aspects is essential for continuity of

activity in these institutions.

The effect on institutions

In *Times Higher Education*, Ellie Bothwell, in an article titled “Coronavirus: a ‘make or break’ moment for universities”, has observed: “...Pandemic may tip some institutions ‘over the edge’ financially... Universities that fail to successfully transition to online education in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic could be at risk of permanent closure...”

Prof. Caroline Hoxby of Stanford University, speaking about the effect the epidemic is likely to have on university finances, has said: “...It really depends on the capability of the administration – can they get a good share of their instructors to move to an online platform?” (Quoted by Ellie Bothwell in the *Times Higher Education* article).

The effect on institutional leaders

The current crisis has definitely raised a number of questions, both ethical and moral. Everyone is looking forward to an educational leadership which is not just transformational but inspirational, too. We are in for a phase-by-phase application of decision making. The first phase will be one in which we directly confront the Covid19 crisis. In the next phase, there will be attempts to scale up online teaching and learning, and finally arrive at a stage where we draw on lessons from the first two phases and prepare for a learning culture where teaching online becomes a part of the core value of the institution of learning. Here, it is significant to note that many global organizations have pointed out that scaling up for online teaching

and learning is no small endeavour (ICDE, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Researchers have also pointed out that leaders usually fail at the implementation stage of organizational transformation (Kotter, 2012).

The effect on teachers

Kamenetz (2020), discussing the factors related to teaching online during the coronavirus pandemic, makes a reference to the experience of the Faculty of Education at the University of Colorado, who describe their current teaching as “Panic-gogy” (from ‘panic’ and ‘pedagogy’). She goes on to explain: “Panicgogy means understanding students’ practicalities. Some only have smartphones. Some have family responsibilities. Some have been sent home and need to find a new place to live, a new job, and new health insurance and none are sure whether students will show up and take classes the same time every day.” These incidentally are more or less universal issues and have relevance for the Indian educational scene, too.

Further, in many countries teachers are always underappreciated and disenchanted with their own profession. It is while possessing such an unhealthy frame of mind that the Covid crisis has suddenly begun to stretch educational systems to a breaking point. Everywhere teaching is moving online on an unprecedented scale. Naturally, there is a lurking fear, particularly among teachers, that learning will be replaced by inferior alternatives. So it becomes imperative to reflect on ways of mitigating such fears. Teachers have to explore meaningful ways of engaging the learners.

The effect on learners

Students, used to attending school or college where social skills are nurtured in face-to-face contacts, are now suddenly forced to meet and learn online. This is a drastic shift and so the time has come to find ways of engaging students online. Carlsson et al. (2015), who studied the effect of schooling on skills, found that a mere ten days of extra schooling significantly raises scores on tests of the use of knowledge (crystallized intelligence). So, the question that crosses the mind of educationists is whether a virtual learning environment (VLE) can be a good substitute for nurturing the skills.

Effect on home schooling vis-à-vis families

In their study, Bjorklund and Salvanes (2011) perceive the role of families as central to education as parents compliment the input from school and back in homes, learners actually continue their education. This then prompts us to ask the question whether online learning can compensate for the learning lost in school.

When we shift to full-time home schooling, according to Oreopoulos et al. (2006), factors such as the non-cognitive skills of parents, the resources available including good internet connectivity and the amount of knowledge can result in inequality of human capital growth for the affected cohorts.

Online learning as an alternative

The number of institutions of higher education taking the decision to move online is growing every day. Alexander (2020) has curated the status of hundreds of such institutions. Research has found that effective

online learning results from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development (Branch and Dousay, 2015). To make online education effective, an investment in an ecosystem of learner support becomes imperative and this takes time to identify and build. At the same time, online education is quick and inexpensive and, in the present crisis, will in every possibility be full-time 'residential' instruction.

This is a critical time and we need resources. The time has come to activate to optimum use the VLE in campuses with guarantee for technical assistance as a top priority. Perhaps at this stage it would only be appropriate to begin setting up an information processing facility. This should not only function regularly but must be accessible to everyone in the organization. Of course, security and privacy of information should be at the top of the agenda too.

To start with, training students, faculty, and staff to adapt to online teaching needs to be undertaken. This should go hand in hand with an introduction of learning management systems (LMS) and exploration of ways of exploiting the use of Open Source for digital learning, the adoption of mobile-based learning models, and the setting up of Campus Resilience initiatives. In short, the time has come to alter the current pedagogical methods and integrate seamlessly classroom learning with e-learning modes.

Advantages of online learning from an ELT perspective

Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention. The urge to communicate is likely

to make learners explore new ways of communicating. Not only would online discussions provide scope for polishing the ability to communicate, but also make possible the recording of such online discussions a handy document for future reference and pedagogic purposes.

Pedagogic challenges of online instruction

In their review, Redmond et al. (2018) found that online engagement can be categorized under five headings: emotional, social, collaborative, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. In planning for instruction, all these aspects have to be addressed.

1. For institutions

A full online course development project might take months to launch. But the urgency of the situation of somehow getting delivery online has every possibility of affecting quality. The practitioners know that an online platform is a great space for collaborative learning (e.g., discussion forum), but getting students to respond to the posts of peers is not easy. Learners have to be directed to post responses with strict word limit and use a tone that is not jingoistic but accommodative.

Experienced teachers know that web conferencing is always a preferred choice when the group of learners is small, say 30; the students can use their microphone or even chat. However, when the numbers are more, web conferencing becomes just another TV broadcast with little or no scope for interactive learning. Here, too, lack of good internet connectivity can be a big hassle. More importantly, compared to face-to-face instruction, online teaching may not be inclusive.

2. For teachers

Unlike face-to-face instruction, during online instruction the teacher will seldom know whether all the learners are really attentive. Then, posing questions at regular intervals, especially during an online lecture, becomes more of a necessity. More importantly, it takes time for a teacher to become an effective online teacher. Further, most online assessment employs multiple-choice questions. When learning outcomes include the ability to demonstrate a skill, the teacher would have to go in for performance-based assessment, which may involve submission of audio or video recordings by the learner as proof of their learning. Here the digital divide, which affects learners from low income groups, can affect learning and assessment.

3. For learners

Given the novelty of the mode of instruction, students who are quite talkative in the class may tend to be silent online. Further, learners are likely to feel lonely or not cared for, resulting in a sense of anxiety. This would then mean that plans for instruction by the teacher during the proposed online teaching should set up avenues for communication that make the learners feel that they are taken care of and are always connected.

Overcoming challenges through ‘Best Practices’ (BP)

‘Best Practices’ are methods or techniques generally accepted as superior to any other alternative. They often are “a set of guidelines or ideas that represent the most efficient or prudent course of action” (*Investopedia*). The

fact remains that, though a course of action is normally recommended, certain situations require choosing practices that most suit the specific context.

‘Best Practices’ in course design and delivery

CourseArc, a leading digital content authoring and management tool producers, have listed best practices for online course design. They include:

1. Beginning with a clear course syllabus/ content outline
2. Designing course content to suit the specific audience – millennial learners who are comfortable with succinct content with lots of videos and ‘interactivities’
3. Delivering course content in manageable chunks
4. Utilizing design elements that make navigation for learners relatively easy
5. Ensuring content accessibility in addition to integration with assistive technology

While adopting such best practices, CourseArc cautions, it is equally important to design courses addressing learner needs and the intended audience by matching the specific learning outcomes.

‘Best Practices’ in teaching

Salcido and Cole (2018) identified best practices for teaching online. These include:

1. Ensuring instructor presence
2. Motivating learners to make real-world connections

3. Orienting students for online participation, communication, and etiquette
4. Providing clear expectations regarding due dates of assignments and assignment directions
5. Aligning content with course objectives and assessment
6. Feedback that not only checks learning but reinforces important concepts and skills
7. Engaging students by providing challenging and enriching educational experiences

‘Best Practices’ for learners

Canvas, a leading provider of online courses, has listed the following best practices for students taking online courses. Those which have immediate relevance for institutions planning to introduce online instruction include:

1. Schedule times several days a week to work on the course just like a face-to-face class.
2. Read the directions for completing assignments.
3. Communicate with the teacher on a weekly basis via email or by phone.
4. Ask questions so that the teacher will know that what is learned has been properly understood.
5. Try to stay organized by saving files in appropriate folders.
6. Complete the given assignments putting in the best work possible.

7. Maintain a copy of all the answers.

Plan of action

All planning should begin by identifying the problems and nature of support necessary for the staff, changes to be made in infrastructure, if any, and a critical review of assets essential for proper execution of business plans. The planning should be such that it helps coordinate all key functional teams. These have to be undertaken by the institutional leadership. And for this, a communication plan which helps coordinate the new set-up should be a top priority.

