Effective Teaching of English as a Second Language

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Abstract

The status of English as a second language in Nigeria implies that it plays a very key function in the social, professional and educational life of Nigeria. It is important to point out that English is not the mother-tongue of any ethnic group in Nigeria, and this means that its teaching in schools is not a question of refining a language already known. Over 95% of Nigerian children depend on the school to learn English. This has tremendous instructional implications, one of which is the need to give priority attention to the development of oral language competence. Children should be helped to understand and speak the language first before reading and writing are introduced. In other words, its basic sounds and structures need to be taught. Another is that emphasis should be placed on the language and not information about the language. This means that practical examples of how the language is used in different contexts have to be provided. That is, situations demonstrating the use of the language items being taught have to be created to make English learning meaningful and interesting. One other important implication relates to what the goals of English teaching should be. According to the National Policy on Education (2014 revised), "the objective of English teaching is to give children permanent literacy and the ability to communicate effectively" Perhaps what needs to be added is that the type of English that is taught and learnt should not only be nationally acceptable but must be internationally intelligible. To what extent have the instructional efforts achieved the desired goals? This issue is one of the foci of this article among others that inform effective teaching of English as a second language.

Keywords: English language, language skills, learning, second language, teaching methodologies

Introduction

A number of factors have been blamed for poor standard of English in schools. These are poor methodology, inadequate preparation of teachers, government's lack of commitment, and the examination system. The issue of methodology is a complex one. There seems to be no agreement among educators about this. While some blame the problem on the abandonment of traditional grammar, others argue that it is precisely because of the teaching of grammar, traditional or structural that students are failing to learn English. Another factor that is often blamed for the decline in English standards is inadequate preparation of

teachers. The consensus of opinion is that Nigerian English teachers are not thoroughly grounded in content and methodology. It is doubtful, for example, whether the average Nigerian teacher can intelligently point to any principle, linguistic or psychological, which guides his instructional practices. Government's lack of commitment is another factor militating against effective teaching and learning of English in Nigeria. A clear manifestation of this is that government is not doing enough to implement the national language policy in a meaningful way. The evidence of this is variation in practice from state to state and sometimes within a state. This applies particularly to the language of instruction in primary schools. Some states adopt what is called "Straight for English" policy while others use the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community in the first few years of primary education. And it is not clear what level of literacy is expected in the mother tongue before shifting to English. One tragic consequence of this lack of commitment on the part of government is that many children in the school system are neither literate in English nor in their mother-tongue.

Another pointer to government's insincerity is that most schools lack good buildings, books and other materials or equipment needed for effective English teaching. In many schools, teachers of other subjects are asked to teach English. And more often than not, teachers are not paid their salaries promptly. That is why some people have observed that many of the problems facing the teaching of English in Nigeria are system problems. One other factor is the examination system. The main allegations are that it engages teachers to teach for exams at the expense of use of English, and a good grade in the WAEC's English Examination, for example, is not a reflection of the student's competence in the language. The strategies that might be used to promote effective English teaching and learning will be addressed in this chapter.

Objectives of English Language Teaching (ELT)

The objectives of ELT as stated in the *National Policy on Education* (2014 revised) call for all-round proficiency:

a. Ability to speak fluent and acceptable English;

b. Ability to understand simple conversational English spoken at normal speed;

c. Ability to comprehend contemporary written English of a level of attainment;

d. Ability to write clear, acceptable English on such topics as prescribed.

A close observation of the English language teaching process reveals that a great output of teaching and learning materials have failed to demonstrate an

integrated understanding of communication. This shortcoming may be due to the fact that the ESL objectives have not been put into the right focus. There seems to be an apparent contradiction in the approach to the concept of English language teaching and learning process. For instance, the thrust of the ESL curricular is that what students need to be taught is the linguistic competence (rules, grammar, lexis and host of idiomatic phrases and vocabulary). The effective use of all these for communication processes is given little or no thought at all. Learners are left in a vacuum to figure it out themselves. Yet, the huge percentage of students' failures constantly recorded in the School Certificate Examination can be linked to poor communicative skills. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that in Nigeria, as far as English Language teaching and learning is concerned, there is need to develop competence in using the language for general as well as for academic purposes.

