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INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND READING IN HOME SCIENCE FACULTY

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Abstract:

The paper tries to explore a new method of understanding stories and comprehension passages. English language is known as the 'link language' to understand the World. Most of the disciplines have made it compulsory to study English. One of the objectives is to improve students' academic English'. Talking about Home Science students, students study English language till higher secondary level. Students are not used to writing descriptive answers. They have seen and unseen comprehension passages respectively for five marks each. Essay writing is for seven marks, the only question which has the maximum number of marks. The First Year syllabus includes language and literature. The approach followed is that of integrated skills so that students are given adequate practice and opportunities in reinforcing skills.

When students come to F.Y. Home Science course they find it difficult to answer questions for ten marks. The problems were analyzed as it affected the students' marks and selection of the majors in the S.Y. Home Science course as most of the subjects are taught in English. While studying, students give preference to Home Science subjects, then to Science subjects and language paper is studied at the last minute. Some changes in teaching were implemented for teaching the subject "Communication Skills in English". The traditional lecture method was not followed but following methodology was adopted to get the desired results. 1. Narrating the story in a simple language. 2. Making them read in the teacher's presence. 3. Asking questions to test their comprehension. 4. How reading skills should be developed. Most of the reading skills will be discussed by taking examples from the prescribed books.

KEY WORDS:

Traditional methods, Reinforcing skills, Home Science.

INTRODUCTION:

As an academician, in the present era for everyone there is a great challenge to accept new technology to teach students. English is a compulsory subject for Arts, Commerce, Computer Science and Science faculties at UG level in almost all universities in Maharashtra State. At present, researcher teaches English at First Year Home Science higher level and lower level students. The objective is to improve the students 'academic English' – Spoken and written form for the first year Home Science students only.

The paper is an attempt to show how language and literature can be taught in Compulsory English Classes. The Home Science course includes language and literature in the course, so it becomes obligatory for the students to study these topics apart from Business English. The focus is on the improvement of four skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The books which are prescribed for the course are 'Let's Go Home' ed. by Meenakshi Mukherjee and Interface. A Textbook of Compulsory English' by Dr.

Ranu Vanikar and Dr. Katayun Palia. Traditional method of explaining and writing is not followed. The approach adopted is that of integrated skills so that students are given adequate practice and opportunities for writing academic and social purposes.

DIFFICULTIES IN READING:

Reading the prescribed stories is very difficult at times, but students have to be reminded about their role in understanding the topics at first year level. As the course is in English, it becomes important for students to understand the stories in order to understand the life and society in which we live. Students take efforts to study 'Business English' which includes 'Letter Writing' Resume writing and 'preparing for interviews. But when it comes to studying stories they do not show interest in writing long answers which are descriptive in nature. Twelfth standard students had comprehension passages- seen and unseen. Passages which are of two to three paragraphs. And the paragraphs have three to four sentences. So students know comprehension passages which are easy to answer. Essay writing is the only question where they write descriptive answers. Very few students are comfortable in writing essays. In essay writing the ability to think, plan and explain the argument, comes after lot of practice and writing. When students come to first year, they can not write descriptive answers which are for ten marks. So, I found it important to, follow this technique to get the expected results.

In First Year, there are three theory classes and two tutorial classes. The exercises are framed in three stages simple intermediate and advanced level where the students' comprehension skills are tested. Very few students are interested in solving the exercises. Students from non – English medium, find it difficult to read the story in one sitting. English medium students' may follow the style of writing but they do not read the stories nor devote time for reading stories. Reading stories should help students to answer short and long questions, interpreting meanings and answering questions on 'Reference to context' require students to do good reading and understanding of the stories. While reading stories students come across difficult words and sentences. This creates a hurdle in understanding the text. Reading story is not a literary enjoyment, so the student may find it very boring to read the text. In order to help students, following methodology was adopted to get the desired results.

