



UNIT

6

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Introduction

Learning a language means developing four skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. As teachers of English we must know what each of these skills mean and how to teach them effectively. This unit focuses on the four skills and the methods/techniques that can be followed to help learners develop the four skills.

LESSON**1****Introduction to Language Skills**

Objective:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- explain the four skills: LSRW and
- demonstrate their importance in language learning.

Task 1

Why do we use language?
How do we do it?



Picture 1: Two persons talking to each other.

Look at the picture. What are they doing here? Write your answer in a few words.

1.1 Communication Through Language

Human beings need to communicate between each other. Language is the vehicle or means through which this communication takes place. Communication is done to transfer information/messages from one point to another.

1.2 Language Skills

This use of the language can be done in four different ways by listening, speaking, reading and writing (see figure 1). These are called language skills.

The use of Language takes place by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening - Speaking - Reading - Writing
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Figure 1: Language skills

Learning the language means acquiring the four language skills. We must remember that language is not an object. It is rather a set of skills. For being able to use the language successfully in our day-to-day life, we must acquire these language skills.

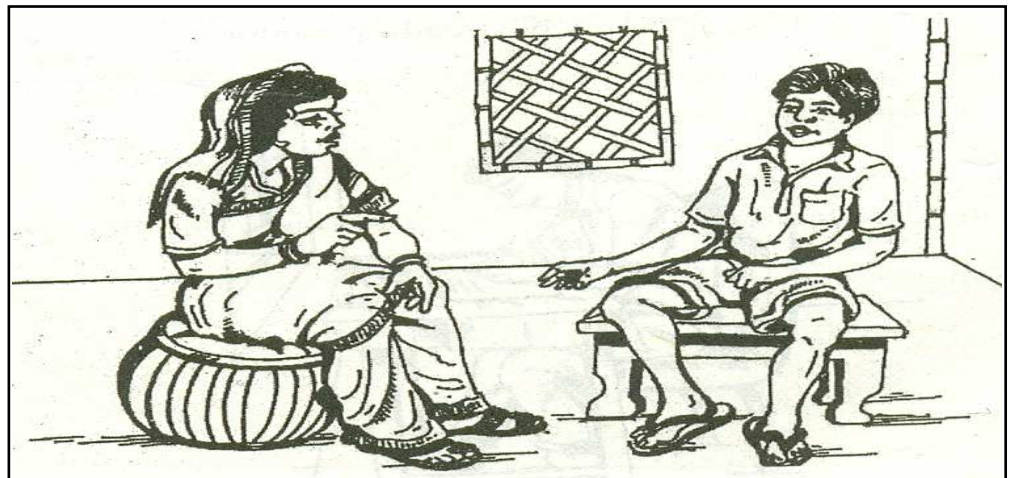
In Isolation—
বিচ্ছিন্নভাবে
Memorizing—মুখস্থ করা

Knowing or talking about the rules of the grammar of the language *in isolation* or *memorizing* the contents of a written material do not really help us in using the language in times of our need. Instead, regular practice of the four language skills can actually help us in improving our language skills.

1.3 Forms/Classification of Skills

Task 2

Look at the four pictures below. What is common about them? What skills are the characters using?



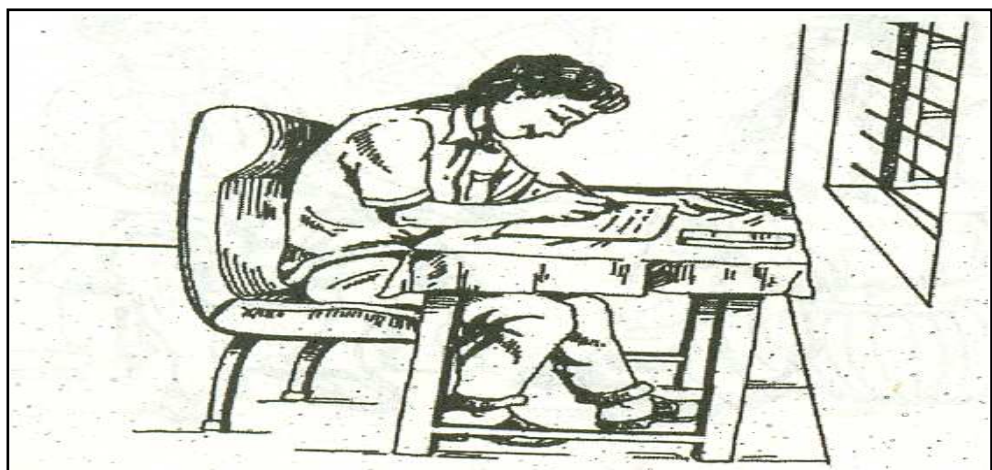
Picture 2a: A boy speaking to his mother.



Picture 2b: A girl listening to a radio.



Picture 2c: A boy reading a book.



Picture 2d: A boy writing.

Now, look at the pictures. What are they doing in there?

Please write your answer in one sentence on each of the pictures.

We use language to receive information or to give information. We receive information through listening and reading. Therefore, listening and reading are known as **receptive skills**. We use speaking and writing for giving information. Speaking and writing are therefore known as **productive skills**. But we should remember that language skills are not usually used in isolation. A single activity may/usually require to practise two or three or sometimes all the four language skills. This we may regard as the mixed/integrated use of skills.

Task 3

Reading the following situations. Identify the skills students are practising.

- (i) Students (SS) read a news item in a newspaper. Then the teacher writes some questions on the blackboard. SS answer the questions orally.
- (ii) SS read a passage, ask and answer questions to their classmates/partners, then write their answers in the exercise books.

REVIEW

Human beings can not exist without communicating with each other. And language is used for communication. It is the means or vehicle through which we can communicate. So, we need to learn how we can use the language in our real/practical life. For learning this practical use, we ought to acquire the required four skills of the taught language. There is no benefit in talking about or describing the grammatical rules of the language. Rather, for effective learning of the language, we need to know or acquire the language skills. Similarly, for improvement of our language skills, the most effective/useful or rather the only practical way is to practise the language skills in our real life contexts.

Now, we will move on to each of the four language skills in the following lessons.

