TEACHING ENGLISH IN A DIVERSE TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

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The world of languages is like joining a universe full of stars. These stars are what we call the pidgins, creoles, dialects, idiolects, jargons, and the like. The English language is part of our national urgency to be globally competitive and to produce individuals who will be part of the workforce in the future. English is integrated to the school curricula from primary to tertiary education and a lot of English teachers have been promoting the importance of learning this second language for career and skills development. However, despite of the many programs and activities that reiterate the purpose of learning English, we cannot blame students who are not acquainted with linguistic intelligence. What’s alarming is that the levels of English proficiency of Filipino learners are getting low every year. How do language teachers address this issue?

It is a true statement that Filipinos are known to be highly educated, reaching at least 70% of the population with a high English proficiency level, making the Philippines one of the fluent English-speaking countries in Asia and in the world. In a news article written by Tita C. Valderama of The Manila Times titled “Pinoys’ English proficiency declines sharply” (November 18, 2019), she reported that our country declined from being 14th place in 2018 to 20th in the 2019 English Proficiency Index (EPI), a predicament that blamed the standards of Philippine Education System. There are language professors and specialists in our country who have disagreed with the results of the EPI as they emphasized that the EPI’s assessment tool is not structured with our own curriculum. Some have been deterred with the outcome. English is English and most lessons are the same with the international references.
Language teachers in the Philippines continue to strive harder to formulate pedagogies and andragogies that can effectively ensure the learning of the pupils and students. Before, the approaches were traditional, but now, the “old” ways are being concocted with the contemporary styles of teaching. Language teachers address the problem of language proficiency reduction by providing learners multifaceted learning domains that encourage holistic development – cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. First, cognitive domain is considered when grammar lessons are patterned with literary springboards. Second, affective domain is used to highlight self-esteem. According to Stephen Krashen, in his theory of Second Language Acquisition, affective filter hypothesis determines the motivation of the students to listen, speak, read, and write with reduced fear. If the students have a low self-esteem, their language learning is affected. Lastly, psychomotor domain in language teaching has been the twin of the Total Physical Response (TPR), but today, it is associated with independent locomotive language learning.

In addition, today’s English is taught with the advancement of technology, but even with this, diversity of the environment is still present. Diversity in this article is defined with various types of gadgets – mobile phones, desktop computers, laptops, tablets, televisions, radios, projectors, amplifiers, etc. Utilizing these tools creates profound and different learning outcomes. In what way? Desktop and laptop computers have bigger storage than mobile phones. The former has the capacity to download and store soft copies of the learning materials that serve as the packet of the students. The latter has a quicker limit. Uninstalling other applications is required if the maximum storage is being reached. In this case, students have different coping mechanisms. How do we relate this in teaching English? Most English teachers will agree that videos and many texts in portable document format are part of the learning sessions. The macro-skills are supported by these things. The size of the screen of the gadgets has also an effect to the language learning. Reading must be done using readable materials. Cellphones have smaller screen sizes than that of computers.
The 21st century epoch of education opened the door for this notional change. Our previous learning ways constituted only printed textbooks accompanying a good English proficiency level. Why is it that in this time where technology is advanced, some students go down gradually? It is no one’s fault to be specific. Students are just easily distracted because of the many social media applications. These are platforms of communication, but there are a lot of fun present in the internet world, and students are caught off guard. English is supposed to be well learned in today’s time when there are too many contexts in the realm. Teaching English in a diverse technological world must be reframed beginning from assessing the students’ needs. What is the new purpose of language learning? It must be hoped that it should go with the national goals. The results of the EPI might not be fully accurate, but it has something to tell. It has given us the idea that the problem is there, and a solution is needed. Now is the time to reevaluate our Language Teaching Methodologies and construct more fitted ones.

Michael Halliday innovated his functional communication that helped us to create lesson plans and design activities that are suitable to the degree of the topic. Let us not forget that we, as language teachers, can also invent and innovate our own theories and apply them into practices. In the past, our job is only to teach, but now, our job is to fundamentally become scientists of the language teaching and learning that will enable our learners to bring back their enthusiasm in all the facets of the English Language.

In the end, diversity is only a frame. The bones are the teachers.

References:

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