METHODOLOGY:

1) Narrating the story in a simple language:

When I realized that the students did not understand the language of the story, author thought it would be a good idea to narrate the story in a simple language. When the students do 'silent reading' they could not relate the incidents and characters, A story may require more than two readings to get a fair idea of the story. Narrating helps students to anticipate the events in the story and meeting characters as explains earlier.

2) Making the students read in the classes:

Every teacher / teachers expects his students to read the story at home. But our Home Science students do not give time for reading stories, most of the students give excuses like they had to complete the journal or they were busy completing their project. Very few girls are interested in reading at home. So, author thought that she should make the whole class read the story in my class in my presence and do the silent reading'.

3) Monitoring and intervening:

When the students read, author would go around and observe the students doing silent reading. If any student has difficulty in understanding any words they ask teacher. Sometimes, the explanation is for the entire class. Author request students to stop reading and listen to my explanation. Such interventions certainly help the students to understand stories. Explaining the difficult word with some example also helps students to understand the words better. If any student wants to explain the word, author would listen to her views and opinions.

4) Asking questions to test students' comprehension:

Explaining and giving time to read in the class should help students to answer the Exercises.

Simple questions, one line answer tests the students' comprehension level. Skimming and scanning help students to prepare them for tests and oral exams. The difference between reading at home and reading in the class makes a difference. When the teacher is in the class, students should feel free to ask questions and get solved their queries.

As reading helps to acquire and internalize vocabulary and structures, it helps to write well. Some students do not like to speak in large classes. So every student should be attentive and listen to their classmates. If a student is unable to answer in the class due to poor confidence, such students can learn from the ones who are confident and correct. Most of the students realize the importance of reading attentively in the class as it helps their understanding of life and the world around them.

Author has taken two examples which test the students' comprehension. These questions are taken from the story 'The Meeting Pool' by Ruskin Bond (From Let's Go Home)

- 1) Were Anil and Soni different from each other? Which words prepare you to notice the difference between them? Which words prepare you to notice the link between them?
- 2) What were the different ways in which the boys tried to catch the fish in the pool? Were they successful at fishing?

To find answers students have to read and find the paragraphs in which the writer had spoken of their friendship. After saying Anil was wild and dangerous, how is Soni referred to? He is gentle and sensitive. So he is different from Anil. One is wild, the other gentle. These are qualities which are different from each other, Note the words, 'on the other hand'. These words prepare us for something that is different from what has been said in the sentence just before this.

This is the answer to the first question. Very few students can answer correctly. If the students cannot explain the answers. author explains the words, and their meanings and the answer. When the class is listening, teacher asks some students to repeat the answer. This helps to check whether the class was listening or not when their friends were answering. If the students' sentence structure is incorrect or unacceptable the teacher corrects them.

CONCLUSION:

Over the years, researchers have realized that this method does help the students but it takes a lot of time and patience. The numbers of teaching hours are needed more when one follows this technique. Due to this, researcher has to take extra classes to complete the syllabus. In tutorial classes we have a small group of 40 students. Teaching in tutorial classes helps in giving 'Individual attention' to students. Teaching technique in the tutorial classes is very different from the traditional method. Remedial grammar and topics which students should know well are revised. Exercises help to reinforce the skills which are required to understand the English course. Focus is on Business English like letter writing, Resume writing and preparing reports.

All these topics are studied by the students in earlier classes. But as they go to the higher classes, we see there are changes in the type of letters, which expect students' to write precise brief letters. we have given more weightage to resume writing'.

As the editors of the book expect students to work in pairs author strictly follow it. Students do not have text books so author have photocopied the required material. When we have topics where pair work is necessary she gives the photocopies of the topics which she wants to teach. Working with handouts helps the students to understand better and answer to the point. Introducing a new topic requires background information, so the students can relate the information with the help of handouts. Keeping in mind, the student's attention span, so students can not listen to the lecture so these handouts are of great help. These techniques have helped me to teach students and I get a sense of satisfaction in teaching the prescribed topics. When feedback of teaching and the techniques was asked students found the techniques very interesting and learner friendly.

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