

Inculcating the Habit of Reading -A Challenge for the English Teacher in the Arts College for Rural Students

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Abstract

In today's world as there is a steep increase in competition each passing day, the importance of communication skills has gained tremendous prominence. Today's students especially from colleges, who will go for many competitive tests and face many interviews are required to possess good communication skills in order to succeed and they need high level of proficiency in language and communication during selection process.

How does the English teacher help the student develop this skill? In fact, the biggest challenge for the teacher is to inculcate in student the habit of reading. My paper deals with the problems of imparting reading habits to students of arts college from rural areas. I would like to share how my colleagues and I have discussed as well as dwelt upon this challenge and came about a few possible solutions which are being implemented in our college.

Introduction

“Make a habit of reading books; it not only gives you an immersive of knowledge but also teaches you the valuable lessons.” Ram Prithvi Teja

Apart from providing immense pleasure, reading helps us gain knowledge about things happening around us. Reading shapes our thoughts and enables us to think better. Reading gives us an edge over others in both social and professional circles. There is a pedagogic reason for the emphasis on reading skills: readers write better. This paper attempts to identify the causes for lack of reading amongst rural students in the arts stream, elaborate on why reading is important for them and discuss some initiatives to inculcate as well as develop reading skills among these students.

Why is it important for Rural Students

To study long texts and various books on various topics and prepare for lessons as well as exams, the students face problems. To accomplish this objective, the student is required to read material like textbooks, reference books, journals, and so on. If the student is an efficient

and effective reader, he will be able to cover more volume, ensuring that more information is at his disposal. This knowledge when coupled with his writing skills will help him to perform better in his exams as well as be a good reader. To face examination students are required to retain and reproduce what they read. It has been proved that students who can identify the structure of the writing and appreciate the choice of words have better retention capacities. Hence reading indirectly contributes to academic success.

Measures to improve reading

Given the growing importance of reading, a few measures can be taken to encourage students to inculcate reading skills and make reading a more enjoyable activity. The various measures and their benefits are discussed below.

Developing reading skills and word building

A teacher should always encourage students to communicate in the class. The communicative competence of a student improves only when he listens to his voice while speaking. Even reading a lesson in the class should be done by the student and not by the teacher. To begin with, the teacher should make the whole class read a lesson once silently. While reading the text silently, students should note down the words which they find difficult to comprehend in their notebooks. Dictionaries are a must in classrooms. Using dictionaries, they need to identify the meaning of the words that they have noted down. The teachers should then ask the students to read aloud the words that they have noted down and their meanings.

While the students read the words along with the meaning, the teacher should start noting down the problem in pronunciation that each student faces. Undergraduate students must be taught all 44 phonetics symbols. They should also be taught how to verify the word phonetically using the dictionary and get the right pronunciation of the word. Each student makes a different phonetic error. This can be rectified only if a teacher pays individual attention to each student and make him read or speak in the class.

Book Library

Reading for a wholesome personality is something that all students must be motivated towards. Reading skills and knowledge so acquired can develop into a very strong foundation for the growth of rural students. In our college, we encourage and made it compulsory for students and send them as a task to the library to start with the reading of books like easy reading books, novels, storybooks, autobiographies, biographies, motivational and self-help books, books of Indian writers, classics, short stories and so on. The library caters to students who want to begin reading and also to the students who cannot afford to buy books. This task

has been successful because many students from rural backgrounds are also taking an interest in reading. The library came as an aid to inculcate reading habits in students, as the number of books is large in number so it becomes easy for the students to borrow books regularly from the library.

Start a book club

A book club can play a big role in inculcating reading habits in rural students. They feel responsible and accountable for being part of the book club. They get exposure to working in a team, and also learn through various guest lectures and workshops organized by the club. They get to know the varied number of books and authors as well. It gives a deeper understanding of their reading.

The Department of English for this purpose started a book club and the students gained much guidance and enthusiasm to start reading various books

Model United Nations (MUN)

The role of any Model United Nations is to create the participants more attentive to the political and economic happening at the international level and their impact on various countries. The MUN isn't just a mock UN, it is a practical simulation that involves meticulous preparation on behalf of the students who represent various member countries as delegates.

In the MUN students play the role of delegates from various countries and they try to solve the issues the various countries face and they discuss the policies and perspectives of their assigned country. Students that participate in MUN become worldwide students and they also learn communication skills as well as leadership skills. In a MUN there is structure to everything i.e., there is a secretariat, administration, and committee such as security council, peace, disarmament committee, and so on. The proceedings in an exceedingly MUN are formal in terms of attire, language used, and conduct of varied members. MUN also involves significant documentation in terms of preparing drafts and resolutions for acceptance. The working of MUN is extremely like the particular UN because it considers only realistic proposals.

For the conduct of a successful MUN, the students are required to review and skim extensively on the subject area given to them. The students in this activity learn to read because of requirements. The concept of MUN is extremely interesting as students become involved in the preparation of the study guide and other documentation also. This also helps them to develop writing skills.

The functional English Department took the initiative to start conducting MUN fortnightly basis wherein students gathered to represent the actual country and discuss variously the emerging problems and developments of assorted countries. To sort out, we start we started with the education problems of developing countries. Due to extensive documentation, the students develop writing skills significantly. This activity indirectly helps the students in the learning process as well as develops in them leadership qualities.

Language Lab Activities

Reading is a vital part of language instruction at every level of school because it supports learning in multiple ways. In language labs, there are activities to encourage the students to instill in them the habit of reading directly or indirectly. In group discussions, students are told the group discussions to be conducted the following will focus on current issues. So, they are asked to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments by reading the newspaper every day. There are many other language lab activities, debates, film reviews, and so on which also test the reading acumen of the students.

Incentivization of Books

The literary club of our college organizes many extracurricular activities like debates, symposiums, and numerous events throughout the academic year. Winners are given books as prizes which are written by popular authors. This objective of giving books as a prize helps in inculcating reading habits.

Conclusion

Inculcating the habit of reading in children at the school level itself is a challenge nowadays, for rural students coming to college the task is even greater. The students enter the colleges with very little knowledge of the importance of reading habits. Therefore, the English language teacher has to lay the foundation and reiterate the benefits of reading to all the students.

All young people on the road to success must-read books. When a person is on the ascending path of his life, he is expected to be a leader who leads a lot of people. To lead, you have to read is a golden rule which should be imprinted on the minds of all aspiring rural students. Reading is certainly one of the skills which can make these students not only successful but complete individuals. It also helps the students to exercise their comprehension and analytical abilities. It also fires up students' imagination and stimulates the memory centers of their minds. It helps them to recall information as well as stabilize their emotions and also strengthen their mental muscles. It also improves their communication and language skills.

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