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Eliciting in ELT: Unlocking Learner Potential at the Tertiary Level

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Abstract

The conventional approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) has often focused on textbooks as the primary source of examination and evaluation, yielding limited results in improving students' English language proficiency. This paper argues that ELT at the tertiary level should shift its focus from mere transmission of information to facilitating linguistic experience. Eliciting, a powerful tool in ELT, can play a crucial role in achieving this goal. Eliciting involves drawing out learners' existing knowledge, ideas, and experiences to facilitate language learning, promoting communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

This paper explores the concept of eliciting, its role in ELT, and provides tips and tasks for effective implementation in learner-centred classrooms. The benefits of eliciting in ELT include improved communication skills, increased learner engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and autonomous learning. However, challenges such as class size, time constraints, learner resistance, and teacher training need to be addressed.

The paper suggests strategies to overcome these challenges, including teacher training programs, flexible lesson planning, technology integration, and learner orientation. By incorporating eliciting techniques, teachers can create learner-centred classrooms that promote communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, ultimately unlocking learner potential at the tertiary level.

Introduction

English has become an essential language for global communication, and its importance is increasingly recognized in academic and professional settings. In India, English is a crucial language for higher education, and its proficiency is a prerequisite for success in various fields. However, despite years of English language instruction, many students struggle to communicate effectively in English. This situation necessitates a re-examination of ELT approaches and methodologies.

The traditional approach to ELT has relied heavily on textbooks as the primary teaching material. This approach focuses on transmitting information and testing students' knowledge through examinations. However, this approach has several limitations. The focus on covering textbook content leaves little room for language practice and communication

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skills development. The conventional approach often neglects learners' interests, needs, and experiences, leading to a lack of motivation and engagement. The emphasis on theoretical knowledge over practical language skills hinders students' ability to communicate effectively.

Eliciting is a teaching technique that involves drawing out learners' existing knowledge, ideas, and experiences to facilitate language learning. It encourages learners to participate actively in the learning process, promoting communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Eliciting can be used to activate prior knowledge, encourage communication, and develop critical thinking. By eliciting learners' existing knowledge and experiences, teachers can connect new language items to their existing cognitive structures.

Eliciting can play a significant role in ELT at the tertiary level. It promotes learner autonomy by encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning, fostering autonomy and self-directed learning. Eliciting tasks can be designed to develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in an integrated manner. It promotes critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills, essential for academic and professional success.

To elicit effectively, teachers should create a supportive learning environment, establish a safe, inclusive, and respectful classroom atmosphere, and use open-ended questions to encourage learners to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Visual aids and authentic materials can be used to stimulate discussion and interaction. Teachers should monitor and provide feedback, circulating around the classroom and encouraging peer feedback.

Eliciting tasks can be designed to promote learner-centered classrooms. Discussion forums, role-plays, and simulations can be used to practice language functions and develop communication skills. Problem-solving tasks can be designed to require learners to work collaboratively to solve problems or complete projects. Reflective journals can be used to encourage learners to maintain a record of their learning experiences and insights.

The benefits of eliciting in ELT are numerous. It promotes speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in an integrated manner, encourages learners to participate actively in the learning process, and promotes critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills. Eliciting fosters autonomy and self-directed learning, essential for academic and professional success.

However, eliciting also presents several challenges. Large class sizes can hinder effective eliciting, and time constraints can make it difficult to cover the syllabus. Some learners may resist participating in eliciting tasks, and teachers may require training to effectively implement eliciting techniques. To overcome these challenges, teacher training

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programs can be used to develop eliciting skills, and flexible lesson planning can accommodate eliciting tasks. Technology can be used to facilitate eliciting tasks and overcome class size limitations, and learners can be oriented to the benefits of eliciting and encouraged to participate.

Eliciting can be used in various contexts, including language classrooms, content-based instruction, and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses. It can be adapted to suit different learner levels, from beginner to advanced. Eliciting can be used with young learners, teenagers, and adult learners, making it a versatile technique for language teachers. The role of the teacher in eliciting is crucial. Teachers should act as facilitators, guiding learners and providing feedback. They should create a supportive learning environment, encouraging learners to take risks and participate actively. Teachers should be aware of their own biases and try to create a neutral and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Learners also have a crucial role to play in eliciting. They should be active participants, sharing their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Learners should be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning, setting goals and reflecting on their progress. They should be willing to take risks and participate actively in class, engaging with their peers and the teacher.

