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## **Role of Fun Activities in the Acquisition of Spoken Fluency in the ESL classes of Adults**

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### **Abstract**

The acquisition of spoken English after ‘the critical learning period’ or ‘the sensitive period’ has been an interesting topic. Though some psychologists aver that the acquisition is feasible even in adulthood, yet it is taken with a grain of salt by the others. The term ‘acquisition’ is used to refer to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations with others who know the language. Having felt the need of English language differently, a lot of adults seek for the acquisition of the spoken part of English language; they are exposed to many methods and approaches like the Audio Lingual and the Communicative Approach respectively. Consciousness, activity, environment and acquisition are very much correlated, and regulate spoken English acquisition classes of adults vastly. The most fundamental change in the area of acquisition of spoken English in recent years has been a shift from concern with the teacher, the text book, and the method to an interest in the learner. Introducing fun activities like games, drama, and poetry etc. can do wonder in the acquisition of spoken fluency of English language in adults, who are a bit more conscious and come to these classes, filled with many things of L1, i.e. mother tongue. This paper aims to give a clear understanding of what the fun activities are, and highlights the empirical benefits and results of these activities, if introduced insightfully, in the curriculum of the classes meant to acquire the spoken English fluency in adults.

**Key-Words:** Acquisition, Consciousness, Insightfully, Fluency, Curriculum.

## **Role of Fun Activities in the Acquisition of Spoken Fluency in the ESL classes of Adults**

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Some children grow up in a social environment where they acquire English in circumstances similar to those of first language. American States with two languages like Louisianan (English and French), and New Mexico (English and Spanish) are de facto bilingual. In countries like India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Japan, South Korea etc. even after so many English medium schools, students are highly lacking in the acquisition of the Spoken English. They are not

exposed to a second language until much later; hence, their ability to use it, even after years of study, rarely matches with their ability of their mother tongue. They just learn English, but cannot use it naturally in communicative situations with people who know it well. Since, English is an international language and used as a lingua franca worldwide, its importance is understood by these children in their adulthood, finding its need in different activities. Then, they try their best to acquire it, to communicate in it like their mother tongue, i.e.L1. But acquisition of spoken part of English, i.e. L2 in this case, is very challenging and demand different treatment of both the curriculum and the students.

In adults, the acquisition experience of L2 is fundamentally different from their experience of L1. They usually encounter the L2 at such a time when a lot of things are going on in their mind and the availability of L1 is there for most of their communicative requirements. The teacher, the syllabus, and the treatment are highly important in the acquisition of L2.

The synonyms of 'Fun' are amusement, diversion, enjoyment, a laugh and pleasure. Fun is a source of enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure. Generally fun and humour are used for the same thing. Fun has multiple meanings besides being a synonym for humour.

There is a high level of stress in L2 acquisition classrooms because adults have to face unfamiliar or unknown grammatical structures, accents, tones, words, texts and so forth. Therefore, adults often feel uncomfortable and insecure in such classes and develop a kind of phobia which inevitably affects their ability to acquire. Fun activities can help to bring down their anxiety level immensely. While participating in a fun activity, adults forget to be a part of the process, and communicate effectively with or without making mistakes and do not try to correct themselves in every single sentence. They are free from stress and can improve their fluency and natural speaking style. Adults acquire without realizing that they are in the process of acquisition.

#### Fun games and spoken English acquisition:

A fun game "I am going on picnic" goes like this:

On this picnic, you will be bringing a wide range of items from A to Z. The first player will begin by saying, "I'm going on a picnic, and I'm bringing apples." or anything that starts with 'a'. The second will continue, "I'm going on a picnic, and I'm bringing apples and bananas." Continue taking turns until you have reached the end of the alphabet.