Assessing Learner's Needs
One of the main issues in ESL teaching is that of learner's needs. It has always been assumed that curriculum planners/designers know everything about the leaner and his needs. Yet, learners to some degree, especially at the post primary schools, are reasonably aware of their own language needs. Yet, learners to some degree, especially at the post primary schools, are reasonably aware of their own language needs. Though it is impossible to cater for learners' needs individually, such needs can be handled in groups. Thus, organised education can only form sufficiently large class to justify the efforts and finance required to satisfy his needs. Course planning "must be based not only on the needs of the individual leaner, but must take into account the needs of the social group to which he belongs, the institutions providing the educational framework, and the social institutions that provide the resources".

Learners' needs in language learning are also dependent on political situations, societal demands and career opportunities. These needs also include learners' wants which are often derived from their own perceptions or/and their parents'. Personal preferences of students also influence their attitude. Students' perceptions of their needs can be researched through carefully drafted and interpreted questionnaires.

Central to this concept of language teaching and learning is the learners' ability to identify their own needs. The *how* and *who* decide the *what* to be learned are taken care of through students' needs assessment approach. This learners' needs assessment approach will allow for much learner choice, and ultimately an improved ESL curriculum and its teaching and learning process could be engendered.

The Discipline of English as a Second Language (ESL)

As a discipline in the school system, ESL is planned as a subject and as a medium of instruction in complementarity with the indigenous languages. In the meantime, the English language is presented as a subject in the curriculum at levels of education, its role as a medium of instruction must be properly considered at each level, based on the capacity of the indigenous languages available to play such roles efficiently. In terms of objectives, the discipline should be developed as:

i.   A means of inculcating the spirit of nationalism in learners;

ii.   A means of gaining access to modernism and

iii. A tool of internationalism.

The Components of the ESL discipline are:

i.   Practice of English language/use of English (to acquire the knowledge and skills of the language).

ii.   Description of English language (to learn about the language, that is, learning the rules and meta language) and

iii. Literature-in-English

The practice in English component emphasizes the efficient mastery of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This aspect constitutes the major focus of the English Programme in primary and Secondary Schools. At the University undergraduate level, after which it is assumed that the students have gained sufficient mastery of English skills, the description of rules should be a focus or should be focus on. The post-graduate level of the programme should focus on the theories underlying both the practice and description of English language.

The Literature-in-English component contains any record of human experience, oral or written in English or translated into it in any of the literary genres of prose, poetry and drama. The subject matter may be fictional and non-fictional and the context may be African or non-African, though the African context ought to be emphasized. While literature may be integrated into the extensive reading sub-component of English language practice in primary education, it should be taught as a compulsory subject, separate from English language in the secondary school curriculum.

The use of English component is a feature of tertiary education in Nigeria. It denotes the various programmes for the practice of English at this level. Technically, three areas may be identified in the component within the framework of ESL:

a. Remedial English (RE)

b. Developmental English (DE) or English for academic purposes (EAP), and

c. Vocational English (VE) or English for occupational purposes (EOP)

While the remedial English (RE) is designed to cater for the deficiencies of learners in the learning of English at the earlier levels of education, the developmental English course caters for the demands made by learners on English as a medium of instruction in their various academic courses. The demands require the level of students' mastery of English to be raised to appreciable standard that will enable them to engage gainfully in study skills and activities encompassing advanced listening and reading comprehension, note-taking, advanced writing, summary work and library studies.

Both remedial English (RE) and Developmental English (DE) are crucial for all new entrants to tertiary institutions. Lastly, the Vocational English (VE) is tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of learners who want to engage in specific professional or occupational assignments such as engineering, tourism, business and commerce.

Language Teaching Methodologies

From the 19th century to the present time, there has been a proliferation of language teaching methods. This period was dominated by the *grammar-translation method,* with its emphasis on the learning of rules and its reliance on the technique of translation into and out of the target language. Using this method, *emphasis was also placed on paradigmatic treatment of the parts of speech and the reading and writing of the target language (TL).* This method lacked dynamism and made the teaching of the target language for actual communication an almost unattainable objective. It also contributed to the *death* of Latin as a language of communication since the method used in teaching it did not promote its usability in real life situations. With the death of Latin, its method which had indiscriminately been used in teaching English also died naturally.

