

Editor's explanatory introduction to
“Teaching a Second Language to Beginners - A Study”
by Beena Anil Kumar

In some countries, there seems to be a necessity for alternative views on teaching practices. This paper may be seen as one example. It is in this sense that this contribution has been included in this collection. The following brief introductory notes may prepare the reader before turning to the paper itself.

This contribution may be representative of a way of writing or expressing one's thoughts (or even doing research) in a different way, area, time and teaching situation than in the “Westernized” world. There, in order to make sense and be regarded an authoritative (scientific) contribution, the written text may be required to be a loose compilation of thoughts on a or a variety of topics, refrain from offering or too closely following up stringent theses, and keep away from demonstrating specific field knowledge. This way of writing may require integrating larger sections of text from other writers without overtly marking them as such.

If one now takes this point of view as a starting point, and starting from this as a tradition, “Westernized” scientific papers may well look to people with this background exactly as hard to cope with as theirs do to “Westernized” readers. Taking this into consideration, it makes sense to include this paper as an exemplary contribution under such circumstances.

A final point concerns borrowing from sources without indicating this, as this has become a legal matter called plagiarism. In order to avoid at least the most obvious cases, the editor has searched, found and indicated one each of three kinds of passages, obviously all taken from the internet:

- From a reader's forum contribution,
- from the internet version of a newspaper's magazine, and
- from the author's own work.

There may be others, but in that case they should here be considered as examples of this writing style .

Teaching a Second Language to Beginners - A Study

Beena Anil Kumar

Reference data:

Kumar, Beena Anil (2010) Teaching a Second Language to Beginners - A Study. In: Reinelt, R. (ed.) (2010) *The new decade and (2nd) FL Teaching: The initial phase* Rudolf Reinelt Research Laboratory EU Matsuyama, Japan, p. 58 – 70.

TEACHING SECOND LANGUAGE TO BEGINNERS-A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the development of language to a child's intellectual progress seems established, but two important aspects of language development need to be emphasized. Children born with a predisposition to language which is a part of their genetic heritage and the latter is post-disposition to language that is to inculcate in the children by the teachers. Teachers need to provide opportunities for students to talk freely and easily to accept their dialect and accent; this is the starting point to encourage a wider range of use as well as greater fluency. These opportunities may have to be closely linked to practical activities.

The conventional teaching approach relies heavily on the classroom teacher and the textbook, and there is a need to break this domination and go for more child-friendly approach with possible integration of media technologies.

Children should be simply allowed to listen to spoken English as much as possible. The use of mass media such as the radio and the television could prove more effective educational media as they have mass entertainment appeal. The FM radio, which is emerging as one of the most popular mediums of communication, needs to be adequately tapped for the promotion of English in classrooms. However the modalities of integrating

mass media into school curriculum for English learning and the kind of unconventional approaches that can be employed for the purpose need to be worked out in greater detail for achieving the best possible results. The efforts in this direction should be to expose children to listen to good spoken English as well as suitably reorienting the classroom teacher to play a facilitator and moderator's role while the mass media does the most substantial part of the teaching function.

Design, Develop and, Demonstrate

“Language is an integral part of ourselves, vital to a sense of identity and therefore to our emotional health. There is a natural connection between the language spoken by a social group and that group's self-image. From this citizenship or membership, the group draws a distinct strength and pride, social importance and a feeling of belonging in a historical space. The closer a learner moves to her/his mother tongue, the deeper he/she moves into the safety zone of a sense of self. (from <http://www.haitiwebs.com/archive/index.php/t-246.html>, source and color added by the editor).”

Teaching English to young learners should pave a way for easy approaches. Learners should be at ease despite learning any language. The study that I have conducted made me to feel that learners with open- mind would accept any change so that they can be a change to themselves.

In the classroom second language is not acquired but learnt. Students are less exposed to second language comparing to first language acquisition. To top it all, many students fail to pick up the second language due to fear of making mistakes, lack of motivation or lack of exposure. But, they can learn a language if the right conditions apply. We can therefore say that 3

D's [design, develop and , demonstrate] should be present in learning a language especially in a class room learning.

Activities and materials, include games, discussions, picture reading, stories, proverbs, moral stories etc., should *design* students in learning a language, and though in its absence teacher or learner should sign up with the topic, exercise or language they deal with. When learners are engaged or designed, they learn better than when they are wholly or partially designed.

Successful language learning depends on a judicious blend of subconscious language acquisition and the study activities included to focus in on language and how it is constructed. **Develop** means any stage at which the construction of language is the main focus.

Demonstrate helps learners to use language as freely and communicatively as they can. The objective is not to focus on language construction; it offers learners a chance to try out real language use with little or no restriction.

In a process of learning language, learners should be interested and designed, then they develop something and they then try to demonstrate it by putting it into production. Here is an example for beginners.

