An English Laboratory: Task Based Activities

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Abstract:

   This program deals with the creation of an English Laboratory that is characterized by a task based activities. This program ponders on the idea that students can learn English Language the easiest way by engaging themselves in the English Laboratory. In this program the students are expose to the different skills such as Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Grammar and Vocabulary.

Key words: Teaching English, English Laboratory, Teaching Strategies, Teaching Style, English Skills, Task Based Activities

I. INTRODUCTION

GRU English Laboratory is technically a language laboratory, as such it is an instructional technology tool consisting of a source unit or a task based activities given to any students at their convenient time. In these laboratory students can further practice and ponder for improvement their writing, speaking, listening, grammar, vocabulary and reading skills in a smaller groups.

II. PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE PROGRAM

The GRU English Laboratory is organize because of the following objectives: (a) to develop the skill of speaking, (b) to develop the skill of reading, (c) to develop the skill of writing, (d) to develop the skill of listening, (e) to enable the students for the use of grammar correctly, and (f) to enable the students to analyze the element of language and establish the appropriate relationship among linguistic components.

Specifically, the GRU English Laboratory programs aims to learn the basics of the English language that would form the foundation for its mastery in the future. Use the basic structures of English sentences. Learn the core vocabulary assigned for this stage. Listen to and understand simple English. Express themselves (students) orally using simple English. Read and understand simple written English materials. Write simple guided sentences in English.

III. PROCEDURE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

A. Teacher

The GRU English teachers spare two of their office hours per week to the different English Laboratory activities such as Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Vocabulary and Grammar. The teacher in charge to this program plan for the timetable and inform the concern teachers.

The task based activities change every two weeks and the activities are provided for the teachers in the laboratory room (F23). The teacher helps the students develop their speaking, writing, listening, reading, grammar and vocabulary skills and abilities by exposing the students to the task based activities provided.

The task based activities lasts for 40-50 minutes including the discussion of the teacher on the selected activities. The task based activities in the laboratory are used

to reinforce the skills that the students acquired in their regular classes. The teacher has also the option to use other activities of their own liking provided that it beneficial to the students.

B. Student

In order to attend a laboratory, students must look at the laboratory schedule and choose skills of their liking according to their free time. Once they have chosen a laboratory to attend they must go to the office of the teacher to sign-up at least one day before the actual laboratory timing.

The sign-up sheets are provided on each of the office doors and are updated every week. Communication English (CE) students can attend any of the three laboratory. Technical Writing (TW) students can attend the Listening, Reading and Writing Laboratory. Communication Skills (CS) students can attend the Listening, Reading and the Speaking Laboratory. English for Academic Purpose (EAP) IT and Business students can attend the Speaking and Writing Laboratory.

The teacher gives an incentive to the students that attend the laboratory activities. This is to encourage the students to come and share to the group their ideas. A schedule is prepared at the beginning of the semester and is included in the student's guides as well as displayed in all classrooms so they know the time and place of the different English labs and where to sign-up.

IV. TEACHING STRATEGIES USE IN THE GRU ENGLISH LABORATORY PROGRAM

The GRU English laboratory program used the following teaching strategies to discuss and enhance the skills:

Task Based Learning – offers the student an opportunity to do exactly this. The primary focus of the activity is the task and language is the instrument which the students use to complete

it. The task is an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome. The activity reflects real life and learners focus on meaning; they are free to use any language they want. Playing a game, solving a problem or sharing information or experiences, can all be considered as relevant and authentic tasks.

In TBL an activity in which students are given a list of words to use cannot be considered as a genuine task. Nor can a normal role play if it does not contain a problem-solving element or where students are not given a goal to reach. In many role plays students simply act out their restricted role. For instance, a role play where students have to act out roles as company directors but must come to an agreement or find the right solution within the given time limit can be considered a genuine task in TBL.

Cooperative Learning – is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different ability levels, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. By using this method, each of the students feels that he or she is an important member of the group. Each member of a team is responsible, not only for learning what is taught, but also for helping his or her teammates learn—thus creating an atmosphere of achievement.

Guided Writing – is taught to small groups in 20 minute lessons. These groupings should be flexible, based on observation of students' current needs, and might be implemented following a whole-class writing lesson. Engage students in a brief, shared experience. You might read a short but fascinating section of an informational text, for example, or conduct a brief experiment. Engage students in a rich conversation during this experience, expanding their linguistic ability for this topic. Have students explicitly rehearse the ways in which they may decide to write about this experience.

In guided writing remember to teach strategies for all levels of writing decisions, including composing, text and sentence structures, spelling, and punctuation. Provide brief examples or cue cards of strategies in order to support students' immediate use. Hold brief discussions with students about how they will integrate these strategies into their own writing during today's lesson. Provide students with time (5-10 minutes) to write at the small-group table but individually and as independently as possible. Students should experience sustained attention to writing, producing a short but complete piece of writing. Include a brief sharing activity in which each writer's immediate work is shared with an audience. This sharing will allow each writer to experience his/her newly written text as a whole.

Graphic Organizer – also known as a knowledge map, concept map, story map, cognitive organizer, advance organizer, or concept diagram, is a communication tool that uses visual symbols to express knowledge, concepts, thoughts, or ideas, and the relationships between them. The main purpose of a graphic organizer is to provide a visual aid to facilitate learning and instruction.

Socratic Approach – the oldest and still the most powerful teaching style for fostering critical thinking is Socratic teaching. In Socratic teaching you focus on giving students questions, not answers. You model an inquiring, probing mind by continually probing into the subject with questions. Fortunately, the abilities you gain by focusing on the elements of reasoning in a disciplined and self-assessing way, and the logical relationships that result from such disciplined thought, prepare us for Socratic questioning.

V. FEATURES OF GRU ENGLISH LABORATORY PROGRAM

There are three main features of the GRU English laboratory program. First, they have a goal or purpose that requires the

use of the target language, but is not itself centered on that language. For example, each student writes and tape records a story about an invented vacation. Students then listen to the stories and evaluate them in terms of which vacation they would most like to take themselves. The students' goal is to tell a story that interest and excites their peers. The focus is on the story rather than on the language itself; however, the means to the end is through effective communication in the target language.

The second criterion involves making use of the unique features of a language lab to create a learning environment that cannot be recreated in the regular classroom. Activities such as cloze exercises based on music passages are not lab-specific. Such an activity can be accomplished as well, or perhaps even better, with a portable tape recorder in the regular classroom.

On the other hand, some group-oriented classroom-based activities can be improved by adapting them to the language laboratory. For example, paired activities involving one student describing something or giving directions to another student may be better accomplished in the language laboratory than in the classroom. Lab pairing eliminates the opportunity for students to see or show the materials they are working with, and thus heightens listening comprehension and questioning skills. The students work in pairs or small groups and listen, discuss, reason, and draw a conclusion. At the end of a given period of time, the teacher brings the students together for a discussion about the topic.

The third characteristic is that it involves the student in a way that intrinsically motivates, lowers the affective filter, and creates a desire to excel. One element of motivation is to want something. To want something is to be motivated, and motivation initiates and sustains involvement in learning. Task-based activities, then, can be designed to provide students with the opportunity to want something.

VI. REFERENCES

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