

Situational language teaching method



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Proper use of language is very important in communication. In learning institutions, different language teaching methods are applied. A teaching method allows educators or teachers to teach a language based on certain procedures and systematic principles. Castillo (Castillo, 1990) holds the opinion that these procedures and principles are developed when various ways on how a language can best be taught and learned are identified. According to Julian and Richard (Julian and Richard, 2004), situational language teaching method originated from the work of British applied linguists in the 1920s and 1930s.

The two well known linguists who were prominent in language teaching included A. S Hornby and Harold Palmer. The theory of teaching using this method focuses on behaviorism and puts emphasis on the processes of learning . According to Al-Mutawa and Kailani (Al-Mutawa and Kailani, 1989), teachers apply various principles when they use this method of teaching. Since speech is considered to be very critical, situational language teaching method advocates for oral use of language first followed by the written form.

John and Lindsay (John and Lindsay, 2005) state that situational language learning is promotes oral use of sentence patterns. This can be then followed by an automatic use of a language in reading, speech and writing. According to Steven et al (Steven et al, 2006), in countries where a foreign language teaching syllabus is greatly based on grammar, situational language teaching method has continued to be very popular. This is due to the support this method receives from language teachers who consider its emphasis on grammar, sentence patterns as well as oral practice important in learning.

The two major roles of a teacher in situational language teaching are to correct errors made by the learners to and set the context. According to Gilbert (Gilbert, 1995), the students on the other hand needs to imitate and memorize what is taught for effective learning. In class, learners are expected to understand that mistakes are bad and they should be avoided to counter the development of bad habits. Jack (Jack, 2001) holds the opinion that learning institutions that have adopted situational language teaching are committed to language learning that involves habit-formation.

Through cultural and linguistic context, students are able to learn the meaning of various words. Diane (Diane, 2000) asserts that teachers have a great responsibility to ensure that students learn well. As a result, teachers who apply situational language teaching method strive to see their students excel in class. Geoffrey (Geoffrey, 1993) states that in this method of teaching, speech is considered to be vital in acquisition of good communication skills.

This makes the ability of the learners to respond accurately and quickly to speech situations important. Through the structures that are presented in situations, successful teaching of English ensures that learning promotes good command of the four basic skills of the language. Teachers use grading of items of grammar whereby simple forms of English are first followed by the forms. Proper pronunciation of words is very critical in proper learning of a language. This opinion is supported by Pennington (Pennington, 1989).

Learning institutions such as primary schools where situational language teaching is applied are required to adopt a structural syllabus whereby a list

of basic sentence patterns and structures are arranged according to how they will be presented in class. While the teaching of structures is done within the sentence, the vocabulary is used when it allows sentence patterns to be taught well. The initial stages of teaching are characterized by students listening and repeating what the teacher says. In addition, the learners can also respond to commands and questions.

With time, this is replaced by active participation by the learners in class. Teachers are able to assess the use of English by students during the practice phase. Bloomer et al (Bloomer et al, 2005) states that the learners get an opportunity to apply what they have been taught in less controlled situation. Richards and Rogers (Richards and Rogers, 1986) hold the opinion that the teachers' role in this case is to look out for any structural or grammatical errors that students make. Based on the errors, a teacher is expected to improve teaching in lessons that follow. Teachers use instructional materials to improve teaching.

For instance, text books can be used to plan organized lessons around various grammatical structures. Examples of visual aids that can be used as instructional materials include pictures, stick figures, wall charts and flash cards. Therefore, presentation, practice and production are the most essential features of situational language teaching. Cyprus is a multilingual country and this makes many Cypriots plurilingual people. School children are taught foreign languages, English included. A substantial proportion of the time used for teaching focuses on language learning.

English is introduced in primary schools and for learners in year 4, English is taught for 2 periods every week. The education system offers both private and public education. Due to the great importance of foreign languages, about 14 per cent of curricular time in Gymnasium is spent on learning of foreign languages . English has been made prominent in Cyprus by the education system that considers foreign languages to be very vital for the people. Situational language teaching is recognized as one of the most effective methods of ensuring students develop correct speech habits.

As pointed out by Morley (Morley, 1991), the habits are necessary for good language learning. A good example of how about 8 -10 Cypriot children can learn English based on situational language teaching is by use of pictures and objects . Different children can present pictures and objects which can assist them to understand the meaning of the English words for the items or objects in the pictures. For example, teachers can request various students to show pictures to other students who should then attempt to identify the English words for the objects in the pictures.

The children can also be engaged in actions such as walking, jumping and reading to understand the meaning of English words taught by the teachers. For example, by putting children in a group, each student can lead out loudly while others listen. This can enable the students to pronounce English words appropriately. Conclusion Language teaching and learning is important in enabling learners to understand and use a language. Stern (Stern, 1992) holds the opinion that education systems in various countries all over the world encourage the teaching of foreign languages such as English to improve learning.

Teachers and educators have been using various methods of teaching languages. Situational language teaching is one of the methods that can be used to teach English to young learners. This method emphasizes on speech as an important aspect of learning and application of what has been learned to situations outside the classroom. In addition, the method is time-consuming and it requires teachers to be patient, competent and enthusiastic to ensure there is good language learning.