



LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Languages have been taught from time immemorial and it is a surprising fact there has been little improvement in the methods of teaching, until practically our own times. Educationist held referent opinions for which there was no experimental basis support, because the tradition and certain preconceived notions ruled everywhere. Certain practices had prevailed for decades, as they were held to be right and as nobody cared to question their validity then.

Up to the early 1950's, oral language training led to the emphasis on reading. And the Traditional method-Grammar translation method-tried to teach the language by rule rather than by use, but it failed to lay emphasis on speech.

In the middle of the 19th century, a new brought to bear upon the old educational problems, including those connected with foreign language, i.e. teaching of English as a second language.

Introduction to structural Approach

During the later 1950's, Dr. Michael West introduced the structural approach, it which controlled vocabulary, situational presentation and respected practice were the salient features.

Direct method

In the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, English language teaching in India underwent remarkable changes towards improvement. At this juncture, a question "How to teach a Foreign language? The categorical answer came, "All foreign languages ought to be taught by the Direct Method".

"Direct method is a method of teaching language, especially a modern language, through conversation, discussion, and reading in the language itself, without the use of the pupil's language, without translation and without study of grammar. The first words are taught by pointing to objects or by performing actions". Webster's New International Dictionary.

Many educationists felt that the name Direct Method does not sufficiently indicate all that it means or implies. So they invented other names such as Natural Method, Oral Method and Psychological Method.

The Direct Method was originated in France in 1901. It is based on the principle that fluency in reading and facility in writing follows fluency in speech. (G.K.S, p.244)

This method says that speech must come before everything else in language learning. So the essence of the direct method is 'speech first'. The Direct Method insists that the learner should, from the outset, think in English. It

discourages the practice of thinking inwardly in the mother tongue and then overtly translating the thought into English

The Direct Method:

1. Insists on speech from the beginning
2. Avoids interference of L₁ (first language)
3. Follows the child's natural way of learning a language
4. Tries to teach the language by use and not by rule and
5. Recommends functional grammar and formal grammar.

The direct method merely laid down the general principle according to which the foreign language to be taught. It said 'speech first', and left all matters concerning the implementation of this principle entirely to the discretion of the teacher. It did not go into details as what the teacher should do from day to day and from lesson to lesson.

Implementation of Structural Approach

In these circumstances, Dr. Michael West's structural approach could offer the teacher some standardized guidance and help based upon objective study, experimentation and research. It is only a technique evolved after considerable research in the nature of language and the best way of teaching it.

According to Brewington, "Structural is a scientific study of the fundamental structures of the English language, their analysis and logical arrangements:, Structural approach cannot function in isolation. It always goes hand-and-hand with Situational Approach and Oral Approach.

Noam Chomsky belongs to psycho-linguist group. According to Chomsky "Language development is the result of maturation of the child's genetic capability for language i.e. Language acquisition Device". The second language is learnt, but the first language is acquired in the natural family situation and social situations.

So similar situations are to be created by the English teacher to teach the foreign language. So, the modern method is actually called SOS approach, i.e. Structural Oral and situational approach. It implies that every structure is orally presented to the pupils through meaningful situations which may be either real or artificial.

In order to help the teacher in his classroom work, the essential sentence structure and vocabulary to be acquired at each stage, have been worked out carefully and elaborately by many experts in the field of ELT, notably by Dr.H.E.Palmer and A.S.Homby.

The new method and the concept in teaching of English has led to a revolution in the planning and construction of Readers or Textbooks. Formerly, the textbook writer merely brought together a number of lessons and poems, and arranged them in an order of difficulty level, as he conceived it. Today we find a radical change in textbook instruction. The textbook is no longer the centre of instruction in the old sense.

It study is no longer an end itself it is only a means to an end. The end is say speak, to read and to write English correctly by following the right way. The fundamentals of language teaching and principles of textbook construction have been scrupulously followed. Every prose lessons or poetry does not end with the text poet and comprehension questions as it was earlier. Now the textbook is no longer a textbook, it is a Reader-cum-workbook. Every lesson-proper consists of exercises relevant to the development of the listening, speaking and reading the new content words (to be introduced), the content part or the textual part. Glossary (with

pronunciation of new words), comprehension questions, short testing of vocabulary, synonyms and antonyms, reading comprehensions exercises, pronunciation practice/test, grammatical categories (to be taught in functional grammar) and exercises for developing writing competency, creative competency and occupational competency. So to say shortly, the text part of the lesson runs about four or five pages and the exercise parts run about fifteen or sixteen pages.

When all these parts of every lesson are properly dealt with by the teacher, the direct bond between the word and experience is established. English is taught without the interference of mother tongue. Pronunciation is taught systematically. Words, phrases and sentences are explained and grammar is taught inductively. As the emphasis is laid more on oral work, the students can speak with correct pronunciation. This method enables the pupils to think in English and expresses their thought/emotions directly in English.

