



TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS USING MATRIMONY ADS

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ABSTRACT

The present research reports on the importance and use of interactive materials in the teaching of English. Learners are expected to have a desired knowledge of English while entering the college. Advertisements are easily available and accessible materials which can be exploited for language teaching. They can be used in teaching the basic communication skills – LSRW along with a special focus on grammar and vocabulary. The present report records the use of matrimony ads used as a material to enhance the communication skills of the learners.

Key words: advertising, communication, interactive, materials.

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INTRODUCTION

Newspapers are the easily available and perennial sources of information which can be utilised for language teaching. The 21st century learners who are said to be with 'limited attention span' should be involved with different kinds of activities and tasks so as to engage them and educate them. In this context, the role of a teacher is as that of a moderator and facilitator; s/he has to prepare materials based on the needs and linguistic level of the learners as well as to address their interests. In order to serve the purpose, advertisements shortly known as ads are one of the tools used for language teaching. Ads can be used in the language classroom to enhance the communication skills of the learners.

Impact of mass media

Media like that of literature has two major functions – to educate and to entertain. Media

includes newspapers, television, internet, mobile phones, computers, etc. In the globalized era, people use mass media as an important tool to gather information, socialize and make decisions. The impact of media on the society is significant. Most of the times, media determines the behaviour of the people especially the youth. Advertising is an area where people are forced to buy what is publicized in the media. The impact of mass media is both positive and negative on the general public. Besides giving awareness about the things and trends in the market, it monopolizes the mindset of the common public.

Use of Audio Visual aids in classroom

Audio visual aids are more appealing than pictures as they reach out to two senses. Teaching with audio visual aids is not boring as it avoids the usage of Johnsonian long structures. Ads convey more information as they are spiced with pictures,

catchy words, slogans and symbols which attract everyone. Besides basic communication skills, they open themselves to a lot of advanced communication activities in English such as describing and interpreting pictures, learning new combination of rhyming words and forming new words, using appropriate words to convey wise statements and interpreting symbols to define things. Using mass media materials improves the memory power, associative ability, and application tactics and sharpens the creative acumen of the learners.

Interactive course materials

Interactive as described by Merriam - Webster Online dictionary, is "involving the actions or input of a user." Interactive materials are those which interact with themselves to reveal the exact meaning and the purpose and thus making themselves comprehensive. Instead of going to the established items of grammar book, thesaurus or appendices, learners can comprehend the meaning of the text in relation with the other materials included in the textbook. Comprehension of these materials demands the consultation of other materials in the same textbook. It develops study skills and promotes self – learning. The term 'interactive' is used as interaction among the materials is made imperative and also demands interaction with the learners' knowledge repertoire to make the materials more comprehensive. It increases the motivation level of the learners. Learning takes place when it is relevant and fun to the learners. Interactive materials are designed in such a way that they keep the learners engaging in the learning process applying the cognitive domain. The learners know their progress as they do the task or activity. They receive immediate and non-judgmental feedback. (Warchoalk, 2000).

Interactive materials can be introduced within the units, and then they can be extended within the syllabus of a particular level and further be consulted other than what is in the syllabus. The term "interactive" is used to refer to the fact that comprehension of a material demands interaction with other materials, the learners and the teachers.

General objectives

- The communication skills (LSRW) of the learners will be enhanced.
- They are encouraged to involve in the classroom activities with interest.

Specific objectives

- Learners will comprehend the text given for listening and answer the questions.
- They will be able to comprehend the given passage and recommend a suitable match.
- They will be able to prepare an invitation card.
- They will be able to conduct an event (here - wedding).
- They will know how to use adjectives, adverbs, sentence structure and use of present tense.

Benefactors

The target group is the Undergraduate rural learners. They are socially, politically and linguistically disadvantaged.

Interactive materials and methodology used

A short – term programme with more thrust on speaking and writing skills is planned and executed. The material chosen are the matrimony ads from the newspapers. The learners are given a brainstorming session of the matrimonial procedure followed in Tamil Nadu, India. Then they are asked to listen to the matrimony ads read out by the teacher. Questions are asked to check their listening skill. Some of the questions are:

- (i) What are the expectations of a groom?
- (ii) What are the expectations of a bride?
- (iii) List the words that are used to describe the family background.
- (iv) What are the words used to describe the educational qualification?
- (v) List the words that are used to refer to the cultural background of the bride and the groom.

