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PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY BY RECYCLING IN ELT:
FROM GARBAGE TO CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Teaching-Learning Materials (TLM) have always been essential tools for effective language teaching. Unfortunately, they have failed to produce the required results in the field of language learning. This might be because the traditional materials or long-existing materials do not teach language for practical use. Moreover, in a country like India, it is highly tedious to revise materials on a regular basis. There are some language experts who are putting all their efforts to design teaching-learning material for practical use, but some sections of society like the economically backward sections of society remain deprived of these. Although there are several schemes run by the government to promote education for these sections of society, it is hardly noticeable at ground zero. Furthermore, the participants from these sections are not very motivated towards learning. Hence, they are reluctant to spend money in buying teaching-learning materials for themselves. As far as the language teachers are concerned, it would be only unfair to expect them to bear the expenses of materials for their learners. In order to teach language to the learners from economically backward sections in minimum or zero expenditure, this paper attempts to suggest the use of authentic texts which are found in the packaging of daily-use products.

Keywords: Authentic Material, Inclusivity, Teaching-learning Material

1. Introduction

One of the major steps towards development that India has taken recently is inclusive growth. Inclusive growth refers to equal economic growth of all the sections of society. It aims in providing even-handed opportunities at a reasonable pace to both urban and rural divisions of the nation. Inclusive growth intends to effectively reduce poverty and encourage sustainability. The two key aspects which inclusive growth covers are income growth and income distribution. Nevertheless, realising the success of inclusive growth effectively is still one of the biggest challenges for India. Out of the many reasons accountable for this, one is the long-prevalent low literacy rate in backward areas. Sadly, the roots of education and English language have not yet been able to clench the backward sector, and hence, it has remained the major barrier for development.

In order to promote inclusive growth, it is highly important to bring the rural participants to the global set-up, for which the acquisition of global language English is undeniably vital. For the past few decades, some efforts are being made at the rural level to promote education and English language. Unfortunately, due to several problems, the results obtained are far from being regarded as a success. Some of these problems are listed below.

2. Problems in ELT in Backward Areas:

1. **Financial Constraints** – Most of the participants from backward areas are financially weak. They are not so motivated towards English language learning that they spend money to acquire a language.
2. **Unscrupulous Governmental Schemes**—In order to financially support these participants and motivate them towards learning, there are several governmental schemes which focus on promoting English language. However, the deep-rooted corruption does not allow the schemes to reach the target learners.
3. **Incompetent Teachers**—Studies and reports have suggested that most of the teachers who have been given the responsibility to teach English language in the backward sectors are not adequately skilled. In some cases, the competence of the teachers is itself unreliable and erroneous. As a result, these teachers cannot be considered a reliable source of information.
4. **Long-existing/ Traditional Material** –The language learning materials that are being provided in most of the backward sectors are traditional and long-existing, and do not teach language for practical use. Hence, they are less effective.
5. **Economic Pressure on Teachers**—There are some teachers who are working hard to bring about a language revolution in backward sectors. But due to the unavailability of effective materials, their hard work does not provide the desired results. As far as the language teachers are concerned, it would be only unfair to expect them to bear the expenses of effective materials for their learners.
6. **High Drop-out Rates**—Many language learners from backward sectors drop out of school after acquiring the basic or primary education. This might be because they realise the impracticality of the traditional language learning and also because the primary education is not followed up by fine education at the secondary level.

In order to curb the aforementioned problems and to teach language to such learners in minimum or zero expenditure, the use of authentic texts which are found in the packaging of daily-use products is advisable. The same has been delineated below after a brief literature review on authentic material.

3. Review of Literature on Authentic Material:

Material has been an essential part in language learning ever since. In fact, many scholars consider it to be an inseparable tool of language classroom. The substantial use of materials for language learning dates back to late fifteenth century. In this span of more than five centuries, materials in language learning have undergone a drastic change. Early language learning materials were mainly one-way and translation-oriented. They were predominantly deductive in nature and had impractical implications. On the contrary, recent language learning materials are more interactive, and they involve learners more effectively. They are designed by keeping in mind practical perspectives and are learner-centred.

In recent years, language classrooms have witnessed an extensive use of a new type of material which promotes language learning for practical motives in particular. Interestingly, these materials are not designed to be a source of language learning at the first place; rather, they are produced for users who are already proficient in the language. These are created for wholly different purpose, and are termed as authentic materials. Little et.al consider authentic materials to be the materials created “to fulfil some social purpose in the language community” (25). Polio defines authentic materials as the materials “that were not created for language learning purposes. Instead, they were created with some real-life goal for, generally, native speakers” (1). Some common authentic materials that have been used over the years by language teachers are newspapers, magazines, posters, pamphlets, audio clips, video clips and more.

Authentic materials have been significantly advantageous in language classrooms, and the same has been ascertained by many scholars. Al-Azri and Al-Rashdi highlight the advantages of authentic materials by stating that they “help to bridge the gap between the language being taught in the classroom and the

language used by real people in real situations in the real world" (251). On the contrary, some scholars believe that on some occasions authentic materials are not effective at all. They have found that authentic materials have at times de-motivated and frustrated weak learners. Miller asserts that authentic materials might be less effective as it is "too difficult and time consuming to select, edit and prepare" them (5). Also, the authentic materials that have been adopted from a totally different cultural setting can have an undesired response from the learners due to the cross-cultural differences.

4. Utilising Authentic Text Printed on the Packaging:

India is a market of innumerable products, the packaging of which is inundated mostly with text in English. Many of the common products have a reach to almost all the geographical spaces of the nation including the backward sector. As a matter of fact, most of the printed texts in the packaging go unnoticed. As opposed to this, the text on the packaging can be used creatively by teachers to teach several language items.

