



Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

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Innovative Language Teaching and Learning Methodologies

R.Calaivanane, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology-Vellore Campus, Vellore

Abstract:

This paper titled '*Innovative Language Teaching and Learning Methodologies*' begins with the definition of 'Language' and the use of language in the present arena. Language, unlike other subjects, is skill-oriented and language learning is not like the construction of a wall, but the growth of a plant. The paper, emphasizing this point, stresses the need of language in various perspectives and highlights the roles of language teachers, besides their covering the syllabus in language subjects. The paper brings out the differences between language being taught as a subject and language being taught as a skill. It further proceeds with the importance of developing the communicative competence of learners. The paper pinpoints some of the drawbacks in the present syllabus in languages and in the methodology adopted while imparting the language skills. The paper lays stress on the employment of innovations in language teaching and offers certain practical experimented suggestions for effecting the innovations and pays focus on the probable results that are sure to be obtained by putting the innovations into practice. The paper underscores the attitude of learners when language is taught in an innovative way. Mere traditional methods of language-teaching may be effective to some extent. In the world of technology, language-teaching needs a sea change. The theme moves further with the use of technology for effective language-teaching. Though innovations are welcome in language-teaching, the advantages of traditional methods of teaching, especially while teaching grammar, are emphasized. The paper ends with highly practical and innovative suggestions for making language-teaching very effective.

Introduction:

Man came to know of the world by using language. One is judged by the language he/she uses. Language plays a vital role in making and maintaining human relationship. It is the language that has brought the people of the world under one umbrella. Language is defined as the tool for communication. It is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. It is the code we all use to express ourselves and communicate to others. We communicate our ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions, using words, gestures, signs or marks. Any means of communicating ideas, specifically human speech, and the expression of ideas by the voice and sounds articulated by the organs of the throat and mouth is a language.

Language Acquisition:

"Language acquisition occurs when language is used for what it was designed for, communication"- Krashen

Language is something specific to humans. Language is the basic capacity that distinguishes human beings from all other creatures. Language, therefore, remains virtually and potentially a communicative medium to express one's ideas, moods, feelings, sentiments, attitudes and, in short, oneself to others.

A set of linguists who define language on the basis of their assumptions conclude that language is nothing, but habit formation. Language acquisition is not possible just by means of mastering the knowledge about the rules of grammar. Language cannot be taught or learnt, but it can be acquired through constant use and practice. The more one is exposed to the use of language, the better one learns. The way in which words are meaningfully combined is known as the syntax and grammar of the language. The actual meanings of words and combination of words are termed as semantics. Language is one of the liberal arts on which education is based.

What is Language?

Language is the most important aspect in the life of all beings. We use language to express inner thoughts and emotions, make sense of complex and abstract thought, to learn to communicate with others, to fulfill our wants and needs, as well as to establish rules and maintain our culture.

Language can be defined as verbal, physical, biologically innate, and a basic form of communication.

Behaviourists often define language as a learned behaviour involving a stimulus and a response. (Ormrod, 1995)

The importance of language:

The knowledge of language/s is indispensable for academic, professional growth and a successful career is a well-known fact. The curricula can no longer afford to ignore the importance of language for students of academic and professional purposes.

Learners must be initiated to the various communicative functions, which can be presented in interesting real life situations followed by many functional expressions. The language task for each function requires the active participation of learners in challenging and exciting tasks revolving around communication during real life situations. The language activities need to essentially interactive with focus on real life situations, thus catering to the actual market demand in an academic and professional context as well as in the social milieu.

Mastery of Language Skills:

Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) are not communication skills, but they are Language Learning Skills. The practice of language learning skills results in communication.

"The power of expression in a language is a matter of skills rather than of knowledge. It is a power that grows by exercise, not by knowing merely meanings or rules". – Thomas and Wyatt

Mastery of a language does not mean knowing about the language, but knowing the language, and using it correctly, meaningfully, effectively and, if necessary, powerfully in speech and writing. Any one can jump, but only those with knowledge minute details of and training in jumping can excel. Hence, training and practice are required for appropriate, meaningful and effective communication.

Difference between Knowledge subjects and Skill-oriented subjects:

The approach of the teachers towards students while teaching knowledge subjects and skill-oriented subjects varies and needs to vary. Language, unlike knowledge subjects such as chemistry, physics, commerce or management or those of engineering and technology, is out and out skill-orientes. A skill cannot be taught or learnt, but it has to be acquired. Language learning is not like the construction of a wall, but like the growth of a plant. Language acquisition is not a over- night process. Language learning is like learning of skills like swimming and driving. Those who are not interested in swimming and driving or those who are afraid of water or of driving cannot become masters, however knowledge they have in other subjects. Language has its uniqueness in various perspectives and the need for developing and mastering the language skills in the present arena is beyond any doubt.

