

Teaching and Learning of English Language in the Modern Era

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Introduction

English language stands as the linchpin that threads the global community together, enjoying the status of a second language in nearly every nation. It acts as the conduit through which essential skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are honed by learners. In today’s landscape, the pedagogy of English language is acquiring heightened importance, driven by its pivotal role in expanding market opportunities and enriching the communication landscape. Communication, inherently interactive, hinges on the dynamic exchange of initiation and response, culminating in valuable feedback. Reputed as a conduit for the rapid advancement of technology and scientific knowledge, English is often heralded as a pipeline channelling insight across diverse fields of learning. Leslie Dunton-Downer states, “The magic glasses of English enable speakers to behold the world on a global scale, and to shape life on our fast-changing planet in a language that is, itself, changing quickly” (xiv). This language assumes a vital role in fostering interpersonal connections within societies, serving as a cornerstone for mutual comprehension on a global scale. The contemporary professional arena places immense value on English proficiency. Individuals who lack fluency in this language, be it in speech or writing, are often deemed ill-equipped for industry engagement. Such limitations engender a communication chasm between students and educators, impeding successful task completion, analytical prowess, and problem-solving. This predicament emerges when excessive emphasis is placed on technical know-how, neglecting the paramount importance of effective communication skills. Indeed, communication prowess stands as the bedrock of accomplishment, especially within the business milieu.

In both personal and professional realms, effective communication empowers individuals with self-assurance and dignity, commanding respect within society. Effectiveness in communication develops robust confidence in an individual. M. Ashraf Rizvi states: “By listening to classroom lectures, academic discussion in seminars and workshops, and academic speeches the student acquires the professional knowledge and expertise needed to excel in his/her profession” (10). Moreover, the technical acumen of industries hinges on employees’ command of the English language. No longer confined to classroom settings, English permeates modern communication channels, such as videos, computers, journals, and newspapers, acting as the bridge that links individuals to broader society. It becomes the medium through which talents are showcased, whether in written or spoken discourse.

1. **English for Specific Purposes (ESP):** English for Specific Purposes (ESP) constitutes a distinct realm within English language instruction, encompassing domains like Business English, Technical English, Scientific English, and English for Medical Professionals. ESP is meticulously tailored to fulfill learners’ specific requirements, employing discipline-specific methodology, terminology, and activities. The focal point is crafting language that aligns with the particular activities, incorporating grammar, vocabulary, study techniques, discourse, and genre appropriate to the field. This approach markedly diverges from general English instruction and is primarily designed for intermediate to advanced learners. In the realm of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) occupies a prominent position. Renowned institutions like the University of Birmingham and Aston University in the UK have integrated ESP into their curricula, offering postgraduate programs in the field. The scholarly publication “English for Specific Purposes” serves as an international journal devoted to this specialized domain. The emergence of an ESP community in Japan, along with periodic conferences, underscores the expanding global recognition of ESP’s significance.

English for Specific Purposes encompasses two key dimensions: it involves teaching English for academic pursuits and equips learners with language skills tailored for vocational or professional contexts. This pedagogical approach hinges on aligning content and methodology with learners' precise needs. The application of the 'AIDA' acronym, often used in print advertisements, is pertinent here: AIDA stands for Attention (are you talking to me?), Interest (why are you talking to me?), Desire (nice idea, but do I really need it?), and Action (what will I have to do to?) (Sharma and Mishra 18). This model finds relevance in teaching communication skills to language learners.

- 2. Learning and Teaching of English Language through Literature:** The incorporation of literature stands as a captivating tool in the realm of language instruction. Within the community of language educators, an ongoing discourse surrounds the integration of literature into the curricula of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as the collaborative potential of literature and ESL/EFL teaching for the betterment of both students and instructors. Employing literature as an instructional technique bears fruit in imparting foundational language skills encompassing reading, writing, listening, speaking, and essential language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Its application extends to translating literary works like dramas, poems, and short stories, amplifying the communication prowess of English speakers. Engagement with literary texts introduces individuals to diverse linguistic forms, communicative functions, and meanings. Meenakshi Raman states: "Linguistic competence is the possession of appropriate language skills and the ability to present scientific facts or information clearly and objectively (447)." Literature serves as a propitious avenue for those seeking skill enhancements. For language learners, literary pieces like novels, plays, and short stories contribute to comprehending how communication unfolds within a specific cultural context. Moreover, literature serves as a conduit for expressing the cultural nuances of learners themselves.

The integration of literature into language classrooms emerges as a potent strategy that aids learners in attaining a holistic grasp of the target language. As students immerse themselves in literary texts, an organic connection is established, drawing them into the narrative. During this phase, the primary emphasis shifts away from understanding specific lexical items or phrases. Instead, content assumes a renewed significance, guiding learners toward conveying meaning via appropriate expressions, syntax, and forms. This pivotal shift significantly enriches the language acquisition journey.

