

SITUATIONAL APPROACH

This approach basically tries to teach English as the child learns his own mother-tongue. The main standpoints of mother-tongue learning are :

- (i) Every item of mother-tongue is learnt in a real situation.
- (ii) Whatever the child understands and expresses, is connected with his own life.
- (iii) The situation in which the child learns the mother-tongue, are repeated again and again.

From these points, it can be concluded that English should be taught as second or third language by forming links between new words and real situations. The problem is — How to create a real situation in the classroom. This is a practical problem, not a theoretical one. The situational approach merely tries to solve this practical problem. It, therefore, indicates how a teacher should create a real situation in the classroom.

Main Characteristics

The main characteristics of this approach are :

1. The teacher introduces new words incidently in the class.
2. Many opportunities are offered to the learners to associate the meaning of new words with corresponding situations.
3. Appropriate materials are used to create proper situations.
4. Constant repetition is stressed.
5. Several examples are given in a short period.
6. The teacher puts up a lot of questions about the created situation and answers them himself.
7. Stress is laid on revision.
8. The chain of actions of the teacher is unbroken.
9. Teacher's actions are not silent but he gives continuous statements about his actions, puts questions and answers himself.

Procedure

(1) Presenting new vocabulary and syntax, e.g., objects of the classroom can be presented as follows :

Teacher : It is a table.

I am pointing at the table.

1 Randolph Quirk : *The Teaching of English*, p. 46.

I am standing near the table.
That is a black-board.
I am pointing at the black-board.
The table is near the black-board.

(2) Presenting opportunities of recognizing affirmative, negative and interrogative forms of speech, e.g.,

Teacher : What is this ?
This is a table.
Is this a table ?
Yes, this is a table.
Am I pointing at the table ?
Yes, I am pointing to the table.
Are you pointing at the table ?
No, you are not pointing at the table.
What is that ?
That is a black-board.
Am I pointing at the black-board ?
Yes, I am pointing at the black-board.

(3) Repetition of these statements.

(4) Using imperative. The teacher now orders the student to perform some activity and he himself gives statements, e.g.,

Teacher : Suresh, stand up and go near the black-board.
Suresh is going near the black-board.
Is he going near the black-board ?
Yes, he is going near the black-board.

(5) Putting questions to the class. Now the teacher asks questions related to the statements given by him, e.g.,

Q. Is this a table ?
Q. What is that ?
Q. Where is Suresh standing ?

In the beginning, the teacher can give all the instructions in the mother-tongue but gradually he should switch over to English.

After this, other activities like writing and reading should be performed.

Precautions

According to A. S. Hornby, the following are the points a teacher should keep in mind while teaching with this approach:

(i) All new words must be presented clearly to the class in situations that make their meaning clear.

(ii) The amount of new material in each period must be limited so that the students can assimilate it easily.

(iii) The pupils must hear numerous repetitions before being called upon to produce.

(iv) When pupils are called upon to produce, they must engage themselves in the activities about which they are speaking.

(v) Action chains and long sequences are preferable to isolated actions. Action chains are sequences of activities inside the class-room to tell the meaning of new words and syntax.

(vi) There must be constant revision.

(vii) This kind of work should occupy not more than one-third of the whole period. The other two-third of the period must be devoted to pronunciation, drills, reading, spelling and writing.

(viii) The teacher must be efficient. A. S. Hornby points out, "The situational approach makes great demands upon the teacher. He must have ready invention, be quick to see where there is comprehension and where there is the need for revision. He must himself be fluent in the language which he is teaching."

Merits

- (i) This approach follows the principles of interest.
- (ii) Action-chains make the class lively.
- (iii) It also follows the principles of variety and simplicity.
- (iv) It emphasises on learning by play.
- (v) This approach gives stress on learning through hearing.
- (vi) Material aid is also used.

Demerits

- (i) Only well selected words and sentence-patterns can be taught by this approach.
- (ii) This approach suits to lower classes only.
- (iii) Due to over drilling and repetition, the class becomes monotonous and dull.
- (iv) This approach is not meant for teaching : (a) prose, (b) poetry and (c) composition.
- (v) Text-books cannot be taught by this method.
- (vi) This approach requires trained teachers.

The foregoing description clearly indicates that there is no one method or approach which can be called perfect. No one has all the indices of good method or approach mentioned previously. Everyone has some merits as well as demerits. It can be concluded that for achieving the teaching objectives, the teacher should not be rigid in the use of particular or specific methods and approaches. He should be apt in choosing an appropriate method or approach according to the subject-matter and objectives.