



TEACHING IDIOMS THROUGH INTERESTING MEDIUMS

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English in India is not an easy task especially in Northern parts of India where people find it easier to switch to their mother-tongue very often. The ease to use English results into code-mixing. Though there is nothing bad about using Hindi as an aid to learn English but it creates a huge problem when there is no parallel found in the mother-tongue by the learner. This situation can be faced by the teacher while teaching many topics of grammar and especially while teaching idioms in the classroom. It becomes a mammoth task to prevent the students from trying to find parallel idiom in Hindi every time. Certain idiomatic expression might appear very unacceptable for the learner as they do not fit with the same sense that appeals very much in their mother-tongue but a crafty and smart teacher can provide a better solution by introducing different Language Learning Strategies and Second Language Games. The paper proposes some second language games which can prove quite helpful in the second language classroom while teaching Idioms.

INTRODUCTION

In a helpful survey article, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) defined learning strategies (LS) broadly as 'behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning' which are 'intended to influence the learner's encoding process.' Later Mayer (1988) more specifically defined LS as 'behaviors of a learner that are intended to influence how the learner processes information.' These early definitions from the educational literature reflect the roots of LS in cognitive science, with its essential assumptions that human beings process information and

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that learning involves such information processing. Clearly, LS are at the root of in all learning, regardless of the content and context. LS are thus used in learning and all subjects both in classroom settings and more informal learning environments.

Teaching English in India is not an easy task especially in Northern parts of India where people find it easier to switch to their mother-tongue very often. The ease to use English results into code-mixing. Though there is nothing bad about using Hindi as an aid to learn English but it creates a huge problem when there is no parallel found in the mother-tongue by the learner. This situation can be faced by the teacher while teaching many topics of grammar and especially while teaching idioms in the classroom. It becomes a mammoth task to prevent the students from trying to find parallel idiom in Hindi every time. Certain idiomatic expression might appear very unacceptable for the learner as they do not fit with the same sense that appeals very much in their mother-tongue.

Here it is the crucial role of a good teacher to intrude and create interest while teaching any such topic. A proper LS has to be applied in the SL classroom by the teacher. Thus it gets a bit difficult for the teacher to find out that which LS will be suitable for the students as they try to find parallels from their mother-tongue in each and every concept. Teaching idioms to the North Indian students requires dynamic approach on the part of the teacher as it involves various socio-cultural aspects to be taken in consideration while designing an appropriate LS. 'A sociocultural perspective positions social activities and the language used to regulate those activities as being structured and gaining meaning in historically and culturally situated ways.' (Karen E Johnson: Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective) Thus deciding an LS which is according to Tarone (1983) is 'an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language -- to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence.' According to Rubin (1987) LS 'are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affect learning directly.'

The idiomatic expressions are also the result of language built from the sociocultural regulation. But as the two languages i.e. L1 and L2 have different cultural and historical contexts, certain idioms appear very unacceptable to the students and can be taught easily with the help of suitable LS. Some idioms that appear very much similar are as follows:

- At one's finger tips- *Anguliyon par hona*
- At dagger's drawn- *Talvaren Tan jana*
- Add fuel to the flame- *Aag me ghee dalna*
- Blow one's trumpet- *Apna raag alaapna*
- Build castles in the air- *Aasman me kile banana/ Khayali pulav pakaana*

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- Breathe one's last- *Aakhiri saans lena*
- Bolt from the blue- *Bijli girna/ Gaaz girna*
- Make someone bite the dust- *Dhool chataana*
- Cut one's coat according to one's cloth- *Tete pair pasariye jeti lambi sour*
- Hit the nail on the head- *Garm lohe pe war karna*
- Shed crocodile tears- *Ghadiyali aansu bahaana*

The above mentioned idioms are learned easily by the learners as the parallel sense and parallel idiom is found in Hindi also while it becomes a bit difficult to accept some of the following ones:

- At sixes and sevens
- Apple pie order
- Pour oil on the troubled waters
- A scarlet woman
- Bull in a China shop

The above mentioned idioms are quite dissimilar to our mother-tongue thus the students do not learn them easily.

The idioms cannot be changed or made literally translated to L2 because of the language and sociocultural constrains. Thus it is the teacher who plays the role of a key to unlock the barriers by introducing fun and interest in the classroom so that the students get tuned into learning such concepts.

A teacher can help the students by introducing different SLA games and activities that they get so lost into these thus forgetting these barriers. Such games definitely add interest in the teaching and learning process. The following games can prove a great aid while teaching idioms in the classroom:

Idiom-actor

It is the first phase game introduced just after the teacher has taught and provided the list of idioms to the students in small groups. The teacher makes small groups (maximum 5 students in each) providing a list of around 10-15 idioms group-wise. The students are supposed to use maximum idioms in the form of a conversation or role play in front of everyone. The teacher gives marks as per the number of appropriate idioms used by the groups.



In this game the students come to know the meaning and usage of many idioms through different group conversations. The students learn by doing their act as well as watching others'. Once the game is over they have learned many idioms.

Idiom Charade

This is the game for second phase when the students have learned the usage of many idioms. This game helps the students to retain all the idioms they have learned and also the usage. In this game the class is divided into many teams depending on the number of students. The students have to come one by one and pick out one of the chits on which idioms are written. That student has to enact the idiom through literal or contextual sense to his/her team. The team can answer in two guesses only. If they guess it right for the first time, they score **2** points otherwise **1** point for the second guess and **0** for the wrong guesses. Whether they have guessed it right or wrong, the actor gets the chance to add **1** bonus point by using that idiom into his/her own sentence.

The students try their best to remember and make appropriate usage while competing for the scores. Thus the game can create interest and fun while making them learn the idioms.

Introducing such SLA games can do wonders in the second language classroom. These games help the students as well as the learners to learn different idiomatic expressions easily.

Thus the use of appropriate Language Learning Strategy and especially some fun games can add interest and ease for the second language learners. The students feel enthusiastic to learn idioms through fun games and thus it gets easy to retain them in their memory as well.

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