ABSTRACT

Lack of sufficient practice of English outside formal classes is one of the reasons for unexpectedly low outcome of English language education in the countries where English is used as a foreign language (EFL). Community English Learning Centers (CELCs) can help people practice English in real-life situations and ultimately make them competent users of the language. This paper expounds methods and techniques for teaching-learning of all skills of English language at CELCs for people of various ages and status. It also discusses policies that can turn CELCs into entertaining and effective places for English language education.

Keywords: EFL; CELC; TEE.

1. INTRODUCTION

After decades of relentless efforts, teaching-learning of English language is still struggling in most of the countries where English is used as a foreign language (EFL). In many countries, huge funding, twelve to sixteen year class room teaching, modern English language laboratories, study of English literature, recruitment of native English language teaching staff, conducting researches and conferences etc., have failed to enable students master skills of English language. A very strong pre-requisite that English language policy makers evade, in most of the cases, is that they don’t accommodate English language in real-life
situations. English is not used in the societies of these countries; rather, use of English is confined to a few hour formal classes. Those English language classes are also laden with many problems like lack of trained English language teachers, improper curriculum, wrong teaching methodology and lack in student's motivation. Many English language and literature departments in EFL countries do not have strong English language labs or trained instructors. Furthermore, there is negligible amount of English language practice outside classes which is a strong impediment to learning English. For all these reasons, students fail to achieve desired competence in using English language. In such countries, English should be practiced in real-life situations. So it’s important to establish Community English Learning Centers (CELCs) where people of all ages will be able to practice skills of English in true social environment.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

To make the learning environment friendly as well as learner-centered, CELCs should adopt simple methods and techniques. Moreover, they should use effective and popular materials. In this case, popular culture and mass media can play significant roles. For example, adult learners like to watch news on television and discuss current issues. They should be encouraged to continue the same in English language. Likewise, young learners like to watch sports and movies, talk about fashion, computer, technology and Internet. They'll be encouraged to chat on their preferred topics but the language will be English; so, the occasions and issues will not change; only the language will change. Learners will watch football and cricket matches on television and listen to English commentary minutely. Facilitators will ensure that they talk only in English [1]. Explains the ways how the skills of English language can be taught by using mass media like newspaper, magazines, radio, television, Internet and movies [2]. Elaborates on the methods of learning English through popular culture and media [3]. Narrates utilities of mass media in English language education. The use of popular culture, mass media and familiar issues will bring learners of all ages to the mainstream of learning English.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 In CELCs, All Four Skills of English Language i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing will be Practiced through Communicative Approach

3.1.1 Listening

With the help of various listening aids, learners will improve their listening in English. They will use audio and video clips with audio CD, DVD, Internet, radio and television. Learners will watch English news, reports, documentaries, talk shows and movies. After watching some video clips or programs on television, they will indulge in follow up discussions. Facilitators will work as moderators in such discussions. Learners will watch English news channels like BBC, CNN, Aljazeera and Fox News. Sometimes, they will also watch English movies. Moreover, they will listen to audio clips that come with ESL, EFL and ELT books. Furthermore, they will practice listening with the CDs of TOEFL and IELTS preparation tests. In order to correct their pronunciation of words and sounds, they will listen to the CDs of standard English-English dictionaries. If possible, learners may also be introduced to online English dictionaries e.g. www.dictionary.reference.com Listening and watching audio and video clips, participating in follow up discussion and getting feedback from facilitators will improve learners’ listening capability.
3.1.2 Speaking

English will be treated as the only language for communication in the CELCs. Facilitators and learners will create a ‘Total English Environment (TEE)’ in CELCs by using English both in formal and informal settings. Facilitators will show video clips based on the use of English in everyday life including in greetings, manners and etiquettes. Learners will assimilate the ways of greeting as well as responses to greetings in English. They will also learn to use English in different social settings and occasions. Learners will drill and role play those manners. They will carry on conversation in English on regular basis. Television channels, newspapers, magazines and other sources will provide topics for conversation and group discussion. Facilitators will not stop anybody for using incorrect English. A follow up feedback may be provided but nobody should be stopped while speaking [4]. Notes the difference between ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’. Skills are crucial in the teaching of English. Speaking in English may also be practiced in arranged formal events as speeches, debates, open forum and round table discussion on different topics and occasions. These events will be arranged mainly for young learners who are currently studying in different academic institutions. Thus, practices of English language will inspire learners to speak in English and will ultimately make them confident English speakers.

3.1.3 Reading

CELCs will create a habit of reading in English for learners by exposing them to an extensive number of reading materials as well as effective reading strategies. English reading materials collected from numerous sources and cross-cultural contexts will make learners able to read and understand English texts with confidence. The centers should have national and international English newspapers, magazines, periodicals, books and dictionaries. Learners will also be introduced to reading pamphlets, brochures and leaflets [5]. Assists teachers in improving students’ reading skill by using news stories and the 5 W’s of journalism. Forming ‘Reading Groups’ will encourage learners of all ages read English books regularly and discuss on them afterwards. In reading groups, they will practice reading comprehension and vocabulary building [6]. Experiments on teaching vocabulary by using newspaper reports. CELCs may also arrange competitions on reading books and newspapers. Readers’ forums and fan clubs of different newspapers can help the CELCs in this regard. Facilitators should discuss reading strategies like skimming, scanning, guessing and telling back through which learners will find reading easy and effective.

