ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR TAMIL MEDIUM AND RURAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Learning English Language is the dire and absolute need of the hour. English is the global language, it is a language that connects the world and the people. English language is highly required for gaining knowledge, workplace exposure and to personally uplift one’s social status. Students generally join the degree course without the basic knowledge of English. To gain proficiency in English is very important to the students. The very pathetic thing is that the students complete their graduation without acquiring the basic communication skills. The students are expected to have some knowledge of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. To teach English to the Tamil medium students requires a special care, patience and skill. Certain strategies have to be adopted to enhance their overall improvement and betterment in acquiring English language skills. Reading habits should be inculcated for enhancing the communication skills. Motivation and team work is a very important factor to improve the student’s competency in acquiring the language. Peer group interaction will definitely improve the students English language skills.

Keywords: Reading habits, Peer group interaction, communication skills.

Introduction

Language has been used as a tool of communication for centuries. It has enabled us to interact with the environment we live and also helps to regulate one’s social behavior. Language is indeed one of the most prized possessions of mankind. Ever since the dawn of civilization, man has been trying to exploit the flexibility and dynamism of language for the conduct of his day-to-day affairs. But in this attempt he has been only partially successful. Though human society has progressed with remarkable speed, the use of language for communication is not still free from ignorance, prejudice and superstition.

English language is regarded as the language of elite groups. English is frequently used in the sphere of Education, Government and Employment. It is used as a medium for communication, press and media. We can find many newspapers, journals and magazines being published in English. English language is gaining momentum and world wide popularity.

The main problem with the Tamil medium students is that English is taught to them as a subject and not as a language. Moreover, passing the examination becomes more important to the students rather than gaining mastery over the language. In fact, the rural students are equally intelligent like any other English medium student, but the former possess a kind of shyness and inhibition in using the language. He thinks that he cannot speak or write clearly and precisely like the latter. Although the medium of instruction is English, the students are made more comfortable only in Tamil. The rural students should be highly motivated to shed off their fear in grammar. The students have a very vague idea in the use of verbs, tense etc. This poses a serious threat and de-motivates them to perform better. The students should be
taught to understand Grammar very easily. Once this is done, they can easily understand that English is a very beautiful and a friendly language like any other vernacular language.

To overcome the problem of educating the Tamil medium students every college is equipped with a language lab which provides training session to the students to understand the basics of grammar and nuances in speaking and listening skills. It must be made clear to the students that only listening can help them to acquire a language. They must be made to understand that they acquired their mother tongue only by listening. This indeed will motivate and create a right attitude to acquire and understand the global language.

The primitive method of chalk and talk, textbook teaching has become more outdated. This method of teaching does not involve the students and bring out the desired holistic development. Hence it is the appropriate right time to follow strategies for motivating the students to develop and acquire the language. The students should be encouraged in reading, role play, and creative story telling etc which will enhance their interest and provide them a very conducive environment for effective acquisition of English language.

**Brief Sketch for Teaching English to Rural Students**

Students who walk into the college are from the rural background and they become the real victims of not understanding the beauty of the language. These students are the first generation graduates. They have very less knowledge of the language. To aggravate misery of the students, the teacher’s profuse use of books and their attempt to teach through translation method only make the students tiresome and this creates a kind of boredom. The teachers most frequently use mother tongue to explain the difficult concept. The class room very often becomes bilingual. At this juncture, the students understand the concept but fail to acquire the proficiency of the language. Hence, the use of bilingual should be completely avoided or restricted in the class room. “The use of two languages in the classroom can be done in such a way to provide comprehensible input in the target language”. It is very clear that the mother tongue influence should be completely avoided.

Next, the system of our Education is also responsible for the present condition. Our education system focuses only on passing the examination with a good credit points, rather than helping the students in acquiring the life skills. There is very less scope of teaching beyond the text. The teachers are also very keen to complete their text within the stipulated period of time. All these become a great hindrance for the Tamil medium students to acquire English knowledge. At the same time, it must be clearly understood that the students from the rural set up lack motivation. These students should be motivated to a greater extent. A burning desire to acquire the language skill should be instilled in them. The students must realize that they too can accomplish and acquire language.

