

Enhancing The Self Esteem of The Students For Effective and Easy Learning of English as a Second Language

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Abstract

‘The Learning Revolution’ by Gordon Dryden and Dr. Jeannette Vas, speaks of the following three factors which would make teaching and learning effective and easy; interesting and instant.

1. Enhancing the self esteem of the students
2. Training the brain to bring out its best potentials and
3. Creating a positive class room climate.

Lack of self esteem or self confidence, as mentioned by these authors, has resulted in slow and low learning, as evidenced in most of our schools, especially among the low achievers and slow learners. Enhancing the self-esteem of the students will definitely result in better and fast learning of English as the second language.

To make the English language teaching and learning easy and interesting for Tamil medium students in Tamil Nadu, India, this research scholar has developed an IELT (Integrated English Language Teaching) methodology. The first pillar of the IELT is the session on self-esteem. This paper presents the details of the IELT approach to language teaching and gives the details of the

sessions on self-esteem. These sessions have not only enhanced the self-esteem of the students but also resulted in a strong motivation and determination to learn English.

1. Introduction

Our students in all the Tamil medium schools in Tamil Nadu, India, have been learning English from standard one onwards. Yet they find it extremely difficult to express themselves in English even after completing twelfth standard. Where does the problem lie? Is it with the system or with the learners? Is it with the teacher or with the methodology? Grappling with these questions and issues, this research scholar has come out with the Future Perfect Project (FPP), an innovative and interactive, interesting and activity-based methodology of teaching and learning English. This project is being implemented in all the nine Jesuit Tamil medium schools in Tamil Nadu for the past seven years. It has been very effective in terms of improving the ability of our students in standard six to eight to speak and write in English. It has revolutionized the way, the students learn English. Learning English has become a joyful experience for our students. More than the content, it is the integrated methodology that has made the project a great and grand success. It basically follows the IELT (Integrated Language English Language Teaching) approach.

2. Need for the IELT Methodology:

Right from the first standard, the Tamil medium students of Tamil Nadu schools have been studying English as their second language. They begin turning the pages of the new English books with much pride and enthusiasm; pride because it is English and enthusiasm because it is a new and foreign language. When they complete their higher secondary education, as they turn back the pages of their school lives, all their efforts seem to have been only motiveless adventures; they have struggled a lot all the years with English but for no gain and not to its mastery. Only their progress reports show some traces of the existence of the English subject not their actual progress. They read and listen to a good amount of English text during their school days but they get deceived when it comes to its transformation into productive skills. We can summarize this that no Tamil medium school in Tamil Nadu has so far blessed its children with the 'gift of tongue', English speech.

However, we can tolerate no patience keeping the entire school going generation dump all along their lives unless and until the need arises to speak in English.

It will be a grave injustice if the language rights are denied to those from socio-economically impoverished sectors. Most of the students in the Tamil medium schools are from these sectors. The rich and the elite are able to get it (and get it right) by their wealth and influence whereas the poor and the disadvantaged sections are denied this opportunity to master English and thus enhance their ability and employability. Parents aspire to educate their wards in the best way possible irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.

The present scenario leaves much to be desired, as when they encounter English in Std.I they are obsessed with Anglophobia. Their approach to language is xenophobic. A vast majority of the children are studying only in government/ aided corporation / panchayat union schools.

There is total block – out of exposure to the languages, as the home environment and immediate neighborhood are not conducive to get exposed to English. So the sole place of hope for such children is the class room.

They begin their English learning adventure at the age of five. It is our duty to design their destination and make them fluent as early as possible so that, their interest may not get drained up. What is the attempt, we have been making so far in this regard for the past seven years? This IELTS approach (named as FPP) has been evolved by this research scholar and is being implemented in nine Jesuit Tamil medium schools in Tamil Nadu since 2007.

3. Integrated Methodology

It has been named as ‘Integrated’ because several aspects are merged, unified and incorporated together in this proposed methodology. The following are some of the specific elements, which are incorporated into this methodology.

- Self-esteem sessions are very important in this
- Important elements of the other methods of teaching English have been incorporated in this.
- Besides the following five elements, project works and other supportive activities and structures form part of this
- Pair share, group works are regularly done, and this promotes cooperative and collective learning.
- Elements of multiple intelligences are incorporated
- Teachers’ empowerment and their ongoing formation are part and parcel of this method
- All four aspects of language learning – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are given sufficient importance
- Corrections are done in a non-threatening way.
- The prescribed state government English text books are effectively used and incorporated in all the classes
- The entire class is divided into several groups. Each group has a name and a leader. All the games and activities are mostly conducted in the groups and marks are allotted to each group based on the performance. Marks are displayed on the notice board. Once a term, prizes are given to the best performing teams. The progress of the groups is publically recognized and affirmed. This serves as an external motivation and promotes collective learning. Each group vies with others to win recognition and prizes.

