

STUDY SKILLS AND REFERENCE SKILLS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to develop four cores of communication skills, Listening Skills, Speaking Skills, Reading Skills and Writing Skills among the language learners. Each skill is important for a language learner. Listening Skills and Reading skills are considered as 'Passive Skills', whereas speaking skills and writing skills are considered as 'Active Skills'. The two important skills to develop writing skills are study skills and reference skills. A language teacher should provide opportunities for his/her students to develop their study skills and reference skills. This paper discusses the importance of these skills for the language learner.

Keywords: Skimming, Scanning, Intensive/ Extensive Reading.

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INTRODUCTION

"The word thesaurus means a treasure-house or treasure"
There are a number of instructional tools that can be called essential aids in language learning and teaching; they are important for the reference purposes, locating, sorting and retrieving information, and study. Since the aim of teaching is teaching learners how to learn, there is a need for educating the skills of self-study among the learner. Unfortunately, not much attention is paid to this aspect in the classroom.

STUDY SKILLS

Note-taking, shortening and transfer the information involving graphic and pictorial material, charts, tables, maps, etc., the library practice is locating the sources of information; make into summaries, etc., these are the 'survival-kits' or the 'tool-kits' that are necessary for successful and informed living in the competitive world of today.

REFERENCE SKILLS

While referring dictionaries, 'words' books and encyclopedia are important. **Dictionaries** are the most instructive tool for the learners' nowadays dictionaries are giving guidance for not only the pronunciation, spelling and meanings but also examples of usage with illustration, difference in the British and American spelling, collocations, exceptions and a whole information are necessary to learn English. Learners must have been taught how to use such dictionaries. For example, **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** gives picture of illustration for the 'birds'; pictures are given for sparrow, kingfisher, pigeon, woodpecker, crow, robin, etc., the names of the parts like feather, wing, bill, etc., are shown for a bird; it also gives expressions like birdie. A person who gets up early will be successful', with the 'single stone' to kill two birds, etc, Learners have been trained to seem up such dictionaries often so that their vocabulary gets extended.

Longman important Activator is a word-bank that contains all necessary information to help the learners to put their ideas into words. For example, under the entry agree, one can find all necessary way of expressing agreement with 'Help Boxes' that give the most common mistakes when learning English; it also gives situation-based essential communication and essential grammar. There is also a workbook to go with the Activator. The

Reader's Digest Reverse Dictionary helps the reader to get the words on the tip of their tongue. **Macmillan Dictionary** for advanced learners come with a CD-ROM; two similar but separate editions, one for the British mixture and another for the American mixture, are available. This dictionary is highly pioneering and user friendly.

OTHER BASIC REFERENCE BOOKS

An encyclopedia is another useful resource of information and knowledge. An encyclopedia is arranged in an alphabetical order wise by subject. On the back of each volume the letters illustrate the subject covered; for example, Volume I A-C covers all subjects, the first letters of the titles are between A and C. There are cross-references for certain subjects: e.g. 'see also' Vol IV. There is also a catalog at the end of the last volume to help the users. There are also a number of shortened versions of dictionaries and encyclopedia in the market. The thesaurus is another useful manuscript for reference purposes. A thesaurus is a communicate dictionary in which, the ideas are being given; one can find the word or words and phrase or phrases by which the idea may be most appropriately expressed. This arrangement is according to the meanings of words; which gives all synonyms in terms of meaning categories. For example, in the section on an arrangement of ideas, we find all words are related to intellect, absence of intellect (mental-power), thought, idea, curiosity, incuriosity, attention, inattention, care, neglect, etc. Under intellect, we find all related words.

LISTENING AND TAKING NOTES

While you listen to lectures, follow these useful tips for taking down better notes:

1. Get ready before the lecture starts, with a pen/pencil and a notebook.
2. Listener entire attention should be on the lecture. It is better if listener knows the lecture topic before hand so that listener can tune their self to the content of the lecture. Even if listeners don't know it before hand, listener can get it in the first few minutes of the lecture if listeners are attentive.
3. Listener should focus on the essential points in the lecture. The jokes and fun should only be enjoyed and

not taken seriously. The examples can be taken for understanding the topic. The main points should be noted down clearly.

4. Listener should be quick in taking notes and listener should follow an order while taking notes. It can be any order of listener choice but follow it consistently. It is better to number the headings, subheadings, subsections, etc., so that the sequence of argument is not lost. For example, see the following notes taken of the lecture on 'English in India'.
5. The best time for listener to take notes is when the speaker switches over from one point to another. Generally the speaker signals this switch over by using phrases such as 'the next point is' or 'let me now talk about the....', 'Let me move on to.....' 'Firstly, secondly, thirdly, etc.' this is only a suggestion and if you are able to take notes simultaneously when listener's listen to the lecture, please do it.

READING AND TAKING NOTES

A student needs to read a lot in English and so the skill of making notes is of utmost importance to him/her. The following tips will be useful:

- (i) Prepare yourself for making notes before readers start reading the books; keep a small notebook and a pen/pencil.
- (ii) Read the content of the book and get some idea of the entire book. If necessary, read the preface or introduction.
- (iii) Focusing on essential points is very important. Equally important is ignoring the non-essential one.
- (iv) Use symbols, abbreviations or any other devices which reader find useful and make notes. Whatever system reader use, use it consistently
- (v) As making notes is a leisurely activity, don't be in haste-reread the part which reader doesn't understand.

To make good notes, reader must proceed systematically; reader should also know for what purpose readers are making notes – just for the examinations, for future reference, or just for organizing reader's thoughts better and for drawing conclusions. Taking notes and making notes are applicable to all subjects but are never taught in schools and colleges. Since English is related closely to other subjects, the teacher of English must train students in these skills; these skills are a part of teaching comprehension and summarizing. There are several techniques that can be used for recording and preserving notes.

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