ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS OF LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOM USING INNOVATIVE TEACHING LEARNING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Inclusion does not refer to teaching the students with special needs along with mainstream. It talks about cohesive development of all varieties of learners. Today's classrooms are diverse with respect to language abilities as well. We have students from different social backgrounds, speaking different languages studying in the same class. All students are not at the same level of language proficiency. The present paper discusses the need to accommodate all such learners with varied abilities of languages. The paper explains some simple strategies a teacher can use that will facilitate students' interaction and help them develop language skills as well as confidence in them. The paper also gives some ways for developing classroom culture that will motivate students to take active part in these activities.

Keywords: teaching learning strategies, Act it out, reports, Jigsaw, Take a stand, PWIM, 5W, Semantic gradient, Semantic map

Introduction:

Inclusion in education involves the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools. Inclusion is concerned with the learning participation of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or categorized as having special educational needs. Inclusion is concerned with improving schools for staff as well as for students. [Centre for studies on inclusion in Education(CSIE), 2000]

The inclusion is based on the following principles:

1. **The need to set suitable learning challenges.** – A culture of high expectations for all is encouraged within a model of teaching and learning which can suit the approach used to pupils' abilities.

2. **Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs.** – This principle emphasizes the need for thought about teaching and learning environments. This includes the physical environment- the classroom space, its use, its layout and its acoustics. It stresses also the need for all pupils to feel safe and secure and those views- particularly stereotypical views – about disability and impairment, for example are always challenged.

3. **The overcoming of potential barriers to learning and assessment. -**This demand requires that 'Teachers must address the needs of minority of pupils who have particular learning and assessment requirements which, if not addressed, could create barriers to learning.

In modern classrooms, especially in urban areas, students from different cultural backgrounds are learning together. Parents in metro-cities are not from same social backgrounds. Due to regular transfers or better job opportunities, the parents keep changing cities and states. Thus Indian cities are becoming culturally diverse populations and so is the case with the schools. The students in such schools have different mother tongues. The language of instruction in school is either the language of that state, Hindi or English. Parents prefer sending their wards to English medium schools that conduct CBSE or ICSE curriculum so that students face fewer problems if schools are changed. But then they keep speaking in their mother tongue at home. Thus the home language and school language are different. Different students have got different inputs from their primary schools. Thus the students in our secondary class are of different levels of language attainment. Such group faces the range of difficulties. They have speech and language delay; impairments or disorders, specific learning difficulties. Such children may have profound difficulties. Other students may not have such profound difficulties but may have moderate problems such as falling short of vocabulary, problems in pronunciation, comprehension etc. Students have receptive or expressive language impairment whereas some student might have mastered the language attainment which is expected of that level. Those students whose mother tongue language spoken at home is same as school language, their proficiency in the language will be more and that will also reflect in their general ability of grasping different subjects of school.Thus the classroom of today has a variety of learners w. r. t. language proficiency. It is a big challenge to ateacher to accommodate all such learners in the classroom. When we talk about learner centered classroom a teacher should not teach a class. He should teach a student. It is very essential that each student gets a feeling of being the part of the class. Each student must develop a sense of belongingness for the class. Each student's active participation will help

teacher to motivate students for learning. A teacher in such class has two main tasks. 1. To help students to overcome language barriers. 2. To master the content of his subject.

Following teaching- Learning strategies will help the teacher to help students with different language abilities.

A. **Act it out** – This is small group activity designed to give students time to decide what they would do in different situations. It provides them with the opportunity to discuss the information they need to include and to try to find ways of improving their speaking and listening.

Steps: 1.Pick a scenario card and discuss some questions like: What is happening? How do we know? What will we say and do? What we mean? And similar other questions.

2. You need to decide who will act out the part and where the action will start, before, during or after the event on the card.

3. Try acting it out.

4. Take reflections on the act.

This motivates students from different levels of linguistic achievement to participate and enhance their spoken skills. Teacher encourage students with different linguistic background to be the part of the group and allows use of their mothertongue where needed since the objective is to incorporate all students in the activity, rather than improving their language skills.

B. **TV/ Radio reports.** - Teacher can play a segment of a TV or Radio programme such as news, weather and documentaries to create awareness amongst students. This will afford them the opportunity to listen to and analyze the specific language structures and features that make up this spoken text- type. The students can record key information under the 5W headings- Who, When, Where, What, Why.