4. Five Pillars of the IELTS Methodology:

This IELTS methodology includes the following five elements. Language teaching and learning is done through the following five ways.

- a. Motivational sessions to enhance the self-esteem of the students
- b. Language games and activities

- c. Rhymes connected to the language items taught
- d. Stories in audio-visual form
- e. Case studies and group discussion

Of all the aforementioned five pillars of IELTS, this paper deals with details of sessions on self-esteem.

5. The Conceptual Framework:

‘The Learning Revolution’ by Gordon Dryden and Dr. Jeannette Vas (1994), speaks of the following three factors which would make teaching and learning effective and easy; interesting and instant. The authors, together, have done a detailed study and research on all the best educational practices around the world and come out with the following three principles and findings which would foster easy and fast learning. The factors are:

1. Enhancing the self esteem of the students
2. Training the brain to bring out its best potentials and
3. Creating a positive class room climate

Lack of self esteem or self confidence, as mentioned by these authors, results in slow and low learning, as evidenced in most of our schools, especially among the low achievers and slow learners. Enhancing the self esteem of the students will definitely result in better and fast learning. It will remove the fear in the minds of the students and enhance their motivation to learn the language.

6. Clarification of the Concepts

6.1. Motivation and Language Classes:

Most of the language classes fail miserably, due to lack of motivation. J.K. Pillai (1997) observes that lack of student motivation is a primary cause of low academic achievement. Motivation can be instrumental, integrative and task oriented. But present day language classes do not provide any inspiration to learn. Delamont (1976) opines that in India, Belgium, Iraq, South America and New Zealand, the teachers keep on talking. The learners’ motivation is affected by the meanings they attach to learning English, by learning difficulties and by the content of learning and learning styles. Dickinson (1987) also advocated self direction in language learning; Brindley (1984) and Nunan (1988) have suggested that curriculum design can be seen as a negotiative process between teachers and students; Eisler (1987) says that decisions regarding the content and form of teaching are being shared between teachers and students.

J.K. Pillai (1997) says that while task achievement satisfaction is important, the social need satisfaction of the students, namely receiving attention, approval and affection in the class room also have to be fulfilled. If students are encouraged and given opportunities to participate actively in the class room activities, favourable attitudes are developed. As the teachers listen to students, accept their feelings, respond to their suggestions, involve them in the teaching – learning process using relevant questions, praise and encourage adequately, a warm, supportive, positive class room climate is generated and such a climate enhances emotional security and zest for learning and leads to high student achievement. Moreover for greater efficiency, David

Nunan (1992) and Kathleen M. Bailey et. al (1992) advocate collaborative language learning and teaching. Collaboration can be had at three levels. i. pre teaching collaboration ii. In class collaboration iii. Post lesson collaboration.

As a great motivating factor, self-esteem sessions play a vital role in the language classes in this IELT approach.

7. Meaning and Importance of Self-esteem:

A person's self-esteem is a major determinant of what a person accomplishes and how fulfilled and rewarding a life, he or she lives. Rosenberg (1979) defines self-esteem as a positive or negative orientation towards oneself (p. 215). Definitions of self-esteem vary considerably in both their breadth and psychological sophistication. High self-esteem means that we appreciate ourselves and our inherent worth. More specifically, it means we have a positive attitude, we evaluate ourselves highly, we are convinced of our own abilities and we see ourselves as competent and powerful in control of our lives and able to do what we want.

To grow in self-esteem is to grow in the conviction that one is competent to live and worthy of happiness and therefore to face life with greater confidence, benevolence and optimism, which help us to reach the goals and experience fulfillment.

Branden (1990) provides a particularly compelling view of self-esteem. He sees it as having two interrelated aspects: a sense of personal efficacy or confidence in a person's ability to think and act; and a sense of personal worth or an affirmative attitude towards a person's right to live and to be happy. In the most succinct terms, self-esteem is the disposition to experience one as competent to cope with the challenges of life and to be deserving of happiness. The importance of healthy self-esteem lies in the fact that it is the foundation of our ability to respond actively and positively to the opportunities of life, in work, and in play. It is also the foundation of that serenity of spirit that makes possible the enjoyment of life.

Overall it would appear that self-esteem can be envisaged as a 'social vaccine', a dimension of personality that empowers people and inoculates them against a wide spectrum of self-defeating and socially undesirable behavior (California Task Force to promote self-esteem, 1990).

