



PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT:

Even today we cannot deny the necessity of English as a medium of teaching and communication and the growing importance of English, as is evident in the growing number of writers having resorted to English in writing their works. There are many grammar books available in market and number of rules given in these books. English teachers face a huge task to explain all the rules to the students especially when it is a short course. However the fact is that rules are not important, what is more important is how to use the rules. Knowing grammar rules is one thing; knowing how to use or explain those rules is quite another. Even non literature students need to learn grammar techniques and methods to pass competitive exams. English teachers, can help these needy students by making easy associations and simplifying grammar rules. The modern language teachers do not follow one rigid method, but applies the approach or method – fitting to the learner. They choose practical techniques that are appropriate for each particular task and learner with a focus on motivation and help the learners become independent and inspired to learn more. Kenneth Ward Church argues, “It is common practice in linguistics to classify words not only on the basis of their meanings but also on the basis of their co-occurrence with other words.”



KEYWORDS: Rules, teaching, techniques, learners, associations.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of teaching English is different at different learning stages, such as at schools and colleges. At Universities students start specializing in particular branches of English as language and as literature they choose. Emphasis is given to teaching of English at the learning stage at schools where the students just start learning language. The main problem English teachers generally face is how to

inculcate into their students interest in learning language. This anxiety that English teachers feel reveals itself in keeping the attention of their students riveted on their teaching.

USE OF VARIOUS TECHNIQUES IN THE CLASS ROOM:

If we look into the history of language teaching, we find that no one method seems to have prevailed for long. Different language teachers believe in

different ways and methods of teaching. It may be said that there are as many methods of language teaching, as there are language learners. A variety of methods are used in teaching English to native speaker as well as foreign learners. We have to learn that English is not a knowledge subject, it is a skill subject. The teacher has to adopt various teaching skills so that the learners can grasp or adopt those skills in their lives.

Using various kinds of techniques

in the class room has always been a challenge. The teachers should be able to use in their classrooms different tasks through different technologies. These technologies enable teachers to meet various needs and interests of their students. They also provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, books, Internet, etc. and tasks which develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. They entertain students and encourage basic language skills in general, both inside and outside the classroom, giving them the confidence, the motivation and the ability to continue their learning outside the classroom.

Native English speakers often speak too quickly. As language teachers, we should slow down; otherwise the students may find it difficult to follow what we are saying. Next thing, we have to use simple vocabulary and not to progress to more complex rules of grammar until the students grasp the basics i.e. using words and phrases that our students are already familiar with. Native speakers have no difficulty in understanding idioms or phrasal verbs. It comes naturally to them. On the other hand, most second language learners have a tough time understanding these peculiar word combinations. By limiting the use of idioms and phrasal verbs one can go a long way in helping students learn more effectively.

Pictures and other visual aids are extremely helpful. The pictures, diagrams, PowerPoint slideshows and videos can be used to connect concepts to words. The pictures should be age-appropriate. An elementary learner will like cute cartoon images, but an adult may prefer pictures of adults. One may make his own visual aids by cutting out pictures from magazines or printing pictures online. Using pictures, videos and diagrams will help them visualizing what the teacher is talking about.

Group work is a great way to encourage oral communication. Encouraging as many contributions as possible may also be a good idea. Once the students understand English well enough to communicate a bit, put them into groups or pairs to read, communicate and converse. The more they practice, the better they get at using the English language. This often makes them feel confident when talking with fellow students. Discussions in the classroom may involve elements of creativity and artistic expression and emphasize learners' dual roles as listeners and speakers. The teacher may engage the language learners by discussing a poem, a story, a piece of music, a play, a painting, a film, a TV programme, explaining or asking for explanations of how something works, comparing or contrasting things, discussing possibilities and probabilities of a thing, solving problems and so on. The language learning activities are interactive and inter-personal rather than individual and personal. As a whole, group and pair work in the classroom not only offers students enough opportunities to learn to speak and learn from each other but also provides them a supportive and enjoyable learning environment.

SOME EFFECTIVE AND EASY METHODS:

Now-a-days it is required to explore some more effective tips to make an understanding and fluency among students. Human mind works efficiently on made associations and image perceptions. As Church quotes, "Word association norms are well known to be an important factor in psycho-linguistic research, especially in the area of lexical rescue. Generally speaking, subjects respond quicker than normal to the word nurse if it follows a highly associated word such as doctor." (p. 23)

Another scholar, Paula Jullian suggests, "Meaning association is a key aspect to Semantics. These mental connections may go from very basic facts and relations (synonyms - antonyms) to very advanced and sophisticated analogies which set the ground for figurative language and metaphors." (p. 239-247) In addition to that she points out, "We all make our own matches, based on personal experience, which bring into play non-linguistic associations." (p. 239-247)

This refers to our personal associations that we make when we go for the first time somewhere remembering a building, temple etc. so that while coming back we may not forget our way. It is not only applicable in general life, but can equally be applied in learning and teaching too. As Beverly Ann Chin argues, "However, while students may be effective speakers of English, they need guidance to become effective writers."

