

Developing an Exploratory Model for Using Literature to Teach English in Primary Level ESL Classrooms of Assam

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ABSTRACT:

Using literature in a language classroom can give students plenty of chances to pick up new words, sentence structures, and other rich linguistic inputs. It can also allow them to comment, defend, and reflect on themselves. A teacher can encourage and support the students' engagement in the language classroom by employing literary texts. Numerous scholars have examined the advantages of employing literature in language classes and expressed the opinion that it can give students rich stimuli for expressing themselves in their target languages. It can help learners practice the four language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary. Literature can introduce students to many learning modalities. The mother tongue support for learning a second language was the main focus of NEP 2020. This paper tries to explore ways to use literature in a language classroom in some innovative ways, especially in the context of primary-level vernacular schools in Assam, where it is observed that most of the students from rural areas struggle to acquire the English language. This paper also attempts to develop some modules that use localized contextual examples and literature to teach the English language.

Keywords: use of literature, second language classroom, MT-supported models, ESL Classroom.

Introduction

The importance of literature in a language classroom is undeniable. Literature provides enormous inputs in a language classroom from vocabulary to language structures and patterns. Many studies have highlighted the importance of literature used in a language classroom and its benefits. Assam is a state full of diverse communities with unique characteristics, traditions, cultures, rituals, and different dialogues and scripts. Though some of the communities have their own language yet the medium of instruction in the school is Assamese which is the dominant language and common lingua franca of different communities in Assam. English is a language that is the third language of these communities and students of different

communities even Assamese medium students find it difficult to cope with the English language and express themselves in English. It becomes a herculean task for them to talk and communicate in English. Hence, considering the place and importance of English in today's world it is important to explore ways to make the teaching and learning process of English easier so that the students can learn the language at ease and feel comfortable. To teach a language that is second or third to these students it is important to have a mother tongue support so that they can relate and conceptualize. Therefore, the researcher thought of developing some tasks and modules, and activities taking support from the mother tongue as well as literature from the mother tongue for primary-level learners of English in ESL classrooms.

Research Questions

- a) What are the effective ways to use literature in a language classroom?
- b) How can we use literature in a primary-level ESL classroom to foster the target language?

Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are:

1. To explore ways to use literature in a language classroom effectively.
2. To find out innovative ways to develop language skills using MT support and literature.
3. To develop some modules to demonstrate the use of literature in a primary-level language classroom.

Methodology

The paper uses qualitative analysis and exploratory methods. It mainly uses secondary data in the research process. It has taken references from secondary sources like books, journals, reports, articles, etc.

Literature Review

Several studies have researched the advantages and benefits of the use of literature in a language classroom and discussed how literature can provide effective stimuli and input in the process of learning a second or target language. It is necessary to choose an important text and material to provide comprehensible input in the class. Keshavarzi (2012) has highlighted the importance of choosing an appropriate text and how literature is crucial for language development. Hoque (2007) has highlighted the learning of a second and foreign language through storytelling, a study of society and values, and

demonstrated the activities to use literature, not study literature, the role of translated texts from the mother tongue, and the importance of the selection of appropriate texts. Irene, K.V. (2015) has highlighted the criteria for using literature and has suggested several models and the effect of different factors in teaching English through literature. Her article highlighted the age-appropriate text adoption from literature to teach and foster language skills in students. Kolodner&Guzdial (1990) and Schank (1990) also highlighted the promotion of the usage of literature and stated the significance of the same, as according to them literature and its different types consist of real-life conversations based upon different situations followed by some events; these words and sentences in a certain situation can be inputs for the listener. Hence, there is no doubt in denying the fact that the usage of literature has great significance.

Development of Module and Discussion

It is important to develop some innovative techniques and models to foster English language skills. A teacher can use different literary texts such as poems, essays, stories, and tales to make them learn the English language. The English language has four skills: listening, writing, speaking, and reading. A teacher can use a poem recitation for listening skills and role-play for the production of the target language. The teacher can also use daily conversation or dialogues from a play to make them practice the language. It is important to help the learners with mother tongue support, hence, one can use the translated texts of one's mother tongue as it is important to have a conceptual understanding and familiarity with the content of the text.

