



Developing Participatory Visual Aids For Teaching English To/By Graduate Visual Arts Students

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Abstract

The proposed study intends to develop participatory visual aids for teaching English to/by graduate Visual arts students. It is an outcome of issues faced both by me as a teacher and students in English language learning process at Fine Arts College in Telangana. This paper is an attempt to identify specific problems of English communication skills and find solutions for easier and more effective ways of teaching/learning English through visual aids and tools.

Keywords: Visual Teaching Aids, Language Learning, speaking skill development, Participatory tools.

Introduction:

For Indian language speakers learning English as medium of communication still throws challenges. Out of the many spoken languages of India there are 22 Official languages mentioned in the Constitution of India. English is one of the official languages used across India. Most of the educational institutions especially Higher Educational institutions in India use English as the medium of instruction. And this is the reason why learning English language becomes necessary even for a student who hails from a local language medium of education during their schooling. Several Visual arts students come from rural parts of the region where English language teaching is meager and hence very challenging. It is also unavoidable as English is one of the compulsory courses for graduate students.

Graduate students acquiring new knowledge and learning new skills develop new attitudes as they have a reached mature intellectual stage of life. Hence, finding new ways of teaching these learners is important. In this process, developing participatory teaching/learning aids were tried out.

Collective learning by creating artistic products while making drawings, paintings, sculptures in their own way is explored. This kind of course will be useful in higher education for learning art while making progress in English language learning, by creating art works. For instance, games on correcting sentences from jumbled words, drawing illustrations on idioms to engage creative thinking, develops better understanding and builds confidence by demonstrating their art works.

English as a second language becomes a very conscious learning during adulthood. Language acquisition theories like behaviorist theory, cognitive theory, interactionist theory speak about children at a very young age like a new born to 12 years old. Chomsky (1950) proposed that humans have an inborn biological capacity for language, often termed the Language Acquisition theory, which predisposes them to acquire

language. And language acquisition is understandable for these young children. When it comes to young adults (graduate students) language acquisition is not that easy as they are very conscious by this age. At the same time Piaget's (1936) Theory of Development believes in lifelong learning.

According to John Locke's (1689) philosophy, the theory of tabula rasa states that people are born as a 'blank slate' like mind. They have no knowledge of language at all. But as they grow they acquire language from their environment and social surroundings. As this language acquisition is a subconscious process there is no effort put by the child in knowing the language. Whereas language learning is a conscious process, in this research my goal is to find effective ways of language teaching/learning for graduate fine arts students.

Teaching Aid:

Material used in teaching/ learning to instruct the learners for an effective learning is known as teaching aids.

Types of Teaching Aids:

Instructional material may be available in various types from traditional ways to the current technological ways.

| Traditional teaching aids | Technological teaching aids |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| blackboards and chalk | Interactive white boards |
| Posters | Audio aids |
| Globes | Visual aids |
| Textbooks | Audio-visual aids |
| Activity books | Digital tools/Apps |

Importance of Teaching aids:

Lecture method of teaching a language may become tiresome and also boring for the learners. Teaching aids facilitate in making the teaching/learning process more interesting. Additional to this if the teaching aids are interactive they make the learning more enjoyable.

Benefits of using teaching aids:

1. Stimulate interest
2. Helps teacher teach effectively
3. Helps learner in understanding the lesson with ease
4. Encourages the learner participation in class
5. Learners remain attentive
6. Learner do not get distracted
7. Memory retention of the lesson is better
8. Builds confidence in learners
9. Creates enthusiasm in learning more

Overview:

This research was initiated with the premise that the integration of creative visual aids into English language teaching has long been recognized as an effective method for engaging students, especially those with a visual or artistic inclination. Thus, the present research, which is focused on graduate visual art students, aims at exploring how participatory visual aids can be developed and utilized to improve English language teaching methodology. The main objective of the study is to understand and adopt an engaging and effective learning environment by using tools that are not only educational but also aligned with the creative capabilities of visual art students.

