Kowloon True Light Middle School

Name of Awarded Teacher : Chan Pui Yee, Pearl

Extending English Learning Horizons through IT

Introduction

English learning involves development of language skills. It takes a long time to master English. Self-motivation and a positive attitude towards English learning are crucial. Effective English teaching practices can establish English as the main language of communication between the learners and themselves both inside and outside the classroom. Effective English teaching practices foster a genuine liking of learning English independently and continuously, even after class and graduation. Weaker students may not make an immediate, remarkable improvement in their performance in the English examinations but, with a positive attitude towards English learning and the correct approach of developing essential language skills and study skills, sooner or later, they will be proficient in English. "Practice makes perfect" is always true provided that learners practise persistently with proper, effective strategies.

The role of a good English teacher is not a transmitter of knowledge of English but a facilitator to promote the development of essential English skills and a positive attitude towards English learning in order to maintain an ever-increasing capability for improvement throughout life. The mission of an English teacher is to enable students to see the need to improve and ways of improving their English proficiency, to meet the demands of the 21st century. Effective English teaching should promote not only instrumental motivation but also intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation facilitates lifelong, pleasurable learning of English. To foster intrinsic motivation to acquire English, language learning activities must be related to the learners' needs, interests and daily life experiences; they must be authentic and purposeful, as well as engaging the learners in genuine acts of communication. Language tasks and projects such as tourist interviews, variety shows, sending e-cards, chatting on the bulletins in the e-class, helping to run English activities for other students in other forms and the Thanksgiving project, are effective activities for the development of communicative competence. Learning through these communicative activities enhances learners' long-term language development. Since these activities are learner-centred, teaching efficiency and effectiveness are improved. Students are actively involved in the learning process and they have autonomy of their own learning. They treasure the time they cooperate with their peers and the products they create. They experience the use of English in authentic situations. With the accomplishment of the tasks and projects, students boost their confidence by applying their knowledge of English and generic skills (collaboration skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, self-management skills, negotiation skills, creativity, information technology skills and study skills) for purposeful communication in real-life situations.

With the introduction of the English mass media like the SCMP, the RTHK, TVB Pearl, ATV World, Discovery Channel and magazines, students are gradually exposed to a widening range of contexts, thereby extending their experience beyond that of their immediate environment. Effective English teaching enables learners to develop the awareness that there are many varieties of English, as the language is used in many parts of the world with different traditions.

It is vitally important, in this day and age, that, as teachers, we recognize the strengths and weaknesses of our students. They are individuals and, thus, by adopting a wide range of teaching methods and adapting programmes to suit particular needs, teachers cater for each student in the class. A range of these, as set out below, focusing on Information Technology.

(1) School-based Curriculum Project - Using e-cards to promote creative writing

This project covers the use of e-cards and word processor from F.1 to F.7 to promote creative writing and peer editing. It exposes students to authentic social English and arouses their interest to read and write to others beyond the formal curriculum. Some assigned writing tasks strengthen students' reasoning while others boost their creativity. It enlivens the traditional English lessons with some Language Arts activities and information technology skills. Peer editing enhances the confidence of S.6 students in using English and their understanding of English grammar. The rationale and procedures of running the project, the students' work and feedback and the evaluation report are kept as CDs.

(2) Thanksgiving Project

This is an extended task from the previous project about festivals. It has been carried out, with constant modifications, with my sixth formers, since 2001. The students' work is getting more sophisticated in terms of understanding this unique western festival, creativity and IT skills. Students' oral presentations of their original webpages about Thanksgiving demonstrate their collaborative efforts and confidence in using English. Students admit that they enjoy doing this project and really learn a lot about Thanksgiving from it. Integrated preparatory materials, which prepare students for this project and students' work, are available. Projects about other issues such as environmental protection and creativity can be run in a similar way.

(3) Using an e-class to enhance English learning

The AS Use of English is a real challenge for F. 6 students and, in particular, to those studying in the CMI schools, as they have very little exposure to English in the school context. Extra efforts have to be made to maximize students' exposure to, and use of, English in school and beyond school. Establishing an electronic platform to foster English learning and communication outside the classroom after class is an effective way to enhance English learning. In an e-class, teachers can upload reference notes and foundation courses whilst students can share their opinions and masterpieces.

For details, please refer to Appendix XIII.

Way of Accessing Further Information on the above Teaching Practice

Those who are interested in using e-cards or festivals to promote creative writing may go to the English Language Resource Centre to view the project. Those who are interested in the Thanksgiving IT Project and e-class learning may visit our e-class by using a guest account.

URL : http://eclass30.broadlearning.com

Login : it@ktlms.mysch.net

Password : eclass

Preferred Way of dissemination / collaboration

Sharing sessions, class visits or establishing an e-class for joint schools

Contact

Miss Chan Pui Yee, Pearl at 2336 4758 during school hours.

Remarks of the Assessment Panel

To foster her students' intrinsic motivation for lifelong, pleasurable learning of English, Ms Chan relates teaching to students' needs, interests and daily life experiences using authentic and purposeful communication. She maximizes their exposure to, and use of, English in school and beyond school in an integrated learning approach (ILA) across different levels.

Her multi-dimensional practice reflects her zeal in embracing and contextualizing new ideas to develop creative materials and a good curriculum for her students to acquire English in a more meaningful, pleasurable and effective way. She has motivated her students from being passive, quiet learners to become active, self-motivated ones with good results.