What we teachers generally teach in classroom about tenses is rules and rules. For Present Indefinite the rules of when and why this tense is needed are explained and structure of the tense is written on board or shown through PPT. And there are many rules in the explanation of this tense. Same happens in present and past continuous and present perfect tense. Shaughnessy in one of the texts explains that the superior grammar instruction is that which gives the maximum output by investing minimum of our time. Further, she suggests teachers not to narrate and explain much of grammatical terms as it may overlap and confuse the information communicated.

TENSES:

As far as an easy and effective technique is concerned, after briefly explaining the definition of the tense, we need to tell students in a very simple way about subject verb agreement. The questions in competitive examinations are not about rules but about the practical application of the tenses and grammar. So, focus must be on practical application from the point of competitive examinations. In simple words, when Subject is Singular ie She, He, It or Name, s/es, does, is, was, has is used with or as main verb. In other words, it means if subject is either of She, He, It or Name, then

Subject>Singular	Present Simple	Present Continuous	Past continuous	Present Perfect
She, He, It or Name	Use of s/es/does	is	was	has

For Plural subjects no use of s/es, and use of do, were, have is applicable. We can notice here that all the above stated words Subject, Singular, SHIN, s/es, is, was and has either start with or end with alphabet 's'. So, we can make an analogy and in one go we can end the confusion of students regarding use of s/es, is/are, do/does, was/were and has/have in Simple Past, Present Continuous, Past continuous and Present Perfect tenses.

Moreover, we can make our teaching interesting by relating grammar with facts. For instance, rather saying we use verb's second form in positive Past Simple tense, we can assert that positive Past Simple tense is the only tense in history of grammar which takes verb's second form. It will be understood by the learners quickly.

Spellings:

Another obstacle faced by students, especially general students is spelling errors. They may be confused with as simple as principle and principal, stationary and stationery and most of the students may misspell lieutenant due to its pronunciation. Here, we can make our own associations which are easy for all to understand and most importantly to remember. It can be given colour of humour.

Pair	Meaning	Difference in spelling	Association
Principal	Head	pal	Pal means friend who guides us like principal
Principle	Rule	ple	Ending of word and meaning is similar (le)
Stationary	stagnant	a	letter a is common
Stationery	Tuck shop	e	Going to tuck shop to buy an eraser

In the above table, in first pair of Principal and principle, one means head and other means rule. It is to be noticed that principle and its meaning rule is same spelled and rhyme at the end. In the second pair of stationary and stationery, the only difference in the spelling is of 'a' and 'e'. We can make association of tuck shop and eraser with stationery. In confusion of spelling, student can recall that he is

going to tuck shop to buy an eraser and eraser starts with letter 'e'. So, stationery is **the** correct word for a stationery shop. Another example is the spelling of the word lieutenant. Most of the students, especially undergraduate level students spell it incorrectly as they may be confused with its pronunciation of sound 'f' in it. We can provide a simple analogy by breaking the word in an interesting way. For instance, Lie-u-tenant and here a student can remember it easily that a tenant is lying and owner catches him saying 'lie-u-tenant'. These are the few examples only. One can make one's own analogy and association to remember difficult words' spellings and meanings.

READING:

In reading passages, the traditional method to find answers was to first read the passage and then read questions and again returning to passage to find answers. Today, in competitive examinations, time is the key. Students can't afford even the wastage of 2-3 minutes during examination. So, to save time, first go through questions rather than reading passage. By reading questions, 25% of the picture about what the passage is all about will be clear, as mostly relevant information is asked in the form of questions in reading passages. Another benefit is that the reader will come to know what he is supposed to find in the passage. Then underline the verbs in questions and read the passage. Any word similar to verb underlined will immediately strike to the mind of the reader which may lead to the solution of the questions he has read earlier.

GRAMMAR:

When teaching grammar to ESL students focus on one specific point at a time. Trying to teach too many rules at a time will only confuse your students. Say, for example, you are teaching the uses of the verb have. Have, as you probably know, has many rules. It can be used to form the perfect verb forms. It can be used to show possession. Have can be an auxiliary verb. It can also be a principal verb. Instead of teaching all of these uses of have at all once, focus on one at a time. Once you have taught those rules move to the next. We should avoid complexity when we begin teaching students English as a second language. We better start with texts that feature basic sentence structure, word order and verb tenses, with few irregular verbs.

CONCLUSION

The above stated are some of the techniques to learn quickly by making associations and this quick learning can be viewed as long term resource. We can make our own associations which can be personal or regional or at an international level. These should be for easy understanding but there is no shortcut to success than hard work. These techniques are only few examples. Many teachers and learners make these types of associations on their own. On the whole, the chief focus must be on the benefit of learners whichever way they understand the concept.

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