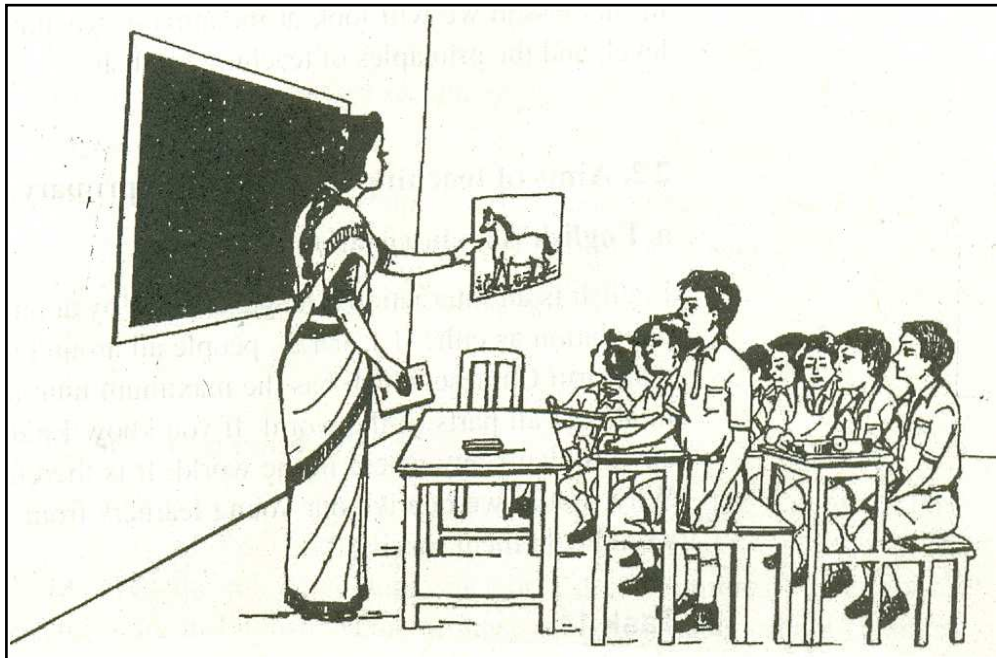


# UNIT

# 2

## TEACHING ENGLISH AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL



Picture 1: Classroom Teaching.

### **Introduction**

This unit focuses on the teaching and learning of English at the primary level. It discusses issues like:

- Why English is taught at the primary level?
- Principles of teaching English at the primary level, and
- What is Essential Learning Continua?

A thorough study of this unit will help you understand other issues of English Language Teaching and Learning (ELT-L) discussed in the book.

# LESSON

# 1

## Aims Teaching English at the Primary Level

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### Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- explain the aims of teaching English at the primary level.

### 2.1. Introduction

It is not clear to many of us why we are teaching English to our young learners at the primary level. You would perhaps argue, our young learners are already loaded with work, why give them the extra load of learning of foreign language? What is the purpose?

In this lesson we will look at the aims of teaching English at the primary level, and the principles of teaching English.

### 2.2. Aims of Teaching English at the Primary Level

#### a. English is an International Language

English is an international language used by about one third of the world's population as either L1 or L2. People all around the world. It is second to mandarin Chinese which has the maximum number of speakers. It is used in almost all parts of the world. If you know English you should not have any problems any where in the world. It is therefore a *survival language*. Why should we deprive our young learners from learning a language that would help them survive?

#### Task 1

Can you now explain what we mean by *survival language*?

#### b. English as a Foreign Language

Every country must learn a foreign language or a second language. A foreign language is one that is required to communicate with foreigners, both within and outside the country. While a second language is one that is needed to communicate with people within the

Bilingual– দুই  
ভাষা যেখানে চলে  
Multilingual–  
তিন বা তার অধিক  
ভাষা

country using a different language? A second language is essential for a *bilingual or multilingual* situation.

Learning a foreign/second language makes life easy for us.

### c. English- Language for Higher Studies

After the completion of their primary education, many students go up for secondary, higher secondary and higher education. At that level, English is essential for most of the books in the library are in English.

### Task 2

Read sections b and c and say whether the statements are true or false. Write T for true and F for false in the spaces provided.

1. Developed countries do not need to learn a foreign language.
2. A foreign language is one that is needed to communicate with foreigners.
3. All countries must have a second language.
4. One must learn a foreign language in order to get a good job.
5. Lingua franca means a common language used by speakers of different languages in a bilingual or multilingual society.
6. English is essential for higher education.


### d. English- for a Good Job

If you want a good job, you must know good English. The validity of this statement can be observed in the job market in Bangladesh and the world outside. Even the job of a shopkeeper or a driver requires the ability to read and write in English. Many primary school students cannot continue education after class 5 due to *financial constraints*. They look for jobs and if they know some English at this stage they would be benefited.

Financial  
Constraints– আর্থিক  
সংকট

### e. English gives Prestige and Honour

People who know good English are honoured and respected in society. English gives them prestige and dignity. To gain this prestige and honour students should start learning English at an early age.

