



Comics: A Multi Dimensional Aid in Dual Skill Development in Writing and Speaking in an ELT Classroom

KEYWORDS

ELT, EFL, comprise enjoyment, language acquisition, integrating comics, vocabulary acquisition, analytical thinking in Grammar.

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ABSTRACT *Streich (2009) shrewdly points that using visuals in teaching promote students' analytical skills and activate higher level thinking ability. Besides, humours in cartoons and comics comprise enjoyment in foreign language classes and release students' burden and tenseness in learning a new language. In any language acquisition, providing a variety of activities by integrating comics helps the students learn and comprehend better. The current study is about the various activities incorporated in the ELT class room among EFL learners by using comics. The visual images in comics encourage the students to observe and analyze the situation in a better way and make them understand the situation presented in the comics and interpret easily. It tends to be easier to understand vocabulary with comics, the visual aspect of the comics generally provides the context and the vision of the words given, and naturally vocabulary acquisition is facilitated. It may lead the students to enjoy their learning and freely explore their creative and analytical thinking in Grammar: Adjectives, prepositions, direct speech and indirect speech. While grasping a comic strip, one has to closely pay attention to the graphics in relation to the text that is given, by doing so the students will be able to understand the use of satire, symbolism and humor in comic strips, which develops a logic and continuity in narration. Comics' strips can be used to enhance the speaking skill through role play activity and for narrating anecdotes. Thus the students could relate the materials learnt with their environment. As a result, the students could be more creative, active, responsive, analytical and critical. Improvements in the students' communicative competence as well as writing skill are quite obvious when one uses the Comics in ELT class room among EFL learners.*

INTRODUCTION

To enhance learning in an English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom particularly in ESL atmosphere the teachers have to search for new and innovative methods. One authentic material that has been explored over the past few years is the comic strip or comic book (Davis, 1990). The author adopts Comics in dual skill development in writing as well as speaking. For a reluctant learner a complete prose text may be daunting. In such case Comics is the perfect tool which divides the text into chunks supported by images that keep the learners engaged in their imagination and interest. Comics help the readers to increase the vocabulary acquisition by connecting the words and the images. It is a highly effective tool for teaching challenging material like Grammar in a more efficient way. It could lead the students to explore their creative and analytical thinking in narrating anecdotes. Comics' strips can be used to enhance the speaking skill through role play activity where the students could relate the materials learnt with their environment. As a result, the students could be more creative, active, responsive, analytical and critical. Improvements in the students' communicative competence and writing skills are assured when one uses the comics in ELT class room among EFL learners.

AIM

To introduce Comics in dual skill development: writing and speaking in English Language Teaching Class.

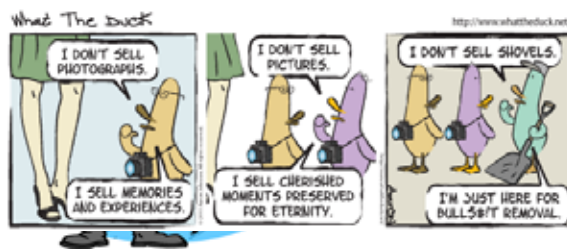
OBJECTIVES

- to increase vocabulary acquisition
- to teach Grammar
- to explore their analytical thinking in narrating anecdotes
- to enhance their role play activity

VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH COMICS:

Communication will be effective if one has variety of words to use. To express precisely, accurately and fluently one

have to increase their vocabulary. Comics are just as challenging as prose novels in terms of reading level and ability. But, as they are broken into chunks of reading, they are much more accessible to reluctant readers and EFL Learners. Comics are the perfect vehicle through which the readers' vocabulary acquisition is certain where the students enjoy and explore. As Comics are a form of visual communication media it has the power to convey information about the vocabulary they use. This is possible because it combines both picture and writings which makes the information easy to absorb, to understand, to follow and to remember. For e.g.: gumboot, levity, shovels and Narcissism this may be Latin and Greek for the students who were not familiar with these words, where as when we introduce these words with the Comic Strips they will understand the information about the vocabulary effectively.



Gumboot: a rubber boot Shovels: broad blade attached to a long handle used for removing

TEACHING GRAMMAR USING COMIC STRIPS:

Grammar is the important and difficult aspect of language learning. Most of us feel grammar to be the dullest part of learning language. Learning the rules of a language will enable us to communicate properly. To put it in Mark Twain's words "Ignorant people think it's the noise which fighting cats make that is so aggravating, but it ain't so; it's the sickening grammar they use". As Mark Twain points

out ESL/EFL learners have to concentrate on grammar in real-life situations. Comics equips with models of correct grammar that will help to express the ideas in speaking and writing. To make this dull part (grammar) interesting the author uses Comic Strips to teach adjectives, prepositions, direct speech and indirect speech in ELT class room.

ADJECTIVES:

Adjectives are the describing words which modifies a noun or a pronoun. For e.g.

He is a good boy.
Radha is a beautiful girl.
I need some water.

The learners may feel bored when they just see the sentences. Instead when the materials in the form of comics are distributed related to the subject taught they could easily understand and their interest in learning is triggered. The teacher may ask the students to copy down the sentences from the Comic Strips and ask them to underline the adjectives in the sentence.