There are activities for learning and practicing English grammar, listening, speaking, pronunciation and phonics. One of such activities can be in the shape of a fun game, which is a useful strategy to encourage the language particularly the spoken part. Games are fun, interactive way to help students to improve their spoken English. When using games in the classroom; it is expected from the teachers to have a complete understanding of the definitions and use of them to reap the best results. The teachers should also consider the advantages of games, their ability to capture students' attention, their ability to lower students' stress, and their ability to give students the chance for real communication. It is important to choose an appropriate time and integrate them into the curriculum. A teacher should introduce only those games which suit the purpose, size, topic, and students' characteristics.

Sometimes the whole purpose of introducing games is believed to be fun only. In fact, games can provide the students more than that. Among several strategies used to improve students' proficiency such as visual aids, CALL (computer assisted Language Learning), drama, role play, and so on, Games are another useful strategy to promote students' language proficiency (Richard-Amato, 1996).

In fun activities competition is very important because it stimulates and encourages students to participate, since they want to beat the opponents. The students learn, pronounce well, spell correctly, remember and acquire fast.

“...Stress is a major hindrance in language learning process. This process( Learning Language in traditional way ) is by its nature consuming and stress provoking....raises the stress level to a point at which it interferes with a student’s attention and efficiency and undermines motivation....one method has been developed to make students forget that they are in class...relax students by engaging them stress reducing task(games).

Poetry and Spoken English Acquisition: The most important goal of adult learners in an ESL classes to acquire spoken fluency, and to get it, they grope for vocabulary, symbolic ways of expression, intonation, avoiding unimportant grammatical errors, rhetoric, different ways to express etc. Though English poetry in getting spoken fluency is not believed in match with the other traditional inputs, which are considered to be the hallmarks of acquiring spoken fluency, yet its use can bring tremendous success. English poetry, if implemented dexterously by accomplished teachers, can be a great fun for adults, who struggle to acquire spoken fluency. To make the learners speak fluently in English, a teacher exposes a learner to grammar, newspapers, discussions, and what not. Finding handier to reach at acquisition of spoken part, only prose part is given importance and looking at poetry for this purpose is believed to be a bit odd.

Poetry is the rhythmical expression of one’s feelings and ideas. It, if used otherwise, can help immensely in the acquisition of spoken English, where one expresses himself without hindrance of any kind, be it vocabulary, be it grammar etc. Generally, dry topics sans excitement are discussed to get acquisition of spoken English. If the learners are always asked to explain pictures, reading newspapers, role playing, it would bring boredom to the class. To kill it, a teacher needs to introduce something rhythmical, soft, pleasant and fun generating like poetry. Poetry adds variety as well as fun, and certainly paves the way for profound understanding of the subject, which eventually leads to the acquisition of spoken part. Adding poetry to this process is completely new, and in the every likelihood, is going to be liked by the adults immensely.

Introducing poetry is equally beneficial for all kinds of students, the beginners and the ones, who can express themselves up to large extent. In the case of beginners, when they are introduced to simple poems with very simple vocabulary, and asked to paraphrase the idea, they will find it very fascinating and try to explain beyond their capacity, sometimes because of its theme; sometimes because of its vivid images and sometimes because of enchanting and sonorous words. The latter category can be exposed to a bit difficult poems, which demand more creativity and imagination.

Having recited a poem well, the teacher should tell the learners, the importance or dedication to express the idea without being obsessed with the grammatical rules. They can be asked to explain the idea in their own words using some words or some phrases used in the discussed poem. The students after finding the exercise more exciting and easier will speak creatively, confidently, and the vocabulary and phrases learnt in this way are for good. On the top of it, when the students speak some sentences or phrases, they feel more motivated, and it results in the fluency at later stages.

To improve vocabulary and structures one needs to get exposure to the widest possible range of topics. There are poems on humour, war, love, philosophy, religion and what not. English poems expose learners to “fresh and unexpected” use of language in relation to vocabulary, syntax, semantics, morphology etc. These uses are beyond the fixed layers of meaning and structural

units. A repertoire of vocabulary and structures is a big asset for the fluency. A poet, apart from using new words and structures, gives one ideas to be creative with one's own vocabulary in the future. It teaches how deftly a poet uses his carefully selected words afresh every time. This is the best desired quality needed for the acquisition of spoken English in adults.

