

LECTURE 5. TEACHING THE LANGUAGE SKILLS

5.1 Teaching pronunciation

5.2 Teaching vocabulary

5.3 Teaching grammar

5.1 Teaching pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation is of great importance in the developing of pupils' listening and speaking habits and skills. It is of no less importance in the development of reading and writing habits and skills since writing is the graphic representation of sound sequences. In reading the visual images become acoustic images. These are combined with kinesthetic images, resulting in inner speech.

The content of teaching pronunciation

Proceeding from the aims and objectives the FL syllabus sets out, pupils must assimilate.

1. The sounds of the English language, its vowels and consonants. They should be able to articulate these sounds both separately and in different phonetic contexts.
2. Some peculiarities of the English language in comparison with those of the Russian language (length of vowels, palatalization (dark L, light L).
3. Stress in a word and in a sentence, and melody (fall and rise). Pupils must be able to divide a sentence into groups and intone it properly.

The teacher faces the following problems in teaching pupils pronunciation.

1. The problem of discrimination identifying the differences between phonemes which are not distinguished or used in the Russian language and between falling, rising and level tones.
2. The problem of articulation, i.e. learning to make the motor movements adequate to proper production of English sounds.
3. The problem of intonation, i.e. learning to make right stresses, pauses and use appropriate patterns.
4. The problem of integration, i.e. learning to assemble the phonemes and a connected discourse with the proper allophonic variations (members of a phoneme) in the, months, hard times.
5. The problem of automaticity, i.e. making correct production so habitual that it does not need to be attended to in the process of speaking.

Consequently, discrimination, articulation, intonation, integration, automaticity are the items that should constitute the content of the teaching of pronunciation.

Absolute correctness is impossible. We cannot expect more than approximate correctness, the correctness that ensures communication.

How to teach pronunciation

Pupils assimilate English pronunciation through 1) the acquisition of new sounds, stress, tone-patterns 2) drill in recognition and reproduction new material to acquire pronunciation habits and 3) making use of the pronunciation habits in language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

In teaching pronunciation there are at least two **methodological problems** the teacher faces:

1. To determine the cases where conscious manipulation of the speech organs is required and the cases where simple imitation can or must be used.
2. To decide on types of exercises and the techniques of using them.

Since imitation can and must take place in FL teaching the teacher's pronunciation should set the standard for the class and the use of native speakers whose voices are recorded on cassettes is quite indispensable.

Teaching a FL in schools begins with teaching pupils to listen to it and speak it that is with the oral introductory course, or the oral approach. The teacher's task is to determine which sound the

pupils will find hard to pronounce, which sounds they can assimilate through imitation and which sounds require explanations of the position of the organs of speech while producing them.

Exercises used for developing pronunciation habits may be of two groups: recognition exercises and reproduction exercises. Recognition exercises are designed for developing pupil's ability to discriminate sounds and sound sequences.

Pupils should have ample practice in listening to be able to acquire the phonic aspect of the language. It can be done:

1. By listening to the teacher pronouncing a sound, a sound combination and sensible sound sequences.
2. By listening to the speaker on the recording. This exercise is more difficult for pupils as their auditing is not reinforced by visual perception.

Reproduction exercises are designed for developing pupils' pronunciation habits, i.e. their ability to articulate English sounds correctly and to combine sounds into words, phrases and sentences easily enough to be able to speak English and to read aloud in this language. A few minutes at each lesson must be devoted to drilling the sounds which are most difficult for Russian-speaking pupils.

The material used for pronunciation drills should be connected with the lesson pupils study. These may be sounds, words, word combinations, phrases, sentences, rhymes, poems, and dialogues. Proverbs and some useful expressions can be used as material for pronunciation drills. It is impossible to overestimate the role that can be played by recording. They:

1. Allow speech to be reproduced with correct pronunciation and intonation in particular.
2. Permit the same text to be repeated several times for pupils to have an opportunity to listen to it again and again.
3. Makes it possible for the teacher to develop his pupils' abilities to understand English spoken at various speeds.
4. Helps the teacher in developing his pupils' ability to speak.
5. Give pupils an opportunity to listen to texts read by native speakers.

Conclusion

Pronunciation is a skill that should be developed and perfected throughout the whole course of learning the language that is why the teacher should use pronunciation drill during the lesson, irrespective of the stage of instruction.

3.2 Teaching vocabulary

The importance of teaching vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the aspects of the language to be taught in school. It is evident that the number of words should be limited because pupils have only two-four periods a week. It depends wholly on the syllabus requirements. The latter is determination by the conditions and methods used. The vocabulary, therefore, must be carefully selected in accordance with the principles of selecting linguistic material, the conditions of teaching and learning a FL in school.

