

RESEARCH ARTICLE

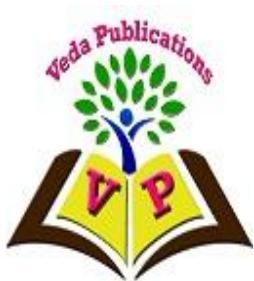


METHODS AND TOOLS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

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ABSTRACT



The present paper intends to assess the effective methods of teaching English language skills to non-native speakers at the UG level. The title of this paper consists of two important phrases- *methods and tools* and *teaching language skills*. The target group of this study is Marathi speakers who intend to learn English at the UG level. Teaching-learning is an ongoing process in which a teacher is the sender who confers the knowledge by using various methods and tools of teaching and students are the recipients who try to understand the message. Therefore, any communication method that helps students to understand the message given by their teachers could be considered as effective methods. Teaching language skills include the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Generally, we know that students listen carefully and develop this skill satisfactorily; but this is not true about speaking skill. The main reason, according to the present researcher is the passive participation of students in learning these skills. It happens because of spending a lot of time in teacher talks and reducing or almost denying student talks by the teachers in the classroom. A teacher should know that the students are needy people and it is teachers' duty to offer a space for various activities that compels students' active participation in learning in the classroom. A teacher of English language should use role play method, observation method, fun method, and audio-visual tools and other tools of technology while teaching in the classroom.

Keywords: *Teaching Methods, Language Skills, Communication Method, Audio-Visual Aids.*



INTRODUCTION

Generally, language skills are classified into two major categories- Perceptive Skills and Creative Skills. The perceptive skills are those skills that can be attained through observation, imitation and perception. Listening and Reading skills fall under the category of perceptive skills as the learner is forced to observe and imitate others while learning these skills. The creative skills can be called productive skills. Speaking and writing are creative skills in English language. The learner while acquiring speaking and writing skills engages himself or herself in the faculty of imagination. It is widely accepted that one can teach or learn the language skills beginning with the listening followed by speaking, then reading and writing. However, in daily life, these skills are interdependent in many ways. Proper and careful listening develops speaking skill and good reading creates awareness about writing skill among the students. In the classroom, most of the time, we observe that the students are more interested in receptive skills and they avoid participating in productive skills. It happens because they have little exposure to productive skills in the classroom. Therefore, it is teachers' duty to keep students actively engaged in productive skills. Our students (Marathi Speakers) learn English as a second language and they feel that learning of English language is a boring task. Many times, the teachers play very passive role while teaching English in the classroom. For them, teaching is only interpreting the English text into Marathi language and nothing more than that. The clause patterns, clause elements and their functions are over skipped consciously or unconsciously by the teachers and students too. The mechanical behaviour of the teachers and the passive participation of the students make English as an alien language in Maharashtra. For the betterment of the students, a teacher must be creative and he or she has to use a number of supplementary materials such as wits, folk tales, anecdotes, thought-provoking speeches, newspaper clippings, films and many other things while teaching English language in the classroom. Using all these auxiliary resources and types of equipments, a teacher should organize a number of activities in the classroom that keep

students engaged actively in learning. A teacher should combine various methods of teaching including experiential, participative and collaborative methods. To name a few are lecture, group discussion, debating, role play, field visit and practical sessions etc. A teacher should develop his or her skills and abilities of using various tools of teaching traditional as well as multimedia in the classroom. The present paper is an attempt to explore effective methods for teaching language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. As it is a theoretical study, it follows descriptive method to develop the idea in the paper and the present researcher has resorted to primary as well as secondary sources such as books, research papers, speeches on the internet, etc to carry forward his own ideas.

TEACHING LISTENING SKILL

Listening is not a passive activity though it belongs to the category of perceptive or receptive skills. Listening is not only absorbing the words or talks produced by the speakers. In fact, it is a very attentive activity that incorporates thinking, understanding and inferring process. Therefore, the learning of the listening skill imposes an active participation of the students in the classroom. Any student who wants to develop his or her listening skill, he or she must follow the communicative, observational and imitative listening and self-talk listening methods. In communicative listening method, students are exposed to listen to the matter first and then they are motivated to do something as a response to listening. For example, when a teacher enters the classroom and immediately instructs "keep quiet", "open your book" and "read loudly". Students listen to it carefully and as a response to these instructions they start to read. This method is known as a communicative method of developing listening skill. It is teachers' duty to use such instructive words at regular intervals during his or her class hours. The observational and imitative listening is a kind of one way communication in which students are exposed to listen to only the message. Listening to lectures, radio, public speeches etc. belong to this category. Self talk listening method carries internal thinking and reasoning. It is a

teacher's duty to provide a profound exposure of listening activity in the classroom. He or she may use the following exercises to develop the listening skill of the students.

