

The Importance of Teaching and Testing Language Skills for Foreign Language Learners.

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Abstract

This article sheds light on the importance the practitioners have to give to English language in a foreign learning setting. It mirrors through different variables the pedagogical contents the language offers to its learners. Therefore, both, the teachers and the learners have to be acquainted with the basic elements of the foreign language in order to facilitate its teaching and learning process as well as its testing.

Key words: The importance of English as a foreign language (EFL), teaching EFL, testing EFL, Foreign language learners.

Résumé:

L'article intitulé « L'importance de l'enseignement et de l'évaluation de la langue anglaise aux apprenants étrangers » a pour objectifs de guider les enseignants de l'anglais dans leurs pratiques en se basant sur les différents éléments et les compétences qui forment la base de cette langue ; aussi, de faire apparaître l'importance de cette langue dans un milieu d'apprentissage et d'enseignement étranger.

Mots clé : L'importance de la langue anglaise, l'enseignement de la langue anglaise, l'évaluation de la langue anglaise, les apprenants étrangers de la langue anglaise.

I- 1- Introduction

Interestingly, the importance of foreign language skills, as part of core class requirements, is reflected through studies success, a career securing, and in life enrichment altogether as the most valuable skills to develop in today's society. These objectives may force the language learners to think about the structure and the role of the language. Indeed, there is no doubt about it; teaching foreign language skills will not only open the learners' and the teachers' eyes but syllabus designers' and researchers' to new sights, to opportunities and experiences, and thus to endless possibilities to learn, understand, and practice the language as well. Furthermore, and in order to validate an effective and reliable language teaching and learning, there should be set of principles based on assessing this objective achievement. Assessing the amount and extent of language teaching comes through testing. Of course, we do not only test to measure degrees of acquisition but also test to analyze, reflect on, review, and make decisions about the what, the who, the when, the where, and the how to test. These abilities are, according to us, the core grounding to pave the soundest way to effective teaching and testing language skills, and therefore, reinforce and cement the teaching/learning and testing process practices. According to the aforementioned statements, it is necessary to outlook the fields of teaching and testing the language skills. These are the main points we are working around to develop and investigate through the related literature background.

I- 2- Studies in Testing the Language skills.

According to H. D. Brown, 2003, informing one's thinking about tests and assessments should be first of all based on understanding what reliability and especially validity of assessments are. He also provides fundamental principles for evaluating and designing procedures for classroom-based assessments. He delves into the purposes, the design, validity, and utility of standardized tests and assessments of a student's language proficiency. We therefore utterly share this position because, according to the field of the investigative literature we have been able to collect, we have thus found that there are four main criteria by which language tests have traditionally been evaluated. These are: validity, reliability, practicality, and positive wash back. In maintaining these criteria, we are tracing the objectives for which the language learners are tested, and most importantly the role of testing these learners in adjusting and evolving the language teaching and learning process as well as reinforcing the learners' language skills. For these purposes, Gulikson, 2003, (cited in Barbara Law, et all. 2007:14) says:

Evaluation of students is central to student learning in every school and classroom. Without evaluation, we do not know if learning has taken place, nor can we plan for future learning opportunities. Evaluation results and findings that are incorrect or unsound, or evaluation conclusions that are meaningless or unjustified are likely to be detrimental to a student's progress and future development.

Based on this philosophy, we are likely to set practical analysis of language testing theory and access to meaningful explanations on learning about language testing. Accordingly, we therefore refer to procedures through which we can establish reliable and valid educational testing meant to provide answers to questions like;

- Whether we have set of testing standards;
- What procedures we are likely to follow to estimate test reliability;
- What procedures we are likely to follow to ensure test validity;
- What we are looking when for when testing, and
- Whether the testing process is effective, and mainly what outcomes this process is likely to provide.