Principles of selecting vocabulary have been worked out. The words selected should be:

1. Frequently used in the language.
2. Easily combined
3. Unlimited from the point of view of style
4. Included in the topics the syllabus sets
5. Valuable from the point of view of word-building.

The number of words and phraseological units the syllabus sets for a pupil to assimilate is 800 words.

The analysis of the words within the foreign language allows us to distinguish the following groups of words: concrete, abstract and structural.

Words denoting concrete things, actions and qualities are easier to learn than words denoting abstract notions. Structural words are the most difficult for Russian-speaking pupils. The teacher should bear this in mind when preparing for the vocabulary work during the lesson.

Rules:

1. Introduce words in sentence patterns in different situations of intercourse.
2. Present the word as an element, i.e. in a sentence pattern first. Then fix it in the pupils' memory through different exercises in sentence patterns and phrase patterns. In teaching pupils vocabulary to the ear and the organs of speech should take an active part in the assimilation of words. Pupils should have ample practice in hearing words and pronouncing them not only as isolated units but in various sentences in which they occur.
3. While introducing a word pronounce it yourself in content, ask pupils to pronounce it both individually and in unison in a context, too.
4. In teaching words it is necessary to establish a memory bond between a new word and those already covered.

Vocabulary: what should be taught

1. Form: pronunciation and spelling

The learner has to know what a word sounds like (its pronunciation) and what it looks like (its spelling). These are fairly obvious characteristics, and one or the other will be perceived by the learner when encountering the item for the first time. In teaching, we need to make sure that both these aspects are accurately presented and learned.

2. Grammar

The grammar of a new item will need to be taught if this is not obviously covered by general grammatical rules. An item may have an unpredictable change of form in certain grammatical contexts or may have some idiosyncratic way of connecting with other words in sentences; it is important to provide learners with this information at the same time as we teach the base form. When teaching a new verb, for example, we might give also its past form, if this is irregular (*think, thought*), and we might note if it is transitive or intransitive. Similarly, when teaching a noun, we may wish to present its plural form, if irregular (*mouse, mice*), or draw learners' attention to the fact that it has no plural at all (*advice, information*). We may present verbs such as *want* and *enjoy* together with the verb form that follows them (*want to, enjoy -ing*), or adjectives or verbs together with their following prepositions (*responsible for, remind someone of*).

3. Collocation

The collocations typical of particular items are another factor that makes a particular combination sound 'right' or 'wrong' in a given context. So this is another piece of information about a new item which it may be worth teaching. When introducing words like *decision* and *conclusion*, for example, we may note that you *take* or *make* the one, but usually *come* to the other; similarly, you *throw a ball* but *toss a coin*; you may talk about someone being *dead tired* but it sounds odd to say **dead fatigued*.

Collocations are also often noted in dictionaries, either by providing the whole collocation under one of the head-words, or by a note in parenthesis.

4. Aspects of meaning (1): denotation, connotation, appropriateness

The meaning of a word is primarily what it refers to in the real world, its denotation; this is often the sort of definition that is given in a dictionary. For example, *dog* denotes a kind of animal; more specifically, a common, domestic carnivorous mammal; and both *dank* and *moist* mean slightly wet.

A less obvious component of the meaning of an item is its connotation: the associations, or positive or negative feelings it evokes, which may or may not be indicated in a dictionary definition. The word *dog*, for example, as understood by most British people, has positive connotations of friendship and loyalty; whereas the equivalent in Arabic, as understood by most people in Arab countries has negative

associations of dirt and inferiority. Within the English language, *moist* has favourable connotations while *dank* has unfavourable; so that you could describe something as 'pleasantly moist' where 'pleasantly dank' would sound absurd.

A more subtle aspect of meaning that often needs to be taught is whether a particular item is the appropriate one to use in a certain context or not. Thus it is useful for a learner to know that a certain word is very common, or relatively rare, or 'taboo' in polite conversation, or tends to be used in writing but not in speech, or is more suitable for formal than informal discourse, or belongs to a certain dialect. For example, you may know that *weep* is virtually synonymous in denotation with *cry*, but it is more formal, tends to be used in writing more than in speech, and is in general much less common.

5. Aspects of meaning (2): meaning relationships

How the meaning of one item relates to the meaning of others can also be useful in teaching. There are various such relationships: here are some of the main ones.

- Synonyms: items that mean the same, or nearly the same; for example, *bright*, *clever*, *smart* may serve as synonyms of *intelligent*.

