



TEACHING PUBLIC NOTICES AND SIGNS IN ESL CLASSES

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Abstract:

Public notices are always very important in all parts of the world. But there are many different kinds of notices in different countries of the world. They differ according to the cultures and the societies in that city, in the town, or in the village. This study deals with the public notices, the definitions, and the explanations of these notices. The definitions of the public notices will be given. Sample classroom activities about the public notices will be shared. The role of the public notices and signs in our lives will be highlighted. Books and websites about the public signs will also be shared.

Keywords: public notices; signs; ESL classes; sample classroom activities

1. Introduction

There are many public notices and signs in the world. These signs have different cultural backgrounds. The role of the public notices and signs are inevitable. Teaching the meanings of the public notices and signs will always activate the cultural awareness and the communication competence in our classes. Students who learn the definitions of the public notices and signs will be aware of the importance of the rules and the announcements in their societies day by day.

In this study, classroom activities which can help to teach public notices and signs in ESL classes will be shared. The definitions and the meanings of these notices and signs will also be shared. The role of the importance of these notices and signs are very essential as they help to understand the conditions of the locations or the important rules in their societies and the urgent situations for people or for the animals or plants or for the whole world.

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2. Theoretical Background

2.1 What is Public Notice?

According to the Law Dictionary, public notice is defined as:

“A notice providing information for the public that is widespread throughout all types of media. It will be in newspapers, on radio broadcasts and television broadcasts. It includes items such as Lottery results and Development applications.”

(<https://thelawdictionary.org/public-notice/>)

Public notice has been defined on the Business Dictionary as:

“Notice widely disseminated through broadcast media such as newspapers, radio, television.”

(<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/public-notice.html>)

2.2 Definitions of Public Signs

Sign is defined on the Cambridge Dictionary as:

“A notice giving information, directions, a warning, etc.: A road sign/ A shop sign

(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sign>)

The definitions of sign are also given on the Collins Cobuild Dictionary. They are as follows:

A. Countable noun

“A sign is a mark or shape that always has a particular meaning, for example in mathematics or music.

Equations are generally written with a two-bar equals sign.

Synonyms: symbol, mark, character, figure.

B. Countable noun

A sign is a movement of your arms, hands, or head which is intended to have a particular meaning.

They gave Lavalley the thumbs-up sign.

He made a sign of assent. [+ of]

Synonyms: gesture, signal, motion, indication

C. Verb

If you sign, you communicate with someone using sign language. If a programme or performance is signed, someone uses sign language so that deaf people can understand it.

All programmes will be either 'signed' or subtitled. [be VERB-ed]

D. Countable noun

A sign is a piece of wood, metal, or plastic with words or pictures on it. Signs give you information about something, or give you a warning or an instruction.

...a sign saying that the highway was closed because of snow.

Over his head, he held a cardboard sign saying 'Free Hugs' in big, black letters. As soon as the seat belt sign had been switched off, we rushed out.

Synonyms: notice, board, warning, signpost

E. Variable noun

If there is a sign of something, there is something which shows that it exists or is happening.

They are prepared to hand back a hundred prisoners of war a day as a sign of good will. [+ of]

His face and movements rarely betrayed a sign of nerves.

Your blood would have been checked for any sign of kidney failure. [+ of]

Synonyms: indication, evidence, trace, mark."

(Cambridge Dictionary)

2.3 Categories of Public Signs

Bi (2017: 703) states that;

"Lv Hefa divides it into four categories according to its practical usage in life as expressions with instructive and guiding information, expressions with function of restricting; expressions with prohibitive and impelling tone; expressions with remindful information. Based on the previous studies, this paper puts forward three types of public signs."

In this paragraph, it is understood that there were four different categories of signs according to their usages in life and they give information to the people in their societies.

2.3.1. Instructive Public Signs

Public signs like this have simple words and various sentence structures. They are not compulsive. For example: Beware of pickpocket, Shark sighted, (Bi, 2017: 703)

2.3.2. Indicative Public Signs

There are powerful and obvious negative words like, NO and FORBIDDEN in these signs. For instance, Please don't pick flower, No smoking! , No stopping, No driving against traffic rules. (Bi, 2017: 703)

2.3.3. Consultative Public Signs

These public signs are mostly used in the service places and they give information about the purposes of the places and the locations. After reading these signs, people can act according to their needs and requirements, because they do not include direct rules or compulsive information. For example, Customer service center, Ticket office, Cashier, Parking lot, Public toilet (either men / women; male / female), Baggage claim, Fresh produce, etc. (Bi, 2017: 703)

2.4 Characteristics of Public Signs

The most well-known characteristics of public signs is their simplicity and they are completely easy to understand. If people cannot understand the notices, they read or see, they cannot get any benefits or they cannot obey the rules.

