The Guidelines of English Language Teaching for Thai Teachers
แนวทางการสอนภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับครูไทย

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Abstract

English teaching in Thailand is increasingly important especially when the country is entering the ASEAN Community (AC). English has been chosen as the medium for communicating among countries in AC. That is why learning and teaching English in Thailand should enable our students to use the language effectively both at work and in daily life, as well as in higher education. The objectives of the article are to present guidelines of language learning processes and suitable concepts as well as to present essential roles in language learning and teaching for Thai teachers to enrich teachers' effective classroom instruction for Thai learners appropriately.

Keywords: language learning and teaching, language learning for Thai teachers, English teaching

บทคัดย่อ

การจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทยมีความสำคัญอย่างยิ่งโดยเฉพาะเมื่อประเทศก้าวเข้าสู่ประชาคมอาเซียน ทั้งนี้เพราะภาษาอังกฤษได้รับเลือกเป็นภาษากลางในการสื่อสารกันระหว่างประชาคมอาเซียน ดังนั้นการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษของไทยจะต้องมุ่งส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนสามารถสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ เพื่อให้ผู้เรียนสามารถนำความรู้ทางภาษาที่มีไปใช้ในการประกอบวิชาชีพ การดำรงชีวิต และการศึกษาต่อในขั้นสูงที่ขึ้นได้ เพื่อความเข้าใจบทนำของกระบวนการจัดการเรียนรู้ภาษาที่เหมาะสมและมีประสิทธิภาพ บทความนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อนำเสนอแนวทางการสอนภาษาอังกฤษตามกระบวนการรู้ภาษาและแนวการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ อีกทั้งเพื่อนำเสนอบทบาทของครูไทยในการจัดการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในชั้นเรียนเพื่อเพิ่มพูนประสิทธิภาพการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษให้เหมาะสมสำหรับนักเรียนไทยมากยิ่งขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: การเรียนการสอนภาษา, การสอนภาษาอังกฤษสำหรับครูไทย, การสอนภาษาอังกฤษ

1. Introduction

What is language? The definition of "language" becomes the famous topic for all time. It can be defined as the purposive aid for people that help them to communicate to others. Language is with us everywhere either speeches or words since we need to communicate all time. We can say that "language" plays an important role as the human medium to share or exchange ideas and information. We use language to explain or describe situations and events about things in lives and to discuss or even to argue (Lynch, 2001:3). It is the most important device to talk or teach young children in the society. The examples of different purposes of language use are as follows:

> Introducing – "*I would like you to meet Mathew; he is our new classmate.*"
>
> Giving information – "*We are going to have a reset soon.*"
>
> Expressing Feeling – "*I am very glad to see you again here.*"
>
> Requesting – "*Please come again.*"
>
> Offering help – "*What can I do for you, sir?*"
>
> Instructing – "*Don't touch the stove! It's hot.*"

The examples above show us various functions of language we use to communicate. They are called verbal language. It refers to the language consisted of words, which can be seen both in the spoken or written forms. However the language can be shown in other forms like signs, symbols and illustration. They are non-verbal communication.

2. Verbal communication

We can say that people use the verbal language or verbal communication all the time. When we write a word, the word is made up of letters and when we speak, our speech is made up of sound. (Watkins, 2008: 359) Since the verbal language is expressed by letters and words, the pronunciation of words or letters are also important for the spoken language and it affects the written language as well. The ability of pronunciation refers to intonation, stress and accent. These things become the precise factors of language and communication. It sometimes turns to problems if the speaker is unable to pronounce the word clearly, the communication might be broken down. Look at the examples below:

> A: "*What would you like to order?*"
>
> B: "*I want a plate of lice with curly.*"
>
> A: "*Excuse me, madam. Do you mean "rice with curry?*"

In this example, the word "lice" should be substituted by "rice" and "curly" refers to "curry". Moreover, spelling mistake is also an obstacle that causes poor pronunciation and it may cause communication break, for example "*I hap some money in my pocket.*" The word "hap" should change to be "have". Hence it is advised that we speak with clear pronunciation and correct spelling so that we can communicate to others instantly.