3.1.4 Writing

Writing practices need formal teaching–learning environment. CELCs will arrange some ways to make learners practice formal and informal writing. A good practice is to encourage learners keep journals in English. Facilitators may also inspire students in creative writing. Eventually, they should be guided to make wall magazines and bring out little magazines. Learners will make wall magazines on different issues and occasions. The magazines will be hung on the walls of the centers. They will use relevant photographs, cartoons, graphs, sketches and drawings with illustration to make the wall magazines attractive as well as informative.
3.2 Besides Practicing the Four Skills of English Language, People will Use CELCs for Many Other Purposes but English Language Education will be the Main Concern. Let me Discuss a Few Modes of Practicing English Language

3.2.1 Use of literature

With an objective to make CELCs entertaining and friendly to its learners, the center should hold sessions on literature and creative writing. As many people like poetry, CELCs may organize poetry reading sessions which will be followed by discussion. In dealing with poems in the classroom, [7] suggests a nine step technique that includes ‘trigger’, ‘vocabulary preview’, ‘bridge, listen, react, and share’, ‘language’, ‘picture’ and ‘more language’. Poetry can also be used to ice break and initiate discussions [8]. States: “Poems often explore themes of universal concern and embody life experiences, and thus kick off a strong response from the reader” [9]. Opines that in the interpretation of poetry there is a necessary interdependence between the understanding of formal structure and the recognition of a communicative effort.

3.2.2 Children’s literature

Childhood is the best period for learning a foreign language. In many EFL countries, students’ lack of competence in using English language indicates insufficient practice of the language at elementary level. So, special attention should be given to children’s interests and their needs. A collection of children’s literature rich in rhymes, stories, pictures and cartoons with English illustration will bring children to CELCs. Special methods and techniques should be utilized to hook kids’ attention. They will learn English through funny and fascinating games. Facilitators, trained basically in child psychology may be very effective in this regard. If such practices and persons are arranged, CELCs can also be turned into children’s play zones. Book reading competitions may be arranged for learners of various ages.

3.2.3 Job preparation

Many colleges and universities do not have arrangement for preparing graduating students for jobs, but competency in English language is a common pre-requisite to get good jobs in all EFL countries. Graduates can get the opportunity to learn English in the society they live in. They’ll register with CELCs and specify their needs and background knowledge in English. Then, the centers will arrange placement tests for them. After that, they will arrange competent facilitators as well as job preparation modules and courses for them. In this case, learner’s individual needs and level of competence should be taken into consideration. Mock interviews can also be arranged for the job seekers.

3.2.4 Public speaking

Public speaking is an important technique for learners to practice spoken English. In the centers, learners of various age, occupation and educational background can practice impromptu speech, informative speech, persuasive speech, welcome speech, after dinner speech and other forms of public speaking. Public Speaking Fests may be arranged on different issues e.g. dowry, smoking, drugs, patriotism, etc, as well as national and
international days like International Mother Language Day, Labor Day, Independence Day, etc.

3.2.5 Adult learners’ speaking

Adult learners who have insufficient input in English should be dealt cautiously. They should not be forced to speaking, rather be encouraged to get involved in informal discussions. The best way is to let them start with their topics of interest. Facilitators will help adult learners continue their discussion. They will intervene only if learners cease speaking or bring in irrelevant issues.

3.2.6 Business english

People of different ages and occupations need Business English and CELCs can help them reach their goals. Students need practice of English language to get good jobs, while service holders and business people need the language to run their respective ventures more effectively. CELCs may offer short Business English courses to meet the demands of these people. Facilitators will run video clips on the use of English in business settings. They'll also show learners some clips on facing an interview and responding to questions in correct way. Mock interviews can also be arranged. Facilitators may offer lectures on technical and business writing e.g. writing job letter, CV/ resume, report, memo, business letters, reports and meeting minutes. Moreover, learners will know how to communicate in business settings. Furthermore, they will study business jargons. Finally, sessions on the techniques of doing demonstration and making power point presentation can also be arranged.

3.3 Let me now talk about Necessary Infrastructure Support that We Need to Run a CELC

3.3.1 Management

A CELC may be run by an authority like Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, an NGO, an INGO, Local Government, a voluntary organization, an English daily, voluntary teachers or university students. The authority should appoint one or several persons as facilitator(s). The facilitators should be trained in English Language Teaching in general and in teaching English through Communicative approach in particular. They will facilitate learners practice skills of English language. They may work part time or full time; voluntary or paid.

3.3.2 Infrastructure and Resources

The centers need necessary infrastructure and resources for implementing modern methods and techniques for teaching-learning English language in real-life situations. What a CELC needs are: a few rooms, desks, chairs, black/ white boards, chalk/markers, cassette/CD players, PC(s), a TV set, multimedia projector, shelves, poster papers, flip charts, English newspapers, magazines, books, dictionaries and stationeries.

4. CONCLUSION

English language learning centers in EFL countries will help learners enormously to learn skills of English language. The centers will assist young learners in practicing English
language in real environment besides their simulated practice in formal classes. Moreover, the centers will provide learners of all ages the opportunities of learning English language in informal as well as real-life situations. Furthermore, strategies explained in the paper will help organizers set up and run the CELCs.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES


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