- a) A teacher should not behave like the speaker only. He or she must be an instructor and an ordering figure. During the class hour, at the regular interval a teacher should use a bunch of instructions and expressions that forces students to do some physical as well as psychological response activities. The teacher's use of instructions with proper intentions and interval engages students in listening process actively in the classroom. A teacher may use instructions and commands such as everybody sit down, listen carefully, look at the board, listen to me and repeat, open your books and read the paragraphs and many more while teaching in the classroom. Such instructions develop students' listening habits and skills.
- b) A teacher should use multi-media tools such as cassette recorder, audio-visual clips from internet, and lectures through video conferencing in the classroom. It develops listening habits and creates awareness about pronunciation, stress, intonation and some other useful paralinguistic skills among the students. Bollywood movies like *Chalk and Duster*, *Rough Book* really help students in responding to the teachers' instructions and commands.
- c) In order to develop the listening skills of students, a teacher should build a positive environment in the classroom by using hypothetical questions, limited explanatory questions and motivational words. Questions like *what will you do if ----?* or *what do you mean by---?* etc enforce students to listen and think properly. A teacher should provide them an exposure to situational talks by creating various daily life situations. Here role play method and a habit of self talking play very crucial roles.

TEACHING SPEAKING SKILL

Speaking is a dynamic and productive skill and hence to develop this skill one must pay more attention to it. A teacher should use the following methods for teaching speaking skill.

- a) A teacher should use verbal response activities in the classroom by using interrogations, rhetorical questions and left out sentences. He or she may use yes/no or wh-type questions during the lecture. A teacher should bring some objects or pictures of the objects in the classroom and by pointing towards the objects or pictures ask students 'Do you know, what is this? Or "Describe what you have seen? As a response, students start to speak.
- b) To develop speaking skills, a teacher must use a role play method in the classroom. It is teachers' duty to offer daily situations such as shopping, greeting in the ceremonies, etc. and then ask students to play different role associating with the situations. Even, students can also play the role of the teacher in the classroom.
- c) For speaking practice, substitution drill as a method must be used. In this method, a teacher introduces sentence patterns first by putting some examples on the blackboard. For example; a teacher writes an example- "I purchased a car". The pattern of this sentence is S+V+O. Now, he or she may ask students to substitute an object with other words. As a response to this, student starts to substitute the word "a car" with "a house", "a bat", "a laptop" etc. Thus, they can develop their speaking.
- d) Students should be encouraged to speak in the classroom. A teacher should describe some events first and he or she may ask students what you learn from the description. Thus, students get involved in guessing and after that they start to speak. For example, you can describe a person whose business is teaching and ask students



"who is this?" Immediately, students start to guess and they reply "he is a teacher." Or vice versa, a teacher should name the event or person and ask the student to describe. They start to speak.

TEACHING READING SKILL AND WRITING SKILL

Reading skill includes comprehensive reading, skimming and scanning and critical reading. A teacher should use deductive or inferential skill developing exercises that enforce students in logical reasoning while reading the passage in the classroom. A teacher should develop a bunch of small questions and ask the students to find out the answers. In order to find out answers students start to read the passage carefully. Moreover, a teacher should ask the students to interpret a short story in their own way.

The teaching of writing skills includes word building process, clause elements and patterns, derived structures and cohesive devices. In order to write a well organized written passage, a teacher should teach how the sentences are constructed, what kind of logical devices should be introduced to establish the relationship between two sentences? A teacher should ask students to write a paragraph considering logical signals and time markers. Students should be asked to develop their own ideas having with good beginning, middle and an end.

USEFUL TEACHING AIDS

In order to teach the four language skills effectively, a teacher must use wide variety of teaching aids. All teaching aids can be classified under the category of visual aids, audio-aids, audio-visual aids and multimedia tools, etc. Pictures, photographs, flashcards, chart, posters, diagrams are visual aids and by using these visual aids in the classroom, a teacher can develop students' interest in language learning activities. Radio, record player, tape recorder, etc. are some of the audio-aids that can develop students' listening skills and make them aware of pronunciation, stress, pause and intonation, etc. Audio-visual tools such as television, projectors, etc. are the most effective and useful tools for teaching language skills.

CONCLUSION

The effective methods of teaching language skills are only those that encourage students to take part actively in the learning process. In order to engage the students actively in the learning process, a teacher must use multi-media tools and supplementary materials along with the chalk and talk method. It is the teacher's duty to minimize his or her speech time and maximize students' talking time. We have to build a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom by motivating students and providing endless exposure to students' participation.

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