

STORY TELLING METHOD 360° : A PANACEA FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION TO ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract: Telling stories is as old as language itself. English literature is a repository of millions of stories. It has been used as a powerful tool in personal transformation since time immemorial. The role of stories in upholding and bequeathing Culture, tradition and customs is immense. Telling stories was also used as a method of imparting skills in language to the children for many decades. The title of this paper carries with it a 360° tag which illustrates that it is applicable to all variables and also that it caters to the needs of the students of all age groups for whom English is a non native language. This method makes the best use of formative and summative evaluation. Class room teaching is more interactive and lively when stories from literature are told. Each feedback leads to the incremental improvement of the next class. Information and communication Technology (ICT) and other tools of technology have been employed to assess the improvement in language and the results are satisfactory. This method has been used to teach the same skill to students of different age groups simultaneously. The results were on expected lines. The students of eight year age group and that of eighteen years in the different age groups learned almost at the same pace. When self motivated and external motivated group of classes were taught and evaluated separately, very less difference in the development of language skill was found. This attests the conclusion affirmatively that “The story telling Method” is an indispensable tool in imparting the basic skills of English.

Key words: (Story telling- language skill-teaching methods ESL)

The teacher of English language confronts challenges in teaching every day. There is no single teaching method that could be used in all classrooms situations ubiquitously. Moreover there are some are first generation learners and whose mother tongue is not English. The parents, students and society expect so much from English teachers. On one hand he has to equip himself with latest ever widening never ending knowledge and on the other hand he has to fine tune his teaching methods constantly to cater to the needs of his students. Sometimes he finds it difficult to convey some simple concepts of grammar or spoken English as students show some psychological resistance to some methods of teaching. In addition to this there is a problem of mother tongue intervention. Students find it difficult to deal with the traditional methods of teaching. Students who learn grammar find it hard to communicate. It is an uphill task for one to speak English just by learning grammar. In fact, the knowledge of grammar restricts the spoken English flow. This is applicable in toto to the ESL learners. This makes one to search for panacea for the above problems. If students find teaching method interesting, they will grasp and adapt the learning content without any strain. This makes the story telling method an indispensable tool in the hands of a teacher. Story telling is a method that helps us face the problems encountered in English language teaching head-on. Story telling is in vogue since time immemorial. Teachers found something to employ this method at least to some extent in their classrooms to suit the needs of specific teaching

learning process. The method

“Deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience and to locate the experience in time and place. Stories can bring abstract principles to life by giving them concrete Form”. (Bruner, J. S. 1986).

But as a method of teaching learning process for all topics of the English language for ESL learners, it has hardly ever been employed. This statement is to be taken in the context of formal education. The purpose of storytelling is simple: to impart language skills through the means that suits the students. “In addition to promoting development of language and literacy, storytelling provides a forum for children and adults to interact within the rich cultural context of folktales and other stories”. (Bettelheim, 1976; Yolen, 1981). A Position Statement from the National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE] on Storytelling 1992, recommends teachers to teach through stories. This recommendation has a great significance. It will pave way for far reaching consequences. Studies have proven that this method improves language development dramatically.

“Storytelling in the classroom promotes expressive language development: speech and written composition. It also promotes receptive language development: reading and listening comprehension”. (Jackie Peck Source 1989).

some teachers find amazing advantages of storytelling.

“Stories can serve multiple functions in the

classroom, including sparking student interest, aiding the flow of lectures, making material memorable, overcoming student resistance or anxiety, and building rapport between the instructor and the students, or among students themselves” (Melanie C. Green 2004).

In some communities like the Quechua community of Highland Peru, there is no separation between adults and children when they learn their language through this method (Bolin, Inge. 2006). Advantages: This method has inexhaustible source of advantages in teaching. Students of all ages will be very interested to listen or tell stories. Once they get interest they will listen with rapt attention. This is the first step in the development of listening skill. This also fosters an attitude of self discipline. They will learn language without any hard work on their part. They participate on their own to tell stories. This makes the teacher’s job easier as it is easier to test and correct their reading and writing skills. Soft skills and values can be inculcated in the participants once they feel they are part of the team. This is especially effective with ESL learners as cordial atmosphere prevails in storytelling. Inculcating values is possible by using method. This is tested, trusted and proved in this context. Students can give good feedback.”Students can gain sensitivity to the value of this feedback by sharing their observations with the teller”. (Livo and Reitz, 1986). Teachers are the first and foremost potential beneficiaries since they will learn how to hone their teaching skills according to the different age group students. Teachers can easily gauge the improvement of performance of students through formative and summative evaluations. Classroom teaching will be more learner friendly and student centric as students actively participate. Students will learn according to their own speed of learning.

“Active participation in storytelling enhances fluency and expression in oral language” (Morrow, 1985).