**Key Factors to Motivate the Tamil Medium Students to Gain Mastery of Language**

The biggest challenge the English teacher faces in her career is capturing the student’s attention, and sowing creative and brain storming ideas into them. It is the expectation of
every teacher that a student should be very enthusiastic even after they leave the classroom. To make this happen, classroom experience need to be innovative to sustain the interest of the prospective students.

1. **Creative Teaching and Writing**

   The Tamil medium students should be encouraged to sharpen their creativity and develop their creative ideas. They must be given absolute freedom to explore and narrow down their creative ideas. Whatever be the output of their creativity, it should be encouraged at the firsthand.

2. **Audio and Video Tools**

   Audio-visual materials can be introduced to supplement text books. Mind mapping will help the Tamil medium students to imagine and develop their lateral thinking skills. By looking at the video and listening to the audio they tend to emulate the style of the speaker. This imitation is the first road to success in understanding any language acquisition. These are the shortcuts to develop their ability to listen and better understand the concept.

3. **Real Life Experience**

   The usual lessons can be linked to the real world experience. By proper blend of the real life incidents and the text book incidents the monotonous class will certainly transformed into lively atmosphere. This will definitely help the students to understand and grasp the essence of the concept. This will spark and ignite their interest.

4. **Role Play**

   Teaching through role play will make the students to step out of their comfort zone and develop their intrapersonal skills. In addition to these, there should be stimulating class room environment. This cordial environment serves dual purpose. This is helpful both to the student as well as to the teachers. The main purpose of education is not just making a student literate but to develop and grow their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

5. **Sense of Humor**

   To make a universal appeal to the students, teaching should be blended with the sense of humor. Humor becomes an effective medium of teaching. Everyone loves a teacher with a good sense of humor. This sense of humor builds a very good rapport between the teacher and the student. This helps the students to love the subject. Humor spreads and strengthens the bond between the mentor and the students.

6. **Mnemonics:**

   This term sounds new but the application of this term makes the concept easily understandable and very clear. Mnemonics is nothing but the associated meaning in words. This technique when applied helps the students to narrow down the concept and understand the idea better. Example, Only words are predominately used than sentence, once the students understand the meaning of the word, they build a sentence and the teacher can read and explain it.
7. **Wide Spread use of Dictionary**

Dictionary must be used widely by the rural students. This usage will definitely enrich their word power. The students tend to understand the usage of words and their vocabulary will also improve to larger extent.

8. **Reading Habits**

The Tamil medium students must be encouraged to read newspapers. This reading habit and listening to English news will enable them to pick up new words and listening will help them to know how to pronounce the words with clarity.

9. **Peer Group Interaction**

Peer group interaction is an excellent method of teaching and learning. The teacher facilitates the discussion asking questions and eliciting answers. The students cannot remain passive in this interaction programme; instead they need to have a thorough knowledge in the subject.

Peer interaction makes the students to concentrate more in the lessons, because they need to ask questions and reply suitably. Group work as a form of co-operative learning means that several people work together to finish a certain learning goal (Adams And Hamm, 1990) Group work improves students learning interest, their ability and creative thinking (Johnson & Niles, 2004) and improves their team spirit and social communication skills.

Peer group interaction will help the students to improve grammatical competence, pronunciation, vocabulary and sentence structures. In the beginning the students may be bit reluctant to take up peer interaction, but once they are divided into micro groups, they are motivated and are no longer passive to participate.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, all the above discussion and strategies when adopted among the Tamil medium students is sure to bring about a positive change in their attitude to acquire a language. Moreover, “Education is nothing but, a manifestation of perfection already present in man”. We must make the younger generation understand that Language acts as a repository of wisdom, a propeller for the advancement of knowledge and a telescope to view the vision of the future.

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