

# The Use of Aids for Teaching Language Components: A Descriptive-study

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** To present briefly the basic used phases when using aids to teach language components and also to outline the possible aids that could be used to support the teaching of each language component.

**Method:** Related literature about the teaching of language components and use of aids were thoroughly consulted. On the basis of this, the study did not include any data-collection, investigated hypotheses, or whatever! It is just a descriptive study.

**Results:** The descriptive discussion of the above raised issue indicated that three phases are to be minimally considered when using aids to teach the sound system component: discrimination and recognition, repetition and/or imitation, and free-production; three phases also for grammatical structures, namely: mechanical-drills, meaningful-exercises, and communicative exercises; and three also for vocabulary: form, meaning, and contextual usage and collocations. Besides, the major possible aids for teaching each language component were outlined and followed with the use of conventional labs, radio and TV—for teaching language components. The last part introduced computer-assisted language learning CALL, its uses and the advantages of using it for teaching language components in particular and language skills in general.

**Conclusions:** The use of aids whether they were conventional or modern is inexorably required so that language teachers can achieve what could have never been achieved through non-aid use teaching methods and/or strategies.

**Keywords:** Language components, aids for teaching language components, , sound system, vocabulary, grammatical structures, computer-assisted language learning, aids-use teaching approach, non-aids-use teaching approach

## 1. Introduction

A language consists generally of both language skills and language sub-skills or components; that is, listening, reading, writing and speaking for the former, and sounds, vocabulary and structures for the latter. Again, the use of aids in their different types has become very common if not a must when teaching a language to whatever purposes (English for Specific Purposes: ESP and English for Academic Purposes: EAP) and in whatever situations (English as Second Language: ESL, English as a Foreign Language: EFL). This, however; is an account of the different types of aids which can be used for teaching each of the language

components. Thus, it should be noted that too much details about the use of each aid are not provided; more focus is paid to the aids which can be used for each language component rather than its use.

## 2. The Study

### 2.1 Using aid for teaching sound system

Basically, sound system refers to segments and supra-segmental features of language in relation to both phonetics and phonology, the former includes: vowels, consonants, sounds' distribution and sounds combinations, the latter includes: stress, pitch and juncture to form intonation pattern. Hence, it is important to know how teach such features using different aids.

There are actually three phases for using aids when teaching sounds: 1) *discrimination and recognition*: using exercises (minimal pairs like /pin/ and /bin/ to discriminate between /p/ and /b/, 2) *repetition* (imitation): students can start repeating after the teacher or the tape, then they can do it as groups and then individually (there is a model to follow or imitate), and, 3) *free-production*: in this case there is no model to follow or imitate.

Actually, different types of aids can be used for teaching sounds: realia aids can be used; students can be taught how different meanings can result from different pronunciations like /pen/ and /pin/. Moreover, action aids can be used (dramatization); facial expression (showing how a sound is articulated); animations (showing how a sound is made/done), sounds can be also demonstrated using a mirror, hand figures, written texts (visual aids). We can also make use of audio aids like tapes, sound films, or CDs, records, radio and TV (audio-visual aids). Intonation for example, can be taught with the use of drawings:

He is a student.  
Is he a student?

Stress, on the other hand can be taught using capital letters: student, STUdent, progress, progress and so on. Last but not the last, all the above mentioned aids can be used and categorized under (multimedia aids).

Lastly, it should be noted that recognizing a sound is different from discriminating it, the former means to recognize a sound when you hear it and the latter means to differentiate between sounds which are close to each other. Again, when you recognize a sound means you require the knowledge of it. It has been also mentioned that different aids can be used for teaching the sound system: starting from realia aids, visual aids (pictures, hand figures), audio aids (tapes, CDs, records, facial expressions [production of sounds], audio-visual aids (films), and ending with action aids.

### 2.2 Using aids for teaching grammatical structures

There are basically three phases for teaching grammatical structures and they are ordered according to the degree of difficulty: 1) *mechanical-drills* or (semi-mechanical drills): a) *pattern-drills*: they can be done without full understanding, i) *substitution*: (substitution can include all major parts of speech) consider the following example: (Mary is reading a book. (John), (John is reading a book.) (writing), (John is writing a book.) (Ali), ii) *double*: consider the following example: (Mary is writing a letter.) (John reading), (John is reading a letter.)

