

ADDRESSING STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN ANSWERING ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

(English Language Education)

Problem: The syllabi on English Language(2013) at the Primary level(up to Class-V) in West Bengal under the WBBPE lay emphasis on three things.----- What are they? Write a paragraph on each of these three things. Critically observe a class-room in your school and comment on the existence/nonexistence of these things. What are your suggestions for improvement?

Solution to the Problem: What are the three things, emphasised in the Syllabi?

The three things are: (a) shift from teacher centricity to learner centricity which dictates a transition from 'knowledge as given approach' to 'knowledge as constructed or created approach' (b) change over from passive listening to active participation in the collaborative and cooperative activities in order to construct or reconstruct, create or recreate students' own knowledge, and (c) replacement of periodical examination by continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

Accordingly, the syllabi on Primary English (2013) in West Bengal under the WBBPE lay emphasis on (i) child-centricity (ii) a joyful input-rich language- learning situation for acquiring the language through communicative activities under the guidance of a teacher who would remain less dominant as far as practicable, and (iii) a continuous and comprehensive assessment of skills---Listening ↔ Speaking ↔ Reading ↔ Writing

Solution to the Problem: Write a paragraph on each of these three things.

(i) Shift from teacher centricity to learner centricity which dictates a transition from 'knowledge as given approach' to 'knowledge as constructed or created approach'

The concept of learner-centricity is nothing new. According to this concept, students should be brought in the forefront of the learning process within and outside the class-room. The teacher in the class-room, according to this concept, should not act as the owner of all information in the world and the children need not be taken as 'empty container'. The teacher should act as a guide and a facilitator, an observer and supplemental etc

(ii)) Change over from passive listening to active participation in the collaborative and cooperative activities in order to construct or reconstruct, create or recreate students' own knowledge

In fact, a language is learnt through the use of it in an interactive or communicative situation rather than through learning about it from the teachers. It does not mean, of course, that there is no place of accuracy in this type of language learning. What is suggested by this type of language learning is that a learner must go to the usage through the use of a language. This is exactly what happens in case of a learner's mother-tongue-learning. The activities or tasks and participation of the learners in them cooperatively and collaboratively give the learners scopes for using the target- language.

(iii) Replacement of periodical examinations by continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

A learner learns every day through a process, classroom transactions and interactions, but assessed periodically or terminally, giving the entire system no scope for removing his deficiencies. So, when s/he is promoted or detained, his/her 'disability-mass' remains with him as a blocking agency, unaddressed. The concept of continuous and comprehensive evaluation takes a learner into its fold since his/her entry into the process of learning, observes, compares and measures him/her in terms of his progress, stagnation or regress in reference to a scale, already set, and constantly provides support to him/her to reach up to the expected mark, set for him or her. The primary objective of such evaluation is to plug the wastage of human resource.

Solution to the Problem: Critically observe a class-room in your school and comment on the existence/nonexistence of these things. What are your suggestions for improvement?

I see the following things:

(i) English text materials developed for primary children contain many interactive activities and tasks , but teachers need to struggle a lot to divide the large group into pairs or small groups.

(ii) Teachers of my stature having Bengali medium background, feel hesitant to use the language frequently. This gives the learners less exposure to good English within the class-room.

(iii) Students feel that they will have to perform and, therefore, have to come out of their shell.

(iv) The daily detection of deficiencies and clustering the deficient groups on the basis of the respective patterns of disabilities or difficulties is gradually gaining ground.

(529 words, inclusive of the numbers & sections in (), but exclusive of the Questions and subheadings)

- This is one of the many ways of writing the answer Students should read through the lines and reorganise their answers if they need any redressal, but should never lift and copy every line.**

Problem: How can you integrate Second Language Acquisition with Mathematics, Physical Education and social interaction network?

The integrative approach to learning is nothing new, because when we learn something we learn it wholly in association with other related experiences. As for example, when we see a flower, we learn its name, its look, shape, colour and even count how many petals it has. This is because we cannot stop a learner from looking at the other dimensions of a concept or problem.

Similarly, in case of Second Language Acquisition if learners are exposed to the target second language in mathematics classes, physical education classes or social interaction network, acquisition of the target second language occurs side by side with learning in that particular area of the subject.

As for example, in a mathematics class if a teacher says: Add 2 to 3 and tell me the total, while writing the figures and the signs on the chalk board, learners get additional input rich situation in the mathematics class and acquire the bit of English, which otherwise would not have happened so spontaneously.

Similar thing also happens when a teacher in his/her physical education class commands: "Stand at ease" or "Stand in attention" etc or a pair of students plays the roles of a passenger and a booking clerk of a railway station and starts conversing like the following through role-reversals:

Passenger: I would like to book a ticket for Dumdum now.

Booking Clerk: Yes, you may..

Passenger: How much have I to pay?

Booking Clerk: Five rupees only.....

In fine, we can say that English language acquisition requires exposure to language situations as in First Language Acquisitions. If the teaching-learning-situations in other subjects give us such situations, acquisition occurs.

(273 words. The sizes of the examples may be reduced to limit the answer to 250 words)

- Students should read through the lines and reorganise their answers if they need any redressal, but should never lift and copy every line.