Enhancing Speaking and Writing Skills in English using Status in WhatsApp – A Study

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Abstract: The advent of the smartphone era had brought in many aspects in the facets of life that once seemed imaginary or seemingly impossible. To begin with, technological advancements like e-commerce, e-banking, e-business etc. have made life so easy for humans. One of the most wanted and highly recommended apps is WhatsApp. One of the key features in WhatsApp is the Status portfolio that has been added quite recently. This is one striking feature that enables the user to upload anything that they feel is appropriate to be uploaded. First, the teacher who is to engage in this exercise should make sure that the target group (students) are all having a smartphone with WhatsApp installed in it. Though there is no group of broadcast list formed from the teacher's WhatsApp account, the users will invariably be instructed to watch and learn the status that is posted every day by the teacher. Given to understand that the mobile data tariff is very much reduced nowadays, it is expected that the target group will have a good mobile data connection, both in terms of connectivity and tariff. Furthermore, if teachers of English can fully understand the apps that are developed for social networking and then put them into creative for the benefit of the masses, it will bring in a positive approach among the students who yearn to learn and master the English language, irrespective of age, class, creed and religion.

Keywords: WhatsApp, speaking, writing, technology, activity, skills.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The advent of the smartphone era had brought in many aspects in the facets of life that once seemed imaginary or seemingly impossible. To begin with, technological advancements like e-commerce, e-banking, e-business etc. have made life so easy for humans. Though there still might be some voices refuting the claims, to a large extent the fact remains that these features have come to stay and have made life easier. All these above-mentioned features predominantly started their with that of the desktop computers, later moving on to laptops, now it is even more accessible and user-friendly after these features have moved into the smartphones with the relative apps to relative segments. After the arrival of the smartphone and even more recently the accessibility to each individual owning a smartphone, irrespective of its price and durability, the life of the individual is made safer and more convenient. After demonetisation came into effect in India, the use of smartphones and usage of very many apps in the market, irrespective of whatever OS platform the user has have reached the maximum.

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Thanks to the heavy shedding of prices on data charges and much attractive offers made by the mobile operators, smartphone users are now exploring their mobile phones and its apps to a greater extent.

II.   EFFECTIVE E-LEARNING THROUGH WHATSAPP

One of the most wanted and highly recommended apps is WhatsApp. The origination and history of WhatsApp are almost known to in this globe or perhaps to outer space too. WhatsApp over the years has evolved, much to the need and liking of its billions of users. It is one of those apps that make the individual feel happy, sad, and crazy, shout out in ecstasy and what not. The latest additions to WhatsApp have made it the clear winner. Apart from typing texts and forwarding text messages, features like video call, sharing voice messages, videos, GIFs, uploading profile pictures & Status pictures and videos, etc., it very clearly shows that WhatsApp has come to stay. Irrespective of age, class or religion, it is being used by the multitudes to create or forward messages, pictures or videos which they feel is worthwhile to share.

One of the key features in WhatsApp is the Status portfolio that has been added quite recently. This is one striking feature that enables the user to upload anything that they feel is appropriate to be uploaded. It might be a picture or GIF or a short video, anything of their choice. Many people use inspiring messages, pictures or videos as their status, while others have something comical. Whatever is being displayed in the status is very much subjective. It is very much used by the majority of WhatsApp's users worldwide. This study is to ascertain the use of the status in WhatsApp for an educative purpose, particularly in developing the Communicative English Skills to narrow down it concentrates on two skills, namely, Speaking and Writing. It is very much the method in which we can educate the target group to develop all the above-mentioned skills and also to share the knowledge with other learners.

First, the teacher who is to engage in this exercise should make sure that the target group (students) are all having a smartphone with WhatsApp installed in it. Though there is no group of broadcast list formed from the teacher's WhatsApp account, the users will invariably be instructed to watch and learn the status that is posted every day by the teacher. Given to understand that the mobile data tariff is very much reduced nowadays, it is expected that the target group will have a good mobile data connection, both in terms of connectivity and tariff. To begin, as of now there are no restrictions on the user in posting their status on WhatsApp.

You can post a whole lot of pictures or videos or GIFs, but with a maximum duration of 30 seconds per picture or video or GIF and it will be there for one day (24 hours). This is actually a boon for both the teacher and the learner.

III. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

To begin, the teacher should create a small group of students (a maximum of 25 students will be very effective). This group of students will everyday view the status that is uploaded from the teacher's WhatsApp account and then the course of study will roll on.

The teacher in order to educate the learner group (or anyone who volunteers apart from the group to watch and learn of what the teacher is posting in his/her status) will need to first collect information either online or through any magazine or newspapers. The teacher will next download the necessary information or scan the information from magazines or newspapers and then collate it as a small and precise video and then upload it on to their status in WhatsApp. This assignment will be called **"This day… That year".** The teacher in this context, accomplishing this assignment is educating the student group to first learn world history (significant events in science, technology, politics, war, literature etc. and the birth and death of famous personalities are to be dealt in these pictures). This collated pictures put as video can be very creatively edited and very interesting background music can be added by using many user-friendly third-party editing software found in all major mobile OS used nowadays.

