

Pictures; an Indispensable Tool in an Adult English as a Second Language Classroom

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Pictures are considered a universal stimuli that aid learning. "a great help in stimulating the learning of a foreign language (Bowen, 1982). However, they are not aptly explored in our programmes for the students. The study examines the contribution the pictures can make in an adult (English as a Second Language) ESL classroom. It focuses on the effectiveness of using picture based activities in practice phases of ESL lessons as an extension to the textbook activities to help learners absorb the language structures targeted in the curriculum of level 2 programme of English Language Proficiency Course in the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo. The claims of the theory of Multiple Intelligences and learning styles also prompted the use of this approach to help students acquire language in an interesting and engaging way.

Evaluation of the approach was done through classroom observation and analysis of questionnaires administered among 04 teachers and 82 students who used a module prepared with picture based activities.

Great enthusiasm and motivation on the part of the students when engaging in the tasks had been observed in all the classes in which the module was used. The study revealed 100% positive feedback in favor of the approach with students claiming that the practice phases helped them to better absorb the targeted language structures. Three out of four teachers pointed to the need of introducing vocabulary prior to the commencement of the activity. Imposition of ground rules too was suggested by 50% of teachers as useful in minimizing the use of the mother tongue.

The study found that the pictures helped adult learners to absorb the language structures that had already been introduced to them. This indicated the possibility of using them in a wide range of language learning situations. The study thus reveals several possible areas for future research in the context of language learning and teaching.