

Innovative Techniques in the Teaching of English Language

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Language which has been considered man's most remarkable achievement, Language is a system. It is not a random collection of items. Patterning is all important. Each language has its own structure, its own system. It has its own unique way of organizing its units into an internal structure.

A language is a means of communication.. English language not only belongs to English people but to the people all over the world. English is considered as a secondary passport. Language is only one of the codes we use to express our ideas. Languages continually change; their statistics are "non-stationary." Not only do they change continually with history, as social conditions in general alter, but they may show a difference, at any particular time, as environmental conditions differ. The relationship between the whole structure of a language (grammatical formalism) and the outside world associations (its semantic functioning) is extremely complicated; it is essentially empirical and above all, varies between different languages.

Communication is a complex interaction process involving shared assumptions and unspoken agreements between individuals.

Language Proficiency

Generally when the question of language teaching and communication are raised, one can immediately think about the knowledge of the structure of the language concerned and also proficiency in the four basic skills of the language. They are

1. Listening skill
2. Speaking skill
3. Reading skill
4. Writing skill

Among these four skills, both listening skill and reading skill are called as **receptive skills** or **passive skills** and the other two skills, namely speaking skill and writing skill are called as

productive skills or **active skills**. It is very important to note that there is a close link between all the above skills. In other words, every skill in its own way is interconnected in order to achieve the overall objective of communication. Unless one has systematic exposure in receptive skills, he/she cannot be systematic in productive skill. Everything takes place and develops within the linguistic, cultural and social boundaries of the concerned society in which the particular language is spoken. It is the curriculum, syllabus; text book, teaching methodologies under the efficient functioning of the teacher in the class room, those students are shaped in different skills mentioned above.

The main concern as language teachers is not to inform our students about the language but to develop their ability to use the language for a variety of communicative purposes. The teacher will play different roles at the three stages of the learning process.

Presentation : when a teacher introduces something to be learned

Practice : when a teacher allows the learners to work under her directions

Production : when a teacher gives them opportunities to work on their own

Presentation Stage : the teacher's main task is to serve as a kind of **informant**.

It is not enough to be merely a teacher who wears a "know all" mask, but a facilitator who understands her students, empathizes with him/her, and in fact becomes a part of the search with her students, for knowledge and wisdom. One of the advantages of systematically incorporating into one's teaching these learning-how-to-learn tasks is that learners became aware not only of their own preferred ways of learning, but also the fact that there are choices, not only in what to learn but also in how to learn.

The mind-soul dualism was interpreted as a basis for two independent purpose for communication. One purpose was intellectual or cognitive in nature; the other was emotional. One appealed to the mind, and the other to the soul .According this theory, one purpose of communication was informative - an appeal to the mind. A second was persuasive – an appeal to the soul, the emotions. We should employ atleast four criteria for our definition of purpose. Communication purpose must be specified in such a way that it is:

1. Not logically contradictory or inconsistent with itself;

2. Behavior-centered; that is, expressed in terms of human behaviors;
3. Specific enough for us to be able to relate it to actual communication behavior;
4. Consistent with the ways in which people to communicate.

Language is essentially a skill. It is not a content-subject like science, social studies ,commerce, etc. which aims at imparting information and fill the human mind with knowledge. A skill may be called the ability to do something well. Swimming, playing, etc. are skills which people perform after acquiring them. Knowing about these things is an intellectual exercise. Cognition and using or doing them is a skill (action). It must be remembered that language is a complex skill involving four sub-skills which are as follows:

1. Listening
2. Speaking
3. Reading and
4. Writing

The four language skills are divided into two parts:

- ❖ Receptive skills (a)
Listening and
- (b)

Reading

- ❖ Productive Skills (a)
Speaking and
- (b)

Writing

Teaching Aids

Teaching aids reinforce the spoken or written words with concrete images and thus provide rich perceptual images which are the bases to learning. When these materials are used in an interrelated way they make learning permanent. They provide for a great variety of methods. Teaching aids supplement the teacher and

they do not supplant him. The aids alone cannot accomplish the task of education and the teacher always remains the main pivot of all teaching.

