

ROLE OF VOCABULARY TEACHING RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

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Abstract

This article seeks to examine how vocabulary teaching is related to environmental issues. The hope of the article is that it will enable the learners to discover or rediscover many environmental issues/ concepts through English language teaching in the form of vocabulary. Vocabulary is a fundamental language element and one of most important skills of language learning in the classroom where various exercises relating to environment can be brought into the classroom. It will not only enable the learners to develop their language proficiency but also develop critical /analytical thinking strategies that can be useful in environmental sustainability.

Keywords: English language teaching, vocabulary, Activities, environmental issues

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INTRODUCTION:

Environmental issues are an important topic for the English language classroom. It is not difficult to engage learners as the environment is a global and universally relevant subject. As language teachers in 21st century, we live in critical times. Our world faces serious issues of global warming which has led to threats to biodiversity, massive storms, growing animal extinction, unprecedented drought, flooding, wildfires, melting ice, sea rise, warming and acidification of oceans and severe pandemics like COVID 19 etc. Climate change, deforestation, threats to biodiversity, land, water and air pollution and all forms of ecological crisis have affected not only human lives but also environmental sustainability itself.

So how can we prepare our students to cope with these problems? What is our responsibility as language teachers in a world of global environmental problems? We cannot call ourselves as English teachers unless we find a solution to it. Further, we cannot call our English teaching successful if our students, however fluent, are ignorant of the world problems, have no social conscience and use their communication skills for international crime, oppression and environmental destruction etc (Cates 1997:4). For this reason, there is a growing interest for introducing environmental education in teaching EFL/ESL. The purpose of incorporation of environmental issues/concepts into teaching EFL/ESL is to raise the environmental awareness of global environmental problems. The responsibility for taking participation in environmental issues belongs not only to the government, environmentalists, scientists, but to language teachers as well. Cates (1990) believes that language teachers have at least two reasons of why they should carry about global problems. The first reason is ethical reason and the second season is personal reason. a) it is only ethical to stop burying our heads in textbooks and pretending that world problems do not exist (Cates 2002),b) working on global issues provides

students with opportunities to use language in a meaning full way (Eastley, 2002). That will help in preparing the learners to become not only fluent in language skills, but familiar with the world problems. The incorporation of environmental issues in language classes can take-in many forms, such as through teaching methodology, course design, and many teaching materials (Cates, 1990). So incorporating environmental concepts/issues into language syllabus is part of an aim to close the gulf between real life and classroom activity.

ROLE OF VOCABULARY IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM:

Vocabulary is a fundamental language element and one of most important skills of language learning in the classroom. A mastery of vocabulary in any fields/issues can help develop proficiency in language skills. Its importance in language teaching cannot be overemphasized. It is an aspect of language that plays a vital role in both language comprehension and production. As Steven Stahl (2005, 95) puts it, “vocabulary knowledge is knowledge, the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world”. Nattinger (1988) says, “Comprehension of vocabulary relies on strategies that permit one to understand words and stores them, to connect them to memory that is, whole production concerns strategies that activate ones’ storage by retrieving these words from memory and by using in appropriate situations.” Lee (1995, 324) points out : “To bring the students into environment In classroom , the activities, tasks need to be authentic and they are for real life communicative purposes in which the writer has a certain message to pass on to the readers” . It can also help the learners by 1) bringing them in direct contact with objects and things 2) making concrete what is abstract (appropriate pictures to show.....) 3) bringing the world into the classroom.

The teacher should draw the learners’ attention to these materials and to use for classroom interaction so that the children can learn with pleasure. The teachers need to be experimental, creative and innovative while engaging the students in doing such activities in language classroom.

Teaching Some environment related vocabulary activities in English language classroom:

The inclusion of environment related vocabulary activities in the classroom can help development of communicative abilities of students and their analytical thinking. It also allows them to apply communication in various situations when debating on environmental issues (Yukiko Ishikawa et al...2007). The analysis of vocabulary teaching related to environmental concerns has been done on research by means of taking some students of class X studying in regional medium school of Bhubaneswar, Odisha . The main objective of this paper is to answer the following objectives as mentioned below.

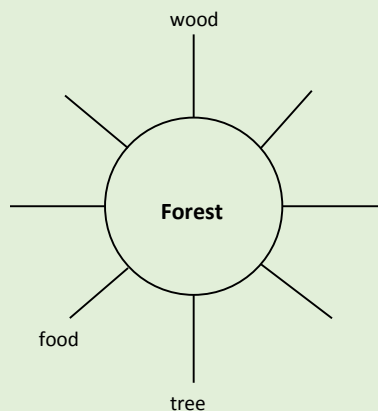
OBJECTIVES:

- To make the learners aware of the environmental concepts
- To raise the environmental awareness of global problems among learners
- To enable them to enhance their skill and abilities for critical thinking and at the same time to contribute to their language development, as environmental issues are of particular interest in the present.

Activity 1: Brain –storming (BS) / Quick Rising Activities:

Brain is the centre of learning .The success of any system of education lies in touching, tickling and and activating the brain of the learners.

