CHAPTER 4

SKILLS’ DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Developing Receptive and Productive Skills

The Present form of post-methods provides enough liberty to a teacher for any method suits to his/her learners’ requirements and the environment of the classroom. The focus is on the learners and their learning style rather than on methods. It can be referred as ‘a break with the method concept’. But in our country majority of teachers adopt lecture method in higher classes. “A lecture involves a continuous formal exposition of or discourse on a single topic for the benefit of many (Corzon, 1985)”. It can be successfully used in teaching content-based subject like sociology, history etc. However language is not a content-based subject. It is skill-based and skills can be mastered only by practice. So how to develop receptive and productive skills of English language in our learners is the basic question.

4.2 Developing Listening Skill

For many years, listening did not receive priority in language teaching. Teaching methods emphasized productive skills and the relationship between receptive and productive skills was poorly understood. Until recently, the nature of listening in second language was ignored by applied linguistics and it was often assumed that listening skill could be acquired through exposure but not really taught. This position has been replaced by an active interest in the role of listening comprehension in second language acquisition, by the development of powerful theories of the nature of language comprehension and by the inclusion of carefully developed listening courses in many ESL programs.

4.2.1 Input Processing

Listening is an active process. It can be depicted as

Input – processing – output

By input it means, the words spoken by the speaker and by output the listener’s response. The input can be processed in following ways-

- Bottom up processing
- Top down processing
**Bottom up processing**----- In bottom up processing, listeners use their lexical and grammatical competence in the language for getting the intended meaning of the message. Comprehension occurs to the extent that listeners are successful in decoding the spoken text. The listeners demand solely on the incoming input for the meaning of the message. The input is received and analyzed at different levels of organizations. The sound signals are organized into the words; words into the phrases; phrases into the clauses and clauses into a whole sentence.

**Top down processing**----- It is by contrast involves the listeners in actively constructing meaning, based on expectation, inferences, intention and other relevant prior knowledge. The language data serve as cues to activate this top–down process. Listeners rely on their background knowledge for understanding the message. Listeners through their knowledge of the world make guesses of the intended meaning of the message and approach the input to confirm them and fill up the specific details.

### 4.2.2 Types of Listening

There was a time when listening in language classes were perceived chiefly as a mean of presenting new grammar. Dialogues on tape provided examples of structures to be learned, and this was the only type of listening practice most learners received. Ironically, much effort was spent on training learners to express them orally. Sights were lost of the fact that one is rather handicapped in conversation unless one can follow what is being said as well as spoken.

From the late 1960s, practitioners recognized the importance of listening and began to set aside time for practicing the skill. A relatively standard format for the listening lesson developed at this time.

**Pre-listening**

Pre-listening of all important new vocabulary in the passage

**Listening**

Extensive listening (followed by general questions establishing context)

Intensive listening (followed by detailed comprehension questions)

**Post-listening**

Analysis of the language in the text.
Pre-listening of vocabulary has now largely been discontinued. In real life, learners can’t expect unknown words to be explained in advance; instead, they have to learn to cope with situations where parts of what is heard will not be familiar. However some kind of pre-listening activities are now usual, involving brainstorming vocabulary, reviewing areas of grammar or discussing the topics of the listening task. A teacher should set two simple aims for the pre-listening period:

- To provide sufficient context to match what would be available in real life.
- To create motivation (perhaps by asking learners to speculate on what they will hear)

The Listening task may be extensive listening or intensive listening. We recognize that learners listen in an unfocused way if questions are not set until after the passage has been heard. By resetting comprehension questions, we can ensure that learners listen with a clear purpose, and that their answers are not dependent on memory. More effective than traditional comprehension questions is the current practice of providing a task where learners do something with the information they have extracted from the text. Texts can involve labeling e.g.

- Building on a map
- Selecting (choosing a film from three trailers)
- Drawing (symbols on the map)
- Form filling (hotel registration form) and
- Completing grid activities etc.

They also provide a more reliable way to check understanding. Another benefit is that tasks demand individual response. Filling the form, labeling diagram, or making choice obliges every learner to try to make something of what he or she hears. For the naturalness of language and real-life listening experience, it will be better to introduce authentic material in the language course. In general students are not daunted or discouraged by authentic materials –provided they are told in advance not to expect to understand everything. Indeed, they find it motivated to discover that they can extract the information from an ungraded passage. The essence of the approach is that ‘instead of simplifying the language of the text, simplify the task that is demanded of the student’.
As part of post-listening, students can be asked to infer the meaning of new words from the contexts in which they appear—just as they do in reading. The procedure is to write the target words on the board, replay the sentences containing them and ask learners to work out their meaning.