Additionally, when we put words together, we have a sentence. Therefore, it is important that we have enough knowledge of grammar to make up the correct sentence. One example is the way to rearrange a sentence for active and passive voice. We can say, "Erik feeds the hungry dog." But we can't say, "The hungry dog feeds Erik." In this case, we should say, "The dog is fed by Erik." This shows the vast of grammar rules. There are also many other rules we need to learn before making sentences. Creating verbal language is sometimes complicated especially for people who are learning English as a second or foreign language.

The non native learners of English are expected to comprehend lots of language structures so that they can speak or write English correctly. However, the way they learn the language has become a massive topic discussing for ages about the most suitable theory or methods for instructing. By the way, the results are various; this is because each student is unique so there isn't the most perfect methodology for every classroom. The teacher had better learn how to adopt the suitable learning pedagogy for his or her class. We can say that the best way of teaching is the greatest way of adaptation.

While many learners are busy studying the language rules, when they really have to communicate, they have sometimes found that there is the other way of talking that is also quick and effective. They can produce it right after they see the samples.

3. Non-verbal communication

Although we always use words and speeches in verbal communication, in some situations, non-verbal language is more convenient and quicker to use. Think about the situations below how you can communicate without any words or sound.

"Hello"   "I don't know."   "Come here."

The examples above show you that we all know and use this type of communication all the time. The other example is when a policeman wants to stop the car; he will put his hand out. The moment, the policeman putting his hand out, is called the non-verbal communication. We use this way of communication all the time variously based on situations. Another example is at the airport, when someone wants to go to the restroom, he or she will look for signs and notices instead of asking other people the directions. This is because at the airport, people are from different countries and they speak different languages so using non-verbal language like signs, and symbols helps them to communicate more conveniently than verbal communication. We can say that "gesture", "sign" and "symbol" are used as a national or international language, since despite of no letters or sound, people know what the other person wants to communicate.

According to the examples above, we can conclude that when we use the body movement to express our need like glancing, blinking eyes and whistling, known as a gesture. On the other hand, a message, given by an illustration or a picture, is called a sign or symbol. And both of them are non-verbal communication and we use it to communicate without words or speech. Nonverbal communication is taught differently in each culture. The young children usually learn gestures or body language from adults like families or schools. This conveys culture values or the way children should learn how to participate in society appropriately. We can say that it is the processes of encoding and decoding. When we do some facial expressions or gestures, this involves encoding while the decoding is the way people understand and react us. So decoding or trying to comprehend the encoding needs experience because it risks of being misunderstood. For teaching a language is how to encourage learners to produce the language correctly and effectively. This refers to the ability of communication in other language. What is communicative ability?

4. Communicative ability

One of the characteristics features language ability the combination of functional and structural aspects of language. This means that communicative ability can be defined as the competence of how to use the language in the suitable situation and correct grammatical rules. It is structural and functional views of language. (William, 1995:1)

When we talk about the structural view or aspect, it is all about the grammatical systems in English language. It is a base of producing the language. Students are supposed to know at least the basic

knowledge of words like a noun. For example, the way to turn a singular noun into a plural one is usually the first lesson for all nonnative learners. They should be able to tell the difference between "ox" and "oxen". When learning this language rules, they should be introduced both the singular and plural forms as variously as they learn. Since the principle of plural nouns are varied. The base noun is important to be stated, and then we change it into plural. While learning this, students should also recognize the meaning of the words. The ability of producing language by using the correct grammar rules is called linguistic competence. (William: 1995:1) It is involved both the knowledge of structures and meaning on that language. We can conclude that if students have well enough structural view of language learning so they should already have the linguistic competence.

Is only the structural view enough for the effective communication? Look at the example below.

A: Excuse me, sir. Do you have a time?
B: Oh, not really. Why?
A: I mean, what is the time by your watch?
B: Oh, yes. It's quarter to four.

