



THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGE ARTS IN ELT

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Abstract

English refers not only to the English language arts: reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking but also includes language, literature and composition, as well as process, product, content, form, and skills. Moreover, language art consists of three important concepts: language, art and thinking. Related to the teaching, there are eight components of language arts instructions: oral language, listening, reading, writing, grammar, writing conventions, language arts used across the curriculum, and creative expression. Furthermore, there are eight dimensions of thinking competencies that are amenable to the instructions: basic cognitive operations, thinking processes decision-making abilities one uses to solve problems, metacognitive thinking, creative and innovative thinking, thinking effectively in groups, abilities to think effectively when alone. As a significant means for developing students' abilities to use their minds well, language art is one of central factors in learning for all students and in all disciplines.

Keywords: language arts, teaching

INTRODUCTION

English clearly refers to the English language arts: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and, perhaps most importantly, thinking. It also includes language, literature and composition, as well as process, product, content, form, and skills. But it involves more. Language art consists of three equally important concepts: language, art and thinking.

Finocchiaro (1964) states that language is a symbol of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture to communicate or to interact. Moreover, language is defined as (1) a major means for to the next transmitting our culture to the next generation. It is an important tool in education. (2) Language is involved in our mental processing, such as thinking, problem solving and memory. (3) Language serves a necessary means of communication. For it is through language that we make sense of the world that we make the world.

Besides language, the topic discussed is about art. Art is the use of acquired skill, knowledge and imagination in producing words. Traditionally, the primary divisions in the language arts are literature and language, where language in this case refers to both linguistics, and specific languages.

Related to both terms, according to the American National Council of Teachers of English, the five strands of the Language arts are reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing (visual literacy). They are firstly; reading. It is the ability and knowledge of a language that allows comprehension by grasping the meaning of written or printed characters, words, or sentences. Reading involves a wide variety of print and non-print texts that help students gain an understanding of what is being read. Reading allows students to acquire new information, gain knowledge and understanding, and for personal fulfillment. Reading of texts that are often included in educational curriculum includes fiction, nonfiction, classic, and contemporary works. Secondly; composition, it is as the combination of distinct parts or elements to form a whole and the manner in which these elements are combined or related. The following are examples of composition in language arts: the art or act of composing a literary work, the structure or organization of literature, and a short essay, especially one written as an academic exercise (an essay is a short literary composition on a particular theme or subject, usually in prose and generally analytic, speculative, or interpretative). Furthermore, there are many types of short



essays, including, but not limited to: argumentative essay, cause and effect essay and comparative essay. Besides, compositions may also include: narrative essays, expository essays, persuasive essays and technical writing.

The third concept of language art is thinking. Thinking is the ability to organize language, and explain ideas so as to achieve, analyze, infer or resolve. Language and thought are related in a number of ways: language as a form of thought, language as a mediator of thought, and language as a tool for enhancing thought. Language operates with thinking in both known and unknown ways.

Related to the teaching, language arts instruction can be defined as the section of the educational program that assists students to use an ordered system of symbols and principles to transmit ideas and information. The teachers' philosophy of language arts instruction directs the ways in which they teach communication systems and principles to students in the classroom. The philosophy is the convictions the teachers hold regarding language learning; and the criteria they select between equally attractive instructional alternatives that compete for their attention.

Success in school and in life is determined in large part by competence in language. As a significant means for developing students' abilities to use their minds well, language art is one of central factors in learning for all students and in all disciplines.

The Theoretical Foundation

What principles determine successful language arts program? The questions are answered by proposing five principles, they are: principle 1: Language arts classes must be positive, comfortable, and challenging environments. In these classes, students learn concepts that they will value and refine throughout their lives. Principle 2: Student communication centers are places where students' needs are the central concern of curriculum. Principle 3: Speaking, listening, reading, writing and thinking are highly complex, intricate and interactive systems. Principle 4: Language arts teachers know they are an important force in their students' live. They continuously work to nurture characteristics that correlate to high students achievement. Principle 5: Students need to work on tasks they will use in the world; activities that are authentic and intrinsically motivating. Principle 6: Language arts teacher evaluate students communication differently that your teachers did when you were in school.