The researcher has attempted to develop some modules for the primary-level ESL learners of English in Assam described as follows:

Module 1: Bi-lingual Rhyme (For Class 1)

Practice and Presentation:

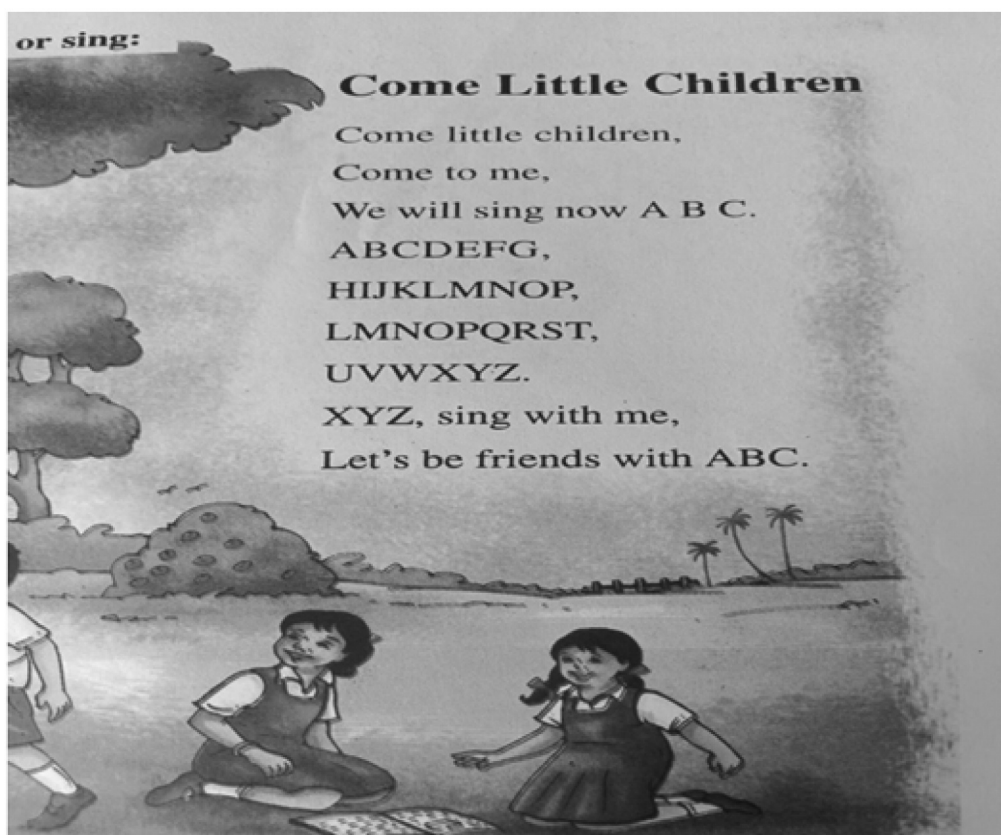
Aim(s):

To develop listening skills

To develop conceptual understandings

To use a poem/rhyme to teach different words of English in relation to their mother tongue

Reading a rhyme and translating it to make the learner understand the meaning. For example, we can use a rhyme from our textbook prescribed for class I and sing the rhyme and help our students sing along with us. For more understanding, the teacher can use a bi-lingual method by translating the lines into their MT. They can also write the rhyme in Assamese or any other mother tongue of the children.



Source: Beginners' English-I, A Textbook for Class-I (SCERT, Assam)

Name of the poem: *Come, Little Children*

Example Rhyme:

Come Little Children, (Assamese: KonmaniHikhuHokolAaha)

Come to me, (Mur kakholoiaaha)

We will sing now A B C. (AamiEkelogeetiya ABC gaam)

A B C D E F G,

H I J K L M N O P,

L M N O P Q R S T,

U V W X Y Z,

X Y Z, Sing with me (Mur logot gai jua, X Y Z

Let's be friends with A B C. (Aahaami A B
C'rXoiteBondhu Hou/ Bondhutto koru)

Follow-up Activity:

1. As a follow-up activity, we can ask the students to tell us what the poem was about.
2. We can ask them to tell us about the meaning of different words such as come, children, sing, and friends in their language.
3. This way we can bridge the gap between a foreign language and the mother tongue.

Module 2: Greeting (From a set of dialogues)

Aim(s):

To learn meet and greet in English

To let the children speak

Practice and Presentation:

The teacher can create a dramatic environment by using two students to practice greetings in English as we do in normal life when we meet someone. He will instruct and motivate them to use English words just as we use our mother tongue to greet someone.

Example Dialogue:



Source: Google

Follow-up Activity:

Greetings and Response between Kelly and John can be more contextualized by changing the names to Kaushik and Kaveri.

Kaushik: Hello, Kaveri! How are You? (Oi Kaveri, keneasa?)

Kaveri: Hi, Kaushik. I am fine Thank you! (Oi Kaushik, Moi bhaleasu! Dhonyobad!)