Example: to write an essay on “forest”, the teacher writes “forest” on BB (Blackboard) or WB (Whiteboard) and asks the learners to say anything that comes to their mind when they think of ‘forest’. Teacher writes their responses on BB/WB using a sun diagram .Later these points/ideas are arranged into groups from which different paragraphs can be developed on forest.

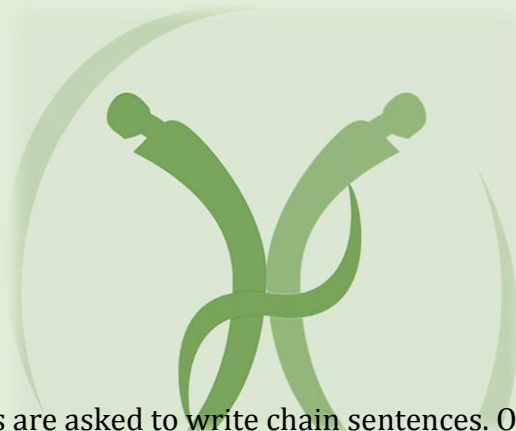


Many activities relating to environment can be brought into the classroom and students can be aware of many environmental concepts.

Example 2: Given below are some words related to forest. Arrange them in order starting with “forest” as shown below.

(Forest, learning, books, wisdom, paper, wood, tree)

1. Forest
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. -----
6. -----
7. -----

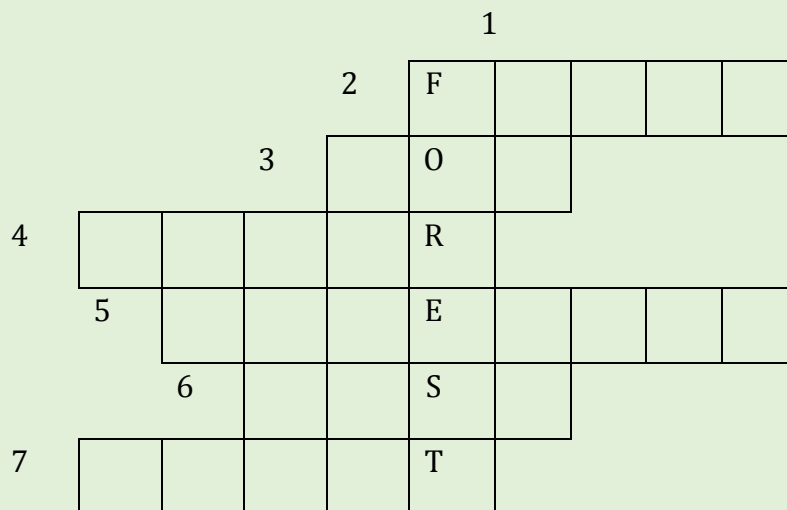


Example 3: The students are asked to write chain sentences. One is done for you.

1. If there is forest, there is tree.
2. If there is tree, there is -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. If there is book, -----
6. -----

They can also solve the following cross-word puzzle.

Solve the following cross word puzzle.



Clues:

1. Jungle.
2. We get from tree and eat.
3. A piece of wood.
4. Name of a wild animal.
5. It is used for cooking food. It is made up of two words. One is fire
6. A large plant but smaller than a tree.
7. Living thing in the earth / water/ in other places with leaves and roots.

Similarly many environmental topics can be experimented by the teachers to tickle the brain of the students.

Word Ladder Activities:

Many environmental concepts can be learnt/ taught in the class through word ladder activities. The students are instructed to change one word into another by changing only one letter at a time. Each change must constitute a word. Many environmental words can be experimented in the classroom by the teachers such as FIRE TO HEAT , FISH TO COOK , TAIL TO CURL etc

Example: 1

FIRE TO HEAT

FIRE

HIRE

HERE

HERD

HEAD

HEAT

Example: 2

F I S H

--	--	--	--

A clenched hand

--	--	--	--

Lots of speed

--	--	--	--

Covers a broken bone

--	--	--	--

The price of something

--	--	--	--

C O O K

A water –bird (rhymes with boot)

to make a meal with different food

Example :3

T A I L

A cat has a long _____.

--	--	--	--

Opposite of short

--	--	--	--

Cinderella (the story) is a fairy _____

--	--	--	--

A fancy word for weight.

--	--	--	--

To love or help someone.

--	--	--	--

To make an illness go away.

C U R L

to twist something

Similarly many environmental related words like 'WHEAT to BREAD', 'TREE' to 'WOOD' etc can be innovated by the teachers and it will increase the learners' motivation. Such activities can give the learners the feeling that they are using the real language.

Riddles:

The teacher can conduct a riddle competition relating to environment between two groups of students in the classroom.

Examples:

1. What happens when Santa
Puts too much coal in your
Stocking at Christmas ?

Ans. Global Warming

2. I am something people like to climb
But I am not a tree with branches
I have lots of snow at my head
So beware of avalanches

Ans. Earthquake

3. I'm liquid and I flow, I'm made of H₂O

Ans. Water

4. What can run but never walks?
It has a mouth but never talks,
It has a head but never weeps,
It has a bed but never sleeps?