Moreover, there should also be an exploration of key concepts related to language testing and through which we can highlight tests appropriateness and draw a clear distinction on their appropriateness. These key concepts are as follows:

- Whether the tests provide us with the data we need to gain insights about the students we serve;
- In designing a test, first, we have to decide which skills, processes, or knowledge we want to assess;
- We need to figure out how to go about measuring these traits;

- Whether the tests measure what actually is intended to measure to claim therefore their validity;
- Tests should purposefully measure students' skills and knowledge consistently;
- Whether tests promote effective language learning and teaching, and effects known as wash back;
- Whether tests consume resources because, we believe that, developing, administering, and scoring tests all require time, money, and individual power.

In addition to these key concepts, we have to fully and analytically consider that testing mechanisms should be added to the whole range processes of tests groundings, as we strongly maintain that practicality is another key component and that issues of validity and practicality intersect and are complementary, especially when providing adequate answers to questions as:

- What are we actually testing? And
- How shall we test it?

Furthermore, and in doing so we are seeking some practical methods of testing the students' skills in reliable and valid ways; all of which are directed towards promoting positive wash back. Again, and because most of language teachers recognize that testing is a skill which is based on the above mentioned profiles and criteria, and because this issue rests on test development and scoring, we have therefore, to classify the four language skills in terms of directionality and modality:

- Directionality entails the direction of the language used relative to the student. If the language learner is receiving income language, we therefore, refer to receptive skills of listening and reading. However, if the learner himself is generating and producing the language used, therefore, we refer to the productive skills of speaking and writing.
- Modality refer to the channel of language use to quest whether it is writhe or aural/oral.

These are, according to us, based on providing some sense of discipline, order and intelligible ways of reflecting and deciding on testing and its modalities. We therefore,

thoroughly share the observation done by Erickson, 1982 (cited in B. Law et al. 2007;14) who quoted:

The consequences of misclassifications due to inadequate or inappropriate tests may include improper placement; insufficient instruction, and, as a result, lower academic achievement than would have been reached if appropriate instruments and proper placements had occurred.

As a matter of fact, alongside the increasing number of foreign language speakers, the need for testing their language proficiency is progressing as well. In this vein, two major issues are brought to the surface. The first is concerned with the content and the method of testing. It has appeared as a result of the shift in the views of the nature of language and of language learning. In this part of our investigation, we will tackle the following issues: what is the role of testing in the language classroom? What are the types of tests and tests items? And finally, what are the contrasting pairs in the field of testing which cause confusing?

I- 2- 1- The Role of Testing in the Classroom

Classroom testing is a vital tool to promote both poles' achievements: the teacher and the learner. According to Rebecca Valette (2003:3), there are three crucial roles that tests play in the learning environment: they define course objectives, they stimulate student progress, and they evaluate class achievements.

I- 2- 2. Defining course objectives

The test content and the items help the learners to recognize the elements of focus of each course and the short range objectives of the teacher. For instance, if a test which is held after a course or a set of courses composed of translations and declension tables, the learner will soon determine that the goals behind the course (s) is to manipulate the language with near-native fluency.

I-2- 3- Stimulating student progress

Certainly, the tests are tools through which learners are expected to demonstrate their abilities and skills. Simultaneously, they are indicators of learners' language gaps and performance disabilities. The test best fulfills its function as a part of the learning process if correct performance is immediately confirmed and errors are pointed out. Hence, the learner knows his strengths to build up upon them and his weaknesses to overcome them.

I- 2- 3- Evaluating class achievements

Tests aid the teacher to define the parts of the program which represent difficulties for both the individual learner and the class as a whole. Moreover, they enable the teacher to explore the extent to which the class objectives have been met. In addition, tests serve in evaluating the effectiveness of a new teaching method, of a different approach to a difficult pattern, or of new materials.

I-2- 4- Types of Tests

Language tests are divided into four major types: aptitude tests, progress tests, achievement tests, and proficiency tests.

