

Using Semiotic Resources to Upsurge the Level of Learning Among Young Learners in Rural India

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse how the semiotic resources can be helpful in improving or increasing the level of learning among young learners especially in rural India. Technology has taken a new shape especially in the sector of education, information and communication. Even in the swift developmental process around the world, some communities or people still stay away from margin, unaware of the development in the education and technology. The children who are in rural areas are economically, socially backward and are deprived from good education. This affects them psychologically. In urban areas education level has raised consistently and school children are privileged to get good education and shape their personality accordingly. Education to the young learners is not simply reading books and passing the examination. It must help them to prepare for their future. These categories of children can be taught using different modes of semiotic resources to make them understand the language and the concepts clearly. Semiotic resources can be used in communication, especially using the language, gestures and expressions. This has a great impact on teaching learning process. This paper gives an idea of how these semiotic resources can be used effectively to teach English language and how it can be embedded in educational settings.

Keywords: semiotic, education, resources, language, communication

1 Introduction

In this constantly changing environment technology takes a new shape especially in the sector of education, information and communication. Connectivity between individuals or groups has been easy and there is no space or time limit to expand this connectivity. Technology and science had shrunk the world and made it to fit in human's fist. Be it in a public place or in a private place, people are more convenient to communicate with each other. Technology has brought a development in communication. Previously people expressed their thoughts and feelings through verbal languages and now they express it through pictures, sounds and other modes. As Craig, R.T. (2006) explains that

The term communication (or its equivalent in some other languages) is used to refer to a range of activities – communication practices – that involve talking and listening, writing and reading

Like communication process, teaching and learning are a twin way process and if it is done effectively and attractively the results will be fruitful. Monotonous way of teaching or learning becomes a boring procedure for both the teacher and the students. That's why activity-based teaching and learning is effective when it comes to communication.

When British entered India, knowingly or unknowingly their language entered the country. When East India Company took a lead, the then leaders started thinking about educating people. British schools slowly started to establish and Indian people were fond of acquiring Western culture and knowledge. English, the foreign language, became the medium of instruction in education institutions. While speaking about the importance of English language Evgenevna, S. A. (2020) says "Each language is magnificent, but knowing exactly English in modern time is some kind of window to the world". Later as the language gained



popularity, large number of Indians started using it and it changed its shape to British English to Indian English.

Even though the language has spread widely around the country, there is a huge difference between the rural and urban areas when considering about the language acquisition. The schools in urban areas, implement English language learning in the very primary or elementary stage itself. So, when the children reach the secondary or tertiary level it becomes easy for them to communicate in English. They develop a good understanding about the language. But in rural areas it is difficult to teach or learn a foreign language without losing its essence.

Teachers who work in schools situated in rural areas must work hard to build a strong foundation of literacy for their students, because the kids develop basic skills which will be used throughout their lives. It becomes the responsibility of the teacher to build the foundation of learning and make them to proceed in the path of success.

Since young learners feel bored and stressed in the monotonous way of learning, teachers can implement various methods of teaching. One such method is teaching by using semiotic resources. This kindles the interest of the young learners and make them to participate actively in the class. This interest makes them to learn the language easily and quickly.

2 Literature Review

Charles, Cyril and Gierdien (2020) describes the nature of the inter-semiotic and intermodal construction in the exposition to find a solution of the problem. It is true that in every school curriculum English takes a major role to develop various skills, critical analysis and thinking and many more. In a mathematical class, Ferdinando et al., (2022) states how semiotic resources are helpful in teaching the students a concept more clearly, especially speech, artifacts and also inscriptions. He further describes that semiotic bundle or semiotic games will also help in this regard. Whereas Tsui, A. (2008) clearly states in his article that how teacher's attitude and gestures are very important in using semiotic resources. He even argues that the teacher's speech in the classroom surely affects the learner's language.

Previously the semiotic resources were used mainly in mathematical classes to explain the concepts more easily to the students. But Yandell, J. (2008) describes about the semiotic resources used in the Secondary English classrooms which is situated in multicultural urban school. Even he explains further more about the multimodal semiotic approaches. In this regard Sukyadi et al., (2016) deeply scrutinizes about the transduction and also transformation of many semiotic resources teaching English in a classroom. The researcher deals with semiotic usage in Junior and Senior High school.

2.1 Research Questions

To fulfil the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the different combinations of semiotic resources used by the teacher to teach language?
2. How did these semiotic resources affect young learners' understanding of the language?

3 Methodology

A case study methodology was adopted for this purpose collecting multiple sources of data. The case study as described by Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011) is it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases. (pg. 301)

As he had described, case study can be done now and then to a larger number of groups to get a good result.

For this research, the subjects are a language teacher, especially English, and a small group of students, 10 in number, aged 7. They are from an independent school in Tamil Nadu rural side. These ten students are identified because they find difficult in learning the language. One difficulty in learning English is that they are comfortable only in their mother tongue. The teacher selected is a female, and has experience in handling the students effectively. She takes the responsible for supporting the students' language proficiency. With her concern she was selected since she understood the value of developing the proficiency among the students and she willingly took part in the study.