Almost all the daily-use products' packaging contains language items that can be useful for all the three levels. For beginner and intermediate level, the front side of the packaging can be highly effective for teaching practical and useful vocabulary items. These can help in learning names of vegetables, fruits, colours, flavours, flowers, and also some general adjectives and verbs. Some examples are listed below in table 1.

Table 1: TLM on the Packaging

Products	Items that could be Learnt	Supplementary Picture or Information on the Package
ADJECTIVES		
Cheetos chips and many other products	<i>Hot</i>	A picture showing fire
Cinholsoap and some other products too	<i>Cool</i>	A picture showing ice
Top Ramen Noodles	<i>Fiery</i>	It is vibrantly displayed inside a picture of fire.
Go Slim Milk	<i>Slim</i>	A picture showing a slim waste being formed by milk
Cigarette and tobacco packs	Adjectives like <i>Injurious</i> and <i>Addictive</i>	Usually mentioned as a warning and mostly in red
Several products	Adjectives like <i>New, Original, Free, Extra</i> etc.	These adjectives are generally printed at the fore side and in bold letters
NOUNS		
Tiger biscuit	<i>Tiger</i>	A cartoon of tiger
Good Day biscuit and Good Night mosquito repellent	Difference between <i>Day</i> and <i>Night</i>	The time at which these products are usually used can help them remember the difference.
All Sunflower oils	<i>Sunflower</i>	Almost all the sunflower oils display a big picture of sunflower at the front.
Bisleri mineral water	<i>Mountain</i>	A picture showing mountains
Mr. Muscle Cleaner	<i>Muscle</i>	A cartoon of a muscular man
Surf Excel washing powder	<i>Stain</i>	A picture of a shirt with stain marks.
Wheel washing powder	<i>Wheel</i>	A picture showing wheel
Bingo Salted Chips	<i>Salt</i>	A picture showing salt being sprinkled

Tropicana and other juices' tetra-paks	Name of fruits like <i>orange, guava, pomegranate, apple, mango, pineapple</i> etc.	Each tetra-pak has a picture of a fruit. In fact, on the rear side of each Tropicana tetra pak there is a small chart that exhibits different fruits with pictures
Several products	SI units of time like <i>Seconds, Hours, Days, Months</i> and <i>Year</i>	Most of the products give reference of time either for their expiry or for the functioning of the product.
NOUNS FOR BODY PARTS		
Head and Shoulders shampoo	<i>Head and shoulder</i>	The connotation that the shampoo clears the heads and the shoulders from dandruff
Little Hearts cookies	<i>Heart</i>	The shape of cookies is in the shape of a heart
Thums Up soft drink	<i>Thumb</i>	Written inside a picture of a hand with the thumb up
Cigarette and tobacco packs	<i>Lung</i>	The warning shows a picture of a lung encircled.
Soaps and hair oils	<i>Hand and Hair</i>	The products show these parts evidently.
VERBS		
Hide and Seek biscuit	Verbs like <i>Hide and Seek</i>	The connotation that the chocolate chips are hidden inside the cookie
Kitkat chocolate	<i>Break</i> from the tagline "Have a break, have a Kit Kat"	The picture shows a chocolate strip breaking into two parts
Vanish detergent	<i>Vanish</i>	The connotation that the stains vanish after the use.
Hit spray	<i>Hit</i>	A picture showing a mosquito being hit by a laser
Lays Twistz chips	<i>Twist</i>	The chips are twisted in shape.
Target Matchbox	<i>Target</i>	A picture showing a dart board.
Several Products	<i>Save and Buy</i>	These verbs are written at the front side and in bold

While the foreside can be utilised to teach language items to learners from beginner and intermediate level, the back side of the packaging can easily be an effective language learning material for advanced learners. This side gives the learners an opportunity to learn advanced language items such as prefixes like *anti* as in "anti-dandruff shampoo," *pro* as in "Yakult probiotic drink," prepositions like *before* as in "Best before..." in all the products, comparatives like *lighter, crispier* and *tastier* as in Taka Tak chips, and superlatives *best* and *most* as in most of the products.

Moreover, the rear part of almost all the products contains well-structured and complete descriptive sentences. These can be helpful in learning descriptive writing. Often, interrogative sentences and imperatives are also found on the rear part of the packaging. By reading the practical and appropriate use of interrogatives and imperatives, the learners can acquire these language items gradually.

Mentioned above are only a few of the several language opportunities that these products give to language learners and teachers. The creative teachers can integrate this strategy of using the packaging into their language classrooms for many reasons. Firstly, since most of the backward area learners already have basic knowledge of language, they can independently learn by understanding and relating to what is written on the packaging. Secondly, daily-use products like these are easily available everywhere. In fact, dry dustbins of confectionary stores can act as the resource for language material. Thirdly, for learning from these packaging no formal classroom set-up is necessary. A learner can learn language items even while walking alone on the road. Fourthly, the items thus learnt would be highly practical and useful for the learners. Also, the packaging is constantly updated which means that each time it gives the learners an opportunity to learn something new.

5. Conclusion:

India is a vast country that still holds the status of a 'developing' nation. In order to uplift its status from 'developing' to 'developed,' several steps are being taken regularly, one of which is the emphasis on inclusive growth. Nevertheless, low literacy and incompetence with the global language have remained the two prime barriers to inclusive growth. This paper intends to restrain these barriers by attempting to find an answer to problems in ELT in backward areas by highlighting the use of authentic text printed on the packaging of daily-use products.

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