DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS IN LEARNERS

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Abstract - It is an undeniable fact that in today's world English has become the yardstick for employability. Language proficiency has therefore become the key ingredient for self confidence and success in any field. Mastery of a language comes with conscious effort and constant practice on the part of learners. Language needed to be studied in the broader sociocultural context of it'suse, which included participating their behavior and beliefs. Experience is the best of all schools. This paper is an effort to trace the various activities for the four skills of developing a language, especially English.

Keywords - Skills, Participation, Activities, Learners, Teachers

I. INTRODUCTION

" How many times", says the exasperated teacher, " have I got to tell them? I am always telling themthat they are going on making the same mistakes."

We all say things like this and we all think them too, and we are all wrong.
Languages are the vehicles of expression and agents for the growth of personality. Teaching English is more difficult than learning English. India is the only country in the world which, though a land of many languages has the largest number of English speaking people in the world. This historical development due the British rule of three centuries which has made the country a great link between the third world and the English speaking world. Everybody learns a language in a particular way in developmental or naturalsequence. Whatever maybe his mother tongue, wherever he may be, he develops his knowledge in the same way.
The role of the mother tongue is to help move along this particular path, faster or less fast. Whenever we are trying to communicate in the second language we can observe the influence of the mother tongue in the speech of the learner.
It was theancient Romans who felt for the first time in the history of human culture the need to learn a language in addition to their mother tongue. The language teaching evolved by ancient Romans has not been discarded , but improvements and sophistications were made on it down the centuries. Even the dialogue for my everyday life was prepared in such a way that they were to be very interesting to the learners.

Cominius, a seventeenth century educator wrote, " All languages are easier to learn by practice than from rules. But rules assist and strengthen the knowledge derived for practice."
Information and knowledge grow rapidly that no one can cope with all that there is to be known and learnt.

Knowledge and information are basically of two types:

a) Those that can be used immediately
b) Those that are to be stored and used later

Since no one can store up all that there is to be known and no one can be expected to supply all that is to be learnt, the best the most practical way to help learners would be to impart such skills as it would enable them to go to the source of information and collect it to suit their needs. This is the key principle in teaching and developing study skills. Learners are empty vessels sent to their school by their parents to be filled with information by their teachers.

Acquiring a language is internally constructing grammar unconsciously. LSRW are the four skills required for any language learning.

LISTENING: In the total communication process, listening is 45%, speaking is 30%, reading is 16% and writing is 9%. As students, one has to listen to lectures,explanations during tutorials and practical sessions,seminars and workshops, technical presentations,academic discussions,academic interactions,vivavoce tests and so on.Effective speakers are effective communicators.

"You are not listening to me ",says the Teacher. "Sir, I am listening to you", the student replies. "No, you are not" the teacher emphatically says. The problem is simple.The student is unable to focus 100% on what the teacher is speaking and the teacher is able to sense it. Listening involves recognizing what is said and comprehending the matter.

II. RULES FOR GOOD LISTENING

1. Stop talking –one cannot be a speaker and a listener at the same time.
2. Stop thinking.
3. Remove distraction.

4. Do not let the mind wander –listening is faster than speaking.
5. Be patient-patience is the key to good listening.

A. ACTIVITIES

1. Listening to BBC news.
2. Listening to great speeches by eminent persons
3. Listening to a passageand answering questions.

Two ears and one mouth. God's creation shows the importance of listening.

SPEAKING: Shakespeare observes"Mend your speech lest it may mar your fortune". Like listening,speaking is crucial to effective communication.

III. STRATEGIES FOR GOOD CONVERSATION

1. Be an active listener
2. Be a subtle speaker.
3. Speak with clarity.
4. Be simple.
5. Be friendly and flexible.
6. Be interested and do not argue.

IV. ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE SPEAKING

1. Role plays.
2. Extempore speeches.
3. Language games.
4. Indulging in conversation on practicalsituation,[Meeting a friend after a long time.]
5. Group work and collaborative tasks.

Effective speakers start stronglyand powerfully. Well organized and a well planned outline contribute to effective communication. 'Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and cannot ; the other half have nothing to say and keep saying " remarks a critic.

Teaching is a process of construction like that of a building.A builder regulates and controls the building.When a wall has to be built the builder decides which brick isto be placed first, etc. It is entirely to the builder." Given motivation,it is inevitable that a humanbeing will learn a certain language if he is exposed to it".

Ababy distinguishes the comfort and discomfort through the first noise. The next stage is 'babbling' of selected syllables and repeating them to produce 'mama' and 'dada' which makes the ecstatic parents as the baby's first word.After a year the child can manage single, simple words. Within another year,with the encouragement of the parent, meaningful group of words will be possible.This is called language acquisition device. After all language is for selfexpression,reflection and communication.

Thirteen year old David had this to say to an interviewer,'I think that talking brings out more things in you than just writing it down on a piece of paper. The teacher just ticks the writing and that is it.If you read a book all through and told the teacher you had read the book,one learns the language.

READING; Reading could be quite a challenging activity because the act of understanding is not always simple.Reading skills involve vocabulary skills,visual perceptional skills,rapid reading skills and intensive reading skills.Efficient reading involves reading with fast eye movements which leads to efficient and resultoriented task.

Strategies for reading

1. Develop faster eye fixations.
2. Read in word groups
3. Improve accurate visualperception of words and phrases.
4. Recognising rapidly the word meaning.
5. More concentration while reading.

ACTIVITIES FOR READING

1.Reading daily newspapers

2. Reading magazines,journals of one's interest.

3. Reading comprehension passages and writing answers.

Teachers and students keep a reading record or a diary to check the progress and the students record brief reactions or review of what he has read.A small group needs to be engaged in reading and then they can have healthy discussions. Joint activities like writing a drama from a story or painting , drawing etc canbe an enjoyable activity with total involvement.

V. WRITING

The ability to write effective sentences is essential for the success in technical communication because writing anything primarily involves writing sentences.Inappropriate sentences.sloppy,loose and awkward sentences can never make effective writing. Drill in the mechanics of writing, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing etc need a lot of practice. Practice after practice makes a man perfect.

VI. STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING WRITING SKILL

1. Writing simple words with same meaning.
2. Grouping words according to the context or a particular field.
3. Writing on an easy and familiar topic.[about their family , interest in life, ambition]
4. Error spotting and rewriting correct sentences.
5. Developing creative skill and originality

VII. ACTIVITIES FOR WRITING SKILL

1. Arranging jumbled sentences.
2. Email writing.
3. Writing job application.
4. Writing circulars,minutes of a meeting. Memo

VIII. ASSESSMENT OF THE SKILLS

1. Overall presentation
2. Technical skills[spelling,form of writing, punctuation]
3. Reading [Efforts made,amount done]
4. Basic comprehension [Ability to summarise,report,review,take notes]
5. Independent thinking[Ability to work out problems for self].
6. Individual work[Response to peers,originality of conversation, prepared talk]

What does a language do? According to Halliday,it gets things done.It can control other people's behavior. It allows one to get on socially and to express one's individual personality.Through it one can find things out and convey information and one can use it for imaginative purposes.The important catalyst is the teacher. The teacher knows the satisfaction of reading and thinking about fiction of qualityand in these cases,has been asking the right questions,setting up the right situations and presenting learning an enjoyable as well as productive task. Clearly everychild has the knowledge of the language.The teacher can introduce his pupils to a coherent series of activitiesand exercises designed in the light of his own knowledge of language development to build upon the command and competence.English will continue to make a unique contribution in the preoccupation with the potentiality of a language.After alllanguage is not taught but caught.

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