The impact of eliciting on learner motivation and engagement is significant. When learners are actively involved in the learning process, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged. Eliciting promotes a sense of ownership and autonomy, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning. It also fosters a sense of community, promoting peer interaction and collaboration.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Eliciting

Eliciting is rooted in constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the active role of learners in constructing their own knowledge. Eliciting is also informed by communicative language teaching approaches, which prioritize authentic communication and learner-centeredness. The constructivist approach views learning as a process of constructing meaning, rather than transmitting knowledge. Eliciting is a key strategy in this approach, as it encourages learners to draw on their existing knowledge and experiences to construct new meanings.

Eliciting Techniques

Eliciting techniques include using open-ended questions, visual aids, and authentic materials to stimulate discussion and interaction. Teachers can also use eliciting to activate prior knowledge, encourage communication, and develop critical thinking. Some effective eliciting techniques include:

- Using open-ended questions to encourage learners to share their thoughts and ideas
- Using visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, and videos to stimulate discussion and interaction

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- Using authentic materials such as news articles, videos, and podcasts to engage learners and promote critical thinking
- Encouraging learners to share their experiences and perspectives on a topic
- Using role-plays and simulations to practice language functions and develop communication skills

Eliciting Tasks

Eliciting tasks can be designed to promote learner-centered classrooms. Examples include:
- Discussion forums: Organizing topic-based discussions, debates, and presentations
- Role-plays: Using real-life scenarios to practice language functions and develop communication skills
- Simulations: Using real-life situations to practice language functions and develop problem-solving skills
- Problem-solving tasks: Designing tasks that require learners to work collaboratively to solve problems or complete projects
- Reflective journals: Encouraging learners to maintain a record of their learning experiences and insights

Benefits of Eliciting

Eliciting promotes speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in an integrated manner, encourages learners to participate actively in the learning process, and promotes critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills. Eliciting fosters autonomy and self-directed learning, essential for academic and professional success. Some of the key benefits of eliciting include:
- Improved communication skills: Eliciting encourages learners to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in an integrated manner.
- Increased learner engagement: Eliciting encourages learners to participate actively in the learning process, promoting motivation and engagement.
- Enhanced critical thinking: Eliciting promotes critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills, essential for academic and professional success.
- Autonomous learning: Eliciting fosters autonomy and self-directed learning, essential for academic and professional success.

Challenges of Eliciting

Large class sizes can hinder effective eliciting, and time constraints can make it difficult to cover the syllabus. Some learners may resist participating in eliciting tasks, and teachers may require training to effectively implement eliciting techniques. Some of the key challenges of eliciting include:
- Large class sizes: Managing large classes can be challenging, and eliciting may not be effective in such settings.
- Time constraints: Eliciting can be time-consuming, and teachers may struggle to cover the syllabus.
- Learner resistance: Some learners may resist participating in eliciting tasks, and teachers may need to use strategies to encourage participation.

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- Teacher training: Teachers may require training to effectively implement eliciting techniques.

Overcoming Challenges

Teacher training programs can be used to develop eliciting skills, and flexible lesson planning can accommodate eliciting tasks. Technology can be used to facilitate eliciting tasks and overcome class size limitations, and learners can be oriented to the benefits of eliciting and encouraged to participate. Some strategies for overcoming challenges include:
- Using technology to facilitate eliciting tasks and overcome class size limitations
- Providing teacher training programs to develop eliciting skills
- Using flexible lesson planning to accommodate eliciting tasks
- Orienting learners to the benefits of eliciting and encouraging participation

Implications for ELT Practitioners

ELT practitioners should recognize the potential of eliciting and adapt their teaching approaches to meet the needs of 21st-century learners. Teachers should act as facilitators, guiding learners and providing feedback, and create a supportive learning environment that encourages learners to take risks and participate actively. ELT practitioners should also be aware of their own biases and try to create a neutral and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Future Directions

Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of eliciting in different ELT contexts and to develop more effective eliciting techniques. ELT practitioners should also explore ways to integrate eliciting with other teaching approaches and technologies to enhance language learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, eliciting is a powerful tool in ELT that can transform the learning experience at the tertiary level. By incorporating eliciting techniques, teachers can create learner-centered classrooms that promote communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. It is essential for ELT practitioners to recognize the potential of eliciting and adapt their teaching approaches to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

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