Tips for preparation to teach online

Jisc, the London-based agency which specializes in digital education and research, has provided a few practical tips to ensure continuity of learning during enforced absence. A few which are directly related to the focus of this article include:

1. Ask all teaching staff to ensure they can access and know the basics of how to use the VLE.
2. Ensure all teaching staff have access to support for using the VLE.
3. Ensure the accessibility of all content you provide to learners online.
4. Ensure your VLE is enabled to manage online assessment.
5. Support teaching staff to create robust, meaningful, and accessible online assessments.
6. Consider student wellbeing by paying particular attention to vulnerable

students and what additional contact needs they may have, including the setting up of a help desk.

7. Connect with staff without forgetting that they also have their own needs and anxieties, which may overlap with those faced by your students, but which will require separate consideration and treatment.
8. Ensure that the staff are prepared for remote working and encourage them to make their home environment as conducive as possible to effective remote working.
9. Encourage a management culture which is built around trust, flexibility, and outputs, rather than one which leaves staff feeling the need to account for every minute of their working day.
10. A pragmatic approach to the introduction of online pedagogy in this time of unprecedented crisis would be to avoid the temptation to re-create the existing educational ecosystem. Instead, one should attempt to set up instructional support that is reliably available to the teacher and the learners during this Covid-related crisis.
11. Given the existing digital divide in many institutions, while implementing online pedagogy, teachers need to ensure that asynchronous activities receive precedence over synchronous ones. In addition, extension of time for assignment submissions has also to be considered.
12. The nature of the learning task, the

proposed degree of cognitive engagement of the learner, and the strategy employed by the teacher to assess the learning has to be carefully chalked out.

13. It is advisable to set a time schedule for learners to get in touch with the teacher for clarifying doubts when they are working most of the time offline.
14. Long-drawn-out lectures will have to be replaced by short summary type lectures.
15. Discussion forums lend scope for flexible participation. The teacher has to pose consciously questions related to the content taught which is at the same time related to the learning outcomes and assessment.
16. Learning with and from peers through collaborative effort is a feature of online learning. Providing tasks that prompt learners to share their understanding and engage in focused discussions for completion of a task will in every possibility result in meaningful learning.
17. The tendency to relish a sense of belonging and a strong sense of community will always be there among students. This would necessitate the teacher to get students to engage in online discussions on topics where all the members in the group feel that they are connected. Tweaking topics that interest learners and at the same time get them to say something that makes them feel connected is crucial.
18. Writing a general response at the end of all the discussions related to a question

in the discussion forum which becomes a sort consolidation of all of the responses of the participants touching upon the main points by the teacher is essential and may require time and energy.

19. Preparing challenging distractors for multiple-choice questions is likely to be time consuming but is worth the challenge. At the same time, if the questions as such are very difficult, the learners are likely to lose interest in learning online.

The practical tips provided here may equally apply to teaching English in the Indian context with adaptations and enhancements, wherever applicable.

Summing up

There are plenty of resources available online but the scale of change to online learning is likely to stress the system that provides the resources. Further, teachers turning to online teaching for the first time are likely to utilize the online possibilities below the optimum level, but we need to recognize them for the efforts they put in and provide the necessary support to refine their online pedagogic strategies.

The current situation necessitates adoption of e-learning strategies, so it is important to establish benchmarks for the online learning mode. Those in leadership roles have to ensure that there are proper assessment parameters for the e-learning courses that teachers offer. Continuous review and monitoring, possibly with expert assistance, should become a regular feature.

The suggestions made in this article are not all-encompassing but are only meant for institutions and teachers to help with the critical planning phase. Let us realize the fact that what we are experiencing now is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode owing to the Covid-related crisis. Teachers, students, and managements of institutions are asked to do things never before attempted and the absence of a proper role model can not only affect quality but also create confusion. Nevertheless, we have to welcome creative ways of delivery modes and use of tools to match the needs and limitations of both teachers and learners coping without any prior training.

In conclusion, the advice of Dr. Miller, a digital learning professional with over 20 years' experience as an online and face-to-face instructor, on the rush to offer courses online is worth considering: "... there's a high probability of error but also a lot you can do to succeed. Problems may occur due to overtaxed technological infrastructure, your students' disorientation, and fear...the current crisis-driven educational opportunity is a call to action. The reputation and integrity of your institution—and you! —depends upon your offering *engaging* online classes."

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Some useful web tools for speaking skills

Podcasting Tools

Podomatic (<http://www.podomatic.com>)

Spreaker (<http://www.spreaker.com>)

Audioboom (<https://audioboom.com>)

A podcast is an audio broadcast over the web. It is broken up into parts or episodes. Most podcasts are similar to news radio programs and deliver information on a regular basis, but they can also be comedy shows, special music broadcasts or talks. You as a teacher can set up a podcasting channel in Podomatic, Spreaker, or Audioboom.

[**Contributed by Dr. Xavier Pradeep Singh**, Dept of English, St Joseph's College, Trichy]

English for Empowering Paramedics

Vidhya Lokesh

ABSTRACT

English, in the era of globalization and the Internet, is acknowledged globally as a universal language. It is a language interlinked with communication skills. Mastery of this language has a far-reaching impact as it is the common language in the field of trade, commerce, education, research, politics, law, arts, and so on. The current paper explores the need for a course in English specific to the paramedics. Paramedics are healthcare providers who are skilled and authorized to attend to a person during an emergency and stabilize them even before the affected persons are taken to the hospital. They work as a team with doctors, technicians, pharmacists, nurses, and therapists, and many others with whom they interact. Language plays a major role. Therefore, one has to be aware of the language they need to use.

Keywords: English for paramedics; Communication skills in English.

Introduction

English is essential in the school and college curriculum in India; it also plays an integral role in finding job placements in reputed organizations. English has become a language of the Indians since the British colonization and is labeled as a second language. To learn a second language one needs motivation and a good attitude. Above all, since its declaration as the official language, English helps people in their career growth. Today, in the age of globalization and the Internet, English is used in all fields, be it trade, business, engineering, medicine, law, arts, science, politics, information technology, and so on. According to a news article in *India Today*, 2013, which focused on the increase in the number of engineering colleges and students graduating every year, the question of employability of graduates

pursuing graduation in engineering was raised. This emphasizes the need for language skills in the job market. Puneet Kumar Pandey, Senior Director, Talent Management Group, HCL Technologies, stated, “Engineers have to interact with customers. I have come across candidates who cannot draft a straight mail in English that needs to be sent to their customers.” “Written, verbal communication and etiquette have now become a major part of the selection criteria,” he said. Today, it is the same with medical colleges. Although the government scrutinizes the number of students entering the medical field, the intake is 200 per year in the private medical colleges and the challenge is even higher, especially when students from Tamil or other regional language medium schools face crucial challenges in meeting the demands. Language plays a major role, impeding their

entry into a professional course like medicine. English, when seen from one perspective, has become the language of the elites and remains a fruit that cannot be eaten by the poor.

English language skills, intertwined with communication skills, have become important in the field of healthcare, enabling healthcare professionals to communicate with people from across the world. Any healthcare professional requires a lot of technical skills pertaining to their field, but the ability to communicate effectively with their team members, to draw information from the patients, to respond to their queries, feelings, and concerns, to diagnose, and to build a good rapport with them, they need good communication skills.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for specific purposes is related to the teaching and learning of English as a second language or a foreign language, where the specific target of the teachers or the facilitators is to facilitate the student's need in a specific academic, professional, or occupational domain. Hutchinson and Waters attempted to define ESP as a variety of the many possible kinds of language teaching. They say that ESP must not be looked at as a matter of producing specialized varieties of English, and not as a matter of science words and grammar for scientists, but rather a need-based study with specificity and for apparent reasons. This was supported by Dudley-Evans with a note that ESP learning is the "attitude of mind".

Basturkmen, in her book *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*, states that a learner is seen as a learner involved either

in academic, professional, or occupational needs and uses English as a channel to carry out those needs. In an ESP context, the learners would want to attain the 'real world' objectives, objectives requiring specific linguistic competencies. This idea of Basturkmen is strongly supported by Mohammad Kaosar Ahmed in his paper *The ESP Teacher: Issues, Tasks, and Challenges*.

English for Medical Purposes

This term refers to the teaching of English to healthcare providers, from doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, technologists, nutritionists, and emergency service providers, to technicians working as a team to save patients and the caregivers. Equipping them with skills related to their field along with communication skills, interpersonal skills, and language skills would best cater to the protocols of any health sector. The ESP teacher's knowledge and skill in imparting discipline-specific English skills is a very controversial issue. Learners of the respective field would possess a far more in-depth knowledge of their specialization than the teacher. For Strevens (1998:42), the ESP teacher is like the "educated layman", i.e. someone who is familiar with the language of the subject, whereas Robinson (1981) is convinced that what is required from the ESP teacher is a grasp of sub-O level concepts in a given area. These types of controversies can be partly removed by participation in conferences and various kinds of training programs. Lafford (2012) states that the teachers of ESP – in contrast to the non-English LSP practitioners – are much better served by annual conferences conducted by various professional organizations.