Then the learners are divided into groups. Each group is given ten matrimony ads of bride and groom each. They are asked to recommend a suitable match from the given ads. After the groups finalize the suitable match for the bride and the groom, they are given samples of wedding invitations. Next they are asked to prepare two wedding cards – a family card (a card given to the family members and relatives) and a friends' card (a

card given to the friends of the bride and the groom). Then they are given topics for role play and are asked to perform. The topics are:

- (i) Booking marriage hall, catering service, decoration and flowers, photography and rooms for the guests.
- (ii) Preparing and printing wedding cards.
- (iii) Purchasing costumes for bride and groom.
- (iv) Purchasing return gifts for the guests.
- (v) Arranging for transport.
- (vi) Seeking permission from the religious heads.

Main and sub skills trained

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the main skills trained. The sub skills of listening include identifying appropriate words, proper nouns, adjectives and descriptive words. The following are the sub - skills of speaking – expressing opinions, thoughts, choosing exact words to describe, consulting, negotiating, compromising, agreeing, disagreeing, convincing, giving directions, giving suggestions, debating over, seeking permission and concluding. The sub skills of writing includes differentiating between formal and informal writing, choosing the right word to use in the invitation, following the register and designing the card keeping in mind the value of the tradition and custom. The learners are also trained in framing yes/no questions and ‘wh’ questions, sentences for describing a process, use of polite words, choosing the appropriate synonym from the given the list of synonyms, use of ‘please’ and use of cohesive devices.

Analysis of the material

The materials used are matrimony ads and invitation cards. These materials interact with each other and the learners are expected to consult the materials when they are given each activity. For example, matrimony ad is used for listening practice and the same can be consulted while reading exercise is done. This leads to the next activity where they prepare a wedding card and further conducting the event (wedding) as a role play. The materials interact within themselves and the learners and of course the learners have to interact among themselves and also with the materials.

This programme does show some significant improvement in the learners in using

communication skills. However, there are learner variables such as motivation and attitude which interferes with the acquisition and they still have impact in the learning process.

Although there is no complete elimination of negative features or errors, the learners have shown improvement in areas such as accuracy in using words and sentences, organization of ideas per T/unit, rate of speech, number of sentences per T/unit, reduction of pauses, and the like. In addition to that; self – confidence is boosted up, participation in the classroom activities is enhanced and application of the learning in different situation is honed.

Findings

The findings of the study are listed below:

- Learners found the activity interesting, though there was hesitation on the part of the learners in the beginning. Since they are not allowed to express their opinion about matrimony in their families, they were not comfortable to voice out their likings at the beginning. But towards the end of the activity, the participation level was high.
- The learners were able to decide on only two extreme ideas – good or bad. Through this programme, they were trained to use specific and polite expressions such as ‘Could I make a call?’ ‘I am afraid it doesn’t suit you well’. They were even trained to use strong and courteous way of convincing others – ‘Could you look from this point of view?’ Use of ‘could’ rather than ‘can’ was stressed upon during the programme.
- They were made to differentiate between formal and informal writing. In formal writing, solemnity and seriousness of the matter is maintained, whereas in informal writing, the tone is more conversational.
- They were encouraged to use ‘please’ and polite words while speaking and writing.
- They were asked to write the pros and cons while agreeing or disagreeing with some issues.

- The general objective was to make them involved in the process of teaching and learning and this was done.
- It is found out that interaction with the materials and other learners plays a major role in language learning.
- Grammar should not be taught as a separate entity; instead it should be taught along with the skills.
- Immediate feedback of the learners' performance and the learning process enhances learning and active involvement in the tasks.
- The learners expected accuracy to be maintained in the language they use and hence were afraid of making mistakes in a heterogeneous class. This reveals the fact that the adult learners' competency in using simple structures and appropriate words is less than what is expected of them.
- The language environment in which the learners of English have their mother tongue for their rescue itself is a hindrance to use the target language. The social, political and cultural background of the learners affects the learning of English to a large extent.

Conclusion

Communication is the ultimate aim of language learning. Learning takes place when there is meaningful interaction. As a result of many researches carried out in this area, it is found that it is necessary to update the materials and methodology used. The teacher's role is pivotal in the classroom and s/he has to create a conducive learning atmosphere. Opportunities must be created for the learners to use the language. The study confirmed the fact that learning takes place when the materials are interesting and engaging the learners. Interactive course materials with optimum teacher talking time (TTT) enhance language learning. Thus, the short term programme had enabled the learners to stretch their use of the target language.

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