Project Based Language Teaching and Learning :
A Pragmatic Approach in ELT

Ms. S.Sunila Sailaja

Assistant Professor in English, Dept of Humanities and Basic Sciences, Godavari Institute of Engg.& Technology,
Rajahmundry- 533294, A.P., India. E-Mail:somanasailaja16@gmail.com
(Research scholar JNTUK)

Abstract: *New and innovative methods of teaching may better the student learning. Experiential learning is one of the productive methods in teaching language. Pragmatic learning is synonymous with it. When compared with other conventional and traditional methods of teaching English language, it could better enthuse both teacher and learner since it changes their roles from conventional to pragmatic. The multiple skills demanded by job market in the professional students, knocking doors for refined trends in the language classroom in acquiring multiple intelligences. At this context highly effective communication ability had been valued uniquely. Every professional student in general and engineering students in particular aims at improvement of language usage, particularly in global language, English.. Hence looking at the inevitability to own skills in using this language, present generation is looking at teachers of English, about how well the teacher can bring the learning process close to them and how could it be a benefit to accomplish particularly their career goals as well as social activities. The present paper focuses on a new method of teaching and learning English that is Project based learning. It had well discussed the advantages of project based learning with a view to amplify the convenience in acquiring language skills by using this method. The process involved in implementation of PBL is discussed in detail with relevancy to the mixed ability classrooms. An example case study is attached with a view to enlist pragmatic learning process and its outcome at the end.*

Key Words: *Project Based learning, pragmatic approach, language needs, mixed ability class rooms, language projects.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Socio-economic development is based on the academic advancement of the country. Since years higher education is the back-bone of the academic development. Higher education offered by various technical educational institutes is playing a prominent role in the achievement of progress in different fields since ages. As teacher is the source of education irrespective of its branch of study teaching has been a noble profession that could offer, better and refine human resources to the process of development. This magnanimous mechanism is possible through the way of teaching. As the conventional methods where teacher is sage on the stage proved to be unsuccessful in equipping multiple skills, the teachers' responsibility has been changed and he is compelled to be a mentor, facilitator, and guide on his side. The changed role had given scope and demand for new methods of teaching where the student is bestowed with enough autonomy and reliability in acquiring and practicing knowledge. Many researches were conducted on the methods of teaching that can better meet the needs of the present day job market. Among the various methods identified the method that offer experiential learning in pragmatic approach is said to be right and trendy method. Implementing such a method would break the shy shell of the learner and drags him out of his inabilities like backwardness, stage fear, dependency, complexity, phobia of pronunciation, accent and intonation, mother tongue influence etc. Particularly the learners of rural background would suffer with the above inhibitions that could better be wiped away by practicing Project Based Learning.

2. ENGLISH-ONE OF THE ACADEMIC NEEDS OF EFL LEARNERS:

The concept of Globalization had brought lot of changes in culture, society, and also in the fields of communication, media, science and technology. As English has been the lingua franca of every nation across the globe, it became the effective means of communication at the context of exchange of information. English became the language of trade and commerce, science and technology and also the language of philosophy and literature. Moreover by looking at its functions appropriately it can be identified as link language in many formal and informal situations. In all the fields of society language English had been valued high particularly in the field of academics. Looking at its importance at international level the focus of the present generation is shifted to its learning and new methods of teaching English. So

the teachers of English are at trails to modify their teaching methodology that could better cater the desired language needs of the learners. Science and technology has been the dominant field in the development of every nation as development is possible through it. The new millennium engineering graduates are at their effort in acquiring the skills belonged to language with an emphasis on vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax and grammar, which stand as a back bone to their presentation skills. As part of globalization many international projects are inviting the involvement of engineers, who could better present knowledge through effective communication. The whole world is there wide open for effective communicators who can impress, convince, dominate, encounter and lead with their word power. Hence language moreover global language English has become prime means of communication.

3. ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE:

In the countries like India English has been second or foreign language, till schooling. But when coming to undergraduate studies it is compelled means of communication and also the only medium of instruction. It has been identified in the course of education in the universities engineering and other professional students have to face different spheres of professional activity like researching science concepts, research and development like publishing papers, involvement in engineering and manufacturing procedures and also organizing and management, in the pursuit of professional or engineering degree. At that time the allowed means of communication is global language. To deal with these challenges the learner looks at English teacher for linguistic support. To satisfy the role of teacher, English teacher in particular has to adopt new methods of teaching English that allow the learner to develop the ability to communicate and practice the content, knowledge in professionally oriented context.

4. METHODS IN ELT:

There are many existent methods of teaching English. The primitive methods like grammar, translation method, direct method, Audio lingual method and structural method. Instead of making the learner confident in using the foreign language ,the above methods convinced the learner that English is also a subject just like maths, physics, chemistry etc. In the 20th century looking at the growing needs outside the class room pushed the language analyst into a different thinking environment that brought forth communicative language teaching. As one of the different methods. By the advent of CLT English has changed its shape from subject to means of communication. So the English subject teacher became language expert. Communicative language teaching's concentration on cognitive abilities and methods encourages practical language learning. The present study is on one of the methods that come under CLT.

5. PBL: PROMOTES EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:

As there is incomparable demand for English, many efforts were done to draw forth suitable methods for language learning. As referred earlier the different methods like grammar translation method, direct method, and structural method were experimented with lot of care but they were proven to be insufficient to impart some important skills. The research done on teaching methods supported efficiency of project based learning. It is appreciated for its pragmatic and experiential nature [1](*Larsen-Freeman, 1986*) .In this approach rather than learning to use English, students use English to learn it.

According to Longman Dictionary Project means –A piece of work that needs skill, effort and careful planning especially over a period of time (Longman) .Project based learning is student centred approach. Students enjoy academic autonomy at length throughout the process. When the assignment of a project is prepared student is given chance to select the project of his own interest. From there it gives complete autonomy till he finishes the project, where unconsciously he follows the metrics set by the teacher where the target language is achieved finally. During the process learner enjoys liberty in solving problem and teacher enjoys the professional satisfaction in diverting the learner into the tract of language acquisition. The objectives set in PBL aim at the acquisition of target language undeniably.

The concept of PBL is slightly different from TBL. When TBL focuses on task set to learn a particular language item, PBL focuses on both task and set target. In project based learning task is related to any social or academic need set for a stipulated period, but learner deals with target language to accomplish it. During that period, process should go in an orderly way, so as to experience all the intended phases like making survey, meeting the target group for data collection, data analysis, matching the experiences with set linguistic needs, level of attaining necessary objectives [2](*Gee, 2003*).Educational games contextualizes learning, challenges individuals, allow production, strengthen problem solving skills, motivate, encourage collaboration, foster deep learning and allow recreation to oneself. The teachers' role is also essential in PBL as he has to act like a facilitator, giving necessary frame work, providing access to necessary information, helping with target language.

6. PBL - A SIGNIFICANT TEACHING METHOD:

It is true that projects are highly motivational to the younger generations. They are enthusiastic in its functionalities. They bring real life into class rooms. The way they learn language becomes more meaningful. It brings facts to real life. From teacher we can learn how to plant a seed, how the sprouts come out and how a plant could bear fruit. But the project based learning gives the experience in planting a seed, looking at its first sprout and can look at

how it could bear its fruits. Hence it arouses interest. Projects can be intensive activities which take place over a short period of time, or extended studies which may take but one or two hours or a week .PBL gives chance to develop multi-disciplinary skills like travelling to the target point, negotiating for permission, doing surveying, collecting the required data, presenting, analysing, discussing, explaining, convincing etc. Finally it provides higher level of thinking at every level, since the outcome is more important.

