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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract - Teaching and learning English in India has always been a challenge, both for the teachers and the taught. Widely spoken throughout the world English took over Indian languages with the coming of the colonial rule. Gradually it became part of the curriculum in academic institutes and language of communication of the elite. The English rule faced a stiff resistance in Punjab from the native ruling power and the language faced a challenge in becoming a medium of instruction and conversation in the state. The result is that learning the language is a phobia and a complex challenge for the majority. Mushrooming of private and commercial institutes have made it all the more important to sensitize the English teachers to focus and tackle the students at all levels of growth and grooming.

The paper aims to focus on some of the key objectives by creating awareness on the current trends, issues and challenges that language teachers and learners have to face. Several obstacles such as a big number of students in the classroom, rural background, lack of motivation and confidence, illiteracy, inability to read and write, inappropriate and impractical curriculum, lack of participation and response and above all unavailability of trained and qualified teachers make the entire process of implementing quality education and skill orientation futile.

Various aspects of teaching & learning are highlighted in the paper. The importance of teaching the language in order to fulfill the ever growing demands of career enhancing to compete in various competitive exams are stressed. The focus is given that how students can put their learning into practice through effective communication skills. The importance of teaching English in order to fulfill the ever growing demands of English language is also stressed. Moreover, the common prevalent problems in the classroom are discussed and solution are provided in order to tackle such situation. We need to bridge the gap between haves and have not or 'urban' and the 'rural'.

The needs to reform teaching methodology in literature and to adopt appropriate teaching strategies are also taken up to face the global demands. Challenges before the teachers in present day scenario are also taken up.

Key words: *Quality education, skill orientation, effective communication skills, teaching methodology and strategies.*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country and the teaching of English has become a real challenge right from the beginning of the history of English language teaching till date. Though language is the backbone of civilizations and cultures across the world but still everybody in our country is lamenting on the deteriorating condition of English in schools and colleges. English as a language is insufficiently developed in most of the students of schools especially government schools in region of Punjab. The irony is even after spending 10-12 crucial years of their life learning English language from I to +2, most of the students remain tongue-tied and the same heritage of functionally illiterate learners in English is passed on to the colleges and the most affected ones are the students of BA stream. Moreover, the higher authorities always expect good results and teachers are caught in the mire as whether to complete syllabus or improve the English language of the learners.

It is astonishing to note that the English language has won 'global status' or 'International Language', and all the evidence suggests that the position of English as a global language is going to become stronger but we have to swallow this bitter pill that teaching spoken English to the Indian students has remained a major challenge to the language teachers for ages.

This paper throws light about current trends, issues and challenges that all language learner's and teachers are facing. Various obstacles regarding large number of students stuffed in small classroom, rural background, lack of confidence, lack of motivation,



barrier of hesitation, lack of reading habits, phobia in the minds of learners, inappropriate curriculum that do not fulfill the requirements of English learners, lack of feedback and lack of trained and qualified teachers are some important factors that makes the entire process of implementing quality education futile.

Moreover, the importance of teaching English in order to fulfill the ever growing demands of English language is also stressed. Current challenges before English teachers in present day ELT would also be taken up. They ways in which students can put their learning into practice in day-to-day use to fulfill their practical demands through effective communication skills apart from gaining command over English language would be also be highlighted. We need to bridge the gap between 'haves' and 'have-not' or 'urban' and the 'rural'.

This paper deals with the current or contemporary status of English teaching language at college level. In the earlier days, English was just like a library language but now that notion has been challenged today. At present the challenges before the English language teachers in India are diverse and it is necessary for them to shape up accordingly to meet the demands of the day.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. The objective of teaching English in India should not be 'producing bookworms' or 'linguistic robots'. What is important is to motivate the students by creating awareness around them regarding importance of English.
2. The other important objective is to focus on the graduation stream especially B.A streams of mixed ability. Since most of the students study English not as a subject to be 'learned' but as a subject to be 'passed; so that the future seems a long dark tunnel for such learners.
3. The other foremost objective of teaching English in India should be to make the students learn the English language (in play-way methods) in order to produce efficient communicators.
4. The barrier of hesitation or the phobia in the minds of learners about English language especially B.A students should be overcome so that real learning takes place.
5. The current curriculum of English language of graduation stream do not meet the demands and requirements of the learners as

whole teaching learning process is examination centered and degree driven.

