

Approaches of Teaching English -

(1) Structural Approach

(2) Situational Approach

(1) Structural Approach on Audio Lingual method

Due to the efforts and researches done by British Council in Institute of Education, University of London and many others, this method came into existence. It is also known as 'New Approach' or 'Aural-Oral Approach' or 'Aural Linguistic Approach'.

This Aural-Oral Approach means, "teaching a language by giving opportunities to the students to hear and speak the language." For this purpose, structures are carefully selected and suitably graded. These structures enable the learners to use the language for expression of his reaction in a given situation, ex. stating facts, answering questions, responding, greeting and so on. This 'Structural Approach' is an approach and not a method. In an approach the stress is laid on the content and not on the procedure.

C.S. Bhandani and others say → "It is not a method; it is an approach."

Any method can be used with it."

According to Brewington - "Structural Approach is a scientific study of the fundamental structures of the English language, their analysis and logical arrangement."

What is a structure?

English has its own structure. It has been found ^{that} 100 sentences of English have about 600 structural words. Consider the following sentences -

(a) Mohan is there.

(b) Is Mohan there?

(c) There Mohan is!

In the above three sentences, the same vocabulary items are used; Mohan, is and there. But all ^{the} three sentences give different meanings due to different arrangements of these three vocabulary items. Thus structures are tools of a language.

Types of structure -

(a) Sentences Patterns - A sentence pattern is a model for sentence, which will be of the same shape and construction although made up of different words. eg. he reads a story. shut the window. 'It is 5 o'clock.' Taking this model sentence, we can make many sentences like - It is 6 o'clock. ~~It is 12 o'clock.~~
It is 12 o'clock. ~~etc.~~ etc.

(b) Phrase Patterns - Phrase is a group of word or group of words which express an idea without its being a sentence or clause. ex. - under the table, on the table, into the basket etc.

(c) Formulas - Formulas are those words which are used on certain occasion. eg. - How are you? Good Morning; Thank you; God Bless you; etc.

(d) Idioms - Idioms ~~like~~ like 'born with a silver spoon', 'to err is human' come in this category. These should be taught as a whole.

Selection of structures - These structures⁽³⁾ should be selected with which have the following characteristics → (a) useful
(b) simple
(c) teachable

Gradation of structures - After the selection of structures, they should be put in a suitable order. This is called gradation. It can be done in the following manner -

- First - structures which identify things and persons.
- Second - structures which locate them in space.
- Third - structures which fix them in time.

Content words - In structural approach, besides structures, content words are also taught because without content words, teaching will be dull and uninspiring. ex. - when the teacher is teaching, "an apple is on the table", and he shows an apple put on the table. "Apple" will be the content word. The selection of content words should be also dependent on usefulness, simplicity, teachability of content words.

Procedure of Teaching -

- First step - Presentation of item in appropriate situation by the teacher.
- Second step - Oral Drill by the students of those situations created in first step.
- Third step - Presentation of the item in some new situations.
- Fourth step - Oral drill by the students of those situations which were created in the third step.
- Fifth step - overall Drill.

(4)

Principles of structural approach → F. G. French has stated the following

three principles of structural approach -

1. Importance of the child's activity rather than the activity of the teacher.
2. Importance of speech for firmly fixing a word.
3. Importance of the formation of the language habit to arrange words in suitable English sentence-pattern in order to replace the sentence-patterns of the ~~child's~~ child's mother-tongue.

Besides this some other principles should be followed -

- (1) mastery of structures
- (2) meaningful situation
- (3) use of text books
- (4) method and situation of teaching.

Aims of Structural Approach

The following are the aims of this approach according to *Menon and Patel* :

1. To lay the foundation of English by establishing thorough drill and repetition of about 275 graded structures.
2. To enable the children to attain mastery over an essential vocabulary of about 3,000 root words for active use.
3. To correlate the teaching of grammar and composition with the reading lessons.
4. To teach the four fundamental skills namely understanding, speaking, reading and writing in the order named here.
5. To lay proper emphasis on the aural-oral approach, active methods and the condemnation of formal grammar for its own sake.

Structural Syllabus—Application at Junior and Senior Levels

For teaching through this method, a structural syllabus should be formed. *Prof. S. C. Sarkar* rightly suggests, "It would certainly be useful for the English teacher to have the most essential structural items arranged in a reasonable and practicable sorted teaching sequence." A structural syllabus is a graded list of language items to be taught to each class. A text is also prescribed that goes with it. In India, many structural syllabi have been prepared in different States and institutions. Some well-known are prepared by :

- (1) Madras State,
- (2) Committee appointed by the All India Council for Secondary Education.
- (3) The English Language Teaching Institute, Allahabad.
- (4) Central Institute of English, Hyderabad.
- (5) Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh.

There should be some difference between the syllabus for the first three or four years and for higher classes. According

NCERT¹, "The syllabus for the first three or four years of English should cover the fundamental structures of the English language and specified vocabulary. For later stages, interesting supplementary readers should be provided. P. G. French has suggested the following structures to be taught during the first three years of language teaching :

- (i) Simple two-part patterns : e.g., *You eat, Hurry.*
- (ii) Simple three-part patterns : e.g., *She is singing, You are sitting.*
- (iii) Simple four part patterns : e.g., *I went to Kachnar, You came to college.*
- (iv) The interrogative forms of these patterns (beginning with a helping verb) : e.g., *Are you eating? Is she singing?*
- (v) The interrogative forms of these patterns (beginning with an asking word) : *Where have you been? How are you?*
- (vi) Patterns using 'there' and 'it' : e.g., *There are four bananas. It is a table.*
- (vii) Order Patterns: e.g., *Do your work. Sit down.*

This approach forms a sound and correct background at the early stage by drill work, reading and writing.