This video that is posted will be viewed by the learner group. This video posted every day about major and significant events that happened long back will not only educate the learner but also create an interest in the learner to know more about certain personalities or events. The first assignment given to each student in the group is to talk for about 5 minutes about one of the famous personalities/events mentioned in the video. For this, the student needs to do 2 tasks.

1. 50% resource - to explore contents related to the person or event from the website and

2. 50 % resource - to search books and magazines from the library about the chosen personality or event and then concise it so that he/she can speak about their chosen person or event on the next will deliver his/her speech to the whole class.

This whole activity is to be done in English alone. This activity will help the learner to overcome the obstacles or taboos they have. Not only that, they are going to speak about someone or something which is now part of the glorious history, this will make the student think and proactively use more information regarding the chosen event or person. The reason why the student is asked to take resource about the chosen person or event 50% each to online sources and library sources is that the student should not only rely on online sources but make use of the library, sadly which many students do use this extensively nowadays. This exercise of students of going to the library and then spending quality time on books and magazines will slowly help them develop a strong vocabulary. Coming to the main aspect, the speech that is delivered by the student might initially have grammatical and tense errors. These mistakes should be overlooked by the teacher. Initial identification of mistakes should not or must not psychologically create an impact in the learner. Rather the teacher can emphatically tell the particular student of where he/she can improve. Also, the teacher educated the student about voice modulation, tone, pitch etc., which is involved in teaching. All these basic-level exercises will positively enhance in the learner to be more involved in the process of speaking and later refining their skills in communicative English. This activity is to be done for at least a week so as to give equal and fair opportunities to everyone in the class. Day in and day out every student is observed of how he/she prepares for their speaking assignments and what kind of help is needed by them. The teacher should be readily available so as to clear any kind of doubts relating to the activity. Moreover, the teacher should make sure that each and every student is actively involved and has developed the greater interest that is needed for lifelong learning.

The next activity or assignment involved is that of writing. Writing is one activity where a majority of our students commit a number of mistakes. Using the same video posted by the teacher, the target group of students are asked to write essays on their chosen favourite personality or event of interest. Beforehand, the teacher should brief the student of what kind of writing is expected of them. The essays should contain facts and related information regarding their chosen personality or event. Students should also be encouraged to add creative information related to the topic and this aspect of creativeness will make the student think more and react even more. All these essays written by the students are to be submitted to the teacher who in turn will randomly distribute the same to the group of students in the class (the student will not get his/her same paper). Students who are going to value the paper are asked not be too critical and evaluate without prejudice. Once the evaluation is done, it is returned to the teacher who will again go through those papers and do necessary corrections and give it back to the respective students. This assignment or activity will again make sure that the students make use of the internet sources as well as the library sources when they draft the essay. This makes sure that there is more room provided for the student to explore more about the personality or event and this again will make the student unknowingly develop their vocabulary skills. Writing and rewriting is an effective way to make the learner to bring in a refinement in the communicative skills of the learner. Especially in the use of the English language, where we the non-native speakers to improve our skill set in English need to practice evermore for the fine-tuning of the language.

This method of observing from the video and then drafting it into an essay is an attractive method that helps the learner grasp ideas and points easily and when they are put to task to draft the essay, it becomes an enjoyable endeavour. The importance of writing is slowly but steadily infused in the minds of the learners, who in turn will become ever more interested in studying a lot of things either from the internet or through the regular visits and learning at the library.

IV. CONCLUSION

Though this method of enhancing the Speaking and Writing skills in English using the status in WhatsApp is a very new idea. It is something to be extensively explored in the coming days. WhatsApp may totally redefine the status used, even for a better and more sophisticated usage which will definitely be very useful for the present generation and even to the ones earlier. Speaking is one area where a majority of the Indian youth find it difficult and there is almost a great fear when it comes to speaking in front of an audience. Writing is another area where many people make gross mistakes, knowingly and unknowingly. The method of enhancing these two skills using the status in WhatsApp is in a way the play-way method of teaching the English language. Students will not feel the stress of going through a syllabus, which at times is rigid or not flexible to the student community. Furthermore, WhatsApp is something that is liked and favoured by most people. This simple task of observing the video about the bygone past reiterates in the minds of the readers about the glorious past where many people struggled to achieve what we are enjoying today. Furthermore, if teachers of English can fully understand the apps that are developed for social networking and then put them into creative for the benefit of the masses, it will bring in a positive approach among the students who yearn to learn and master the English language, irrespective of age, class, creed and religion.

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