

The Impact of Affective Factors in the L2 Class and a Technique to Overcome them

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English language came into existence in Ceylon with the arrival of British in 1796. However, a need to teach it arose much later namely, when British felt the need of a "nucleus of native loyalists for their political stability and for the advancement of commercial interests". (Jayasuriya J.E.-1961: 1). Strategies adopted to meet these needs were 'teaching English' and 'Christianisation' of natives. English was needed to prepare natives for government employment and Christianisation was contemplated to civilise the natives whom British thought were 'heathens' (Sumathipala K.H.M. 1968: 01). Christian missionary societies wholeheartedly supported the latter. Although missionaries accepted native languages as the best media for 'conversion' they approved the former with the idea of reaching the "children of the higher social class" (ibid). This made commoners to associate English with Ceylonese elite. Levy of money for English education kept English out of the reach of the poor. Insistence of English as a pre requisite for government jobs, made English educated eligible for state jobs too. Introduction of the British public school curriculum which inculcated Christian and English ideals in English schools alienated the English educated from native languages and their cultures. Thus, during British rule English educated were an educated, wealthy, powerful esoteric group practising European life style. Following words of Fernando "ability to be at ease in English is a symbol of status, power, intelligence and breadth of vision". (Fernando, Siromi 1986:46) prove the powerful position English occupies here even today. On account of this those who are skilled in English like to exhibit that proficiency; those non-proficient in it prefer to hide that fact.

This paper discusses a technique based on vague pictures prepared to focus attention on meaning. Specially designed pictures which can be interpreted on the basis of the clues found in them are displayed on the board and students are asked to study these pictures carefully and interpret them, taking into consideration details like shadows, position of various objects and postures of the people in them. As the pictures are vague, intelligent guesswork is necessary to understand them. In order to verify matters, students have to ask questions too. This encourages them to formulate meaningful language constructions as well. Purpose of the questions being eliciting information needed to interpret pictures, students' aim here is meaning. Therefore, at this point they are prepared to use the language by means of whatever vocabulary and grammar they have at their disposal. This form of natural language, according to Rivers provides opportunities to students to test their 'Hypotheses' about L2. The other advantage is class begins to accept learner's 'Interim grammar'. (Rivers, W, M. 1983: 13) This 'Interim grammar' incidentally is what Nesmer defines as Approximative System. Nemser William in Richard (ed.) 1974; 63). This technique was tried out in E.L.T.U. classes, and the student participation was very encouraging.

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