3.1 Data Collection & Analysis

Data were collected from various sources. Initially the female teacher was interviewed about her plan which she was implementing for a long term for teaching the particular language. The process was done and the work samples were collected. The researcher conducted group interview with the students about how they perceived the learning experiences and semiotic resources helped them to understand the concepts. The three concepts selected are poem, detailed lesson and non-detail lesson. The focus lies on the research how teaches develop students language acquisition, gestures and understanding through semiotic resources. The data collected from the students of age group 9 is the combination of language and gestures. The work samples were analysed deeply. At this stage the analysis further proceeded to focus on various semiotic resources which were used in support. The response to these learning experiences was analysed. Finally, to analyse the different aspects and perspectives of the researcher the findings was presented to the teacher for her comments and suggestions.

4 Results and Discussion

The researcher presents some of her findings which has emerged from the analysis about the different combinations of semiotic resources which was used by the teacher to induce the interest of the students in learning the language effectively.

Combination of materials to use Semiotic Resources:

- 1 **Pictures:** Showing pictures related to the topic is one way to use semiotic resources. The teacher without explaining anything holds the picture so that the students draw information from the picture they see. They try to correlate the picture with their understanding. Since pictures engage them more, they will be able to describe it in details. Words can be drawn out and texts can be made. Students can even infer various meaning of unfamiliar words. Various types of pictures can be shown by the teacher to do a compare and contrast analysis and draw as much vocabulary as she can.
- 2 **Oral Reading:** Oral reading practice in the class will make the students benefited in two ways – one by reading they try to express themselves, through their body gestures, postures, tone variation, intonation and even stress. They learn how to use these resources properly and effectively. The other way is hearing others do oral reading. Pronunciation takes an important role here. When students tend to hear different pronunciations, they can understand which one is correct and which is wrong with the help of the teacher. Instead of asking students to read continuously it is effective to make them read selecting randomly and that too in an unpredictable manner.
- 3 **Art of reciting poems:** Try to make the students recite the poem. Allow them to read it aloud. Through this they can learn to explore the poem in a rhythmic way. Apart from this they learn to appreciate and enjoy the piece of literary work. It enhances the ability learn the lyrical nature of the text. When the teacher reads the poem aloud along with the students, they easily learn how to pronounce the words, proper way of stressing the rhymes and also makes them to enjoy various forms of poems. It is not

only reciting it but also teaching/learning the facial expressions when they come across reading emotions and expressions.

- 4 **Spelling Exercise:** Spelling becomes the important basic form for any language. It very important for the young learners to know the spelling. It is better to teach the basic rules of spelling. Syllabification can be done using simple words and then the level can be raised slowly to reach out difficult words. Action oriented games can be conducted to make it more interesting. Eg. Dumb charades
- 5 **Creative Writing:** Semiotic resources can not only be used for reading but also in writing. The child can be made to write either to develop a story seeing a picture which is shown in the class or weave their own story. After writing the student can be asked to read the story with expressions and emotions. Since they combine their imagination with their writing they enjoy to write more.

There many such methods which can be implemented in the classroom to enrich the students' interest to learn the language. These are some of the methods through which the resources can be used in the classroom environment. This helps both the teacher and learner to use these things in an effective way since it is a combination of language and gesture. It is observed that, the student who appears to be nervous in the language class was keen to work, discuss with his/her classmates and also comes out with many ideas. Generally, in the language class the students appear to be dull since they don't understand English properly and it is very difficult for the students who belong to the rural side where English is really a foreign language to them and feel very comfortable using their mother tongue. The teacher went along with the observation which is done in the data analysis.

Even though, many semiotic resources are not planned and used, this part acted as an inducer for the students to explore the given task and use it in a proper way. While revising and recapping the portions the students answered the teacher spontaneously without any hesitation. It is true that apart from her oral explanation, the support of the resources and gestures used helped a lot in the process.

5 Conclusions

English language is changing and is losing its colour and culture. In this technological world it is used as a tool for inter/intra – national communication. The employment opportunities around the globe for English knowing or English learned people, made the language to be accepted by the majority of people in India. Recent development exhibits that, it has become an international language and people started using it to express their own cultures.

In this research it is clear that when teaching the language English, the teacher skillfully used semiotic resources including models, images, pictures, gestures and literary texts. The findings here support that the language teacher in the process of teaching and learning all these resources are important.

As many other researches, this too has some limitations. The first one is that, only few students were selected as samples for this experiment. In a class there may be many students who find difficult to learn the language. All have to be tested and evaluated. Then only action can be taken evenly and implemented. The second limitation is that, this experiment is done considering only one particular school in Rural India. There are many other schools in rural areas where this study can be done and the procedure can be implemented. Hence the students will be benefited.

The third limitation is that, only five procedure is explained to use semiotic resources. But there are other categories also. Since it is for young learners according to the age groups it can be utilized. The young learners age group is from 4 to 11, accordingly the procedure can vary. For all the young learners and different age groups the same experiments cannot be used.

Future researchers can bear this in mind and work on this area.

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