As a follow-up activity, we can use different situations such as going to the theatre, going to the playground, and asking your friends to accompany you in the playground, asking for chocolate from your uncle, etc in our classrooms to make them learn simple conversations in English by supporting it with their mother tongue and contextual examples.

Module 3: Learning Vocabulary from a Tale

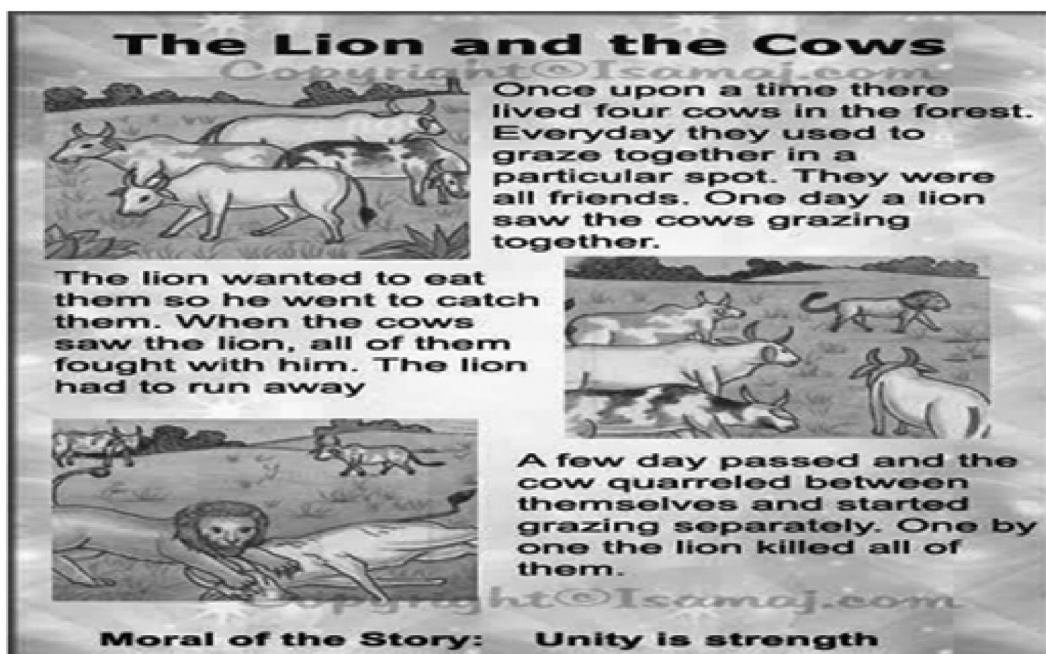
To learn morals

To describe the story from a picture

Aim(s):

To learn new vocabulary

Practice and Presentations:



Source: Google

The teacher can use one short story or tale which is simple in language and tell the story to the class and ask them the moral of the story and what they have understood from the story. He can make groups in the classroom and ask them to tell the new vocabularies that they learned from the story and the meanings of the same.

Example:

Lion: Hingho, Cow: Goru, Forest: Habi, Aranya, etc.

Benefits: These kinds of tasks and activities will help them to learn new words as well as help them to imagine beyond their daily thinking. It will help the students to create stories in their minds as young minds are creative and

imaginative.

Module 4: Tell Me About Your Day (from your own experience)

Aim(s):

- a) To help students articulate longer sentences.
- b) To teach students how to share personal thoughts and communicate with their peers.

Practice and Presentation:

Ask students to stand up and describe their daily routines and hobbies.

If they hesitate, ask them to speak in their mother tongue first, then translate it into the target language as a starting point.

Benefits: This task will build confidence in

students to speak up and share their knowledge in their target language.

Conclusion

Using age-appropriate materials is crucial at the primary level. Mother tongue support should be prioritized as it helps students link new concepts to familiar ones. Scientists have emphasized the importance of the mother tongue in learning a second language. Learning a non-native language requires effort and regular practice. Exposure to daily use of the language is essential. Therefore, it is important to expose children to English from the primary level so they can adapt to the world outside their local zones. Researchers have noted that vernacular medium students often struggle to express themselves in English due to a lack of motivation, hesitation, and fear of judgment. Addressing this fear and inefficiency from the primary level is vital by adopting various methods that make learning more flexible and enjoyable. Students should be exposed to innovative and joyful learning environments where they can develop an interest and enjoy the learning process. With this in mind, the researcher developed modules using mother tongue support to teach English to primary-level students in Assam. The teacher's role and motivation in the learning environment are crucial; the teacher should guide and direct students playfully.

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