

TEACHING AND TESTING OF MEANING IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

General theories of methods have shown the fact that it depends on the objective of teaching whether a certain method is suitable to be used in Teaching English as A Foreign Language (TEFL). A method which is suitable for a certain aim of learning English may not be so useful for another aim. There may be some textbooks that are made up exclusively of picture. Those picture books give only the meaning of the words spoken by the teacher. The Grammar Translation Method pays attention more to the meaning rather than to form. Language exists in two forms, the spoken and the written. Two linguistic activities are associated with both speech and writing: an encoding and a decoding process. Speaking and writing themselves are the encoding processes whereby we communicate our ideas, thought or feeling through one or the other form of language; and listening and reading are the parallel decoding process by which we understand either a spoken or a written message that refers to the meaning. The two important elements shared by all four language skills: grammatical structure and vocabulary, these elements are used in language testing for testing of meaning in English.

Keywords: teaching, testing, meaning

INTRODUCTION

Objective and methods of teaching and learning English seem to be almost the constant topic in foreign language teaching discussion. One may wonder whether all attentions should be devoted to teaching listening-speaking-reading and writing. It has been repeatedly stated that different aims will call for different materials, different ways of teaching, and will certainly present different problems.

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As a matter of fact testing cannot be separated from the teaching and learning process (Sabarti, 1986:2). Both of them comprise parts of a continuous process each of which depends on one another. Basically testing provides feedback for the teaching and learning process. The feedback may concern with the objective, students' achievement, effectiveness of teacher's presentation and methods used, students' learning difficulties, the sound of the test itself and still many more.

DISCUSSION

1. Meaning

There are several types of meaning and several ways of conveying each type. Lexical meaning includes the meaning of concrete words (pencil, book, paper); of abstract words (honesty, truth, etc); of quality words (good, wide; and verbs (give, learn, understand). There is a structural meaning conveyed by the structural words, by the various types of word order, and by the grammatical categories.

The different types of meaning mentioned above should get into the student's mind, because the teaching material- no matter how it has been carefully graded and selected, will be useless unless it get into the mind of the students. Each types of meaning may pose a different problem. The problem of nouns, for example will be

different from that of abstract nouns, and so on. According to M. Subyati (1996:48) some ways which can be used to get the types of meaning into the student's mind are

a. Meaning Through Native Language

The reason for using the native language to teach meaning is that it prevents misunderstanding, saves time, and makes the presentation free from physical demonstration. Most method which makes use of the native language, either for translation or for explanation, assume that the students will use their mother tongue any way in their mind. So it may be useless for the teacher to prevent the students from doing so. The teacher should not, of course, teach all meaning through the native language. The teacher should remember this caution: avoid using the native language if it leads to mistakes, and use the native language if it helps avoid mistakes.

b. Meaning Through Objects

By using objects or models the teacher can teach not only vocabulary but also structure. The easier the objects or the models can be seen and felt, the easier it is to get the meaning across:

1. Names of things like books, pencil, etc, may be taught by pointing and naming technique. The success of this technique lies in making clear what is being pointed at.
2. Quality words have meanings which can be effectively presented in contrast with their opposites by means of objects which best bring out opposing qualities
3. Certain abstract words like metal, plant, substance, etc may be taught by grouping a number of objects, models, or samples of material belonging to the name class. Bits of tin or iron for example, may be used to explain the meaning of the word metal
4. Structure words like on, in, under, etc may be explain by using objects which illustrate their particular relationship.

c. Meaning Through Actions

It is not efficient to teach meaning by means of object alone. The teacher may use gestures like pointing and touching and actions like giving and taking. These may be used, alone or with objects, to convey the meaning of demonstratives (this, that), directional prepositions (to, from), verbs of actions (go, come), and nouns of actions (smile, fall). To convey structure meaning through actions, there are three points to remember first, the action should be completely isolated from other actions; second, the timing of the action should reflect the tense of verb; and third, the gestures should be clear and conventional.

d. Meaning Through Situations

Situation may or may not include actions. They may be examined from the point of view of variation and interest.

Variation: structural meaning may be taught by varying the situation together with the sentence. The teacher may do the following: he does what he is saying; she then points to students to do the same action and says what he is doing he repeats the first action with other objects while the student says what the teacher is doing. The teacher says what other students are doing. The teacher may continue doing this, varying each element of the situation with the corresponding element of the sentence.

Interest: to maintain the interest, a situation may be dramatized quite early in the course. The students may be asked to introduce one another with simple forms like "Darcy, this is Henry". "Henry this is Darcy". Later as structure and vocabulary permits, the course may dramatizes more complex daily activities like shopping, posting a letter, etc. The teacher may also use various sorts of games

e. Meaning Through Pictures

Pictures in the text may be functional or illustrative. If the picture are functional, that is if they are the means of teaching meaning, it is important to make sure that the pictures are not ambiguous. To be clear, a picture should contain only what the words mean; there should be nothing in the picture that is not mentioned in the sentence. All the irrelevant details must be removed; otherwise the picture is merely illustrative.

