

TEACHING ENGLISH: LISTENING, SPEAKING AND READING DURING ENGLISH CLASSES

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ABSTRACT: *The paper presents the description of various methods of teaching foreign languages, some of the disagreement very clearly stemmed from the attitude of the teachers toward grammar. Some of them support the idea that it is tremendously important that the students know grammar rules, while others maintain that the person learning a foreign language can speak and write with assurance, without knowing any grammar.*

KEY WORDS: *foreign language, teaching method, learning skills, methodology, lesson, classroom language, school curriculum, goals, teaching practice, approaches, methods'procedures and techniques.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *A21*

1. INTRODUCTION

A language teacher must make decisions all of the time. Some of your decisions are relatively minor ones- should homework be assigned that particular day, for instance. Other decisions have more profound implications. What should be the goal of language instructions? Which language teaching method will be the most effective in reaching it? What is the best means of evaluation to see if it has been reached? There is no single correct answer to questions like these. Each teacher has to answer them for himself. A teacher informed about some of these possibilities, will make better decisions.

To many people, foreign language learning is essentially a question of grammar. In the description of various methods of teaching foreign languages, some of the disagreement very clearly stemmed from the attitude of the teachers toward grammar. Some of them support the idea that it is tremendously important that the

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students know grammar rules, while others maintain that the person learning a foreign language can speak and write with ease and assurance, without knowing any grammar.

In the course of time, the approaches used in teaching foreign language had to take into consideration several other factors:

1. The purpose of mastering a foreign language, the materials available and the priority objectives;
2. The development of the linguistic theories, the findings of psychological research;
3. The socio- historical conditions of the times that triggered a particular interest in foreign languages.

The question of the methodology appeared as an issue only in the 19th century, with the integration of foreign language teaching into the secondary- school curriculum. A chronological attempt to look into the history of methods used in teaching foreign languages will point to a plethora of hypotheses, theories, approaches, methods, procedures and techniques (the concepts are often confusedly defined), out of which the most important, still use or recently evolved, are presented during the present chapter.

2. ORAL PRACTICE

In order to help teachers evaluate different types of oral practice activities from the linguistic point of view, we have to find the language needed to handle a variety of oral practice activities in the classroom, to give practice in different elicitation techniques that can be used at the practice adage in the classroom.

We will see the way to use each section:

a. Preliminary discussion

The aim of this preliminary discussion session is not necessary to find answers for all the questions at this stage. It is to add here experience, exchange ideas and to bring problems to light.

Teachers need to:

- ✓ List the types of activity suggested in the textbooks which can be used to give the student practice in speaking English;
- ✓ Decide how far these activities are designed to help the student and how far to test him;
- ✓ Develop any useful techniques to give the students practice in spoken English;
- ✓ Take notice that activities based on “information gap” between two speakers, guessing games are often more motivating than drills or exercises;
- ✓ Realize that students need practice in recognizing the meaning of the new item and in using it in appropriate situations- in short, they need practice in FORM, MEANING and USE;
- ✓ Make an inventory about the visual aids to make the some of the activities more interesting and meaningful.

b. Dialogue practice and lesson extract

- ✓ Dialogues are short enough to be practiced and learnt thoroughly, comparing pronunciation with that of the teacher on the tape.

- ✓ The lessons, longer than the dialogues, are designed to give controlled practice in use of language as well as pronunciation.

The teacher will play the tape and practice and repeating the teacher's part. Then she will underline in the text all the "marker" words. The teacher uses to make the class pay special attention, when something different is going to happen. Then play the tape again, repeating just the phrase with marker words in.

c. Classroom language

This section is designed primarily for the non native- speaker teacher of English by some extra linguistic analysis practice, analyzing the forms, meaning and use of suitable teaching items.

The teacher will select the language which relates to the type of practice activity to be used in class. She will adapt it where necessary to suit the students.

These goals can be fulfilled through:

1. *Conversation drill*. The purpose of using a two lines dialogue for structure practice is to give students practice in using the new structure in a natural way in a meaningful situation. Supposing you wanted your students to practice the structure "should have done" using the following examples with picture cues to produce sentences like:

- ✓ You should have gone to bed earlier.
- ✓ He should have driven more carefully.
- ✓ She should have bought some more bread.
- ✓ He should have tried it on before he bought it.