- **The aptitude test:**

It is qualified as a prognostic measure that indicates the learner's readiness to learn a foreign language. It is generally held before starting the language study, and it can be used to select learners for a particular language course or to place them in sections appropriate to their abilities.

- **The progress test:**

It measures how much the learner has learned in a specific course of instruction. This includes the tests that the teachers prepare for administration at the end of a unit or of a semester.

- **The achievement test:**

It resembles to the progress test as it measures the extent of the learned material in a foreign language course. However, this kind of tests is generally designed to be used with learners from different schools and programs.

- **The proficiency test:**

It measures what a learner has learned, but it aims at determining whether the learner's language ability meets the specific language requirements.

I- 2- 5- Types of Tests Items

Each question in a test is called an item. In language classes, it is common to use multiple-choice items, short-answer items, and communication items.

- **Multiple choice items:**

They are designed to elicit specific responses from the learners. In this type of items, there is generally only one right answer; however, in some rare cases more than one or even none answer. They are easy to correct. More important, when corrected by a group of scorers, a test paper is scored the same.

- **Short-answer objective items:**

In this kind of items, there is a single predictable correct answer. These items are prepared for classroom tests rather than for standardized tests. They can be in the form of brief responses to questions (oral or written), the filling in of missing elements, or several words or full sentences may be required.

- **Communication items:**

They are tests that allow and encourage creativity on the part of the learners. So, it is usually impossible to predict the learners' responses. Communication items are not as objective as multiple-choice or short-answer items.

I- 2- 6- General Testing Terminology

Here, there is a set of contrasting pairs that should be clearly defined to avoid any kind of confusing and misunderstanding of concepts.

- **Test and quiz:**

The distinction between these two concepts occurs at the level of dimension and purpose rather than of item content. On one hand, the test is announced in advance and covers a specific unit of instruction, that is to say, a part of a lesson or several lessons. Classroom tests may be organized every two or three weeks, and in some cases, every week. The value of a test relies in the completeness with which it examines the material under study.

On the other hand, the essence of the quiz is brevity. While a test is always announced, the quiz is usually not. The frequent quizzes encourage learners to devote time regularly to their language study. Additionally, the quiz enables the learners to recognize the types of items which will be used in tests. The main importance of a quiz lies in its positive effect on learners' language learning.

I- 2- 7- Objective and subjective test items:

The terms objective and subjective in test items refer to the manner in which the item is graded. An objective item is one for which there is a specific correct response ;hence, if the test is corrected by one or more teachers, if it is scored today or last week, it is always scored the same way. A subjective item is one that does not have a single right answer. In such type of tests, the learners may give a variety of responses that differ from each other.

- **Speed and power tests:**

They are the tests that require speed when answering the items. They involve so long tests, in which the learners are unable to finish within the time allotted, and the items differ are of more or less equal difficulty. On a power test, however, the learner is given enough time to finish the test. Most classroom tests are power tests as their length allows all the learners to complete the test.

- **Formative and summative evaluation:**

Benjamin Bloom (1971) has identified two types of evaluation: the formative and the summative. The former refers to the type of tests which is given during the course of instruction, and which aims at showing which aspects of the chapter the learner has mastered and where remedial work is necessary. Yet, the summative test is usually given at the end of a marking period and measures the « sum » total of the material covered.

- **Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests:**

The norm referenced test is concerned with comparing a learner's performance against the performance of other learners. In the case of a classroom test, the learner's performance is often graded on the curve. In the case of a standardized test, the learner performance is compared to that of other learners who have taken a similar language course, and the results are expressed in terms of percentile rankings. The criterion-referenced test determines whether the learner has met predetermined objectives or criteria. The learner's performance is graded on a pass-fail basis and the opportunity for retesting is provided. It is given at the end of a unit and based on specific material.

- **Discrete-point and global testing:**

Discrete-point tests measure whether or not the learner has mastered specific elements of the second language. However, global language tests measure the learner's ability to understand and use language in context.

