

Chapter 2

Teaching English Language and Critical Thinking Through Authentic Short Videos (Ted Talks)

Sudhalakshmi Panneerselvam

Vellalar College for Women (Autonomous), India

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how usage of technology in learning becomes common in the current Indian educational scenario. In order to meet the employment expectations, the young students of higher education need to enhance both critical thinking and communication skills. Hence it is essential to develop both productive and receptive skills of English that include not only pronunciation and vocabulary, but also grammar and spelling both in oral and written communications. To manage better communication, learners need to express their thoughts in various ways. Ted Talks, a robust social media platform is proven to be the authentic material for the language learners to develop thought-provoking ideas and express through useful language.

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, every budding individual is at the crossroads for his/her better identification in society. Notably, in India, increasing needs and demands for the younger generation in the globalized scenario, motivate them to discover their specialized skills. Along with the preferred subjects, the English language plays an essential role during their exploration to fulfill the measure of society. In the

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words of Graddol (2010), it is clearly understood that “Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression” (p. 120).

Being aware of learning English as the target language, young Indians, even from the rural background, are curious to be acquainted with the different dimensions of learning English. Hence, it becomes a big challenge for the English teachers of higher education in educating this global language in Indian educational scenario due to many reasons: the student-teacher ratio in the classroom, the fluency of the teacher, availability of the teaching-learning resources, aids and methods of teaching English and many more can be taken into consideration. One such difficulty is that “a teacher has to face students from different backdrops with different levels of knowing English, i.e., a class of heterogeneous group” (Kumar, 2013, p. 71).

Learning English as a Second Language

In the Indian educational system, Inductive method of teaching English as the second language make learners confront many complexities in classroom learning. The learners from different schools have not been given primary importance for speaking and listening because of the Indian grading system, which encourages reading and writing English as an essential goal. Thus, as non-native speakers of English, these language learners fail to comprehend the necessary skills of English at the entry level of a college education.

Eventually, the need for enhancing communication skills becomes a crucial one. Hence it is essential to develop both productive and receptive skills of English that include not only pronunciation and vocabulary but also grammar and spellings both in oral and written communications. In order to manage better communication with well-expressed thoughts, “A language classroom should emphasize activities which take place in real life communication rather than pattern rehearsal...” for the intensified learning process (Kumar, 2013, p. 186).

Critical thinking is one of the main strategies that can be used in language classroom situations for augmenting both communication and essential life skills. Critical thinking process enhances life skills along with vocabulary. More the case be analyzed, more the world around would be learned. Rethinking the problem in various perspectives, the learner develops the ability to examine, then argue and explain the fact and opinions. Through these aspects of critical thinking, there is a development of communication, relevant vocabulary, grammar, and fluency as well.

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