To introduce the concept of Degrees of Comparison Comic Strips can be used. To explicate the complicated three degrees of comparison positive, comparative and superlatives, Comic Stripes plays a vital role. Comic Strips will help the trainer as well as the learners to make the concept explicit and thus can ensure if the learners understood the topic clearly. Each student should be given a copy of picture containing three different animals or objects; e.g. a picture showing a rat, a cat and a cow. The students should be asked to write their names on the sheet and make two sentences each for the positive, comparative and superlative degree by comparing and contrasting the animals or objects. This task may be done individually or in groups where the students participate enthusiastically.

POSITIVE DEGREE

This is a useful book.

COMPARATIVE DEGREE

He is wiser than her sister.

SUPERLATIVE DEGREE

She is the most beautiful girl of her class.



PREPOSITION:

A preposition is a word or group of words used before a noun or pronoun to show relationships between nouns, pronouns and other words in a sentence. Even the learners of English at the advance level find it difficult to use the correct preposition. This can be explained to them by giving few sentences. For e.g.

He kept his pencil on the table.
We can play after lunch.

The cat sat under the chair.
Ravi hid behind Ramesh.
The mouse is in the box.



But this may not be clear for the reluctant learners, whereas when one teach them through Comics (images) this may not be the same. The learners can easily understand and identify the right preposition by relating the word and the picture. Comic materials may motivate learners for smooth acquisition of preposition.

DIRECT SPEECH	REPORTED SPEECH
Present simple	Past simple
Present continuous	Past continuous
Past simple	Past perfect
Past perfect	Past perfect continuous
Past continuous	'would' conditional
'Will' future	Could
May	Might
Must	Had to
Should	Should have
Shouldn't	Shouldn't have

DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECH:

Generally while teaching Direct and Indirect Speech one student will tell a statement or ask a question and another student have to report on what was said by the first student. This method has been followed for ages which are monotonous. In order to make this monotonous task more creative and interesting Comic Strips are used. A Comic Strip should be selected and given to all the groups. The groups should use different reporting verbs for every direct speech and complete the task in 10 minutes. Similar task can be given for converting from indirect to direct speech.

DIRECT SPEECH:

Saying exactly what someone said in quote is direct speech. While converting from direct speech to indirect speech the teacher may help the students by posing questions like what he asked so that the student may try to answer the questions correctly.

- He said, "My master is writing letters."
- He said to me, "What are you doing?"



INDIRECT SPEECH:

Reporting what he said without quoting his exact words is indirect speech. The students have to remember the necessary changes they did while converting from direct to indirect and apply the same. This task will be made easier and interesting by using Comic Strips.

- Ravi said that he was very busy then.
- He asked them whether they would listen to music.



NARRATING STORIES:

To put in Nitin Bhatnagar and Mamta Bhatnagar's words (2010) "Pictures are the visual materials, which can be effectively used in acquiring communication skills. They offer a wide range of language learning situations providing real opportunities for students to communicate, whether they are working in the class, in groups or in parts. A picture is the powerful medium to unlock speculations in us. It kindles a process of ideas, thoughts and imagination." Asking them to imagine the situation and narrate a story may be daunting, instead by giving the comic strips and asking them to narrate a story will be quite interesting. The learners may be divided in groups and the picture that has to be narrated should be distributed. While interpreting a Comics one should find the context, recognize the characters and identify the message conveyed in it. Brainstorming should be done with few questions to get the idea about the story like

- What could it be?
- How could such things happen?
- What initiates or begins the action?
- What does main character attempt to do?
- What are the results?
- How does the character respond?
- What do characters say to each other?

Sometimes the language used may be colloquial and referential to cope up with so one should be careful in selecting the Comics and the Comic Strips.

**ROLE PLAY:**

Role play is to pretend to be someone else or pretending to be in a specific situation that you are not actually in at the time. Teachers should select role plays that will give the students an opportunity to practice. At the same time, the role play should create an interest among students. The most basic activity is to cut the strip into individual boxes and asking the students to rearrange them into an appropriate order. This also involves recognizing discourse markers and ordering the pictures appropriately, while the second activity is to enact it in front of their classmates. This task makes the students to shed their fears and speak confidently.

**OUTCOME:s**

- increase in vocabulary acquisition was quite obvious
- triggered their learning interest in Grammar
- their analytical thinking in narrating anecdotes was tremendous
- enhanced their role play activity

CONCLUSION:

In the field of language acquisition, trainers are constantly searching for new and innovative techniques to enhance learning outcome. The purpose of using Comics for com-

municative language classroom is to lower the students' anxiety, improve retention, participation of students and pleasure in learning in the classroom atmosphere. Incorporating Comics in teaching vocabulary, grammar, narration and role play was motivating and moreover it aroused interest even in the reluctant learners. The study found that by having activities using comics has motivated the students to enjoy their learning and freely explore their creative and analytical thinking. They could relate the materials learnt with their surroundings. As a result, Comics and Comic Strips can be used starting from the beginner level to the advanced level in teaching the language. It may also be one of the powerful tools in teaching communication skills.

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