Gaming and Simulation in English Language Teaching: A Symbiotic Interweave Towards Language Efficiency

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Abstract

India is a nation of linguistically diverse classes. Hence the daunting task of connecting the entire nation falls on the English Language. This renders English Language Teaching all the more demanding, intricate, and exceptionally challenging. Teachers have to develop and initiate their own individual and innovative strategies of teaching. Teaching a language caters to developing and excelling in the four domains of language learning viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing and has tobemadehighlylearner-centric. Language learning should be implemented at various levels of usage. Learning a language theoretically becomes strenuous and complex to apply.Gaming and simulation play a dominant role in language learning and nurturing the learners on a pedagogical, didactic, as well as psychological level. Simulation refers to a task based activity in which the real life situations are explored. This type of learning has no barriers and can be applied or implemented to all age groups. This paper will focus on the role of games and simulations executed in a class with the objective of teaching English as a foreign language, and enhancing and enriching its learning experience towards ultimate perfection.

Keywords: Gaming, Simulation, Language, Role-play.

Introduction

Communication is the chief function of language and has to be syntactically correct along with pragmatic as well as contextual accuracy. Moreover, fluency in language appends a spark to communication. Language learning is an approach to make associations and links with the outside world and this has to be implemented at various levels of usage. Theoretically taught language becomes tedious and boring with no effective results. Grammar based monotonous teaching often leads to disinterestedness in thelanguage learning process consequentially with no positive outcome. Knowledge of language can widen avenues and minds and create empathy and understanding. The more you know a language, the more profound and meaningful those connections can become. Learning a language needs daily and consistent practice over a period, in addition to a willingness to communicate. Putting in a lot of effort is required to attain fluency in language learning. There are no shortcuts whatsoever.

As far as the scenario in India is concerned, there is plurality of situation in the classroom with students coming from varied linguistic, communal, social, cultural and economical background. Consequently, an innovative, creative expertise is in demand to tackle the situation. At the same timelanguage learning should be more relaxing and entertaining than demanding and stressfulThere is a new move to teach English and bridge the gap between the English medium schools and the government schools. There is a widespread demand for learning English." Indian English "has been accepted as a legitimate variety the world over resulting in the need to develop teaching methodologies to suit the state of affairs.

Methods of Research

In recent years, there has been a great amount of experimentation and educational trialing related to language learning processes. A review of research reveals extended periods of language socialization intosophisticatedcommunicativepractices(Verghese, BV, (2002)). Language is used as a tool for self-identity as well as cultural identity and development (Verghese, BV, 2002). Visual and kinesthetic learning are more effective, imbibe superior sensibility, and have a greaterlearningimpact(Verghese, BV, (2002). It inculcates quality learning through interest and infuses learners with a long-term retention power and ability to revive it efficiently. Hence, gaming and simulation are the closest training to application and therefore, are effectual tools in the process of learning a newlanguage. Being fluent in second language gives a huge advantage when it comes to communication, travel, work etc.

Findings

Games and fun based activities are a vital part of teaching English as a foreign language. Whether you are teaching adults or children, games enthuse up your lessons and make certain that your students will leave the classroom demanding more. Games can be used to warm up the class before your lesson begins during the lesson to give students a break when you are tackling a tough subject or at the end of the class when you have a few minutes to kill. There are innumerable games that you can play with your students. Language games are used to test vocabulary, practice conversing, and learn tenses.The list is endless. A good language game pushes the learner to enhance his/her speaking, listening, writing and reading skills of the target language:

> With the world entering into digitalization there are wonderful language learning techniques, whichmightrendereffectiveresultsifthestudentsdevelopself-disciplineandhard

work (Googlecoin, 2016). Just to mention a few, Anki is one such software which is quite popular and which means' memorisation'in Japanese. It allows users to create their own decks of cards or download pre made decks by other users. It allows studying online or on cell phones, it stores your statistics and also tracks your progress (Googlecoin,2016).

FluentU takes real world videos like music videos, movie trailers, news and inspiring talks and turns them into language learning experiences (Googlecoin, 2013). You are easily able to import words and then you can automatically see images, definitions and examples that have been written for those words. You can even see how the word is used in different videos throughout the site. It tacks your history and provides new and different video clips based on your previous history on FluentU.

