

Overcoming Classroom Obstacles: Teach to enable communication

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Lest we forget, in our enthusiasm to impart all that we want to, Language is acquired and developed for the expression of our needs and wants and to have them satisfied in whatever circumstances. These needs and wants change as a learner's cognitive ability widens. The development of his linguistic ability has to be commensurate with that. Language that has to be consciously taught has to take into account the stages it has to go through when acquired naturally. The order of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) has to be given due respect especially in the classroom.

A great deal of language teaching in the classroom is still about explaining, describing and exemplifying language items which, in most cases, do not have practical value as far as the learner is concerned. This usually happens when the teacher monopolizes the precious time allotted for language learning, at the expense of a group of at least 25 learners eagerly waiting to have a go at making intelligible sounds and making sense of them. LSRW must not be ignored. The sine qua non of the language teacher is to make this happen. Unfortunately, this is not happening. Why?

This has to be looked at from the perspective of effective and efficient teaching. In tandem with this, a receptive and ready learning atmosphere has to be created. To achieve this, obstacles in the classroom must be removed or at least minimized to benefit from the limited time that is available. The acquisition of the Mother Tongue (MT) is a natural, developmental process. The degree of proficiency and competence depends very much on the opportunities available for interaction and the intensity of reinforcement in the environment of the child.

Basic needs and wants are met often with immense satisfaction and sense of achievement. Compress a period of MT acquisition into a period of learning time in the classroom and the need to economize time and overcome obstacles to learning becomes obvious. The paper will attempt to identify the obstacles present in the classroom, assess the extent to which they are detrimental or conducive to learning and offer solutions to minimize them.

These obstacles emerge from the corpus of the language that is required to be taught, the teacher's personal knowledge of the language, the teacher's proficiency in the language, the pedagogical passion of the teacher, the technological support employed to teach, the learner's aptitude and his motivation and, above all, the learning and teaching conditions

The delivery will be from the perspective of a bias for the foreign language learner i.e English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The English as a Second Language (ESL) learner has the linguistic ecology for support and abundant opportunities for intensive interaction. The EFL learner does not and therefore his learning time in the classroom needs to be optimized for benefit. The gap between the two becomes wider if attention to important facilities for learning is not favourable.

Often teachers are involved in wanting to teach too much and this ambition brings about stumbling blocks in their work. Optimistically speaking, indeed, transforming the learner, the teacher and the classroom will go a long way to helping a learner to reach required standards and feel the value of their efforts. Globalization shrinks the world and only a mutually intelligible language will ensure harmony and well-being for all.

About the Presenter

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