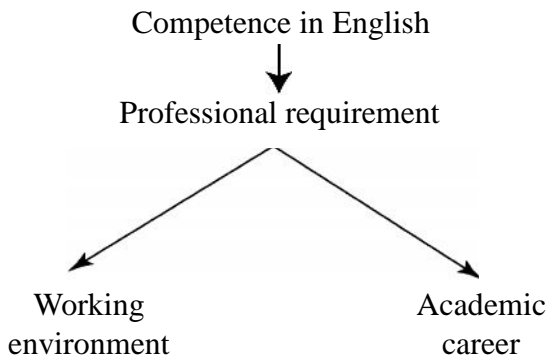


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows that irrespective of the needs, one has to strengthen one’s language competence to fulfill the professional requirements. This completely depends on the working atmosphere and academic profession. It is higher in the field of medicine and its related fields where communication is the basis for everything.

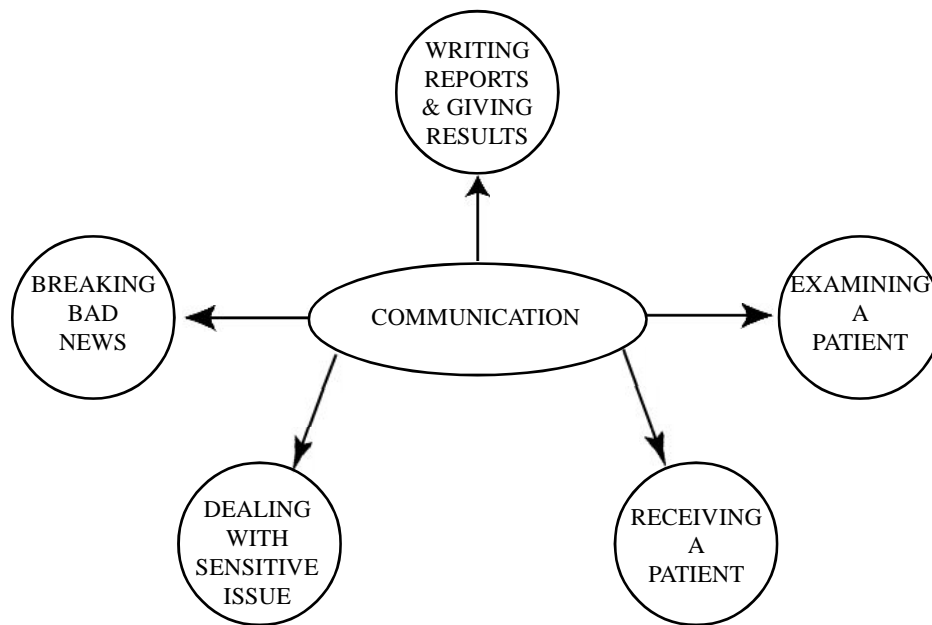


Figure 2

Figure 2 depicts that healthcare providers must possess strong communication skills which would help them in building a good team of other healthcare providers and doctor-patient relationships. A paramedic or healthcare professional should have skills oriented to communication, like questioning skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, good interpersonal skills, writing skills, reporting skills (both oral and written), handling difficult patients, and so on, along

with the four major skills of the English language (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). The skill of questioning would help them in collecting the patient’s history, which would in turn help them with their diagnosis; decision-making skills would enable them to take decisions on the plan of treatment. The foremost skill needed for a healthcare professional is the art of listening, because poor listening could lead to clinical errors. Equal importance must be given to the tone

of speech, especially when dealing with patients or sensitive issues, and when breaking bad news to the patient or the caregivers. Being empathetic and courteous would increase understanding of treatment and improve compliance, leading to improved health. Communication or language barriers between the healthcare professions and the patients can impede effective communication and patient comprehension of health-related information, putting them at risk. A study, *Hospital discharge preparedness for patients with limited English proficiency* says that mixed methods of bedside interpreter-phones show that hospitalized patients with LEP experience significant adversities in patient safety and outcomes of care. Compared to English speakers, patients with LEP are more likely to have serious adverse events during hospitalization, particularly due to communication errors.

Sources Available

To help and support the English teaching facilitators there are some online sources available, such as medicalenglish.com, hospitalenglish.com, and books on medical English. These sources help the language facilitators gather the basics of medical knowledge, with supportive materials for teaching medical terminology, cloze passages on some known or unknown diseases, listening comprehensions related to functions of the human body, and so on, which would add strength to the teachers.

Research questions

1. Can English be considered as a language of the elites?
2. Should language teachers equip

themselves in both general and the specific purposes of learning the language skills?

3. Should language teachers undergo special training to cater to the needs of the learners of any specific field?

The below-attached questions were prepared by the researcher and were orally asked of the students. General responses were given, which showed that the students have identified the need for English. They listed certain situations where they felt they strongly needed good communication skills. For example,

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oral presentation (seminar) 2. Viva voce (Practical sessions both internal as well as the university exam)
Speaking 3. Report writing (investigation/clinical reports to read as well as to write) - | <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | <p>Reading
and
Writing</p> |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Choice of words (vocabulary): the medical terms 5. Pronunciation of terms both common and medical – intertwined (Listening and Reading) 6. Lack of understanding to write on their own after reading a text (During examinations – could understand the concept but find difficulty in putting them in words). With these inputs, this paper focuses on how the healthcare providers can be helped in enhancing their ability to fit into their job of serving society. | | |

Conclusion

To conclude, English, both as a language and

a skill, is to be mastered, especially in a profession, where clinical errors are not acceptable. Good communication among the members of the healthcare team is essential; this ensures effective treatment of patients. On the other hand, poor communication skills, like lack of understanding and poor listening or documentation of reports will affect the efforts of the entire team, who serve to help the patients. Therefore, it is good to equip oneself with good communication skills to accept better opportunities that come one's way.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Use of Online Videos towards Developing Communicative Competence

Dhareppa Konnur

ABSTRACT

While learning the mother tongue, the learners never feel that they are learning a language, but while learning a foreign language they become cautious. When the language learners are asked to speak in English on a given topic/context, they try to speak, but they may not speak well and fluently due to lack of ideas, information, exposure and confidence. Even to write a piece of composition they need to get ideas. So, they escape, avoid or postpone due to inadequate language. Owing to this, they lose confidence; they hesitate to speak, and show reluctance to write. It becomes inevitable to the learners of vernacular background to master communicative competence in English. So, the author feels that using online videos would be a better idea to motivate the learners of heterogeneous groups to enhance their communicative skills. The core of the approach is: 'the more they see, the more they learn'. The present approach is a modernistic approach which provides a platform to teachers to cater for learners to address the needs of present day communicative world through computeracy. The present article focuses on teaching speaking skills through group/team work.

Key words: Speaking skills; communicative competence; online videos; computer literacy.

Introduction

In today's world of Information and Communication Technology, every learner must be tech-savvy and should be ready to open up for computeracy, update and upgrade easily and voluntarily. Therefore, the researcher felt it would be an innovative idea to make the learners acquainted with the English language in an easy and interesting way by using modern technology. When learners are asked to speak on a given topic/context, they may not show interest to speak, but they are attracted towards online videos because of the audio-visual effect and pay greater attention, and learning becomes more

enjoyable.

According to Benson (1991: 202), "Learners' interest, aptitude and motivation for learning English and the chances of success in foreign language ... depend to a large extent on the favourable attitude towards English language." Online videos instill confidence and learners will be easily persuaded to speak. "Motivation ... plays an effective role in academic achievements among students in general and English in particular" (Abdelrahim, 2012). So, the researcher felt that online videos from 'YouTube' will be better to motivate learners to speak, particularly learners of heterogeneous groups,

to enhance their communicative competence. The present paper focuses on teaching speaking skills in English by using online videos from 'YouTube', 'WhatsApp' and different online modes.

Backdrop of the study

In the context of a poor education system, fewer opportunities for language learning are being provided. A language learner has to wait to get a good English teacher in most rural places. Learners of heterogeneous classes come from vernacular backgrounds and have little exposure to the target language, English. They are expected to speak or write on a given topic or context without being given proper training. The learners hesitate to do it because of fear, lack of ideas, and lack of confidence, and are unable to do it: "Ignorance coupled with fear and inhibition obstruct the students' thinking capacity" (Lowrencia, 2011). The researcher felt that a better way to motivate the learners to speak in the target language would be to help them generate ideas and persuade them by showing online videos and video clippings. In the world of developing communication technologies there is no scarcity of internet resources. As most of the learners use 'WhatsApp', sharing selected online videos from 'YouTube' on 'WhatsApp' to each group fosters curiosity, and the learners are more likely to be encouraged to speak. Various forwarded online videos in social media are motivational, inspirational, and persuasive. In the classroom, when the teacher screens such online videos she explains and discusses the concepts or ideas, and sets the objectives of the screening. Later, the learners can be

asked to watch them and understand them. The advantage is that the learners can watch the same video repeatedly with their peers in groups until the ideas become clear to them.