According to Barclay, "The role of teaching aids in the classroom is to make learning real, practical, and fun through seeing, hearing, discovering, and doing. Teaching aids should primarily function to make learning experiences in the classroom more tangible, applicable to real-life situations, and enjoyable." (1984, p. 8).

The primary objective of this minor research is to explore how participatory visual aids can be developed to enhance the teaching of English among graduate visual art students. By incorporating visual aids into the teaching process, the study aims to achieve three specific outcomes:

1. The research aims to enhance the learning experience by incorporating visual tools that will capture the students' attention and stimulate their interest in the subject matter. This is particularly important in a field like English, where traditional teaching methods can sometimes fall short in sustaining student engagement.
2. To create a classroom environment that is inclusive and comfortable for all students. This can be achieved by incorporating a variety of visual aids that cater to different learning styles and preferences, which ultimately makes students feel more confident in their ability to learn and understand English.
3. Since the target group consists of students from the College of Fine Arts, the research specifically focuses on encouraging students to leverage their artistic skills in creating their own visual aids. By making students active participants in the creation of teaching tools, the research aims to personalize their learning experience, making it more relatable and effective.

Methodology

The research employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. However, The following steps were taken to gather insights from the target group and engage them in the research process:

1. **Surveys:** As the first step in the research process, surveys were conducted to understand how visual aids were currently being used in English language teaching and to identify any challenges or gaps in their application. This survey gathered feedback from students and faculty, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of existing practices.
2. **Language Games:** As part of the data collection process, I visited Gurukul Schools to conduct language games with students. These games were designed to be both fun and educational, providing an opportunity to observe how students engage with visual aids. The games also served as a way to assess how interactive learning tools impact student interest and engagement in learning English.(fig.1)
3. **Structured and Semi-Structured Questionnaires:** To collect more detailed responses, I conducted structured and semi-structured interviews with both students and faculty members from the College of Fine Arts, JNAFAU. This allowed for a combination of open-ended responses and numerical data, which provided a more holistic view of the students' perceptions of visual aids and their willingness to use or create them.
4. **Engagement with College Students:** Given that the research focuses on Visual Art students, special emphasis was placed on engaging students from the College of Fine Arts, JNAFAU. These students, being trained in visual arts, offer a unique opportunity to integrate their artistic skills into the learning process. Their involvement in creating visual aids is an essential part of the project.
5. **Data Analysis:** After collecting the survey and interview responses, I began analyzing the data to identify patterns and fundamental needs of English learners. The analysis helped me to understand common challenges faced by students and teachers in using visual aids and revealed the most effective types of visual tools that could be used for teaching English.

Visit to the Language Lab: To explore the role of technology in language teaching, I visited the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad. The visit provided valuable insights into how language labs and digital tools are being integrated into English language teaching to improve oral practice and listening skills

Findings from the Research

From the surveys and interviews conducted, several key findings emerged. Students expressed a positive attitude toward the use of visual aids, particularly those that were interactive and creative. Many students, especially those from the visual arts background, reported a strong preference for art-based visual aids, such as posters, drawings, and charts. These aids, they felt, helped them better retain information and made complex language concepts easier to understand. However, there was also a noticeable gap in students' confidence when it came to creating their own visual aids. While many students showed enthusiasm for the idea, they felt unsure of how to integrate their artistic skills into practical teaching tools. This certainly indicates a potential area for further development, where more guidance and training could be provided to empower students to create their own aids.

Also, I have received positive feedback on the language games conducted in Gurukul Schools. Students found the games to be both engaging and effective in making the English language learning interactive. However, there were suggestions to incorporate more context-specific games that focus on practical language usage rather than abstract vocabulary exercises.

Workshop: A workshop focusing on English phonics and speaking skills development was organized for students. This helped them understand the foundational aspects of English pronunciation, spelling, and reading. The workshop did not only enhance students' phonics and speaking skills but also help them in understanding the role of improving their overall language proficiency.



Fig.3 Workshop on developing participatory visual arts teaching aids. Students from department of Painting actively participating – Understanding Prepositions.



Fig.4 ‘Learn Idioms with us’ Prepared by students from Department of Animation

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