

## **Handout as a Supplementary Material to Facilitate Discussions in the Classroom at Secondary Level**

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### **Abstract**

Supplementary materials play an important role in language teaching. It is a well known fact that teaching has a lot do with understanding and attending the needs of the learners whose learning directly or indirectly is influenced and improvised based on the methods adopted and the choice of materials. This paper discusses the types of materials and the uses of handout (or) worksheets as a supplementary material or teaching-aid in initiating discussions in the second language classroom.

### **Syllabus-Definition**

A syllabus guides a teacher about the objectives to be achieved in a classroom pertaining to the learning of a language (or) a subject by learners. So, syllabus is the basic framework which includes every aspect related to learning such as

- objectives of the learning
- materials required for learning.
- methodology to be followed
- ability of learners.
- a time schedule within which the learning has to take place.

In the words of Scott Thornbury (2006), “a syllabus is an item-by-item description of the teaching content of a course. On the basis of the syllabus, a time table (or) a scheme of work can be drawn up for the academic year”.

With the advent of communicative approach many types of syllabuses came into vogue such as content-based syllabus, topic-based syllabus, notional-functional syllabus etc., A task-based syllabus is organized around tasks and activities that the learners would carry out in English. In a topic-based syllabus the learners are made to talk on different topics

selected. A functional syllabus is organized around the functions most commonly needed in speaking. The objectives of any syllabus is reflected, realized, and achieved through materials. So, materials are like the treasure trove for teaching and learning. Materials related to a language classroom fall under two divisions –

- course book (instructional material).
- supplementary materials (or) teaching-aids.

### **Course Book and Additional Materials**

Brian Tomlinson (2011) says that, “materials can be anything which is deliberately used to increase the learners’ knowledge and/or experience of the language.” The basic difference between a course book and supplementary materials is that a course book is designed on the principle of homogeneity and the supplementary material appeals to the heterogeneous feature of a classroom. In a country like India, a course book designed and prescribed, especially for learners at primary and secondary levels, takes lot of time, minimum of 8 to 10 years to undergo a change to address the needs of the learner.

Every course book need to be supplemented with additional materials such as teaching-aids. According to Penny Ur (1996), “most language-teaching course books probably need supplementing to some extent, if only in order to tailor them to the needs of a particular class (or) to offer richer options.”

### **Supplementary Material or Teaching-Aid**

“Aids” are materials that do not become sole means of instruction, but can be used as supplementary devices. Penny Ur, in her book, *A Course in Language Teaching* (1996) uses the words- teaching-aids and supplementary materials complementarily and mentions computers, overhead projectors, video equipment, audio equipment, posters, pictures, worksheets (or) handouts as some of the supplementary materials which are indeed known as teaching-aids.

What is the need for supplementary materials? As Brian Tomlinson (2011) says, “supplementary materials are usually related to the development of the skills of reading, writing, listening (or) speaking”. Indeed, a learner needs considerable amount of practice regarding productive skills like writing and speaking. For that purpose supplementary

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materials (or) teaching-aids serve as an extension to the activities that are mentioned in the course book. Indeed, they introduce variety into a classroom. Especially, when the learners enter secondary level of learning, they need to acquire fluency especially in speaking as they need to interact with the society around them as they grow. So, all these things need to be attended. For that purpose, supplementary materials (or) teaching-aids play a significant role in introducing ‘discussions’ at secondary level learning for class X.

### **Handouts**

Handouts are often termed as worksheets. Handout is a sort of visual material. Handout is a communicative material. It has all the features that a communicative material will have. The following are the features of a communicative material -

- promotes group interaction
- the focus will be on fluency.
- immediate feedback.
- they involve information.
- they have authenticity.
- they accommodate personal individual differences found within a large group.

### **Handouts and other supplementary materials or teaching aids**

Teaching-aids or otherwise called supplementary materials fall under two divisions: Uni-modal (appeals to one sense that is either visual or audio) and bi-modal (appeals to both the senses that is both visual and audio). Specific uses and advantages of some of the supplementary materials other than handouts are explained as below:

Computers enable individual work, and provide a self-check facility and they grab the attention of the students very soon and serve as invaluable source for preparing materials such as worksheets. Overhead projectors (OHP) are useful for presenting visual or written materials to classes. Audio equipment such as cassette recorders and cassettes are not available at low cost but also they are very easy to use. However there are certain disadvantages with usage of these supplementary materials.

- Most of the teachers and students are unaware of the operation of computers and it takes time.

