

Effective Strategies and Techniques of Teaching a Foreign Language

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According to the *infoplease*, there are more than 65000 languages spoken in the world, each with its own unique culture and a way of thinking and communicating. As Globalisation barrels forward, learning a foreign language becomes even more important and beneficial for students. As learning of a foreign language is difficult same is the teaching of it. It is not an easy task for the teachers of foreign language to teach. The reason is teaching a Language is a social phenomenon while learning is a psychological phenomenon. The language teacher exercises a firm centralised control. He directs every action of his students. He does all the planning for the class. He even tells his students what to think as well what to do, but sometimes he regards himself as the only active agent in teaching and considers his students passive listeners of instructions and information which is a wrong impression of the teacher. Therefore it is essential to understand the purpose and scope of language teaching,

Language teaching has a long fascinating and torturous debate on teaching methods which have evolved particularly over the last hundred years. The names of methods (Grammar-Translation method, Direct- method, Audio Lingual. method etc.) are familiar enough yet the methods are not easy to grasp. During 1970s, there was a widespread reaction against these methods which concerned developments to make foreign language teaching "Communicative", by focussing on learners knowledge of the functions of language and their ability to select appropriate kind of language for use in specific situation. As the teaching of a foreign language is an art involving various strategies and techniques, in this research paper, an attempt has been made to explore and elaborate these strategies and techniques to make the teaching process more effective and to equip our teachers to master the difficult art of teaching a foreign language, here by foreign language I mean English language because it is given the status of second most used & spoken language in India - a country of 22 official languages and more than 1652 spoken languages.

Formation of habits

Development of Speech Skills

Language learning is essentially a habit of forming a process during which we acquire new habits of speaking, reading and writing it. In the long history of human trace, the spoken form of language continued to be its dynamic aspect. Speech is the ground work, all the rest are built up from it. Through speech, the student learns to make the direct connection between the English language word or phrase and the object, action or idea it bears. He learns the habits of using words in the correct sentence pattern and phase pattern and he can learn this in no other way. One more reason to advocate the speech training is to remove the regional standard of speech with which our students and indeed many of their teachers speak English. By listening to their pronunciation, one can easily make out that the speaker is from North India, Bengali, Marathi or Tamil. We have absorbed spoken English and regionalised it. The reason is that we see the loss of intelligibility and sometimes it is felt the interpreters are needed in our country too as we need them outside India

This means that we should aim at forming healthy speech habits. We should know the secret of speech habits and also how to develop these habits.

Development of Reading Skills

Second habit which we should ensure our students to learn is reading habit. Of all the linguistics skills, reading is the most difficult exercise for pupils as it an independent skill to be developed . We should keep in mind that to learn a foreign language, reading is one of the most useful skills. Lord Bacon in his essay, Of Studies, wrote "Reading maketh a full man". W S Gray also supported this view, he stated "Reading is a form of experience " Good reading habits promote self education which helps in the modification of personality. Reading trains our minds and broadens our outlook. Books and their reading get interwoven with life and man and books become inseparable and never failing friends.

Development of Writing Skills

The entire process of learning a language consists of (a) its understanding, (b) its speaking, (c) its reading (d) its writing. Lord Bacon says, "Writing maketh a man exact " It fixes our vocabulary and sentence pattern. It is a practical side of language learning, Writing is a tool used to enable us to express what is in our ears and eyes. It develops our memory. The writing process is much slower than either speaking or reading. So it has a powerful effect on the child's mind and provides a very good way of fixing vocabulary, spelling and patterns of all kinds. Through the corrections, the teacher should ask the student to look into what they have written and find out their own mistakes. And doing so, they help them to focus their attention on the correct forms to write a foreign language correctly which otherwise is not at all easy for students. For teachers also correction is the heaviest labour, the least interesting and most disappointing of all sides of English teaching. Some steps are suggested to lighten this burden are like ask the students to copy it from some books(novel, story books or text books), encourage the students to do exercise that are found in English course books, involve other students to correct the incorrect writings Write the difficult words on black board and ensure students that the written work is not a test it is only a practice in writing foreign language . In this way the burden of correction work will become light and the success in formation of the linguistic skills like habit of speaking, reading, and writing will be achieved

Use the target language in lessons

The more we expose our students to the target language i.e foreign language the easier it is for them to learn.. Occasionally, speaking a foreign language [English] may be easier but using or speaking it with fluency needs practice. So immersing our students in the target language helps them use it more independently and this can lead to increase confidence and better vocabulary. Students enjoy listening to real people speaking the target language, so get our colleague involved. If a teacher with same knowledge of the target language comes into our classroom, involve them in the immersive experience. We should encourage the students and staff to use the language even if they make mistakes and emphasize that communication is the key.