**Task 3**

1. "If you want a good job you must know good English." Do you agree with this statement? If yes- why? If no- why not? Discuss the question with your tutor.
2. Do you think your English teacher in school enjoys special prestige and honour because he/she teaches English? Why?

**f. English- the Language of the Computer and the Internet**

In order to keep pace with the fast developing world and to bring knowledge at your door step you would have access to the computer and the internet. These two will help you in information transfer through Information Technology (IT) to and from the world. The language that the computer uses is English. We should thus, prepare our young learners to use the computer and the internet for gaining and updating knowledge. They should therefore start learning English to be good users of the computer and the internet.

As a developing nation we would like to see our young learners face the challenges of the future with courage and confidence. They are the future citizens and leaders of the country. Each one of them is a soldier with a promise to build the nation. In order to help these young learners build a better future for themselves they need to learn English. That is why English is introduced from class 1 so that students can take their time and gain control over the language and use it to suit their purpose.

**Task 4**

What are the aims of teaching English at the primary level? Read section 2.2 and write the summary of this section from your understanding.

**REVIEW**

As English is an international language used in almost all countries of the world, we should help our young learners learn the language. They should not be left out from the main stream. It is a foreign language for us, and a language for higher studies. It is a language we need to get a good job, and to get prestige, honour and dignity in society. It is the language of the computer and the internet/information technology. A good command of the language leads one to a better future. In view of the dominant position of English in the job market, and in the development of science and technology, we should teach our young learners this language and help them build a better future for themselves and the nation. In order to fulfil this aim English is introduced from class 1 in our primary schools.

## Principles of Teaching English at the Primary Level

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### Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- explain and apply the principles of teaching English at the primary level.

### 2.2. Introduction

English is a foreign language in Bangladesh. Considering its needs, purpose and aims, English should be taught in a planned way. Before we start teaching this subject, we have to ask ourselves–

- What are we teaching English for?
- What do we expect our learners to do with the knowledge, experience and skills they would gain from this course?

These questions will be addressed in the following lesson, but they are here for they give rise to principles and methodology of teaching. What principles should we follow in teaching English and how should we teach it?

In this lesson we will look at the principles of teaching English at the primary level. Methods and approaches of teaching English will be discussed in unit-5 of this book.

### 2.3. Principles of Teaching English at the Primary Level

#### 2.3.1. The Four Skills- LSRW

Language teaching means developing skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing- LSRW. English is taught in our schools and colleges as a language for communication. Students are expected to perform certain functions with the help of this language, e.g. introducing oneself, greeting somebody, asking for information, thanking/ congratulating somebody, etc. In order to help students do these functions we have to teach them the four skills, separately and in an integrated manner.

### 2.3.2. The Importance of Practice.

To help the students develop the four skills we have to help them practise the skills in class. Instead of telling them about the importance of each skill we should design activities which would help them practise listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, instead of we, the teachers reading and explaining the text to the learners, we have to help them read and understand the text, and ask and answer questions themselves. This way they can practise all four skills.

#### Task 1

Can you answer the following questions with reasons?

- a. English is taught in schools and colleges so that students can study and appreciate literature. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
- b. What do you think is the reason for encouraging students to practise the four skills in class?

### 2.3.3. Emphasis on Oral Practice

Of the four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing the first two skills i.e. L and S should be emphasized in class at the primary level. If the students can listen to good English and practise speaking it, they will not have problems in writing good English and understanding good written texts. For this you, the teacher must provide them with a good model. You can use a lot of oral drills in class. They are helpful for structures and pronunciation.

### 2.3.4. Use L1 Learning Experience

To teach English as a foreign language it would be a good idea to use your student's experience of learning L1 or the mother tongue. This experience would be particularly helpful in teaching phonetic sounds and structures. You would perhaps compare and contrast these with those in the student's mother tongue.

#### Task 2

Complete the following with ideas/information from the text. One is done for you.

- a. Of the four skills at the primary level L and S are the most important skills for practice.
- b. Listening to good English means \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. The teacher must improve her own English \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. Oral drills are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- e. Students' experience of learning L1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 2.3.5. Examples from the Learner's Life

For teaching language functions you often have to give examples or create situations for the learners to practise the language. These examples or situations must always be chosen from the learner's life. As it is a familiar experience learners would find it easy to understand and use the language, e.g. if you are teaching present simple tense to your students of class 5 it is better to let them talk about characters in the book using that tense. Even if they talk about characters in the book the practice must finish with students talking about themselves using the present simple.

### 2.3.6. Make Learning an Enjoyable Process

Students must enjoy learning English. For that we have to create a warm and friendly environment in the classroom. We have to encourage students to speak in class, to ask and answer questions in English. We should use encouraging words, and not discourage them or criticise for wrong answers.

A good way of making the whole English language learning process enjoyable is by using language games in class. Through these games students can practise different structures and language items quite *unwittingly*. It is therefore our responsibility as teachers to create a non-threatening environment in class and make English language learning an enjoyable process.