2. *Substitution labels*

3. *Discrimination exercise*

4. *True/false statements*

5. *Indirect questions (to elicit question forms)*.

6. *Playing a game related to the issue*.

d. Role play and teaching practice

Give the opportunity to put together the language and skills that you have been practicing before, during the previous sections; the practical work is planned in groups, executed, then discussed and evaluated.

Planning

The aim of the teaching practice in this unit is to examine and supplement, if necessary, the practice activities suggested in the textbooks and to practice teaching them.

There are a few useful hints:

- Work in small groups, each teaching a different unit or lesson from the textbook used in the class
- Prepare any necessary flash cards or plan blackboard sketches to help contextualize the language being practiced and as cues or prompts for pair works
- Suggest the stage at which these activities might fit into a lesson.

Teaching practice

At least one activity should be introduced and carried out by each teacher.

- ❑ Begin by introducing the activity to the class or peer group;
- ❑ Remember to check the students understand what it is they are saying;
- ❑ Vary the pace if possible, and also vary the pattern of teacher/ student interaction by using massed pair work as well as individual responses.

Evaluation

Discuss which activities you think would be most useful in your teaching situation. If there is a number of practical suggestions that are not included in your textbook arrange them to be typed up and circulated for the benefit of all teachers, a note of the aim each activity and rough idea of how to make it work effectively in class.

Optional activity

The teacher will plan a longer lesson around the extract. It should include some other types of practice activities, and one or two less controlled types of practice to follow on after the extract.

f. Further reading

The teacher will instruct students for further reading

3. LISTENING

Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90% of them in-school information through listening to teachers and to one another. Often, however, language students do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability.

Listening involves a sender (a person, radio, and television), a message, and a receiver (the listener). Listeners often must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. In addition, listeners must cope with the sender's choice of vocabulary, structure, and rate of delivery. The complexity of the listening process is magnified in second language contexts, where the receiver also has incomplete control of language.

Goals and Techniques for Teaching Listening

Teachers want to produce students who, even if they do not have complete control of the grammar or an extensive lexicon, can fend for themselves in communication situations. In the case of listening, this means producing students who can use listening strategies to maximize their comprehension of aural input, identify relevant and non-relevant information, and tolerate less than word-by-word comprehension.

Focus: The Listening Process

To accomplish this goal, teachers focus on the process of listening rather than on its product. They develop students' awareness of the listening process and listening strategies by asking students to think and talk about how they listen in their native language.

They allow students to practice the full repertoire of listening strategies by using authentic listening tasks. They behave as authentic listeners by responding to student communication as a listener rather than as a teacher.

When working with listening tasks in class, they show students the strategies that will work best for the listening purpose and the type of text. They explain how and why students should use the strategies.

They have students practice listening strategies in class and ask them to practice outside of class in their listening assignments. They encourage students to be conscious of what they're doing while they complete listening tape assignments.

They encourage students to evaluate their comprehension and their strategy use immediately after completing an assignment. They build comprehension checks into in-class and out-of-class listening assignments, and periodically review how and when to use particular strategies.

They encourage the development of listening skills and the use of listening strategies by using the target language to conduct classroom business: making announcements, assigning homework, describing the content and format of tests.

They do not assume that students will transfer strategy use from one task to another. They explicitly mention how a particular strategy can be used in a different type of listening task or with another skill.

4. SPEAKING

Speaking a language involves using the components correctly – making the right sounds, choosing the right words and getting constructions grammatically correct. Pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary tasks will focus on the need for practice in language accuracy.

There are three basic reasons why it is a good idea to give students speaking tasks which provoke them to use all and any language at their command.

Rehearsal: getting students to have a free discussion gives them a chance to rehearse having discussions outside the classroom. This is not the same as practice in which more detailed takes place.

Feedback: speaking tasks where students are trying to use all and any language they know provides feedback for both teacher and students. Teachers can see how well their class is doing and what language problems they are having. Speaking activities can give them enormous confidence and satisfaction.

Engagement: good speaking activities can and should be highly motivating.