LESSON**2****Listening****Objectives:**

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- understand language when spoken and
- help SS practise listening and develop this skill.

We listen to something/somebody for detailed comprehension. We have known in the previous lesson that listening is one of the two receptive language skills. We receive information/messages by listening to people or to the speech/sound produced by some mechanical devices, e.g. listening to tape recorder, radio etc.

2.1 Desire and Purpose

Usually, we listen to something because we want to do so. This means we need to have desire and purpose for listening. We listen to something because we have an interest in the matter, and because we want to use the information for practical purposes.



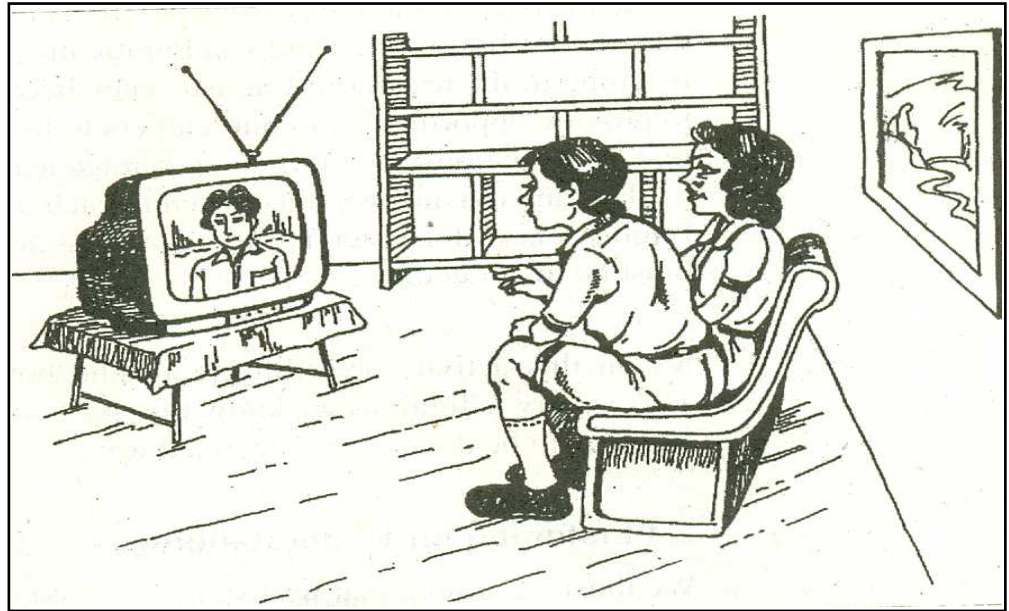
Picture 3: A father talking to his daughter.

Task 1

Now, look at the above picture? What can you see in there?
Try to answer in 2/3 sentences.

Task 2

Now, look at the picture below. What can you see in the picture? Try
to write about the picture in 3/4 sentences.



Picture 4: Watching TV.

2.2 Types of Listening Texts

Here is a list of texts we listen to everyday:

- announcements
- instructions
- news
- stories
- songs/ music
- weather forecast
- lectures
- speeches

- anecdotes
- sports commentary
- descriptions
- reports
- narrations, etc.

2.3 Passive Listening

In our traditional method of English language teaching the learners do not get the opportunity to listen to good English. The teacher teaches English in Bangla, translating every sentence and word. Therefore the learners become weak in listening and speaking. And whatever little English they listen to, they do not find it interesting and motivating. They cannot perform any task listening to the teacher in English. They become passive listeners. We need to provide opportunities to our learners to listen to the language and use it in real life situations. We have to encourage learners to become active listeners in class and outside. SS must listen to each other and speak in English in the English class, for listening and speaking go hand in hand. The two skills must be integrated.

SS, in this activity are really practising both speaking and listening skills. This is very natural, as we know that skills can not be practised in isolation. This has to be done in an integrated way.

2.4 Listening for Understanding

We must remember that we listen to understand or comprehend the message of the spoken language. But how do we do it?

We need to act consciously to use our listening ability. This has to be done effectively in each listening situation. The main action for successful listening is *decision making*. We make decisions in different listening situations, e.g. while listening to the radio/TV news, classroom lectures, friends, parents etc. The way we decide to listen in different situations is called listening *strategy*. Our listening ability develops by *activating* these strategies in listening. When we listen to a speech, lecture, conversation, etc. we do not notice every word, phrase or sentence. We pick up only necessary bits of information, e.g. Anis asks Rahim, "What are you reading?" Rahim replies, "I'm reading a novel."

Strategy– কৌশল
Activating– কার্যকরী
করা

Anis does not pay attention to the first part of the sentence "I'm reading....". He pays attention to the last part of the sentence- "...A novel," because that is the information he needs. If Rahim had replied only in the last part of the sentence - "a novel," Anis would still have been satisfied. In fact in real life situations we communicate with short answers.

If some body asks you, "Where are you going?" You would reply "To school," and your answer is perfect.

We have to encourage students to respond to questions with short, correct answers.

Task 4

Give a short reply to the questions given below. Use the blank spaces.

- a. What's your name?
_____.
- b. Why are you doing C Ed?
_____.
- c. What's your favourite food?
_____.
- d. What time do you go to school?
_____.
- e. Do you take sugar in your tea?
_____.

We (both teachers and learners) should use English in our English language classroom. We need to try to avoid our L1 to create a situation/context where we can really practise the target language in the class. It is important to remember that all our efforts centre round/aim towards the activities that take place in the classroom. Our learners hear English when they are involved in different language activities in the classroom, e.g. pair/group work, listening to teacher's instructions, explanations, etc. Listeners usually do a lot of constructive and interpretative work. They try to integrate what they hear with what they already know. This is essential in *aural language*.

It is not necessary for a listener to understand each and every word of a speech/a piece of spoken language. We should always keep in mind that we use language for communication and our aim is to develop our communicative skills. This requires us to understand the 'overall message` of the speech, and not each and every word of it. One example will help us to realize the reality we listen to TV/Radio news. Sometimes, we do not know/understand the meaning of some particular word/words. Does it matter very much in comprehending the overall message/information from our listening to the news? No, it does not. In such cases, we guess and understand from the context.

