

BOOK CLUB: A MODERN STRATEGY IN ENGLISH LEARNING.

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ABSTRACT:

This paper will be focussing on Book Club as an emerging modern strategy used in language learning. It will elaborate on how Book Club is a suitable strategy for the learners to acquire vocabulary, sentence structure, English grammar, Idioms and phrases and also enhance their listening, speaking and writing competency. The paper will also discuss on how additive exercises such as arguments and debates will help the English language learners to adapt to the language quickly. Further more, the importance of errors, with regards to this strategy will also be discussed in the paper. The paper will include examples from the model book club which was conducted for 15 weeks, with the book, “Charlie and the great glass elevator” by Roald Dahl as an experiment. The subjects of the experiment are four children between the age group of 7 to 10.

INTRODUCTION:

The current scenario of the world is so much bound with technology that people hardly recognize that they have to spend some quality time.

Technology has taken over the time of people, that they are all so much occupied by the fantasies of technology. In this world of visual entertainment, people hardly find time to read books and enlighten them with knowledge and also language skill. In this paper, I will be introducing book club as a modern strategy in English learning.

To explain how this book club works, it is a discussion meet that happens frequently, where the language learners meet and discuss about a book. This book club includes discussions, arguments and debates, where the language learner gets to acquire vocabulary, sentence structure, English grammar and also idioms and phrases. These book clubs happens under the supervision of a teacher, but the role of the teacher is very passive here, and the learners' role is very active, since they are the ones who acquire than the teacher stuffing the language into the learner's brain.

The monitor model, which was propounded by Stephen Krashen gives a clean explanation on the difference between learning and acquiring a language. Learning is a conscious effort to master language whereas acquiring is a process of imbibing a language, which needs no effort. It happens naturally. Book club, which emphasises on natural acquisition of language, gives the role of monitoring to the teacher.

TEACHER'S ROLE IN BOOK CLUB:

In Book Club, the teacher is not a person who teaches every part of the language, rather a monitor, who keeps a check on the learners' use of language, and interferes if needed, and only if it demands necessity. The teacher only acts as a supervisor who gives home works to the learners and checks their completion. The teacher is simply a convenor for the learner to acquire the language, and a facilitator for the learners to learn from the errors they make.

Other than this, the role is much more active from the side of the learners who have the basic responsibility of grasping everything.

For example, in the model book club, the learners were asked to read a chapter in the book, “Charlie and the great glass elevator” and share the story with other learners. In that way every learner had something to contribute in the class, and the teacher’s role was simply to supervise the activity of the learners and correct their errors. In that way, they acquired a lot of vocabulary and sentence structure from reading the book.

LEARNER’S ROLE IN THE BOOK CLUB:

In the book club, the learner’s role is very prominent, because they are the acquirers of the language. They are actively involved in the activities, and they are the main focus in the book club. The students are involved in debate and arguments where they have to express their own ideas and their own claims under the supervision of the teacher. While the teacher comes up with the activities, it is created in a way, where the learners acquire the language rather than learning the language. The vocabulary, sentence structure, English grammar and idioms and phrases are the main focus in the book clubs.

SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES USED IN BOOK CLUB:

In the model book club, the learners were asked to read a chapter, and each of the learners is asked to explain the chapter with their talent of expression. Meanwhile, the teacher writes down all the difficult vocabulary for their age group, and the learners are asked to figure out the meaning of the words using their dictionaries.

Later, the learners are asked to use the same word in another sentence where the context suits the meaning of the word. This is one activity used in the book club to help the learners acquire the language, than asking them to memorise the meaning of the word in their rote memory. When the book, “Charlie and the great glass elevator” was discussed in the model book club, words like ‘anxious’, ‘surgeon’, ‘flabbergasted’, ‘contraption’ and ‘precise’, were used for the learning of the vocabulary. Also, the sentences used in the story, were particularly chosen and the learners were asked to identify if the sentence is an imperative sentence or an informative sentence, etc. By the end of the fifteenth class, the learners of the language were able to identify any type of sentences and they could also make use of the vocabulary with were discussed in the book club.

Apart from these activities, the teacher also made particular identification of the idioms used in the story, “Charlie and the great glass elevator” and the students were given the meaning of the idioms, who were later encouraged to match the right kind of emotion with the idiom. Though the teacher’s role in all these activities are prominent and also confirms that language learning cannot be facilitated without the teacher’s presence, it is considered to be passive because the role of the learner is much more important here. If the learner chooses not to involve himself in the activities handled in the class, the level of language acquisition would be zero, and therefore, the importance is more on the learner than the teacher, because of the active participation required in all the activities.

CREATIVE STRATEGIES TO LEARN LANGUAGE:

Since book club focuses on language acquisition than language learning, the activities used in book club are very often creative. In the model book club which was experimented,

the learners were given with activities like completing the story, “Charlie and the great glass elevator” when they were discussing the eighth chapter of the story, they were asked to give an alternate option to the story. For example, the story, “Charlie and the great glass elevator”, aliens were trying to invade the space hotel that USA sent to space. The learners came up with alternative options in the story like, the aliens being very friendly and one learner introduced a super hero into the story to rescue the space ship from the alien invasion. Activities like this, improvise the learner’s speaking skill, and therefore it helps them to express their ideas with more clarity and more expression.

Debates and arguments put the learners into logical thinking, and also give importance to validating their claim with suitable examples. In all these activities, the teacher acted as a supervisor, to record their improvement, and also make sure that they correct their errors, either by themselves or by the intervention of the teacher. In the experiment conducted, the story, “Charlie and the great glass elevator”, there came a point when Charlie and his friends were assumed to be aliens by the American government to the White House. At this juncture, the learners were asked to design an invitation card, where they, on behalf of the American government, invited the aliens, who are actually Charlie and his family, along with Mr. Willy Wonka, to the White House. Though the learners designed their card with bright colours and stickers, they were also asked to make a formal write up to the guest which was the main focus of the activity. The learners completed the activity with much involvement, and the letter of invitation was very much impressive, where they used the vocabulary they acquired during the book club sessions.

These are some of the creative methods used to facilitate language learning among the learners.

ROLE OF ERRORS IN BOOK CLUB:

As proposed by Pit Corder, the error analysis plays a very prominent role in language learning through book club. Since, the process of enhancing the language in book club is through language acquisition, the learners' errors is the main source which helps the teachers to know the improvement of the learners. In the experiment carried out, the teacher made a note of all the type of errors tat the learners used and could notice the gradual reduction in the errors they made. Furthermore, the learners were also able to correct the errors they made in sentence formation, since they were exposed to a lot of sentences in the book.

There is a significance of errors in the book club because they act as a record of the development of the learner in language. The error analysis theory rightly falls in place in the book club, because the errors made by the learners in significant for it shows the level of improvement by the language learner.

CONCLUSION:

With the modern world which fantasies the visual assistance in everything, seems to gradually move towards movies, whereas the importance of reading books is gradually decreasing. This book club brings back the passion towards reading books, which is a wonderful habit to be followed. English learning is well facilitated through book clubs and their activities, which enable the learners to acquire the language, which will be a benefit for the learners.

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