- Antonyms: items that mean the opposite; *rich* is an antonym of *poor*.

- Hyponyms: items that serve as specific examples of a general concept; *dog*, *lion*, *mouse* are hyponyms of *animal*.

- Co-hyponyms or co-ordinates: other items that are the 'same kind of thing'; *red*, *blue*, *green* and *brown* are co-ordinates.

- Superordinates: general concepts that 'cover' specific items; *animal* is the superordinate of *dog*, *lion*, *mouse*.

- Translation: words or expressions in the learners' mother tongue that are (more or less) equivalent in meaning to the item being taught.

Besides these, there are other, perhaps looser, ways of associating meaning that are useful in teaching. You can, for instance, relate parts to a whole (the relationship between *arm* and *body*); or associate items that are part of the same real-world context (*tractor*, *farmer*, *milking* and *irrigate* are all associated with *agriculture*].

All these can be exploited in teaching to clarify the meaning of a new item, or for practice or test materials.

6. Word formation

Vocabulary items, whether one-word or multi-word, can often be broken down into their component 'bits'. Exactly how these bits are put together is another piece of useful information - perhaps mainly for more advanced learners.

You may wish to teach the common prefixes and suffixes: for example, if learners know the meaning of *sub-*, *un-* and *-able*, this will help them guess the meanings of words like *substandard*, *ungrateful* and *untranslatable*. They should, however, be warned that in many common words the affixes no longer have any obvious connection with their root meaning (for example, *subject*, *comfortable*]. New combinations using prefixes are not unusual, and the reader or hearer would be expected to gather their meaning from an understanding of their components (*ultra-modern*, *super-hero*).

Another way vocabulary items are built is by combining two words (two nouns, or a gerund and a noun, or a noun and a verb) to make one item: a single compound word, or two separate, sometimes hyphenated words (*bookcase*, *follow-up*, *swimming pool*). Again, new coinages using this kind of combination are very common.

A good modern dictionary should supply much of the information listed in this unit when you look up a specific item.

Stages in teaching vocabulary

There are two stages in teaching vocabulary: presentation or explanation, retention or consolidation.

The process of learning a word means to the pupils:

1. Identification of concepts, i.e. learning what the word means.
2. Pupil's activity for the purpose of retaining the word.
3. Pupil's activity in using this word in the process of communication in different situations.

Accordingly, the teacher's role in this process is:

1. To furnish explanation, i.e. to present the word, to get his pupils to identify the concept correctly.
2. To get them to recall or recognize the word by means of different exercises.
3. To stimulate pupils to use the words in speech.

Presenting new vocabulary

There are two ways of conveying the meaning of words: direct way and translation. The direct way, is usually used when the words denote things, objects, their qualities, sometimes gestures and movements. It is possible to group them into: visual and verbal (context, synonyms, antonyms, definitions, word-building elements etc.)

The use of the direct way, however, is restricted whenever the teacher is to present words denoting abstract notions he must resort to translation. Pupils are recommended to get to know new words independently; they look them up in the word list at the back of the book or the dictionary.

Retention of words

To attain the desired end pupils must first of all perform various exercises to fix the words in their memory. For this purpose it is necessary to organize pupils work in a way permitting them to approach the new words from many different sides, in many different ways, by means of many different forms of work. Two groups of exercises may be recommended for vocabulary assimilation.

Group 1

Exercises designed for developing pupils' skills in choosing the proper word.

Group 2

Exercises designed to form pupils' skills using the word in sentences.

The desirable relationship between these two groups of exercises should be in the ratio 1:2 that is most of the exercises must be connected with developing pupils' skills in using the words in sentences and in connection with the situations offered.

5.3 Teaching grammar

The importance of grammar in learning a FL

Grammar is a reality. A command of the structure of the language of the pupil ensures listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. In order to understand a language and to express oneself correctly one must assimilate the grammar mechanism of the language studies.

The chief difficulty in learning a new language is that of changing from the grammatical mechanism of the native language to that of the new language.

For example, Russian pupils often violate the word order which results in bad mistakes in expressing their thoughts. The English tense system also presents a lot of trouble to Russian-speaking pupils because of the difference which exists in these languages with regard to time and tense relations. The sequence of tenses is another difficult point in English grammar for Russian-speaking pupils. There can be given some other examples. The most difficult point of English grammar is the article.

The grammar material may be classified into the following 3 groups:

1. The grammar phenomena which do not require any explanation since there are similar phenomena in the mother tongue of the pupil.
2. The grammar phenomena which require corrections (money – is).
3. The grammar phenomena which are strange for Russian-speaking pupils (article, tense, modal verbs).