From the beginning of the 20th century, in rapid succession, came a bewildering number of changes from one language method to another. For instance, the *direct methodofficially established in France in 1901 substituted the teacher for the textbook.* It bore a strong resemblance to the *natural method,* which assumed that the second language could be learned in the same way that the first language is acquired.

The debate on language teaching over the years has centred on the rival claims of two main groups of methodologists. The emphasis of one group in language teaching is on practice and repetition and *the aim of the teacher is*

to teach the language, not about the language. This group is represented by the audio-lingual habit theory. The other group, represented by the *cognitivecode-learning theory* stresses the importance of learning the rules, an approach to language teaching based on the principle that language is a rule-governed be-haviour. None of these groups has succeeded in establishing its claim to have discovered the one best method of language teaching. Perhaps it is possible to get a sense of the range of method proposals by looking at a synoptic view of the roles defined for teachers and learners within various methods. Such a scanty synoptic view can be seen in the following chart:

Teaching methods and teacher-learner roles

Method	Teacher roles	Leaner roles
Situational language teaching	Context setter	Imitator
	Error corrector	Memorizer
Audio-lingualism	Language modeller	Pattern practiser
	Drill leader	Accuracy enthusiast
Communicative language teaching	Needs analyst	Improviser
	Task designer	Negotiator
Total physical response	Commander	Order taker
	Action monitor	Performer
Cooperative language learning	Counsellor	Collaborator
	Paraphraser	Whole person
The natural approach	Actor	Guesser
	Props user	Immerser
Suggestopedia	Auto-hyprotist	Relaxer
	Authority figure	True-believer

As suggested in the chart, some schools of methodology see the teacher as ideal language model and commander of classroom activity (e.g. audiolingual, nat-ural approach, suggestopedia, total physical response) whereas others see the teacher as background facilitator and classroom colleague to the learners (e.g. Communicative Language Teaching, Cooperative Language Learning)

There are other global issues to which spokespersons for the various meth-ods and approaches respond in alternative ways. For example, should second language learning by adults be modelled on first language learning by children? One set of schools (e.g. Total Physical Response, Natural Approach) notes that first language acquisition is the only universally successful model of language learning we have, and thus that second language pedagogy must necessarily

model itself on first language acquisition. An opposed view (e.g. silent way, suggestopedia) observes that adults have different brains, interests, timing constraints and learning environments than do children, and that adult classroom learning therefore has to be fashioned in a way quite dissimilar to the way in which nature fashions how first languages are learned by children.

Another key distinction turns on the role of perception versus production in early stages of language learning. One school of thought proposes that learners should begin to communicate, to use a new language actively, on first contact (e.g. audiolingual method, silent way, cooperative language learning), while the other school of thought states that an initial and prolonged period of perception (listening, reading) should precede any attempts at production (e.g., natural approach).

The ESL teacher should examine objectively methods proposed and their relevance to the learners' needs and the immediate environment in which the methods are to operate. Also, the teacher should vary his methods according to the calibre of learners because methods that are suitable for young children may not work for adult learners. English language teaching is a continuous process, so a comprehensive methodology of ESL instruction should provide remedial teaching. There should be an in-built remedial teaching. There should be an in-built remedial programme so that many learners, especially the weak ones, can have an opportunity of benefitting from the system. Remedial teaching therefore should constitute an integral part of ESL teaching.

ESL Teaching Materials

English language teaching is a service discipline. Therefore its teaching materials should relate statements about form and meaning to the context in which these are given expression through language. Materials for teaching and learning should demonstrate an integrated understanding of language and communication, but it is hardly so in our secondary schools. The textbook is one of the few teaching materials available to ESL teachers and it thus becomes an indispensible tool for most teachers. However, many English language textbooks in use are glaringly inadequate in content and method. Yet, most teachers follow the prescribed textbooks slavishly without giving room for their own initiative and creativity. Teachers do not often bother because the materials and methods of presentation of the activities have already been specified by the author irrespective of the prescription of the JSS/SS ESL syllabuses in terms of content and methods.