4.2.3 Material for listening skill

Some activities of listening skill can be:

- Play a short passage, and then get learners compare their understanding of it in pairs. Encourage them to disagree with each other—thus increase motivation for a second listening. Play the passage again, and let the pair revise their views, then share their interpretations with the class. When the whole class has argued about the accuracy of different version, play the text again and ask them to make up their minds, each student providing evidence to support his or her point of view. In this way listening becomes a much more interacting activity. By listening and re-listening, they improve their ability to construct representations of meaning from what they hear.

- Listen to an incomplete story and guess the remaining part of same activity.

- Listen to an expert on a topic and then read about it from the book and check how many latter matches with the expert lecture.

- Listen to the one side of telephone conversation and guess what the other person’s response can be.

- Go through a list of jumbled key points to be covered in a talk and then listen the same talk and number the key points in sequence while listening to the talk.

- Look at some pictures and listen to some description and arrange them in the order in which they are described.

- Look at the diagram of a object; listen to an oral description of the object.

To summaries, the format of a good listening lesson today differs considerably from that of four decades ago. Our current methodology reinforces the natural instinct of the teacher to provide answers. We need to design a listening lesson where the teacher has a much less interventionist role, encouraging learners to listen and re-listen and to do as much of the work as possible for themselves. On the other hand, we should also
recognize the extent to which listening can prove an isolating activity, in which the liveliest and most vocal class can quickly become a group of separate individuals, each locked up in their auditory efforts.

4.3 Developing Reading Skill-

Reading is a skill which is highly valued by students and teachers alike. Since the 1980s, a number of advances have been made in research on reading, both in first and second language contexts.

When we read something, we understand it at three levels—first, the purely literal responding to the graphic signals only with little depth of understanding, the second level at which the reader recognizes the author’s meaning and the third level where the reader’s own personal experiences and judgments influence his response to the text. These three levels can be summarized as reading the lines, reading between the lines and reading beyond the lines.

4.3.1 Input Processing

Reading is mainly a decoding process.

Encoder-----------Message ----------------decoder or reading

The encoder encodes the message while the decoder decodes it and understands it. That is, decoding is not of much value if it is not followed by comprehension.

Reading is an active process. A reader can understand a text only when s/he actively puts of use her/his mental faculties. This may be the reason why Kenneth Goodman calls this a “psycholinguistic guessing game.”

4.3.2 Types of Reading

We read in different ways on the purpose for which we are reading a text.

- **Skimming**—Skimming is looking quickly over a text to get a general superficial idea of the content.

- **Scanning**—Scanning is looking quickly through the text searching for a specific piece of information. We use the same technique when we look up at dictionary to find out the meaning of a particular word.
**Extensive reading**- Sometimes we read longer texts like a novel or a short story mainly for pleasure. There we read rapidly and aim at a global understanding of the novel. This type of reading is called extensive reading.

Extensive reading generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer reading (e.g. whole books) for general understanding, with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language. Although extensive reading programs come under different names, including Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading, Drop Everything and Read, Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun, and Book Flood Approach, they all share the same purpose that learners read large quantities of books and other materials in an environment that nurtures a lifelong reading habit. In extensive reading, teachers attempt to build a reading culture in which students read in quantity. The most commonly extensive-reading tasks are -

- Design a bookmark to suit the book.
- Role play of the story.
- Design a poster to advertise the book.
- Read interesting/exciting/well written parts aloud.
- Copy interesting words and useful expression into a notebook.
- Write a letter to the author.
- Share their views about the book with a small group of classmates.

Extensive reading is seen as offering many advantages. Some of which are as follows-

- Enhance language learning in such areas as spelling, vocabulary, grammar and text structure.
- Increase knowledge of the world.
- Improve reading and writing skills.
- More positive attitude towards reading.
- Higher possibility of developing a reading habit.

Extensive reading represents much more that reading device. It represents a lifelong habit, a habit that brings with it the power and wealth that language offers in such large quantity. By encouraging our students to read extensively and showing them how to do so, we help them strengthen their grip on the efficacious tool of reading.
• **Intensive reading** – Intensive reading differs from extensive reading. In intensive reading, students normally work with short text with close guidance from the teacher.

