

TEACHING VOCABULARY THROUGH GAMES-A SANGUINE STEP

By

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is predominant in improving one's communicative skill. Language is more powerful when it is being used perfectly. Teachers should consider the background of learners and aid them to learn and develop their vocabulary in many interesting ways especially through games. This paper deals with a productive and a logical study, done on a set of college students to improve the vocabulary of first generation learners at college level through games. Learners should be exposed to develop basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Print and visual media help learners to acquire more words interestingly.

Key words: Predominant, Logical, Productive Study, First Generation Learners

INTRODUCTION

Knowing a language implies the mastery of basic speech sounds grammatical pattern and essential vocabulary through the four basic skills, viz., listening [understanding], speaking, reading and writing. Adequate knowledge of vocabulary is one of the causes of failure of students in educational institutions. The English teacher plays a predominant role to help her students to acquire sufficient vocabulary to comprehend. Language is more powerful when it is being used perfectly. The more it is used, the better it is learnt. Students should be given opportunities to speak in English with their known vocabulary. Teacher should motivate students to speak and never highlight their grammatical mistakes openly but personally.

To know how to use the words and sentence structure one should have a close observation of the language. Ability to use words and expressions is the reward to students. In class, students should be trained to pay due attention to words and make them to be familiar with the meanings, the ways in which they combine with their words and connotation. Teacher should provide students with opportunities to help them acquire mastery over the usage of words. Students want something holistic, something exciting and something new with a slice of life in it.

Selection of vocabulary is essential to improvise the spoken and written form of students. Proper attention should be taken in selecting the words and the methods to be followed in the classroom. Popular and useful words should be given prime preference. As an English teacher, the

authors experimented various methods [key method was to make students to get a newspaper everyday] to the undergraduate Foundation English classes [especially first generation learners]. The first generation learners have a disadvantage of not having 'high exposure' to the target language. Many a student thinks that knowing English and speaking English is meant for elite group or 'English medium' students. An English teacher should shield herself with many innovative and interesting techniques, as a result students will muster confidence to face any challenges attributed to communication.

In English language teaching, many techniques and methods are adopted by teachers to make students to learn the language successfully. Students' fear for the language should be eroded, by giving them opportunity to learn the language at ease.

Visual aid is an important tool for learning. Students can be allowed to watch and learn. Advertisements are also helpful to students to hone language. A sense of wonder is not something that takes language forward. Apart from stimulating the imagination, such methods help students remember concepts, as learning is linked to real life experience. Such learning happens after a student is directly involved in day-to-day activities. English teaching should develop the soft skills of the learners. Such teachings should aid students to break their shells and lease new energy and confidence. To make the students involvement the observer conducted various games to stimulate interest among them. Arrive to a point where you would

give appropriate vocabulary and situation to students so that they can speak English accurately rather than fluently. These students had no English background at home but a little knowledge in school [studied in Tamil medium but studied English as a second language till higher secondary] helped them to understand some words in English.

Methodology

This section describes the methodology adopted to collect data for the study. Forty students from a semi-urban aided college, chromepet were selected for the study. The students studied in Tamil medium till class X. The background, age, motivation, confidence of all the students were the same.

Hypothesis

Do games help students in English learning? Does the pronunciation get improved? Do the students with modern technologies are better than that of the children with only teaching in English learning?

Materials

The following instruments were being used to conduct games to improve students' vocabulary

- Flashcards
- Print advertisements
- Newspaper
- Mobile
- Dictionary
- Pictures

The Empirical Study

Dividing the class into groups or pairs is extremely suited for teaching English.

The observer adopted various games that were filled with infotainment.

- Visual Game
- Pronunciation game.
- Just opposite
- One word = many words
- Check the words
- Words extension

- Improvisation
- Dramatize a scene
- Photo-judging session
- Just a minute
- Guess who? Or role plays
- Situation demands or ship wreck.

Visual Game

The students were provided with enough number of products from newspaper or visual denotation to understand the product names. For ex: Whirlpool, Rin, Vim, Aerial, Tide, Surf, Boost, etc., Asked the meaning of the name of the products, incredibly, students enjoyed answering them.

Students never forget the meanings and this helps them to develop their vocabulary.

Pronunciation Game

This game helped students to improve their pronunciation and understand the difference between similar sounds in English like 'p' & 'b', 'sh' & 's', 't' & 'd'. Many tongue twisters were given to improve their pronunciation.

Just Opposite

This game helped students to get acquainted with various synonyms and antonyms.

One Word = Many Words

The game helped students to learn many words as much as possible.

e.g. encyclopedia – cycle, load, pea, end etc.,

Chair – air, hair.

Similarly a sentence with wrong words in it was given to students and made them to correct the sentence to make it as a meaningful one.

e.g. The lion waits for its pray [prey]

My father adviced me [advised]

Check The Word

A list of words especially taken from visual advertisements was given and asked students to give meanings or frame sentences. For Eg.

- Fragrance

- Sharper
- Effective
- Dangerous
- Non-sticky
- Pronunciation

Words Extension

Students felt hard in finding the meanings for the above given words, so the observer had provided them with some clues. For Ex:

Advertisement [product] - English words

Horlicks - Taller, stronger, sharper

Clearsil - Pimples, great, effective, close-up

Parachute hair gel - Non-sticky

Air wick - fragrance

Tata sky - Pronunciation

ICCI Prudential, - life insurance Very dangerous, business news, education, retirement.

