

Use of Project Work in ESL/EFL Classroom: A Novel Approach

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research article is to teach writing and speaking skills of English language which can also be called as productive skills or active skills. If we look into history of English Language Teaching (ELT) most of the applied linguists and psychologists tried to implement or search for innovative practices. The implementation of new pedagogies and better practices always open in English language classroom in order to create a new enthusiasm and energy among the ESL/EFL learners. The History of English Language Teaching always proved that when we experiment and think innovatively, all these new thoughts and practices will surely leave a lasting language impression among the learners. Hence, the present article puts forth one such language experiments in ESL/EFL classrooms known as "Project Work". This novel approach had been experimented among the undergraduate and post graduate students of Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad and obtained fruitful results and drastic changes among the learners towards learning important skills of writing and speaking skills. Further, it also helped to improve their team work, leadership skills, self confidence, asking question techniques, interactive skills, group behavior and giving feedback skill etc.

Key Words: *project work, active skills, team work, leadership skills, group behavior*

Introduction: Since the world is changing very drastically and rapidly every moment, it is also important and essential to change the approach to teaching of English language so that teacher of English meet the learners' needs. With this setting, the field of English language teaching also changed quickly and drastically, giving scope for new panoramas to open up and also to widen the possibilities of teaching. The demand for globalized communication has knocked the door of traditional language classrooms and motivated it to adapt, innovative, creative experiments. A couple of years back, English language teaching was considered as a subject and no attention was given for its effective use of speaking and writing skills. But the incredible change in the communication system at once awakened the learner, to look at her/his language, especially English not as a

subject but as the international medium of communication, irrespective of the subject he or she handled. It is widely agreed that the ability of communication lies in the effective use of its language.

The learners, in particular from professional education, are habituated to deal with practical usage of every subject. Even in the English classroom, their attitude will be the same and prefer their active participation rather than being taught all the time. Bairagi Patra (2012) mentions in of the research articles that, “the interactions among the learners in the classroom provide adequate activities for each participant to air their voices. It also obliges the learners in the classroom provide adequate activities for each participant to air their voices. It also obliges the learners to open their mouths and talk frequently” and agrees the idea that classroom is the center of knowledge. Irrespective of the prescribed curriculum, functional English has become the need of the hour. The teacher of English is expected to go beyond pedagogy, curriculum and land at more creative language teaching, paving ways for completely unique atmosphere for the ESL/EFL learners where they can be simply themselves.

It had been a rich experience teaching to undergraduate and postgraduate students who usually come from Urdu medium for the last three and half years, started implementing innovative practices of ELT. Trying to gather information about the interests of learners, it is learnt that new trends should be used in ELT. Puneet Rahi (2010) also supports this idea and opines that “Teaching of English must always be adjusted to the level of emotional and intellectual development of the teacher is to put the learner into situations real or imaginary in which he will be compelled to think or feel in a particular way”. It has become the principal factor to implement innovative and creative teaching methods and approaches to enthuse the learner by making him/her understand that English is the tool for communication in the modern world. It is also fact that, in this present scenario, English language is playing an important role to get a better job.

Whenever we visit or meet different institutions and persons, we thought seriously about how the concept of project work can be used in English classroom. Keeping this in view that, one should think that just like different technical and non-technical exhibitions or fairs, a project works also can be used effectively in English classroom, where the learners have more opportunities to present her/his language abilities to develop and improve their written communication, interactive skills, team work skills, leadership skills, boost their self-confidence, question and answer technique and finally they will be good at giving feedback to their co-participants.

Project Work: According to Wetestch1, online source, the meaning of project work is “a series of activities that allows the students to study, do research and act by themselves using their abilities, interests, personal experience and aptitudes”. The project work progresses under the guidance and monitoring of a teacher or other adviser, they will give ideas about project work, advice about the topic, how to manage the data collection

process and planning. All levels of students can do a project work. The students can work alone or with a group according to the project scope and difficulty. The project work might be small and easy or large and complicated.