Since ESL teaching is very closely tied to the textbook, the traditional practice of selection of textbooks/materials by various agencies responsible for education should be discarded. Ministry officials are the least suited for textbooks

selection for schools since they do not implement such books in the class. Teachers, as much as possible, should be involved in the selection of textbooks because they are the users. Equally, textbooks and material writers should be advised to live up to expectation since textbooks are indispensable to the ESL teaching and learning.

Procedures for Teaching the Language Skills

The listening skill

Listening involves recognizing sounds, giving them meaning from one's experience, reacting to or interpreting them and integrating them with one's knowledge and experience. However, just hearing does not guarantee listening. Listening is a major means of learning. We can classify the different types of listening as follows:

a. Passive or marginal listening which is prevalent as pupils are engrossed in one activity but listen just enough to be aware of what is being said. Listening is not the focus here, it is marginal.

b. Appreciative listening which is involved when the pupil enjoys a story, a poem or a recording.

c. Attentive listening which is involved in situations when the pupil listens to directions or announcements.

d. Analytical listening which occurs when the pupil analyses what he hears in terms of his own experience and or judgement. In such a case, the pupil may be heard pondering: "I wonder why?"

How to teach Listening

The teacher should note that young children are easily distracted. Because they have a short attention span, he should try to adjust to this and help them grow in ability to attend without undue pressure:

a) The teacher can plan brief periods of any one given activity. The length of stories, recordings and music periods should be within the pupils' attention span.

b) Methods of presentation should vary and there should be use of attractive, bold materials, pictures, bright colours, and interesting objects to help to gain pupils' attention.

c) The teacher should allow pupils to wriggle or twist. He should not insist that they sit up straight like pieces of furniture when they are going through listening activities.

d) The physical arrangement of the classroom should be such that pupils are comfortable and outside noises and interferences are at a minimum.

1. The teacher should help the pupils to understand; their listening is important. For example, do not repeat an explanation, directions or announcement over and over.

a) If pupils know that the teacher will repeat on request they will not appreciate the essence of listening.

b) They should make activities so interesting that children will want to listen and will miss something if they do not.

c) The teacher should speak in a voice that is adequate but low enough to require listening if the pupils are to hear what is being said. Do not try to talk above the noise of the class nor speak so softly that you cannot be heard.

d) Do not talk too much as the voice that goes on and on becomes "monotonous and the pupils tend to tune off."

2. The teacher should create a relaxed, happy atmosphere and relationship among the children and between them and himself. A pupil who is relaxed and free from emotional strain can listen more easily than the child who is uneasy, hostile or afraid.

3. When the teacher has ensured that all conditions are rightly set for teaching listening, he starts with the beginners by helping them to develop an awareness of sounds e.g. the sounds they hear every day. The teacher can begin by calling attention to types of sounds (recorded in a tape) such as those of nature/animals (a cat mewing, a cock crowing, a dog barking) or the traffic (a car hooting, a train passing by, a motor-cycle ...) or human sounds (a baby crying, a woman/man shouting or laughing. One approach is to say to the pupils "Close your eyes. Listen carefully and tell me what you hear". They may identify the sounds and describe them as loud, soft, close, far away, sharp and so on. Rewind the tape and replay to allow pupils listen again to identify more sounds more accurately.

4. Provide many opportunities for a wide variety of meaningful listening experiences. There should be listening for pleasure, appreciation and information. The teacher may use stories, poetry, records, directions, tapes, musical instruments, television, radio and conversation with adults and other children (over the telephone, though recorded on a tape).

5. Arrange opportunities for pupils to listen for certain purposes, such as answering questions, solving riddles, completing rhymes, putting ideas in se-

quence, identifying words which do not rhyme and detecting irrelevant sentences.

6. Where there is a language laboratory around, the teacher should take the pupils out to the language laboratory and give them the opportunity to:

a) Listen to various recordings and then comment on the recordings etc.

b) Record their own stories, poems, sentences and so on and play these back for them to listen to with their peers and react to the recordings by passing their own comments from their personal views.