Advantages of Using Teaching Aids

Effective use of teaching aids:

- ❖ Adds interest and involvement
- ❖ Makes learning permanent
- ❖ Reduces verbalism
- ❖ Develops greater understanding
- ❖ Stimulates self-activity
- ❖ Fosters continuity of thought
- ❖ Makes us teach efficiently

- ❖ Helps in overcoming language barriers
- ❖ Provides a great variety of methods
- ❖ Brings the world into the class room

Classification of Teaching Aids

All teaching aids can be broadly classified under three heads namely.

1. Projected and non-projected aids
2. Audio aids, visual aids, audio-visual aids and activity aids
3. Hardware and software

Here the classification followed is audio aids, visual aids, audio-visual aids and activity aids.

CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHING AIDS

Visual aids	Audio aids	Audio-visual aids	Activity aids
Pictures, Photographs, Flash cards, Poster, Charts, Diagrams, Graphs, Maps, Cartoons.	Radio, Record Player, Tape Recorder, Compact Disc Player	Sound motion, Picture Projector, Television, Video closed circuit, Tape-slide Projector, LCD Projector	Demonstration, Programmes Instruction, Teaching Machine Computer assisted Instruction, Language Laboratory

Learning -Teaching Strategies

The training which learners should receive should prepare them to direct the course of their own learning, that is, it should take them from their states of varying degrees of dependence to the state of the greatest of independence or autonomy which is possible in a given set of circumstances.

- Co-operative learning
- Puzzling out things
- Self and peer correction
- Choice of activities
- Trouble-shooting sessions
- Confidence sessions
- Using pupil teachers
- Extensive language activities outside the classroom

Definitions of a Good Language Learner

Good language learners have the following characteristics. They:

- Find a style of learning that suits them
- Try to figure out how the language works
- Are like detectives; always looking for clues that will help them understand how the language works
- Are creative and experiment with language
- Learn from their errors
- Use knowledge of their first language in mastering a second language
- Learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

Co-Operative Learning

- Pair work
- Group work
- Role play

Pair Work

- Provides a lot of oral practice
- Gives learners a chance to work independently
- Prepares learners for group work
- Provides an opportunity to talk face-to-face, which reflects real life situations

Group Work

- Pair and group work differ in :
 - Time set
 - Nature of the group work
 - Type of activity

Role Play

- Students play imaginary characters in given situations
- It brings a wide variety of language experiences into the classroom
- It gives an opportunity to use language as used in real life situations
- It helps better self expression (as it is full of fun and enjoyment)

Innovations and creativity in Language teaching through Language Games and teaching skills.

Techniques of Teaching English:

How a thing is done in class is a *technique*. A technique is 'implementational – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective' (Anthony 1972). Techniques are closely related to methods and approaches. Another important point to be remembered is that having a repertoire of techniques is by itself no guarantee of success; one must know *when* to use *which* technique. Language has been divided into four main skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). Each skill has been further divided into sub-skills.

Language Games

Psychologists believe that learning should be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. Children tend to learn more when they are tension-free. They can and do learn a lot of things through games. Language can also be learnt through a play-way method. Language games have both fun and excitement and serve the pedagogical purpose. It must be noted that language games would fail in their purpose if they are not planned in advance and used methodically and carefully. According to Peter Hubbard et al., “Games are often wrongly regarded as an end-of-term activity or something to fill in the last five minutes of a lesson. In fact they can be used at all stages of practice from controlled to free”. W.R. Lee discusses the importance of Language games in his book and states, “Language learning is many sided, which need not discourage us from seeing it crudely as a matter of four skills: those of successful listening, speaking, reading and writing” (1965:2) Language games can be divided into four kinds:

Listening games
Speaking games
Reading games
Writing games

Role of Language Games in Language Proficiency

The idea of play-way method of teaching English was proposed in the late 19th century as it was brought that interesting games, if included in the teaching activity, could increase the motivation of the learners; learning will take place in an atmosphere of freedom and enjoyment. This idea has been incorporated in all the late methods of teaching English in the form of language games. Language games can introduce a healthy competition among the learners in English classes. They are useful for improving the learner’s knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and his language skill.

Advantages of Language Games

Language games, if organized well with care and interest, help the learners, especially the young ones, acquire a lot of language, because while playing a game learners have opportunities to learn without stress and anxiety, which is good for learning. The teacher uses a lot of language without conscious attention on it and this language is useful for acquisition. For example, the teacher uses words and phrases such as the following in plenty during the games.