How to Teach Thinking and Language Arts

Aristotle believed that the depths of one's thinking governed the types of language one could use (Nagappan, 2001). The relationship between language and thinking has been a topic of debate for a very long time. However, nearly every program we have considered acknowledges the importance of language facility to effective thinking in one way or another. Students must become an adroit manipulator of language, logical forms, computer programs, or other symbol systems that, ineffect, can serve as vehicles for thought" (Gardner and Hatcher (1989:48).

We now believe that language abilities and thinking competencies shape each other. Both are of equal intensity in fostering learning. Through the power of language use, the quantity and the quality of students' thoughts can be improved. Through reading, writing, speaking, and listening, transitory thoughts can be transformed into lasting principles. This transformation occurs because single ideas enter the mind as cognitive entries, capable of bonding with collective categories of former thoughts. These categorical thoughts are then stored as a dense cognitive 3 structure called schema. Each schema is the collection of learnings, experiences, emotions, and values one has about a topic. Nerve ending of schema in the brain expands in length and breadth as one discusses, writes, reads about a concept. This depth and breadth eventually become wisdom as more and more dendrites (branches



from nerve endings) are forced to intertwine (after Rosenblatt, 1978; Smith, 1978). Thus, if teachers do not ignite students' thinking, writing, reading, speaking, and listening, they regularly limit their wisdom (after Collins, 1992)" (Block, 1993). The union of cognitive entries and schema explains how new information is acquired and combines with previously learned knowledge (after Loban, 1976). Research has also demonstrated that even kindergartners come to school with well-established schema about life and language. Our job is to refine their less accurate ideas, embellish schema that are less nurtured, and fashion new bodies of understanding to unite schemata" Block, 1993).

It is not simply a matter of having taken something in and mapping it onto our old self; our new thinking about language and learning is to relate new learning to everything else we have, in an individual way. Indeed, each aspect of learning is unique because of previous schema we possess; those schema predispose us to see the world in a certain way, and they also provide the boundaries, so to speak, of where [our] leaning will fit." (Rigg and Alien, 1989:35).

While each child or student is a unique individual, students pass through similar stages in thinking and language development, for example: most children's brains increase to about ninety percent of adult brain size by age five, about the same time as they master oral language competencies) However, each person has distinct cognitive inclinations and communication modality preferences." (Brown, 1985).

Developing the Thinking Process

Thinking development should precede language instruction (Jean Piaget, 1885-1980). Piaget professed that students learn language by translating thoughts (notions, natural inclinations, and tendencies) into words. Children learn to talk through their own initiative and curiosity. In a period of only three or four years, for example, children acquire a vocabulary of 5,000 words, internalize major grammatical rules of their spoken language. Piaget proposed that schools should use immersion and exploration as learning tools throughout the high-school years.

Vygotsky theorized that through the use of specific words and language patterns, thinking is shaped. The degree and direction of thinking will be related to the breadth of one's language development. Thus, if teachers teach language arts from this perspective, they will develop thinking simultaneously with language, teachers will assist students to translate ideas, feelings, and experiences into words as soon as a mental image appears. Here are some reasons why teachers should improve student's thinking: (1) teaching strategies that strengthened thinking competencies increase language arts achievement (Collin, 19991b). (2) Building student's cognitive and language competence is related to society. (3) Knowledge in our world increases fifteen percent per year; many jobs students will hold in the third millennium have not been invented yet (following Duffy, 1992).

Students are not performing as well on measures of higher level thinking as students in developed countries; if students are to continue to rise to international leadership positions, teachers must teach them how to think, how to use fair-minded flexibility in groups, how to create ideas cooperatively, how to encourage multiple options, and how to select among equally attractive alternatives.

Reading and language arts are the perfect vehicle for developing higher order thinking because literature - perhaps more than any other source of information - provides powerful models of problem-solving processes. It is full of characters who engage in effective and ineffective attempts at solving problems, who use incisive or fuzzy reasoning, and who rely on adequate or inadequate evidence. What is needed is to move the activities that involve higher order thinking into the core of our lessons, to move concern toward developing higher level thinking into the main stream of instruction" (Beck



1989:680-682). To help students develop these abilities, teachers need to relegate more time to instruction concerning high-quality thinking with printed and spoken material.