To adopt a hand on approach to language learning

Encourage students to adopt a hand on approach to language learning. Students need to be involved in tasks. They find interest in an environment where active and successful learning is encouraged. Students make the progress while they are enjoying themselves. Competitions and quizzes keep motivation level high and rewards for communication in the target language skills area offer chance for constant self improvement. The smallest of tasks such as matching pictures to words or phrases or even word searches can be turned into competition against the clock first to finish fastest class etc.

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grammar is the foundation for building language skills. Learning grammar enables students to speak and write more accurately, confidently and fluently. Asking students to explain grammar rules to each other and to the rest of class gives them more confidence. It also indicates to the teacher whether the grammar needs clarifying or explaining. To explain grammar rules, games, activities and video clips should be included. The language should be consolidated. More we learn and practice language, the more accurate and fluent we become. Repetition and practice are essential to many skills and this is especially true when learning a language. In order to consolidate classroom learning, the teacher must repeat and revisit grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. As language learning is cumulative, it must be consolidated outside the classroom. This can be done as homework by setting regular vocabulary tests that require revision outside school time and also in school clubs.

Bring language and culture alive in classrooms

Expose students to as much of the language as possible. While this may sound like an obvious thing to do, it is not always utilized in classrooms. Limit the native language and focus on the target one in the interactions with the students. Even if they don't know any of the target language, they can still easily learn simple classroom commands. Spend the first day going over some simple phrases that you can utilize throughout the classroom experience. ("I don't understand" and "May I be excused to use the restroom?" are two invaluable phrases.) Sometimes the native language will be required, however our job as a teacher is to expose as much of the target language as possible, enabling your students to also begin using it as quickly as possible.

Enacting the stories

Stories form a very integral part of teaching a language. These stories help teach the students about the formation of sentences and how to express their thoughts and a lot of other things and plus they help in keeping the students interest alive how the story ends is something that every student wants to know. It appeals to the inquisitive nature of the students. Any unfinished story always keeps the mind of the reader agitated. Although this method of using stories has been implemented, the procedure of teaching the language through it is generally not used. The evaluation procedure of testing the students in their proficiency over the language is through questions based on the story. This is generally not that effective. Due to this, the students generally tend to take up the stories as a chapter rather than looking at it as an interesting read. A story is supposed to appeal to the creative part of the brain. It helps us to be more imaginative, by trying to visualize the things that are happening inside the story. It should not only teach them the language but it should also help them broadening their mind.

Use of multimedia to enhance the learning experience

The problem most language students have after learning in the classroom is the inability to communicate effectively in the country of the language. We all know at least one person who studied many years of a language in high school, only to find him or herself incapable of ordering a coffee when it comes down to it. Often, this is because the student isn't taught to think and speak in a real-world environment. In the classroom, words are often enunciated, sentences are complete, and the pacing of speech is often slower. Get your students ready for the real world by using television, film, and radio broadcasts. While they will not come close to understanding what's being said on such mediums, they'll at least get a hint of how the language flows, how gestures are used, and how quickly native speakers converse.

Thus, in teaching a foreign language especially English care should be taken on every step formulating linguistics habits either it is habit of thought or habit expression acquired in the native language. Train a child in acquiring these habits in any other foreign language. Hence the onus of

language teaching lies with the teachers of mother tongue and their responsibility is greater than any other language teacher. Therefore, I suggest that teaching should be approached by a dynamic and reflective process which means a permanent interaction among the curriculum, teachers and students activities, methodology and instructional material. I propose an active role of the teacher to design his or her content, tasks classroom- interaction, material, methodology, evaluation rather than being in a passive role.

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