Bi (2017: 704) denotes;

“Public signs are concise, simple, eye-catching, understandable words or phrases. And the main characteristics are simplicity, regularity and intertextuality.”

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants consisted of 40 (forty) university students at Dokuz Eylul University in the city of Izmir in Turkey. They were first class and second class students in the Department of Museum Studies in the Faculty of Letters at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 18-23.

3.2. Teaching Procedure

The participants were asked to say the public signs or notices they have seen or known. After getting replies from them, different kinds of public notices and signs were introduced to them in their class hours.

3.3 Sample Classroom Activities

- Picture-Talk Activities;
- Pair Work and Group Work Activities.

A. Sample Classroom Activity I

The following notices were given to students and they were asked to write sentences using modals in grammar:

Parking Notice (Johnson and Rinvoluceri, 2010: 77)

- Free at Any Time.
- No Return within 40 Minutes.

In A University College (Johnson and Rinvoluceri, 2010: 77)

- Please Do Not Put Your Cigarettes Out on the Carpet
- Please Use The Bins Provided Thank You
- Look! Please Put Your Paper in the Toilet

On A Stile Leading To a Foot Path (Johnson and Rinvoluceri, 2010: 77)

- Public Right Of Way Closed

In A Petrol Station (Johnson and Rinvoluceri, 2010: 77)

- Petroleum Spirit Highly Inflammable
- Switch Off Engine
- No Naked Lights

On A Grass (Johnson and Rinvoluceri, 2010: 77)

- No Parking on the Grass PENALTY £40

B. Sample Classroom Activity II

Traffic problems, environmental problems and car parking problems can be prevented with the help of public notices or signs. Students were asked to find public notices and signs about the following topics:

1. Car parking;
2. Smoking;
3. Environmental problems;
4. Departing flights;
5. WiFi Zones;
6. Recycling;
7. First aid;
8. Toilets;
9. Pools;
10. Beaches;
11. Hospitals;
12. Libraries;
13. Museums;
14. Schools;
15. Restaurants;
16. Stairs;
17. Telephones;
18. Waiting Rooms;
19. Bus-stops;
20. Shops and markets.

C. Sample Classroom Activity III

Students were asked to do this classroom activity and they were asked to reply the following questions:

- a) Please write 4 school rules using public signs or notices;
- b) Please write 3 rules which are necessary in the libraries;
- c) Please write 5 rules which are necessary in the museums;
- d) Please write 4 rules which are necessary in the hospitals;
- e) Please write 4 rules which are necessary in the universities.

4. Findings

4.1. Students' Feedback

Classroom activities in this study were used in two different classes in the Faculty of Letters at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir in Turkey. Students in these classes were Turkish students who come from different cities in Turkey and most of them were staying in the dormitories in Izmir. Students informed that learning the meanings of these signs were useful in their lives.

5. Objectives of This Study

Objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To help students to learn new words in English;
2. To help students to learn the new words efficiently and accurately;
3. To help students to learn how to use 'must', 'mustn't', 'have to/has to', 'don't have to/doesn't have to', 'can', 'cannot' in English effectively.

6. Conclusion

Up to here, the definitions of the public notices and signs have been given. The categories and the characteristics of the public signs have been told and listed. Sample classroom activities for learning and teaching public notices and signs have been shared.

Learning a foreign language means learning a different culture. While learning the definitions of the public signs students also learn the values in that society or in that country. They learn why some rules are important in that country or in that society.

In conclusion, it can be said that learning and understanding the meanings of the public notices and signs are very important in all parts of the world and in all the moments of our lives. Therefore, teaching public notices and signs are important topics in foreign language education and in the classes where English is taught as a second or a third language.

It is hoped that this study will help all colleagues to teach public notices and signs in their classes. It is also hoped that this study will help colleagues to find new materials in their classes which cultural topic are taught.

7. Discussion Questions for the Instructors

1. Do you think learning and teaching public notices and signs is an important topic in education?
2. Do you think your students will be interested in learning public notices and signs?
3. What is the most unusual public sign you have seen?
4. Do you think public notices and signs are different in different countries?

5. What is your favourite public sign? Why do you think it is very important or necessary?

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