



USING MOTHER TONGUE IN TEACHING VOCABULARY IN THE CLASS ROOM TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims at highlighting the effectiveness of using Mother tongue in teaching vocabulary in the language classroom to enhance the communication skills of the students. Vocabulary plays an important role in learning a language specially acquiring competency in English. The paper may help the teachers to use mother tongue judiciously to teach vocabulary for enhancing communication skills of the learners.

Keywords: *Mother Tongue, Teaching, vocabulary, Communication Skills*

Introduction

Extensive research has been carried out in the area of mother tongue influence on L2 learning. Among a number of teachers in second language acquisition, there seem to be an increasing conviction that the mother tongue (L1) has a facilitating role in the second language acquisition (Schweer, C 1999). Atkinson (1987) not only acknowledges the positive role of the mother tongue in the classroom, but also identifies the following uses of it: eliciting language, checking comprehension, giving instructions, enhancing co-operation among learners, promoting discussions of classroom methodology, improving presentation and reinforcement of language, checking for sense, testing, and development of useful learning strategies. The following are several reasons why the L1 should be used as a tool in the language classroom:

- it is more natural to use the L1 with others who have the same L1
- it is easier and more communicatively effective to use the L1
- using L2 can be a source of embarrassment particularly for shy learners and those who feel they are not very proficient in the L2
- L1 can help to move the task along by establishing a joint understanding of the text and to manage the task
- L1 allows learners to focus attention on vocabulary and grammatical items (e.g., searching for vocabulary items or providing information and explanation about grammatical rules and conventions)
- L1 may facilitate classroom activities, particularly for low proficiency students and complex tasks
- L1 can provide a foundation for learners on which to build L2 structures, especially during collective activities in the classroom, and
- L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' live experiences, allowing them to express themselves (Nation, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Atkinson,



1987; Wells, 1999; and Schweers, 1999).

Mother tongue has potentially both positive and negative consequences: it may serve social and cognitive functions (Carless, 2008:331). It is claimed that students working in groups do not have to speak English all the time. Use of mother tongue relates to learner identity. Negative impact of mother tongue use is that too much reliance on the L1 may undermine the interaction in English. However good the students are at comprehending authentic reading or listening materials, the majority keeps mentally translating from L2 into L1 and vice versa. This fact makes teachers of foreign languages aware of the importance of translation in language classrooms.

According to J. Harmer (2001:131), a principal cause of the L1 use is required by the activity, if students are linguistically incapable of activating vocabulary for a chosen task. Another reason is that translation is a natural thing to do in language learning, and code-switching between languages is regarded as naturally developmental. The amount of L1 use by particular students may well have to do with differing learner styles and abilities. Evidence from research into the crucial issue of the L1 use in classrooms around the world was analyzed by G. Mattioli (2004). For instance, L1 use in the Chinese classrooms offers evidence that L1 is a valuable tool for socio-cognitive processes in language learning. Another reason for L1 use in the classroom relates to the fostering of a positive affective environment. C. W. Schweers (1999:6) encourages teachers to insert the native language into lessons to influence the classroom dynamic, provide a sense of security and validate the learners'

experiences. C. Schweers (1999:7) conducted research into this issue and found that a high percentage (88.7%) of the participants felt that mother tongue should be used in their English classes. Moreover, if learners of a second language are encouraged to ignore their native language, they might well feel their identity threatened.

Important strategies in Teaching & Learning Vocabulary

Learning vocabulary is a complex process. The students' aim to be reached in learning vocabulary process is primarily their ability to recall the word at will and to recognize it in its spoken and written form. Generally, knowing a word involves knowing its form and its meaning at the basic level. In deeper aspects it means the abilities to know its (Harmer 1993):

- 1) Meaning, i.e. relate the word to an appropriate object or context
- 2) Usage, i.e. knowledge of its collocations, metaphors and idioms, as well as style and register (the appropriate level of formality), to be aware of any connotations and associations the word might have
- 3) Word formation, i.e. ability to spell and pronounce the word correctly, to know any derivations (acceptable prefixes and suffixes),
- 4) Grammar, i.e. to use it in the appropriate grammatical form

Techniques

Pictures and Drawings

Pictures of many types and colours can be used successfully to show the meaning of words and sentence. Handmade pictures can also be used as



there is no need to be very artistic. Drawings can be used to explain the meaning of things, actions, qualities, and relations. A line drawing of a head, for example, provides many useful nouns and verbs.

Realia

Real objects or models of real objects are very effective and meaningful in showing meanings but in handling of real objects, a teacher must be practical and should not be superfluous.

Reading the word

Reading words aloud is also very beneficial. It makes a learner familiar with the word and also improves pronunciations of the learners.

Key word method: Make the students to think of an image that connects an unfamiliar word with a familiar key word that sounds similar or is contained within the target word. For example, to remember the word *truculent*, students might think of the key word *truck* and then draw or visualize a picture of a fierce-looking person driving a truck to represent the meaning of the word.

Brainstorm: One method of associating vocabulary words with familiar words is to brainstorm with students. Once students have heard a word and its definition, teachers can write the word on the board and ask students to say words that go along with the new vocabulary word. If the word is "mare," for instance, students might say "horse," "barn" and "hay." By writing the words down together, it creates a visual reference for students.

Incidental Learning

Incidental vocabulary learning occurs all of the time when we read. Based on the way a word is used in a text we are able

to determine its meaning. While you may not know what a specific word means, many times you can determine its meaning based on what the rest of the sentence focuses on. Adults should model this sort of incidental vocabulary learning for children to help them develop their own skills.

Context Skills

Context skills are the strategies that a reader uses for incidental vocabulary learning. Texts are full of "clues" about the meanings of words. Other words in a sentence or paragraph, captions, illustrations and titles provide readers with information about the text that they can use to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words. These features are often referred to as "context clues" because they are contained within the context of the piece of writing rather than outside it. Young readers should be taught to find and use context clues for learning new vocabulary words. Adult modelling and practice are key for helping children develop this important reading skill.

Write a Story

A larger vocabulary enhances students' writing and reading abilities, so what better way for students to retain words than to use them in stories? Teachers can assign stories on an individual basis, or make it a class project. By having students incorporate all their vocabulary words correctly into the text, students get the opportunity to learn proper spelling and definitions, and also how to use the words in context.

Conclusion

This paper shows the effectiveness of using L1 in teaching and learning vocabulary. Teachers have to take into consideration the teaching environment



and the target population they teach. Teachers have to provide adequate exposure to learners of English. They have to fix the syllabi according to the students-teachers comfort which enable the learners to respond easily. They have to use English as much as possible in her /his teaching. So the learners are exposed to develop their communication skills in English. Learners realize that fluency in L1 is a stepping stone towards achieving fluency in L2. The mother tongue represents a powerful resource that can be used in a number of ways to enhance learning but that it must always be used in a principled way. If teachers can creatively and consciously deploy the first language as a resource and treat it as a starting point for learning vocabulary, it would make the learning process more meaningful and less stressful.

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