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TEACHING ENGLISH - VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR, READING, WRITING.....

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ABSTRACT

A child learns the four language skills listening, speaking, reading and writing quickly in his/ her mother tongue. In fact reading and writing are the predominant skills. In English, similarly the child should be exposed to a good deal of correct spoken English. Teaching English language in non-native countries like India, China, Japan, Pakistan etc., is very difficult. English language teachers find difficult in teaching though there are number of methods, approaches and techniques to teach it as a second language. At the same time students also feel difficult to learn English language because it is not their native language. They have some difficulty to learn it. But we all know the importance of English language. The importance of English has increased in the modern global societies. It is useful to the students of all braches to mould their lives and set their goals. When matter comes to learning English 'vocabulary and grammar, students have to learn both. Vocabulary and grammar help a lot in language learning. A part from these two, social environment is essential at school or college and at home. Reading, writing these two are the two important branches in language skills. The great English essayist Francis Bacon says about reading and writing as "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man".

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English language is the one among the fastest growing languages in the world. Every educationalist should accept English Language's dominance and prominence. At present the whole world is shouting with a single tone about the importance of English language.

Of course Teachers of English language have their own problems to teach it to the students in different states in India only because it is not our mother tongue. At the same time students also cannot accept English language as they accept their mother tongue. They have some fear about it. This fear simply makes the students dumb.

A good language teacher opts for good methods to teach -tile language to the students. Firstly he tries to remove the fear among the students and th he makes them feel comfortable and enjoy the language learning. Basically a good language teacher should have some special skills to teach the language. An efficient

teacher should possess the teaching skills of English language in order to develop suitable learning skills of English among his students effectively.

Vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing skills are the inseparable areas in language learning. Each part has its own importance.

Vocabulary: Words, which we use to speak, to listen, to read and to write, -simply constitute vocabulary. Teachers feel some sort of difficulty to teach English to students of non-native, only because it is not their mother tongue. But students show hundred percent interest to learn things by playing. So here play way method is suitable.

Georg Mano in his article "Classroom Activities for Building Vocabulary", he mentioned about all the preferable games, like Charades, Pictionary, Synonym, and Antonym Cards etc.

Charades: Charades is a well-known game, probably of French origin. Its rules are simple. One player looks at a piece a paper with a word or title written on it, then, without speaking, he/she uses gestures or acting to give clues to the other players, who try to guess what word or title is written in the paper.

Pictionary: Pictionary is a board game invented by the Parker Brothers Company. The original game has cards with words on them. One player looks at a card and would draw a picture, while another player would try to guess which word the picture represents. Actually for the lower class students, these types of the games are not suitable. There the teacher needs to take the existing words for the games and see that they should be their level.

The treatment to vocabulary in the text material can be suited to the purpose of teaching.

Some useful steps for teaching vocabulary:

- Select the vocabulary for teaching from the text/pages.
- Grade them to Pre-teach or to teach while explaining the text of Intensive Reader or Non-detailed Reader.
- Active vocabulary should be presented in spoken form from first situation ally in meaningful sentences.
- Students should be checked whether they have understood the word in context or functional form, using suitable technique.

Words through actions and gestures:

Simple actions can be performed to clarify meanings.

Actions: walk, write etc.

Gestures: smile, laugh, stare glance etc.

Prefixes and Suffixes:

Prefix: un known un able etc.

Suffix: kindness darkness.

Word groups: There will be different word groups related to the ideas. The teacher has to give guidance how to do the activity.

1. Word group with similar ideas (Synonyms)

Eg: End: finish, close, complete etc.

Look: stare, glare, glance, peep etc.

Beautiful: pretty, charming etc.

2. Word group with opposite ideas (Antonyms)

Eg: Slow: fast.

Bright: dull.

3. Word groups to describe.

Eg: Man: his work, his place of work etc.

Teacher: teach, school.

Word games: As I said above there are several word games in English. According to necessity, the teacher has to organize a game in the class to help the students to expand their vocabulary. Those are memory game, word production game, word expansion game, word completion game etc.