In teaching grammar, therefore, the teacher should approach to the material differently depending on the difficulties pupils encounter in the assimilating of grammar phenomenon.

The content of teaching grammar since school-leavers are expected to acquire language proficiency in aural comprehension, speaking and reading grammar material should be selected for the purpose. There exist principles of selecting grammar material both for teaching speaking knowledge (active minimum) and for teaching reading knowledge (passive minimum), the main one is the principle of frequency, i.e. how frequently this or that grammar item occurs.

The syllabus and the textbooks present grammar differently. The syllabus emphasizes what to teach and gives it in terms of traditional grammar. The textbook emphasize how to teach and present grammar in sentence patterns, structures.

The amount of grammar material pupils should assimilate in school, and the way it is distributed throughout the course of study, may be found in the syllabus. In teaching grammar the teacher follows the recommendations given in Teacher's Books.

How to teach grammar

Teaching grammar should be based upon the following principles:

1. Conscious approach to the teaching of grammar. It implies some rules for the teacher:
 - Realize the difficulties the sentence pattern presents for your pupils. Comparative analysis of the grammar item in English and in Russian or within the English language may be helpful.
 - Think of the shortest and simplest way for presentation of the new grammar item. Remember the more you speak about the language, the less time is left for practice.
2. Practical approach to the assimilation of grammar. It means that pupils learn those grammar items which they need for immediate use either in oral or written language. The learner masters grammar through performing various exercises in using a given grammar item. Rule for the teacher:
 - Teach pupils correct grammar usage and not grammar knowledge.
3. Structural approach. Grammar items are introduced and drilled in structures or sentence patterns. Structural approach allows the pupil to make up sentences by analogy, to use the same pattern for various situations. Pupils learn sentence patterns and how to use them in oral and written speech. Rule for the teacher:
 - Furnish pupils with words to change the lexical meaning of the sentence pattern so that pupils will be able to use it in different situations.
4. Situational approach. Pupils learn a grammar item used in situations. Rule for the teacher:
 - Select the situations for the particular grammar item you are going to present. Look through the textbook and other teaching materials and find those situations which can ensure comprehension and provide the usage of the item.
5. Different approach to the teaching of active grammar (for conversation) and passive grammar (for reading). Rule for the teacher:
 - If the grammar item belongs to those pupils need for conversation, select the oral approach method for teaching. If pupils need the grammar item for reading, start with reading and writing sentences in which the grammar item occurs.

Types of exercises for the assimilation of grammar

1. Recognition exercises. Since pupils only observe the new grammar item the situations should be natural and communicative. Recognition exercises are indispensable as pupils retain the grammar material through auditory and visual perception. Auditory and visual memory is at work.
2. Drill exercises.

- Repetitive drill. Pupils pronounce the sentence pattern after the teacher, both individually and in unison. Attention should be drawn to the correct pronunciation of the sentence pattern as a sense unit, as a statement (sounds, stress, and tune).
 - Substitution. Pupils substitute the words or phrases in a sentence pattern. Pupils substitute the words or phrases in a sentence pattern. Pupils consolidate the grammar item without thinking about it. They think of the words, phrases, but not of the form itself, therefore involuntary memory is at work.
 - Completion. Pupils complete the sentences the teacher utters looking at the pictures he shows (Mike is...).
 - Answering the teacher's questions. Drill exercises may be done both orally and in written form. Pupils perform oral exercises during the lesson and written ones at home.
3. Creative exercises (speech exercise). This type of exercises requires creative work on the part of the learners. These may be :
- Making statements either on the picture the teacher shows, or on objects.
 - Asking questions with a given grammar item.
 - Speaking about the situation offered by the teacher. (He is opening/has opened the door)
 - Speaking on a suggested topic. For example, a pupil tells the class what he did yesterday.
 - Making dialogues using the grammar item covered.
 - Dramatizing the text read. For example, pupils read the text in persons.
 - Commenting on a film-strip.
 - Telling the story.
 - Translating into English.
 - Participating in free conversation in which pupils are to use the grammar item.

As to the grammar items pupils need only for reading pupils assimilate them while performing drill exercises and reading texts. This is usually done only in senior grades where the grammar material is not necessarily used in oral language.

All the exercises mentioned above are designed:

- 1) To develop pupil's skills in recognizing grammar forms while auding and reading English texts.
- 2) To accumulate correct sentence patterns in the pupil's memory which they can reproduce whenever they need these patterns for speaking or writing.
- 3) To help the pupils to produce sentences of their own using grammar items necessary for speaking about a situation or a topic offered, or writing an essay on the text heard or an annotation on the text read.