PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR B1 LEARNERS AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *Teaching English as a foreign language can be a difficult task, but it can also be very rewarding. It is important to be patient with your students and make sure that they are following your lessons. It's also necessary to use different teaching methods, such as games, projects, and activities in order to keep your English learners interested and engaged in the language learning process*

Key words: *overhearers, Practice at using L1 (mother tongue) strategies, Rehearsal time, Develop interactive listening exercises, Transactional and interactional language, English a second language (ESL).*

INTRODUCTION

While it is a bit of an exaggeration, students clearly feel that classroom-based speaking practice does not prepare them for the real world. Why do students so often highlight listening and speaking as their biggest problems? Partly because of the demands of listening and speaking and partly because of the way speaking is often taught. It usually consists of language practice activities (discussions, information-gap activities etc.) or is used to practice a specific grammar point. Neither teaches patterns of real interaction. So, what can we do in the classroom to prepare students for real interaction? What do students need? Practical suggestions and what language should I teach? How do I get students to use new language Further reading What do students need? Practice at using L1 (mother tongue) strategies, which they don't automatically transfer.

An awareness of formal / informal language and practice at choosing appropriate language for different situations. The awareness that informal spoken language is less complex than written language. It uses shorter sentences, is less organized and uses more 'vague' or non-specific language. Exposure to a variety of spoken text types. The ability to cope with different listening situations. Many listening exercises involve students as 'overhearers' even though most communication is face-to-face. To be competent at both 'message-oriented' or

transactional language and interactional language, language for maintaining social relationships. To be taught patterns of real interaction. To have intelligible pronunciation and be able to cope with streams of speech. Rehearsal time. By giving students guided preparation / rehearsal time they are more likely to use a wider range of language in a spoken task.[1]

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Transferring L1 strategies

When preparing for a spoken task, make students aware of any relevant L1 strategies that might help them to perform the task successfully. For example, 'rephrasing' if someone does not understand what they mean. Formal / informal language give students one or more short dialogues where one speaker is either too formal or informal. Students first identify the inappropriate language, then try to change it. Also show students how disorganized informal speech is.

- Vague language
- Using typescripts of informal speech, focus on examples of vague language.
- Different spoken text types
- Draw up a list of spoken text types relevant to the level of your class. Teach the language appropriate for each text type.
- Interactive listening
- Develop interactive listening exercises. Face-to-face listening is the most common and the least practiced by course books. Any form of 'Live listening' (the teacher speaking to the students) is suitable.
- Transactional and interactional language
- Raise students' awareness by using a dialogue that contains both. It could be two friends chatting to each other (interactional) and ordering a meal (transactional).
- Real interaction patterns

Teach real interaction patterns. Introduce the following basic interactional pattern: Initiate, Respond, Follow-up. This is a simplification of Amy Tsoi's work. See Tsoi (1994)[1]

The following interaction could be analyzed as follows:

A: What did you do last night? (Initiate)

B: Went to the cinema (Respond)

A: Oh really? (Follow-up)

What did you see? (Initiate)

B: Lord of the Rings (Respond)

Have you been yet? (Initiate)

A: No, it's difficult with the kids (Respond)

B: Yeah of course (follow-up)

Understanding spoken English after a listening exercise give students the typescript. Using part of it, students mark the stressed words, and put them into groups (tone units). You can use phone numbers to introduce the concept of tone units. The length of a tone unit depends on the type of spoken text. Compare a speech with an informal conversation. In the same lesson or subsequent listening lessons, you can focus on reductions in spoken speech, for example, linking, elision and assimilation. Preparation and rehearsal before a spoken task, give students some preparation and rehearsal time. Students will need guidance on how to use it. A sheet with simple guidelines is effective. Real-life tasks try to use real-life tasks as part of your teaching. What language should I teach?[5]

Spoken language is both interactional and transactional, but what should teachers focus on in class? Brown and Yule (1983) suggest the following:

When teaching spoken language, focus on teaching longer transactional turns. This is because native speakers have difficulty with them and because students need to be able to communicate information efficiently whether in their country or in a native-speaker country.

Teach interactional language by using an awareness-raising approach. For example, with monolingual classes by listening to a recorded L1conversation before a similar L2 recording.

For recordings of native-speaker interactional and transactional conversations, have a look at 'Exploring Spoken English' by McCarthy and Carter (1997). It not only contains a variety of text types, but each recording comes with analysis.

How do I get students to use new language?

