

'Brochure' as a resource for language learning

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ABSTRACT

Differentiated Instruction has become the norm of the day. Teachers and learners today are looking beyond the traditional approaches of language teaching and learning. The methods adopted by language teachers should be continuously revised according to the requirements or needs of the learners. While the resources available to the language teacher to enhance language skills are in abundance, it has become difficult for them to select and create apt, focused and innovative materials for the required purpose. The teachers' knowledge, experience and expertise also help them to choose the relevant materials. In this context, an attempt has been made to look at the ways in which language skills can be promoted in students by the use of brochures. Brochures play a significant role in language development, as they contain catchy sentences, phrases and technical vocabulary. Students come to know about the subtle nuances involved in the creation of brochures and how information can be disseminated through them. This paper focuses on the various activities that can be designed through brochures. It also provides some criteria for designing the activities.

Introduction

There are various ways in which we can promote language learning in English classrooms, the learning components being listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. Authentic materials such as newspaper articles, advertisements, video and audio clippings, documentaries, speeches, talks, short stories, quotations and proverbs are useful resources for promoting language. One such authentic material is brochure. Brochure is a leaflet containing two or three pages that give information about a particular subject.

It may be related to any field right from advertisement of schools, colleges, universities, products, medicines and cosmetics to courses such as engineering, architecture and interior designing. Brochures give scope for readers to understand the content better, easier and faster as the information is concise, precise and consolidated, all in one place with key words and phrases. This article outlines a few exercises that can be designed to make language learning happen in the classroom and also help learners to enhance their grammar, vocabulary, speaking and writing skills through group work.

Brochures and the language components

Various language elements can be found in brochures and they can be improved by learners. Some of them include sentence structures, vocabulary items such as subject-specific jargon; synonyms, antonyms, homophones, homographs, homonyms, idioms and phrases; catchy expressions; grammar components such as tenses, articles, prepositions, parts of speech; writing skills such as organizing and sequencing of thoughts, imagination and creativity; and designing new brochures related to the given themes. Thus brochures can be used to help learners with skill development and language proficiency.

Group size and the procedure

A class of 20 was organized into five groups with four members in each. Copies of a brochure on 'Diabetes' a pamphlet designed by Himalaya Company, were distributed. The students were first asked to go through the brochure, the side headings, colour combinations, changes in the font size, and the organization of the content in 10 to 15 minutes. The learners were free to discuss and add to what was given there. Later the following ten exercises were distributed one after the other so that they would feel enthused throughout the class.

Creative Strategies

1. Guessing the meanings of words

Some technical words, say about ten, could be picked up from the brochure and learners might be asked to match each word with

the meanings given on the right hand side. This would enable them to guess the meanings through the context in the content of the brochure.

E.g.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| a. <i>Cardiac</i> | impossible to deal with |
| b. <i>Miracle</i> | when your heart beats too quickly or irregularly |
| c. <i>Conception</i> | of the heart or heart disease |
| d. <i>Accumulation</i> | great worry caused by a difficult situation |

2. Listing down of phrases

In this activity, learners would distinguish between words and phrases. The teacher would explain what a phrase is and give examples from the brochure for them to understand easily. As there are four students in a group, each one would search for the phrases and it will be an interesting activity for them.

E.g. *levels of stress, last breath of life, etc.*

3. Picking out adjectives

Picking out adjectives or the describing words help the learners to enhance their vocabulary and use them in other contexts creatively.

E.g. *miracle organ*

4. Points vs. Paragraphs

Asking the students to analyse the brochure

based on the various sections and side headings (whether they are in points or short paragraphs) helps them to understand the structure of brochures and how brochures can be designed using key points, sentences, words and phrases.

E.g. Students can write like this

Para 1 – short paragraph (4-5 lines)

Para 2 – bulleted points

5. A question on ‘Wh’ aspect in brochures

Posing a ‘*wh*’ question to students would help them in understanding the content of the brochure. Learners come up with their own answers. Each paragraph is with a side heading, such as ‘What is diabetes?’ and ‘Why does it occur?’. This analysis helps them to know how the side headings can be made interesting and catchy to draw the attention of the readers for the required information.

6. Panel Discussion

A group of four students assuming the role of subject experts such as a physician, patient, dietician and physical trainer can participate in a discussion on the health issues in the recent times and how they can be tackled. This promotes speaking skills in learners.

7. A question on key features of a brochure

Asking the students a question on the essential features of brochures helps them to think and put down all the points they

think are relevant and have learnt from studying the brochure. This creates clarity in them as to how a brochure has to be designed. Learners come up with answers such as *concise, precise, using words sparingly* and *mostly in points and short paragraphs*.

8. Sentence Structures

Using the sentence structures given and making sentences on their own will help them to master the structures and use them confidently in their writing.

E.g.: *The more you . . . the . . .*

Not only does . . . but . . .

If- construction

9. Paragraph Writing

Learners can be asked to write a short paragraph or a story of about 200 to 250 words using many of the words, phrases, adjectives they have come across in exercises 1, 2 and 3. The topic can be related to any other aspect and closely related to the theme of the brochure. This helps them to be creative, expressive and confident in using words in a different context.

10. Designing new brochures

A case study can be given. Students use all the techniques they learn through this activity and create a new brochure. This requires a lot of expertise and time as the content also has to be designed by them. But in a group, learners come up with different ideas within no time. This helps

them to get a panoramic picture of designing good brochures.

E.g. Imagine that you are going to set up your own catering business. Prepare another brochure using the pattern of the given brochure. The brochure should contain all the necessary and relevant information related to your project. You need not stick to the pattern given. Your brochure can be as creative as possible.

Conclusion

When the activity was conducted, there was good response for the vocabulary exercises. Designing a new brochure was the toughest part, but the learners confessed that they enjoyed doing that. The teachers have their own liberty of designing activities based on the necessary skill they want their learners to improve in. Through these exercises, skills such as vocabulary, speaking and writing have been tested and improved. As such, any one skill can be honed at one time as per the requirements of the class. Thus

brochure can be an important source for language learning.

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Abstract in about 150 words

Full paper should not be in more than 2000 words.

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