7. Various listening skill development games could be devised and played in the classroom. For example:

a) The teacher instructs the pupils on how to play the LISTENING GAME whereby he passes a message round the class. The message will be relayed into the ear of the first pupil who will in turn relay the message word for word to the next pupil to him and so on. The last pupil to receive the message will come up to the board to write the message he received for all members of the class to cross-check with what we have.

b) If the written message turns out to be distorted or different from the original message sent by the teacher, the teacher can trace where the "breakdown in communication" occurred.

c) Constant repetition of various listening skill games such as that one above helps the pupils to listen more attentively to messages/instructions given them.

d) The teacher must however ensure that the messages given to pupils are graded. The teacher should start with very brief and meaningful messages (especially when training younger children in the junior classes).

e) As you progress with older children, the messages could become longer and more complex.

The Speaking Skill

It is important to pay attention to the development of oracy skills in children because they need English first of all to communicate orally in it, that is, to understand it when it is spoken to them and to express their feelings and experiences in it in a way that is intelligible and convincing. The second reason for giving priority to oral language foundation is that reading and writing build on it. Children will learn to read and write English easily if their oracy skills in the language have been adequately developed. English learning will have meaning and relevance for children if this fact is observed in its instruction.

Teaching children with different language background the speaking skill

One challenge primary and secondary school teachers face is that of helping children with different language background in their classrooms. They may fall into four categories viz:

    i.   Those who speak English fluently already;

    ii.   Those who can speak some English;

    iii.   Those who speak Pidgin; and

    iv.   Those who cannot speak English at all.

It should be noted that all these categories of children have come to school to learn and they need English to do this. They all can be profitably taught to speak English and be literate in it. The first essential requirement on the part of the teacher is a positive attitude to these children as persons and to their language background. As the teacher provides opportunities for them to hear and speak English, and as they interact with others, they will come to learn the type of English that they need to meet their personal needs and the demands of the school curriculum. The following are teachers' main goals of speech development:

    i.   To help children to express their experiences or talk about things in their environment, and

    ii.   To encourage the use of speech as a social instrument, that is, to communicate with others in the form of sharing ideas, giving commands, making requests, asking questions and supplying answers.

Teachers should not see opportunities which encourage children to play and talk as merely a way of occupying them; rather, they should be seen as vehicles of speech development. These should therefore be frequent, guided and facilitated by teachers. One way of doing this is to ensure that the children are supplied with materials to play with and talk about e.g. toys, water, counters, sand, clay etc. Children may be encouraged to bring some of these from home to supplement the school's supplies. Another way to encourage speech development is for teachers to develop a positive attitude to the playing or talking that goes on around them. These activities are naturally engaged in at home by children and they should be encouraged at school as well. This is an excellent way of making English learning a pleasure and something meaningful and functional.

The following are some of the activities which the teacher can use to achieve the goals of speech development:

i. News sharing: This has to do with guiding or leading children to talk about their experiences, events, objects within and outside the classroom. The teacher should share interesting news with the children and should invite them to share their own news, too – all in a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere.

ii. Telling them simple stories and asking them to tell stories of their own – real or fiction.

iii. Reading aloud to them and inviting their reaction to the stories read.

iv. Talking about pictures.

v. Retelling – listening to and telling stories.

vi. A child telling a group of children a story or describing something, somebody or a scene.

vii. Pairs of children or small groups with one telling a story while others react.

viii. The teacher discussing a topic or event with a group of children and requiring each child, or some of the children to comment upon, add to or ask questions about what has been said.

ix. Members of a group allocated tasks and each having to explain his responsibilities and tasks to others.

The reading skill

Reading is a process of interaction between the author and the reader. In other words, during the reading process, the reader is actively trying to make sense of the written or printed text by integrating his previous relevant experiences with the text information. It is necessary to state that reading is a complex skill which requires a life-time of effort to perfect. It is a skill we cannot master once and for all; yet it is a basic tool for learning! It is for this reason that we as parents and teachers must make the necessary effort to ensure that our children are given a good start in learning to read. The goal of reading is to achieve understanding. In other words, reading is a meaning – searching and meaning – getting activity. The reader is never passive; he is actively constructing information, making use of textual cues in conjunction with the information (about language, content of text and knowledge of the word generally) stored in his head.