Research by Peter Sekihan on Task-based Learning shows that giving students preparation time significantly increases the range of language used in the performance of the task, whereas the accuracy of the language is not as influenced. If this is so, then it seems sensible to give students preparation time when encouraging them to use new language. Imagine you have been working on the language that would be useful for the following task: 'Having a conversation with a stranger on public transport'. You have now reached the stage where you wish students to perform the task. Rather than just give students 10 minutes to prepare and rehearse the task, give students guided preparation time.[4]

A simple preparation guide for the task could be a few key questions like:

How will you start the conversation?

What topics are you going to talk about?

How are you going to move from one topic to another?

How are you going to end the conversation?

After the preparation stage, students give a 'live performance'. This can be in front of the class or group to group in a large class. This increases motivation and adds an element of real-life stress. Another way of encouraging students to use new language in a communication activity is to make a game out of it. Give students a situation and several key phrases to include. They get points for using the language. Similarly, when working on the language of discussion, you can produce a set of cards with the key phrases/exponents on. The cards are laid out in front of each group of 2/3/4 students. If a student uses the language on a particular card appropriately during the discussion, he/she keeps the card. The student with the most cards wins. If he/she uses the language inappropriately, then he / she can be challenged and has to leave the card on the table.[3] 'Noticing the gap' happens when learners focus on the gaps in their own linguistic knowledge. This may happen when students do a dictogloss – sometimes referred to as grammar dictation. The following is an example of how it works.

What happens if learners do not notice grammar?

Without the chance to 'notice' grammar, learners might make errors despite significant experience with the target language. Learners could also correctly infer rules and patterns about new language based on what they have learned, but avoid using these structures in real-life situations.The transition from not knowing to knowing and using spontaneously is not instant. The transition may take moments, hours, or even days. Sometimes, it doesn't happen. However, it is the teacher's job to train learners to discover how grammar works in real-world contexts.

In one of my A2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) adult classes, I put the present passive simple in context using a text about the olive harvest. After creating interest in the theme of the lesson, I read at a natural speed:

There are an estimated nine million olive trees in Palestine, which can produce tons of oil. Green ripe olives are picked in October by thousands of Palestinian farmers who work daily for over a month. More than half of the Palestinian population participate in the olive harvest. Once the harvest is completed, fresh olives are sent to the press. Olive oil is then extracted from the olives and packaged in yellow gallons. The product is not only sold in Palestine but also shipped around the world. (Text created by We'am Hamdan)

I checked learners' general understanding of the text, then I re-read it. This time learners wrote down key words. In groups, they tried to reconstruct the text from memory, as close to the original as possible. Then they compared their version with another group, and worked together to agree on one version. Finally, I showed the original version on an interactive whiteboard.

During the activity, the learners used their linguistic knowledge and worked out the meaning and form of the emerging target language. This is how they 'notice' the gaps in their current version of English. The process can lead to a restructure in their mental picture of the language system.

CONCLUSION

Learning a language is no easy task for many people. English as a second language comes with many challenges, especially in terms of pronunciation, context and cultural norm. All languages have their idiosyncrasies and learning English may be daunting to many learners for many reasons. Schools that offer ESL classes tend to be in urban areas with high concentrations of minority and economically disadvantaged students. ESL learners therefore are positioned to be highly segregated from English-speaking students. This lessens their opportunities to hear from and interact with good models of English and peers who are native speakeasies learners are often faced with culture shock, which can impede their education and progress. Culture shock is anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. Many things can attribute to culture shock, including language barriers, social isolation, unfamiliar weather patterns, different foods, status change, and living conditions. Even a different type of education system can confuse learners and deter them from making beneficial education decisions. Due to language barriers and the unfamiliarity of cultural norms such as bus schedules and pick-up locations or train and subway routes, an English-language learner can find it difficult to make time for education and language learning.

Because of these challenges, many learners walk to their literacy programmers. Some juggle multiple jobs and are also taking care of families, so attending a class at a literacy programmed could mean that learners must choose between making it to the class or eating dinner, helping their children with their homework, or other priorities. When it comes to literacy instruction, there is a lot of interaction, conversation, and value involved. Sometimes, topics covered in instruction may focus on something culturally that ESL learners do not understand, know about, or even value. Engaging in conversation is the best practice for ESL learners to improve their skills and achieve their language and education goals, but

if they feel socially isolated from the conversation, they will make little to no progress. Not only do they need English language proficiency training, but also cultural knowledge and education. At SEGi College KL, we have a system of making the learning of English better and easier.[6]

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