According to NCERT², "The syllabus in English, for last two or three years of English, depending on the duration of the course (the higher classes), need not be arranged in terms of graded structure." Essentials of elementary grammar should be introduced in the last two years of the English course. By the end of secondary level, 2,500 words should be in the active vocabulary and 500 words should be in the passive vocabulary of the pupils. But the current syllabi are rigid and demand mechanical drilling of isolated language items. There is no continuity between syllabi of lower and higher classes, as pointed out by NCERT³, "The majority of current syllabuses lack continuity. The syllabuses for the first three or four years of English are usually formed on the structural patterns but those of the later years are still traditional and bear no relation to the former."

Following are some of the qualities of a good structural syllabus :

- (1) It can be used by an average trained teacher.

1 NCERT : *The Teaching of English in India.*

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

(2) Provisions are made in it for revision of items already taught. According to NCERT¹, "Units should provide a systematic revision of earlier structures, proper presentation and practice of new structures and for preparing the ground for the structures to follow in later years."

(3) It can enable students to do compositions after learning five or six items.

(4) Text-books that go along with structural syllabus, should be interesting.

(5) "The teaching sequence of the chosen items should neither be rigid nor arbitrary", as pointed out by S. C. Sarkar.

Merits of the Approach

The following are the merits of this approach :

(i) According to Jespersen, "Language cannot be separated from sound." This approach emphasises more on speech or oral aspect of language learning.

(ii) With a well-selected and well-graded programme, this approach can be effectively adopted at all stages.

(iii) It creates appropriate environment for learning a language.

(iv) Structural approach can help in teaching prose, poetry etc. as viewed by R. K. Jain², "If we have a programme of teaching language along with literature just as we have from class IX onwards, even at the University stage where pupils offer English there too, structural approach can be of much help to the teacher."

(v) Due to much oral drilling, whatever is learnt in the class, remains stable in the minds of the students.

(vi) This approach gives ample opportunities to students to give expression to their ideas and feelings.

(vii) The principles on which this approach is based are scientific.

(viii) Besides oral work, it emphasises on reading and writing. In this way, it fulfils all the fourfold objectives of language teaching—understanding, speaking, reading and writing.

(ix) After six or seven years of language learning, students have a command over : (a) 275 basic structures and (b) 3,000 words.

1 *Ibid*.

2 R. K. Jain : *Essentials of English teaching*, Agra : Vinod Pustak Mandir, 1968, p. 176.

(x) At the time of learning structure, the child inductively learns some grammar.

(xi) In the words of *Shanti Sarup*, "The special virtue of the structural approach lies in the fact that at every stage the objectives of teaching and of learning are very clearly defined and are attainable, producing a delightful sense of mastery and confidence.

(xii) This approach establishes a system in teaching English. It systematises the work of syllabus makers, text-book writers and teachers.

(xiii) It amounts to 'economy of efforts' because the work of teacher is thoroughly stream-lined which permits a minimum of wastage.

(xiv) It makes both teachers and students active which is psychologically sound.

(xv) By using this approach, the teacher can attend a large number or almost all students of the class.

Demerits of the Approach

Some scholars make allegations against this approach on the basis of some of the demerits which this approach seems to have :

(i) Like direct method, it is most suited to lower classes.

(ii) It overlooks the linguistic habits already formed while learning the mother-tongue.

(iii) Only well-selected sentence-patterns can be taught through this approach.

(iv) Text-books prescribed in courses cannot be taught through this approach. *Trivedi* and *Gandhi* say, "This approach requires nicely planned text-books which should have a regular frequency of the language material used therein. Till such text-books are produced, the structural approach will have to be at the mercy of deficient tools."

(v) Too-much mechanical drilling is emphasised. It makes the class dull and uninteresting.

(vi) This approach is not for teaching : (a) prose, (b) poetry, (c) grammar and (d) pronunciation.

(vii) This approach is rarely successful in overcrowded classes.

(viii) Teachers trained in Translation-cum-Grammar method find it difficult to follow.

(ix) It does not tell teachers how a new item should be presented or drill should be conducted. The teacher himself has to think over.

(x) This approach demands too much material aids in order to create a real life situation.

(xi) Teacher's centre of interest becomes the material-aids and he ignores the children.

(xii) If the structural syllabus is followed strictly, it cannot be taught within time.

(xiii) Trained teachers for this approach are very few.

(xiv) It is difficult to apply this approach to every sphere of teaching and testing.

(xv) According to Prof. R. N. Ghosh, this approach over-emphasies on :

(a) oral presentation,

(b) teaching of structural items,

(c) monolingual presentation,

(d) mechanical drilling and

(e) rigid sequencing of structures resulting in the production of uninteresting reading materials.

(xvi) Prof. R. N. Ghosh further says that this approach neglects :

(a) reading of all types,

(b) vocabulary expansion,

(c) exploitation of the pupils' knowledge of the mother tongue, and

(d) possibilities of a more flexible structural grading and production of interesting reading materials.

Precautions

If the following precautions are taken, this approach can be much fruitful :

(i) The structures should be graded, arranged and illustrated on the basis of linguistic research findings.

(ii) The teacher should not play the role of a structuralist all the time. He should remain a teacher most of the time.

(iii) Other methods should also be used alongwith this approach.

(iv) Less new content words should be introduced in teaching one structure.

This approach is still in an experimental stage and different Institutes of English Teaching are trying to improve it. No doubt this approach is superior to old methods of teaching. *Randolph*