(Changing two elements [subject and object], iii) *required modification*, b) *transforming*: it includes (negative, affirmative and interrogative, passive and voice) consider the following examples: (Ahmed is a student.) (not), (Ahmed is not a student.), (Is Ahmed a student?), (Ali wrote a book.), (A book was written by Ali.), c) *expansion*: by adding modifiers [mostly adjectives and adverbs sometimes], consider the following example: (Yesterday, I read a book.) (good), (Yesterday, I read a good book.) (in history), (Yesterday, I read a good book in history.) (about Britain), (Yesterday, I read a good book in history about Britain.) (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), (Yesterday, I read a book in history about Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.), d) *combination*: by combining sentences using either conjunctions (forming compound sentences) or relatives (forming complex sentences), consider the following example: (John entered the room.), (John sat down.), (John entered the room and he sat down.), (John entered the room and sat down.), (This is a book.), (The book I bought yesterday.), (This is the book which I bought yesterday.),

The second phases: 2) *meaningful-exercises*: by definition, it means to be able to understand the text (comprehension tests), consider the following example: (Does your classmate have a pen in his hand?), (How many shirts are there in the class?),

The third phase is: 3) *communicative-exercises*: actually, both the meaningful and communicative exercises are meaningful, but the difference is that in the former information is available (what colour is this board? It is white) [the board is available], and the latter is not available (how many brothers and sisters do you have? I have four [unavailable information]). It should be noted here that one of the drawbacks of the audio-lingual approach is that learners can use the elements they learn in communicative situations which is actually the major aim of learning a language [communication]. Consider the following example for the communicative approach: a) clock face exercise: (it is shown and available) [some sort of new information]: (What time do you go to bed?).

Finally, it should be noted that pure mechanical drills unlike semi-mechanical drills, does not require thinking or understanding, but semi-mechanical drills such as vocabulary drills require thinking/drills. Consider the following example: (Ali is reading.) (he), (He is reading.), (The boy is reading.), (The boys are reading.), (Ahmed is writing a letter to his father.), and (Mary is writing a letter to her mother.). The following is a repetition of the above explanations in the form of outlines:

## **Outlines of Using Aids for Grammatical Structures Teaching:**

### **1. Mechanical drills or (semi-mechanical drills):**

- a. Pattern drills: they can be done without full understanding
  - i. Substitution: (substitution can include all major parts of speech) consider the following example:
    - Mary is reading a book. (John)
    - John is reading a book. (writing)
    - John is writing a book. (Ali)
  - ii. Double: consider the following example:
    - Mary is writing a letter. (John reading)
    - John is reading a letter. (changing two elements [subject and object])
  - iii. Required modification:

- b. **Transforming:** it includes (negative, affirmative and interrogative, passive and voice) consider the following examples:
- Ahmed is a student. (not)
  - Ahmed is not a student.
  - Is Ahmed a student?
  - Ali wrote a book.
  - A book was written by Ali.
- c. **Expansion:** by adding modifiers [mostly adjectives and adverbs sometimes], consider the following example:
- Yesterday, I read a book. (good)
  - Yesterday, I read a good book. (in history)
  - Yesterday, I read a good book in history. (about Britain)
  - Yesterday, I read a good book in history about Britain. (in the 19<sup>th</sup> century)
  - Yesterday, I read a book in history about Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- d. **Combination:** by combining sentences using either conjunctions (forming compound sentences) or relatives (forming complex sentences), consider the following example:
- John entered the room.
  - John sat down.
  - John entered the room and he sat down.
  - John entered the room and sat down.
    - This is a book.
    - The book I bought yesterday.
    - This is the book which I bought yesterday.
2. **Meaningful Exercises:** by definition, it means to be able to understand the text (comprehension tests), consider the following example:
- Does your classmate have a pen in his hand?
  - How many shirts are there in the class?
3. **Communicative exercises:** actually, both the meaningful and communicative exercises are meaningful, but the difference is that in the former information is available (what is colour is this board? It is white) [the boards is available], and the latter is not available (how many brothers and sisters do you have? I have four [unavailable information]). It should be noted here that one of the drawbacks of the audio-lingual approach is that learners can use the elements they learn in communicative situations which is actually the major aim of learning a language [communication]. Consider the following example for the communicative approach:
- **Clock face exercise:** (it is shown and available) [some sort of new information]
    - What time do you go to bed?