Objectives of the Study

Videos increase student engagement, which in turn would help to boost student achievement. If the students are interested in the material provided, they will understand and remember it better. Videos offer the flexibility to pause/stop, skip, or replay for having class discussions or reviewing particular sections. According to Wange (2015), there are three goals of teaching English with video materials.

(a) To facilitate the development of EFL learners' language skills. It means that the video can give a lot of information to the learners, get their attention to focus on the material in the video, and improve their language competence.

(b) To cultivate students' competence in intercultural communication. When a video is screened in the classroom, it not only gives information about the language, but the learners can also learn about the culture of the English speakers.

(c) To inculcate aesthetic values in students. In this case, the video screened not only provides information about what the students have watched, but is also expected to enhance their sense of appreciation. It can encourage them to have deep critical thinking and critical review. So, the students can get a lot of benefits from the video.

The objectives of using online videos in the English classroom would be:

- a) To instill courage in the learners to speak in the second/target language and to remove the sense of inferiority in terms of language competence;
- b) To boost their confidence, make them fluent in the second/target language, and develop in them a flair for the language;
- c) To make them competent in English by minimizing the influence of the mother tongue and improving the accuracy of their language use;
- d) To strengthen the active vocabulary of the learners in the second/target language;
- e) To prepare them for making public speeches and formal presentations in the second/target language.

Participants and Duration

A batch of thirty learners with two hours of work in a language lab is sufficient to hone their speaking skills. If we engage more students, it might be difficult to achieve the objectives.

Methodology

Methodology includes the procedure, the material used, and the assessment procedure. With the help of proper tools, the learning objectives would be achieved. The activity was designed to help the learners to improve their fluency by making them involve themselves in the process of learning. During this activity, each group was given a different video clip or online video and the handouts related to the video clipping. The learners watched the video clip or online video, answered the questions and expressed their views in the handouts, interacted with the

members of the group, overcame stage fright and spoke. They also developed confidence. In this activity, the classmates needed to support every learner, not allowing demotivating factors play any role.

Procedure

The teacher divided the learners into five groups of six learners each and distributed the handouts to every member of each group. A mobile phone or a tablet with only the video clipping or online video was given to each group. The learners were asked to watch the video and write the answers to the questions given in the handouts. The members of the group discussed, shared their views, and completed the writing task individually. Once the groups were ready, the teacher played each video in the classroom, so that all the learners in the class watched the video. Then, the members of each group came in front of the class to express their ideas related to the video. The teacher appreciated the groups. In the last five or ten minutes, the teacher invited two or three learners to talk about their experience of the group activity and gives suggestions. Finally, the teacher collected feedback from the learners and gave her feedback in detail.

Time management

While conducting such activities time management is important; otherwise, the core focus of the activity will be lost. Grouping the learners, distributing the tablets or mobile phones, and giving out handouts and instructions should all be done within the first ten minutes. Twenty minutes of time should be given to complete the task initially; it may be extended by five or ten minutes to

motivate them to perform better. After playing the video, each group should be given eight to ten minutes of time to speak. One should also keep time for sharing experiences and for feedback.

Material used

Mobile phones and tablets with video clips or online videos; handouts; computer with projector, speakers, and internet connection.

Handouts: The handouts were prepared based on the video clip or online video, which included questions related to that video. The common questions were:

1. What message did you get from the video? What did you learn and what do you want to do?
2. Was the video useful or informative? Did you face any such incident in your life? If you did, can you narrate it?
3. Comment on aspects of the language like style, vocabulary, accent, action, characters, and theme.
4. What was the takeaway from the video? Do you want to share this video with others? If yes, with whom? Why?

Role of the Teacher

To achieve the objectives of the activity the teacher must be a facilitator, mentor, guide, and minute and careful observer. She should give a tablet or a mobile phone with only the video to every group and the corresponding handouts to each member of the group. She should give instructions and assist the learners at various stages. She should monitor

the learners and help them to follow the video. She should motivate the learners by giving time limit to complete the task. She should build an atmosphere of healthy competition, which would motivate the learners to learn effectively. While giving feedback, she should be careful not to demotivate the learners. She has to explain to the learners the importance of building their active vocabulary.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an integral part of any learning process. Learners are evaluated by listening to their interpretation and critical analysis of the video clips from their speeches and from the answers given in the handouts. Their pronunciation, posture, body language, eye contact, hand movements, audibility, tone, and other aspects of formal presentations must be observed.

Results

- a) Each learner spoke on the video in a different style from their perspective.
- b) The interaction of the learners with their peers in their group helped them to analyze and understand the video from various perspectives.
- c) The video clips generated ideas and various thoughts, and even the learners from vernacular backgrounds could overcome stage fright and spoke confidently.
- d) Their logical thinking and analytical skills were also developed.
- e) The learners' communicative competence was enhanced gradually.

Recommendations of the Study

The teacher should:

- a) select motivational/inspiring/heart-touching/sensible videos with different themes with social implications. Before selecting each video, she must check whether the video would help achieve the objectives.
- b) watch the videos well in advance, analyze, and understand them thoroughly and prepare handouts according to them. The questions should cover all the objectives of the activity.
- c) also give numbers to the videos and handouts to avoid confusion.
- d) ensure that there is only the relevant video in the mobile or tablet to prevent the learners from getting distracted.
- e) monitor and guide the learners in analyzing the video and encourage them to complete the task in the given time.
- f) correct the learners' errors immediately while speaking, but correct them later with the whole class.
- g) select the suitable time slot for the screening.

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Grammar Guru 9

V Saraswathi

As a grammar teacher, I often come across sentences like the following in my students' compositions:

Coming up the hall, the clock struck ten.

(When did clocks start walking?)

Flying over the oak tree, the farmer saw the flock of birds that had damaged his crops.

(Since when have farmers started flying?)

This is a very common mistake most of us commit and we are not generally aware of it. Let's look at the correct forms first, and then see why the sentences are wrong.

As I was coming up the hall, the clock struck ten.

The farmer saw the flock of birds flying over the tree. They had damaged his crops.

The phrases in bold above are known as **dangling modifiers**. A **modifier** is a phrase that gives more information about the subject, verb or object in a sentence. The modifier is said to 'dangle' when it relates to the wrong word in the sentence. A **dangling modifier** occurs when a writer starts a construction but forgets where he is going. As a result, there is confusion about the meaning as well as obscurity.

Here are some ludicrous examples:

Coming around the bend in the road, the church was seen.

(Can the church come on the road?)

Running down the street, the house was on fire.

(Can houses run down streets?)

Here are some steps to set right a dangling modifier:

1. Check for modifying phrases at the beginning of sentences.
2. Underline the first noun that follows the modifier.
3. Check if the noun and its modifier are logically related. If not, you have a dangling modifier there.
4. Rewrite the sentence using the appropriate

subject of the modifier.

For example, **coming around the bend** is a modifier, but it is not logically related to the noun **the church**, which follows it. The logical subject of **coming** must be a noun or a pronoun, for example, **I**.

As I was coming around the bend in the road, I saw the church.

Similarly, As I was running down the street, I saw the house on fire.

Michael Swan calls these **misrelated participles** and says that such sentences are common and often seem quite natural when the main clause has a preparatory **It** or **There** as the subject.

Being French, it is surprising that she is a terrible cook.

Having so little time, there wasn't much that I could do.

Would you like to 'undangle' the modifiers in the sentences given below? Try.

a) Locked in the vault for fifty years, the owner of the coins decided to sell them.

b) Sailing up the river, the statue of Liberty was seen.

c) When still a girl, my father joined the army.

Answers:

a) The owner decided to sell the coins locked in the vault for fifty years.

b) While we were sailing up the river, the statue of Liberty was seen.

c) My father joined the army when I was still a girl.

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The English Advantage

Kiran Shetty

Various schools of thought have emerged worldwide which explore how languages are learned. Language teaching methodologies have evolved from being teacher-centered to learner-centered in recent years. One of the parameters of effective language learning and teaching is how effectively the learner is able to use and apply the language in real world.

To explore the use and functionality of the English language beyond the boundaries of the classroom vis-a-vis India, it is vital to review why it was introduced to India. In 1835, Thomas Macaulay's 'Minutes' proposed the introduction of the English language as an instructional medium. Subsequently, the *English Education Act* was passed under Governor General Lord Bentinck. This was carried out to introduce a class of Indians who would be trained to perform subordinate duties in administration while acting as cultural conduits of the English ideology and culture to the larger "vernacular" Indian populace.