Seeing that the person B does not know the actual purpose of the person B so he replies incorrectly but when the question has been changed, he can answer it. This example shows us the way functional view works in language. Most of sufficient communication happens since the listeners do not have enough knowledge of functional ability in that language. Another example is when a boy showed up at his class and his math teacher asked him the questions, "Why are you late again, Benjamin?" The boy shouldn't suddenly answer but he should think carefully before making any replies. The moment he is thinking about what he should say is the way functional view works in his brain. When he says "I'm sorry, Mr. Clinton. I'll not do this, again". This means both the teacher and student understand each other. But what will happen if the little boy made no reactions.

Mr. Clinton: Why are you late again, Benjamin?
Benjamin: (no response from the boy.)
Mr. Clinton: Boy, you are late again. What happened to you this morning?
Benjamin: (no action.)
Mr. Clinton: Ok, boy. Did you get up late today?
Benjamin: Yes, teacher.

The example above shows us that the boy couldn't understand the teacher at first. He didn't know how to excuse himself. Then the teacher changed the question twice so he could response him. The little boy is uncooperative because he is lack of functional meaning to communicate where as Mr. Clinton is able to change his questions to help the little boy to comprehend. The functional meaning is the way we try to communicate to our meaning to others. It is the ability to try to use the language and success with it. Hence we can see that linguistic competence has an effect on communicative competence and all of these are concerned as communicative ability. The main purpose of using the language requires both decoding and encoding words and symbols. The effective way of teaching languages will actually occur when teachers encourage students to use the language as much as they can. How do they do so? There are some samples of teacher's roles to fulfill students' language experiences.

According to the information above, Edge (1999: 11) suggested about what good teachers should concern for improving their teaching. The first thing is "*organization*" in the classroom. This refers to the way teachers prepare the class materials as most convenient as it should be for students to study and practice while studying. When the learners are facilitated, they will be more ready to learn. The second one is called "*motivation*". Every student will be more interested to learn and try new things after they have been motivated since the beginning of the lesson. And the third is "*information*" instructed in the class. This should be up to date and various for all students relating to students' lives as much as possible. Moreover, the third essential thing is a "*model*" that can show them how to use the language in the classroom. The fourth is to "reflect" students' work or the way they learn by *teachers' feedback, and guidance*. It is important to improve students' learning and practicing by reflecting. They should know how well they do and how much they are close to the lessons' target or objectives (Edge, 1999: 11). Students' problems should be introduced to them positively. This also means that teachers should be able to encourage students in the classroom continuously. And the last thing is a teacher's job to "*evaluate*" students' learning in order to investigate their weakness not to discourage them.

From the idea above, we can see that teachers play an important role in teaching. They should be able to facilitate students like preparing materials to practice as well as being good modeling. Moreover, they also need to know how to encourage and motivate them because good learning atmosphere reflects students' positive learning attitude and they feel comfortable to do more practice in the class. The teachers' ability of correction and giving corrective feedback helps learners to learn better. As the teacher's role in language learning has changed to be not only for instructing but facilitating good learning atmosphere so that they can learn through appropriate language communicative activities. The new style of language learning has been done through various creative types of language activities.

5. How is language communicative activity organized?

Littelwood (1995:19) suggested that there are several roles of teacher to concern when doing the communicative activity in language classroom. They can be summarized as the following topics;

1. The teacher should know how to prepare the materials or lesson that students can cope with a communicative situation.

2. The teacher should encourage students to be an independence learner by pre-communicative or communicative activities.

3. The teacher should have enough psychology to offer good advice to monitors students' straight and weakness positively.

4. The teacher is supposed to correct students' mistakes at once so that they don't repeat that problem in the future.

5. The teacher should be a co-communicator who guides students to comprehend and complete their work appropriately.

To do as the above points, the students aren't trained as a machine but they are supposed to learn by doing and activities as the teacher planned. From the past, learners would be instructed before doing something, at present, the lesson may be a part of language learning to solve a problem and guiding students to be able to learn both inside and outside the classroom so they can be an independent learner.

