

Editorial

Welcome to the first number of a new volume of our journal! Most of the articles in this issue are practical in nature and describe classroom procedures for developing communication skills in English. Besides the regular column on a useful speaking activity, we have included a brief report on a series of workshops on virtual learning conducted by ELTAI and supported by IATEFL, UK.

The first article by Porselvi discusses the importance of academic writing skills and reports an experiment using what the author calls “an unique writing centre model” called ATHENA – an academic thinking environment for aspirants. She reports on how two experiments carried out with first year postgraduate students based on the syllabus for academic writing designed by her and using the writing centre model helped the students to explore and experience the different stages of writing.

The second article in this issue by Nair and Mathew is rather theoretical and highlights the challenges and difficulties in identifying slow learners in the English classrooms and discusses ways of “uplifting” them. The major issue, according to them, is the lack of a mechanism to help these students, as they do not come under the category of learners with special needs and therefore do not receive appropriate intervention by their teachers. They thus feel neglected, leading to learning gaps and psychological problems such as a sense of insecurity and lack of self-confidence to learn.

The next article by Nagamani presents the classroom teaching procedure to make students explore the cultural content of a well-known short story. She maintains that the exploration of culture helps students to hone their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in meaningful and interesting ways. She concludes by stating that including the study of culture in language learning “brings a new dimension” in ESL teaching.

The following article on vocabulary enrichment by Kala Chandrasekaran brings to the fore the distinction between passive and active vocabulary and, in particular, the dormant passive vocabulary among rural and semi-urban students. She then proposes using jargon to turn the passive vocabulary into active. The teaching procedure outlined by the author in her article is claimed to help students develop strategies for building their vocabulary and increasing their fluency.

The fifth piece by Sushma Brahmadevara highlights the significant ways in which brochures can be exploited in the language classroom through a range of activities for promoting language skills, especially speaking and writing. She also outlines the teaching procedure involving group work activities and tasks.

The last article by Athista argues the need for formal training for improving listening skills of professional students through focused listening activities. She distinguishes between casual and focused listening, and between top-down and bottom-up processing in respect of listening. She then reports on an experiment she conducted in three stages with students of engineering using Malala’s speech at the UN as the listening text. In the process, she also outlines what active listening involves.

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