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- It becomes difficult to carry OHP from one class to another class.
- Occasional breakdowns and technical problems disrupt the effective outcomes of using video equipment.
- The audio equipment lacks visual content.

In general, the regular power cuts in developing countries like India provides a setback for the use of some of the above mentioned supplementary materials. To sum up we can say that handouts are not only low-cost materials but serve different purposes and provide for group work and pair work.

### **What is a Handout?**

A handout can be -

- a summary or synopsis of the lesson to be taught
- a set of tasks for the learners to work on
- a series of instructions to follow in the course of a class.
- a set of exercises or activities (teacher made or photocopied) for use in class.
- some materials for use as reference or reading materials after the class.
- a set of pictures/tasks given before the class in preparation to attending the class.
- a list of useful books.

Some of the points can be explained further as follows.

### **Teacher-made materials**

We should give utmost importance to teacher-made materials in a classroom situation to cater to the needs of mixed-ability groups. Handout turns to be one such material which is primarily meant for giving instructions and providing exercises with regard to a second language classroom.

### **A Source of activities or exercises**

Handout as a source if properly exploited serve as a source for communicative activities. Jeremy Harmer in his book “The Practice of English Language Teaching” (2008) brings about a distinction between communicative and non-communicative activities.

## Non-communicative Activities

No communicative purpose
No desire to communicate
Form not content
One language item
Teacher intervention
Materials control

## Communicative Activities

A communicative purpose
A desire to communicate
Content not form
Variety of language
No teacher intervention
No materials control

Since a course book may not include a rich variety of activities, it is the duty of a teacher to extend the activities than those mentioned in the course book.

### Uses of Handouts in a Second Language Classroom

The following are the uses of the handouts. They

- make teaching more learner-centered
- facilitate each individual to have a handout.
- allow group work (or) pair work
- help more to promote discussions
- serve as an extension to the activities given in the course book
- act as supplementary sources to handbook.

To sum up, in India the teaching tends to be more teacher-centred. This is the result of many practical problems like large classrooms. It becomes a really challenging task for a teacher to concentrate on each and every student. So, the situations tend towards teacher-centred classrooms. But, a teacher has to take into consideration the development of the learner in the acquisition of skills.

So a teacher has to engage learners with the effective learning process. The teacher has to come up with the materials which help him/her to change the classroom situation and

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make it more learner-centred. Handouts as a supplementary material provide such alternatives. A handout either as a picture or a printout can be distributed to each and every student.

A handout as a teaching-aid is different from other aids like OHP or flipcharts which are not only expensive but their reach will be only to the front rows of a class. Where as a handout which is not only a low-cost teaching material but it can be given to every student. The teacher can monitor well as he/she can give clear instructions. A handout can be best used as a source in successful holding of discussions.

The purpose of using each teaching-aid or supplementary material must be clearly defined in relation to their role. So, the use of each teaching-aid varies. In that sense handout best suits for discussions. Discussions involve group work or pair work. They break the monotony of listening to a specified content. They help in sharing knowledge and improve the speaking abilities of learners. But what happens in a typical classroom is that the discussions end with teacher-learner interaction which must be extended to learner-learner interaction. So the situation can be changed by experimenting with new materials that suit the methodology of a communicative classroom. With a suitable supplementary material like handout, teachers can conduct discussions on regular basis. With this the word power of the learner enhances and the classroom will not be confined to reading and listening.

### **Objectives of this study**

In the Indian context of teaching and learning study skills (or) advanced skills need to be included in the language curriculum and syllabus at the secondary level because the whole crux of teaching and learning is to make learners autonomous. But unfortunately they remain neglected and when the learners need to enter higher level of studies they remain less confident and feel insecure.

So, imparting advanced skills must start at the secondary level. In Andhra Pradesh, we can see these welcoming changes that the advanced skills are given importance in the syllabus design and find a part in the prescribed course book. But the drawback is that the approach or methodology to teach these advanced skills is unclear. And the innovative nature on the part of teacher to impart these advanced skills with the help of supplementary materials is left unaddressed. So, the objectives of the study are as follows:

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- To find out the importance of supplementary materials in initiating discussions.
- To suggest the use of handouts in classroom discussions.

Based on the objective, the following questions are answered:

1. What is the importance attached to supplementary materials in teaching?
2. What sort of materials can be considered to introduce discussions in the classroom?