Task 5

- (a) Do you think that while listening we need to understand each and every word of a piece of spoken language?

Write a short paragraph explaining your point.

REVIEW

We have discussed 'listening` as one of the two receptive skills. We know that we listen for comprehension of the spoken language. We need to have desire and purpose for successful listening activity. The traditional practice of learners' being passive listeners to their teachers should be discouraged. Instead, they should be made actively involved in different listening activities in the classroom. We discussed briefly learners' listening strategies. We need to create the context where we can practise the skills by using the target language in place of our L1.

Finally, while listening, we are not required to know the meaning of each and every word of a spoken language. What is important is that we ought to be able to receive and understand the overall message/information from the context.

LESSON**3****Speaking**

Objectives:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

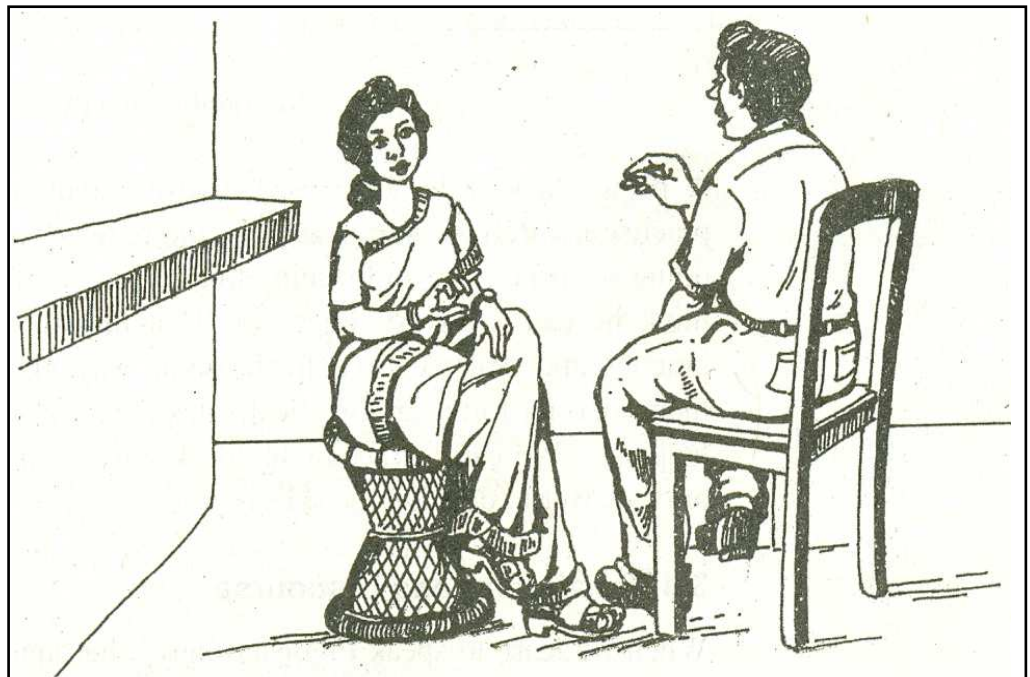
- practise the skill to communicate your ideas/thoughts
- practise the skill to fulfill the information gaps.

3.1 Introduction

Communication means sending and receiving messages effectively/successfully and negotiating meaning. Here are some factors of the speaking skill.

3.2 Transfer of Information

Speaking is the most important and dominating of all the four language skills. This is one of the two productive skills. We produce and transfer information and fill in the gaps of information. In short, we may safely say that we speak for communication, i.e. to pass on our ideas/thoughts to fill the information gaps of others.

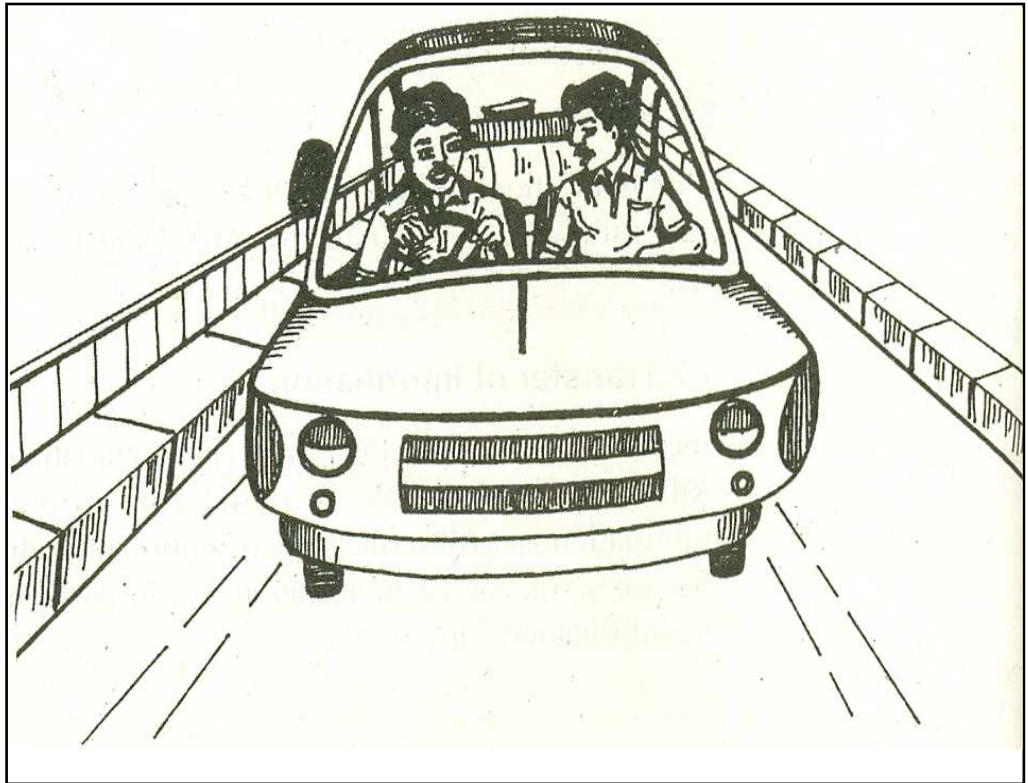


Picture 5: A man speaking to a lady.

