Goal Oriented Teaching Methodology

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Abstract: India is rich in language. We speak several hundred regional languages and dialects. But it is English—our second official language—that Indian students not only want, but also need to learn. Students know that fluency in English opens doors, locally and globally. How can we, as teachers, best prepare our students to communicate well as speakers and writers of English? By preparing language acquisition lessons that are meaningful and engaging, and by keeping the goal in mind at all times.

This paper addresses the challenges faced by Indian English Language Learners and offers a few simple but effective ways—via lesson plans, the use of authentic material and appropriate multimedia resources (technology)—to help Indian students overcome the challenges of English acquisition and become successful communicators in English.

Why is Language Acquisition so Difficult?
First let’s take a comparative look at why, linguistically, native Hindi speakers find English challenging, and why native English Speakers find Hindi challenging. In the grammatical structure of a Hindi clause, we have Subject+ Object+ Verb, while the Standard English clause looks like this: Subject + Verb + Object. The Standard English clause—Subject-Verb-Object—is what we call a “Universal Grammar.” Universal grammar is the standard grammatical construction used in most languages around the world. Not true with Hindi Grammar. Outside of India, in university course brochures, Hindi language falls under the “Less Commonly Taught Languages” header.

At Yale, where I taught Hindi (2012-2013), English was the first language of the students—even the students whose parents spoke fluent Hindi. There, I witnessed the interference of First Language (L1) with Second Language (L2) in the very questions I was asked. Students would begin a question in Hindi (“Main kal …”) and assume that the start of the sentence provided me with enough information to help complete the sentence. But “kal” is used for both ‘yesterday’ and ‘tomorrow,” so I had no idea if they were speaking in the past or future tense. Moreover, I needed a verb to clarify the tense.

Then there’s the issue of gender. In Hindi, nouns are either masculine or feminine, and the gender determines the verb. For us, ‘chair’ is feminine and it needs a verb with a feminine ending. In English, ‘chair’ has no gender. Why my American students insisted on giving ‘chair’ a masculine ending, I don’t know. Perhaps in the US, chairs have more masculine features than they do in India? My students also found concepts like postposition, and Oblique case difficult, because they were trying to find some correlation between their first language and second language.

English as a Second Language is similarly challenging for Indian students. In fact, I’d argue that it is more challenging, because our native language has no Universal Grammar. Add to that the interference of L1/L2.

In Indian schools and colleges, ESL learning process begins early. Some children begin speaking in and listening to English at home, and in school they start reading and writing. Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing (SLRW) are those four skills needed for a learned language. As both an Indian student of English and a teacher of English, I know that the more challenging of those four skills—and the ones that too often remain underdeveloped—are writing and speaking. This is because psychologically and intuitively our brains are constantly looking for similarities between L1 and L2. Before true language acquisition can take place, this search for the similar needs to be broken. This isn’t easy. Not only is the constant inner translation that goes on in the mind of the student subconscious, but it also allows the student to cling to what’s known, in the face of the unknown.

Task-based Teaching Methodology
One of the primary ways that we can help our students become confident speakers and writers of English is by creating an effective learning environment in the classroom. We can do this via task based teaching methodology that works towards a specific goal. This methodology uses three simple tools—a lesson plan, authentic material, and multimedia resources.
A **Task** is different from an “activity.” An **activity** with the purpose of ‘speaking’ may get students talking using spoken language, but without a fixed outcome. A task has a fixed or desired result. Tasks should be carefully planned according to the learners’ level (Advanced, Intermediate, Beginners) and the desired outcome must be foremost in the instructors’ mind. For example, let’s say the objective is to ‘speak’, or use language in a realistic circumstance. Here we want a task that’s almost methodical in its focus. Task: ‘You are visiting New York City, and you want to reach Point B (Grand Central Station, NYC) from Point A (Columbia University, NYC), but along the way, you become lost. Ask someone on the street for directions.’ This task provides the student with a fixed goal: to reach Grand Central Station. As well, the task gets the students speaking in order to reach that goal. In this way, both the learner and the teacher achieve the desired outcome.

**Goal Oriented Teaching Methodology Lay-out**
The following diagram demonstrates a lay-out for the Goal Oriented Teaching Methodology:

![Diagram of Goal Oriented Teaching Methodology]

**Goal:** To overcome the problems faced by ESL learners. (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing)

**Task Based Teaching Methodology**

![Diagram of Task Based Teaching Methodology]

In **Goal Oriented Teaching**, we can divide goals into Major and Minor. The Major Goal is the acquisition of English as a Second Language. The Minor Goal supports the Major Goal by employing various lessons that have fixed objectives. For example, minor goals can focus on prepositions, articles, tenses, mood and aspect, and brevity, and other grammatical issues.

![Diagram of Goal Oriented Teaching Methodology]

A lesson plan that incorporates authentic material and multimedia resources can support minor goals and make tasks fun and engaging.
Lesson Plans

The lesson plan is a teacher’s best friend. A good lesson plan involves pre-planning, planning and step-by-step sequencing in a classroom. It helps with time management and provides a framework. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class:</strong> Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal/objective:</strong> Formal e-mail writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time required:</strong> 60 Minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material required:</strong> Four samples of different emails (may be from teacher’s own inbox) addressing the different subjects, preferably written by the students of different nationals. Set of different situations to create emails on them by the students, large sticky sheets, coloured pens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparations:</strong> The email samples should be used to analyze the formal language. The emails can be used to pay attention to the brevity, clarity and the length of a draft for an email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task:</strong> Work in groups. Review or analyze all the samples and try to improve them. New questions are shrined up on the projector. Write new emails according to the given situation within the groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback:</strong> Discuss all the emails written by the groups of students and take their feedback too.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authentic Material**

Teaching material that takes content from news, blogs, books, interviews, movies, plays, and online search engines, etc, engages students in a unique way. Students relate to authentic material in a personal way. This psychologically enhances the learning process. There are online repositories and other multiple sources for the relevant and appropriate material. Also, as J.M. Swales, a linguist suggests, “When teachers cannot find suitable authentic materials, they have to be able to create purpose-built materials” (Swales 2009).

**Multimedia Resources**

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) incorporates new technology into the teaching of English as a Second Language or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). Young students use technology daily, so it makes sense for technology to be incorporated into the learning process. Teachers may provide students with some examples of blogs, and then have students write their own individual blogs or create a classroom blogging site. (www.blogger.com). To practice tenses and other grammatical units, sites like DianaHacker.com, Complete Lexical Tutor, Corpus Concordance English are excellent online resources. Learners can also be introduced to Carnegie and IOWA Pronunciation for better pronunciation. There are many ways to bring exciting authentic material to the classroom. But remember that authentic material must be focused on the goal, otherwise students treat it as entertainment and they walk away from class without having progressed.

**Conclusion**

The confidence of our students as speakers, listeners, readers and writers is our goal as teachers of English; and this confidence depends on our effectiveness in the classroom. We can reach our goal by fixing goals for our students. Careful lesson plans comprised of goal oriented tasks will assure that our students leave every class knowing what they’ve learned, and confident of their progression.
References