Roles of Language Teachers:

Language teachers have a long way to go. Language teachers have promises to keep and language teachers have miles to go before they sleep and miles to go before they sleep. To effectively and purposefully play the roles, language teachers need to appropriately adopt a psychological approach towards learners in language classes. The ultimate purpose of language teachers is not to complete the prescribed syllabus in the particular language, but to develop the communicative competence of learners in the particular language, thereby developing the confidence level of the learners too.

Mere covering of the prescribed text-books in a language might satisfy the authorities of the educational institute and the students and help learners secure marks in the examinations, but the very purpose of teaching a language is lost. In many of the language classes, teachers are the active speakers and students remain the passive listeners. The absence of interactions in language classes does not yield the desired output. A few lessons followed by certain grammar exercise are useful to some extent. While teaching or learning a lesson, the main focus of both the teachers and the taught is on the ideas conveyed by the author of the lesson. Thus it could be said that the lesson is just read, not studied. However, the covering of the syllabus with a multi-purpose yields fruits. While teaching a lesson in a language subject, the focus could be on vocabulary acquisition, constructions of sentences, style of writing and structure, besides the main ideas of the author or the main or sub-themes.

Mastery of a language lies in the prodigious, strenuous and combined efforts of both the teachers and the taught. It could be aptly said that the clap of both the hands makes noise. The cordial relationship of the teachers and the taught too makes a lot in language teaching. A language atmosphere can be created in class room. Too many instructions on rules of grammar may seem to be good, but the result will be pernicious. The method of teaching in language classes needs a sea change. Mere chalk and talk method of teaching might be useful in grammar classes, but the ultimate purpose of language teachers in developing the communicative competence of learners may not be possible by adopting the conventional methods of teaching.

Learners-oriented Syllabus:

The changes that aim at satisfying the academic and professional needs and requirements of learners need to be effected. Learners should be facilitated to think, create, manipulate and so on. Motivation moves mountains. In the process of language teaching, a lot of motivation is very much required for the students. Teachers must realize the fact that perfection is not possible at the initial stage of language-learning. Keeping in mind the differences between oral communication and written communication, teachers can perform their duties while teaching any language. Fluency is important in oral communication and accuracy is important in written communication. Teachers of languages must realize the fact that making mistakes while using a language is one of the developmental stages in language learning and that a little amount accuracy, especially in oral communication, can be sacrificed for the sake of fluency.

Methodology:

The methodology adopted in language classes is highly indispensable. Classical methods of teaching in language classes cannot be completely ruled out as the only alternative to modern methods of teaching. We all know very well that as far as grammar teaching is concerned, classical method of teaching is quite desirable and effective. To further develop the communicative competence of the learners, various other approaches such as computer-based learning, genre-based approach and task-based approach could be adopted for the benefit of the students. Nevertheless, the method or approach adopted by the language teachers is in need of flexibility. Flexibility does not mean freedom. A class room is homogenous. A fully flexible credit system can be tried out. Innovative methods of teaching are not only effective, but also enjoyable on the part of both the teachers and the taught.

Suggestion for Effective Teaching:

1. Motivation :

As far as language teaching is concerned, interest is the basic requisite. Thus creating interest of the students in languages and motivating them in all the best possible ways are very important on the part of the teachers.

2. Identification of Slow Learners :

Any sort of comparison in terms of performance of students should be avoided. Slow learners must be identified and suitable measures need to be taken for their benefit.

3. Error Analysis :

Errors made by learners can be pointed out, but not hurting the feelings of learners under any circumstances. The focus must be on rectification of errors, not on underestimating their knowledge of language. Too many corrections of errors must be avoided. Things may be done with good intentions, but the result should not turn out to be pernicious.

4 .Suitable Methodology:

Innovations in the methods of teaching must be tried out at all levels of language teaching. Monotonous methods must be avoided.

5. Interactions :

Language classes need to be interactive. Various language-based activities such as presentations, group discussions, and debates must be conducted in classes occasionally to promote the linguistic atmosphere in classes and develop the communicative competence of students.

6. Periodical Assessment :

Though individualization of instruction is not possible in a class where the strength of students is more than 60, it can be tried out. Periodical assessment is indispensable for serving the purposes of language teaching.

Conclusion:

Language teachers have, thus, vast responsibilities. They have a long way to go. The relationship between the teachers and the taught is very important in language teaching. That is possible only through the duties performed by teachers not only in class room and even outside. Let us stay together, work together, discuss things on such occasions like this and strive hard to produce great citizens and great leaders mainly with effective communication skills.

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