- **Testing linguistic competence and communicative competence:**

The test of linguistic competence identifies the breadth and accuracy of the learner's command of linguistic elements including: pronunciation, vocabulary, and structures. The test of communicative competence, on the other hand, focuses on the learner's ability to communicate in specific situations.

I- 3- Studies in Teaching skills:

It has been demonstrated that language education, as part of applied linguistics, is the teaching and learning of a language. In front of the great range of information related to this field, , we can denote that the majority has been applied on language acquisition as to ally this acquisition with sensation and experience, or simply focus on the oral profile of its teaching and learning practices. These different positions, we have to underlie it, have been emphasized by the different schools throughout the many studies undertaken, to determine how a language can systematically be taught and learned, and most importantly, reveal the pedagogical methodology for this.

With the advance in the field, there have been two major branches in the language teaching/learning domain; the empirical, and theoretical. As far as the empirical branch, we can mention for instance Jespersen, Palmer, and Leonard Bloomfield, who promote mimicry and memorization with pattern drills, which basically result from habits formed by

conditioning and drilling. Whereas the theoretical side, for instance François Gouin, M. D. Berlitz, and Elime de Sauzé, in relation to the work done by Noam Chomsky, have led to a wider variety of teaching methods, which have gone in turn from the grammar(-translation method to Gouin's « series method », to the direct methods of Berlitz and de Sauzé. All of which have been meant to enable the students generate original and meaningful sentences to gain a functional knowledge of the rules of grammar. Furthermore, as in teaching/learning processes principles, we cannot describe or delve into a profound investigation without referring to the different methods or approaches the field has witnessed right here. Therefore, it is thus judicious to develop some sights on methods of teaching foreign languages.

I- 3- 1- Methods of teaching foreign languages

I- 3- 1- 1- Understanding teaching concepts.

Sometimes we get confused when having to apply the terms "approach", "method" and "technique"; still, they are hierarchical concepts. An approach is a set of correlative assumptions about the nature of language and language learning, but does not involve procedure or provide any details about how such assumptions should translate into the classroom setting. Throughout the literature relevant to this field, we have been able to observe three principal views which are as follows:

1. The structural view treats language as a system of structurally related elements to code meaning (e.g. grammar).
2. The functional view sees language as a vehicle to express or accomplish a certain function, such as requesting something.
3. The interactive view sees language as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of social relations, focusing on patterns of moves, acts, negotiation and interaction found in conversational exchanges. This view has been fairly dominant since the 1980s.

A method is a plan for presenting the language material to be learned and should be based upon a selected approach. In order for an approach to be translated into a method, an instructional system must be designed considering the objectives of the teaching/learning, how the content is to be selected and organized, the types of tasks to be performed, the roles of students and the roles of teachers. A technique is a very specific, concrete stratagem or trick designed to accomplish an immediate objective. Such are derived from the controlling method, and less-directly, with the approach.

I- 3- 1- 2- Methods in Language teaching

As aforementioned, there is an interesting range of methods which focalizes on given points of importance in teaching a foreign language. Briefly these methods are:

- The grammar translation method

The grammar translation method instructs students in grammar, and provides vocabulary with direct translations to memorize. It remains the most commonly practiced method of English teaching in some parts of the world.

At school, the teaching of grammar consists of a process of training in the rules of a language which must make it possible to all the students to correctly express their opinion, to understand the remarks which are addressed to them and to analyze the texts which they read. The objective is that the pupil controls the tools of the language which are the vocabulary, grammar and the orthography, to be able to read, understand and write texts in various contexts.

- The direct method

Sometimes also called *natural method*, is a method that refrains from using the learners' native language and just uses the target language. The direct method operates on the idea that second language learning must be an imitation of first language learning, as this is the natural way humans learn any language. This method places great stress on correct pronunciation and the target language from outset. It advocates teaching of oral skills at the expense of every traditional aim of language teaching. Such methods rely on directly representing an experience into a linguistic construct rather than relying on abstractions like mimicry, translation and memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary.