- ✓ Stand here
- ✓ Make a circle
- ✓ Follow me
- ✓ Are you ready?
- ✓ Touch your nose
- ✓ Stand behind here
- ✓ Sit down
- ✓ Do like this
- ✓ Can we begin?
- ✓ Cross your legs
- ✓ Show your cards
- ✓ Shut your eyes

and so on. These serve as a valuable input for language acquisition in a tension-free situation. Language games are not necessary in advanced classes. When necessary, games suitable for adult learners can be used in advanced classes.

Types of Language Games

1. Jumbled Words

Through this type of game the students are able to develop the skill of construction of a sentence and also sequence of words in.

2. Expanding the text

This type of expanding the text game is used to develop the skill of formation of sentences, to improve their grammatical knowledge and to improve the skill of concept and creativity.

3. Reading Aloud

This type of game is used to develop the skill of listening ability and also the questioning ability.

4. Word Card

Word card game is used for construction of sentences and to develop creative thing coherence and continuity of writing skills.

5. Three Picture Story

It helps to develop the skill like creativity in speech, imagination, pronunciation and sentence formation.

Techniques of Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills:

LISTENING and SPEAKING are two sides of the same coin – both are closely interlinked. The table below, which lists some sub-skills, illustrates this point.

Listening	Speaking
identify sounds	produce meaningful sounds
segment sounds into meaningful groups	produce sounds in meaningful chunks
understand syntactic patterns	produce language in syntactically acceptable pattern forms
interpret stress,rhythm and intonation	produce language using proper stress, rhythm and intonation
identify information/gist	convey information
identify emotional/attitudinal tone	formulate appropriate response

How do the concepts of ‘notional’, ‘functional’ on the one hand and ‘communicative’ on the

other relate to each other? It is the relationship of means to end. Our aim is to teach communicative ability, and this may lead us at the syllabus design level to specify and organize our teaching content in a semantic way. Semantic syllabuses are a means to an end – a vehicle for arriving at a destination. But it is also only one means to an end, and we judge a course communicative or otherwise not only in terms of how it is organized, but also in terms of its methodology.

Techniques used in the Communicative Approach:

In communicative language teaching, information gap tasks are used. An information gap occurs in a situation where one person knows something which other people do not. Information gap tasks are introduced in the classroom using the following techniques:

❖ Language games:

According to Morrow (1981) language games are communicative when they are characterized by three features: *information gap, choice and feedback.*

❖ Mind Engaging Tasks:

Communicative activities are based on the implicit recognition that a learner learns best

when his/her mind is on tasks to be done *in* the language rather than *on* language itself. Thus many problem-solving activities are a part of the communicative approach.

❖ Role Play:

Since the ability to manipulate language in a social context is an important aspect of communicative competence, most communicative materials include role play as part of the activities.

❖ Retrieving Text Order:

The technique involves the use of scrambled sentences and scrambled picture techniques.

By doing these activities, learners become aware of discourse features which are distinct

from grammatical features. They become familiar with the use of cohesive devices ('and', 'or', 'nevertheless', etc.), anaphoric

pronouns (the boy - he, the dog - it) and semantic clues (use of lexical items, topic, etc.) through these activities.

❖ Group Work / Pair Work:

Group work and pair work form an important part of any communicative activity, for

peer interaction is an effective means of acquiring some language features which are not

available in a formal teacher-fronted class.

The techniques of language teaching are, to understand the students' beliefs and attitudes,

to meet the anticipated objectives, to keep the syllabus short, precise and attractive, to indicate the advantages and possible disadvantages, to make the term easy for compliance. The learning should be the goal of teaching but not the mirror image of teaching. The teaching should be based on real-life needs provided opportunity for skill-practice. The teaching should encourage the learners to evaluate themselves. A language teacher takes pains to teach all the lessons well. The class is made lively and humorous, the emphasis should be on teaching than on testing. The methods adopted should not pressurise the students. How a thing is done in class is a *technique*. A technique is 'implementational – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective' (Anthony 1972). Techniques are closely related to methods and approaches.

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