

Principles of Language Teaching

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching a language is a serious business and must be conducted carefully. Language teaching should receive psychological, linguistic and pedagogical support which would help the teacher in teaching the target language successfully. Research done in the field of linguistics, socio-linguistics, psychology and pedagogy have brought out certain principles of language teaching. In his book Robert Lado has discussed the principles of language teaching. The principles are stated briefly here.

THE PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

1. Teach speed before writing.
2. Teach Basic-sentence.
3. Establish the patterns as habits through pattern-practice. Talking about the language is not knowing it.
4. Teach the sound system structurally for use by demonstration, imitation, props, contrast, and practice.
5. Keep the vocabulary load to a minimum while the students are mastering the sound system and the grammatical patterns.
6. Teach and present the problems in meaningful situations.
7. Teach reading and writing as manipulation of graphic representation of language units and patterns that the student already knows.
8. Teach the patterns gradually, in cumulative graded steps. To teach a language is to impart a new system of complex habits, and habits are acquired slowly.
9. Translation is not a substitute for language practice.
10. Teach the language as it is, not as it ought to be.
11. The student must be engaged in practicing most of the learning time.
12. When a response is not in the repertory of the student, shape it through partial experience and props.
13. Speed and style: Practice must end in a linguistically acceptable and psychologically full experience.
14. Provide immediate reinforcement.

15. Impart an attitude of identification with or sympathetic understanding of the people who speak the second language rather than merely a utilitarian attitude towards the language or a disinterested or negative attitude towards the people or the language is spoken by the native speakers.
16. Teach the meaning and content of the school language as it has developed in the culture where the language is spoken natively
17. Teach primarily to produce learning rather than to please or entertain. (1971 : 50-60).

CONDITIONS AND VARIABLES

In addition to the principles mentioned above, a language teacher must consider the following conditions and variables when programming any teaching. The teacher must know the age, educational level, handicaps, level of proficiency, goals and linguistic and cultural background of his students when teaching a language. Materials through which the targets are available. The materials must be fully used and exploited. The teacher who intends to teach a target-language should satisfy himself that he knows the language fully well. Linguistic and cultural setting must also be taken care of.

LINGUISTIC BEACH-HEAD

According to Robert Lado a language-teacher can establish a linguistic beach-head by

1. Speaking the language.
2. Asking the students to memorize dialogues.
3. Providing motivation and fun through graded dialogues, rhymes, language games, etc.
4. Making the form available.
5. Using the mimicry, memorization technique (Imitation).
6. Conducting group-recitation before individual recitation.
7. Putting the meaning across.
8. Practicing recall.
9. Applying the laws of learning.
10. Clarifying the cultural content (1971 : 61-69).

So far we have discussed the principles of language teaching along with the strategies for establishing a linguistic beach-head. Let me briefly mention here a few generalizations which J. A. Bright and G.P. McGregor elaborate in their book entitled, 'TESLL'. The generalizations are of vital importance and are given below:

GENERALISATIONS

1. Telling is not teaching.
2. There is no learning without exposure.
3. We are trying to teach, primarily, not knowledge but skills.
4. Skills can be acquired only through practice.
5. The teacher must give his student as much opportunity as possible for the correct practice language skills and as little opportunity as possible to make mistake.
6. Education and in particular language learning is not a race or competition at all. There are valuable prizes for everyone.
7. Make language activities enjoyable, which will make teaching more enjoyable too, and far less exhausting.
8. One way of helping students to enjoy their language activities and building up their confidence, is to explain to them, as far as we can, what we are doing in class, and why.
9. The teacher of English has the responsibility of equipping his students with the skills that they need to pursue their studies in all other subjects either immediately or in the future.
10. Even more important than this, the English teacher should have the wide ranging enthusiasm and imagination that can make his English course a sort of ideas and interests.
11. Find out what students have done before (Bright and McGregor, 1970:1-13)