

Training Life Skills to Students in the English Classroom

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Abstract : *Life skills in English language teaching has to be managed properly to achieve an exact result. Language learning is integrated with a vast array of skills and consequently has innumerable benefits. It makes one articulate confidence, assertiveness, decision-making, and the ability to stay safe and healthy.*

Life skills may be viewed as a range of psycho-social and cognitive abilities that equip children to make informed decisions and choices, manage their emotional well-being and communicate effectively. Thus this paper looks at innovative uses of ideas and quotes that can be used creatively by the language teacher to enrich life skills through English Language.

Keywords : *Life skills, Effective communication, ELT, Proverbs and quotes.*

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Introduction

The aims of education is to build traits –such as Communication, Self Awareness, Empathy, Decision making, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Problems Solving, Effective Communication, Interpersonal relationship, Coping with stress, Coping with Emotion.

The primary objective of a language teacher is to teach language skills and enabling learners to communicate effectively in English. However, in addition to these skills, language teachers impart life skills to their students. Life Skills are a set of human skills that prompt and motivate individuals towards positive constructive behaviors such as interpersonal relationship, coping with stress and solving emotional

Democracies need active informed and responsible citizens, who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and contribute to the develop our country/nation. Nowadays World is globalization as well as competitive work environment, an employee with only technical or subject knowledge is not likely to sustain and grow professionally. So one has to work on self improvement by having life skills. Such skills need be developed over a stretch of time. Language skills and life skills can also be imparted using a variety of teaching tools for instance through strategies from various genres which could be taken from multimedia.

This paper lays emphasis on one of the most important aspects of life skills which is communicating effectively. It is a skill we can learn and if we are willing to make the effort to enhance these skills, We can surely improve the quality of our lives. Given below are some of the uses of quotes and excerpts in an ELT Classroom:

A) Effective communication:

Effective communication enables us to express ourselves verbally and non-verbally in ways that are appropriate to our culture and situation, Quotes or proverbs can be used to highlight one of the features of effective communication viz. appropriate manner of speaking, For example:

- ◆ A Word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver- Proverbs.
- ◆ Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless- Mother Teresa

Learners can express the themes embedded in the above lines, through a skit or narration of a story. They could also share a quote which conveys the same thought.

B) Interpersonal Relationships:

There is a close interconnection between communication and human relationships. The inability to communicate competently can be disastrous for a relationship. One needs to make an effort to be understood, and if necessary rephrase or clarify, rather than blaming others for not understanding what is being said. This skill of reaching others effectively has to be practised day in and day out. It cannot be suddenly developed overnight, for instance the day before an important interview.

Communication skills enhance self esteem, self confidence, and leadership skills. It also improves healthy interpersonal relationships which involve taking care to value one's self and as well as others. To increase an awareness of the importance of interpersonal relationships the teacher can use quotes in different activities. For instance, the lines given below could be used as topics for group discussion or role play.

- ◆ We build too many walls and not enough bridges- Isaac Newton.

C) Brevity of Expression

One of the main reasons for using quotes to teach language as well as life skills is that it can be done successfully, using minimal amount of time and the least number of words. Quotes will be acceptable to the students since they strike home message in a brief but powerful manner. Lengthy discourses on the contrary, are tedious, time consuming and cumbersome. Concise quotes on the other hand have an immediate effect and greater impact on the reader. They encapsulate great wisdom in a few words and can serve as topics for brief presentations. For examples

- ◆ The brave will save -Proverbs
- ◆ You are your choices- Seneca

D) To Motivate and Inspire

The very brevity of quotes and the fact that they are packed with meaning, make them an effective tool for teaching language in the English language lab. The bonus is that they not only teach language but that they are also useful for a plethora of reasons such as motivating, inspiring and character building. The various possible

techniques that can be used included using the quotes or excerpts given to share an inspiring anecdote or an inspirational biography. For examples

- ◆ Yesterday I dared to struggled. Today I dare to win- Bernadette Devlin
- ◆ Act as if what you do makes a difference it does -William James.

E)To inculcate positive attitudes:

To learn and master a language and face life's biggest challenges can be very daunting. However, positive attitudes can be inculcated through exposure to quotes that highlight courage, hope, optimism, perseverance, etc. In his book *Greatness Manual*, Rabison Shumba quotes Normal Vincent Peale as saying, "The person who sends out positive thoughts activates the world around him positively and draws back to himself positive results". Examples of quotes that can have a constructive effect are given below:

- ◆ Character is a diamond which scratches every other stone -Proverb.
- ◆ Our greatest glory is in never falling, but in getting up every time we do- Confucius.
- ◆ Hope is faith holding out its hand in the dark-George Iles.
- ◆ Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive result-Willie Nelason.

These lines can be used as inspiration for well thought out problem solving exercises given by the teacher. Or the learners themselves can link the given lines regarding facing life's challenges in a positive manner with the lives of those who solved problems in the community for example Mother Teresa.

