Teaching the four skills in Iranian pre-university schools

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Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign is one of the most important subjects in education. The main purpose of the present study was to provide some guides that can be useful for language teachers who teach English as foreign language in pre-university in Iran. Using these guides helps them to create the useful methods for teaching that are different from traditional methods. Today most Iranian teachers who teach English in pre-university level don’t pay attention to the correct pronunciation, in some cases, they only focus on teaching grammar without paying attention to the purpose of learning language in this level. So some students, after coming to the university have problems with English as a foreign language. In this study, we are going to solve these problems. Our statistical society was 200 students who studied in pre-university in Kermanshah. They were selected through Simple Random sampling. After using our new guides for teaching, ANOVA (direct analyze variance) test was used to compare these 200 students’ scores with another students that their teacher used traditional methods. As a result of this research the scores of students using the new guides were higher than another group who were taught through traditional method. It is recommended that teacher specially teachers who teach in high school and pre-university should update their methods of teaching.

Keywords: pre-university students, four skills, guides, foreign language

1. Introduction

Nowadays, teaching most English as a foreign language in Iranian pre-university school become one of the most important subjects. But, unfortunately most of the Iranian teachers, teaching in high school and pre-university school, specially older teachers, don’t pay enough attention to update their method of teaching. For example, in pre-university level most of them only focus on teaching grammar without pay attention to the pronunciation. In some cases, rarely they teach listening during the semester. Because of it, when these students come to university have serious problems with English as a foreign language. Here I try to give some guides for teaching the four skills and hope to they are helpful to improve English as a foreign language in Iranian pre-university level.

The main purpose of this paper is to provide some guidelines that it is expected to be useful for teachers who teach in pre-university level.

The hypothesis of this study is: the scores of students using the new guides were higher than another groups who taught through traditional method.

2. Methodology:

This is an applied research, and an analytical study method was employed for it. In this research the statistical society include 1340 pre-university students that according to the below formula between them 200 students was selected through Simple Random sampling.

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selected by Simple Random Method. Then by Simple Random Method these 200 students was separate to two group.

\[
n = \frac{Z^2(N \times \alpha)(\alpha)}{(d^2)(N) + (Z)^2(d^2)}
\]

The first group’s teachers was trained to use the correct methods for teaching the four skills and was asked them to use this new method in teaching. At the end of semester two groups was examined by the test that include 40 questions. After that the result was analyzed through ANOVA (direct analyze variance) test.

3. Discussion:

As we say, the main purpose of this paper is to provide some guides that is expected can be helpful to teachers who teach English as a foreign in Iranian pre-university schools. First want to say about listening, because teachers pay less attention to it. Also listening is a pre_request to speaking.

3-1-listening:

Most of the Iranian students said that listening is the most difficult skill, because in first time ,students feel pressure to understand the words, also understanding all of the words is difficult for them.

Here teachers play an important role in the classroom . At start of the class teachers should ready their students with necessary background knowledge. Then, teacher creates some questions about texts, introduce some new words , pronounce the new words correctly and also guide them to look for key words and listening for the general meaning. If students feel under pressure to understand some words in first time, we should say that it isn’t necessary to understand all words in the first time. we can repeat again. A way to make things easier to students is to select the texts that are interested for students. This is a good motivation for them. Also, the difficulty of texts should be at the level of proficiency in the class.

Finally, when the students have completed the activities, we should evaluate them and check how well they did the exercises. Rather than saying an answer is correct or no, play the CD or cassette again and allow them to listen again to confirm their answers.

We know that, the importance of listening comprehension in language learning should be now quite apparent. As we move on to look at speaking skill, always remember the ever_present relationship among all four skills and the necessity in authentic, interactive class to integrate these skills even as you focus on the specifics of one skills area.(Brown, 2001:160)

3-2-Speaking:

In speaking class firsttime teachers should introduce the topics and try to select the topics which are interested for students.

Thinking first about the topics rather than the vocabulary or grammar will tend to focus attention on ideas and meaning rather than on linguistics elements.( chastain,1988:284)

It’s clear that, the native language of students is the most important factor that effects on students’ pronunciation. Fortunately, most of the teachers who teach in Iranian pre_university level are Iranian native speaker, therefore, they are familiar with the sound system of the students’native language and they will be better able to solve the students’ problem of pronunciation.

For correcting the faulty pronunciation, at the early single word drilling phase, errors should be corrected immediately by teacher modelling the correct form and the students imitating. If students cannot imitate, then the
teacher must resort to these strategies: 1-giving linguistic description. 2- comparing the sound to one in the native language. 3- by modification of another English sound.