The poetry teaches thousand new ways to say the same thing. Enhancing the importance of the idea, it also provides different ways to look at old things. The themes and subjects of the English poetry are related to the common areas of human nature, but they are dealt differently in different cultures. By introducing poetry in the spoken English acquisition classes, we can introduce many treatments of these common subjects to enrich the learners' creative, constructive and reflective thinking. This multipronged knowledge is greatly helpful in the fluency. On many occasion a speaker is not supposed to say a thing straight; the poetry offers him symbolic ways to present this kinds of ideas more emphatically.

#### Drama and acquisition of spoken English:

Drama has surprising and unexpected results in the acquisition of spoken English in adults, provided it is given a different treatment, keeping in mind their needs, level, interests and goals. It could be a great fun activity. The main aim of introducing drama in the spoken English classes of adults is to bring their consciousness level down. Dramatics has the ability to lead the players to self-effacement and putting forth the demands of the roles. It mesmerizes one so much that one forgets the complexity level, shyness and worry of not getting appropriate words etc.

It gives opportunities for developing students' communicative skills in authentic and dynamic situations. By using drama in the classrooms, we can use English with our students in intriguing and useful way. The language can be used in context and comes to students' life. Drama has the potential of making the acquisition experience fun for the students and even memorable because it is interactive and visual. Alan Maley and Alan Duff are classic sources for the benefits of using drama technique; how it helps to learn new vocabulary, builds confidence, motivates the students and helps shift the focus from the teacher to the students (Malay, 1982).

Drama is more dynamic than simple text and helps learners to recycle vocabulary. While drama has a characteristic of recreation, the fun aspect should not be underestimated. When students are learning new activity, they let their guard down. The shyness and fear of using English very often block acquisition. When the students are submerged in an active fun activity, they are more open to new concepts and are led to acquisition. When the students are having fun, they let their mother tongue guard down and become less inhibited. The students tend to relax and stop blocking out new ideas. They will forget how hard it is and start absorbing the ideas presented. Changing the students' perception of the language learning from a negative to a positive is a huge plus for the acquisition process.

Drama allows students to communicate with and understand others in new ways. Students who participate in drama are likely to have less difficulty in speaking in public. Students will develop specific presentational styles and speaking skills that are needed for various speaking situations. Students will also be comfortable in using English as a positive habit communication. This will lead to the acquisition of meaningful, fluent interaction in English language. The assimilation of pronunciation and prosodic features in a fully contextualized and interactional manner are highly beneficial for students' acquisition of the spoken part. It motivates students in critical thinking and instills students to be amplycreative.

It also develops confidence and imagination of the students. The students can go beyond the here and now and 'walk in the shoes' of another. It provides an opportunity for independent thinking (McCaslin1996)..

Therefore, it makes sense that fun activities can help acquisition of spoken English in adults immensely. It is next to impossible to give place to all fun activities in the paper. But the few above mentioned ones, emphatically present their constructive and indispensable contribution in the acquisition of the spoken English in adults. Fun activities, generally, comprise the curriculum of the children, but, they can do wonder if they are used with some modifications even in the classes of adults, who join these classes with different mindsets and purposes. The main obstacle for them is their consciousness and already acquired linguistic knowledge of L1. Being a part of fun activities like games, drama, poetry etc.; they will feel at ease and grasp all the parts required to the acquisition unconsciously. This kind of use of language will add to their confidence level immensely. They will acquire language through contexts and give it way to their real life. These activities demand great discretion on the part of the teacher, and he or she is expected to keep in mind the real purpose, i.e. spoken English acquisition, time, level etc. before introducing these fun activities. The introduction of fun activities demands highly proficient and creative teachers, but presently, sites like You Tube and other ones are a great helping hand to implement such fun activities.

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