

Analysis of Support Materials in English Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: The research paper entitled “*Analysis of Support Materials in English Language Teaching and Learning*” Focuses on detailing the aspects of support materials in English language such as Cartoons as Support Material, Newspaper Middle as Support Material, Folk Tales and Anecdotes as Support Materials, Riddles, Crossword Puzzles and Jokes as Support Materials, Proverbs, Limericks and Malapropisms as Support materials. And analyses the Though this may be true, yet another truth is that one can use support materials and keenly engage the learners in the language learning process by giving them pleasure. Language play is one of the ways in which English teaching and learning can be made an entertaining as well as worthwhile experience.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, English Language Learning.

1. Introduction

The greatest essential challenge for a teacher is that she or he should try to hold the interest of the learners. If the text fails to interest them, the teacher should discover new ideas and unite them into his or her collection. There are sufficient of support materials that can be used for English language teaching or learning purposes in the classroom. Students can be cheered to study and try-out with a large variety of text types such as newspaper middles, cartoons, riddles, jokes, puzzles, limericks, malapropisms, folktales, anecdotes and proverbs. Though these are not likely to be essential for specific exams, but in most cases such activities help in interesting students and developing their appreciation of text types. The language consciousness exercise will lead them to think about words, rhythm, and all the best way of carrying an idea unmistakably and in brief. They are therefore, formative as well as worthwhile. They offer a wide range of thought-provoking activities that will develop students’ creative and imaginative writing skills. They can be used as supplementary materials to complement another course and deliver greater emphasis on communicative skills.

One’s aim is to motivate students to grasp various skills and express themselves without obstruction. They should learn to speak and write and take desire in doing so. The focus must be on activities that will lead to open expression. Exercises should be intended in sequence to lead from comprehension of the material to student production. Students will be well prepared to talk and write about a topic after they have worked with texts, developed some vocabulary, and recognized some important issues surrounding

the topic. Production activities must develop certainly out of comprehension activities. Comprehension activities should never be ends in themselves; they should be a means to an end, such as, the basis for production in speech or writing.

The learner should be stimulated to do the numerous tasks by working in pairs or groups but they should keep up their individual records. The individual work put in by the learners will allow them to become independent and overcome their fear of expressing themselves. Language and grammar need not to be focus in the initial stages. We should not be too worried about errors. We should aim for effective communication without stressing mistakes and faults. The support materials taken for analysis in the present paper going to deal with have been selected keeping in mind to heighten language teaching and learning at college level.

2. Analysis of Support Materials in English Language Teaching and Learning

1. Cartoons as Support Material

By means of cartoons in the English classroom can motivate learners. A teacher can select a cartoon and use it as it is or modify it to suit his purpose. According to George Woolard, “modifying a cartoon is a way of discovering and appreciating the creativity of the cartoonist—that rare and enviable ability to take a fresh view of ordinary aspects of the human condition and human behavior” (Woolard 20). One of the most significant pedagogical uses of cartoons is that they encourage learners. They enable student involvement. A teaching aid that inspires learner participation is more encouraging than one that protects the centrality of the teacher. A judicious use of a sequence of cartoons based on

coordination, correlation and consolidation, should encourage learners. The regular, consistent and parallel use of cartoons that motivate participation should cheer up the class. Learners will observe these cartoons as realistic and meaningful.

Cartoons are outstanding supplementary materials and it is suitable to build up a bank of topically organized cartoons that can be injected into course books at apt moments. Cartoons are a flexible resource. They often contain little in the way of language and can be used productively across a wide range of levels. Hence, a cartoon can offer motivation for speaking and discussion activities in the classroom. The cartoonist takes pains and describes the funny characters and their expressions. Through the caption he can give a twist to show ridiculous the situation is. Cartoons focus general aspects of human behavior. They have a deeper social purpose and can help people from drifting from the prescribed moral path. This feature of cartoons can be expressed in the classroom to teach moral values. Hence cartoons serve a dual purpose, one in enabling the language learning process and education on the other.