Certainly all these games help the teacher to make a student to get sound knowledge in vocabulary.

Grammar: Teaching grammar at school and college level is challenging. To make grammar classes interesting teachers have to teach innovatively and creatively. A good teacher applies good methods to teach grammar along with his own skills. A person's ability in language is judged, not by the amount of grammar he knows but his skill in using that language. At the same time we cannot say that he need not know any grammar.

Language teaching experts uphold the view that grammar should not be taught separately but it should be taught as an integral part of the language lesson. Nearly seventy one percent of the students' find it interesting. The teachers teach grammar along with prose of other materials taken from various sources.

Useful exercises for teaching grammar: Majority of the learners agree with the necessity of doing exercises in the class. But they do not like this kind of grammar exercises that are not based on any context —based exercises. The materials for these exercises may be taken from sources like newspapers and magazines. Besides these learners hate the practice of dictating grammar exercises in classes. They feel that it is quite waste of time and that they want worksheets of grammar exercises from teachers.

Teaching grammar with electronic tools like overhead projector and power point presentation is very simple and effective to the teacher and it is very helpful to the student to understand the grammar very easily.

Grammar teaching should begin with examples of current usage, and not with the rules behind such usage. This kind of teaching is called inductive teaching. What happened for many years in schools was deductive teaching with insistence on rules and examples and exceptions.

Types of grammar: Grammar is of two types, depending on the Traditional and Modern viewpoints of teaching/learning grammar. They are 1. Formal grammar and 2. Functional grammar. Formal grammar:

It is also known as prescriptive grammar as it prescribes the grammar rules of language. It is a traditional type of grammar. It is theoretical grammar pertaining to rules, definitions, inflexions of words etc. By learning such grammar, the learner will be acquiring the ability to describe the language and its forms but not to use the language fluently. The students have to first learn the rules of grammar before any use of language. The rule is followed by an example in every instant of grammar form or structure.

Learning of grammar involves conscious learning of grammar rules by rote memory. The rule is followed by an example and the students are tested in their memory of rules of grammar and concerned examples. Formal grammar is taught in the traditional Grammar — Translation method of teaching English.

Functional Grammar: It is also known as 'incidental grammar', as it is studied whenever a need arises while teaching materials in English. In functional grammar, we study only that portion of grammar, which helps us to speak and write correct English instantly. No rule of grammar is studied unless there is a specific need for doing so. The students quite unconsciously while learning the language situation ally learn this type of grammar. It insists upon learning a living language but not its rules. The grammar is picked up from the situational learning of the language.

Reading: Most of the English teachers would agree that reading is an important ability to help learners not only to improve their knowledge of a language, but also faster new ways of developing it.

E.L.T specialists Bright and Mc.Gregor (1990) says about reading as: "Where there is little reading there will be little language learning".

Goodman defines reading as "Psycholinguistic guessing game".

According to Widdowson, "Reading is regarded not as a reaction to a text but as an interaction between the writer and the reader mediated through the text".

Prof day recommended that students at the beginner and intermediate levels should be encouraged to read books of their choice".

As a follow up activity he suggested that they should be given activities like timed repeated reading and writing rather than giving comprehension exercises, which curtail their creativity. He also emphasized the importance of making students learn to infer meanings from context and develop the ability to skim a text to get the general idea or scan for information.

While discussing reading it is usual to talk of levels. This is because of some skills involved in it. It has to be spelt out.

1. Learning to recognize letters/words/sentences.
2. Understanding conventions used in graphic representations of language.
3. Learning the meaning of written words.
4. Learning to 'chunk' sentences into sense groups interpreting them.
5. Understanding and interpreting discourse.

To equip learners to read, certain pre-reading task is suggested. The use of this task gives learners 'reading readiness'. This technique is usually used at the pre-primary level.

A part of all the above said things a few methods help language teachers to teach reading:

The Alphabet Method: This method is an age - old method of teaching reading. It is also called the Letter Method. The students are taught to spell the word like b-a-t as bat. The unit of reading here is a letter of the alphabet, not its sound. The names of the letters b-a-t do not add up to the word 'bat'. But here children learn the words without complete idea or meaning of that word.