The textbooks, curricula, and teaching of the English Language thus laid overt stress on the form of the language, grammar drills, reading and writing, and as deemed necessary during those times, the neat handwritten presentation of the same. Seventy-three years since our Independence in 1947, we have moved rather slowly towards major educational reforms. By and large, we continue to hold on to the way the English language was taught, learnt, and assessed two centuries ago.

Globalization has opened the doors to many multinational industries to our shores. Cross-country trade and services provide new avenues of employment to our youth, and careers that no one imagined before are now a reality. India of the 21st century is young, vibrant, and raring to go.

In such a context, communication in the English language holds the key to conduct business and reach out to the world around us. Industry leaders and companies recruiting Indian candidates have repeatedly lamented the lack of soft skills even in the most meritorious employees. Many are forced to employ soft skills trainers to bridge the gap.

As pursuing higher education in traditional careers or professional ones is now more of a norm than an exception, a need to understand, interact in and externalize English is imperative. Every year scores of Indian students study in overseas universities and discover the hard way that they are ill-equipped to deal with the academic rigour and language requirements needed for higher education.

It is not difficult to deduce the missing pieces of this puzzle to see the big picture. So, while maintaining the status quo with what is demanded from us by the authorities, school administration and exam boards, and the pressure of completing the syllabus before the deadline, how can we translate our classroom time into an experiential one?

An average Indian classroom consists of fifty

to seventy learners depending on where we are geographically located. Some of us may be lucky to teach smaller numbers but that is only a very minuscule percentage.

Recently, many course books emphasize group activities, and teachers sometimes find it challenging to conduct these due to the large numbers of students and the layout of the classroom. As our entire teaching is exam-oriented and coursebook-dependent, there is little or no time to practise the language through conversations and interactions. It is no denying the fact that examination is an essential part of student life but so is using the language beyond the boundaries of the classroom. It is an equally essential life skill in today's world.

Let us go through some of the suggestions given by experts in the field of English language education:

1. Start with questioning if we are engaging the full potential of the students in the class.
2. Engage and fuel the natural curiosity of children to learn and explore.
3. Practise by giving a lot of examples of language beyond those mentioned in the coursebooks and workbooks.
4. Encourage the practice of learnt grammar items and vocabulary in situations beyond the classroom and draw attention to it – for example, on the playground, during lunchtime, or in the library.
5. Spend five minutes with the quiet ones in a one-on-one session after class to check if they 'got it'.

6. Demand more from students in terms of participation in class interaction.
7. Provide tasks like interviewing and recording short videos as language practice activities rather than writing drills. It is important that the task has a **communicative** purpose.

Some of us might be practising these and many more exciting ideas. The field of English language learning and teaching has seen many theories and methodologies propagated, popularized, and debunked over the years. Each has its merits and demerits, and it is only when we start practising them that we realize that a smart teacher needs to combine many methods to reach out to all the students and not only to the handful few who shout out all the answers.

At the heart of language acquisition is figuring out the functionality of the language, understanding that grammar is intrinsic to the language, and that without the adequate lexis delivered with attention to phonology, communication will not be meaningful. This focus on the functionality of language is vital in the real world. This skill transference in language will count in higher education and in the professional field. The English language and its mastery is often touted as the passport to success and strangely is linked to societal acceptance in our country.

As our 21st century world becomes increasingly competitive, interconnected, and challenging, the opportunities for people who can communicate effectively in English for study and employment are growing. The world around us is changing rapidly and we have no choice but to adapt and align. This

was never truer than it is now when the world is cornered by the Corona virus and we as teachers are going through a steep learning curve ourselves.

As English language teachers, we can make a difference and be a part of nation-building for India of the 21st century.

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Building Better Readers: The Role of Reading Strategies

Jalson Jacob

ABSTRACT

Exploring effective reading strategies to tackle the problem of reading comprehension is not an easy pedagogic activity. Students need to be trained to use the reading strategies effectively in order to solve the various issues related to reading. If not equipped to become autonomous, skilled readers, they are unlikely to make academic achievements and excel in their professional lives. This paper details how lack of proper background knowledge in the subject concerned, inability to understand the general content of the topic being discussed, unfamiliar words in a text material, poor grammar knowledge and non-motivating texts hinder smooth reading by the students. It also suggests practical remedies to make reading a meaningful, productive and focussed academic activity.

Key words: Effective reading; good readers; reading strategies.

Introduction

The ability to read in a second language is often considered as the most important skill suggestive of the mastery of a language. According to Anderson (1999), reading is a key to achievement in all other language skill. “The ability to read proficiently is significantly related to how much a person can achieve in his personal and professional life.” (Block & Israel 2005).

In the Kerala scenario, reading is generally considered as the best possible and the most practical way of exposing the learners to the grammar and vocabulary of their second language and thus of acquiring mastery of the language. Right from the kindergarten days, the learners are taught to read the alphabet and monosyllabic words, which is widely acknowledged as the initial steps in gaining mastery of the second language.

When it comes to higher classes, learners are expected to read advanced and complex reading materials, which necessitates the reader to possess deductive and inductive inference skills, ability to comprehend hidden and implied assumptions and the capability to interpret, analyse, synthesize, and evaluate the knowledge base. The leisurely pace with which the learners had grown accustomed to reading in the yester years fails to help them in absorbing advanced reading materials. Here the reading task becomes a not so easy endeavour often demanding the dexterities of a skilled reader who can apply the different strategies to make reading effective. This becomes all the truer in the case of a student of science and technology as he has to deal with voluminous texts loaded with facts, figures and abstract concepts. So it is imperative that students of higher education should be developed

as ‘autonomous, skilled readers’.

In order to meet the demands of the academic environment and the workplace a college student ought to master the reading skills, which otherwise would hamper his/her academic and career prospects. The researcher being a teacher in a higher education institution has come across the various problems faced by the students while reading texts. The common problems the students face while reading are: 1) finding the meaning of unfamiliar words, 2) comprehending the general import of the reading material, 3) lack of background knowledge related to the material, 4) lack of proper grammar knowledge, and 5) texts that lack motivation.

1) Tackling the problem of unfamiliar words

Vocabulary knowledge has been identified as one of the five essential components of reading instruction and a large body of research indicates the critical role it plays in reading comprehension (August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow, 2005; Baumann, 2009; Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997, Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2010). Vocabulary instruction in schools continues to be the teaching of the dictionary meaning of a word rather than equipping the learner to use the word in real life situations.

The challenge that unfamiliar words pose towards the comprehension of a reading text has been the major concern of many a teacher and student and it still remains unresolved. Unless the learners are trained

to comprehend unfamiliar words using different contextual clues, they will spend much time and energy revolving around the meaning of these words. Guessing meaning from context as a way of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary in unedited selections, has been suggested widely by L1 and L2 reading specialists (Dubin, 1993). Nation and Coady (1988) claim that there are two types of contexts. The first type is the context within the text, which includes morphological, semantic and syntactic information in the specific text and the second one is the general context, or non-textual context, which is the background knowledge the reader has about the subjects being read. Only by being sensitive to the context in which a word occurs, can one decide upon its appropriate meaning. The common types of contextual clues are detailed below.

a) Word Presentation: Most often, a close study of the way in which the word/phrase has been presented in the sentence gives adequate clues to arrive at the right meaning of a word. Words do not appear in isolation, but are embedded in the context of a narrative, an argument, an explanation and so on. So in order to determine the meaning of a word, one has to analyse how it occurs in the passage. The meaning of the unknown word might be explained or discussed with the help of a definition or interpretation or an example elsewhere in the passage. In short, a close study of the unknown word and the passage will throw more light on its meaning. Categorisation of the contextual clues and expressions/words which help to identify them are listed below.