What can we see in the picture above? We can see that a person is speaking to transfer his own ideas/information to fill in the gaps of another.

3.3. Practice

To speak English or any other language, you have to listen to it very carefully first. Then you speakers must have plenty of practice in using English to communicate. There is no substitute to practice in acquiring the skills. A single example will make the matter clear to us.



Picture 6: Driving

A person wishes to learn how to drive a motor car. Then he/she must practise it carefully, systematically and regularly as required. But instead of doing so, if he goes on listening to a lecture on driving a motor car, do you think he can learn driving? No. That means, what is important here is practice and practice only. In the same way, if we describe the language, memorize its form, grammatical rules etc., we won't learn how to use the language. We can learn how to speak only by practising speaking. So, the only answer to develop the skill is practice.

3.4 Vocabulary and Discourse

When we learn to speak English or any other language, we actually pick up words- names of different things, people, places and actions. That means we enrich **vocabulary** or stock of words everyday. We do not just enrich or increase vocabulary, but also try to use them in speech. The extensive, natural use of language in spoken or written form is known as **discourse**. A good user of English is one who is able to produce discourse which involves grammar, vocabulary and appropriacy, accuracy and fluency of speech. These are the essential features of discourse.

For our young learners at the primary school we do not have to insist on producing discourse. We have to help them produce simple ideas in clear, simple English. We have to guide them in appropriacy, accuracy and fluency of language.

3.5. Questions to think of

1. What do you mean by vocabulary?
2. How would you define discourse?
3. What are the essential features of discourse?
4. Why should we not insist on our young learners producing discourse?

3.6. Appropriacy, Accuracy and Fluency of Language Use

A good language user would take care of appropriacy, accuracy and fluency of speech. All these features of language use can be developed through practice. We will now see what we mean by each of these.

3.6.1. Appropriacy

When we use language we have specific purpose in mind. When e.g. you want to invite somebody to dinner, you have to consider who you are inviting and what form of language you would use to invite him/her. If you are inviting and what form of language you would use to invite him/her. If you are inviting your boss you would use one kind of language, and if you are inviting your friend your language would be different. If you are addressing students in class you would use one kind of language, and if you are talking to a member in your family your language would be different. Thus, your language must be appropriate to the situation/context in which it is used.

Task 1

Read the utterances (উচ্চারণ) given below. Write in the blank spaces who are speaking to whom? What is the purpose?

1. Hey Arif, why don't you drop by sometime? _____.

2. May I come in? _____.
3. Excuse me, how much is this book? _____.
4. Today we'll discuss how plants make their own food, i.e. photosynthesis. _____.
5. We'd be highly pleased if you could join us for dinner, Saturday evening. _____.
6. Rubbish! His father's not a businessman and he's not the only son. ____.
7. Sorry mom! I'll have the vegetables next time. _____.

3.6.2. Accuracy

Accuracy practice aims at practising the form/grammatical rules of the language, e.g. pronunciation, stress. Intonation or verb forms, noun, pronoun, preposition etc. For this we have to help learners practise different language points in class.

3.6.3. Fluency

For developing the communicative ability, less controlled/freer activities have to be practised. Fluency practice aims at practising the communicative function of language, i.e. giving information. Such practice is less controlled by the text materials or the teachers. Mistakes are not that important in fluency practice. But these mistakes, in no way should prevent understanding or communication.

For appropriacy, accuracy and fluency of language use, we can provide our learners with a variety of practice activities. Drill, role play, mini lectures and group discussions are some of the useful techniques we can follow in class for developing proper language use.

Task 2

Listen to your learner's use of English. Find out some common areas of weaknesses in appropriacy, accuracy and fluency.

REVIEW

We have discussed speaking skill as a tool for communication. This is used to communicate one's ideas/thoughts to fill in the information gaps of others. For developing speaking skills, practice is essential. Only describing or memorizing the language or its forms does not help improve our speaking skills. Accuracy practice helps us in learning the form, rules etc. of the language. While fluency practice helps us to use the language freely. Mistakes are not so important here as it is in accuracy practice. But fluency should not prevent transfer of information, i.e. communication. That means, speakers speech should be understandable to others. We have to be involved in real life situations to get natural use of the language.

LESSON**4****Reading**

Objectives:

After reading this lesson you will be able to–

- discuss the importance of reading
- explain the difference between silent reading and reading aloud and
- help students practise the sub skills of reading.



Picture 7: A girl reading a book.

4.1. Introduction

Reading is one of the two receptive skills used for understanding or comprehension of some text. It is a solitary activity where the reader interacts with the text in isolation. The practice of reading skills involves

- texts
- reader/receiver of information
- interaction with the text
- interpretation of the message/information.

We find the involvement of the same things in the other receptive skill- listening.

4.2. Traditional Practice of Reading in Class

When we read letters, newspapers, novels, journals, etc. in real life situations, we read them silently. But in school we teach our students to read aloud. We are traditionally used to practising reading for repetition and memorization of the text. We do not use 'reading` as a communicative skill that focuses on meaning and understanding. We also read for pleasure, i.e. reading novels, stories, poetry etc. We can develop our reading skills through questions that lead to text understanding. Reading aloud is not really a reading activity, because it does not help us to develop our reading skills. It rather tests our pronunciation which is an aspect of speaking (The Practice of accuracy). For developing reading skills, silent reading is far more important than reading aloud.

Task 1

Write short answer to the following questions.

1. Why is reading a receptive skill?
2. Why is reading a solitary activity?
3. What is the traditional practice of reading in class?
4. What sort of reading should students learn to do?

We receive information/messages from reading a written text. Understanding or comprehension of the message given in the text is important here. Reading without understanding of the content for whatsoever reasons, is no reading at all. We need to interact with the text for receiving the messages successfully. This also depends on how we interpret/negotiate the meaning of the text.

4.3. Interpretation of Meaning

Readers may again, interpret the meaning of a given text in different ways, i.e. two persons- a highly qualified person and an ordinary literate person read a common text material. Their interpretations of the same text will definitely be different. So, in reading, interpretation of meaning is important.