The aim of intensive reading is to help students obtain detailed meaning from the text, to develop skills, such as identifying main ideas and recognizing text connectors and to enhance vocabulary and grammar knowledge. These two approaches of reading – (intensive and extensive reading) should not be seen as being in opposite, as both serve different but complementary purposes. When we read shorter text like a research paper for extracting specific information, we read slowly and intensively. This is called intensive reading.

### 4.3.3 Different phases of developing reading skill in students are-

- Pre-reading
- While-reading
- Post-reading

In the **pre-reading phase**, the teacher aims to arouse the learners’ interest in the subject of the reading text by making them draw on their knowledge of the world and by making them to give their own views on the subject. The teacher removes the hurdles in their path in this phase.

In **while-reading phase** the teacher asks them to quickly go through the text and answer one or two guided questions.

In **post-reading stage** the learners either reflect upon what they have read or they relate the text to their background knowledge.

A lesson has pre-reading activities, while-reading activities and post-reading activities. A teacher has to analyze his/her text book and then decide on the use of material. A teacher should answer that will be helpful in his/her analysis of the textbook.

- What are the aims and objectives of the book?
- What skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) does the material highlight for the learners to work upon?
- Is it aim at integrated skill?
• Is the book content-based or skills-based?
• Does the exam focus on knowledge or skills?
• Is the subject matter of the text used likely to hold the students’ interest?
• Is the subject matter intrinsically interesting or does it merely serve as a vehicle for the language work?
• Does it give them practice in real life language tasks (such as reading, news reports, advertisement etc)?
• How far do they help the learners in acquiring knowledge and skills?
• What learning activities/tasks do they offer?
• Is there anything the teacher would like to add to existing materials so that materials become learner friendly and also help them in achieving their objectives?

To sum up we can say that learners have to interact with the text actively in order to make sense to the text. They should have knowledge of the language system, vocabulary and some background knowledge of the topic in order to succeed in understanding the intended meaning of the text. Learners should also know how to vary their speed of reading depending on the purpose of reading.

4.4 Developing Speaking Skill

A large percentage of the world’s language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking. The ability to speak a second or foreign language well is a very complex task if we try to understand the nature of what appears to involve. To begin with, speaking is used for many different purposes and each purpose involves different skills. When we use casual conversation, for example, our purposes may be to make social contact with the people, to establish rapport, or to engage in the harmless chit-chat that occupies much of the time we spend with friends. When we engage in discussion with someone, on the other hand, the purpose may be to seek or express opinions, to persuade someone about something or to clarify information. In some situations, we use speaking to give instructions or to get things done. We may use speaking to describe things, to complain about people’s behaviour, to make polite requests or to entertain people with jokes and anecdotes. Each of these different
purposes for speaking implies knowledge of the rules that account for how spoken language reflects the context or situation in which speech occurs, the participants involved and their specific roles and relations, and the kind of activity the speakers are involved in.

There is little doubt that listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking ability. Speaking feeds on listening, this precedes it. Usually, one person speaks, and the other responds through attending by means of the listening process. In fact, during interaction, every speaker plays a double role-both as a listener and as a speaker.

“While listening, learners must comprehend the text by relating information in memory, integrate it with what follows and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and of incoming information” (Mendelssohn and Rubin, 1995, p. 35).

If one cannot understand what is said, one is certainly unable to respond. So speaking is closely related to or interwoven with listening, which is basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized.

4.4.1 Input Processing

Our cognitive processes cause speech to pass through four levels of representations before it is actually produced as sound.

- Conceptual planning processes create the message level at which ideas and general meanings are represented.
- The broad syntactic frames are assembled and word meanings are selected in order to create what is called functional level plan.
- The exact sentence structure and word forms are defined in order to create plans at the positional level.
- Finally plans are created for the actual articulation of the words.

These plans result in physical production of speech. Effective communication through speaking takes place when all aspects of language have been integrated into a single utterance. In whatever context we talk, we need to keep in mind our audience and the effect that our speech might have on them. While we are talking, others are listening. Therefore we need to be sensitive towards our listeners.
Communication

Natural learning model (Littlewoods, 1992: 5)

The basic conditions of natural learning are exposure to the language, interaction with other people and the need to communicate.

- Internal mechanism processes the language input in order to find regularities and build up a mental representation of the language.
- This representation constitutes an internal grammar which continues to develop as the learner experiences more language.
- The internal grammar which the learner has constructed at any particular time enables him or her to take part in communication.
4.4.2 Teaching Methods

Speaking skill can be adapted by two ways

Consciously – Through instructions in the classroom, based on the skill learning model.