III. TEACHER AND METHOD

The history of language teaching presents a fascinating variety of methods. Different methods may be appropriate to different contents. If we start searching for the perfect method or the ideal single solution to the problems of language learning, we are bound to fail. Teacher need to use their discretion in deciding on what method to use and when. (Richards and Rodgers)

So, a teacher should adopt eclectic and pragmatic approach because no single approach is useful in all situations. When the teacher becomes slave to the method, the whole teaching work becomes a topsy-turvy. A good teacher should keep all the method in his/her armory and use any method depending upon the learner's level, needs and classroom situation. Judicious use of any method can prove beneficial for the learners. Knowing the latest methods of language teaching is like taking a loan from a bank without knowing how, when and where to invest the loan to maximum advantage.

It is worthwhile for the teacher to keep in mind various approaches rather than a specific method. It is possible to be flexible and adaptable in the English classroom if the teacher lets the class know from the very first what his or her demands are pertaining class work, class discipline and homework and clearly states all goals and objectives. If we respect our students and plan our curriculum to suit the needs of the class, there won't be much difficulty. Most teachers do not strictly stick to one teaching method or strategy but rather combine different aspects of several strategies to create effective classroom interaction. Every method needs to be tailored to the local situations and the context of teaching. There is no single fool proof method, as it were. It is left to the sound practical common sense of the teacher to discover in what circumstances for what purpose which method is most effective.

IV. COMMON PROBLEM IN THE CLASSROOM

As an ESL (English as second language) teacher, we must learn to constantly adapt to our students needs. Many times this means dealing with a variety of problems in the classroom. A good ESL teacher must be able to recognize these common problems and work to find solution for it.

1. **Over Dependence in Teacher:** If the teacher obliges the student with correct answers every



time, it gives birth to the habit of spoon-feeding and student automatically look towards the teacher whenever in deadlock instead of trying themselves. Thus we must focus on giving positive encouragement and should not make them puppets in hands of a teacher.

2. **Students are bored, inattentive or unmotivated:-** The secret of success in the classroom is to ensure that no one feels bored or left out. It is the duty of the teacher that he should make the study of language as interesting as possible. For this, try to relate the topic with their everyday tasks and experience so that it becomes purposive and meaningful and they will enjoy eg. while giving oral or written composition never give topics like 'Polar Bear' or 'Dinosaurs' which they have never seen. Instead give them topics like Diwali, your favourite teacher etc. A child does not take interest in learning things which are altogether unrelated to his life and environment.
3. **Mum participants or introvert learners:-** As an ESL teacher, you will encounter students of different learning capabilities and language skills. Never allow few extrovert and over confident students to steal away the show. Focus on calling introvert and weaker students in the class to answer the questions so as to boost their confidence.
4. **Lack of participation or the Barrier of hesitation:-** We must encourage individual participation and concentrate on more shared learning experience. Teaching English as a second language requires patience and careful planning. We must monitor the class room & check for those who are not participating. A teacher is always the 'catalyst; in the classroom and in order to ignite such quite mouse's, try to involve them in activities like things they like to do, introducing your friend or any family member or the weather outside etc. You can also involve them for participating in interactive games or activities where the students need to communicate in order to complete a task. Make teaching fun so that the students feel at ease learning English.
5. **The use of mother tongue:-** In teaching a foreign language, the proper and judicious use of mother tongue proves of immense help.

