TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *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. The teacher must be the creator of new instruments and technologies during the classroom activity. He introduces, creates or applies newer methods and strategies or combines and originally uses the traditional ones.*

KEY WORDS: *language, communication, speech, instrument, cohesion, coherence, feedback, classroom language, strategies, evaluation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world more and more dominated by technique, the abilities connected to communication become the more necessary in everyday life. Although the new technical means allow transmitting information regardless of distance, the interpersonal communication is more brief than ever.

That is why, in order to use all those modern means, we need to develop our communicative abilities for cultural communication.

More often than ever, the burden of international communication falls English. One needs it for access to at least one of the world's scientific literature. It is thus intimately associated with technological and economic development, it is the language

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of computer technology and it is to a considerable degree the universal language of literacy and public communication.

In recent years English language of computer teaching has taken on a new character. Previously, it was usual to talk about the aims of English learning in terms of the so- called ''language skills'' used for different purposes.

Recently, however, a need has arisen to specify the aims of English learning more precisely as English teaching has been called upon to provide students with basic ability to use the language to receive and to convey information associated with their specialist studies, in order to be able to deal with the demands of their future profession.

2. LANGUAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION

Possessing a language as an instrument of communication is not simply a matter of being capable of constructing and understanding grammatical sentences. It is also a question of knowing how to use these sentences in given linguistic and non-linguistic context.

A fully comprehensive science of language must then comprise study of the *uses* of language as well as the *forms* of language.

The issues of immediate concern are to establish how language functions in the total system of human communication, what relationships there are between linguistic forms and the functions which language must perform.

From a functional perspective, an adequate theory of language has then to deal with two types of rule systems:

✓ The rules which concern *verbal interaction* as a form of cooperative activity- pragmatic rules of communication;

✓ The rules which govern the structured linguistic expressions used as instruments in this activity- semantic, syntactic and phonological rules.

The part of a language theory which must account for the systematic properties of language use is currently referred to as *pragmatics.* The main aim of pragmatics is to contribute to the analysis of the conditions that make utterances *appropriate* and *acceptable* in some situations for users of the language.

Pragmatics combines insights of the philosophy of language, the theory of speech acts in particular, as well as of the analysis of conversation. It starts from two basic assumptions: first, that language is a system which provides speakers with a means of interacting with others who also have access to the system. The system can be understood in its entirely only if this transactional aspect of language is considered, that is only if a study of functional uses complements the study of formal proprieties. A second assumption is that linguistic function is no less systematic than linguistic form, and, therefore, the systematic properties of language use also have to be accounted for.

The concept of pragmatics is applicable to language teaching, having definite implications for program design, classroom practice and student orientation.

"Pragmatics indicates that, instead of concentrating on the words coming out of his mouth, the student should be thinking about the ideas in his head that he wishes to communicate. With respect to classroom practice in general, pragmatics defines the

goal of teaching a language as inducting the student not merely to behave, or to manipulate messages in the foreign language. It is only in using language in this way that the student acquires it".

2.1. Cohesion and coherence

Discourse, because of its patterned nature, can be analyze because of its impromptu nature- a conversation may be changed, redirected, interrupted, annulled etc. Written discourse, by it more permanent, graphic, and controlled nature is easier to investigate. Basically the analysis is possible because sentences within a discourse have meaningful relationships with each other, in order to express the meaningful progression of ideas (coherence).

The problem for the learner is to see how the pieces of the language fit together to give the final meaningful picture.

The first ability is to recognize how sentences are used in the performance of acts of communication, the ability to understand the rhetorical functioning of language in use- this has to do with *the rhetorical coherence of discourse.*

The second one is the ability to recognize and manipulate the formal devices which are used to combine sentences- that is *the grammatical cohesion of text.*

Cohesion refers to propositional development, to the formal links between sentences, *coherence* to illocutionary functional development.

Mention must be made of the fact that cohesion is closely related to register and style. People do have a wide range of choices available to them when they speak and write. According to Widdowson, "a discourse is coherent to the extent that recognize it as a representative of normal language use to extend that we can accept the sequence of illocutionary acts as conforming to know conversation."

2.2. The process of communication

Communication is a process in which people share information, ideas and feelings. The communication process is made up of various elements. These elements are: senders and receivers, messages, channels, feedback and setting.

