



Learning English through Task-based Methodology

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The principal aim of English teaching in today's world has changed fundamentally. English is to be taught as means of communication, to be used in its spoken form in all situations of contemporary life. The visible impact of the presence of English is that today it is being demanded at the very initial stage of schooling. The mushrooming of private English medium schools and the early introduction of English in the state school systems is an example of this.

Languages are learned implicitly by comprehending and communicating messages, either through listening or reading for meaning. Input rich communicational environments are a prerequisite for language learning. The "burden of languages" is the burden of incomprehension. This happens when language is taught for its own sake as a set of forms and rules, and not introduced and familiarised as the

carrier of coherent textual meaning. A number of researchers have stressed that language is acquired when attention is focused not on language form, but on the meaning of messages. The learner should receive meaningful language input that is appropriate to her or his age; knowledge of language and readiness for language skills. The aim at the initial levels i.e. first or first two years of English is to build familiarity with the language through primarily spoken or spoken-and-written input so that the child builds up a working knowledge of the language.

We normally begin with suggestions for "comprehensible input". Inputs include textbooks, other print material such as big books, class libraries, parallel materials in more than one language and media support; it could be magazines, newspaper columns, radio/audio cassettes, etc. and the use of authentic text.

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Encourage the children to look at their books as the text is read out in the classroom. Read it aloud many times and on consecutive days. Repeated reading helps the child to understand the language and to learn to read.

Use of the blackboard to put down new words could be a way of learning new words. The child can have a notebook for new words. New words can also be put up on a chart paper or on the walls. As the activity progresses you can change the charts with word families like adjectives, adverbs, nouns, etc.

Pre-reading questions also help in understanding the theme and mood of the poem. Children can be asked to look at pictures and describe them.

Beginning with action rhymes, simple plays, or skits, theatre as a

genuine class activity can promote the child's engagement with language and its performance. Play-based learning is generally considered the educational context par excellence of the preschool years. The value of learning through play was first put forward by the German educationist Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). The kindergarten and nursery school movement, which developed from his writings,

freed young children from the tyranny of sitting in rows and chanting and writing ABC. Much later Piaget provided a psychological justification for the doctrine by arguing that the child's active exploration of a wide variety of objects is an essential precursor of later verbal and cognitive story reading, as opposed to teaching stories as texts. Reading stories aloud, repeated reading, choral reading, story retelling, and rewriting activities can draw and build on the existing language proficiency and skills of teachers. Regular story reading triggers the acquisition process in children. The stories should also have an element of enjoyment. In telling the story the imagination of the child should be so raised that he actively participates.



There should be a display of signs, charts and notices in the classroom. These should draw the attention of the students to “environmental print”. It has been found that exposure to print through stories leads to a child’s conceptualisation of the page space in terms of centred headings and paragraphs.

Shared reading of big books with text and illustrations and reading cards can be used for a group reading activity and help them develop acquaintance with print code.

The main drawback in any kind of oral work in a language class is that the teacher tends to take the lion’s share of the practice at the learner’s

expense. There is great satisfaction to be derived from hearing one’s own voice resounding through the classroom, dumbfounding the captive audience.

Yet, even when the child is called upon to play an active part, a great deal of what he says will be directly in answer to the teacher’s questions denying him the possibility of forming questions for himself. There are few textbooks that deliberately set out to ensure that the language-learner is provided with adequate and consistent practice in the skill of asking questions as well as of answering, although language learning should be one of the most democratic of activities. The

teacher can employ a number of devices to evoke a variety of questions systematically from the learner in the form of situational or non-situational drill work, assisted by flashcards or verbal cues; what we are concerned with here, however, is the less mechanical, less systematic, but more lively practice offered by games and related activities suitable for a wide range of children/learners. The teacher might acquire or prepare a series of posters advertising such items as sports, films, plays, shows, festivals, meetings, carnivals, holidays, excursions. The greater the amount of visible detail included, the greater the number of questions these posters will elicit.

Dictation is also now seen as a language activity that requires the child to decode and hold in the mind chunks of text that must be reformulated.

Encourage children to guess the meaning of difficult words before you explain. Teachers can supply pictures

for difficult words; jumbled sentences can be presented in some attractive way to be corrected by the child.

An important insight that emerges from this task-based methodology is that a need to communicate must be created in the classroom, which brings into play not only the target-language resources, but all other resources that learners have at their disposal, for example, conjecture, gesture, knowledge of conventions, numeracy, and the mother tongue. Let children talk about their brothers, sisters, cousins, etc.—this will help in bringing out the concept of caring, and sharing, and emotional bonding. There are a number of enjoyable ways in which a teacher may engage his students from time to time to help foster the very important skill of fluency in communication. But the real value of games and related activities is that they should create an environment for learning and reinforcing in which the teacher interferes as little as possible.