Cartoons are very apt for pair and group work. Students have to work together and relate cartoons to what is happening around them. They have to negotiate the meaning of a cartoon in consultation with each other. Students find a cartoon absorbing because it requires them to engage meaningfully with it. The cartoon triggers their knowledge of other subjects and their understanding and experience of the world. Students discuss the semantic, pragmatic and socio-linguistic meanings and messages of a cartoon and report their interpretations to the class. They can also write a composition on what the cartoon means. What they are talking about the cartoon amid themselves, they are interpreting the cartoon and also listening to what others in their group say. When the leader of a group reports their version to the class, he speaks and others listen to him. When the groups write their compositions, they make use of the idea they have collected from their own discussion and from the information of other groups. This is how cartoons can be used to develop discussions and information-sharing activities leading to collective writing. As a result, we can assimilate the four skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing using cartoons. Likewise important use of cartoons needs a mention here. At times teaching becomes overcast and repetitive, and students feel uninterested. Cartoons come to our rescue and help our classes lively.

2. Newspaper Middles as Support Material

The newspaper is the most available print medium in many parts of the world. It can be used to improve virtually the entire range of reading skills. Understanding newspaper style can aid in discovering the organization of ideas in reading and in encouraging flexible reading habits. Welcoming pupils into the realities of local newspapers is important to build and keep alive creative reading skills and approaches very much needed today. Newspaper covers a extensive range of subjects that appeal to different age groups

of readers. Yet the role of newspapers for the purpose of academic instruction has not been given due attention. For some people, “newspapers are unreliable, sensational and too cheap to contain good reading material. For others they are somehow subversive” (Johnson 80).

It is in the hands of the creative teacher to discover the varied range of resource from the newspapers and explore it for the purpose of language learning or teaching in the classroom. In that way it could serve as the best material to develop the students logical and critical point of view. The teacher can select a relevant article and circulate it in the classroom. Students must first be asked to read the article silently. Silent reading is much easier and less demanding than oral reading. It gives the learners a chance to apprise themselves with the materials. Reading aloud without the help of a previous silent reading of the material can be a humiliating experience for some learners.

Newspaper middle often encompasses humorous episodes that are expressed in a brief manner. The space and length limitations force the writer to be clear-cut. The middles reveal great mastery over language and can be very useful for teaching or learning purposes in the English classroom. They can be used for developing comprehension, reading as well as writing skills. The five Ws such as “who, what, where, when, why and how are the corner stones of newspaper writing” (Cheyney 13). Practice in finding answers to these questions can improve reading and comprehension skills. Composition writing using the same technique is also fruitful.

3. Folk Tales and Anecdotes as Support Materials

Stories are very useful in the ESL/EFL classes. They create stimulus, fun and help in developing positive attitudes towards learning. They improve listening and concentration skills. They exercise imagination and link fantasy with reality. They provide enjoyable social experiences and build up confidence. They can be used to enrich numerous language skills. The point of an anecdote may be hard to pinpoint. It may replicate a feature of human nature or just a particular person’s quirk. Anecdotes can be efficiently used for group work and brainstorming as well as prediction exercises. Forecasting what is going to happen in an anecdote, is a vital reading skill.

4. Riddles, Crossword Puzzles and Jokes as Support Materials

A riddle is a puzzling question, statement or description, particularly one intended to test the cleverness of those desiring to solve it. The solutions for many of the riddles include the language of reason and necessary precision. The method used to introduce the riddle will vary. Reading a riddle will not take much time. Once the students recognize what the riddle is asking they can have a group discussion in pairs and attempt to solve the riddle. The teacher will have to offer abundant hints, as most students will not be able to solve the riddle on their own. Here the teacher must keep in mind that getting the answer is much less important than developing language. Once the students come up with a solution, they

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should be cheered to discover different answers and debate whether they are in fact valid solutions. Before telling the answer to the students the teacher should compare the solutions found by different pairs and discuss them. Over and over again the solutions present more scope for language teaching or learning purposes than the riddle itself. In such cases the teacher should not miss the chance of using the solutions. Every student should take a turn explaining a solution to the class. The riddles should naturally draw out a lot of logical and repetitive language.