Sub consciously – By engaging communication outside the classroom.

(Adapted from Littlewoods, 1992: 65)

Speaking is possible when we internalize the language system. It characterizes the goal of all language learning activities since they all contribute towards the learner’s gradual internalization of the second language system so that it can be developed for the purposes of communication.
4.4.3 Material for Speaking Skill

Communication in the classroom is imbibed in meaning-focused activity. This requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. Out of interaction, learners will learn how to communicate verbally and nonverbally as their language store and language skills develop. Consequently,
the give-and-take exchange of message will enable them to create discourse that conveys their intention in real-life communication.

Gradually through information gap-activities and opinion–gap activities, the learners can convey new information to one another for a communicative purpose.

We can involve our students in communication only when they know

- Content of communication
- Reason for communication
- Result of communication
- Participants in communication
- Means for communication

The ability to get along with people in society may co-relate somewhat with how well a person can engage in brief, casual conversation with others or in an exchange of pleasantries. Talk of weather, rush-hour traffic, vacations, sports-events and so on may seem ‘meaningless’ but such talks function to creates a sense of social communion among peers and other people. So in initial stage teacher should develop in his/her learners such skills in short, interactional exchange in which they are required to make only one or two utterances at a time. For example:

1. A:    I love to see movie.
2. B:    Me, too.
3. A:    Friend, will you pass me this newspaper.

As learners get more experiences, they will be able to use some of the simple exchanges and know how to open conversations.

A possible way of stimulating learners to talk might be to provide them with extensive exposure to authentic language through audio-visual stimuli and with opportunities to use the language. Likewise, teachers should integrate strategy instruction into interactive activities, providing a wealth of information about communicative strategies to raise learners’ awareness about their own learning style so that they can tailor their strategies to the requirement of learning tasks.
“In designing activities, teachers should consider all the skills conjointly as they interact with each other in natural behaviour, for in real life as in the classroom, most tasks of any complexity involve more than one macro skill” (Nunan, 1989).

Effective interactive activities should be manipulative, meaningful and communicative, involving learners in using English for a variety of communicative purposes. Specifically, they should be based on authentic or naturalistic source materials; enable learners to manipulate and practice specific features of language; allow learners to rehearse in class those communicative skills they need in the real world; and activate psycholinguistic processes of learning.

Based on these criteria, the following activities appear to be particularly relevant to eliciting spoken-language production. They provide learners with opportunities to learn from auditory and visual experience, which enable them to develop flexibility in their learning style and also to demonstrate the optimal use of different learning strategies and behaviors for different tasks

- **Aural activities**- With careful selection and preparation, aural material such as news reports on the radio will be fine-tuned to a level accessible to particular groups of learners. These materials can be used in some productive activities as background or as input for interaction. In practice, students are directed to listen to taped dialogues or short passages and forwards to act them out in different ways.

- **Visual activities**- Because of the lack of opportunities in foreign language settings to interact with native speakers, the need for exposure of many kinds of scenes, situations, and accents are particularly critical. This need can be met by audio-visual materials such as appropriate films, videotapes, and soap operas. While watching, students can observe what levels of formality are appropriate or inappropriate on given occasion. Similarly, they can notice the non-verbal behaviour and types of exclamation and fill-in expression that are used. Also, they can pay attention to how people initiate and sustain a conversational exchange and how they terminate an interactive episode. Subsequent practice of dialogues, role-playing, and dramatizations will lead to deeper learning.
Visual stimuli can be utilized in several ways as starter material for inaction. Short pieces of films can be used to give “eyewitness” accounts. An anecdote from a movie can be used to elicit opinion-expressing activity. Likewise, non-verbal videos can be played to have students describe what they have viewed. While watching, students can focus on the content and imitate the “character’s” body language. In this way students will be placed in a variety of experiences with accompanying language. Gradually, they will assimilate the verbal and non-verbal message and communicate naturally.

Material-Aids: Oral activities. Appropriate reading materials facilitated by the teacher and structured with comprehension questions can lead to creative production in speech.

- Storytelling can be prompted with cartoon strips and sequence of pictures;
- Oral report or summaries can be produced from articles in newspapers or from well-designed textbooks;
- Hotel brochures can be used for making reservation;
- Menus can be used for making purchases in the super-market or for ordering in a restaurant.

In fact, language input for oral activities can be derived from a wide range of sources that forms the basis for the communicative tasks of one sort or another, which will help learners deal with real situations which they are likely to encounter in future.