3. **Literature and Writing:** As a subject matter, literature plays a role of powerful and inspiring source of writing. There are various themes in literature for writing which enhance the thinking level and creativity of the learners. Writing may include writing on or about literature. The learners may be assigned with assignments of paragraph writing, in-class essays, and take-home compositions. This would motivate the learner to put in efforts to understand the literary devices and their uses. The learner may be assigned with various other assignments regarding plot, characters, setting, theme, and figurative language. The integration of literature into a language curriculum offers a multitude of instructional avenues, including oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, role-playing, re-enactment, discussion, and group activities. Language educators are encouraged to infuse listening comprehension and pronunciation exercises with engagement by utilizing recordings, videos, or personal readings of literary works.

This approach contributes to the cultivation of speaking and listening skills, leading to improved pronunciation, which can be observed during or after reading. Raymond S. Ross, in his book "*Speech Communication*," quotes Ernest D. Nathan, highlighting that "Perceptive listening is a conscious cognitive effort involving primarily the sense of hearing reinforced by other senses and leading to understanding. When perceptive listening is inspired by a sincere desire to understand, it becomes more than a sensory process. It is an attitude well expressed 'as a listening spirit' (34)". The value of

literature-based dramatic activities in ESL (English as a Second Language) / EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts is undeniable. Such activities expedite the development of learners' oral skills, facilitated by a clearer grasp of a work's plot and a heightened awareness of its characters. The three forms of drama—dramatization, role-playing, and improvisation—serve as effective tools within the classroom, aiding students in recognizing the significance of pronunciation, vocabulary, idioms, dialogue, as well as nonverbal elements like facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Michael Lewis and Jimme Hill state, "Language learning does not consist of piling little pricks of knowledge one on top of the other. The process is more complicated than that and involves revising, extending knowledge of the use of, and extending understanding of the things which you have already met"(33). When incorporating literature into English teaching, group activities such as general class discussions, group work, panel discussions, and debates foster the development of students' speaking abilities, with the teacher offering guidance on pronunciation errors during these interactions.

4. **Literary Genres:** The use of poetry offers readers a unique language experience by transcending established grammatical rules, syntax, and vocabulary norms. Poetry evokes emotions and thoughts, familiarizing students with figures of speech employed by poets to enrich their compositions and create poetic impact. With its rhyme and rhythm, poetry underscores the auditory dimension and potency of language. Furthermore, poetry enables students to explore semiotic elements reflecting cultural influences on the target language. Short fiction, a window into the human experience, serves both as a mirror and an illuminator of lives. Its inclusion in the ELT syllabus brings numerous educational advantages. Short fiction presents creative, thought-provoking texts that demand attentive reading, nurturing critical thinking and creativity. Encompassing genres such as fantasy and mystery, fiction enhances readers' understanding of diverse cultures and ethnic groups, forging connections among individuals from varied backgrounds and regions.

Drama serves as a valuable resource within the language classroom, acquainting learners with rhetorical elements while honing language usage. Exploring drama stimulates imaginative capacities and fosters creative thinking. Novels, with their real-life settings, offer an effective tool for language learning and mastery. Notably, English has permeated global society through diverse literary genres, exerting an unparalleled influence on people worldwide. The universal presence of English is believed to stem from political and economic motivations, bolstered by international organizations and the ELT industry. However, the globalization of English has produced contradictory outcomes. While English has successfully supplanted competing languages in various regions, its widespread use has also led to linguistic fragmentation and hybridization. The global prevalence of English has given rise to the emergence of New Englishes or regional language variations. Consequently, the exclusive status of Standard English has encountered challenges as English ownership becomes diversified across countries.

Conclusion

Literature holds a significant role within the English programs of numerous non-English speaking nations. However, a crucial requirement lies in the creation of pedagogically designed materials that possess clear objectives and a well-defined role for literature. In the process of teaching English language, the roles of language teachers and instructors take center stage. Therefore, it is imperative to ascertain the aim of language teaching in alignment with the students' needs and expectations. Careful consideration should be given to the selection of appropriate language teaching methods, instructional techniques, and classroom activities. The language background, interests, and goals of both elementary and advanced level students should be factored in, ensuring that the content is engaging and well-matched with relevant teaching materials. In the modern world, the proper teaching and learning of English necessitate the incorporation of multimedia computers and software. These tools facilitate individualized learning through computer-assisted pedagogical methods. English stands as a symbol of an enhanced

quality of life and a catalyst for transformative change within societies. It paves the way for social and economic aspirations, empowering people to achieve their goals.

Works Cited

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