If a picture is simply illustrative, it may be analyzed for its appropriateness, atmosphere, liveliness, technical perfection, and its appeal to the type of student we have in mind. Illustrative pictures are useful to

focus the attention of the student on what the text says by helping him to imagine it. The picture often comes in the form of crowded scenes, illustrating a single theme, like the family leaving on a holiday, the countryside, in summer, etc. Although they do not give the meaning everything, it is likely that the meaning of certain percentage of items, especially that of the concrete nouns, is conveyed through the picture.

f. Meaning Through Words in Context

The extent to which pictures, objects, actions and situations are used in order to convey meaning may depend on the language level being taught. The smaller the vocabulary of the students, the more will objects and/or pictures be needed in order to get the meaning across. But once the learner has acquired a certain vocabulary, known words may be used to teach the meaning of new words and structures. This can be done by putting the new words in verbal contexts which give them the meaning. These verbal contexts include:

1. Definition

Words may be defined by words already known for example breakfast is the meal we have in the morning. Some words are more useful for defining than are others. A method of teaching may intentionally teach a good number of such words early in the course, so as to be able later to expand vocabulary by definition.

2. Enumeration

A meaning may be taught by listing what it includes for example dogs, cats, horses etc are animals. Books, hats, coats etc are things.

3. Metaphor

If two or more things have a common feature, the same words may be used for them. If one of these is already known, it may be assumed that the students will see the analogy with the other. If the students already known the names of the main parts of the body for example, it would not be too difficult for him to identify the legs of the table, the mouth of the river, the foot of the mountain, etc.

4. Substitution

The meaning of some words may be taught by substituting them for other words or group of words.

5. Opposition

If the student knows the meaning of a word, he need simply be told that another word is its opposite in order to get an idea of meaning

6. Multiple Contexts

Multiple contexts help to make the meaning clearer. The meaning of a new word may be inferred from its use in a number of different sentences. For example students may not know the meaning of the words *distance* but after reading the paragraph he able to understand the meaning.

2. Testing of Meaning

The terms test, measurement and evaluation are sometimes used interchangeably, but some users make distinction among them. The term test is usually considered the narrowest of the three terms. Test often connotes the presentation of a standard set of questions to be answered. As a result of person's answer to such a series of questions, we often a measure (that is, a numerical value) of characteristic of that person. Measurement often connotes a broader concept; we can measure characteristics other than by giving tests. Using observation, rating scales, or any other device that allows us to obtain information in a quantitative form is measurement. Evaluation has been recently defined in a variety of ways. B.S. Bloom et all (1971) stated that evaluation as we see it, is the systematic collection of evidence to determine whether in fact certain changes are taking place in the learns as well as to determine the amount or degree of change in individual students. (Cronbach ,1970:2) as well stated that the essential feature of the evaluation is systematic gathering of information for the purpose of making judgments of worth and making decisions. From the definitions show that evaluation answers the question "How good" – describes student's progress in fair, relevant and accurate manner (be reliable and valid). The term test refers to an instrument or systematic procedure for measuring a sample of behavior It answer the question "how well/how far? An individual perform- either in comparison with others or in comparison with a domain of performance tasks (Gronlund & Linn, 1976:5). Those imply

then the objective of language testing that can be grouped into three headings: aptitude, general proficiency and achievement.

Language exists in two forms, the spoken and the written. Two linguistic activities are associated with both speech and writing: an encoding and a decoding process (Widdowson, 1978:47). Speaking and writing themselves are the encoding processes whereby we communicate our ideas, thought or feeling through one or the other form of language; and listening and reading are the parallel decoding process by which we understand either a spoken or a written message that refers to the meaning. The two important elements shared by all four language skills: grammatical structure and vocabulary.

Based on the discussion above meaning can be tested through testing grammatical structure and testing vocabulary.

a. Testing Grammatical Structure

The preparation of a structure should always begin with the setting up of a detailed outline of the proposed test content. The outline should specify not only which structures are to be tested, but the percentage of items to be written around each problem. According to David P. Harris (1974:26) item types for testing grammatical structure are 1). completion (multiple choice); 2). sentence alternative (multiple choice); 3). sentence interpretation (multiple choice); 4). scrambled sentence (multiple choice); 5). completion (supply type) and 6). conversion (supply type).

b. Testing Vocabulary

The first decision that must be made is whether to test the students' active or passive vocabulary- that is, the words they should be using in their speech or writing or those they will need merely to comprehend, especially in their reading. According to David P. Harris (1974:51) item types for testing vocabulary are 1). definition (multiple choice); 2). completion (multiple choice); 3). paraphrase (multiple choice); 4). paraphrase (supply type); 5). pictures (objective).

CONCLUSION

Among learning activities which teach all language skills can teach them apart and together. Learning activities which teach all language skills together do so on the assumption that what is learned through all the senses is better understood and longer remembered. All avenues of approach-the eye, the ear, reinforced by the motor reflexes of hand and mouth- are used in the same lesson. The lesson may begin with listening and speaking and end in reading and writing. The point is that the students should understand the meaning of they listen, speak, read and write. In short the students should know the meaning of the language. If the teaching of the language skills the teacher could not find any method which is suitable for the teaching purposes, he had better select the one which can most easily adapt to the needs. Then to know the understanding of those students on meaning of English by using testing on grammatical structure and vocabulary since both of the language component close related to meaning.

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