By and large, using audio-visual stimuli brings sight, hearing, and kinesthetic participation into interplay, which gets students across the gulf of imagination into the “real experience” in the first place. Meanwhile, the task-oriented activities give students a purpose to talk. Ideally, the flexibility and adaptability of these activities are essential if the communicative needs of learners are to be met. With the limited time available in class, it is necessary to follow open language experience with more intensive structured situations, dialogues, and role-playing activities. This will give students both chance and the confidence actually to use the language.

4.5 Developing Writing Skill

There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in
translating these ideas into readable text. Writing requires the co-ordination of content, language meaning and style. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skill of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if their language proficiency is weak. Cohesion (structural) and coherence (meaning) are two factors necessary to make any piece of writing effective. At the early stages of writing, learners can write in imitation of a model text. Later learners should develop their own pieces of writing. A proficient writer needs to know-subject matter, appropriate language, mechanics of writing, a rich stock of words, conventions of writing, organizational skills, thinking skills, writing purposes, values: global or national and an in-depth understanding of writing process.

4.5.1 Input Processing

1. Plan organizes and presents ideas coherently by introducing, developing and concluding a topic.
2. Edit, check and revise written work.
3. Expand notes into a piece of writing.
4. Express ideas in clear and grammatically correct style.
5. Write in a style appropriate for communicative purpose.

A writing task must be related to the daily activities of the learners’ so that we can prepare our learners to handle situation outside the classroom. This can be followed by learners’ themselves getting an advertisement and then exchanging among other classmates and then attempting to solve it. In this way we are taking the language outside the classroom and adapting our learners’ to get used to it. The self expression and the creativity, both oral and written must be taught to the learners. Writing is quite different from speaking. Speaking is spontaneous in most cases where as writing always carries with it the notion of correctness of grammar use, of appropriacy, of expression and of comprehension on the readers’ part.

The process of writing involves developing ideas, organizing ideas and critical reviewing and revising writing.
4.5.2 Types of writing

Just as students learn to control different oral registers, they must also be able to write in different ways for different purposes. Writing research has shown that students need to be exposed to and have practice with various genres in addition to narrative writing. Simply allowing students to write a lot will not necessarily provide sufficient practice in the type of writing valued for academic learning. For the second language learner, many writing conventions will remain a mystery unless teachers are able to bring various form of writing and the pattern of language use to conscious awareness. By providing students with the language to talk about texts, they can better understand how to make a piece of writing more effective and appropriate to the communicative purpose. Students should know different types of writing.

- Descriptive ------of objects, peoples, events etc.
- Narrative---------- sequencing of events.
- Expository---------giving an expose of a subject with definition, classification, examples etc.
- Argumentative------taking a point of view and supporting it.
- Reflective--------looking back on issues, events, activities and seeing how peoples’ opinions change.
- Persuasive-------getting readers to change their views.
- Interpretative-----giving the writer’s perspective on an issue.

4.5.3 Teaching Methods of Writing Skill-

- Guided-Writing----It is really a kind of writing our learners have to be involved within school and college unless they are very good and have mastered the craft of writing.
- Developing Content---We can encourage students to use their sense of sights-hearing, smelling and feeling in order to arrive at accurate and authentic description of objects to be followed by people, events, issues etc.
- The How of Writing---When we talk of the process of writing, as the expression of ideas in a specific language, we are talking of how of writing also. This can be seen as instructions given regarding cohesion, coherence, function of language
used for, writing for specific purpose, style of writing, tone of writing, addressing
the audience so on.

- Revise the written work-----It has been suggested that the peer correction can be
done collaboratively and in group. This reduces students’ anxiety on individual
performance and increase the focus on looking at what is inadequate and
incoherent more objectively. This also gives the training to students to listen to
their ‘critical selves’

- Self-editing - No matter how interesting or original a student’s ideas are, an excess
of sentence and discourse level errors may distract and frustrate instructors and
other readers because this may lead to harsh evaluation of the student’s overall
writing ability. Second language teachers, in addition to focus on students’ ideas,
need to help students develop and improve their editing skill. Editing refers to
finding and correcting grammatical, lexical, and mechanical error before
submitting a final writing product.

To sum up the development of receptive and productive is very essential in second
language teaching. All skills are interlinked and can’t be developed in isolation. So a
second language teacher should develop such tasks in the classroom that all skills will
develop equally. All skills have sub-skills. A good knowledge of these sub-skills is
equally important for a language teacher. Only than the real language learning is
possible.

******************************************************************************