The English language which is assumed as a foreign language is taught in an artificial environment and the influence of the mother-tongue is more than the other language. They are taught other subjects in their native language and English fall in their ears only in the class of English. The use

of L_1 in the class creates a feeling of security and atmosphere of relaxation conducive to learning. On the other hand it is also argued that the ability to think in English cannot be acquired by a learner if he/she hangs on to the apron strings of L_1 . As an ESL teacher, it is important to encourage students to use L_2 as far as possible but there is no harm to use mother tongue judiciously. That's why 12 years of school study does not make student gain mastery over English. While they are in schools, English is not taught properly. As majority of the students hail from rural areas, bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps only slow learners to same extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand anything in English, he/she asks for explanation in L_1 . i.e. in his/her mother-tongue. Consequently, the English teacher is forced to adopt bilingual method. Application oriented advanced grammar is not taught in schools. Exposure too is far less to them. Emphasis is laid on learning and acquiring rules, not on application of these rules.

6. Fear of feedback: We must allow children to learn the L_2 and should correct their mistakes as a parent corrects a child learning the mother tongue (L_1) eg. If a learner writes:-

'Catch-cateched- caught' instead of 'catch-caught-caught'

He/She should not be ridiculed in front of whole class because he has at least learnt the rule of grammar 'ed'. There are certain developmental mistakes which are not abnormal rather they are inseparable and integral part of learning process. Never criticize a child, no matter how slow his progress may be. We must remember that a learner is like a tortoise and a tortoise move forward only when it sticks its neck out and it will do so only when it feels secure.

7. Lack of clear cut Aims:- There is a general lack of clarity about the aims and objectives of teaching of English in India. The teachers know that they have to teach the subject since it is included in the syllabus. The students, study, English not as a subject to be 'learned' but as a subject to be 'passed'. This makes them addicted to cheap bazaar guides thereby infecting them with cram and forget virus and short term superficial learning syndrome. For many such students, therefore, the future seems a long dark tunnel. It is this reason why teaching and learning of English in India's school and colleges is in a muddle.

8. Over- crowded classes: Teachers of English experience a lot of problems in handling such a big class. Sixty to seventy students are regarded as the normal class size and in certain cases the class size is 100 to 120 students especially in degree colleges. It is difficult to pay due attention to individual students.



9. Lack of competent teachers: Incompetent teachers are the main source of trouble as far as the teaching of English is concerned.

They are either trained in old methods and have never cared to look for advanced and current techniques that can be employed in classrooms. Many teachers are not even acquainted with the latest and far reaching developments in the teaching of English. Even the materials and methodology used in the training programmes are outdated. There is hardly any scope to improve intuitive and spontaneous knowledge of the language. A good teacher needs to renew ourselves to remain alive and innovative.

10. Faulty methods of teaching:- Teaching of English in India suffers from faulty method of teaching. Most of the teachers are still stuck in Elizabethan's era and they feel very happy to pick up the reader, translate the paragraph, write the meanings of difficult words and assign homework and they think their duty or work is done. Every method needs to be tailored to the local situations and context of teaching. It depends on the sound practical common sense of the teacher to discover in what circumstances for what purpose which method is more effective. Students are not given exposure to the use of language. Language is taught by the rules and learnt by rote memory. As a result students are compelled to cram the language and real learning is not possible.

11. Inadequate provision of teaching aids:- lack of audio visual aids is one of the difficulties in teaching English as a second language. With the help of these aids teaching becomes interesting and lively. ultra CD's LCD projectors should be provided to the students. It also creates the interest among students and make them active as well as enthusiastic.

12. Faulty Examination System:- The English language learning syllabus is created wholly from the exam point of view. As a result the content does not focus on raising the level of communicative competence of the students but is confined in the narrow confines of the exam paper. Even though students are studying English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. The most important reason is they study subjects from the examination point of view only. Our examination system is such that it makes students cramming robots rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. Teacher also find it very difficult to motivate students in the class because the students always aim at memorizing the notes from low standard guides and reproducing them in the examination.

13. Lack of motivation:- As students do not find any immediate need for English, their interest naturally

slackens. The poverty and insecure sociological conditions also force them to neglect the language. Moreover, proper exposure and regular practice are not available to achieve fluency in the use of the language. Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities and of building confidence. The enthusiasm, the zeal and interest of the teacher can kindle the spark of learning in the students.