To teach children to learn to read and to love to read therefore, all reading instructional activities must be presented in meaningful contexts, that is, meaning must be emphasised at all times. In primary schools in particular, teachers must first of all develop in children reading readiness concepts and

skills. Reading readiness is a gradual development from non-reading to beginning reading. Readiness is in itself reading progress in the initial stages of learning to read. Three of these are:

i. Oral language foundation;

ii. Concept of print; that is, children must understand that print gives pleasure and information and

iii. Speech-writing connection; that is, children need to understand that what is spoken can be written down.

Three methods have been found very effective to help children develop reading readiness skills and concepts.

i. Literary awareness programme (LAP)

ii. News on the board (NOB)

iii. Language experience approach (LEA)

LAP is a language activity which involves having an adult read interesting stories aloud to children every day. The advantages of LAP are that it extends both the experience and language background of children; it generates an interest in reading; it develops children's listening skills, and it introduces them to *book language.*

NOB is a language activity that can be used to get children started out in learning to read. It particularly helps children to see the connection between speech and print. It involves having children share their experiences in class, and these the teacher records on the board in the form of news items, such that what is written on the board becomes children's reading material.

LEA is similar to NOB in many respects. The only difference is that the experiences or stories the children dictate follow some particular theme or order. The potential effectiveness of the language experience approach to beginning reading instruction is that children are encouraged to talk about their interests and experiences. Meaning-making from a personal perspective is the goal of literary activities, and instruction is designed to help children express themselves clearly. Dictated stories become the basis of repeated readings of familiar events to facilitate the translation from oral to written language. This practice provides a bridge between oral and written language skills.

To teach reading-to-learn effectively, teachers must have a good understanding of what reading is and must have clearly defined objectives for every reading comprehension lesson they undertake. It must be reiterated that reading is not the ability to recite the letters of the alphabet or to pronounce the words

in a text. And reading does not stop at just being able to answer literary questions or to recall explicitly stated information. This implies that meaning does not reside in the text alone, but it is a product of the contributions of both the reader and the author. It should be noted that the strategies suggested here assume that the children or students have passed the stage of word recognition; that is, learning to read, and are now being taught comprehension skills that is, reading to learn.

As already pointed out, the teacher needs to have a clear goal for every lesson. Does he want to develop in his students the ability to identify main, idea, infer, evaluate, skim or scan? What word-attack skills does he want his lesson to develop? Then he should clearly state this in behavioural objectives and ensure that his instructional activities match the stated objectives.

A typical reading comprehension lesson may have three stages: Pre-reading Stage, Reading/Contact Stage and after Reading Stage. The main activities of each stage are hereby outlined.

The prereading stage

Two basic things are done here. The teacher activates students' background experience and guides them to have a purpose for reading. Through discussion generated by the teacher's guided questions, children's relevant background experience about the content of the passage is activated and brought to their conscious attention. The teacher must make sure that the students have cognitive contributions to make, as this is the only way their reading can be meaningful and interactional. He then gets them to read for a purpose. This is achieved usually by asking what is popularly called purpose-setting questions. He should ensure that three types of questions are asked – literal (factual), inferential (interpretative), critical (evaluative or applicative).

Literal questions require the recall of clearly stated information or facts. 'It involves reading the line'. Inferential questions require the reader to identify information that is not directly stated, that is, implicit information. This is what is called 'reading between the lines'. This type of task particularly requires the use of the readers' background experience. The third type of questions, that is, critical questions require the reader to analyse the content of his reading for appropriateness, adequacy, logicality, authenticity, veracity etc.

What all this suggests is that the teacher must thoroughly prepare for his reading lesson. It is simply harmful to ask students to read without guiding them to have a reason for doing so. Reading is a purposeful, goal-setting activity and it must be taught as such.