The Phonic Method: This method is somewhat modified than the Alphabet Method, Here the unit of reading is a sound, which stands for each letter of the alphabet. There are more sounds (20 vowels and 24 consonants than letters of the alphabet only 26). 1-1 are students have to read words according to the phonic sounds.

The look and Say Method: It is also called the word method. Here the word, the phrase or the sentence can be the unit of reading. This method makes good use of flash cards.

A word is written on a flash card. Eg: apple. A picture of apple is drawn on another card.

There are also a few useful methods like the Phrase method, the Story method, the Sentence method etc.

Reading:

Loud Reading: Oral reading or reading aloud is a skill to be cultivated in the early stages. It trains the students to link the spoken word with the printed symbol. It helps him to develop speech with correct pronunciation, stress and intonation. Teachers have to instruct all the students while they are reading that they have to understand each word and go on.

Reading aloud, like Speaking is a great art. Some people read their radio talks or their lecture script very fluently and meaningfully. For training the students is reading aloud. The teacher should acquire a good knowledge of phonetics and should have a good care for detecting errors.

He should be a good model reader observing correct pronunciation, stress, intonation and pauses. Students imitate their teacher.

Silent Reading:

Most of our adult reading is silent reading. As pointed out earlier the signs of good silent reading are:

1. Widening of the eye span.
2. Reducing the backward movement of the eye as one reads.
3. Shortening the duration of fixation pauses between eye jumps.

Silent reading helps students to work at their own pace. The matter to be read silently must be easy to read. Too many difficult words in the passage will hinder speed. Good silent reading skills prepare the students for library reading on their own. The teacher should have a few lessons from the supplementary readers read silently every week. He should see that there are no lip moments and no backward moment eye as they read. A few comprehension questions, local and global, may be set for students to answer, after they have read the passage. By this way we can cultivate reading skills among the students

Writing: Bacon says, "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man."

The most important feature of good writing is a good handwriting. It helps children to acquire habits of accurate observation, neatness, care and precision. There is a popular notion that the handwriting of a person tells about him. It has formed a basis for the introduction of 'Graphology' to study a man and his character.

Handwriting should be legible to be read easily. Each individual letter should have its own characteristic form to be understood easily by others 'who read the matter written. The teacher should pay attention to the letters that are not written properly by the students and remedial work should be given to rectify the errors in their handwriting

There should be uniformity in the size of capital letters as well as small letters; consistent proportion between height and width, uniformity in slant, spacing between letters, words and sentences respectively. Handwriting should be distinct. There should not be scribbling in writing. A good handwriting should be legible, neat and easily read when written at normal speed.

Handwriting should be simple but attractive with proper slant following towards right, neatness and gracefulness. It should be pleasing to the eye. Left or mixed slant is troublesome to read. The slant should be always slightly towards right. There should not be any omission/commission of letters, words or phrases due to lack of confidence in thinking and writing. Whether slow or fast, thinking and writing activities should coincide with each other. This enables the learner to develop legible, neat and good handwriting without errors.

The writing should be in parallel lines, horizontal and uniform to the base line of the book/ paper/ blackboard. There should be neatness in writing without striking. If at all anything has to be done neatly with a line or two.

Handwriting can be taught after the pupils learn to read from the written symbols. After the first week of oral teaching, reading phrases and sentences from the black board or chart or flash cards is introduced. The orthography should be in print script. The writing activity is introduced when all the students can read a few phrases and sentences quickly and correctly. In the first stage, the students will practice writing by copying the words or sentences they knew better. In the class, room, copying should be from the black board or other visual aids, which the teacher displays. While the students are copying, the teacher should supervise and encourage developing proper handwriting by pointing out to their mistakes. Prior to this practice, the teacher can encourage the students to draw straight lines, circles, semicircles, combining lines etc.

The teacher should clearly demonstrate how to write letters indicating to observe his hand movements while writing. The students observe his writing keenly and imitate him while the copy down the matter from the black board. Thus writing should be taught properly with suitable guidance, error correction and remedial work.

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