- Variation of direct method

The series method is a variety of the direct method in that experiences are directly connected to the target language. Gouin suggested that students learn a language more quickly and retain it better if it is presented through a chronological sequence of events. Students learn sentences based on an action such as leaving a house in the order in which such would be performed.

- The oral approach / situational language teaching

It was discovered that languages have a core basic vocabulary of about 2,000 words that occurred frequently in written texts, and it was assumed that mastery of these would greatly aid reading comprehension. Parallel to this was the notion of "grammar control", emphasizing the sentence patterns most-commonly found in spoken conversation. Such patterns were incorporated into dictionaries and handbooks for students. The principle difference between the oral approach and the direct method was that methods devised under this approach would have theoretical principles guiding the selection of content, gradation of difficulty of exercises and the presentation of such material and exercises. Although this approach is all but unknown among language teachers today, elements of it have had long lasting effects on language teaching. However, its emphasis on oral practice, grammar and sentence patterns still finds widespread support among language teachers and remains popular in countries where foreign language syllabuses are still heavily based on grammar.

- The audio-lingual method

The developing method had much in common with the British oral approach although the two developed independently. The main difference was the developing audio-lingual methods allegiance to structural linguistics, focusing on grammar and contrastive analysis to find differences between the student's native language and the target language in order to prepare specific materials to address potential problems. These materials strongly emphasized drill as a way to avoid or eliminate these problems.

This first version of the method was originally called the oral method, the aural-oral method or the structural approach. The audio-lingual method courses and techniques were redesigned to add insights from behaviorist psychology to the structural linguistics and constructive analysis already being used. Under this method, students listen to or view recordings of language models acting in situations. Students practice with a variety of drills, and the instructor emphasizes the use of the target language at all times. The idea is that by reinforcing 'correct' behaviors, students will make them into habits.

- Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT), also known as *the Communicative Approach*, emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language.

- Language immersion

There are three main types of immersion education programs in the United States: foreign language immersion, dual immersion, and indigenous immersion.

Foreign language immersion programs in the U.S. are designed for students whose home language is English. Most content (math, science, social studies, art, and music) continues to be taught through the immersion language.

Dual immersion programs in the U.S. are designed for students whose home language is English as well as for students whose home language is the immersion language (usually Spanish). The goal is bilingual students with mastery of both English and the immersion language. As in partial foreign language immersion academic content is delivered through the medium of the immersion language for part of the school day, and through English the rest of the school day.

Indigenous immersion programs in the U.S. are designed for American Indian communities desiring to maintain the use of the native language by delivering elementary school content through the medium of that language. Hawaiian Immersion programs are the largest and most successful in this category.

- Minimalist/Methodist

This new approach is underpinned with Paul Nation's three actions of successful ESL teachers. There is a focus on language-in-context and multi-functional practices.

- Directed practice

Directed practice has students repeat phrases. It can quickly provide phrasebook-type knowledge of the language. Within these limits, the student's usage is accurate and precise. However the student's choice of what to say is not flexible.

- Learning by teaching (LdL)

Learning by teaching is a widespread method in Germany, developed by Jean-Pol Martin. The students take the teacher's role and teach their peers.

- Proprioceptive language learning method

The proprioceptive language learning method (commonly called the *feedback training method*) emphasizes simultaneous development of cognitive, motor, neurological, and hearing as all being part of a comprehensive language learning process. Lesson development is as concerned with the training of the motor and neurological functions of speech as it is with cognitive (memory) functions. It further emphasizes that training of each part of the speech process must be simultaneous. The proprioceptive method, therefore, emphasizes spoken language training, and is primarily used by those wanting to perfect their speaking ability in a target language.

- Silent Way

It is called the *Silent Way* because the teacher is usually silent, leaving room for the students to talk and explore the language. The students are responsible for their own learning and are encouraged to interact with one another. The role of the teacher is to give clues to the students, not to model the language.

