

The Oral/Aural Approach to Language Teaching

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Speech should be the basic approach to nearly all language learning. Speech comes before reading and writing. A person must first be able to put his thoughts and ideas into speech before he can put them into written symbols. Speech is of primary importance.

Therefore, it is our duty as teachers of English to put greater emphasis on oral work and to teach spoken English before written English. Spoken English should be very well taught and practised and it should lead to reading and writing. The immediate aims of the teachers of English in the primary schools are to enable the pupils to understand spoken English, to use it freely in speech, and then to read and write.

What is the best method that will not only provide abundant opportunities to practise spoken English most efficiently and thoroughly but will also lead on to mastery of reading and writing skills?

The answer to this question is the 'Oral/Aural Approach'.

The Oral Approach or the Oral/Aural Approach, as it is sometimes called, is the best method because it includes all the best features of all the oral methods by which a language is taught, practised, and drilled. It aims at complete and thorough learning of the basic materials the pupils must learn and produce orally. It not only

aims at perfect conversation in English and good English pronunciation, but it also prepares the way to the acquisition of the other skills – reading and writing.

The Main Features

The two main features of the Oral/Aural Approach to Language Learning are:

- (i) Oral presentation of the language item, and
- (ii) Maximum pupil participation

In the first part of this paper I would like to describe the Oral Presentation of two items of the New English Syllabus; and follow up with the second component of the Approach, i.e. how teaching can be organised for maximum pupil participation when the same language items are taught.

1. Oral Presentation

In the Oral/Aural Approach all new language items are presented to the learners in a meaningful way through oral repetition, demonstration, and oral imitation.

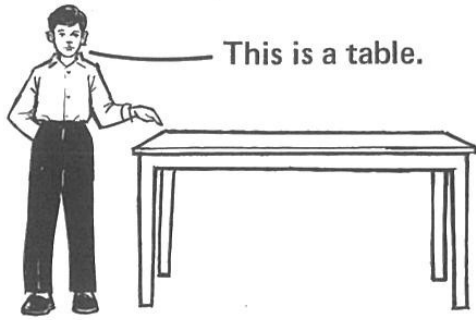
Example 1: Item 7 of the New English Syllabus:-- This/ That + Verb-to-be + the Indefinite Article + Noun.

Aim: To teach the sentence pattern "This is a"

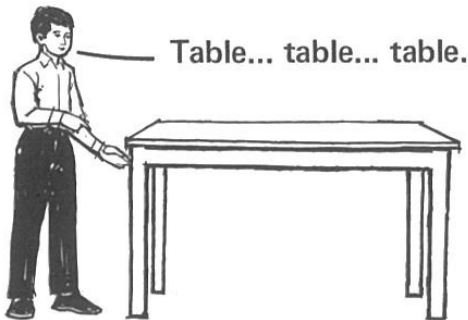
and also the names of the following things in the classroom – table, chair, picture.

Step 1: (a) Teacher (touching the table): “This is a table”.

He repeats “This is a table”. several times.

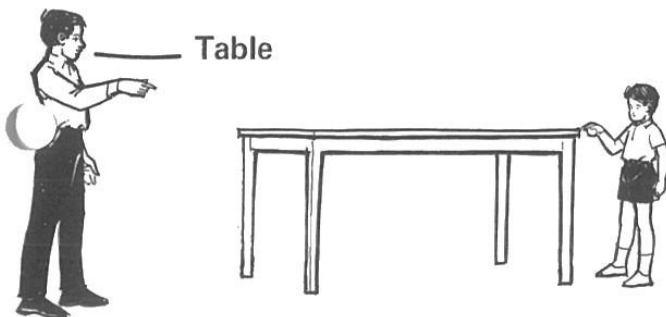


(b) Teacher repeats the word “table” several times while he touches the table each time. This is repeated several times to enable the pupils to associate the name of the object with the object itself.



In like manner the teacher introduces the words “chair” and “picture” and the sentence pattern “This is a”

(c) Teacher names the words taught and the pupils point or touch the object named.



After this step the second part of the lesson follows i.e. pupil participation.

Example 2: Item 37 of the New English Syllabus:– Present Continuous using Transitive Verbs and Object.

- Aims: (i) To teach the sentence pattern: “I’m opening/closing the door/the window/the box/the cupboard/the bag.”
 (ii) To demonstrate the meaning of the verbs “opening” and “closing”.

Note: In teaching the Present Continuous it is important that the actions illustrating the meaning of the verbs are performed while the sentences are being uttered.

Step 1: “I’m opening”

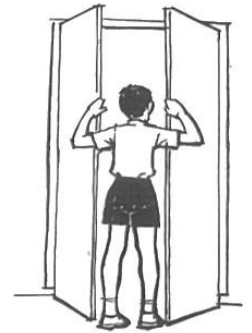
(a) Teacher: (opening the door slowly): “I’m opening the door”.



Teacher repeats this several times.

Then he repeats the structure with the other nouns in the same way with “the bag”, “the window”, “the box”, “the cupboard”

(b) Teacher gets the pupils to do the action. Teacher to pupil: “Open the cupboard”. Pupil carries out the order.



Note: At this stage the pupil only does the action and does not repeat the sentence.

In like manner the teacher calls on other pupils to act in response to his order “Open the door / the window / the bag / the box”.

Step 2: “I’m closing”

In this step the teacher repeats the procedure of presentation as in Step 1 but uses the verb “closing” instead of “opening”.

In the next part of this article the second feature of the Oral/Aural Approach – maximum pupil participation – will be discussed.