Item	Purpose	Signal word / Punctuation	Example
Definition	To give the precise meaning of a word	<i>that is, called, means, parentheses or commas, dashes</i>	<i>Fluoroscopy, examination using fluoroscope, has become a common procedure nowadays.</i>
Synonym	To make the meaning clear, for emphasis	<i>in other words, also, as, like, similarly</i>	<i>The mountain pass was a tortuous road. In other words, it was winding and twisting.</i>
Antonym	To show inequalities, apply contrasts	<i>however, but, although, unlike, on the contrary</i>	<i>The pupils of the eyes contract in light; however, they dilate when it grows dark.</i>
Example	To help infer the meaning of the word	<i>including, such as, for example, for instance</i>	<i>Celestial bodies such as the sun, moon and stars always arouse the curiosity of children.</i>
Cause and effect	To establish something using reason	<i>since, though, thus, so, because</i>	<i>She wanted to impress all her dinner guests with the food she served. So, she carefully studied the necessary culinary arts.</i>

It is generally seen that even these types of training to decipher the meaning of the unfamiliar words are not being given by teachers. It is not the mere familiarisation with these ‘Signal Words’, but also acquiring the skills to identify the ways in which these words help in finding out the meaning of the unfamiliar words that is to be imparted. However, it is to be admitted that, in certain cases this process might not always be successful in arriving at the exact meaning of the word. But this

technique is sure to assist the learners to narrow down the possibilities of the meaning.

b) **Affixes:** One strategy to identify the meaning of unknown words is breaking the word into roots and its smaller parts (affixes). Knowledge of Affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and word roots help students work out the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

For example, the meaning of the word “incredible” can be guessed if one is familiar

with the word “credible” which means “believable”. An idea of the prefix “in”, which generally means *not*, helps in reaching out the correct meaning of the word as

“unbelievable”. Prefixes generally change the meaning of the word and suffixes change the part of speech. Some common prefixes and suffixes are given below.

Prefix	Meaning	Example
non, un, in	not	unhappy, non-violence, inconvenience
Mis	wrongly, not	mislead, misunderstand
Anti	against	antisocial
Inter	between	interstate
Pre	before	Pre-degree
Re	back	reorder
De	reverse	destruction

Root/base	Suffix	Part of speech
explore (v)	exploration	V—N
teach (v)	teacher	V—N
happy (adj)	happiness	Adj—N
acceptable (adj)	acceptability	Adj—N
hospital (n)	hospitalize	N—V

c) **Parsing:** Knowing grammatical category of the word is another way of working out the meaning of the word. It is generally seen that verbs end with morphemes ‘*ing*’, ‘*ed*’ and adverbs with *ly*. If the word ends in “-tion”, it would most probably be a noun. Similarly, if the word ends in “-ise”, it often turns out to be a verb. In a nonsensical sentence like “The tref plened salfully”, one can cleverly guess that ‘plened’ might be a verb and ‘salfully’ an adverb if one knows parsing. This helps him to work out the meaning of the words.

d) **Noun Combinations:** Combinations of nouns are common in academic texts. A “steel box” is a box made of steel and a “computer programmer” is someone who programmes computers. The problem is to understand the relationship between the nouns. A “hand towel” is a towel for drying our hands but a “bath towel” is not a towel for drying the bath. A “paper bag” is a bag made out of paper, but a “hand bag” is not a bag made out of hands and a “shopping bag” is not a bag made out of shopping. Williams (1984) distinguishes ten different functions:

Function	Example	Expansion
B of A	<i>brewery warehouse</i>	the warehouse of (owned by) the brewery
Means	<i>heat-affected zone</i>	the zone affected by heat
Purpose	<i>safety harness</i>	a harness for the purpose of improved safety
Location	<i>roof trusses</i>	trusses on the roof
Materials used	<i>steel boxes</i>	boxes made of steel
Cause and effect	<i>frost damage</i>	damage caused by frost
Extent	<i>tension areas</i>	areas over which there is tension
Characteristic	<i>striation markings</i>	markings characterized by striations
Shape or form	<i>web plates</i>	plates in the shape of webs
Representation	<i>force and motion data</i>	data that represents force and motion

In order to understand these combinations, it is necessary to identify the headword and work backward.

2) Inability to understand the general import of the material

Understanding the main idea of the passage is an important component of comprehension. Main-Idea Comprehension involves a reasonable knowledge of basic grammar, effective comprehension strategies to use with more difficult texts...and a large receptive vocabulary-knowledge base. The different comprehension strategies which would help understanding the reading text are: 1)Skimming, 2)Scanning, 3)Predicting, 4)Summarising, 5)Forming Questions, 6)Inference, 7)Monitoring Comprehension, and 8)Using Graphic Organisers.

Skimming and scanning are two reading strategies that use rapid eye movement and keywords to know what the text is all about. Skimming is reading rapidly in order to get a

general overview of the material, whereas scanning is reading rapidly in order to find specific facts, e.g. figures or names.

Predicting is another reading strategy which makes the reading focussed by checking the predictions that they have made. It allows students to use information from the text such as titles, headings, pictures and diagrams to anticipate what will happen in the story (Bailey, 2015). When making **prediction**, students envision what will come next in the text, based on their prior knowledge.

Summarising as a reading strategy helps students find out the gist of the text.” ...instruction and practice in summarising not only improve students’ ability to summarize texts, but also their overall comprehension of text content” (Duke and Pearson 2002). “A proven activity in summarising is the GIST procedure where students create word summaries of increasingly larger texts” (Cunningham, 1982 as cited in Duke and Pearson).

Asking questions is a comprehension strategy that helps students clarify and comprehend what they are reading. When students regularly ask questions, they are encouraged to interact with the text in a meaningful manner. By trying to answer the questions comprehension is ensured.

Inferencing: For ensuring better reading and to draw conclusions from the given passage students need to develop the ability of inference. This “theory of mind” develops the skill of reading between the lines. “...is a cognitive mechanism that connects what we are currently attempting to understand with memory resources that provide our background knowledge” (Grabe, 2009). Through inference students will be able to draw conclusions, make predictions, identify underlying themes, use information to create meaning from text and use pictures to create meanings (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

Monitoring Comprehension: Monitoring comprehension is a reading strategy which helps to monitor the understanding of the text materials while reading them. In other words, it is metacognitive process of making students think while reading. Skilled readers would recognise that reading is not simply successful decoding of words; rather it is meaning making process which involves a lot of thinking processes. This thinking would enable one to supplement strategies like making connections, asking questions, making inferences when a text becomes complicated.

3) Prior Knowledge/Background Knowledge

The ability to recall information, and

concepts that one has already learnt previously, while reading a text, leads to better comprehension. “Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known” (Koda, 2005). Good readers always bring the information that they know to connect, infer and make judgements about the text they read. The information includes the ideas/concepts similar in theme to the reading topic, inferences/reflections made about the topic and some mental constructs about the theme developed.

4) Grammatical Competence

Is knowledge of grammar essential? Grammar knowledge never comes up as a topic for discussion when dealing with reading skills because it is often treated as a separate entity which needs a lot of time to master. But studies prove that there is a strong correlation between grammar knowledge and reading skills. Grammatical knowledge plays a significant role in lexical inference and developing an awareness of the context of the passage. A proper knowledge of tenses would inform us about the general context of the passage with regard to time; passives would help in understanding more about the subject and object of the sentence. Relative clauses make clear which person or thing we are referring to. In short, grammar knowledge would provide many discrete sets of information and contribute to the understanding of the reading.

The more comprehensive the grammar knowledge is, the higher the learners’ proficiency level in guessing words will be.

Therefore, it appears useful to put more focus on grammar teaching in the pedagogical settings so that it enhances language learning in all aspects.

5) Motivation

Motivation has an important role in the development of reading skills and this wide ranging topic involves multi components like teachers, instructional materials, classroom climate, setting up of goals, etc. It is seen that 'skilled readers' use their own reading strategies to comprehend a text material and have developed themselves as autonomous readers trying to overcome the hardships of reading. "Motivated individuals are optimistic, willing to work on different tasks, and aware of their capabilities: they want choice in controlling their environment and their learning, expect success, build connections with others, experience pleasure from their work, and take pride in their achievements. In brief, positive motivation is what activates effective language behaviour" (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000).

A major strategy to keep learners motivated, it is generally believed, is to provide texts which are interesting. But one cannot expect that he/she would come across only interesting texts in real life situations and again chances are slim that the learners can select and read the materials of their choice in their workplace situation. So the task of the teacher is to equip one to be intrinsically motivated to solve the problems of reading. Giving proper feedback on the learners' accomplishments and helping the learners to set their own goals are two ways to create motivation among the learners.

Conclusion

Acquiring reading strategies has become all the more important for students as they are faced with the ever increasing demand to understand academic texts. Reading strategies make students independent learners and readers. Teachers should enable students to apply, co-ordinate, adjust and modify reading strategies in order to make sense out of a reading text.

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Motivation in Second Language Learning

L C Deepa

ABSTRACT

Proficiency in English is essential for success in today's highly interconnected world, but the majority of undergraduate learners remain deficient in English. Motivation, being a malleable learner variable, can be manipulated in such a way that a maximum number of learners achieve a desirable level of ESL competence. This paper attempts a theoretical study of motivation and its significance in ESL learning.

Keywords: Motivation; ESL competence; attitude.

Introduction

Motivation is the one variable in the absence of which no learning can happen. Learning can take place only when the learner has a desire to learn, and when he recognizes that it is a meaningful activity. In the case of Mother Tongue (MT) acquisition, motivation is always present. But in learning a foreign language (FL) or a second language (L2) formally, the whole situation is artificial. However, motivation of some sort exists: students are aware of the importance of English, which makes them put in the necessary effort; but how to make them sustain the interest is a significant question.