NOTE: pure mechanical drills unlike semi-mechanical drills, does not require thinking or understanding, but semi-mechanical drills such as vocabulary drills require thinking/drills. Consider the following example,

- ❖ Ali is reading. (he)

- ❖ He is reading.
- ❖ The boy is reading.
- ❖ The boys are reading.
- ❖ Ahmed is writing a letter to his father.
- ❖ Mary is writing a letter to her mother.

### **Possible Aids for Grammar Teaching**

1. Labs and recordings: it should be noted that labs have become popular because of the audio-lingual method
  - a. Giving a model (example):
    - Mary is writing a letter. (John)
  - b. Giving a cue
    - (John)
  - c. The process goes on and on
  - d. A space or time for thinking and preparing the answer
  - e. The answer is provide
    - John is writing a letter.
  - f. Another cue is given
  - g. Space
  - h. The answer
  
2. We need to use different visual aids: we actually need visual aids because it is required that the information is available as a characteristic of (meaningful exercises)
  - a. Students can be given pictures, consider a picture of a book, the students must be able to name this picture and produce the correct word (book)
  - b. Face-clock and hands-clock: practicing the time
  - c. Graphs and tables for comparison purposes
  - d. Pictures of persons for comparison purposes (tall, short [pictures of both])
  - e. Maps
  - f. Miming
  - g. Drawings: explaining relation between tenses, prepositions
  - h. OHP (anything where you can use pictures, it can be projected)
  - i. Data-show in case the computer is available
  
3. Games: the focus in the communicative approach is on (meaning) not (form) [as in the mechanical approach], so when learners play a game they focus on meaning since they know structures unconsciously
4. Acting: specially for verbs (action verbs in most cases)
5. Realia: specially for nouns

We combine both vocabulary and grammar and make the process more meaningful.

To conclude, there are actually different types of aids that can be used for all mechanical drills, meaningful exercises and communicative exercises. More importantly, there are actually many party games which can be used for teaching both language skills and language components. Consider, for example, (dictogloss game) where students are grouped, a passage is dictated at normal rate (normal reading), students write then they are asked to present it. The game looks simple, but the outcome is very effective; students use different skills to perform it: writing (for presentation), listening (for dictation) and speaking (for discussion).

### 2.3 Using aids for teaching vocabulary

Generally, when talking about vocabulary at least three basic issues are to be discussed and/or considered:

#### 1. Form

- a. Oral form: pronunciation of the word
- b. Graphic form: spelling of the word
- c. Morphological form (aspect): inflections and derivations
- d. Syntactic form (aspect): complex words (lexemes) like blackboard (Adjective+ Noun), speak up and get out; idioms (can be rephrased and have indirect meaning) like ring the bell (remind) or in Arabic (توفي) انتقل الى رحمة الله and go out (exit) and phrases (cannot be rephrased and have direct meaning)

#### 2. Meaning:

- a. Denotation: primary meaning
- b. Connotation: secondary meaning, shade of meaning, consider the use of the word (pig) to indicate dirtiness, because pigs eat anything
  - ✳ Usually teaching emphasizes on denotation especially for beginner and intermediate students, for advanced students connotation meaning should be also considered

#### 3. Contextual usage and collocation:

- a. Collocations: words which go together like: (take charge, pay a visit, a school of fish and etc.)
- b. Contextual usage: the proper use of a word in context

### Possible Aids for Teaching Vocabulary Form

- Posters
- Pictures
- Letters
- Games (scrabble and cross word puzzles)
- OHP
- Matching cards (prefixes and suffixes)
- Audio recordings (pronunciation and transcription)