This game helped them to observe the words and incline them to use in their day today conversation.

Improvisation

A group of four students was given a situation a day before and they were expected to enact it on the next day.

e.g. It is raining, you are at home alone. There is a knock on the door

Dramatize A Scene

Students were given an opportunity to speak freely and the observer asked them to enact a story or a situation, from their prescribed English syllabus, of their choice. Some students needed some assistance and some of them exchanged their self-written dialogues by using the key words from the text.

Photo – Judging Session

Four pictures were selected from a newspaper and made students to work in groups and allowed them to describe, narrate, analyze and explain the photograph. Students were asked to narrate the pictures in past tense. Time was provided to students. Freedom of expression is important for them. A good picture generates confidence to students to speak freely. In the first class, students could not describe

the photo in three or four sentences. Their errors were being noted and rectified. In the second class, they started to spin the yarn and created their own story. This time their errors were not corrected because their performance provided the reformulated corrected versions.

Just A Minute

Students were given a minute and asked them to talk on topics like success, failure, ambition, well being etc.,

Guess Who? Or Role Play

Students were asked to take on a particular role and imagine her in that role in a particular situation. She had to hold a conversation with the interviewer appropriate to the role and the situation given. Sometimes the interaction might take place between two students. The situation was selected from the newspaper and the key words were given beforehand. A time limit was set. The role play between students could be great fun. Students' spontaneity and creativity was greatly appreciable.

Situation Demands Or Ship Wreck

Students were given a critical situation so that they could speak to protect their stand. Errors were noted and after the session the errors were explained and corrected. The students gained confidence to talk for a longer period of time.

Observation From The Study

The students were fond of games, actions, animation that drew them to pick up the vocabulary interestingly. Young students learn a language at any cost and at any situation but when it comes to quick and easy learning action-oriented method is more effective for them.

Using photos in teaching vocabulary make students to be inspired and motivated to learn more interestingly. This method will help teachers to develop their students' socio-cultural, psychosocial, cognitive intelligence. Eight steps can develop the cognitive processes in students:

- Receiving the attention of learners
- Discharge the objective of using games
- Recall the previous knowledge
- Motivating the learners views
- Converting the views into meanings

- Obtain the response
- Provide feedback
- Corrective and Positive overview.

Results and Discussion

While teaching vocabulary through games it is not only the language skills a teacher develops but also inculcates other soft skills like sharing, caring etc., in students.

We can use games by making it innovative, and today's youth are beamed to learn many things in different and interesting ways.

Students learn much in situations that involve conversations, they learn from observing events, natural or contrived; they learn from watching animated pictures and they learn from their own self-generated mental operations. Whether teaching involves a teacher, a textbook, a motion picture, a television set or whatever its ultimate function is to bring about a change in the student.

Students discover new ideas and try to implement them in their day to day life as a result the ideas are deeper and remembered for a long time by them.

Language is very difficult to comprehend through rote learning. Experiments make it easier and more vivid. Experiments kindle the joy of learning in children. Without them learning becomes dry and unappealing. "Experience, observation, reflection and testing in new situations - these are the keys to meaningful learning process. Apart from stimulating the imagination, these processes help students remember concepts, as learning is linked to real life experience. Such learning happens after a student is directly involved in day-to-day activities.

All conducting the games, the forty students were good at intelligence, motivation, confidence, usage of words, spellings, fluency and accuracy

Students never found their classes boring and unexciting. They were not under pressure of learning a second language but had a pleasure of learning the language. Students used all their senses and were fully involved; by observing and copying sounds, gestures and by watching and listening. They acquired second language through exploring, experimenting, making inaccuracies, reiterating their understanding with a sense of confidence

Suggestions to Teachers

In this knowledge age, students face a cutthroat competition wherein English language plays a pivotal role to make them a good competitor. Using modern gizmos or technology in the classroom will make students to get involved in learning new things interestingly. Though the conventional listen and learn method was of little use in the present scenario, teachers should revamp the structure of teaching children by introducing touch and feel method in the classroom.

To give children all-round development in every domain like social, personal, emotional, language, cognitive, sensory and physical, one should give holistic and child-centered approach. This approach should give a complete experience to students on a 'thematic rhyme' within the range of experiences and understandings of them. This approach is called 'thematic approach' focuses on a total learning experience, which makes the children 'the whole'.

The advantages of thematic games are:

- Students can contribute to the development of the theme through their own interest.
- Involvement will sustain their interest.
- Thematic rhymes can promote useful links between inside and outside the classroom experiences.
- Developing the relationship between oneself and others.
- Developing the relationship with technology

Conclusion

This study shows that the receptive process of language learning is merely based on exposure, interest, observation, and stimulus. It is clear that no assessment procedure used so far is flawless. Perhaps no approach could be perfect. It is for the teacher to devise his or her own approach, using the best from the prevailing techniques. Any approach that improvises the communication part of students should be encouraged and regarded as good or sometimes the best.

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