Proprietary methods

The following methods are tied to a particular company or school, and are not used in mainstream teaching.

- Pimsleur method

It is based on the research of and model programs developed by American language teacher Paul Pimsleur. It involves recorded 30-minute lessons to be done daily, with each lesson typically featuring a dialog, revision, and new material. Students are asked to translate phrases into the target language, and occasionally to respond in the target language to lines spoken in the target language. The instruction starts in the student's language but gradually changes to the target language. Several all-audio programs now exist to teach various languages using the Pimsleur Method. The syllabus is the same in all languages.

- Michel Thomas Method

An audio-based teaching system developed by Michel Thomas, a language teacher in the USA. It was originally done in person, although since his death it is done via recorded lessons. The instruction is done entirely in the student's own language, although the student's responses are always expected to be in the target language. The method focuses on constructing long sentences with correct grammar and building student confidence. There is no listening practice, and there is no reading or writing. The syllabus is ordered around the easiest and most useful features of the language, and as such is different for each language.

I- 3- 2- Skills teaching

When talking about language skills, the four basic ones are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, other, more socially-based skills have been identified more recently such as summarizing, describing, narrating etc. In addition, more general learning skills such as study skills and knowing how one learns have been applied to language classrooms.

More recent textbooks stress the importance of students working with other students in pairs and groups, sometimes the entire class. Pair and group work give opportunities for more students to participate more actively. However, supervision of pairs and groups is important to make sure everyone participates as equally as possible. Such activities also provide opportunities for peer teaching, where weaker learners can find support from stronger classmates.

In addition to this, and according to Rivers, 1981, teaching foreign language skills is intended to particularly use in methods classes in conjunction with observation of experienced foreign language teachers. Furthermore, in dealing with general principles such as objectives and methods of language teaching as well as theories of language and language learning, we are thus, removing layers for a full understanding of the process. This function also includes concerns of multiple natures as the structured practice, teaching sounds, listening comprehension, learning the fundamentals of the speaking skill, various approaches to teaching communicative skills, reading skills, writing skills, cultural understanding, principles and techniques of testing, and technology and language centres.

Through the literature provided by Rivers, 1981, focusing on the communicative competence in teaching foreign skills, this means to consider whether the use of specific communicative strategies can improve learners' English proficiency in communicative tasks and this obviously requires the use of multiple data collection procedures which take into account an in-depth analysis in terms of production rate, the number of errors, and actual strategy use. As far as the teaching methods, the author underlines the importance to find out adequate tools to support key learning processes and their impact on the literacy practices and self-regulated learning skills of the student, showing the effects of the student's attitudes and behaviours on the outcomes of learning the foreign language.

Nevertheless, according to Ken Wilson, 2009: 6, teaching language skills must focus on ways to revitalize the classroom experience for both teachers and learners. He also believes that this process must be categorized by the catch-all-expression based on activities demonstrated through improvisation as a classroom approach which includes opportunities for improvisation and creativity is hugely beneficial to both teachers and learners. Improvisation, he adds, engage people's imagination, makes learners more central to the learning process, and adds colour and excitement to everyday classroom events. It can, he carries on, even enliven the presentation of "new" grammar points. Moreover, according to Widdowson, 1978:1, the aims of a language teaching course are very often defined with reference to the four skills: understanding speech, speaking, reading and writing. These objectives relate to the kind of activity which the learners are to perform. We may mean that this is done through a selection of lexical items, syntactic structures involving thus the development of the ability to produce correct sentences. We also may subscribe to this view a good deal of impressive language teaching material.

In order to present the teaching of any foreign language skills, it is, we strongly believe, necessary to present each language skill according to the extent of importance we provide to each. These are as follows:

- **Teaching Reading :**

Reading is to look at and understand the meaning of written or printed words or symbols. It can also defined as the process of extracting meaning from printed or written material, i.e. the ability of decipher meaning from written symbols as illustrated by Goodman (1967, p.113).

