

Classroom Practices of ELT: With Reference to Karnataka

Dr. Sharanappagouda L Patil

Assistant Professor of English, Government First Grade College, Hungund, Dist: Bagalkot, India

Abstract— In the year 2007, the Government of Karnataka implemented the English as a second language from the first standard in Non-English Medium schools. My intention here is to draw upon my ethnographic fieldwork to make observations on what is happening inside the classrooms and to evaluate whether the teachers follow the procedure as stated in the resource books or not. So, in the first phase of my survey during 2008-09, I observed 47 classes and in the next academic year 2009-10 which was carried out as part of the second phase of my fieldwork. Here, I visited the same 47 schools. The following analysis has been done on the basis of my ethnographic experience, notes and videotaped materials.

Keywords— *Ethnographic, TPR activities, dialogue, TPR activities, resource books, activities books*

With the brief description of the ethnographic fieldwork of two consecutive years of English classes, let me compare the practices of the classroom with that of the methods, that is, guidelines as given in the resource books for the teachers. I have taken up three segments of teaching English language namely dialogue practice, language games and TPR (Total Physical Response) activities as the grounds of comparison.

Guidelines for the teachers as suggested in their resource books and the actual classroom practices

1. Dialogue practice as given in the resource book

This is what the resource book has to say on this section of the curriculum. A dialogue is a conversation between two persons. It is a short exchange in familiar and realistic situations. They serve many purposes. They help in the exchange of information, the creation and maintenance of social relationships and deciding and carrying out joint actions. It provides opportunities for the learners to utter some English words which will have a positive effect on their self-confidence. It gives children a degree of confidence in speaking to overcome shyness, fear of speaking in a strange foreign language. It creates scope for learning the kinds of expression that is in current English that occur in everyday interaction. This practice helps

learners get rid of the fear/hesitations they might have in speaking English and creates storage of spoken expression which the learner can draw on at a later stages.

The main objectives of the dialogue practice are to give exposure to the learners to a linguistically rich environment and create awareness among the learners regarding need based language use. The content of this section of the curriculum is: 50 dialogues for the first standard, 35 dialogues for the second standard and 20 dialogues with 3-5 exchanges for listening and practice for third and fourth standards. There are some guidelines for the teachers. Every day, the teachers have to reserve 4 to 5 minutes for the dialogue practice for the first and second standard students. Once in 10 days they have to organize dialogue practice for the remaining classes. Dialogue practice can be conducted along with either the first three sections of the curriculum (stories, rhymes, TPR activities) or whenever there is an opportunity either in the classroom or outside. Learners cannot read from the book. It is teacher who has to show the learners how to say these dialogues. Afterwards children can practice those dialogues. The teacher will have a major role to play here. The teacher is suggested to choose a dialogue from the resource book. The dialogues given in the book have been already graded to some extent. S/he has to explain what the teacher is going to do in the class so that all learners are clear about their learning tasks. The teacher is instructed to read out the dialogue to the class. As the teacher reads, ask the class to repeat after him/her. It can be done 2/3 times. By selecting one learner, the teacher and the learner can take two roles and demonstrate the conversation to the class. This can be done only initially until they understand their roles clearly. Then ask pupils to practice in pairs of groups as the case may be. For about 6-10 minutes, they can practice on their own. Help them only if they ask for it. Encourage learners to practice dialogues even outside of the classroom. As the teaching progresses, the teacher will see that learners recall the dialogues learnt earlier. Give them enough time to present them freely whenever time permits (DSERT, 2007: 17-19).

Teachers' practice in the classroom: Based on ethnographic fieldwork/video clippings

It is introduced to infuse confidence in the beginner to speak English without hesitations. Many opportunities need to be given to the learners in conversation practice. The learner must be able to carry on with a dialogue relating the conversation to his/her environment or needs. Such practices develop oral confidence among the learners. The very feeling of uttering English will be an encouragement for the learners to go ahead with other learning activities. This section is planned to provide the learners opportunities to engage in English conversation practice.

In the classrooms, the teachers are not following this activity properly. Most of them did not introduce it in the classrooms. They thought that it is not an important activity. Some of them tried their best when I told them to practice the dialogues, but they were unable to introduce the different situations in dialogue practice. Without reading the dialogue before the learners, they forced the learners to imitate them. They did not give any demonstration on how to present the dialogues. Among 47 observed classes, only four of the teachers practiced dialogues in the classes. The teachers didn't explain the learners about their learning tasks and their role in dialogue practice clearly which put the learners in a state of confusion. There was an instruction for the teachers to read the dialogue one or two times and ask the learners to follow it in chorus. But, I never saw this type of practice in the class room. Thus, this segment of teaching is completely neglected in implementation of teaching of English.