4.4. Macro and Micro Skills

Again, there are sub skills of each skill. Harmer (1991) calls the 'skills' as 'macro skills' and 'sub-skills' as 'Micro skills'. The practice of reading for general comprehension will be different from the practice for having specific information. We read different texts for various purposes- to interpret, to transfer information etc.

The following figure taken from Harmer (1991) will clarify the point well.

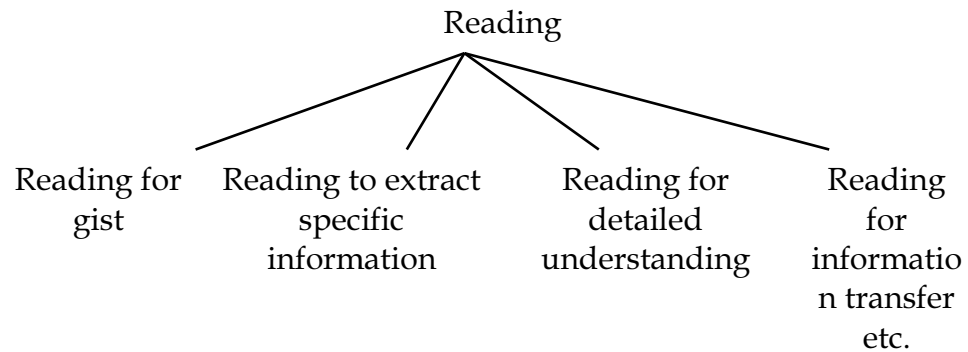


Figure 2: Skills and Sub-skills.

4.5. Sub-Skills

We do not read everything in the same way or strategy. There is difference in reading of a story, a news item in the newspaper, a personal letter etc. Now, we will look into different ways of different materials. These ways are regarded as sub-skills. We will discuss here the following important sub-skills:

4.6. Skimming

It is a very useful way or strategy for reading. We read some texts rapidly for having a general idea about something. For example, when we read the daily news paper or a magazine, we don't go into line by line details of it. At times, we jump from one line or Para to another. Thus we ignore some parts of it. This strategy is followed when we read something for a general idea of it. This is what we mean by skimming. We can develop our skimming ability by practising reading passages/ paragraphs in newspaper/ journals to find out the general theme/idea of it.

4.7. Scanning

Scanning means reading a text quickly for some specific/particular information. We follow this strategy when we want to extract some specific information from a given text. In such reading, we ignore the other details of the text. Even we do not have to understand every single word of the text - rather the required message or information only.

Task 2

In the situations given below what sort of reading would you do - reading aloud, skimming or scanning? Use the blank spaces for writing your answer.

1. From your history book find out Akbar's date of birth.
_____.
2. Your father, who has serious eye problems, cannot read the newspaper. He wants you to read it to him. _____.
3. What day is 24 February, 1999? _____.
4. T : What is this story about?
SS: It's about a greedy man who suffers in the end.

4.8. Inference

Guess- অনুমান করা

This is another very useful way of reading. By 'inference' we mean making use of *clues* in the context of a given text. Thus, we guess the meaning of new/difficult words in the text. When we read something in a foreign language, it is very natural that some words will appear difficult or new to us. Then we have to look for the contextual class and then *guess* the meaning of those words. This is what we call 'inferring meaning from the text'. So, what is important here is to read the text as a whole.

Task 3

Read the following passage and try to guess the meaning of the underlined words from the context.

Two brothers - Rakib and Akib went to a roadside restaurant. They ate some bread and Nalita over there. After returning home, both of them started hizhazing and then fell ill.

Questions

- (a) What do you mean by Nalita?
- (b) What did the brothers start doing after coming back home?

4.9. Desire, Purpose and Expectations

As in the other skills, the issues of desire and purpose should be considered in Reading skills too. In reality, we read something because we want to do so (desire). Again, we must have a purpose (for information) in our reading. Expectation is also important in this skill. Readers have some expectations about what they are going to read. When we buy a book, we have some expectations about it because of the title and descriptions on the back cover of the book.

Reading to confirm expectations is also a very important technique in reading. When we start reading something, we expect what is to come next. This expectation motivates and creates an impression in the minds of the readers. This also gives us a definite purpose for reading.

Task 4

You have a weekly magazine from a library which contains a few articles with the following heading. Now, before you start reading them, what expectations do you have about them?

- (a) The use of computers in everyday life.
- (b) Smoking - a health hazard.
- (c) Developing language skills.

REVIEW

In this lesson, we have dealt with the introduction, nature and meaning of the reading skills. We have tried to identify the traditional concept of reading and emphasized the need to use it as a communicative skill that focuses on meaning and understanding. Different sub skills of Reading have been discussed in short. There is a brief discussion on desire. Purpose and expectations at the end.



Writing

Objective:

After reading this lesson, you should be able to discuss the–

- purpose of writing
- important points of difference between the two productive skills
- difficulties of writing in L1 and Foreign Language
- functions of written language.

5.1. Introduction

Writing is one of the two productive skills. We express our ideas and communicate them to others through writings. It needs a lot of practice and experience to communicate successfully through this skill. This is possibly the most difficult of all the four language skills. So, it needs more and frequent practice than the other three skills.

Task 1

Do you also think, writing is the most difficult skill? Can you state any reason? Write your answer in a paragraph.

Task 2

a) What is the basic purpose of writing? Answer in short.

5.2. Purpose of Writing

To discuss 'writing' as a language skill, we must remember its basic aspect, i.e. its purpose. This is similarly important in other skills too. In a word, the purpose of writing is communication. We write to communicate messages/information, ideas, thoughts etc. to some other person(s). We do this when we cannot communicate orally. When we write, our readers are usually not known near. Also sometimes we know them and sometimes we don't especially when we write a story, novel, poem etc. But sometimes, we know our readers, e.g. when we are writing a personal letter, instructions, descriptions, etc. But in all cases, we have the common feature in our writing i.e. purpose of doing so- communication.

Another purpose for writing is to share feelings ideas, etc. with others. We write to keep records too.

5.3. Common Features in the Productive Skills

The most common features in the speaking and writing skills are-

- both the speakers and writers desire to convey a message to achieve a definite purpose.
- both of them keep in mind the receiver of their message (s)
- they know the situation in which they are passing their message(s) through language.
- they need to select the appropriate language.

