

Discourse oriented pedagogy in language classroom

The teacher reflects on how she was able to generate ideas from children of first grade through discourse oriented pedagogy, developing their sense of ownership over those ideas resulting in an increase in their confidence levels.

However you learn best — visually, auditorily, or kinaesthetically — you'll reap the most rewards by spending time reflecting on your experiences. I am happy to share with my colleagues my reflections on the discourse pedagogy that I have been trying out in my classroom for the last 2 months. The try-out was a continuation of the 5-day training that Azim Premji Foundation had offered to Govt. primary schools of Puducherry Acquiring Competence in English – ACE. Prior to knowing about the new pedagogy I had believed that professionalism was about ethics and how teachers conducted themselves in and out of the classroom. However, while this is still relevant, I would have to now include commitment to the learners. I have realized now that understanding what language is and how it is acquired equally matters.

I handle class IV at GPS, Moolakulam. There are 9 students in my class and they are undoubtedly heterogeneous. From the experiential mode of ACE training, I gained tremendous insight into strategies in language teaching. The training programme rather helped my students to acquire language with ease.

Views on Discourse Pedagogy Training

Having an interest in teaching, I was willingly participating in the training course and it has now grown to a greater extent. Teaching English during several years of my service had not shown any improvement in the students' second language acquisition. I had strongly felt that there was a necessity for an innovation in language teaching. Regarding this, I acknowledge

the Education Department and Azim Premji Foundation for having organized this need-based training.

Nevertheless, when the first week of ACE training completed I had a mix of emotions, excitement and stress. I had to carry forward a 20-day action plan of transacting modules that would generate a few basic discourses like descriptions, conversations, narratives and poems. I wondered whether I could take this to my classroom or whether my students would benefit from it. In the midst of the mixed feelings I decided to abide myself to the classroom process suggested in Discourse Pedagogy. Eventually I was able to tide over the stress I was undergoing during the initial days of the tryout I made in my class.

Discourse pedagogy has given me the chance to understand more about the responsibilities that teachers have on students. Mere teaching the content of the language will be of no use to the learner. From this perspective, cognitive learning and constructing knowledge have been topics that hold a strong interest in me. One of the issues most teachers have been facing is related to working with children who have language disorders and cognitive challenges. The classroom process envisaged in the new pedagogy addresses



these issues. It emphasizes the point that ensuring meaningful interaction is vital in

assisting students to learn and to store newly learned knowledge. Students will benefit from high quality concrete examples, simple and precise instructions and meaningful dialoguing. Language development is encouraged for which students are given the opportunity to generate their own ideas by asking questions and to exhibit their views in the written form, may it be a song, a description, a conversation or a narrative.

Understanding the perception of the children and what they learn is essential in the developmental stages of children. Not all students learn in the same way. By modifying my approach when giving instructions I have noticed language growth in students that I am currently working with. I encourage children to speak on several pictures and write about them. I make them read in pairs. I assist them in group work and individual work. Giving opportunity for students to get involved in hands-on activities that are meaningful to learners on a daily basis is essential for them to acquire the target language.

Generating Discourses in My Class

I understood that a few students needed extra help within the classroom. Assessments of students were both formal and informal and were a good way to monitor the construction of discourses. The assessments reflected on what students



know and what they are capable of exhibiting. Generating ideas on their own helped children to own their language

and instilled confidence in them. The students thoroughly enjoyed the 15-day schedule designed

for discourses. Each day their interest grew on what they were going to acquire in language learning. Group description, group conversation was really a fun and the students enjoyed a lot.

I have just started Narratives. This is the beginning stage. By now, my class children are quite comfortable in writing descriptions and conversations on any given picture. I have been documenting their products in a separate file, each containing their descriptions and conversations along with the picture they worked on. Recently, I organized an exhibition at my school to display the works of my children. The children performed before the visitors. My colleagues and Headmistress were amazed by the performance of my class students. I consider this as an accomplishment of the training programme. I too feel contented.

I have learnt several things throughout the training "Acquiring Competence in English Language"– things that will help me in the future, as I make my way in becoming an efficient teacher. Exploring curiosity in the minds of young learners is the success of this pedagogy. I have learnt a pedagogy that will be valuable for many years, and that will help me grow as a person, as well. This is one of the best professional development training courses that I had undergone in my 12 years of teaching experience.



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