Lennon (1993, p. 41) calls it “the most important single factor influencing continuing development in oral proficiency.” Corder (1967, p. 164) is of the view that “given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data.” According to Littlewood (1984, p.53), “In second language learning, as in every other field of human learning, motivation is the crucial force, which determines whether a

learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres.” It is a complex phenomenon and includes many components: the individual's drive, need for achievement and success, curiosity, desire for stimulation and new experience, and so on.

Theories of Motivation

The early psychological approaches to learning gave rise to the concept of classical conditioning and behaviorism, which consider motivation mainly in terms of external forces: the Stimulus-Response bond. That is, how one behaves in order to meet one's needs, how this behaviour is reinforced when those needs are met, and how this reinforcement affects future behaviour. Murray (1938) identified a large number of human needs, such as our need to affiliate with other people, our need to dominate others, our need to understand or make sense of our worlds, as well as basic biological needs, which cause inner tensions. Motivation was thus defined in terms of the pressure or the urge to release the tension and satisfy the needs.

The keystone of the Achievement Theory of motivation, proposed by Atkinson (1964), is that people differ significantly in their need to achieve or to be successful and that the assessment of such differences had important implications for their learning patterns. Rivers (1983, p.151) defines achievement motivation as “the inherent desire of all human beings to achieve something of excellence.” This need to achieve, interacting with external factors, determines the achievement of success. A person may also tend to avoid engaging in a particular activity because of a fear of failure. “Achievement motivation for any individual can thus be determined by the relative strength of the tendency to approach a task compared with the strength of the tendency to avoid the task” (Williams and Burden 1997, p. 114).

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs/ Motivation Pyramid envisages that every individual has a hierarchy of needs, which can be variously applied to specific situations. An individual is naturally motivated to achieve higher-order needs which can be achieved only if the lower order needs have been fulfilled (Wright 1987, p.29).

The implications of this hierarchy are of great significance in the field of L2 learning. The physical needs must be fulfilled first: the hungry and the cold can hardly feel an urgent need to learn another language. When the next level—the need for safety, security, and stability—is gratified, the students need to feel that they are accepted by their teachers and peers. Their potential can be realized through educational programs only when they are socially accepted and rise in self-esteem. Once the lower-level needs of safety,

belonging, and esteem are fulfilled, the students’ strong drives will be devoted to self-actualization, self-fulfilment, and self-realization.

Therefore, if L2 learning does not seem to yield the expected result, the reasons may be traced to unsatisfactory lower levels of the hierarchy. Also, what the teacher perceives as learners’ needs may be different from the learners’ own perceptions. If students do not appear to be interested in SL learning activities as designed by the teacher, they should be modified to suit, at least to some extent, the students’ real needs, interests, and preoccupations.

Gardner’s (1985, p.147) Socio-educational Model of language learning has greatly contributed to the research on motivation in FL and L2 learning. It incorporates the learners’ cultural beliefs, their attitudes towards the learning situation, their integrativeness, and their motivation. The essential element, motivation, is described as “the effort, want (desire) and affect associated with learning a second language.” The ‘desire’ factor is intimately related to Integrative/Instrumental orientations of motivation. The component ‘affect’, relating to factors such as risk-taking, self-esteem, and anxiety, is defined as a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language, plus favourable attitudes towards the language. For the purpose of measurement, Gardner and his associates define motivation slightly differently, as comprising a desire to learn the language, motivational intensity, and attitudes towards learning the language.

During the 1990s, writers such as Crookes

and Schmidt (1991) and Dornyei (1994) put forward alternative ways of conceptualizing motivation in FL and L2 learning. Dornyei's (1994) model is a three-level categorization of different components involved in motivation and acknowledges the situational factors involved in L2 learning. The language level relates to the various orientations and motives of the learner (culture, community, the utility of the L2, etc.); the learner level involves individual characteristics of the learner; and the situation level includes social factors such as the teacher and group dynamics. This model highlights that motivation is a multifaceted phenomenon that will be affected by situational factors.

The cognitive view of motivation attributes the key role to choice: why people decide to act in certain ways, what factors influence the choices they make, and the amount of effort one is prepared to make in order to achieve one's goals. Thus, one makes decisions about one's own actions, and the role of the teacher is to help and enable learners to make suitable decisions. This is opposed to the behavioristic perspective according to which one's actions are determined by external forces such as rewards, over which one has no control. However, the purely cognitive approach fails to take account of the whole person of the learner: the influence of psychological and environmental factors.

On the other hand, the social-constructivist perspective of motivation, founded on a cognitive framework, presented by Williams and Burden (1997, p.120), holds that each individual is motivated differently. Motivation is defined as "a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a

conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)."

At the centre of motivation is the individual's decision to act, whether to do something, how much effort to expend on it, the degree of perseverance, and so on. These decisions also depend on one's internal attributes like interest, curiosity, perceived value of the activity, self-concept regarding one's strengths and weaknesses, sense of control over one's actions, attitude to language-learning in general, to the target language and the target language community in particular, affective states such as anxiety, fear, confidence, etc., age, gender, and so on.

The decision is also influenced by external factors that interact with each other, such as parents, teachers, peers, exams, feedback, learning environment—the size of the class, school ethos, etc.; societal expectations, cultural norms, etc. For instance, the culture of a country influences the educational system which in turn affects schools, teachers, parents, and others.

The internal factors, which interact with each other in a dynamic manner, undergo dynamic interaction with the external forces as well. The extent to which these factors interact with each other and the relative importance attributed to them by the individual affect the level and extent of learner's motivation to complete a task. The social constructivist approach is thus "cognitive and constructivist, socially contextualised and dynamically interactive" (Williams and Burden 1997, p.140).

Thus, the social-constructivist model of motivation has significant pedagogical implications. Teachers usually attempt to motivate learners simply by arousing an initial interest, for instance, presenting an interesting language activity, but motivating implies far more than this. Even after the commencement of the activity, the effort needs to be sustained so as to achieve the goal, by processes internal to the learner but influenced by the environment.

Instrumental/Integrative Motivation

Gardner (1985) suggests that motivation can take an integrative or instrumental orientation. An integrative orientation occurs when a language is learned because of a genuine interest in the language—a desire to identify with and move closer to the community where the language is spoken. Learners are willing to regard themselves as potential members of the target language community, have a low degree of ethnocentrism, and a love of other cultures and ways of life. On the other hand, L2 learners who are instrumentally motivated, learn the L2 as a useful instrument towards furthering other goals or as a means to other ends, such as passing exams, career enhancement, or financial rewards. It is held that an integrative orientation will be more lasting and more concurrent with the achievement of L2 proficiency since it is an essential and enduring part of the learner’s personality. But, instrumentally motivated learners are more influenced by external factors such as rewards, which are regarded as less constant.

However, as viewed by Littlewood (1984,

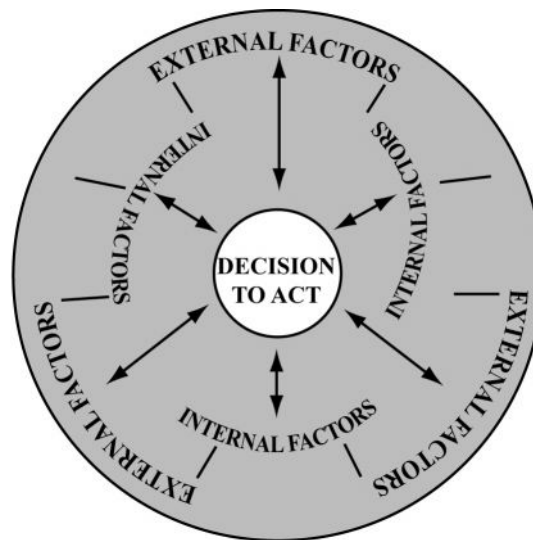


Fig. 1. The Social-Constructivist Model of Motivation

p.57), “the two kinds of motivation do not exclude each other: most learners are motivated by a mixture of integrative and instrumental reasons.” Burstall et.al. (1974), in a study of secondary pupils learning an FL in British schools, found that both instrumental and integrative orientation played a part in success. Therefore, it may be inferred that, while integrative motivation is perhaps more important in an SL context such as learning French in Canada or English in the USA, instrumental orientation may be important in situations such as learning English in the Philippines or India or in other contexts where English functions more as a foreign language, as in Japan. More recent studies are doubtful of the instrumental/integrative distinction, but still stress the importance of positive attitude to the SL country as well as the instrumental aspect of motivation. Thus, we see that it cannot be asserted, as Gardner originally did, that integrative motivation is necessarily more beneficial than other forms.

The distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation is similar to that between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, conceived by cognitive psychologists in theories of learning in general. Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (1989) provide a clear definition of these concepts. Motivation is considered to be extrinsic when the only reason for performing an act is to gain something outside the activity itself, such as passing an examination or obtaining financial rewards. Conversely, when the act of doing something generates interest and enjoyment, and the reason for performing the activity lies within the activity itself, the motivation is intrinsic. Thus, an intrinsically motivated person does an activity for its own sake, or as an end in itself, whereas an extrinsically motivated person considers an activity as a means to an end.

Factors that Affect Motivation

Several factors have been identified as influencing the level of motivation of L2 learners. These include the following.

1. Need for Communication

The chief objective of learning an L2 is the need for communication. The degree of this need depends to a large extent on the nature of the social group in which the learner lives. In L2 situations, the language is used for internal communication, for social contacts or professional enhancement, for instance, in a bilingual or multilingual community. There is a similar need for an SL for internal communication among linguistic minorities. In contrast, in an FL situation, the language has no internal functions and is used mainly for communicating with outsiders and hence,

communicative need is less, as in learning of French in England, English in Germany, Japan or Holland (Littlewood 1984).

The need to communicate varies widely among individuals, within any community. Littlewood cites the example of older women in some immigrant families in Britain, who, having less desire for contacts outside the home, achieve only limited proficiency in the SL, perhaps just enough to satisfy their survival needs. Clare Burstall et.al. (1978) found that there were more successful foreign language learners among children of middle-class families than working-class families because they were more oriented towards contacts outside their own community. Thus, people who reach an advanced level of proficiency in the foreign language are those who perceive a high degree of communicative value in it.

2. Attitude Toward the L2 Community

According to Littlewood (1984), motivation is promoted by favourable attitudes towards the L2 community, due to two reasons. First, attitudes influence the perceived purpose of learning the SL. Favourable attitudes to the speakers of the SL make one seek more contact with them, which reinforces the communicative need. Secondly, our attitudes toward the foreign culture influence the nature of the process of SL learning. When learning a foreign language, we are, to some extent, giving up markers of our own identity to adopt those of another cultural group. If we favour such a process that results in cultural modifications, SL learning can enrich and liberate us. Otherwise, there may be strong internal barriers against learning, which create only resentment and insecurity

in the learners. Learning may proceed only to the minimum level required by external demands. If the L2 community is not so familiar to the learners to have positive or negative attitudes, and if an L2 is learnt primarily for its international function, attitudes relate more directly to the classroom learning experience.

3. Curiosity/Interest

Curiosity can be provoked by making tasks surprising, incongruous, or innovative. The tasks must ensure an optimum level of arousal and complexity, in order to be motivating. Too complex a task is likely to induce confusion. The notion of optimal arousal was put forward by Csikszentmihalyi and associates (1989), who coined the term 'flow experience' to describe the sense of total involvement—a state of sustained arousal.

4. Sense of Achievement

Another factor that affects the learner's level of motivation is his experience of success. A sense of progress achieved is the greatest motivation one can think of in any learning situation. Yet, the relationship between achievement and motivation is a controversial one, as to which leads to which. Researchers such as Gardner (1985, p. 153) have claimed that achievement in L2 learning is mainly the result of motivation and aptitude. Meanwhile, there is equally convincing evidence that success heightens motivation (Burstall et al. 1974). Conversely, failure may demotivate students, which may lead to further failure.

5. Perceived Value of the Learning Activity

The greater the value that individuals attach to the involvement in an activity, the more highly motivated they will be, both to engage and persist in the activity. This holds good whether they are influenced by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation (Williams and Burden 1997).

Crookes and Schmidt ((1991, p.488) point out that motivation is strongest when learners find their ability to be equal to the challenge, and both as comparatively high; in other words, when they have "the sense of feeling competent and feeling challenged."

6. Understanding of the Learning Objectives

A poor understanding of the learning objectives may reduce learners' motivation and will to succeed. This is also true if learners' objectives are in conflict with the teacher's. If learners are not able to pursue what Allwright (1984, p.3) calls a "personal agenda" for language learning, it may severely ruin their motivation. The language teacher must discuss with the learners why they are carrying out particular learning tasks and how each of them leads them towards this goal. Again, learners may be involved in making decisions about what activity to perform, how to go about them and how much effort to expend.

7. Self-concept

Motivation is greatly affected by the students' perception of themselves. High degrees of self-esteem have been associated positively with oral proficiency in L2 (Heyde 1977). Learners with high self-esteem are rarely embarrassed when communicating in a strange language or in an unfamiliar situation. The association between language proficiency and risk-taking is generally held

to be directly proportional, particularly in oral communication. Beebe (1983) argues that learners having high self-esteem attempt to improve their L2 ability by listening to and using language which is beyond their present proficiency level, and are more ready to risk making mistakes or to project a reduced image of themselves.

8. Feedback

The nature of feedback provided to learners is a powerful motivating influence. External reinforcers in the form of rewards—gold stars, house points, tokens—often prove to be excellent ways to motivate under-achieving or reluctant learners. Extra homework, detention, and reprimands for poor learning progress are intended as motivators towards positive change, but they can often have the opposite effect. Nevertheless, there are great dangers in relying excessively on rewards and praise as motivators since these can have a potentially negative effect, especially if learners are already extrinsically motivated (Williams and Burden 1997).

9. External/Environmental Factors

The teacher can build a supportive learning environment which fosters the will to learn, and where individuals are encouraged to express themselves and develop their full potential and individuality, thereby creating powerful motivating conditions in the classroom.

In spite of the multitude of research which proves that motivation is related to success in L2 learning, there is no clear indication as to how motivation affects learning: whether it is motivation that produces successful

learning, or whether it is successful learning that enhances motivation (Skehan 1989). Moreover, the concept of motivation is composed of many different and overlapping factors such as attitude and curiosity. These, in turn, will differ in different situations and are also subject to various external influences. Therefore, any debate on motivation is inevitably complicated.

Educational Implications

Many of our actions are prompted by a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. It is usually found that our students learn English for purely extrinsic reasons. Learners must be offered tasks that exploit their intrinsic motivation at the stages of initiating and sustaining motivation, and promote in them interest, curiosity, challenge, and development of independent mastery and judgment. A good language teacher can make language learning more fruitful by encouraging intrinsic motivation—by helping them see value in carrying out activities for their own sake rather than purely for external reasons.

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Reading Activity - Text Structure*

K. Elango

Objective: To enable readers to familiarize themselves with how writers organize their texts for an enhanced and faster understanding.

Participation: Individual

Material

Any text; for instance, “The real solution to fake news”

[Source: <https://reboot-foundation.org/the-real-solution-to-fake-news/>]

Preparation

Focusing on how a writer presents his ideas, develops and organises them.

Procedure

1. Read the article, “The real solution to fake news”. The first reading can be faster to get a gist of it.
2. The second reading will focus on how the ideas are presented. Consider the beginning of the text: the writer in the first two paragraphs briefly explains what the problem is and establishes its globalized nature.
3. Having stated the problem, notice how the writer moves on to present the solution. First, he points out the solution attempted so far and the futility of it, and hence proposes a solution that he considers viable and implementable. In the subsequent paragraphs, he analyses the challenges faced in eliminating fake news.
4. Further, consider whether the article suggests several solutions to the issue at hand. (The writer sticks to one solution, underscores the difficulties faced and emphasizes the significance of critical thinking.)
5. Find out how the article is developed. (Having stated that fake news is a problem for students, he extends it by mentioning that it is a serious issue for all and discusses elaborately the importance of logical thinking to combat it.)
6. Focus on the ending of the article. (The writer does not clutter the article with too many

solutions but with just one and forcefully argues its significance and relevance to the 21st century.)

7. Reflect on the overall structure of the article. (Starting with the explicit statement of the problem the writer moves on to deal with the solution and the challenges encountered and emphasizes the significance of the solution.)

8. Lastly, examine how the discourse markers are used in the article. (He tends to employ ‘but’ frequently, whenever he attempts to connect ideas.) Find out how and for what purposes the other discourse markers such as ‘for instance’, ‘after all’, ‘if’, ‘in fact’, and so on are used throughout the article.

(It is a good illustration of a *problem-solution* write up.)

Learning Outcomes

1. Learners realise that, rather than jumping into reading a text blindly, they need to keep the textual structure in mind to comprehend it better.
2. Learners understand that they need to focus on the discourse markers to identify the direction in which the writer is leading the readers.

Further Reading

When any expository text is read, readers should consciously keep in focus its organisational structure.

***Text structure:** It refers to how a text is organised. In expository writing (compare and contrast, cause and effect, problem and solution, argumentative, chronological and descriptive), the structure of the text is quite evident. Along with the organisation of ideas, the discourse markers employed reveal the nature of the text.

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