### Possible Aids for Teaching Vocabulary Meaning

- Realia
- Models (shapes)
- Flash cards (one side the picture and another side the word [spelling])
- Composite pictures or series (a human in different ages words)
- Illustrative examples (pen)
  - ✓ I have a nice pen.
  - ✓ I write with pen.
- Using synonymous and antonymous words (intelligent: clever, smart), (stupid, foolish)
- Using translation (it should be the last resort, it makes the word restricted to only one meaning which causes problems to learners)
- Graphs, drawings and maps
- Action (swimming and miming)



- Films
- Audio visual aids ( a picture and listening to it) [form and pronunciation]
- Games: (form by asking the students to circle the odd word [verbs and a noun]), (meaning by asking the students to classify words according to their families [classifying objectives] like fruits or vegetables)

### **Possible Aids for Teaching Vocabulary Contextual Meaning and Collocations**

- Pictures: (students can work in groups)
- Matching cards: can be all found: stationeries, bookshops, computers or students themselves as participation
- Picture sets: a picture showing a group of wolves and then the to be matched with (a pack of wolves)
- Drawings: a boy drinking water, a student is asked to write a sentence
- Role playing
- Posters
- Tables

#### *2.4 Using conventional aids for teaching language components and language skills*

##### *2.4.1. Conventional labs*

As a matter of fact, conventional labs are basically considered as audio-aids and usually as visual aids depending on the available means in this or that lab. However, a number of labs can be mentioned comparatively and contrastively.

Firstly, there are what is called (listening labs), they are the simplest, each student has a headphone. One major advantage of this kind of labs is that students listen clearer and the distance effect is not there. Hence, these labs can be either connected with (wires) (wired network) or (wireless) network.

Another kind of conventional labs is the (active listening labs). Unlike the listening labs, the active listening labs provides a student with both a headphone and a mike so that a student can hear, speak and then hear his or her won speech at the same time.

Furthermore, there are what is known as (full featured labs), a student listens, records and compares what he or she has recorded to what he or she has listened to. Therefore, by definition, a full-featured lab means that each student has his or her own tape-recorder; in the first two types of labs, there is/are only one or two tape-recorders under the control of the teacher. Put it another way, dissimilar to both listening and active listening labs, a full-featured lab allows the students to work independently; there they work dependently. Actually, a sophisticated lab allows chances which are not allowed or say impossible with the use of a regular lab, for instance, consider the speed control, a feature which is only possible with using a sophisticated lab!

Have mentioned major types of labs, now it is worthy to mention how a teacher can prepare materials for such kinds of labs.

First, a teacher should ask: (Why am I recording, to test what, to teach what?). Once a teacher has decided on recording, he or she then makes sure that the source is good and it should preferably authentic rather than stimulated. More importantly, he or she makes that the room is (soundproof) and if possible the teacher needs two rooms: one for recording and another

for technical administration. Additionally, a teacher should bear in mind that (instructions) given to the students are clear and illustrated with examples. The rate of delivery should be normal, that is, it is neither slow nor fast. Once again, a teacher should take into consideration the (silence blanks) for repetition (students' response(s)) and the easiest way for doing this actually is to say the utterance and then you can decide on time in the basis of the time you have spent for saying the utterance.

Above all, a teacher should provide his or her students both (reinforcement and feedback). Consider the following example, (John is reading a letter. Mary), (Mary is reading a letter. [writing]). In case, the students do not know the correct answer, then a teacher will provide them with the correct one.

Other instructions for preparing material for labs will include to take into consideration the following points: 1) making adequate pauses if necessary, 2) making break(s) for long sentences, 3) making sure that long sentences are broken correctly and appropriately, 4) break the long sentences from the beginning, but not from the end as intonation will be affected if the sentence is broken from the end (we start from the end of the sentence to maintain the correct intonation), 5) if you segment any sentence, you should not move before saying the whole sentence fully and correctly, 6) you should provide at the beginning of the tape full information regarding the source and title of the material which will be played for the students to listen to, 7) it is always good to leave an adequate blank at both the beginning and end of the tape, for if any problem happens nothing will be lost from the recorded material, and 8) you should make a full transcript for the text you want to record (scenario) (instructions) and (what to do with the tape and how?), all these things must be transcribed.

