

A technique to encourage speech in the language class.

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ABSTRACT

According to tools of assessment most tertiary level students join English language classes to gain speaking proficiency. Yet, they refuse to respond to lessons orally but opt to produce written answers. These laboriously formulated answers are on the whole plausible but abound in errors. Constructions like "Keep him at an arms length, "Does he can sing?" prove that students apply grammar rules inappropriately. This is responsible for the uncalled for importance they attached to grammar accuracy. Sri Lankans associate accurate English with education, refinement, power etc. but deny these attributes to erroneous English and students avoid errors to avert this social degradation. As speech is the skill which exposes students to errors most, they resist speech. Bad texts also discourage speech. Average lessons done in class being clear and well-demarcated, students can comprehend them effortlessly. If there is a gap in the lesson either information-wise or opinion-wise, students have to grapple with it to derive meaning. Present techniques creates an opinion gap in class through vague pictures. Their vagueness lend themselves for diverse interpretations which have to be justified if questioned. This calls for intelligent guesswork. Anyone giving a logical interpretation to the pictures will be respected by peers for his intelligence. Mere grammar knowledge doesn't ensure this recognition. This encourages students to communicate in English using whatever grammar they know, which promotes speech. This, on the one hand enables students to acquire the language naturally and on the other hand, it gives an opportunity to the teacher to observe idiosyncrasies of the students to plan remedial work.

This technique was used in E.L.T.U. classes and several week-end tertiary level classes with very good results.