

Theme based approach in a freshman education essay

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In the last decennaries several attacks to learn English in EFL contexts have appeared and disappeared as research in this country has developed. Since the 1980s, when constructivism appeared with its accent on societal interaction and the find, or building, of intending (Brown, 2007, p. 12), several methods have come up claiming to be the best to integrate the basic elements of this theory and to be the solution for English instructors to do all their pupils learn and have fun with the mark linguistic communication. As Brown (2007) explains many of these methods are considered representatives of what is today known as the Communicative Language Approach, which is an eclectic blend of the parts of old methods into the best of what a instructor can supply in reliable utilizations of the 2nd linguistic communication in a schoolroom " . (Brown, 2007, p. 18)

The intent of this paper is to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of using one of these 'so called ' communicative attacks, the Theme-Based Approach, in the context of a first-year university class of English as a foreign Language. Though the writer of these paragraphs believes that there is no such thing as the 'perfect method ' , and that it is a good instructor 's occupation to take the pedagogical techniques that best suit her scholars ' demands and her beliefs about linguistic communication instruction, she will merely measure the benefits and disabilities of utilizing the schemes proposed by this individual attack in her ain instruction context.

Yang (2009) explains that the theme-based direction is normally considered within the theoretical account of content-based direction. (p. 162) As the name suggests, the course of study of this attack is organized around subjects or subjects which contextualize the elements of the mark linguistic
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communication that are presented to scholars. Many of these subjects can be derived from the capable affair contents that the pupils are learning in the different phases of their instruction.

Shin (2007) states that `` When learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at any degree, the schoolroom has to be a topographic point in which linguistic communication is non merely taught but besides used meaningfully " . (p. 2) Curtain and Dahlberg in their book Languages and Children: Making the Match (2010) assert that as `` the instructor connects linguistic communication direction to bing subjects or creates language-specific subjects, the linguistic communication category is clearly an incorporate portion of the school twenty-four hours, and linguistic communications are perceived to be meaningful constituents of pupil acquisition " . (p. 1-2)

Brinton (cited in Shin, 2007) claims that a thematic course of study can supply `` rich input for lessons that are either language-based (i. e. , with a focal point on vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar) or skills-based (i. e. , with a focal point on hearing, speech production, composing, or reading) . " (p. 2)

Gao (2011) describes the theme-based attack as trusting on Krashen 's linguistic communication acquisition theory which states that scholars have to be presented with sufficient comprehensible input. This input has to reflect his thought of $i + 1$, where 'i' is the scholars ' current linguistic communication competency and '+ 1 ' is the `` input supposed to be the somewhat higher degree than pupils ' module " . (p. 34) The instructor would be responsible of supplying this input and of assisting pupils to

transform this input into consumption. To make this, he or she has to choose the subject and the activities related that would outdo suit the involvements and demands of the pupils. Yang (2009) adds that when taking the subject and be aftering the activities, the `` kids 's proficiency degree " should besides be considered. (p. 170) As in any communicative course of study, in the theme-based attack, the scholar is the supporter of the procedure, so it is unthinkable to form a course of study without sing the scholars ' involvements and demands as a starting point.

In the undermentioned paragraphs the learning context will be presented together with the different facets of the theme-based attack that are believed to be applicable to this context.

Nowadays most schools are increasing the figure of hours of English in their course of studies. Hence they are necessitating instructors with a high bid in the four accomplishments of the linguistic communication. Most schools are integrating English in more than one capable affair. The Escuela de Educacion of Universidad de los Andes took this demand into consideration when be aftering the new course of study and included 5 semesters of mandatory English classs. The general aims of the English course of study are `` to heighten the four linguistic communication accomplishments through reading, discoursing and working with a choice of texts that assistance in a better apprehension of human existences and learning " (English II, 2012) . Students are divided in two proficiency degrees which allow the pupils to experience relaxed every bit good as demanded in a degree that fits their proficiency.

Nunan (cited in Yang 2009) claims that linguistic communication is best acquired when the scholars are organized in homogenous degrees of proficiency. The theme-based approach allows the instructors to accommodate the subjects, stuffs and activities to the pupils ' proficiency degree, which is consistent with the organisation of pupils in this context.

Since the category described here is a freshmen lower-level English category, the pupils, who are to go simple instructors, are expected to bring forth short conversations on assorted subjects utilizing grammatically right, formal and informal linguistic communication, and a good bid of the English sound system. They have to show critical thought and cognition of the specific subject and related vocabulary. They besides have to be able to place the chief and secondary thoughts in a short text (English II, 2012) . These aims refer to cognitive procedure every bit good as linguistic communication bid. The linguistic communication is an instrument to develop believing accomplishments.

A Theme-based course of study seems really suited to let all these aims to be achieved. The English linguistic communication can be learnt utilizing the wide subject of Education, and within this, a myriad of subjects runing from simple degrees capable affairs, to larning and learning theories, or cultural cognition of the English speech production states. `` When subjects are good chosen, pupils will be more occupied with the acquisition because they can see its intent and happen it interesting -and merriment " . (Curtain & A ; Dahlberg, 2010, p. 2) In other words, this approach motivates pupils to learn linguistic communications. Gao (2011) mentions the experiment carried out

in The Jiang University that supports this statement. Freeman & A ; Freeman (cited in Yang, 2009) confirm this thought when they express that pupils are more willing to take part in the category, seek harder, and remain concentrated, when the `` content of the lesson is relevant and interesting '' to them. `` Their motive is more likely to increase '' . (p. 162) In the instance of the context analyzed in this paper, around one tierce of the pupils take it really earnestly and understand the importance of larning English for their future calling ; one third are mean pupils, who want to larn, but do non make any excess work and, one tierce who take it merely as portion of the course of study. This is really pathetic if it is considered that intrinsic motive is most of import in the procedure of larning. The bulk of the category does non hold it in a desirable grade. The theme-based attack can be a major part to this issue.