There are some gaps also that can be overcome strategically:
Students in groups are dominated by eloquent speakers; sometimes get no chance to speak and negotiate. Project based learning demand lot of patience as well as more co-ordinating work from faculty. Written work contains lot of grammatical mistakes needs thorough check.

7. RATIONALE FOR IMPLEMENTING PBL (PROJECT BASED LEARNING):
PBL has instructional methodology. PBL is a way of ensuring genuinely communicative uses of spoken and written English [3](*J.Harmer 1998*). As the role of teacher is more in giving required instructions, the given instructions are genuine and authentic. Since they come from authentic sources learner is confident in following or putting into practice. The collaborative work assigned would develop other multiple skills like co-ordinating skills, organizing, negotiating, and arriving to a conclusion. The project will be done on the basis of the didactic material introduced in the course book which is naturally designed for future engineers already carrying out their scientific and research activity.

8. TYPES OF ACADEMIC PROJECTS:
- **Encounter projects (Mat wick 2000):** Under these projects, the learner will maintain direct contact with native speakers and usually the various stages of project take place only in the target language.Ex: Project with religious groups, language societies etc.
- **Text Projects (Hutchinson 1986)**: These set of projects are not related to real world. The topics taken from different types of media, audio-visual clippings, text books etc. The very purpose is analysis needed on the given text.
- **Correspondence Projects (Tregret & Raymond-Baker 1991:81):** In this type, communication happens in foreign language and the project bearer will convert the needed information into target language which will examine his language skills.
- **Research and Information Projects:** These type of projects can be easily done and based on the web and books the gathered information can be converted into the given project format.
- **Survey Projects:** Data plays a very important role in this type of projects**.** The given data sometimes to be converted from diagrammatic or graphic representation to target language.

9. THEORETICAL FRAME WORK OF PBL:
Since student centred learning is possible in this method, careful planning and structuring ensure great deal of satisfaction both to the teacher and the learner. There can be four broad stages in implementing this learning.
Stage: 1 Planning and Preparation
This stage demands lot of attention and concentration. Because the learner with the help of mentor sets objectives and goals to the project given, the set goals are familiar. Mentor has to give the themes or subjects as per the interest of the student learners. The set goals and objectives are achievable and should be best tools to bring communicative competence in the target language. When the objectives and goals are fixed with the help of the teacher concerned, learner found lot of confidence in selecting the path to travel for the project.
Stage: 2 Designing the Process
The learner will be given enough autonomy to do the project following the metrics set by the teacher. His goal never allows him deviate from what was framed for the purpose. While the learner is thinking about the process of doing the project, he allows all skills to work together to achieve his aim successfully. As the saying goes no plan fails in man only man fails to plan, learner need to be strategic in designing his procedures
Stage: 3 Participation or Performance
In this stage the learner shows complete involvement in doing the project. Since he has to be equipped with factual information he will not allow any of his weaknesses related to language and psychological factors to disable his performance. Sometimes he even ready to acquire newer skills of language like exclusive form of vocabulary, accepted form of pronunciation, modest and polite phrases to convince the person etc.
Stage: 4 Organizing and Presenting in a Prescribed Format
This can be more important phase in the PBL. The collected data should be sorted out in an organized way. In this stage learner takes the help of target language to present the collected information. It will be developed in a quite constructive way. It has lot of constraints to finalize the collected information. It is not just placing the experiences and information but academically preparing a report that meets the expectations of the supervisor. The role of teacher is also critical in directing the learner at every step of preparation. Lot of linguistic factors particularly the dynamics of writing

skills like sentence structures, phrasal expressions, vocabulary, punctuation, formatting etc stand as important features. After presenting the written script the learner has to be ready for oral presentation that could really become a test for oral communicative abilities.

Stage: 5 Evaluation and assessment:

Here the role of teacher is more. The best way to evaluate the learner is to understand his inabilities and providing possible solutions immediately. The teacher is expected to create some metrics for evaluation. He need not be too rigid. His assessment and feedback has to be thought provoking and pro active. The language check needs to be clear and non-repetitive. The teacher should behave like a mentor in giving guidance to improve target language.