5.4. Important Difference Between Speaking and Writing Skills

There are a lot of differences between these two skills. They are-

- everyone can speak, but cannot write.
- we speak a lot but write much less.
- speaking is an ordinary skill but writing is difficult.
- immediate communication is done through speaking but in writing, communication is delayed.
- speech involves stress, intonation, pitch, pause, gesture etc. But writing concerns spelling, punctuation etc.
- speech is more informal and often lacks accuracy, while writing is more formal and needs accuracy.

Questions to think of:

- a. Can you now discuss what the common features are between speaking and writing?
- b. What are the differences between speaking and writing?

5.5. Difficulties of Writing in L1 and Foreign Language

Many of us find writing difficult even in L1. These difficulties are related to content and organization of ideas. Here the writer faces the difficulty of selection of the subject matter, i.e. what is to write about or how to choose a topic and then handle the content of the writing. Again the writer finds it difficult to organize his ideas/thoughts in his writing.

The range of difficulty is much higher when we write in a foreign language. The basic problem here is related to the issues of general, formal accuracy. e.g. of grammar, spelling etc. In writing, accuracy matters much more than in the other language skills. A writer has to be very careful about the forms/grammar while writing in a foreign language. Another obvious difficulty is to write different kinds of texts- narrative. Descriptive etc. Each kind of writing needs good experience for successful writing.

Task 3

- a. Imagine you are to write an article for the school magazine. Choose a topic and write only one or two paragraphs.
- b. Now reflect (চিন্তা করা) on your experience and write down the problems you faced. You can write them in points only.

5.6. Functions of Written Language

Written language serves different functions in our day-to-day life. These primarily include:

(a) Writing for Action

We write because we want people to perform certain actions e.g.

- traffic signs on public places like roads, stations, centres etc.
- labels and instructions on products like food, tools and other goods.
- maps, radio, television guides etc.
- bills, different directories etc.
- for social contact - personal correspondence like letters, cards etc.

(b) Writing for Information

Newspapers, magazines, textbooks and non-fiction books, public notices, advertisements, pamphlets, reports, guide books and literature on traveling.

(c) Writing for Entertainment

Light magazines, comic and fiction books, literary writings, feature films titles, games etc. (Halliday 1985 b: 40-1)

Task 4

Make a list of various kinds of writing we do in real life situations.

5.7. Writing at the Primary School

Recognize– চিন্তে পারা

As primary school teachers we have to help our learners *recognize* the difference between cursive letters (টানা হাতের অক্ষর) e.g.

This is my book.

and **non-cursive letters** (ছাপার অক্ষর) e.g.

This is my book.

We also have to teach them small letters and capital letters. We have to help them write words, i.e. names of objects, people and places, and then write sentences with these words. Finally we should help them write paragraphs with those sentences. The English textbook, **English For Today** gives the learners enough opportunities to practise writing. Before the learners do the writing tasks we have to discuss the question and make things easy for them.

Task 5

Write a few points you must take care of while teaching writing to pupils of classes I - V.

REVIEW

We have discussed 'writing' as a difficult skill with a short introduction to it. The emphasis is on the regular and more practice of the skill. We have also discussed the purpose of writing in a short compass. There we discussed the most common features in both speaking and writing skills (productive skills). On the other hand major points of difference between the two skills have also been identified. We have seen that difficulties in writing (both in L1 & foreign language) are obvious. But the nature of difficulties in L1 is not the same as in case of a foreign language. The range of difficulty is rather higher to a great extent when we write in a foreign language. Lastly, we have identified and discussed the functions of written language in three broad categories. These are- written language for (a) action (b) information and (c) entertainment.

LESSON

6

Techniques of Teaching the Language Skills

Objectives:

After studying the chapter, you will be able to discuss–

- the modern teaching techniques of the language skills (in general)
- the two 'receptive' and the two 'productive' language skills
- different teaching techniques of the receptive skills
- different teaching techniques of the productive skills.

6.1. Introduction

The modern techniques of teaching the four language skills aim towards effective learner participation and successful communication. By following these techniques, learners will hopefully develop the desired skills in the target language. But to achieve this goal, they must be given enough opportunities to practise the language skills.

Ineffective– অকার্যকর

The existing language teaching method and techniques in our context have proved to be *ineffective* beyond any doubt. Our learners simply listen to the teachers without any understanding. Learner's participation in the classroom activities has to be ensured for meaningful teaching. We have to get rid of such uncongenial language teaching situations by introducing different language practice activities in the classroom.

6.1.1. Teaching of Grammar

Our learners learn the grammatical rules explicitly. They memorize the different grammatical points/aspects without being able to use them in the language. Learning specific grammatical rules will not help them to communicate effectively in times of need. Rather, they need to learn the application or the use of grammar in the language. Learners may learn this application or use only by practising the language skills. So, their involvement in regular practise of language activities is essential. We must provide them with sufficient language exercises and activities to practise the skills.

6.1.2. Use of English

The most important point here is the maximum use of the English language in the classroom. Our teachers are used to translating the textbook contents from English into Bangla in the classroom. They talk about English in Bangla, but don't use it. This hinders or rather damages the entire process of learning the target language effectively. If students are used to listen to the teacher and answer in Bangla, they will not have the opportunity to practise the language at all. So, learners should use English as much as possible. Of course, Bangla may be used at certain points as the last resort if it is that necessary. But still the fact remains that this will hamper in the learner's way of discourse in the target language.

6.2. Receptive Skills-History and Reading

By now, we know that listening and reading are the two receptive skills. We receive information/messages through these two skills. The responsibility of the teacher is to arrange training for the learners understanding of listening and reading texts.

6.2.1. Listening

Our learners may have the opportunity to practise listening when–

- (a) they do pairwork
- (b) the teacher reads a listening passage for them.
- (c) the teacher gives them instructions & explanations.

It is essential that the teacher should speak in English and at a normal speed. For developing learners' communicative listening skills, overall 'message' is required to be understood. Understanding of every single word/expression is not necessary. Our learners may develop this skill by practising information transfer tasks, listening games, tasks on listening passages etc.