Another interesting possibility allowed by this attack is the usage of reliable stuffs. The instructor can choose reliable readings such as verse forms, rimes, short narratives, newspaper articles, academicdocuments, among others, that present the scholars with new vocabulary used in existent state of affairss in relation to the chosen subject. Apart from developing the accomplishment of reading, these readings can be the get downing point to pupils ' production in English. `` Ideally, the sorts of activities instructors design for the stuffs should travel from comprehension activities to such production activities as doing presentations to the category, or composing studies, making a category anthology of narratives, or even printing a newspaper '' . (Strong, 1995) Hence, the four linguistic communication accomplishments can be promoted. Besides, vocabulary related to the

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selected subjects is more easily learned, as Khayef and Khoshnevis (2012) proved in their survey carried out in Iran.

Subjects besides allow pupils to show critical thought and cognition of the specific subject and related vocabulary. Curtain and Dahlberg assert that activities in a theme-based approach can prosecute pupils "in complex thought and more sophisticated usage of linguistic communication" (p. 4). Discussion around subjects of involvement to the scholars can take them to the development of complex thoughts that involve the usage of complex cognitive accomplishments, such as analysing, synthesising, contrasting, comparing and others. These accomplishments are desirable for our pupils, not merely for their own benefit, but for their future pupils', excessively.

Students in the context described know that there are high outlooks of them and that any aid required will be available. This makes them experience motivated to set their best attempt in utilizing the mark linguistic communication and take parting in the collaborative activities. "The pupils in a theme-based schoolroom carry through a diverseness of communicative undertakings in concerted groups in which they portion a common end working fruitfully" (Gao, 2011, p. 37). The disciplined environment that exists in this context would prefer this sort of work.

Some of the techniques used in category are choral reading, grammar exercisings in a context, unwritten presentations of different subjects, cloze, duologues, contemplation, argument and treatment. The thought is to assist scholars use the linguistic communication more spontaneously. It is of import to see the different acquisition manners of the pupils as it is done in this

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class, and to take techniques that develop eloquence and truth every bit good. Most, if not all, of these techniques can be easily adopted in the theme-based approach, but most significantly, it facilitates the development of truth by incorporating the instruction of grammatical elements of the linguistic communication in a meaningful context. `` Thematic direction avoids the usage of stray exercises with grammatical constructions, practiced out of context " (Curtain & A ; Dahlberg, 2010, p. 4) . This position is wholly consistent with the manner grammar is presented in the context dealt with in this paper, although there is a hazard of not giving adequate consideration and depth to the syntactic elements of the linguistic communication. As future instructors, these scholars may necessitate a more profound cognition of the constructions that configure the English linguistic communication, so that they are able to work out the possible uncertainties of their future pupils.

Fluency besides plays an important function in this approach for it promotes cases of unwritten communicating. Gao (2011) confirmed in his survey `` that the pupils under the counsel of Theme-based Oral Approach (TOA) are more likely to better their unwritten English abilities and more enthusiastic and interested in unwritten English learning. (p. 37) Talking about subjects and subjects of common involvement, such as the 1s related to the pupils professional field or to the Anglo speech production civilization, facilitates the interaction and dialogue of significance that are described as portion of the ends of the class and that underlie the sort of activities that the Theme-based approach advocates.

It is of import to retrieve that these scholars are future instructors, so the context is different from the typical linguistic communication class. They are supposed to be theoretical accounts to other pupils in the hereafter, either in the usage of the mark linguistic communication as in her attitudes. This implies an excess variable playing in this 2nd linguistic communication learning environment that can besides be assumed by this attack. The instructor is responsible of choosing the subjects and accommodating them to the different degrees of proficiency and believing accomplishments of his or her pupils. Students in this class may accommodate all the activities they are learning English with to the contexts in which they will be learning in the hereafter. Even though a theme-based course of study reestablishes the importance of the function of instructors in the acquisition procedure, it gives them a great duty in the success or failure of this procedure, every bit good. Yang (2009) asserts that `` theme-based instruction as an attack will non automatically do scholars go more interested in learning English, unless instructors are able to utilize interesting activities and suited stuffs '' .

Choosing the right subjects, stuffs, activities and forming the pupils ' work in the right manner is what boosts learning. This can besides be said about most attacks. Possibly one of the chief factors for any methodological analysis to be fruitful is the manner in which the instructor uses it in a specific context. The theme-based attack requires that the instructor put a considerable sum of clip in be aftering the lesson. Teachers can easy experience overwhelmed with the force per unit area of finding the ends, choosing the subject, making the activities and stuffs, measuring the results and all the other characteristics involved in lesson planning. All this planning can be really

time-consuming, being clip one of the most cherished and elusive hoarded wealths in a instructor 's life.

All in all, I believe that the advantages for utilizing the theme-based attack in the context described exceed by far the disadvantages. This methodological analysis can assist instructors actuate pupils to learn English as a foreign linguistic communication, advancing its usage in meaningful state of affairs that encourage pupils to develop the four accomplishments, hearing, reading, composing and speech production, every bit good as of import thought accomplishments. The costs or disadvantages affect chiefly the instructor who is the 1 responsible for be aftering the lesson. I believe that the clip invested in making so exhaustively will pay back with high involvements. The confirmation of pupils ' acquisition is the best wages any instructor can hold. As for the grammar cognition issue mentioned as of import in this context, I think that instructors can fall back to other sorts of activities to supply excess chances to exert this component, even if it does n't suit absolutely good in the theme- based attack.

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