In conversational exchanges, errors on the particular teaching point should be corrected as well as items which interfere with comprehensibility. Other mistakes should be overlooked. For prepared and recorded speeches and presentations, the same guidelines apply as when correcting free compositions, i.e., judge content and form separately. It is important to find a middle way between correcting so much that the students become frustrated and discouraged and so little that they are at a disadvantage in confronting native speakers outside the class. (Paulston & Bruder, 1976 :115)

During speaking activities, the teachers’ responsibility is classroom management. (chastain, 1988:288)

In speaking activities, students need to accept that there is a real reason for asking a question or giving an information. I think that Role play is a good method for speaking class. teachers should encourage students to speak English without any afraid of errors.

3-3-writing:

Most of the students agree that writing is a complex process. For writing activities teachers should pay attention to the students’ level. At the early sessions teachers can encourage students to write the short and simple paragraphs about anything that they want. According to the Paulston, 1976 students need to give vent to their feeling, put across their own ideas and get a feeling of independent achievement in the new language. Then the major guideline to procedures dealing with free writing on this level should be to preserve this sense of achievement by minimizing the possibility for and emphasis on errors. teachers can help students to organize their ideas and put them on the paper.

Writers must learn how to remove redundancy ( which may not with their first language rhetorical, tradition), how to combine sentences, how to make references to other elements in a text, how to correct syntactic and lexical variety, and much more. (H .Brown, 2000:347).

Topics should be selected with care. To motivate the students, we can select the topics that students interested by them. Make sure that your techniques do not assume that your students know English rhetorical conventions. If there are some apparent contrasts between students’ native traditions and those that you are trying teach, try to help them to understand what it is, exactly, that they are accustomed to and then, by degrees, bring them to the use of acceptable English rhetoric. (H. Brown, 2000:347)

To evaluate the students’ activities you can underline their mistakes or write the correct form in above the word or in the margin.

Now, it is important to say that the greatest benefits to be derived from writing practice relate to homework assignments. written homework cause students to take the course more seriously than is the case when teachers assigns no homework or when the teachers requests that they prepare the lesson orally (chastain,1988:247)

3-4-Reading:

As we know, one of the most important aspects of teaching reading in the selection of the reading text. there are some fairly obvious considerations. The reading selection should not contain marked dialect or slang features (many pocket books are unsuitable in this aspect). The selection should have high interest value to the students and the simplest way of establishing this is by asking the students their opinions of the reading and then eliminating low interest selection from future curricula. The contact should not contrast with students’ own cultural values. (Jonathan Anderson, 1972:50-51)

In reading, the teachers should emphasize on the meaning, whatever, we know that the study of vocabulary is the most neglected area of all in language teaching, yet there is increasing evidence which show that in second language class semantic relationship is more important than the syntactic and grammatical relationship for receiving messages.
but unfortunately some of Iranian teachers pay more attention to teach syntax and grammar in state of semantic relationship.

In reading class, teachers first time can teach the reading skills to students. According to some researches I found that in pre-university level, scanning and skimming are so helpful to improve the students’ reading skills. Students by use skimming method easy can find the main idea of reading and it’s very helpful to understand the text.

According to the Chasten, 1988 in reading class, teachers should ask students to paraphrase and summarize the text. Also pay attention, the texts that you select should be readable.

For difficult text it is better, before reading teachers clarify and explain the unknown part of the readings.

Finally, according to the Paulston, 1976 a good reading class should contain a variety of activities, and to this purpose the last fifteen minutes of reading class differ from day to day in the schools.

4. Research Findings

According to ANOVA:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational regions</th>
<th>The average of the scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region1</td>
<td>18/38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region2</td>
<td>16/52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region3</td>
<td>17/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total average:</td>
<td>17/34</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational regions</th>
<th>The average of the scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region1</td>
<td>14/78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region2</td>
<td>13/95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region3</td>
<td>14/35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total average:</td>
<td>14/33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table 1, The average of the student’s score who learn English with new method is 17.34.

According to the table 1, The average of the student’s score who learn English with traditional method is 14.33.

Therefore, comparing these two tables show that the students’ average in new methods is higher than students who were trained by traditional methods.

5. Discussion and conclusion

As the result of this study we can found that teachers should be update their method of teaching. Because it is better for students by using the new method we can improve to learn English in Iranian high schools and pre-university schools. By this way, when students come to the university they don’t have serious problems with English as a foreign language.

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