As a good language organizer, each teacher is supposed to know their subjects and students well so that it is easier to plan or prepare appropriate teaching goals, document and materials for practicing for each class. To accomplish this goal, a teacher should know what to do in the classroom.

In general, when we imagine a picture of a teacher teaching in classroom, we usually think of a teacher standing in the front of the class and holding a piece of chalk and speaking all the time while students are listening and noting only. This way of teaching does not allow learners to do actual practice. But learning English is an automatically process so when students are able to use the correct grammar rule or tell meaning of a word, they can't actually tell how they know the answers. This is because the language learning acquisition happens when the students actually do things or imitate a model as much as possible. Therefore, it is the teacher's duty to facilitate students to practice rather than to memorize.

6. What should teachers do in the classroom?

Watkins (2005:13-14) suggested about what teachers should do in the classroom is dealing with how a teacher prepare the lesson for the communicative language leaning.

1. Make a clear instruction.
2. Provide an opportunity for oral communication in the class.
3. Listen and answer the students' questions as much as possible.
4. Mime a series of actions to students rather than telling the answer at once.
5. Use only the target language in the class.
6. Encourage students to speak English not any other languages.
7. Help students when they face grammar problems.
8. Tell students what seem to be their problems and how to cove with them.
9. Overlook students' work and set a test after learning to see how much they learn.
10. Check students' class attendance.

As the above mentioned, a teacher should remind themselves about the way that teach or instruct students in the class and the opportunity that allows students to practice. While teaching, the teacher should be also a good listener and answer students' questions when they need helps. A teacher, who uses only the target language all the time or encourages students to produce the target language, leads to a better result in teaching. These can be seen through the way of a pair or group work communicative activities. These can be summarized as roles of teachers as a participant (Watkins, 2005: 13-14);

1. a role of prompter
2. a role of provider of input
3. a role of listener

A role of prompter refers to a facilitator who prepares a well-organized lesson for students. To make an appropriate praise and responding when necessary is also essential and this is known as a teacher's role of a provider of input. And a good listener is that last role of teachers that doesn't mean to listen for checking if their language is right or wrong but this is the opportunity of learning interaction between teachers and students. It is a chance to reflect teaching as well as learners' outcome. The more teachers listen, the better we understand students.

7. Conclusion

The variety of ideas in this article is emphasized on encouraging language learning. Firstly, it is about the definition of "language", or the device of moving ideas from one to the other. It is the medium that we use to communicate and exchange information or idea. Secondly, the purposes of using language, there are several ways we can use it to express ourselves like verbal and non-verbal communication. While verbal communication needs words or sounds, non-verbal communication does not since it deals only with gestures, notices, signs and symbols. However the way people learn how to express this way of language communication is also different and various according to the culture where the language is produced. How well we translate or reply both verbal and non verbal language is also interesting since this might cause people's misunderstanding. We need communicative skills for the correct interpretation. Thirdly, the examples presented on this article are the knowledge of functional meaning and communicative competence. When we say something and the listeners do not understand, we need to change our sentences so that the communication works. This is the way we use functional meaning ability. When we try to understand linguistic structures and vocabulary, it is called communicative competence. But only one competence is not enough for language communication. Fourthly, we need sociolinguistic competence to recall ideas what the other person's trying to say. We can see that, language learning depends on several functions and competence. Additionally the article also presents teachers' roles of English teaching to enrich these language skills. First of all teachers need to know their students' differences and demands before getting start the lesson. The questions of what is the best way of teaching come after the factors of language learning. This means that the basic roles of good teachers are classroom organization, learners' motivation and encouragement as well as teachers' reflection on students' work or evaluation. It seems like easy, but it does not since students' attitude is also important. All of these should be done positively and with psychological concerns if not it will discourage students' leaning and the language. So when teaching, we should realize the roles of good teachers as prompter, provider of input and effective listeners.

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