ELT Methodology

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CHAPTER 4

DESIGNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING SKILLS

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Turan PAKER

Abstract

Language skills are essential in language learning, through which we receive the sent message and interact with other people by producing the appropriate message. In language teaching, they are our essential tools to provide comprehensible input and to practice appropriate discourse. Therefore, we need to present foreign/second language by listening and reading skills and subskills, and practice it by speaking and writing. Initially, teachers focus on these skills individually, however, when the students reach a certain level, they attempt to integrate various skills depending on their purposes and activities such as listening and speaking, listening and writing, reading and writing or reading and speaking. This integration may even take place as a combination of three or four skills depending on the nature of the task or activity. In this chapter, we are going to focus on teaching four language skills both as individual and integrated skills. We are going to display certain principles and techniques as to how to teach and practice through various proficiency levels.

Introduction

In both second and foreign language teaching and learning, four language skills; namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing have been considered essential in almost all language teaching methods and approaches except the Grammar Translation Method throughout the history. In fact, we communicate through four language skills, and therefore, the purpose of a foreign/second language teaching is to enable communication by all means in the target language. Thus, we need to prepare our students for the daily life by having them use four language skills in the classroom. Nowadays, we get a lot of information by watching TV channels, reading newspapers or web pages on the internet, magazines, books, etc. We write e-mail, Facebook, WhatsApp, SMS, twit messages to each other, and we talk with each other face to face, on the mobile phone, or through skype, google and so on. It is inevitable that we can communicate more easily and faster today than 25 years ago as the world has become "a global village" thanks to internet, satellites and other technology (McLuhan, 2003, p. 6). As we have all such different facilities, we should teach the foreign/second language through communication in which four language skills are abundantly used through various tasks based on different topics in the classrooms. As language teachers, we should keep in mind that all students have the four language skills in their mother tongue, and we help and encourage our students to refurbish and adjust their skills by using the foreign/second language that they try to learn. In addition, we also teach them some academic and practical subskills to use in their academic life throughout their education and life-long learning. Thanks to learning some receptive subskills such as skimming, scanning, information transfer, referencing, guessing the meaning of new words from context, inferencing, etc., our students improve their listening and reading skills, and thanks to learning some productive subskills such as narrating, describing, comparing/contrasting, having a debate or an argument, they improve their productive skills, namely, speaking and writing skills at an academic level. Finally, teaching four language skills is one phase of language teaching as well as effective planning. In addition, teachers should assess the four language skills effectively depending on the level and purpose of the tests in order to create positive backwash effect in teaching/learning a foreign/second language.

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