Reading / contact stage:

This is the stage at which children are asked to read silently. Silent reading is emphasized because reading is a sustained silent activity as reading aloud at this stage is a hindrance and must be discouraged. For children to read to learn, they must have contact with print; they must have opportunity practicing reading. The teacher should also discourage vocalization or subvocalization, undue head-movement or finger-printing. All these faulty habits slow down reading.

Another feature of this phase is discussion where students, after reading, answer, first and foremost, the purpose-setting questions and some other questions that may follow the passage or that the teacher may construct. At this point in the lesson, students should be encouraged to read aloud relevant portions of the passage to back up their answers. This is purposeful, constructive reading aloud, not the harmful practice of meaninglessly and randomly reading aloud in class by teacher or pupils (usually in turns) that is prevalent in many classrooms in Nigeria. Meaningless reading aloud should be discouraged because it gives the children the impression that reading is pronunciation, and not necessarily a meaning – getting process.

Another important feature of the reading/contact stage is vocabulary treatment where teacher specifically guides students to use such vocabulary attack skills as context clues, structural analysis and phonics to decode new words. The teacher must resist the temptation to explain difficult words to students or, to hastily ask them to resort to the use of the dictionary. The teacher must bear in mind that his basic goal of vocabulary treatment is to enable the students to own the words, that is, the words should enter their active vocabulary. It is also important to bear in mind that different types of words require different instructional interventions. For effectiveness, not more than three words should be treated in a lesson. The teacher concludes the lesson by giving some relevant homework assignment which further helps to develop students' comprehension skills.

The writing skill

Writing is the use of symbols of letters of the alphabet and their combination in order to relate to the sounds we make when we speak. The process of teaching writing as a process involves five basic steps viz:

    i.   Organizing the classroom;

    ii.   Selecting topics;

    iii. Modelling writing;

    iv. Revising; and

v. Publishing

Organizing the classroom

The classroom should be organised in such a way that promotes and encourages children to write. The following are what to be done:

a. Exciting displays should be provided in the classroom – pictures, objects and books that stimulate discussions and provide the background children need to start writing.

b. The teacher should read regularly to children and they should be given opportunities to react to and talk about what they have listened to.

c. A writing attitude should be developed by encouraging children to share ideas in class and by accepting and praising their contributions. The teacher can also promote a writing attitude by sharing his own writing with children. He can share some of his letters, notes or stories with them. Anything the teacher can do to communicate his love of writing will be helpful.

Selecting topics

The teacher should guide children to select topics they would like to write about. He should not impose his own topic[s] on the children. Children would have to write if they are encouraged to write about what is important to them.

Modelling writing

This includes two stages: planning and drafting.

Planning involves thinking about and organising ideas. The teacher can model this process using his own topic. He tells the class a little about his topic and what he wants to write about. He jots down some of the ideas on the chalkboard. He groups ideas that go together. He tells the children that he now has a general plan of what he wants to include in his writing. He asks the children to do the same, working in pairs or groups and telling each other about their topics.

Drafting involves engaging in the actual writing. The topic is developed here. This practice promotes a positive attitude to revision. It lets children know that it is normal to make mistakes and or changes in one's writing. After the teacher's modelling, children should be asked to start their own writing, using notes they made during the planning stage. The teacher should move about the classroom to offer assistance that children may need – he can even be a secretary to a child who is having difficulty to begin.

Revising

This step in the writing process involves revising or editing content such as ideas and choice of words; and writing mechanics such as spelling and punctuation. Children should be guided to consider the following points:

a. Have I expressed my ideas clearly?

b. Are there other ideas I should add to my writing?

c. Are there other words that I could use to make my writing more interesting?

d. Do sentences and questions begin with capital letters?

e. Are there better ways of expressing my ideas?

f. Do sentences end with a period (.) or an exclamation point (!)?

g. Do questions end with a question mark (?)

h. Is each paragraph indented?

Publishing

This involves making a final copy of the writing and putting the writing in a published form to be shared with others. This is important because it tends to develop in them a sense of importance for their writing and a sense of understanding as to why one must learn to write.