#### *2.4.2. Using TV as an aid for language teaching*

Actually, TV can be used as a simple supplementary aid for learners to watch a certain a programme and comment on it, yet it should not be considered as a pedagogical aid, rather it is just for gaining extra information. Furthermore, a TV offers televised courses be it partial or full courses. More importantly and compared to conventional classes, classes with such aids have the following characteristics: 1) sources are combined (a teacher can combine an ideal collection of works from different chosen works, programmes, etc., [theoretically he or she chooses the best], 2) presents authentic situations, and 3) presents authentic contexts.

#### *2.4.3. Using radio as an aid for language teaching*

Just like TV programmes, radio programmes can be also used alternatively, but here a learner needs to be more competent, because with radio, there are fewer aids than with TV. In other words, in the case of watching, a learner has (people, scenes, animation and visual aids in addition to the audio aids), but when listening to radio, there is only one aid which is listening and using the ears. To conclude, the more the association are, the more the students will learn, understand, interact and tend to learn. On the other hand, the less the associations are, the less the students will learn, understand, interact and tend to learn!

### *2.5 Computer-assisted language learning CALL and some basic concepts*

With the advancement of technology mainly the appearance of computer technology, both language teaching and learning have been greatly influenced by such technologies. Simply, computers have been widely used as aids in language teaching and are becoming major aids in language teaching and learning one day after another. Thus, one can infer that, both learning and teaching are being technologized and more specifically- computerized.

#### *2.5.1. Advantages of CALL*

Computers, however can provide both language teachers and learners with advantages which cannot be provided by traditional aids. Namely, 1) individualization of teaching (instruction) and learning, 2) multimedia characteristics of computers, 3) immediate reinforcement, 4)



assessment of learning, 5) follow up a report to the learners, 6) diagnostic report on learners, 7) self learning, and 8) collecting efforts from different natural sources to form an idea syllabus. At last, two characteristics from among the above mentioned ones are purely and unique characteristics of programmed learning and teaching, namely: individualization of teaching and learning and self-learning.

With regard to the basic concepts and principles of CALL, they include programmes learning or instruction refers to breaking information or learning tasks into small bits, presenting such bits in forms, testing learners and providing them with feedback. For instance, consider the following example:

Linguistics is the science that studies human language that studies sounds and structures. Therefore, linguistics studies..... and ..... (sounds, structures). A person who studies sounds and structures of language is called a..... (linguist).

It was designed for self-learning. Now, there are two ways: 1) linear programming, and 2) branched programming. The first one is done in sequence and the second one is also done in sequence, but depends on the learner's response. Actually, individualization has come from branched programming, whereas, self learning has come from linear programming. Thus, any good software should follow branched programming.

Speech recognition refers to the ability of computers to understand sound system (recognize it) using a mike so that a learner's sound can compared to the standard sound.

Computer adaptive testing refers to the tests which are designed with the use of computer programmes in a way that allow the learner to take the test and know his/her result directly from the computer.

Authoring system refers to the software system which allows a teacher to prepare lessons for CALL, yet for language teaching authoring system LTAS.

#### *2.5.2. Some general uses of computers*

Last but not the very least, it is worth to mention some general uses of computers: 1) computers can be used alone or online (with the internet), 2) they can be used as means of instruction for teaching, 3) they can be used as means of training (practice), 4) they can be used as means of assessment (evaluation-testing), 5) they can be used as means of information (knowledge- texts), 6) they can be used as means of communication (chatting be- it speaking or typing), and finally the computers can be used as means of research (namely here for language study).

### **3. Conclusion**

The current paper aimed at presenting a descriptive scratch on the surface of the field of using language aids both conventional and technological ones in language teaching and learning. However, the paper as indicated in the introduction—restricted itself to the use of aids in teaching language components, namely, sound system, grammatical structures and vocabulary. Possible phases that could be used when using aids for teaching each of the three language components were briefly mentioned and followed by the possible aids that could be used for teaching each language component. The last part introduced the use of conventional

labs, radio, TV and computer-assisted language learning in relation to language components in particular and language teaching in general.

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