Proverbs which impart important life lessons, not in a didactic, moralizing, judgmental manner, but in a way that convey powerful thoughts with subtlety and beauty of expression leave a lasting impression in the learners' mind. For instance, aspects of success are conveyed skillfully in the following quotes:

- ◆ If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things- Albert Einstein.
- ◆ That some achieve great success is proof to all others can achieve it as well-Abraham Lincoln

The learners will be asked to relate these lines to the lives of great achievers who they admire for example-APJ Abdul Kalam.

- ◆ Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be-Marcus Aurelius.

F) To bring about Attitudinal Change

Even words, statements, slogans have had a strong impact and have brought about attitudinal changes as evidenced by the lines mentioned below:

- ◆ Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains-Karl Marx
- ◆ Liberty Equality Fraternity. –French revolution /Rousseau.
- ◆ Quit India/ Slogans of freedom fighters during the India’s Struggle for independence.

In pairs or small groups, learners can try and recall famous slogans of their choice and share their thoughts and interpretations.

A Video clip that highlights the importance of team work in professional life can be given as food for thought to enable students to garner points for discussion. Topics that relate to attitudinal change can also be given for debating. Example

- ◆ Can corruption be totally weeded out of society?

Proverbs can have a transformational effect on the learners and situations boldly. Some quotes, such as those given below can serve as starting points in preparing a presentation on characters who faced great challenges and yet succeeded magnificently, For example, Helen Keller. Given below are a few quotes which can be used to bring about an attitudinal change in the learners.

- ◆ “Life’s challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they are supposed to help you discover who you are”. Bernice Johnson Reagon.
- ◆ “The key to life accepting challenges. Once some one stops doing this, he’s dead” -Bette Davis
- ◆ “Being challenged in life is inevitable, being defeated is optional” -Rager Crawford

In order to ascertain whether proverbs by them have had a positive impact on

the students, English teacher can use certain strategies like the ones mentioned below:

(I) List values and skills

Students were asked to brainstorm and list out of the most important human values and share it with others. For example:

Instruction: Work in pairs and list out what in your opinion are the most important values skills necessary for you to succeed in life.

- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

Thus this simple strategy provides students with an opportunity to reflect on how they can respond positively to the changing trends in proactive instruments of change.

In the words of Steven Covey:

- ◆ Proactive people focus on issues within their circle of influence. They work on things they can do something about. The nature of their energy in doing this is positive, enlarging and magnifying. They increase their circle of influence.

The teacher can creatively use proverbs and quotes in an ELT classroom to impact language skills and life skills by utilizing realia, pictures, songs, lyrics, poems, speeches, stories and information technology which is so much a part of our world. This could be done by asking the learner to express the main idea of the realia, songs, lyrics etc in a word or phrase and then search for another appropriate proverb and quote that conveys his/her idea.

(II) Speeches:

Audio visual clips of famous speeches (for example the I Have Dream speeches or trust with destiny speech) are not only examples of exquisite use of language but they also provide innumerable examples of enhancing the quality of our lives.

(III) Multimedia:

Multimedia can be used judiciously to arouse interest in the learners. This can be done in various ways for instance:

(i) Picture

Quoting Walt Disney, Priscilla Dando points out: “Of all of our inventions for mass communication, pictures still speak the most universally understood language”. Learners can be shown various pictures and a list of quotes. They are then asked to match the pictures with the given quotes. Language skills can be enhanced by also asking them to express their interpretation of the pictures provided in a line or two and then give suitable titles to each of them.

ii) Songs and poems

The teacher needs to carefully choose a verse from a meaningful song or poem that helps the learner to understand life and shed light on how to be a better human being.

iii) Realia

The learner may be shown a real object for example a flower. The response could be beauty, colour or nature and this can be expressed by the learner through proverbs or quotes for examples

- ◆ Even the most beautiful roses have thorns –Proverbs
- ◆ Come forth into the light of things, Let nature be your teacher- William Wordsworth.

iv) Say it in a word

One way is by asking the students to identify the main theme of quotes given to them. This could be done on a regular basis. For example:

Instruction : Express the essence or main idea of the quotes given below in a word or phrase:

- ◆ Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing- Theodore Roosevelt.
- ◆ We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit- Aristotle.
- ◆ ‘What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lives within us- Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- ◆ A man is but the product of his thoughts what he thinks, he becomes- Mahatma Gandhi.

- ◆ A man is what he thinks about all day long-Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- ◆ You can't climb the ladder of success dressed in the costume of failure-Zig Ziglar.

Conclusion:

This paper looked at how a judicious use of quotes can expand vocabulary, increase fluency and enable one to use the most appropriate word in a situation as Abraham Lincoln observed, "it is pleasure to be able to quote lines to fit any occasion"

Since the use of quotes make learning interesting, leading to greater cooperation, they can be used as an efficient tool to impart not only language learning but also the much needed life skills and moral values in ELT classrooms. Such practice will make it possible to meet the objectives of education viz, drawing out the best in the learner by nourishing good qualities, teaching critical thinking and helping learners to become responsible citizens who will use their values to guide their attitudes and behavior.

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