Supermemo is another learning software that uses spaced repetition learning methods with the aid of electronic flash cards. These cardscanbedownloadedfrom a pre made collection or in some cases merged. Users are prescribed with a card to which they have to respond:

> Bravolol teaches you through spellings, pronunciations, visual recognition, and problem solving activities. However, online language games have its own demerits and drawbacks. Learning route accelerates when it is actually taught by a human rather than a passive, unemotional mechanical process. Thus the language teacher is the facilitator, as well as the guide .Learning becomes more effective when action and reaction is involved. It may sound clichéd but traditional language games like scrabble, Pictionary, Categorising articles with a given alphabet, jumbled up words or sentences etc have it so we recompense. The emotions involved, the teamwork, the awards and praises received have a big role to play in the language learning process. There is absolutely no investment in terms of devices, instruments, availability of electricity, internet connection etc. One does not have to be dependent on any external factors. Repetition and consistency speeds up the language learning

Another technique, whichassists in the language learning progression and augmentsthe communicativecompetence,is Simulation orRole-play Simulation heightens interest and excitement in learning a language. It endorses a constant level of newness and freshness while transforming the teacher-student, bossandassistantrelationship (Aldrich, Clark: (2009). Erudition happens at varied levels like cognitive, social and emotional .The decision-making experiences that participants accomplish, the increased role awareness, and the ability of simulation to provide a vehicle for free, interdisciplinary communication. The concrete approach afforded by simulation exercises connects thefissureflanked by schoolwork and the real world Aldrich, Clark: (2009). Learners during simulation activity tend to forget that they are students in a classroom and imagine themselves to be part of a simulated environment.

Simulation is an important part of language learning as it bonds learners with other students and the teacher as well who may or may not be a part oftheentireactivity. Role-play can be helpful and attention grabbing for average and slow learners as it can provide a cover for such students who have some kind of inhibition and who do not mind expressing ideas, feelings, or viewpoints when they are thought beofothers. Emotion is an integral part of simulation and it involves gestures and facial expressions, which convey how we feel when we are conversingoraresilent.

There seems to be a lot of evidence in favour of simulation. The pedagogical approach at the school level is student centric. There is an integral connection between language and culture and culture learning is a vital contributor tosecondlanguagelearning(Ferdig, Richard E; Freitas, Sara de,(2012)) . For a role play the teacher should provide the students with extensive lexis which will allow them to construct discourse related to daily activities, family, school and child associated activities such as games and grammar limited to presentandpasttense (Ferdig, Richard E; Freitas, Sara de, (2012).

Discussion

The teacher should see to it that language learning becomes engaging, enjoyableandmemorable The teacher should be brief and to the point so that the students get more time to enact andplaytheirrole. The topic given should be real and relevant.The roles given to the students should be close and applicable to everyday life.A comfortable ambience should be created so the students do not feel nervous and pressed because no one can give a goodperformanceundergreatstress. Autonomy given to students can aid in the process of finding newwordsandphrases. Assistance can be provided if the students get stuck for words and expressions. The teacher can intervene and provideappropriate vocabulary.

It is not advisable to jump in andcorrecteverymistake. This can deter the students from performing their best and in theprocess lose confidence.(Feng lui & Yun ding, 2009). Corrections can be made after the role play activity is over. However if the activity is recorded, the students can be made to listen to the recording and try to locate the errors and make self-corrections .Peers can also help in making corrections. Positive and profitable inputs can also be given tothem. The teacher should offer comments and advice at the end. Incorporating simulation in the classroom addsvariety, enthusiasm, a change of tempo and opportunities to learn language usingplaywaymethod.(Kapp, Karl M,(2012)). It becomes fun learning unlike the rote learning of traditional grammatical rules. Role-play should be an essential part of language teaching class and not just anoffbeat event tobeconductedoccasionally(Googlecoin,2016). Role-play is a fun based, motivating activity enabling quieter students to get an opportunityto express themselves. The classroom can be transformed into a micro mini outside world. The teacher while assigning the task to the students should make minor alterations by creating small variations each time.

Simulation facilitates language learning at phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic planes. While expressing themselves students learn intonation pattern, word stress and accurate pronunciation, of the words .They are able to comprehend the link betweenspellingsandphonetics. This activity improves vocabulary and lexical competence of the students. They learn several new words, their synonyms, and one word substitute etc. They are trained at using syntactically correct sentences. They are guided, directed and corrected by the teachers for their grammatical errors. Along with learning the language at these levels, simulation also aids at gaining knowledge at semanticlevel. Students get to know and understand the literal and figurative meaning of the words along with its usage.. Language learning becomes successful if the listener is able to perceive the intentionofthespeaker. Hencesimulation helpst he student to learn the language at contextual or pragmatic level as both the speakers as well as the listener are active participants in theenactment. Role play enriches the communicative competenceofthelearners. When the teacher divides the class into different teams, it promotes

competitive spirit amongst the students who wish to excel than the other teams. It is great fun to learn with other living, breathing human beings and a little healthy competition can really boost the morale.

Conclusion

Thus, we observe that diverse strategies are inculcated in the language learning process.Along with languagelearning, a lot of incidental learning takes place as well. The student who acts as a medical practitioner and recommends the patient to take a course of pills twice a day may need not enter this very profession but will definitely learn and develop a strategy for giving recommendations, instructions or advice. A student enacting the role of a salesman will automatically comprehend the nuances of driving home his point or asserting his ideas therby developing his communicative ability.Other factors like working in a team enhance confidence, build up leadership qualities, and amplify endurance levelof the students. Hence, we can perceive that fun games and simulation go a long way in language learning process and language teachers should imbibe them in classroom teaching.

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