Teachers' language arts program can shift from instructing students about things to teaching them to think and communicate ideas. Teachers will shift from helping students gain knowledge to showing them how to form ideas.

Dimensions of Language Arts and Thinking Abilities In Instruction

There are eight components of language arts instruction: oral language, listening, reading, writing, grammar, writing conventions, language arts used across the curriculum, and creative expression.

Components of Language Arts Instruction

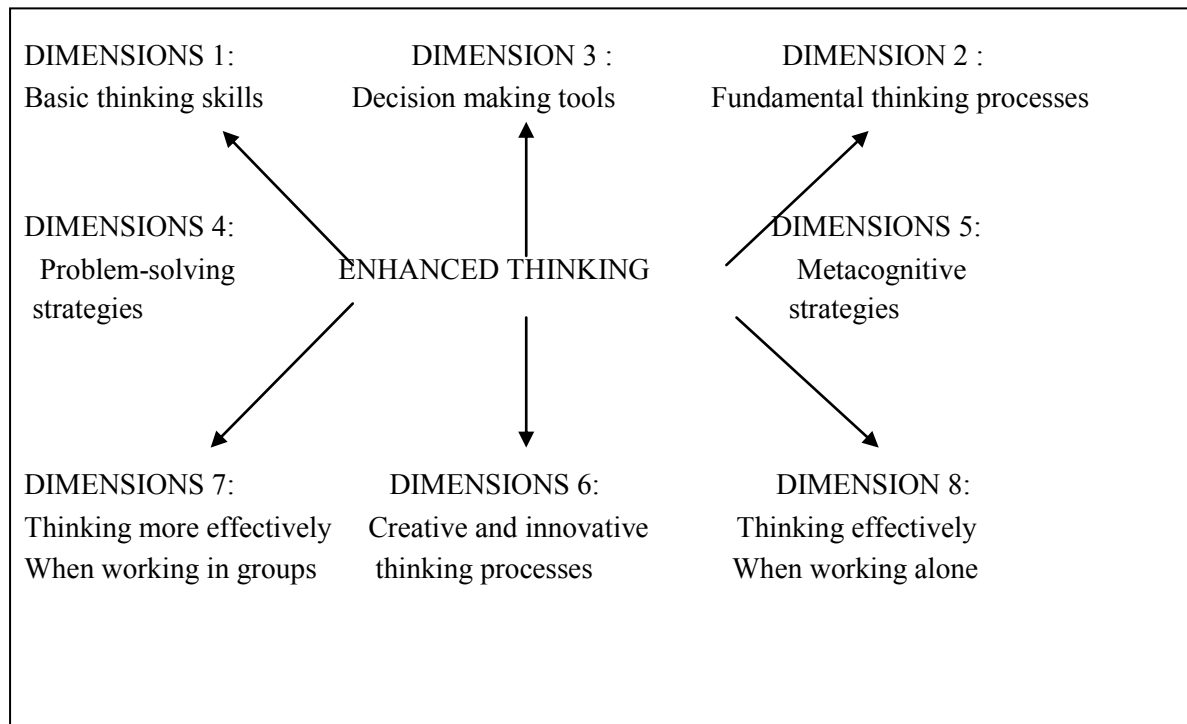
ORAL LANGUAGE	WRITING CONVENTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Informational speech b. Instrumental speech c. Regulatory speech d. Heuristic speech e. Imaginative speech f. Interactive speech g. Personal speech h. Dialectical differences i. Cultural variations j. Vocal qualities k. Oral performances l. Valuing speech as an important communication tool to inform, persuade, and entertain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invented spelling b. Traditional spelling c. Punctuation d. Capitalization e. Penmanship f. Valuing the use of writing conventions to improve communication
WRITING	LANGUAGE ARTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prewriting tools b. Drafting and composing c. Revising d. Editing e. Sharing and publishing f. Writing to different audiences using a variety of genre g. Valuing writing as an effective communication tool to inform, persuade, and entertain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Parallel scheduling b. Thematic units c. Interdisciplinary instruction d. Topic integration