The speaking activities tend to follow the same basic pattern: *Engage-Activate-Study* – that is, the teacher gets students interested in the topic, the students do the task while the teacher watches and listens and they then study any language issues that the teacher has identified as being problems.

Characteristics of a successful speaking activity:

1. Learners talk a lot. As much as possible of the period of time allotted to the activity is in fact occupied by learner talk.
2. Participation is even. Classroom discussion is not dominated by a minority of talkative participants

3. Motivation is high. Learners are eager to speak
4. Language is of an acceptable level. Learners express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other.

Traditionally, the purpose of learning to read in a language has been to have access to the literature written in that language. In language instruction, reading materials have traditionally been chosen from literary texts that represent "higher" forms of culture.

5. READING

Reading is an activity with a purpose. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or in order to critique a writer's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for enjoyment, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading guide the reader's selection of texts.

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text presents letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what that meaning is.

Strategies for Developing Reading Skills include:

- previewing: reviewing titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection;
- predicting: using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing style, vocabulary, and content;
- skimming and scanning: using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure, confirm or question predictions;

When reading to learn, students need to follow four basic steps:

1. Figure out the purpose for reading. Activate background knowledge of the topic in order to predict or anticipate content and identify appropriate reading strategies.
2. Attend to the parts of the text that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory.
3. Select strategies that are appropriate to the reading task and use them flexibly and interactively. Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up skills simultaneously to construct meaning.
4. Check comprehension while reading and when the reading task is completed. Monitoring comprehension helps students detect inconsistencies and comprehension failures, helping them learn to use alternate strategies.

Tips to encourage the use of English

Always we should reply in English, even if students are speaking in their own language.

Artificial motivators like the swear box for use of the students' mother tongue can be introduced in a light-hearted way, or a list of forfeits which anyone not speaking in English must carry out. Use dice and a list of six forfeits (which we can vary throughout the year.) Points can be deducted from the team score during games or contests in the mother tongue are used.

We make it clear to the students that we do not welcome the use of the mother tongue in our classes. We simplify the English to suit the comprehension level of the class and stick to a clear body of classroom instructions which are concise and supported by gesture is appropriate.

We help students to make an effort to understand without depending on a quick translation. This can take the time in groups not used to making intelligent guesses or deducing context.

Table 1. Efficient and inefficient reading

<i>Efficient</i>	<i>Inefficient</i>
The language of the text is comprehensible to the learners.	The language of the text is too difficult.
The content of the text is accessible to the learners; they know enough about it to be able to apply their own background knowledge.	The text is too difficult in the sense that the content is too far removed from the knowledge and experience of the learners.
The reading progress fairly fast: mainly because the reader has „automatized” recognitions of common combinations, and does not waste time working out each word or group of words anew.	The reading is slow: the reader does not have a large „vocabulary” of automatically recognized items.
The reader concentrates on the significant bits, and skims the rest; may even skip parts he or she knows to be insignificant.	The reader pays the same amount of attention to all parts of the text.
The reader takes incomprehensible vocabulary in his or her stride: guesses its meaning from the surrounding text, or ignores it and manages without; uses a dictionary only these strategies are insufficient.	The reader cannot tolerate incomprehensible vocabulary items: stops to look every one up in a dictionary, and/or feels discouraged from trying to comprehend the text as a whole.
The reader thinks ahead, hypostasizes, predicts.	The reader does not think ahead, deals with the text as it comes.
The reader has and uses background information to help understand the text.	The reader does not have or use background information.
The reader is motivated to read: by interesting content or a challenging task.	The reader has no particular interest in the reading.
The reader is aware of a clear purpose in reading: for example, to find out something, to get pleasure.	The reader has no clear purpose other than to obey the teacher's instruction.
The reader uses different strategies for different kinds of reading.	The reader uses the same strategy for all texts.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that what is needed is a different orientation to English study, which involves a shift of the focus of attention to the communicative properties of the language.

Language is not a body of facts or information, but a human activity. It is an active response to a situation, a form of human social behavior. At the level of ordinary speech, it is an almost automatic response; at the highest levels of speech and writing it is a complex intellectual, emotional and aesthetic experience. But at all levels language is a form of communication between people, and its success depends on the faithfulness of that communication.

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