Unwittingly –  
অনিচ্ছাকৃত বা  
অসতর্কভাবে

### Task 3

Answer the following questions in brief.

- a. For teaching English as a foreign language why should you choose examples and situations from the learner's life?
- b. What happens if the classroom environment is not warm and friendly?
- c. Why is it important for students to ask and answer questions in English?
- d. How important is the use of language games in the English language class?

# LESSON

## 3

## Terminal Competencies, Classwise Attainable Competencies, and Essential Learning Continua

### Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to define–

- Terminal Competencies
- Classwise Attainable Competencies
- Essential Learning Continua.

### 3.1. Terminal Competencies

Look at the following questions:

- What are we teaching English for, especially at the primary level?
- What do we expect our learners to do with the knowledge and skills of English language gained during their primary education?

Can you answer these questions? If yes, good. If not - well here is the answer: we want our pupils to communicate in English when and where necessary. We want them to do certain functions in English. As mentioned earlier, language is a tool (যন্ত্র) for performing various functions (ক্রিয়াকলাপ). Our pupils should be able to greet somebody in English, or respond to greetings in English, if required. They should be able to follow instructions in English, or describe a place or situation in English. They should be able to ask for and give information in English. These are some of the functions our pupils are expected to perform at the end of the English course. The ability to perform these functions is known as *competency*. As the competencies are attained and tested at the end of the primary education, they are known as *Terminal Competencies* (প্রান্তিক যোগ্যতা).

Competency –  
যোগ্যতা

Terminal  
Competencies –  
প্রান্তিক যোগ্যতা

### Task 1

1. What do you mean by Terminal Competencies? Explain.

### 3.2. Classwise Attainable Competencies

The terminal competencies are divided on the basis of the four language skills- L S R W. Each of these skills is again divided into

Classwise  
Attainable  
Competencies –  
শ্রেণিভিত্তিক অর্জন  
উপযোগ যোগ্যতা



smaller pieces of competencies which are to be attained (অর্জন করতে হবে) at the end of each class/year. These competencies are known as *classwise attainable competencies*. That means at the end of each class the pupils should be able to do the tasks mentioned in the **Essential Learning Continua**. See **appendix 1**.

## Task 2

What do you mean by **Classwise attainable Competencies**? Explain.

### 3.3. Essential Learning Continua

Learning is a continuous process. What you learn today is based on what you have learnt yesterday, or in the past. Every experience is important in the process of learning. An example will make it clear. Imagine your brother has just finished ironing his clothes. He leaves the iron hot and goes away. You come and pick it up for you want to keep it in its place. You feel the heat, almost burning, and so you withdraw your hand immediately. This experience teaches you a lesson. Next time you hold an iron you would make sure it is not hot. This means that you have learnt from your experience. Also you do not learn everything at a time. You learn everyday. So learning is a continuous process which comes in the form of a chain.

In school and through a curriculum our pupils learn what we teach them. The content of the English course for the primary level is spread out on a chart showing the Terminal Competencies and Classwise Attainable Competencies. This layout of competencies, classwise and skillwise is known as Essential Learning Continua. This chart is produced by English language specialists and policy makers at National Curriculum and Textbook Board(NCTB). The pupils will do the English course in each class and develop competencies for performing tasks in English in all four skills - L S R W.

As a classroom teacher you must keep the Essential Learning Continua with you given at the end of this lesson and prepare your lesson plan accordingly. The English textbook, **English For Today** has been written in accordance with the Essential Learning Continua. The lessons are designed to fulfil classwise attainable competencies. You must test each of the items on the classwise attainable competencies to make sure you are leading them to the terminal competencies. If they fail to attain the Classwise Attainable Competencies you must *reflect*

Reflect–

যে পাঠটি পড়ান হল তা  
নিয়ে গভীরভাবে চিন্তা  
করা।

on your teaching. Find out what went wrong, why it went wrong, and how you can improve it.

### Task 3

Find a couple (2/3) of pupils of class 2/3. Look at the Listening competencies. Try item 3.1. for example- *to understand simple questions asked by the teacher about the student himself*. What is your finding? Do you think the pupils were taught with the competencies in mind? Discuss your findings with your tutor and colleagues.

### Questions

1. Why does the English teacher need to keep the Essential Learning Continua with her while planning her lesson?
2. What do you mean by Terminal Competencies?
3. What do you mean by Classwise Attainable Competencies?
4. What is the total number of Terminal Competencies for L S R and W? (Use the Essential Learning Continua to answer this question.)

### REVIEW

Essential Learning Continua is a chart showing Terminal and Classwise Attainable Competencies. As learning is a continuous process and there is no end to what should be learnt/taught, language specialists and policy makers produced a chart showing a fair and balanced distribution of competencies that should be attained by the pupils at the end of each class. These competencies are known as classwise attainable competencies, and those at the end of five years of primary education are known as Terminal Competencies.

Every classroom teacher must have a copy of the Essential Learning Continua to help her prepare her lessons and teach effectively.