Design : a learner looks at a picture or video of a child. He says what the child is doing. He says why he does not like the child or vice versa.

Develop : learner can produce various sentences by the introduction of words, can, can't [how they are constructed] with the help of the previous knowledge they attempt to say that 'The child can not walk'. 'The child can cry'. 'The child can eat'.

Demonstrate : now learner can present the previous and present knowledge and say about the child's can and can't.

Need for interaction

Every movement is not an activity; that all activities do not necessarily lead to learning and not every kind of learning contributes to the construction of the child's cognitive and affective world. So when does a movement become an activity that leads to learning that helps to build the child's personality? Let us explore.

“Why can't a child do what he is told and be quiet? Why can't a kitten be still for a while without moving and meowing? Why do children need to do an activity for them to truly learn? Why can't they sit behind the desk through the day as is the practice even in most of the so-called best schools of today? Why do we need all kinds of activities for children to acquire concepts?

Learning for any child or adult implies that there is assimilation that leads to some change. The child, by interacting with the world around her, builds her intellectual capacities, her emotional and social persona and her personality. The child is born with a potential but how much is realized depends on the experiences offered to her by society, the most crucial elements of it being the family and the school. If one asks a child to sit quietly for five hours a day, during the most crucial years of his life, he will surely be a diminished the value of movement is not merely to learn, to acquire knowledge but it is the basis for the child to construct his or her personhood. Movement takes place not only when a child does something external but also when s/he sees or thinks or

reasons or understands. Don't we nod, make gestures, change facial expressions, speak when we share, learn or discover something? Did Archimedes continue having a bath calmly when he made a discovery? Can one be still, when elated? Cannot a person who has completed a task successfully be immediately identified? This idea of linking movement and action to learning is a key to unlock the secret of the child's development. If the child has to be given a means to develop, it has to be offered in such a way that the child can and must move. It is not enough for the child to see and hear. Movement cannot be replaced by anything else at the same level of intensity. If a person is deprived of one sense, another sense may take over and become the dominant one. For example, for a blind person, the sense of hearing or touch may become more heightened. But for movement there is no other substitute. (from MAHAPATRA, AMUKTA. (2009) Activity leads to learning. The Hindu. Magazine. Jan. 11.

<http://www.hindu.com/mag/2009/01/11/stories/2009011150180500.htm>, source and color added by the editor)"

Movement needs to be also chosen by the learner, to make it a part of her personality. When a child does activities according to her volition and not because somebody [however many good intentions they may have] has instructed her to do so, then her whole ego is active and the personality functions as a unit. Her actions will flow the rhythm of her own life. This can then be considered as an activity, a task, a work, where all the faculties of the child act in unison, enabling another layer to be drawn into the personality.

Mind grammar reflects the idea of universal grammar, that there is a universal ability to understand different grammars. Nouns, for instance, are always understood as such, and something performs the noun role in every language. Modifiers and verbs can be moved around, and this is where children have trouble. One can see by observing children that they understand the concept of nouns and verbs fairly easily, even when the noun does not refer directly to a person place or thing (in the case of less concrete nouns such as happiness). However it is where the verbs and modifiers are placed in relation to the nouns that takes children time to learn, as this varies from language to language.

There are three basic learning styles to learn a language. They are

- **Auditory – listen and learn**
- **Visual – see and learn**
- **Experiential – experience and learn.**

Auditory – listen and learn

This style requires good reading skills and many children feel embarrassed to admit they have difficulties in reading. Poor reading skills hamper the rest of the learning process. Rhymes help children to listen and learn many words.

Selection of words is essential to improve the spoken and written form of young learners. Proper attention should be taken in selecting the words and the methods to be followed in the classroom. Popular and useful words should be given preference. Many verbal sequences are learned in school that help to develop more complex verbal and intellectual skills. The young

child learns to say the names of the numerals one to ten in order and he may also learn the alphabet as a sequence. To top it all, he acquires many common phrases, such as ‘boy and girl’ ‘back and forth’, ‘yes, I will’ and many others. Considerably longer verbal chains such as verses of songs or poetry may also be learned as a part of school instruction. As a capability, a verbal chain is reflected in the performance of reinstating a sequence of verbal entities [usually word], which represents a specifiable outcome [the alphabet a particular phrase or stanza]

An excellent method is to teach printed rhymes to young learners, added to that create you own rhyme that is teemed with new and oft-used words.

Learners, in some case, can visualize some words while learning and teachers can aid them by showing reel or real things. While showing real things, **the touch and feel method** is being adopted in classroom. This method is quite interesting for learners and they imbibe the new words or things without any prejudice.