READING	CREATIVE EXPRESSION
a. Decoding meaning of words b. Vocabulary and concept development c. Comprehending literal and inferential meanings d. Applying information read to life e. Using reading to create understandings f. Appreciation for reading as an important, self-selected, lifetime pursuit to receive information, opinions and enjoyment	a. Brainstorming, Brainwriting b. Creative units c. Plays d. Puppets e. Poetry f. Imagery
GRAMMAR	LISTENING
a. Sentence building b. Transformational grammar c. Traditional grammar d. Structural grammar e. Story grammar f. Oral grammatical variations g. Valuing the use of grammatical rules to improve communication	a. Receiving auditory input b. Discrimination c. Auditory messages d. Attention to spoken meanings e. Listening comprehension f. Applying spoken messages to life g. Listening critically and imaginatively h. Valuing listening as an important modality to receive information, opinions, and enjoyment

There are eight dimensions of thinking competencies that are amenable to instruction:

- Dimension 1: basic cognitive operations, including the ability to clarify ideas, examine relationships, see errors, summarize and remember.
- Dimension 2: thinking processes that call upon more than one operation, including inferencing, interpreting, thinking like an expert, and making multiple comparisons. In this dimension, concepts, literal elaborations, and connections between ideas are also developed.
- Dimension 3: decision-making abilities, where one selects from competing alternatives that may or may not be obvious to the decision maker, uses decision-making tools, and recognizes critical points when making a decision will eliminate problems before they begin.
- Dimension 4: abilities one uses to solve problems, resolve perplexing situations, assess the quality of ideas, eliminate biases, establish criteria, and judge the credibility of sources.
- Dimension 5: metacognitive thinking, involving control of self; assessing one's current knowledge relative to individual tasks; and identifying barriers that interfere with one's talents, projects, and goals.
- Dimension 6: creative and innovative thinking, including shifting frames of reference: and using models, metaphors, substitutions, humour, risk-taking; curiosity, as well as forecasting to create new thoughts and products.
- Dimension 7: thinking effectively in groups, such as understanding the nature and quality of thinking in group settings; exercising power/authority/influence appropriately; using talents interactively; and developing analytical listening abilities.
- Dimension 8: abilities to think effectively when alone, such as setting goals, establishing redirection, taking action, and eliciting self-motivation to increase productivity.



Transferring Practices into Daily Lessons

Typical Lesson Plan Format

Step 1: Introduction

To open students' minds and engage their language arts/thinking competencies

Step 2: Stating clear objectives: to opens lessons with a dual purpose of building language and thinking.

- a. Suggest a goal, method, and assessment students can use to advance then-language and thinking
- b. Suggest what they need to learn, ways they can learn it, and how they will know that they have learned it.

Step 3: Dispelling Misconceptions about the Lesson Objective: students state their strongest belief about the objective

- a. Ask students to recall what they already know about the lesson`s objective
- b. Explain problems students have had with the topic and how they overcame them.

Step 4: Study a Thinking Guide or Strategy Sheet: introduce a thinking guide

Each thinking guide is a one-page chart or diagram of a specific language arts or thinking ability.

Step 5: Examples

Share three examples of how they can use this strategy to meet the lesson`s objective. These examples are real-world situations students face or may encounter in their lives.

Step 6: Students Select their Objectives

After studying these examples, a book is read (or a real-world activity begins) and students apply the thinking guide to the characters and events in the story (or to the activity).

Step 7: Students then Complete a New, Second Objective



Ask a class as a whole, to select an objective that they complete as a large group activity, under the teacher's direction.

Step 8: Rethink, Restate, and Reformulate their New Understandings

Apply what the students have learned to their lives.

Step 9: Self-Selected Assessment

Ask students to choose how they will demonstrate what they have learned about the thinking/communication strategy.