Reading is a constructive for language acquisition. The more students read, the stronger they sharpen their knowledge. Reading not only increases the students' vocabulary, but develops their pronunciation (through reading aloud), spelling and punctuation as well. It also provides good models for English writing. In a given text, the teacher can push his students to shed light on grammar, punctuation or vocabulary. In addition, teachers can also use reading material so as to show or demonstrate how sentences, paragraphs and texts are built.

- **Different kinds of reading:**

Reading is divided into two categories: intensive and extensive. Extensive reading means reading for pleasure or to kill time-Richard Day names it "Joyful Reading". It has a subsidiary role in the process of learning a foreign language as it widens the students' general knowledge and strengthens the learned items. The material can be in a form of plays, novels, short stories...etc. Intensive reading is a classroom activity. In this sort of reading, students will focus on new words, grammar use, vocabulary choice, genres and cultural insights. It should be done under the teacher's guidance so as to achieve the meaning and the understanding of the content.

- **Reading principles:**

Principle one: encourage students to read as much as possible.

The instructors should encourage their students to read, the more they read, the better.

Principle two: students need to be engaged with what they are reading:

When learners are reading extensively, they should be entailed in an interesting reading. In other words, teachers should do their best to make sure the students' involvement in a given text.

Principle three: encourage students to respond to the content of a text (and explore their feelings about it).

It is crucial for students to study reading texts in order to find how the language is used and how many paragraphs, but knowing the meaning of the text is vital, too. In other words,

teachers should give their students a chance to answer to that message by allowing them to express their feelings and view about the topic.

Principle four: prediction is a major factor in reading:

Books covers give us a clue about what is the content of the book; we can identify reports from their appearance, headlines, and titles. It is preferable before starting reading a given book, poem, article; teachers should provide students with hints or guidelines to help them guess what will be dealt with.

Principle five: match the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts:

Once a reading text is selected to be read (taking into account the students' level and the topic of the text) teachers are required to choose also interesting reading activities.

Principle six: good teachers exploit reading texts to the full:

Any reading text is plenty of words, sentences, idioms, expressions...etc. instead of making students just read the text and then deal with something else, effective teachers use the reading text to introduce interesting introduce interesting topics and stimulate discussions, (using activities to bring the text to life.

- **Reading activities:**

There are many tasks that teachers can use to encourage the students to read. Among them we may cite the following:

- 1- *Jigsaw readings*: students read a short text which includes a problem, then, they form three groups, each group read a text (i.e. three different texts), however all of them deal with same topic. Once, the three texts are read, they join the other to try to describe the whole situation.
- 2- *Poetry*: in this activity, students work in groups, each group is given a line from a poem, showing the line to other groups is not allowed; instead the line can be just read aloud. They have to put the lines in a chronological order

- 3- *Play extracts*: students are given an extract from a play; they should not only read it but understand it as well in order to practice or to act it paying attention to the stress, intonation, rhythm ...etc.
- 4- *Different responses*: in addition to comprehension questions and true/false statements, teachers can ask their students to turn facts into diagrams, tables or graphs. They can be asked to describe the characters of a story, guess the end of a story as they can expand the story.

- **Writing skill:**

Writing can be defined as the act of putting down in conventional graphic form something which has been spoken. In other words, writing is to turn something uttered or said down using letters

It is useful to differentiate between writing for learning and writing for writing. The first can be defined as the activities learners write to learn language better or to reinforce something they have been studying. Writing for writing; however, is a kind of drills which are designed to train students to be good writers.

- **Writing issues:**

To help students write in different styles, we need to consider three issues:

- 1- *Genre*: a genre is a kind of writing which members of a discourse community would recognize for what it was. It is easy to recognize a small ad at the first glance, simply because we are familiar with the way or how it is constructed or done. The point that is to be raised is which genres are significant for our students. Once a decision is made, teachers can give or provide examples of texts (for example a variety of different kinds of written invitations). Such genre analysis will help students to know how a text within a genre is built, so they construct texts themselves. If we deal beginners, the teacher may provide models so as to produce something that may be look like the original. Such guided writing will aid students write texts even with limited English.