People get involved in communication because they have ideas and feelings they want to share. In most communications situations, people are receivers at the same time as they are senders: they are senders- receivers. The message is made up the ideas and the feelings that the senders- receivers want to share. Ideas and feelings are shared only if they are represented by verbal or non- verbal symbols.

Every word in our language is a *verbal symbol* that stands for a particular thing or idea. *Non- verbal* symbols are anything we communicate without using words, such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, vocal tones, and appearance and so on.

Symbols are important to communication: the ideal message in communication is one that is received as it is intended.

There are three principles of transactional communication:
1. Participation is continuous and simultaneous;
2. All communications have a past, present and future;

3. All communicators play roles.

2.3. Types of communication

There are five kinds of communication most often used:
a. The intrapersonal communication is the kind of communication that occurs within us. It involves thoughts, feelings and the way we look at ourselves.
b. The interpersonal communication occurs when we communicate on a one- to- one basis, usually in informal, unstructured sentences, occurring mostly between two people.
c. Interviewing- a series of questions and answers usually involving two people, whose primary purpose is to obtain information on a particular subject.
d. Small group communication occurs when a small number of people meet to solve a problem. The group must be small enough so that each member in the group has a chance to interact with all the other members.
e. Public communication- the sender- receiver (the speaker) sends messages (the speech) to an audience. The audience members may have a chance to ask questions at the end of the speech.

3. TEACHNIQUES OF TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH ENGLISH

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 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.

3.1. 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.

d. Exploitation and teaching skills

✓ Exploitation gives the opportunity for less controlled practice in classroom language, before the free oral production required.

✓ Teaching skills required are eliciting, correcting, checking understanding to write a material and prepare visual aids to supplement the present textbooks where necessary.

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.*
e. Role play and teaching practice

Given 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 a ketch 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.

3.2. Teaching vocabulary

The aim of this section is to make teachers aware of the variety of techniques that can be used to teach vocabulary for active or passive control, and to give practice in the English necessary for presenting, eliciting and checking understanding of new vocabulary.

We will see now the way to use each section:

Preliminary discussion

❑ We must distinguish between active and passive knowledge

❑ Broadly speaking, ''vocabulary'' falls into two categories:

  a) words with specific meaning;

b)   words with a value or a grammatical function.

❑ When planning to do a reading or listening comprehension exercise in class, we must decide which new words to pre- teach, before the passage is read or heard, which to leave until later, and which not to teach at all.

❑ If a new structure is to be presented we should introduce new vocabulary items.

❑ Teachers must study the various techniques in each unit for teaching new vocabulary.

❑ Teachers should reflect of how important is the question ''do you understand?'', and check that each student has really understood the meaning of the new words.

  a.   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 check with the students the comprehension, pronunciation of the teacher on the tape.

  b.   Classroom language. When teaching vocabulary, you normally start by doing one or two things: you either give the students the word or ask the meaning, or you explain the meaning or concept, and ask the word.

  Some suggestions of using this section:

❑ Teaching meaning- announcing your intentions

First, Before we begin	I want to	Check that Make sure	The meaning of a few words what one or two words mean.

❑ Making the students guess the meaning

I will give you	a clue some help	It's something to do with _____ You might hear a _____ saying it.	
Let's see if you can guess		I will give you	a context: _____ an example _____

❑ Looking at the word itself

Look! The word	ends in	''tion'' ''ness''	so it must be a noun
	begin with ''un'' so it means ''not'' something		

❑ Looking at the word in context

Now look at the	sentence	Before, Carefully, After, Beginning '' _____ ''	what	Does that tell you? Does the word '' ___ '' tell you? Is the author talking about?

So what could this work	be about? refer to? mean?

4. CONCLUSION

Foreign language learning is considered to be hard work. Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher `to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

The main aim is a communicative competence. The problem with the primary school pupils is that they tend to have a short span of attention. They need a lot of opportunities to play and explore their surroundings. Playing games and singing songs are very important as they provide a necessary outlet and ensures that the pupils are learning while having fun. The teacher should come with good ideas in order to fill the pupils with enthusiasm.

Playful learning agrees with the stage of development the children are in. Playing games in the EFL classroom provides good practice in all the skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and in all stages of teaching and for many types of communication. The use of games in teaching a foreign language requires careful planning, design and execution. Games should not only be used as time fillers or ice breakers.

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