2. Language games as given in the resource book

The Objective of language games is to give language input to facilitate oral production as stated in the curriculum. So, 21 language games for the first standard and 17 language games for the second standard have been listed as part of the curriculum.

This is conceived as a rich source for increased motivation, interest and enjoyment among the learners. Playing games makes learning an enjoyable and rewarding experience. These help create meaningful contexts to use language and also provide context for intense and meaningful language use. These help develop language learning skills -listening, speaking, reading and writing- among learners and give learners more active roles than many other classroom activities. Learner participation will take place at the level of individuals, teams, and groups. It maybe used as optional and conducted at least once in fifteen days to ensure more exposure to language for the beginners. The curriculum suggests that language games can be transacted once a week

for the third and fourth standard learners. The teachers are advised to conduct the language games in the following way: first they have to explain the game and rules of the game; then give the class a demonstration of how the game is played by playing it with one or more learners as necessary; the selected learners can then give another demonstration of playing the game for the class to watch. The class may be divided into groups and each group plays the game. Some games may be played by the whole class or in pairs. A game that is proves to be interesting to the class can be played again in another class, perhaps increasing the difficulty level a little (DSERT, 2007: 19-20).

Teachers' practice in the classroom: Based on ethnographic fieldwork/video clippings

Children want to play games and enjoy playing them. Their natural interest in playing can be adopted for language learning purposes. To acquire a language one must make an effort to understand language, internalize it and use the language in meaningful contexts. But, in the classrooms, the teachers neglected this activity. Most of them did not introduce it in the classrooms. They thought that it was not an important activity. Some of them tried their best when I told them to conduct the language games. However, they were unable to conduct the language games. In this regard, when I asked the teachers why they were not introducing that activity. They replied that it was difficult to finish off the syllabus if they conduct such activities. In two or three classes, I witnessed this activity. Some of the teachers introduced them for the sake of following the prescribed methodology. They completed it just within three to five minutes. They neither followed the method of handling this activity as given in the instructions.

3. Total Physical Response activities as given in the resource book

The main objective of this segment is to give language input to facilitate oral production. There are 20 TPR activities in each class. It can be conducted either along with the first three (stories, rhymes, dialogue practice) or whenever there is an opportunity either in the classroom or outside of it. The teacher in the classroom has the freedom to choose the TPR activities suggested in the resource books and has the option to use them for about 3-5 minutes every day. The list of activities suggested is only a sample. Teachers can add to the list. These TPR activities facilitate exposure to the English language. They can also be seen as a form of feedback to the teacher. Learning becomes more effective through play and active involvement. Meaning gets understood very quickly. Goal of learning or teaching is highly specific. Learning takes place through minimum stress and anxiety.

Listening/comprehension is more effective through TPR activities. Retention is more through TPR activities at the early stages of learning. The teacher has to set up the classroom with those materials required for making the learners participate. He/she demonstrates models, a command or a description or an appropriate action. Then teacher calls an individual learner and gives commands. He/she repeats the commands if necessary. All the learners keep guessing the action every time a command is given. Teacher can call another learner and give the same command changing the sequence of actions. Though learners appear to be silent, learning process is on because they keep guessing according to the curriculum designers (DSERT, 2007: 21-22).

Teachers' practice in the classroom: Based on ethnographic fieldwork/video clippings

Total Physical Response activities are those activities which make the learners in the classroom involve themselves in the language learning process. During this process, learners become physically active. They act, and they participate actively in performing some gross motor skills.

In the classroom, most of the teachers follow the same activities every day. Sometimes, without giving the instructions the learners perform the actions. It means that the learners are not following the text but as a habit following the practice. The teachers never set up the classroom with related materials required for making the learners participate. Without demonstrating the models, the teachers made the learners to follow their actions. They focused on this activity for the mass learners. They never instructed individual learner with commands. The learners were following those activities mechanically without understanding. So, I saw some of the learners being silent. Anyhow, most of the teachers followed this segment in their classes albeit mechanically and to engage the entire class.

Conclusion:

Thus, with regard to the different segments of teaching English language, most of the teachers are not aware of the procedure laid out in their resource books as well as taught in in-service trainings. From the data in the previous chapters I have shown that 71% of the teachers took in-service training in teaching of English from the first standard. Among them, 48% of teachers opined that the training was effective and 31% of them expressed that it was average. 86% of the teachers told that they are following prescribed methodology in the classroom. But in the field, most of the teachers are not following the procedure. It is recorded during my fieldwork. Among the 3 segments, most of the teachers followed only one segment that is TPR activities.

Dialogue practice and language games are completely neglected. Some of the teachers followed them but the procedure was not followed.

REFERENCES

- [1] Based on my ethnographic fieldwork of two consecutive years i.e., 2008-09, 2009-10
- [2] DSERT. 2007. Teacher's Resource Books