This activity helps students to comprehend the information provided in the TV/ Radio segment and make meaning from it by using 5W headings, students learn to organize their understanding in asystematic way. Many a time students fail to explain or describe since they do not get any direction for reporting. 5W headings help students to precisely note down their observation and report them in orderly manner.

C. **Jigsaw**-Jigsaw is an example of a co-operative learning approach ,which should include the key elements of co- operative learning such as positive interdependence , individual and group accountability .It involves group reflection on learning , team recognition and group responsibility for individual learning. Students are organized in

to groups to research a topic or to complete a task. Students will need to explain or describe their new knowledge of the topic to other classmates. . This helps students to gain better understanding of the topic or the task. Students will need to listen very carefully and ask questions if they are unsure about any element of the topic/ task.

Steps - 1.Divide the class into 'Home groups' of 4-6 students.

2. Give each student a number within their group.

3.Move students from their home group into 'Expert group' based on the numbers. e.g. All 2's go together etc.

4. Expert group members discuss/ investigate on the problem and complete the given task.

5. Students return to their "Home group' having completed the task and share what they have done or what they have found out.

The whole class gets to interact with each other. The student gets an opportunity to listen to other students and also to express their understanding. The oral work acts as a primary source of learning and hence group discussion in the Jigsaw activity help learner to get knowledge as well as improve communication skills.

D. **Take a Stand.** – An imaginary line is established in the classroom. One end represents "Agree" and the opposite end represents "Disagree". The teacher poses the topic e.g. should we accept the policy of cashless transactions? Students place themselves on the line according to their point of view. Those unsure of their opinion, go to the middle of the line. Students share the reasons to justify their standing. After the discussion the teacher will ask questions to probe the process such as; would anybody like to change position having heard other students' thoughts? What can you tell about the person's belief from the tone in their voice?

The same activity can be extended further and four groups of the students can be made instead of two. Four corners of the classroom can be denoted as 1. Agree. 2. Strongly Agree. 3. Disagree. 4. Strongly Disagree. Students move the corner and together present their reasons to the wider group. Here students get divided into smaller groups and get a chance to interact in group better. They can justify their standpoint and express it to entire class.

E. **How many meanings**? – Teaches chooses a word such as **'Plant'**. Teacher may give passages having the word 'Plant' but being used in different contexts. Students try and come up with as many different meanings as possible. E.g. Plant a tree, Money plant,

Biogas plant, Dairy milk plant, Plant tissue culture etc. Teacher may provide students additional reading materials or texts that are using the word "Plant' in different ways. Dictionaries, Encyclopedias may be provided by the teacher for students' reference. The students do collaborative efforts and learn new vocabulary and usage of words in different contexts.

F. **PWIM pictures**. – A picture speaks thousand words. Therefore pictures are very useful in learning but what about thousand words? Describing or wording the given picture is as important as appreciating the picture. PWIM is an inductive model that helps students to generate ideas from picture and describe those ideas in words. Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) is a highly engaging way of developing vocabulary. This is an activity that can be done with the whole class, small group or individually.

**Steps**- 1. The teacher selects a picture and shows it to the students.

2. Students label the elements they know.

3. Studentsdiscuss with each other in groups and research in order to label as much as possible.

4.Students give picture a title and begin to categorize the vocabulary.