Ultimately the direct method, the SOS approach and readers can well develop the four language skills L.S.R.W in English. According to Champion, “The Direct Method fulfills certain aims of teaching English”. (G.K.S, p.247)

All this method naturally places a big burden upon the teacher, and since all teachers are not equally well qualified and do not possess equal powers of initiative and imagination, it is unlikely that all of them will be able to fulfil their task satisfactorily.

Gordon has predicted well in advance, some fifty years ago, what would happen in the English class and how far the direct method would be successful after 50 years. His prediction has become literally true and we find only a very poor English knowledge even among the postgraduates.

Prevailing Case

The English teachers in the primary school and high schools are not competent to teach English, and they do not follow the modern method, simply because they cannot teach English through English. There is no interaction or English atmosphere in the English classroom. The content words are not introduced through simple familiar situations with correct pronunciation. The phonetic transcription given for new content words incorporated in the respective lesson are not cared for. Sufficient chance for the pupils is not given to speak in English in the English classroom. Functional grammar is not taught through the inductive method, despite the grammatical category, its explanation and exercises given after every lesson.

The teacher does not follow the procedure/steps given in the modern method. The teacher straight away starts reading the lesson, given a poor translation or little explanation for a few sentences and covers the portion. The pupils have to depend upon the question and answers given by the teacher on black-board and taken by them in their exercise notebooks. The tenth and twelfth standard students have to depend upon the bazaar notes, read the answers and essays, mug up them and reproduce them in the exam to get a pass mark.

Problems

In a nut shell, we find no development of communicative skills, speaking discourse and written discourse, in English. And the pupils can learn only a very few lexical items (out of 2200 prescribed) and a small number syntactic items (out of 200-250 structures prescribed).

As the language skills are not at all developed among the pupils at primary and secondary level, and their attainments is very poor, even the student at the postgraduate level finds it difficult to speak or write in English on

his own. And now the people feel it well that fluency in English is the felt need of the hour. This is the sinister for the mushroom growth of Spoken English centre's is all towns.

Solution and Conclusion

The first and foremost thing is that only the English literature gradates should be assigned with teaching of English from standard sixth to tenth. All these English teachers should be a sent to the ELT centre to undergo the 4 week training there. There should be hard and fast rule to the effect that the English teachers should teach English only through English and use correct pronunciation. He can be allowed to use the L₁ judiciously, where the words of abstract sense are to be introduced and explained

Teachers should scrupulously follow the classroom procedure in teaching prose, poetry and grammar. When they follow these steps properly, students' listening, speaking and reading skills are developed and the students can learn a number of content words, phrases, idioms and sentences patterns. When the pupils are able to speak correct English they are can definitely write good English.

Above all, there should we supervisory staff/visiting officers (ELT) specially trained at CIEFL/RIE, to pay a surprise visit to every school periodically, observe English classes and give contractive suggestions for the improvement of teaching English and that of the standard of English.

The class room procedure/steps for teaching different areas in English

I. Teaching Prose

1. Introduction about the prose lesson
2. Introducing the new content words,(including phrase verbs, idioms) through Contextualized passage/simple familiar situations/contrived situations.

Pre-reading questions given on pb

3. Modern reading Oral reading by the teacher (pupils keep their books closed) (L)
4. Pre-reading questions/global questions asked-(pupils answer the questions) (S)
5. Silent reading by the pupils (R)
6. Comprehension questions (pupils find out the answer and say) (S)
7. Same more questions given on bb (assigned as home task) (W)

II. Teaching poetry

1. Introducing about the poem
2. Introducing the new content words through lucid contexts

Pre-reading questions pb

3. Modern reading by the teacher (pupils keep their books closed) (L)
4. Pre-reading questions asked-(pupils say the answers) (S)
5. Rhythmic reading by the teacher (L)
(Pupils keep their books open and follow the teacher)
6. Salient reading by the pupils (R)
7. Comprehension questions asked

(Pupils say the answers)

(S)

8. Appreciation questions (pupils say the answers)

(S)

9. Some more questions given on bb (assigned as home work)

(W)

III. Teaching Functional Grammar

1. Oral preparation of sample sentences through situations (by Teacher)

(L)

2. Graphic presentation of some of the sample sentences on the blackboard

(R)

3. Reading the sentences off the blackboard by the pupils.

(R)

4. Pupils to study where to use/when to use the structure.

Teacher asked questions/pupils answer the questions (Arrive at generalized rule)

(S)

5. Some exercises to be given by the teacher (pupils to them orally)

(S)

6. Some more exercises given as home-work.

(W)

(Prescribed steps are there for teaching composition also)

So, it is evident that there is interaction and students' involvement which can wonderfully develop the communicative skills, when the classroom procedure/steps are followed scrupulously and systematically by the teacher.

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