As students participate they shed their inhibitions and develop self confidence. The cost effectiveness of this method makes it a user friendly. English literature is a cornucopia of interesting stories. So getting material is not a problem. The relationship between literature and society helps the participants understand and appreciate literature. The application of “The Story Telling Method 360°” to Language Acquisition for ESL Learners This method of storytelling has been successfully implemented in my teaching. The method is applied to teach all basic topics of grammar and other language skills for ESL learners. As a result, will not feel classroom room activity as a bitter experience and consequently acquire language skills without their knowledge.

“Individuals listening to stories react to them almost

automatically, participating, in a sense, in the action of the narrative”. (Polichak and Gerrig,2002).

The 360° tag in the method indicates that it is applicable to all age groups and it covers all aspects of language teaching. The method adapts “simple to complex” process. It can also stand for there is at least some degree of difference among students in their respective learning styles. This method respects the learning styles of students. It also indicates to test the fool proof nature of this method. It also indicates that it is all encompassing. This method is also flexible as it negates age barrier for learning language to some extent. This is applied keeping in mind of all basic skills of language needs of a student. Hence, it is holistic in its approach. A group of twenty enthusiastic and self motivated students was chosen. The students are ESL learners studying plus two. The students have one thing in common, that is their penchant for learning English. Another group of same number of students who had extrinsic motivation to learn language was chosen. Care was taken that all variables like age and class in which they were same. Each instruction carried out with a set of well-defined objectives. The main idea is that the participants will learn the language skills on their own and apply them accordingly. So the only thing to be provided is the environment that is conducive to learn. After classes were conducted and evaluation was done, astonishing results ensued. There was not much perceivable difference either in terms of acquisition of skills of language or other soft skills. The same test was conducted for the students of different age groups. The first group consisted of twenty students of eight years in average. The second group consisted of eighteen years. Not much difference in LSRW skills was found between the groups in terms of performance. This had us go for the next round of modules of teaching learning process, namely CAPSULE 360° and TONIC 360°. The CAPSULE 360° indicates the teaching method employed for the ESL learners of age group more than eighteen where as TONIC 360° is the method for students of ESL below third class. The names TONIC and CAPSULE have been used figuratively. The words will define the strategy of the teacher to prepare his activity in the teaching. The way a topic is taught differs significantly from TONIC batch to CAPSULE batch. They will indicate the role to be adopted, the instruction of the language to be employed. The words remind the teacher to organize and evaluate his class objectives effectively. There is no difference in the topics of language instruction. The process of teaching learning only differs. The teacher cannot teach the same story in the same way in both the classes. He has to keep in mind that there is so much difference in the ages of learners. To remind the time

and again the tags are written on the blackboard. Here time is a constraint. Inappropriate use of time acts against the teacher. In the absence of good preparation the management is a hard task. Since the time of the class is less when compared to the regular instruction hours, the teacher finds time is working against him. The tag 360° also stands for twenty minute instruction for 360 sessions. So a student attends at least 120 hours of instruction. Participation of each student in telling stories is a must. It is to be noted that two sessions are conducted a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. The stories were chosen from almost all ages of time tested literatures. Reading material was provided to the students who volunteer to read and tell stories. This has a few advantages: it helps to test the student's ability to deliver the goods in a given situation and the listeners' adoptability to different speakers. The participants were asked to summarize the story taught, both in written and oral form. The analysis of evaluation process throws light on the syntax, grammar and felicity of expression of the students. All the data of students' cumulative progress was recorded. The data were utilized to assess the skills at the end of the course. Keeping the above variables in view the teaching material was prepared in advance. This includes evaluation also. This thwarts mother tongue intervention to some extent. In some classroom situations mere formative evaluation was enough for some students to glean some ways of questioning. To avoid monotony if any, students are

made to involve in various tasks. All the latest tools of technology in teaching were employed. This includes Power Point Presentations (PPTs) and other multimedia tools. This was found very effective for the age group below ten years. After the first ten classes there has been tremendous improvement in the basic vocabulary and pronunciation. Each story is narrated keeping in mind the topic to be dealt with in the classroom. Feedback from students paves the way for firm foundation for the next class.

Conclusion: It can be concluded from the above work that the story telling is the appropriate method for teaching English language for ESL learners. All basic areas of grammar, spoken English and value education could be taught by employing this method. Many latest teaching techniques like Digital storytelling and Peer tutoring can be applied to improve and implement this method in class room situations. It is one of the most economical, effective and flexible method of teaching English in the hands of an enthusiastic teacher. But this method needs enormous contribution and indefatigable effort on part of the teacher. He becomes a story teller, listener, participant, editor, and facilitator at times depending upon the topic to be dealt with. He is expected to constantly on vigil to observe even subtle changes to measure the development of participants. This method consumes more time of the teacher for the first time of its implementation. But the fruits are worth the effort for a diligent teacher.

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