CASE STUDY
LANGUAGE PROJECTS: AN EXPERIMENT DONE AT TECHNICAL CONTEXT THROUGH PBL (PROJECT BASED LEARNING)

Being faculty in English working for a technical institution ample of opportunity is provided to experiment the present method of learning i.e PBL. III B.Tech students were taken for the experimental study. During teaching hours emphasis is laid on the Project Based Learning. Technical report writing is taught with lot of care to let the students understand that the present method is an indirect and effective way to learn the target language. Students are given more time to know the various types and formats of reports like feasibility report, administrative reports, accidental reports, incidental reports, financial reports etc. They are given enough inputs about collection of data (note taking), data analysis (organizing the data), presenting the information (sequencing), maintaining language dynamics like punctuation, vocabulary, sentence structures etc.

In the class of sixty, groups were formed; group consists of 8-10 students. Each group was headed by a leader within. According to their exclusive stream of study students were asked to select industries in the nearby areas of the institution. Ex: Smithkline Beacham, GVK, Sugar Industry, Andhra Paper mills, RAK ceramics etc. A permission request letter was authorized from the institution containing the required details of students including the days of their visit and also purpose of the visit.

Students were instructed to fulfil the following conditions:
- Going in college uniform with college ID
- Taking a photograph in the working unit of the industry
- Taking second photograph with the whole students' team at the name board of the industry.
- Visiting all the wings of the industry in person
- Collecting the data as per the assigned tasks
- Using English for all sorts of communication during visit to the industry.

The components for their data collection
- Administrative scenario
- Number of departments
- Nature and features of the product of the industry
- Material details
- About packing and dispatching section
- Promotion of sales
- Statistics of last three years of sales
- Recruitment procedure
- Salary system
- Comparison with other companies that produce the same product.
- Safety measures

Students are given three days of time to collect the required data. Then a class is conducted to support them in project preparation. Finally after five days of time all the students found ready with the language projects.

Every project prepared by the students contains the following:
1. Title of the project
2. Index or table of contents
3. Acknowledgements
4. Declaration form
5. List of key vocabulary
6. Report of the functioning of Industry
6.1 Brief History of the industry

6.2 No.of Departments
6.3 Details of the product manufactured
6.4 Flow chart of manufacturing procedure
6.5 Details of sales and promotion
6.6 Recruitment process and salary system
6.7 Promotions
7. Insurance details and safety
8. Conclusions

10. FINDINGS:

When the experiment is conducted students participation appeared to be very active and even a passive student is found with lot of interest in preparing the project. During the time of oral presentation of the project they brought the language projects in a spiral binding and came with ppt slides, inserting the mainlines with relevant content. Since they have experienced everything very personally at the time of presentation they helped each other if anyone is struggling to get spontaneous thought. At the end of the task it is proved that they developed writing dynamics like punctuation, spellings, syntax, grammatical structures etc. and speaking aspects like acceptable pronunciation, apt vocabulary, native accent, right intonation, etc. Hence the learner is unconsciously equipped with good presentation skills that make them industry ready.

11. CONCLUSION:

Higher education is said to be effective with intuitive learning abilities of the under graduate learners. Learning beyond the text books and taking the learning beyond the class rooms is a new innovative approach. Thus the present paper is suggesting project based teaching and learning particularly in the language learning context, in order to make the foreign language learning less painful and more enthusiastic. Since real life situation is experienced at the graduation level learner could make himself ready for the future social needs that can be easily met with effective communication.

REFERENCES:

1. Larsen-Freeman.D. (1986)Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching .Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Gee J.P. (2003)What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy Newyork: Palgrave /St.Martin's.
3. J.Harmer, (1998,) The practice of English Language teaching, Longman Publishing 1998, p.147.