Task 1

What are information transfer tasks? Explain in brief.

(a) Tasks based on a listening comprehension text.

There are the tasks in which learners listen to a text and then reproduce the information in written form.

(b) Tasks based on Pairwork

This involves learners' speaking and listening practice. Here they usually ask each other questions for personal information. After that, they may write down the information they have received. This activity will improve their writing skills.

6.2.2. Listening Games

This is another teaching technique for improving learners' listening skills. These games can be introduced at the end of the lesson. But to avoid monotony, there must be variation in such games. And the classroom teachers can bring novelty in these games by their own innovative efforts.

Tasks on listening passages: These tasks are related to the use of listening comprehension passages. These may again be divided into two categories-

(a) Guiding Questions

These questions are usually used before the learners listen to the passage. They provide the learners with a listening purpose. They are required to listen for important bits of information. They concentrate on information and not on the words. These questions provide a background for the learners. Thus, these serve the purpose of 'Warm up' activities for reading texts.

(b) Comprehension Questions

These are used after the learners' listening to the passage. It is not necessary to write full answers to comprehension questions. The teaching point of such exercise is students, comprehension of the information. We can only test/check their understanding here and not their writing skills. These questions help the learners to develop their listening skills. These questions are usually of three types-

- (a) True-False/Right-Wrong questions
- (b) 'Complete the Questions' and 'Ask and Answer'
- (c) Multiple choice questions.

6.3. Reading

Harmer (1991) rightly thinks that reading is an exercise of the brain and the eyes. The eyes receive messages and the brain then works on them. The reader has to decide how fast he/she wants to read a text. But in listening, the speed is chosen by the speaker. It is a great advantage that reading text is stationary.

We have known that we read different things in different ways (e.g. reading newspaper, poems, novels, stories etc.). Purposes of reading also differ very much. We have already discussed Skimming, Scanning, Inferring meaning from the context and Predicting. These are also the techniques for fluent reading.

6.3.1. Techniques of Reading in the Foreign Language Classroom

We may think of the distinctions between 'intensive' and 'extensive' reading. Intensive reading is classroom-based and guided by the teacher. But 'extensive' reading is independent, *self-paced* reading of longer texts. This does not normally take place in the classroom. Such reading is good, because it enhances the reading skills in general. But we are concerned here with the 'intensive' reading which is to be practised in the classroom.

Self-Paced– নিজ গতিতে

Again, while we think of developing reading skills, we have to put emphasis on silent reading. Reading aloud is an aspect of speaking. It is a test of pronunciation only.

Task 2

Can you suggest some specific teaching techniques for developing reading skills?

6.3.2. Reading Tasks

These tasks are of two main types: (1) Tasks based directly on a reading passage. (2) Tasks indirectly based on a reading passage, or Tasks which have nothing to do with a reading passage. Now, let us discuss each of the two types at some length.

Tasks Based on a Reading Passage

Guiding/Pre-reading questions- These tasks are given to provide the learners with a purpose for their reading. These help to develop

learners' scanning skills (to find the answers quickly). Students can also be asked to note the answers as a point of focus as they read. We may ask the students to talk about or describe the picture in the textbook. The teacher has to help them in the activity. This can serve the purpose of a 'warm-up' activity.

Comprehension questions- These questions are used for checking students' understanding of the text (often they have to read it). Such questions may be of different types-

- (a) **'Open-ended' questions-** In this type of questions, students must prepare the answers really for themselves.
- (b) **True-False/Right-Wrong statements-** Students here have to confirm according to the given passage whether the statements are true or false/right or wrong. In case of false/wrong statements, students should give the correct information.
- (c) **Multiple- Choice questions-** These are usually accompanied by 3/4 possible answers. One should be correct and the rest are wrong.

6.3.3. Tasks not Based on a Reading Passage

Information Transfer Tasks

In these tasks based on reading, learners are to produce sentences orally or to write down the message they have read. We may have the message in the form of a table, paragraph or a text. Both the tasks are initially aimed at developing speaking or writing skills. But they also practise reading skills. The exercise of receiving information by using a table provides good practice in selective reading.

6.3.4. Other Types of Tasks

There are two other types of tasks which help the learners to develop reading skills. But we must remember that these two types are basically used in developing writing skills. These tasks are:

- (a) **Close passages-** These are the reading passages with blank spaces. Learners are supposed to write the appropriate word/phrase in the blank space. In some exercises, there is a choice of words. In some others, a list of words. And sometimes there is no word at all. So, learners have to make good use of the context of the passage. Then they have to decide what they should fill in the blank space (s). This is

how; they may develop the skill to guess the meaning of the new words.

(b) Re-ordering Exercises

The learners here have to rearrange a series of sentences in correct order. Here, they are concerned with the overall/general meaning of what they are reading. This exercise demands the use of pronouns, articles and words like 'First', Finally, So, Therefore etc.

6.4. Productive Skills-Speaking and Writing

We know that speaking and writing are the two productive skills. We produce information/messages by these two skills.

6.4.1. Common Features

There are some common features of the production skills. These are:

- (a) Speakers and the writers both want to convey a message.
- (b) They have in mind the audience, the receiver of the message.
- (c) They are aware of the context in which they are working.
- (d) Both of them have a purpose to achieve.
- (e) They have to put their messages in language.
- (f) Keeping in mind the context and purpose, they have to select appropriate language for the audience.
- (g) They have to produce their messages in an understandable form.

It is good to note here that there are also a great many differences between these two skills.

Now, let us look into each of the productive skills separately.

6.5. Speaking

Our existing English textbook and current teaching methodologies are not communicative. So, efforts should be made to add/supplement some of the communicative activities in teaching the language skills. Our teaching techniques should aim at teaching and learning the language as a form of communication, rather than as an object. To achieve the objective, the following points should be considered.

- (a) Students must have enough opportunity to practise English to pass on their thoughts and ideas to their teachers, fellow students (s) in the class. They must regularly practise speaking to each other, in pairs. This is called pairwork activity.
- (b) Students need to express their ideas for communication. Mistakes will be there in doing so. The teacher should not stop them to avoid the mistakes. But these mistakes should not prevent others from understanding what they are trying to express.

