

Teaching Tenses through Activity Based Language Teaching

Dr. C. Chamundeshwari^{1*}, Shanthi Joseph²

¹Assistant Professor, School of Art & Humanities, REVA University Kattigenahalli, Bengaluru, India

²Research Scholar, School of Art & Humanities, REVA University, Bengaluru, India

*Corresponding author

Dr. C. Chamundeshwari

Article History

Received: 13.01.2018

Accepted: 21.01.2017

Published: 30.01.2018



Abstract: Language is a means of communication among the society members. English is regarded as a global language in the modern world. Millions of people use English as their first or second language, and 70 countries have it as their official language. English language is regarded as a key for good career and education. In learning language, the syntax, grammar and communication skills play a vital role. Grammar makes the language more effective and essential in communicating your message to the reader. It provides the strategies to help the students to improve the use and understanding of articles, subject verb agreement and tenses. Tenses are one of the important components in grammar. Focusing on the transition of teaching pedagogy from traditional approach to innovative activities based language teaching; the paper exposes interesting and simple activities to teach tenses for the students in the modern era. The papers unfold inductive and deductive approaches for language learning and emphasize Tenses formation and its norms.

Keywords: Activity Based Language Teaching, Tenses, Deductive and Inductive approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Thousands of different languages are used around the world. The estimated languages used in Asian continent are 2,294. But, English language binds the people together within and outside the continent.

The global workforce accepts English as business language, in its business world. English takes the credit of internet language to share and receive information of knowledge. English in different fields as economics, engineering, education, commerce, health and humanities has amplified the scope of this language. Proficiency in English language skills gains better career opportunities in any corner of the world.

Realizing the importance of English, Indian government included it in the school curriculum as first or second language. The Secondary education commission of 1952 and Kothari commission of 1964 reinforced the study of English for school students. Thus, students from elementary to tertiary level procure English. The language is taught in two sections as literature and grammar. Literature comprises dramas, stories, poems and in grammar students cram on topics as tenses, subject verb agreement, voice, Reported speech etc. Assessment of language skills is attained by the written test.

Formal grammar teaching methods are used in most of the schools, where rules and structures are trained for students. To gain the interest of students towards grammar classes is a crucial matter for the teachers. According to Ismail, 'grammar which is composed of tenses is an indispensable part of a

language and it constitutes the bone of the body language' [5]. Tenses and Verbs are the main constituents of English grammar.

Diverse procedures and approaches are employed to teach English in classrooms. The students rustling to English speaking courses and grammar tuitions, reveals possibility for improvement in teaching and learning methodology.

Deductive and Inductive Teaching

Inductive and deductive are two approaches for teaching English. In deductive method, the rules and regulations are given prior to the students, later when students grasp the concept examples will be given on the topics. The grammar work books are apt examples for this. Prominence is given for memorization of rules. Time saving is another significant fact in this method where the teachers can finish the syllabus in prescribed time. This method befits for tertiary level students than elementary level students. In inductive method the concept is inferred by the activities and examples. Inductive method makes the learner to observe and understand from the external or internal sources, and comprehend general rules.

Emily Kuder points that the students have learnt more efficiently by inductive method than the

deductive approach [2]. Activity based language teaching applies inductive method than deductive. The teacher insists the student to do the activities and understand the concept. A deviation from teacher centered classes to student centered classes confirms the significance of inductive method.

Tenses

Tense is derived from the Old French word 'Tens' which means time and from Latin word 'tempus' meant time. Tense represents the time of an action as when it took place in past, present and future. Aspect in tenses expresses the views of speaker on the action of the verb. It includes complete, incomplete, continuous, habitual actions etc. For example: she is going to school, the tense in this sentence is present and the aspect is progressive. Morphologically English has only two tenses as past tense, present tense and future tense by adding a modal as will or shall. Example for past-sang; present-sing and future will sing. UpsornTawilpakul [7] said that Thai learners still have no standard proficiency. Thai English language learners are far beyond that of native speakers. Many research studies have been conducted to evaluate the proficiency of Thai students. The researchers have indicated that tense is the most difficult component for Thai students to acquire.