Teaching Grammar

The term grammar has come to include not only the structure of language but also aspects of usage and social acceptability. Grammar may also be seen in terms of the quality of the knowledge of a language possessed by a speaker, as inferred from the nature of his utterances. Grammar may also refer to the body of prescriptive statements about usages that are considered acceptable and those that are considered unacceptable in a particular language.

Most linguistic scholars agree that there is a place for teaching the grammar of languages. What is not encouraged, however, is a mechanical or artificial approach to grammar teaching. In other words, grammar must not be taught for its own sake, especially at the primary and secondary school levels. It is believed that learners will profitably grasp the points of grammar if it is taught in authentic linguistic situation such as during reading or composition. And whenever some selected grammatical items must be taught as a focus of a lesson, it should be done in a meaningful way. For instance, when pupils are confronted with the items being taught, the context in which the items are presented should be as true to life as possible. Use of aids, variety of pattern drills, oral and written language activities within a framework of realistic communication,

skilful shaping of responses—all these make up a store of techniques that can be selected and effectively applied by the teacher.

Research evidence suggests that the knowledge of grammar *per se* does not enhance efficient use of language. And this appears to apply whether it is in the first or second language situation. One important reason for this is that the process of learning about language may be different from the process of using it. That is, the ability to learn parts of speech may not be the same as the ability to synthesise these parts for effective communication.

Grammar Teaching in Schools

The reality in many schools is that some form of grammar teaching goes on. Research shows that features of traditional and structural approaches can be observed, and that these are promoted by English syllabuses and textbooks. However, the general complaint is that grammar teaching is formally or mechanically done, and the result is that the students know a lot about English but cannot use it. It is also to be mentioned that in some classrooms, grammar hardly receives any instructional attention because teachers do not know how to teach it. This implies that the problem is not with the teaching or non-teaching of grammar as such. What should be of concern is how to teach grammar in a way that will help learners communicate effectively.

Teaching grammar functionally

The first important thing to bear in mind by teachers is that their job is not to teach grammar for its own sake, but to help their students speak and write English, grammatically. That is they are not teaching them information about English, but develop in them the skills they need to communicate effectively in it. If grammar is not functionally taught, it may also lead to confusion and greater anxiety on the part of learners.

The following steps have been found useful for teaching grammatical items:

i.   Initial presentation of the structural unit or pattern,

ii. Explanation of the rule governing the particular usage,

iii. Structural drill/pattern practice and

iv. Repetition/repeated practice

It should be borne in mind that these steps may be adjusted depending on the nature of the grammatical item being taught, the level or age of the learners, and what the teacher considers to be appropriate. At no time should grammar be taught in isolation without reference to contexts. And indeed, in some in-

stances, explanation may not be necessary at all, the learners being expected to internalise the rule through practice and analogy.

Some of the steps outlined above will necessarily require the use of situational drills, dialogues or substitution tables. The objective of a situational drill, for example, is to make the meaning of the item being taught obvious from actions, objects, and sometimes other sentences that are associated with that structure. There are three stages to a drill: Model sentences said or provided by the teacher, choral speaking by the class as a whole or in groups, and speaking by individual learners. It is important that the drills are made as meaningful and varied as possible so that the student will not have any difficulty transferring what is learnt to similar situations that he will encounter outside the classroom.

Beyond the Traditional Conception of Grammar

The ultimate objective of teaching grammar, it should be emphasized, is to enable the learner to use English for communication in real life situations. This suggests that grammar must be taught functionally and imaginatively.

What this means, in practical terms, is that grammar teaching must go beyond mechanical, meaningless, memorisation of rules by students. It must be taught within the context of communicative activities. Classroom activities should be such that will prepare learners for the kinds of discourse they will encounter outside the classroom.

Also, the teacher's conception of grammar must extend beyond the traditional definition of the term. That is, it should not be simply seen as the descriptions of the way in which words combine to form sentences; it should embrace rules of discourse and rules of pragmatic appropriateness. This again underscores the need to teach grammar within the context of communication tasks. This is all that is meant by teaching of grammar functionally. Succinctly put, grammar must always be taught in meaningful contexts. The argument, therefore, is not more or less of or none of it. It is helping students to perform all communicative functions, grammatically.

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