Ans. A river

Kangaroo words Activity:

Many kangaroo words from the environment can be brought into the classroom. Visual images of the hidden word may be displayed for easy comprehension of that word.

Example : precipitation - rain

Destruction – ruin

Lighted –lit

Chicken - hen

Clipped words activity:

Many clipped words from the environment can be experimented by the teacher in the classroom like 'influenza-flu', zoological park-zoo, hippocampus-hippo, 'gasoline-gas 'etc.

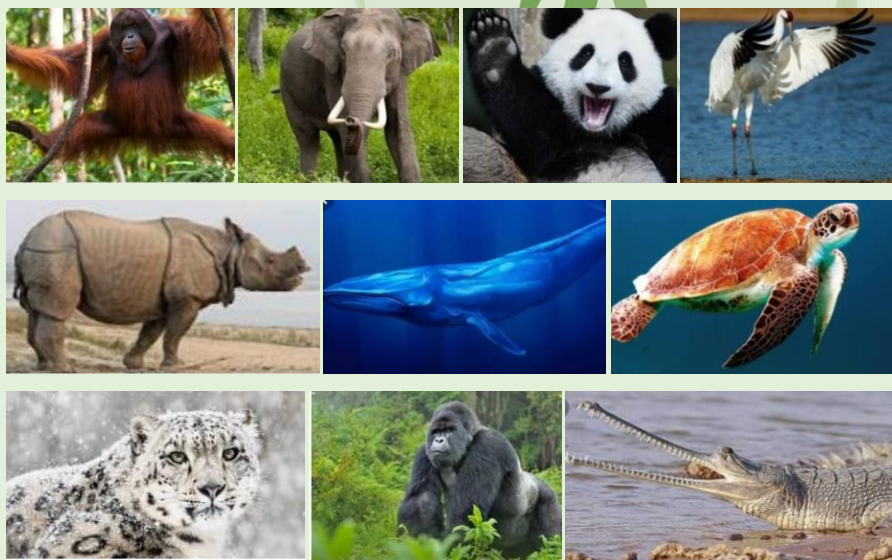
Matching pictures Activity:

The exercise below is for introducing and exploring language for endangered species in the classroom. A teacher may ask students to work in pairs , groups, or as a class. First, students can match the vocabulary to the pictures. Then they can use the conversation cues at the bottom of the worksheet to discuss endangered animals.

Pictures:

Label the pictures with the following vocabulary.

Panda, blue whale, rhinoceros, gorillas, gharial, seaturtle ,snowleopard, whooping crane, Asian elephant, orangutan



Look at the pictures above and then ask a partner the questions below.

1. Which animal would you like to protect?
2. How is it endangered?
3. Why do you want to protect it?

Such types of exercises can help familiarize the students with the vocabulary of environmental issues in English. They can also develop other skills like their reading comprehension, listening, writing, spelling, analytical as well as critical thinking etc.

Environmental issues cause/effect exercises:

The exercise below is for discussing environmental issues in the classroom. Students have to try and describe the problem depicted in each picture and suggest causes, effects and possible solutions to each problem.

Write problems and solutions appropriate to the scenes in pictures.

Picture : 1



Problem: deforestation

Cause: cutting down of trees

Effect: floods/loss of wild life, soil quality etc



Picture : 2----

Problem-- melting ice cap

Cause:

Effect:

Solution:

Picture :3



Problem--- plastic waste

Cause:

Effect:

Solution:

Moreover, many environmental words can be used as a noun as well as a verb like protect-protection, pollute-pollution, conserve-conservation, preserve-preservation, contaminate-contamination, emit-emission, erode-erosion, extinct-extinction etc.

The value of such exercises not only stimulates the use of language but also encourages students to use language as a medium to talk about an important global concern (Stempleski, 1993) .

Positive effects on students:

- It facilitates learning new words and their meaning. By learning some concepts from the environment such as deforestation, global warming, endangered species, biosphere pollution etc, students' understanding of these concepts in English will be facilitated.

- It enhances students' concentration during class. Experiments done in the classroom show that, when the content is re-processed, it facilitates the prolongation of concentration. Prolonged concentration of learners also means easier learning of new concepts in both native and foreign language. If there is no concentration, the activities that take place during class will be boring, uninteresting and ,eventually, everything will be useless.
- Such above activities mentioned earlier can help in development of communicative abilities of students and their analytical thinking. It also allows them to apply communication in various situations when debating on global environmental issues. The exercises of awareness on environmental issues facilitate critical thinking of the students in the classroom. Such thinking directs the students to focus on environmental protection and calls for appropriate response.

English language teaching related to environment will enable the students to enhance their skills and abilities for critical thinking and at the same time contribute to their language development, as environmental issues are of particular interest in the present.

CONCLUSION:

This paper set out to examine how language texts and activities could help learners to be aware of environmental concerns as well as its problems. It can also help them to develop their language skills and to be analytical / creative thinkers. So EFL/ESL teaching should not only be limited to the improvement of learners' language proficiency but also to enable them develop critical thinking strategies that can be useful in environmental sustainability,

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