6.5.1. Accuracy and Fluency:

When practising speaking, we have to think of both accuracy and fluency. Students can learn to be fluent by practising speaking including making mistakes. This is important to remember that mistakes are less important in fluency practice than they are in accuracy practice. Accuracy practice aims to practise the forms/grammar- pronunciation, stress and intonation etc. Fluency practice aims to practise the communicative function of the language (producing information clearly).

6.5.2. We will now look at some of the controlled practice in speaking

Textbook Pictures

Students may be asked to describe i.e. point, ask and answer the questions about the picture. The teacher can demonstrate the activity with one/two students. Then all the other students can practise the task in the class.

Example Dialogues and Substitution Tables

Students are supposed to practise these tasks in pairs after a demonstration from the teacher. Example dialogues may be given in the textbook or 'Act out the dialogue` etc. In 'substitution tables' students may look at a table of different language items in the textbook. They may be asked to 'make questions/answers by using the table' etc.

Written questions

Students may be given here a list of questions which are intended for use as pairwork. The instruction may be 'Ask and Answer these questions'. For example, S1 asks the first question, and S2 answers it. Then S2 asks the second question which S1 answers, and so on. A demonstration of this activity at the first instance will help the students greatly.

Choral Drills

These are generally asked to give students practice in pronunciation, stress, intonation etc. These may be used with a new vocabulary item which students have difficulty in pronouncing.

Task 3

Can you suggest how a choral drill can be done in the class?

Questions and Answers Chain Drills

Students may be instructed to ask and answer questions around the class in a chain. Comprehension questions, substitution tables etc. may be used for this activity. In a chain drill-

- S1 asks S2 a question
- S2 replies to S1
- S2 then asks S3 a new question
- S3 replies to S2
- S3 asks S4 another question etc.

Students should do this asking and answering activity across the class from front to back, diagonally etc.

6.5.3. Freer Oral Practice

It is mainly aimed at fluency in speaking. Students may be asked to-

Talk about (describe) the picture in the textbook- It works as a 'warm-up' activity at the start. The teacher can ask the students questions to encourage them to speak.

Cues/prompts- Students may use the words given under a picture as 'cues/prompts' to make up sentences in pairs. It is good to give them a demonstration at the beginning.

Making similar questions and answers- Students should do this activity as per instructions and in pairs. A short demonstration will help the learners in doing the task.

Information Tables- Students may give key pieces of information to complete sentences in pairs. Instead of giving complete sentences, these give only key pieces of information.

Guided Dialogues- Here the students are asked to make similar dialogues to an example. In doing so, they may use information about themselves and their friends, relatives etc.

Games, Simulation and role play- These are useful activities which can be practised in groups or pairs. We have seen that a lot of language activities can be done in pairs or groups now.

Task 4

What do you really understand by a pairwork? Discuss in short.

6.6. Writing

There are difficulties in learning how to write successfully. So, sufficient practice is needed to overcome these difficulties. The practice of writing should be well organized. Students should go ahead gradually, i.e. they should follow step by step approach in developing this skill. Learners usually begin with writing words, then with sentences- Later they move on to write paragraph and so on. This skill is integrated with the other skills, especially with reading and speaking.

6.6.1. Harmer (1991) mentions sentence writing, parallel writing, cohesion, oral composition and dictation as the ways of encouraging written practice. Now, let us discuss the teaching techniques of writing specifically.

6.6.2. The Fill-in Tasks in Writing Sentences

This is a way of providing controlled and restricted written practice. This gap-filling exercise may be of two types-

(a) To fill-in each gap with one word

Here the learners are given a list of words or a passage/dialogue. They have to choose one word from either of these sources.

(b) To fill in each gap with two or more words

Here the students are provided with lists of words, pictures, a passage or dialogue.

Answering questions- While the students are required to answer the textbook questions, they usually write their answer one often another. This is how, they build up paragraphs.

6.6.3. Parallel Writing

This concept suggests that students need to have a model from which they can work. They will have a piece of writing as a model. On the basis of that model, they will write of their own. There are often types of writing tasks, but with no model. Students may use substitution tables and pictures.

Again, students may write a paragraph based on given model. In such case, they may use information about themselves or about their math's/partners etc.

6.6.4. Cohesion

Coherent organization and logical thought are essential in writing. These aspects of writing are more difficult. So, we need to help students to organize their writing clearly and coherently. So, ordering of sentences and cohesive devices (language used for joining sentences) are both important for successful writing. Reordering tasks may be given for students' practice. They may be asked to write sentences in correct order from a series of mixed up sentences to make a meaningful paragraph.

6.6.5. Oral Compositions

This has been a popular teaching technique for long. Here the teacher and the class altogether build up a narrative. Then the students are asked to write it. The teacher can show them pictures, mime a story or play tape with sounds.

6.6.6. Dictation

This is also a traditional teaching technique for writing. Dictation of little/small sentences instead of big/long ones can keep the technique moving. In place of long, monotonous, stere-typed dictations, interesting innovative, meaningful short dictation can help the students to practise the skill effectively.

REVIEW

This has been a chapter explicitly on the teaching techniques of both the two receptive and two productive skills. At the outset, we have known the existing uncongenial language teaching situation in our context. We have then talked on the use of grammar in language exercises and activities. Our next point was the use of English in our classrooms. We emphasized on the precise use of the target language instead of using the mother tongue in use classroom. The traditional practice of translation from English into Bangla and vice versa should be avoided in the classrooms.

In the next point, we dealt with the two 'Receptive Skills: Listening and Reading'. We discussed the different teaching techniques of the two skills at some length. In the following chapter, we dealt with the two 'Productive Skills'. We found out the common features between the two skills. Then, we discussed some very important issues on speaking, e.g. learning the language as a form of communication, rather than as an object. We talked on Accuracy and Fluency - the two important aspects of speaking skill. We then moved on to the discussion on the controlled practice in speaking and freer ordain practice. The next section is the writing skills, the most difficult of the form language skills. We dealt with the different teaching techniques of this skill at some length. Different ways of encouraging written practice have been discussed in a short campus.