A crossword puzzle is an effective medium to improve one's vocabulary. It comprises playing with language, using it as both the object and the instrument of play. It does not affect the textbook procedure and can be used efficiently to provoke the learners and create a conducive atmosphere for teaching or learning in the classroom. The students work in pairs and fill in the crosswords. The teacher begins by taking easier ones. The students are asked to work out the meanings and fill in the blanks. The teacher can give unfinished solutions to students. For example, 'A' can be given the solutions to ACROSS while 'B' can be given the solution to DOWN. The clues are there in front of them. By reading the clues the students are to give hints to each other about the solution. Student 'A' can tell 'B' that the solution to 3 ACROSS begins with the letter 'B'. Student 'B' can tell 'A' that the solution to 1 DOWN begins with the letter 'A'. In this manner they can offer different types of hints to each other. This will lead to communication. They may also negotiate the meaning and fill in the blanks.

At a later stage by taking bigger crosswords they may be asked to work in pairs and explain to each other the meanings of the words. This task is very useful as the students have to comprehend the meaning first and then communicate it successfully to their peers. As they become conscious of synonyms and one-word substitutes their vocabulary gets strengthened. But crossword puzzles can go beyond these common aspects to include virtually anything under the sky.

Jokes can be suitable for the purpose of language learning or teaching in the classroom. They test the powers of understanding of the listeners. By 'getting the joke', the receiver "displays both ingenuity and access to shared knowledge and values, including those which are conspiratorial" (Cook 72). There are different types of jokes. A joke can put things, definitions, and ideas in a nutshell. The briefness of its nature makes it an ideal support material to be used in the classroom for language teaching or learning purposes. Jokes can be used not only for fun, but also as a way of inspiring learners to use and practice trustworthy language. Telling jokes is a skill that demonstrates mental alertness and social spirit.

5. Proverbs, Limericks, Malapropisms as Support materials

Many proverbs have alike structures. This enables the language teacher to explain the learners with different types of sentence constructions such as those including relative clauses,

comparatives, parallel structures, imperatives, conditions, adverbial clauses and dummy subjects used for emphasis.

A limerick is a short five-line poem which is humorous, usually nonsensical and often coarse. Most limericks describe the absurd behavior of one person. The humour of limericks has a strong encouraging power. If we can get our students involved in activities in which the main aim, as far as they are concerned, is not language learning but some seemingly supplementary activity such as "winning a game, solving a problem or understanding English humour, then the greater the likelihood that learning will take place" (Tunnel 25). The teacher writes the limerick on the blackboard and the students take it down in their notebooks. Then the students work in groups of four or six and discuss it among themselves.

Malapropism is the wrong use of one word instead of another word because they sound alike to each other, and which is amusing as a result. For example, the sentence: The tiger's soldier was wounded and so it groaned. Here, the word 'soldier' is a malapropism as it is wrongly used instead of 'shoulder'. Malapropisms are the result of slips of the tongue. Frequently the speaker knows the right word but just cannot get the word out. These mistakes usually occur for pairs of words that have one or more of the same part of speech, similar beginnings or endings and similar word rhythm. These malapropisms can be used to sensitize the learners to the refined differences between similar sounding words and the distortion they cause to the meaning if replaced by each other. By means of malapropism in the language classroom is very fruitful as it makes the learners conscious of the suitable use of apt words. As soon as the learners go through the malapropisms as an exercise in the classroom they are certain to benefit from it.

3. Conclusion

Lewis in his *Teaching Collocation*, "distinguishes between teaching and learning by pointing out that teaching is linear and systematic while learning is complex and non-linear" (Lewis 11). According to him one really cannot control what students learn and above all there is no assurance that learners learn what teachers teach. Though this may be true, yet another truth is that one can use support materials and keenly engage the learners in the language learning process by giving them pleasure. Language play is one of the ways in which English teaching and learning can be made an entertaining as well as worthwhile experience.

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