Jeremy Harmer (2007), one of the renowned personalities in English Language Teaching (ELT) supports the use and importance of project work in ESL/EFL Classroom. He says that, project work has become one of the popular activities in EFL/ESL teaching and learning, though its use is naturally constrained by the amount of time available for its implementation. It is far more popular, for example, on courses where learners are full-time students and have access to a wide range of resources and people. There are many possible areas for project work in an ESL/EFL setting. Most of the teachers of English language encourage their learners to produce a class newspaper. Other classes produce guides to their town or books on culture. Some projects look at people's attitudes to current issues or ask students to produce brochures for a public service or a new company.

Active Skills: According to Jeremy Harmer (2007), teachers of English have a tendency to talk about the way we use language in terms of four skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills broadly can be divided into two types. Firstly, Receptive Skills is a term used for Reading and Listening, skills where meaning is extracted from the discourse. Whereas, productive skills is the term for speaking and writing, where students actually have to produce language themselves and play active role. We might also want to question a once commonly held view that receptive skills are somehow passive, whereas productive skills are in some way more active. Although the productive skills are different in many ways, we can still provide a basic model for teaching and organizing them.

Further, Jeremy Harmer (2007) states that, part of learners' speaking proficiency absolutely depends upon their ability to speak differentially, depending upon our listeners and upon the way we absorb their reactions and respond to them. Similarly, part our writing skill depends upon ability to change style and structure to suit the person or people we are writing for. Writers engaged in an email correspondence modify subsequent communications on the basis of the reaction of the people they are communicating with. In informal spontaneous conversations, we are constantly alert for the reasons of the people we are interacting with so that we make our communication as informative as possible, modifying it depending on how the other participants in the interaction mood.

Methodology: A key factor in the success of active-skill tasks is the way teachers organize them and how they respond to the student's work. We can here set down a basic methodological model for the developing of active skills among ESL/EFL learners. According to Jeremy Harmer (2007), projects can be organized in a number of different ways, but they generally share the same sequence; the briefing or the choice, idea or language

generation, data gathering, planning, drafting or editing, the result and consultation. Though projects may not be suitable in all situations, still they usually involve a satisfying integration of skills. They require detailed planning and idea generation and encourage learners to collect the data. At the end of the whole process, learners will have work which they can show proudly to their parents, teachers, employers and friends, or they have the chance to be involved in really important presentations both oral or with presentation equipment, such as overhead projectors and computer-supplied data projectors.

Interactive Skills: Projects works will help the learners to develop interactive skills. When they go with a questionnaire and interact target informants at the time of collecting data learners have to interact with many people like head of the institution, organization or company and even they have to interact with many students. By interacting and explaining what, why and how they are going to do this project will help them to develop their interactive communication skills.

Presentation Skills: Project works also help the learners to improve their presentation skills both extempore and impromptu. Therefore project works will play an important role in ESL/EFL Classrooms. After completion of the project work teacher will be asking them to present their work in front of the class so that they can develop their oral communication skills, body language, boost their confidence, they even get rid of fear and hesitation. Finally they will be prepared and get to ready to face the challenges in the market and at work place.

Self Confidence: Project works do help the learners to increase their self-confidence. From the beginning of the project they have to interact with so many people get feedback and make them to answer questionnaire etc. At the same time he/she will be presenting in front of the class by doing this they usually get rid of their tense, hesitation and nervous and increase their confidence levels.

Question & Answer Technique: Project works even help the learners to develop question and answer technique because while presenting and after presentation of the project in front of the audience or co-participants will be asking questions so that the presenter would get opportunity to improve and enhance question and answer technique. In the beginning of the project work he/she has to interact with so many informants or people by doing so they knowingly or unknowingly students will develop question and answer technique undoubtedly.

Conclusion: It is true that from 1970s onwards humanistic approaches changed English language teaching drastically and rapidly. It is seen that learners showed lot of passion and interest in their active participation. The practical used of language made them see language as a medium and not as a subject. When the ESL learner enjoys his autonomy, he brings naturalness and ease in his pronunciation though he is not a native

speaker. Through these kinds of activities; projects and other learner centered activities help the learners do get more opportunities to use their creativity in making, thinking, giving presentation more effective.

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