Misconception happens when the time and aspect is not illustrated properly. Frederickson [3] points out that the students face a problem of getting confused with the many verb forms to associate with time and have a thought that Verb tenses are suits with particular times.

Tense is a requisite for proper communication of language. 'English teachers should shift from literature to grammar teaching as English is turning to a functional language. Further teachers should give more practices for the students while teaching tenses' [1]. Halliday [4] points that 'If the second language learners understand the concept of tense, they would be able to improve their English at high standard level'. In most of the cases, the future tense would be substituted by present tense. Even in Kohlmyr's research, the same type of errors was done by the students which indicate that the students lack the knowledge of using future tense [6].

Activity Based Language Teaching:

M. Uma Devi points out "Teachers follow lecture method, which makes the learners mere passive listeners. If the classes are interactive, the learners in the initial stage may feel hesitant but they will gradually improve their language skills". [1] To boost the soft skills, the students should be cognitive and active in classrooms.

Activity based language teaching is an innovative method to teach the students through

different activities. Various activities will make them to participate actively in the classrooms instead of being passive listeners. These activities will stimulate the minds of the students and help them to gain interest in the classroom learning. Engrossment in different activities will lead them to get rid of their inhibitions and help them to gain confidence. These activities are a boon to the teachers as they can attain their target of teaching.

In Activity Based teaching method the learners build their own concepts and find solutions to problems. Exposure to problems helps the learner to defend and justify their ideas. Thus, they acquire the skills for a better career and have the ability of problem solving and decision making. Possessing a sound knowledge of subject along with good communication skill is an assurance for success in future. Activities help in developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills of students. The success lies in the proper selection and execution of the activity by the teacher. To improve the efficiency of students, individual or group activities can be conducted depending on the strength of the class. In activity based teaching, the learning process makes the students learn themselves and realize that language is a tool to resolve the problems. It provides the students with all the linguistic skills to accomplish the real world tasks. Students learn how to use tenses while speaking and writing. Students should be taught all the language components to develop their communicative abilities. Teachers need to be adapting innovative activities to impart various learning styles.

Different activities from young to adult:

Adhering to the needs of students the teacher plans the activities. Assessing the level of students ability and knowledge, assists in perfect planning of activities. The teachers can attain their target by a well planned syllabus, considering the age, strength and conceptual knowledge of the students. While implementing the activities in the classroom the teacher can clamp deductive approach where the rules or information of the concept can be given before the activity or impart inductively where students will know about the rules after the activity.

Story building is the best technique to develop speaking skill and creativity. The teacher can start the activity by starting a sentence to narrate a story as one day a man was walking on the street and on the road, he saw a newspaper. The next student can connect; in the newspaper he saw an advertisement. This chain will continue till the last student who concludes the story. Anyone can retell the story from the beginning till the end. The stories will take a particular tense and aspect for a story.

Reading skills need to be trained appropriately. It has many sub skills such as scanning, skimming,

intensive reading etc. In scanning, individual scans for the information they need. The teacher gives group or individual activity for finding answer for the questions from the text. The group which gets the correct answers fast would be considered as the winning team.

In skimming, the student reads from the first to the last and gets an overall idea on the text. To develop their skimming skill the teacher gives limited time to read and later ask them the questions related to it. Subsequently, intensive reading is sub skill of reading where detailed study of the text happens and clear idea of text is expected. Asking questions on text, coloring the important portions, summarizing distinct activities can be implemented in the classroom. After reading a text the teacher can exercise different role plays, vocabulary building activities which they gained from intensive reading of text.

Puzzles

Puzzles are the activities for the students from elementary to tertiary level. Puzzles are problem solving games. Depending on the level of students the difficulty of the activity can be elevated. Competitions grabs interest for activities. Puzzles on vocabulary, tenses, subject verb agreement etc. can be included.