V. SAMPLE ANALYSIS

A set of 10 students of first semester studying in a degree college of BCA stream was randomly selected for testing. A questionnaire containing 10 questions of English grammar was given, to them to answer. The errors committed by them were analyzed and classified to find out their sources.

Course	:-	BCA
Strength	:-	60
Sample group size	:-	10
No. of fast learners	:-	4
No. of slow learners	:-	6

Total no of questions	Very Good	Good	poor
10	01	03	06

During the analysis many kinds of errors were found in most of the sentences. The number of errors made by students of 1sem of BCA stream indicates the poor learning condition of the learners. It also poses a serious challenge to the existing academic system that has failed to yield satisfactory results.

1.SOME SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR TESTING THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SKILLS ARE:-

1. Testing the vocabulary
 - a) Write the synonyms for the following:
False, Honest, Coward
 - b) Write antonyms for the following:
Short, Weak, Foolish
 - c) Write plurals of the following:-
Hair, Child, sheep

I. CORRECTION OF ERRORS:-

1. Singular and plural
 - The tiger killed five cattles
2. Comparison
 - I prefer coffee more than tea
3. The article
 - I read statesman everyday
4. Tense
 - I have come here yesterday
5. Prepositions
 - He lives in a small village at Mumbai.



II. PUNCTUATION

Punctuate the following sentences and use capital letters wherever necessary

- a) It must have been the cook said mary.
- b) What have you seen him already

III. TESTING SPELLING

- a) Collage, colege, college
- b) Balloon, ballon, balloon
- c) Vacum, vaccum, vacuum.

IV. SYNTAX

- a). Supply the right form of word:

(i) Radha _____ to Punjab yesterday (went, go, gone)

(ii) They _____ here since October (is, have been, was)

- b) Put into negative form:

- (i) The boys are playing
- (ii) She ate an ice-cream

- c) Change into indirect form:

- (i) He said, "my mother is writing letter"
- (ii) Raja Said to Rahul, "go away"

- d) Change the voice:

- (i) The movie fascinates me
- (ii) They were cleaning the bedroom

- e) Put the following groups of words in the right order to make correct sentences:-

(i) Last week visited our school a man

(ii) Never I have heard of such a thing

- f) Combine the following sentences using the link word given against each:

(i) This is the place, he was murdered (When, where)

(ii) I like the necklace, you showed it to me (which, where)

- g) Join the following sentences using conjuncts

(i) He is young, he is also intelligent

(ii) I liked it. My friend did not like anything of it.

- h) The right of use of common words.

Correct the Sentences:-

(i) He spoke a lie

(ii) He is examining the matter.

Such practices will help them enjoying their play with language. To enjoy such exercises will help them to understand the importance of grammar and will also strengthen their skills. Apart from such practices, we can make the teaching of language interesting and fun loving by using games and music.

VI. CONCLUSION

Teacher and learner are the two eyes to the teaching and learning process. This umblysis between teacher and learner should always remain intact for the growth and progress. As Abdul Kalam says: “

Winners don't do different things but they do things differently.” We don't need to teach a new concept everyday but we can teach the same concept in an innovative way in the form of games and music which students will enjoy and learn.

The teachers own energies and enthusiasm is of utmost importance since neither methods nor materials will make up for the deficiencies in personal qualities. Children's have an uncanny and remarkable ability for learning languages, which decreases year by year until the child has reached his late teens. Unfortunately, that is when we usually begin to teach them L2. The result of this is the secret of success behind fast growing culture of spoken English institute charging huge amounts from their innocent predators. Perhaps we had spent too much time learning the rules and not enough on practising its applicability in real life. There is now a need of reform in the subject matter of language teaching and to redesign the syllabus according to the present requirements of the learner that should lay more emphasis on practical everyday English and appropriate teaching strategies should be adopted at different levels.

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