5. They write about the picture using associated vocabulary.

G. **Semantic Gradient and Semantic mapping**. –Semantic gradients are away to broaden and deepen students' understanding of related words. Students consider a continuum of words by order of degree. Semantic gradients often begin with antonyms or opposites at each end of the continuum. This activity helps students distinguish between shades if meanings. By enhancing vocabulary, students can be more precise and imaginative in their writing and speaking. Following is an example of semantic gradient.
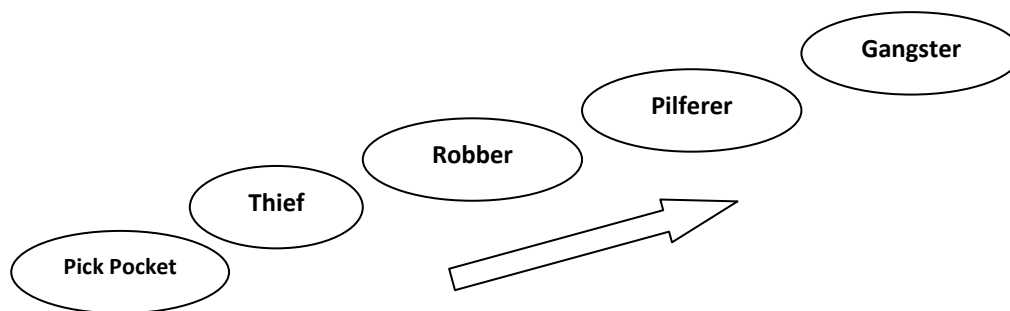
Semantic mapping is a strategy for graphically representing concepts. Semantic maps clearly portray the semantic relations that compose a concept. It assumes that there are multiple relations between a concept and knowledge that is associated with that concept.
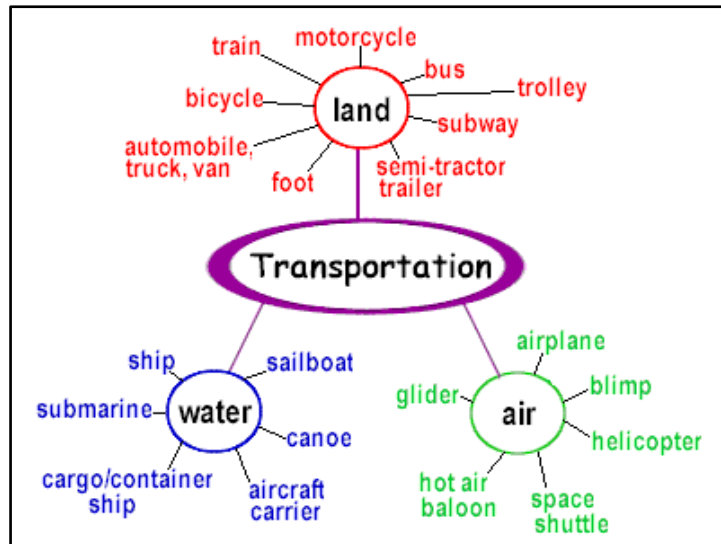
Steps - 1. Teacher divides the class into smaller groups of 5-6 students.

2. A theme/ Concept is given to students.

3. Students discuss and come up with related words, subthemes or topics. They not only try to prepare a bank of related words but also discuss the interrelationship between those words or concepts.

4. Students attempt to prepare the map showing these words with specific connections.

5. Students explain the map and elaborate the concept given in their own words.

All these activities promote students active participation in the class. In usual classes when teacher's talk is prime and students' listening is expected, the students who do not have language proficiency lag behind as they face difficulties in understanding teacher's talk. They cannot comprehend the talk of the teacher properly. This leads to difficulties in learning. The regular class does not give sufficient time and space for students to ask and get their doubts clarified. Even many a time students are not able to frame question or ask their doubts in precise words. Thus the learning is not complete. The students having good language proficiency are ahead in the class. They learn and respond to their teachers actively whereas those who are weak at language and those who are nonnative speakers find it difficult to cope up with the class. These activities demand active participation of students and encourage them to learn. Teachers must develop conducive and supportive environment. While conducting activities mentioned above a teacher has to develop suitable classroom culture.

Ways of developing classroom culture:

1. Create a classroom culture of' Have ago'.

2. Be sensitive to cultural differences.

3. Emphasize enjoyment for all.

4. Value social talk and the use of language used in the home.

5. Encourage all attempts by the children at both speaking and listening.

6. Teach students to share classroom responsibilities.

7. Provide opportunities for the children to reflect and review their speaking and for listening.

8. Explicitly teach students to take turns in groups.

9. Communicate high expectations.

10. Motivate students to speak with all members of the class.

11. Model good listening to the children..

12. Model using specific language to the students.

13. Provide role play opportunities to experiment with language.

14. Read variety of text types to the students.

15. Invite guests to the classroom.

16. Design subject related group activities.

17. Allow students to decide their activities and projects.

18. Keep the group work dynamic by regularly changing the group members.

19. Ask questions to students that will help them to reflect on experiences or unit or to form their opinion. Open ended questions should be asked so that higher order thinking abilities are developed.

20. Speak to all students, even to those who may have language delays.

21. Treat children as if they are skilled at conversation. Give them your full attention and focus. Appreciate every small effort taken by the student to express him. Motivate them although they make a few mistakes of grammar and pronunciation. Do not overlook them but correct them in such a way that it does not harm students' self respect.

Conclusion: It is observed that students having problems in understanding the language of instruction has a problem in learning in general. The lower attainment levels w.r. t. language also reflect in to low self esteem and low confidence among students. Teachers should be creative and innovative. The activities mentioned above are just a sample. Teacher should be

able to think and design classroom activities that are related to their subjects. These activities should bring students together and teach them to help each other.

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