### **Methodology:**

Two government-aided schools were chosen by the researcher as it was found that in those schools the supplementary materials which are in use other than course book are charts and models which are suitable only to teach grammatical structures to learners at primary levels. so, there is no supplementary material that can be used to hold discussions other than course book which provided the basis for the cause to choose those schools. In the study the researcher used two tools to collect the data. The type of the tool and the purposes of using them are given below:

- Teacher's questionnaire.
- Interviews with teachers

Data was collected in midst of frequent intervals for few minutes. Sometimes the gap was more because the concerned teacher has to take the classes of other teachers due to their absence for some reasons. Finally up to 5 to 6 hours were spent on each teacher to explain things and to collect the data. Questions were focused on the teaching methodology used in the classroom and the importance given to supplementary materials in the classroom.

### **Objectives of the Teacher's Questionnaire**

The purpose behind administering the questionnaire to the teacher is as follows:

- To understand the teacher's profile
- To get teacher's perception of the inadequacy of the course book in imparting study skills.

A detailed description of the objectives of formulating specific questions in teacher's questionnaire is as follows:

Part-I of the questionnaire aim at building the profile of the teachers in terms of their name, teaching experience and educational qualification. Part-II deals with collecting data about imparting discussion skills in the classroom. Part-III is based on questions related to use of teaching-aids in the classroom

### **Discussion of Questionnaire with the Teachers**

The questionnaire was given to be filled in the presence of the researcher as information was provided regarding purpose of the questions asked in the questionnaire during the process of filling the forms. It was in their staff room the researcher met the teachers and gave the questionnaires to be filled. The questionnaire was discussed thoroughly with the teachers. Some of the teachers got confused with the term “methodology”. So the researcher made the term clear to them. All of them mentioned that they do not know what is meant by language functions. Then the researcher provided them a copy of language functions related to discussions and also the researcher defined in more detail the terms course book and supplementary materials. The questions were explained in a clear manner then only went for feedback on the questions.

### **Interviews with Teachers:**

The interviews with the 5 teachers at secondary level went like this-General questions were put to teachers regarding the teaching-aids or supplementary materials they use with learners. They said that even if they are provided with computers they don't use them because the students are not aware of how to use them .some said that they do not know how to use computer. Some opined that technology is not necessary in a language classroom. When asked about the classroom management they said that it was very much difficult to make students to concentrate on what was taught. Some opined that it becomes only possible for them to teach what is there in course book that is the content and to make the students to be ready with few questions to be answered in exams. When asked do they attend any training courses they said that it will be difficult for them to attend them. Some more interesting opinions were put forth by some teachers about the background of the learners that is how distracting their home conditions will be.

### **Analysis of the Teacher's Questionnaire**

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The analysis is carried out on the responses that were elicited from five teachers of English in two schools under study. The two schools chosen to fulfil the purpose of the study are government aided schools. The purpose behind to choose those schools is that, the first part of the teacher's questionnaire has 3 questions which throw light upon the profile of the teachers. The profile includes name, teaching experience and educational qualification. All the five teachers are graduates. All teachers have English teaching experience for more than five years.

Part-II has 2 questions out of which one is open-ended question and another is close-ended question. Question 1 of this part attempts to get the response from the teachers regarding the methodology they follow in imparting discussion skills in the classroom. The response to this question from all the five teachers can be summed up as-

The teaching-aids they use include charts and models, which are used to teach grammatical items. Question 2 of this part enquires to know from the teachers whether they use any low cost teaching-aids other than charts (or) models to extend activities other than given in text book to hold discussions. All the teachers said that they do not use any teaching-aids other than charts (or) models. Question 3 of this part attempts to know from the teachers whether they access for more information on computers or not. Out of five teachers, said that they do not rely on computers for information.

### **Findings of the Study**

It has been found from the present study that the methodology adopted to conduct discussions makes the classroom to appear as more teacher-centred than learner-centered.

There is no focus on language functions while conducting discussions. The use of teaching-aids is not related to classroom situations. The innovativeness on the part of teachers to extend the activities with the help of low cost teaching-aids is lacking. The initiative on the part of teachers to utilize modern technology like computers for additional information is very less.

### **Suggestions**

The classroom activities must be learner-centred. Teacher-made materials must find a place in classroom activities. "Handout" as a teaching-aid (or) as a supplementary material

will serve this purpose. A handout can be used innovatively to facilitate discussions. The discussions that take place in a classroom can be made livelier, with help of a handout. For example, a picture in the form of a handout can be shown basing on which language focused discussions can be conducted.

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