General Strategies for the English Classroom

- a. **Warm-up activities.** As a daily warm-up, pair ELL students with English-proficient speakers and ask each pair to illustrate and explain a specific idiom, colloquialism, or slang term used in the English language or to the area of the country where you live. ELL students are often confused by such expressions. So simple, daily instruction about their meaning will improve students' overall ability to communicate.
- b. **Dictionary use.** Provide and encourage students to use translation dictionaries. Students are frustrated when the word they need eludes them. Access to a dictionary that translates from their native language to English is essential.
- c. **Visual cues.** Use visual cues as frequently as possible. When teaching vocabulary, provide pictures of the words. Add interpretive gestures during lectures or explanations, point directly to objects, or draw pictures when appropriate. Use charts, tables, graphs, and other conceptual visuals, and have students create similar visuals to summarize learning.
- d. **Key vocabulary.** Emphasize key vocabulary words by having students create flashcards then build time into instruction for students to use the flashcards. Students should alternate between recognizing the words through the definitions and by recognizing the definition through the word.
- e. **Everyday English.** Focus on useable, everyday English by having students read a local newspaper or watch a local news report that they then must summarize in three sentences or fewer.

Skill Builders for English Language arts Learners	
Grammar	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Utilize Internet resources. Use the Internet to individualize grammar instruction. If possible, begin by explaining the grammatical concept in the ELL student's native language, and then have the student practice and apply the concept using a program that provides immediate feedback.b. Teach students how to break down syntax. Model how to rephrase material using simpler sentence structure. Show students how to strip a sentence by locating the subject (who) and the verb (what). ELL students can use this skill on their own when a sentence or passage is confusing.
Literature	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Allow bilingual approaches. Incorporate bilingual activities into lessons. Ask students to complete a specific reading assignment in the translated version in order to gain context, then have them reread the chapter in English.b. Encourage prediction in the first language. Have students read the first paragraph of a chapter in their first language and then make predictions. Follow this by having them read the English version of the novel seeking words or phrases that allow them to evaluate the prediction. You might have students read portions of the English translation for one analytic purpose, such as locating words or passages that identify the setting. Once students have a firm grasp of the story,



	<p>allow them to refer to the translated version for clarification only.</p> <p>c. Instigate choral readings. Use choral and partner readings for short passages. Be certain ELL students are standing close to English-proficient students so they can detect inflections and pronunciations.</p>
Writing	<p>a. Match abilities. Writing instruction must be progressive and matched to individual abilities</p> <p>b. Build sentences. For beginning ELL writers, use individual words printed on cards and show students how to form sentences from the cards. Once the basics of sentence structure are understood, print sentences on strips of paper and ask students to arrange the sentences into paragraphs.</p> <p>c. Model standard structures. Ask the more advanced ELL writers to write in English only. Model standard academic structures of paragraph and essay writing in English.</p>

Critical Thinking Activity

The question is begun by how to scaffold instruction. Scaffolding is an instructional strategy which support students as the attempt to use a competency for the first time. Scaffolding provides the freedom but adds direction and clues so a child can begin a new task. Teachers gradually reduce your support as the student becomes more self- directed and self-sustained. Teachers scaffold instruction by: (1) modelling the entire strategy first, (2) inviting students to engage in a new task with teachers, (3) clueing specific elements in the new process a student is trying to learn as the child watches, (4) listening to and then replicating specific strategies teachers cue, such as "Which decoding strategy do teachers want to try?", (5) providing two models a student can choose between.

The thing should be reminded that language is a system of patterns and rules that enables one to communicate thoughts. The principles that govern how language is used are phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantical.

Several principles that guide successful language arts programs: (a) students must satisfy their needs, and have a valuable place in the classroom community; (b) lessons must be self-generative, integrative, and based upon research concerning language learning; (c) classroom learning experiences must be authentic with students completing processes and products that will be used in the real world; (d) processes of language and thinking are learned simultaneously as students implement their ideas and ask their questions; (e) assessment occurs through teacher evaluations, grading, measuring progress, student self- assessments, and testing; and (f) teachers must possess characteristics that hold a high correlation with student literary achievement.

CONCLUSION

English clearly refers to the English language arts: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and, perhaps most importantly, thinking. It also includes language, literature and composition, as well as process, product, content, form, and skills. But it involves more. Language art consists of three equally important concepts: language, art and thinking.

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