Quiz

Group activities are apt for quiz. The questions include from the tenses, before and after the teaching an activity.

Identifying games

Identification of tenses, verbs, time, aspects ,etc. from the given task is one of the activity for teaching tenses.

Role play

The teacher can make the students to do the role play by giving different tense to the groups. The students have to use the assigned tenses for framing dialogues. This helps to use tenses in real life situations.

Narrative identification games

The teachers takes a narrative story and asks the group to find out the tenses and aspects used in the story. The group which finds faster and better is the winner.

Action in class

This activity is mainly efficient for beginners. The teacher can make the student do a particular action as yogasana, dance, cookery show etc. The students have to narrate what they are doing and the present tense will be intensified by the teacher. Next day the teacher will ask what did they do yesterday and the students will narrate in past tense. Finally, the teacher will make them to narrate the same for tomorrow, to equip them with the future tense.

Narrative stories

Narrative words are the verbs used to tell the stories. The teachers make cards of different sentences in different tenses. Students have to arrange the jumbled cards. The difficulty level may change as passages are best for tertiary level students.

Syntax

The rules and principles should be followed in a particular language syntax. The word order is focused to get appropriate meaning of a sentence. For example, The crow sat on a tree is the right structure of a sentence and the expected meaning is conveyed without ambiguity. These words kept in different order does not deliver meaning. The teachers can give words including nouns, verb, helping verb etc. The activity is to arrange it in a proper order to make a meaningful sentence.

Different activities help in learning tense. Teachers have liberty to select proper activities and make interesting and beneficial for students. Books and internet are the sources of activities, the challenge of teacher holds in the selection of it and executing it in class.

Activities with technology

Activities combined with technology is fortune for learners. Involvement in activities and technological learning revives the senses of learners. The technological teaching aids include computers, language labs, audio visual aids, projectors etc. Eventhough profits counts more in technology based activity learning, Indian education system has to move a lot.

A major problem of many schools and colleges in rural area are disturbed by electricity supply. Within the limited time of forty to fifty minutes class, the time consumed in starting and interruptions are nearly 15 mts leaving thirty minutes for a class. A blend of technology and activity based language teaching does miracles in the life of students. The limited aids from government curtails the institution authorities to get modern equipments. In technological aids the students are mere viewers than participators. The students are aided by real life situational experience in activity based language teaching. They discipline their body language, mend their communication skill and coordination among groups.

CONCLUSION

Students in the modern world live in a competitive society and the changes demand the teachers to use modern methodology to gain success in the battle. An innovative teacher will always find the way to implement the four skills with grammar and vocabulary. A crusade from lecture method to activity based language teaching offers succesfull career for students. Good marks in exams do not showcase a student as efficient but his soft skills added with the

subject knowledge brings achievement. Quoting Benjamin Franklin, ‘ Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn’. Activity Based language teaching involves a learner in the process of acquisition of tenses focussing on various forms of verbs and remember the structure of tenses .

REFERENCES

1. Devi, Dr. M Uma, “ Teaching Tenses – A comparative Method.” Journal of English Language and Literature, 2015; vol, no. 2, pp.33-37.
2. Kuder E. Implications of an inductive versus deductive approach to SLA grammar instruction (Doctoral dissertation, University of Delaware).2009.+
3. Frederickson CJ. Tenses Yindii Dot Com Co.Ltd. 1997.
4. Halliday MAK. On Grammar. London: Peking University Press. 2002.
5. Çakır İ. Problems in teaching tenses to Turkish learners. Theory and Practice in Language Studies. 2011;1(2):123-7.
6. Köhlmyr P. To Err is Human.... An investigation of grammatical errors in Swedish 16-year-old learners’ written production in English.2003.
7. Tawilapakul U. The use of English tenses by Thai university students. Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Language Institute, Thammasat University; 2003.