“The most basic kinds of concepts appear to be capabilities of classifying objects [chair, table]. The most notable about such classes is that the physical appearance of the objects [a table, for example may be large or small high or low three legged or four-legged and so on]. Many radical learning appears to be acquired by direct interaction of the learner by the touch and feel method. (Kumar, Beena Anil (2009) Rhymes: An effective teaching strategy. In: Reinelt, R. (Ed.) (2009) Into the Next Decade with (2nd) FL Teaching Rudolf Reinelt Research Laboratory EU Matsuyama, Japan, p. 12, source and color added by the editor).”

Young learners learn everything without inhibition. Visual aid is important to do with learning. Young children are not as bothered as are

adults. Give two identical pictures with minimum 6 differences and observe the young learners. Some young children see nothing wrong with the picture. If you cover up one side or the other the figure looks all right.

In my opinion, the rote methods result only in superficial learning, whereas learning which results from the students' own 'discoveries' is likely to be deeper and remembered for longer.

Visual – see and learn

Children can be allowed to watch and learn. Knowing about flowers? Let them explore nature by taking them to a botanical garden. Follow this up by making them read up on how and why language begins. For instance, I have used some of our country's advertisements that have used English and regional language.

The phrases like 'midnight mela' [first choice car loans], double dhamaka [Next ad], dasavatharam offer [Viveks ad], investment bhi plus pension bhi plus [LIC], chamakti safedi hai, machine aur Rin Matic ka kaam [Rin Matic]. The underlined words make an ordinary man to use in his day-to-day conversation that he imbibed intentionally or unintentionally.

Experiential – experience and learn.

Children learn languages at a young age. A sense of wonder is not something that takes language forward. It is also what keeps the mind vibrantly alive and geared to take language on life's challenges.

“The worst thing that man could do is to kill this sense of wonder,” Einstein had once remarked. Language is very difficult to comprehend through rote learning. Experiments make it easier and more vivid. Experiments kindle the joy of learning in children. Without them learning becomes dry and unappealing. “Experience, observation, reflection and testing in new situations – these are the keys to meaningful learning process. Apart from stimulating the imagination, these processes help children remember concepts, as learning is linked to real life experience. Such learning happens after a child is directly involved in day-to-day activities.

Students learn much in situations that involve conversations with the teacher- they learn from observing events, natural or contrived; they learn from rhymes, examining and watching pictures that move and they learn from their own self-generated mental operations. Whether teaching involves a teacher, a textbook, a motion picture a television set or whatever its ultimate function is to bring about a change in the student.

Young learners learn everything without inhibition. Young children are not as bothered as are adults. Give two identical pictures with minimum 6 differences and observe the young learners. Some young children see nothing wrong with the picture. If you cover up one side or the other the figure looks all right.

For ages, teachers come out with unique ways to teach students. The trend is slightly modified from teaching of discrete grammatical structures to the fostering of communicative ability. Multimedia is a boon to teachers, academicians, educationalists and experts to attract learners by its colourful and useful functions.

Media helps to kindle the learning interest of learners. The computer tools like Internet, audio or video clips help learners to interact or listen to the native speakers, this increases the morale of learners. Playing videos in English classroom give a better scope for flexibility of usage. Using video as a stimulus for classroom communication [eg.stories] usually involves students' interaction in pairs and groups and manipulation of the television technology to create an information gap that the learners must fill... video technology offers the obvious advantages of stop/start, rewind/replay, sound on/ off and freeze frame controls. These facilities make it possible for teachers to present different sections of video once or several times in different ways. As mass media comes in handy, teachers can narrate a story with proper background music or show pictures related to the story. Teacher should be a good storyteller or at least should not lead listeners to the boredom.

Story telling is an art. In the story telling activity children are to be active participants in the construction of meaning. Using story telling in class, students develop a constructive and creative comprehension.

Children are good creators. When teacher narrates a story they create a mental picture of what they are listening to and then they imagine the next sequel of the story. Stories are a highly adaptable teaching tool and can be used in a variety of ways to teach a variety of skills.

At young age, language is being acquired rather than learnt. Story telling activity is a good way of making students simply enjoy listening and learning a language especially English.

The success of teaching depends on the interest of students to the subject, on their desire to learn it. Sometimes classes pass by, not leaving a trace in

education of students. Apart from many techniques learners sometimes fail due to their learning habits and lack of concentration. It is in the hands of teachers to make everyone enjoy the joy of learning a language. The high motivation to study English is observed by using many approaches which give a variety of forms of teaching like listening to stories, rhymes and watching clips, pictures, role play etc.,

Bio data

I am, Beena Anil, working as an Assistant Professor of English for SDNB Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai, India. To make on record, I am highly honoured to acclaim that my paper entitled 'Rhymes : An effective learning strategy' was selected for presentation in the 4th FL Teaching and Research Mini-conference .

I have authored 4 books and presented papers in various national and international conferences.