- 2- *The writing process*: by the writing process we mean the divergent stages (planning drafting, reviewing, and editing that writers follow to compose a piece of writing. Many writers do all of these steps several times. Thus they may plan, draft, re-plan, draft, re-edit before producing the final work. We need to push students to plan, draft, and edit several times though it will take too much time and even this will make them feel bored, but at last, they will see the fruit of their efforts by becoming good writers in exams and in their life in general.
- 3- *Building the writing habit*: most of the students see writing as a boring task; this may be because they can not put their thoughts down. In this case, it is up to the teacher to integrate simple and enjoyable activities right from the beginning of the teaching/learning processes, thus writing tasks become an essential part of classroom life.

- **Writing activities:**

There are many writing drills, teachers may use:

- 1- *Instant writing*: one way of building the writing habit is to use instant writing activities as much as possible with kids/ teenagers and advanced learners (adults) who are reluctant writers. When using instant writing activities, students are required to write immediately in response to the instructor requests, for example teachers can dictate half sentences and it is up to the learners to carry on.
- 2- *The use of pictures*: students are asked to write descriptions to a group of pictures, their mates then try to guess which one it is, as teachers can ask them to compose an article about the characters.
- 3- *Writing to each other*: there are endless divergent genres that students can write in apart from what is already mentioned before. Students can be asked to compose personal short stories, as they can complete stories that are half told.

- **Speaking skill:**

Speaking is a part of daily life; it is used to reach many purposes. When we discuss with someone, we aim at expressing opinions, asking for more information, asking for

permission or requests...etc. Speaking also is used to inform someone about something, describe things, complain about things, people, behaviour, actions...etc.

Nowadays, teachers as well as researchers consider speaking the most difficult skill to develop. In order to develop this skill the teacher should be a fluent speaker, provides golden opportunities for learners' participation, involve learners in interactive activities, clarify the objectives...etc.

- **Speaking activities:**

- 1- *Information- gap activities:* one famous information activity is called "Find the differences". In pairs, students look at a picture which look like the one their classmates have. The aim of the activity is to find some differences (let us say 10) between their pictures; however they should hide their pictures. This means that they will describe, ask, answer questions so as to find the differences
- 2- *Students' presentations:* this activity can be done either individually or cooperatively. The students will talk about a topic, of course enough time is given to well prepare it, and each presentation is followed by a hot debate.

Plays: these are an expansion of dialogues, where students learn and act a play. Students may act something they have read or produced (personal work).

I- 4- Conclusion

Overall, in conducting this literature on the target field, we also work around emphasizing the importance we can attribute to the teaching process. We therefore believe

that effective teaching is actually based on principles of learning. It is true that we cannot dissociate the main components of a teaching process, as to consider the skills, the methods, approaches, and the techniques on which this process rests; but sometimes teaching occurs almost instantaneously and other times it is practiced only through long, patient thinking and diligent practice. Therefore, it can be reduced to preparation, presentation, application, and review and evaluation.

Throughout this process, the teacher has to bear in mind various criteria which describe the desired performance of the learners. This is underlied under considering the elements of performance-based objectives which include the description of the skill or behavior which itself implies the desired outcome in concrete terms that can be measured as well as the conditions which stand for the framework under which the skill will be demonstrated. These are, obviously, based on criteria used as the standard which will be used to measure the accomplishment of the objectives: Testing. We therefore end this brief review with the following quotation:

Teaching skills can be developed and teachers must work to personalize and polish these skills till they are like second nature. Being an effective teacher is a challenging task, but should they accept this challenge and responsibility, they also find that it can provide rewards beyond their imagination...changed lives.

Ken Wilson, 2009:6

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