Academic success is strongly associated with emotional intelligence. The children of today are highly intelligent but lack the emotional skills to channelize this intelligence into positive and productive energy.

8. Self-esteem and Motivation:

Enhancing one's self-esteem results in high motivation. In the context of second language learning, William Littlewood (1987: 53) observes: "In second language learning as in every other field of human learning, motivation is the crucial force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres. It is a complex phenomenon and includes many components: the individuals' drive, need for achievement and success, curiosity, desire for stimulation and new experience, and so on. These factors play a role in every kind of learning situation".

Motivation is the driving force in one's life. It comes from a desire to succeed. The most powerful motivation comes from within one's belief system. To move into action one needs to believe in that one does and accept responsibility for one's life. When one accepts the responsibility for his /her behavior and action, his/her attitude towards life becomes positive. Person becomes more productive both personally and professionally. Thus relationship improves both at home and at work. Life becomes more meaningful and fulfilling (Khera, 1998, p.1).

Self-confidence and self-esteem are vital to all learning, and education that fails to address them will fail in its other tasks.

Any good teaching should start with motivation. According to Jame Desse (1967), "Motivation is a general term describing need and instinct regulated behavior with respect to goals" (p. 607). However, according to Morgan et al., (1986), "Motivation refers to the driving forces which result in persistent behavior directed toward particular goals (p. 303). Often it is said the good or bad deed of men are due to motives.

Therefore, motivation is intended for bringing the students to a state of readiness in the beginning itself.

In the words of James (1890), self-esteem can be considered as the ratio of "our actualities to our supposed potentialities". A low self-esteem therefore indicates a large discrepancy between the self-image and the ideal-self, and may be exhibited through several operations by the child (Lawrence, 1996) like avoidance, compensation, low motivation and resistance.

9. Educational Implications.

The social influences on the individual's sense of themselves would suggest possible interventionist programmes for the improvement in, for example, self-esteem. In an educational context, the premise of such programmes has been that there is a relationship between student achievement and self-esteem, and that improvements in self-esteem will lead to improvements in achievement. Whilst research findings on this relationship are mixed, there is a general agreement amongst researchers that students who are underachieving at school are also likely to have low self-esteem (Burns, 1982).

10. Programme to enhance the self esteem of the students:

As already mentioned, in the IELTS approach, every English lesson begins with sessions on self-esteem. The practicalities of the sessions are the following.

One or two motivational video clippings are played at the beginning of the class. This motivational clippings contain footages of ordinary human beings, often times differently abled persons, achieving or doing extraordinary things. If need be, these clippings are played twice. Students watch them in complete silence. Each student is asked to say a sentence or two, only narrating what he/she has just seen. This naturally increases their attention to watch the clippings.

After this, students are taken outside the class room, preferably to the ground, to do some deep breathing exercise (pranayama). Drydent and Jeannette (1994) also affirm the need for this.

“The source of that brain-electricity is good food combined with oxygen. Obviously you get oxygen through breathing. That’s why deep breathing is highly recommended before and during study: to oxygenate your blood. And that’s why exercise is not only good for your body, it’s good for your brain. It enriches your blood with oxygen”. (Gordon Dryden and Jeannette vos, 1994, p. 124)

After the breathing exercise in the open space, students come back to the class and do some silent reflection on the clippings watched. They visualize the clippings and watch them once again in their mental screen. They write down all their reflections and the messages they get for their lives from these clippings. They share their reflections in pairs or in small groups. They fine tune their reflections and share them with the entire class later. The significant points from these sharing by the students are noted down on the board for all to see and get motivated. The teacher then presents and adds his own ideas and reflections. This is often done as power point presentation. Students are given some home tasks, based on the theme of the session.

Every self esteem session ends with the loud repetition of some self affirmation statements like the following: ‘I am the best, I can do it, God is always with me, I am a winner, Today is my best day, I am amazing, I can do anything, Positivity is a choice, I celebrate my individuality, I am prepared to succeed, I am confident, I am brilliant, I am energetic, I am creative, I am fabulous’ etc.

Students learn and sing songs like ‘Be the best’, ‘I have a dream’ etc at the end of each session.

As a result of the programme, the self esteem of the students which includes their self confidence and strong motivation, have been greatly enhanced. This has resulted in the definite improvement in their performance in language learning.

11. Conclusion:

One of the important aspects of the IELTS approach to language teaching is, enhancing the self esteem of the students. Self-esteem sessions have removed the English phobia to a very great extent and motivated the students to learn English effectively.

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