

Learning English as a Second Language in India.

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Abstract

This article gives an account of how English spread and gained the status of a global language. It examines the present status of English as a second language in India. This article lists different phases of learning English, defines language and identifies the factors that affect second language learning. It also asserts that it is essential for a language teacher to understand what a student is intending to say or communicate. This understanding forms the basis for a teacher to select a proper approach, method and technique that would be useful to his or her students. This paper also discusses different problems faced by teacher and learners of English in India. It also explains the need for a teacher to be resourceful and knowledgeable to meet the grave situation and promote better standards of achievement.

INTRODUCTION

“English is a language which is rich in literature humanistic scientific and technical .If under sentimental urges we give up English we would cut ourselves of form the living stream of ever-growing knowledge”. –Radhakrishna University Education Commission.

The language is a means through which a person contemplates the past ,grasps the present and approaches the future .It goes without saying that the language plays an essential role in mental ,emotional and social development of a person .Today’s world considers English as a global language because there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by many people as English .English is one of the primary languages that is taught almost everywhere in the world .It has a lot of extended reach and influence around the world .The India has a tremendous amount of need to learn English as a second language .Every educational system has certain objectives which aim at bringing about desirable changes in pupil .In order to bring about those changes, the institutions arrange learning experience .The success of learning can be judged only in terms of the changes brought about by this experience and evaluation .

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA.

English in India is a question of linguistic centralism while the other Indian languages lead to linguistic regionalism...A foreign languages existing so firmly and distinctly has posed a problem to the country .Yet the language problem became more complicated without any practical solution .In the process of teaching-learning ,the teacher should try to understand the student first .Then only he/she can enable the students to understand his/her teaching .Theory with practice on some of the teaching topics ,may enable the students to understand the concept easily. The growing modernization and internationalism in the world prevented us from doing away with the English language .Besides ,Indian languages are associated with tradition and are understood to be anti-modern .Therefore , a complete switchover to the Indian languages would lead to educational chaos and complete isolation from the developments on the international arena .We could not risk this because of the cultural ,social ,political and economic reasons .Hence ,this situation requires an urgent solution .

The only resolution that could be thought of was need for coexistence of English with indian languages .As a result, we had to define the role of English inIndia and its relationship with Indian languages .As a result, we had to define the role of English iIndia and its relationship with Indian languages .Further, the role of English was strengthened and consolidated as English was recognized and perceived as:

- ✓ The language of knowledge(science and technology)
- ✓ The language of liberal, modern thinking.
- ✓ A window on the world
- ✓ The language of library

Thus, the three language formula came in to existence. This policy was proposed in 1956 by the central advisory board on education and was adopted at the Chief Ministers conference in 1961. The policy aimed at making English an integral part of the school education in India. This naturally restricted the learning and use of Hindi and the students started learning English as second language.

PHASES OF LEARNING ENGLISH

Research has shown that first language acquisition helps the student learn a second language. Students who are learning English as a second language will approach the second language using the same tactics they learned in the first language. One difference to be noted is that the student not only has to understand the meaning, purpose and use of the language, but also how to communicate it in written and verbal form.

Students go through five different stages when learning to write and speak English as a second language. The same is true for any second language. The stages include :

- ❖ Pre-production
- ❖ Early production
- ❖ Speech emergence
- ❖ Intermediate fluency
- ❖ Advanced fluency

The pre-production phase is considered to be silent or mimicking phase. Their vocabulary is limited and they don't feel comfortable with speaking the language yet.

The early production phase may last for six months as the vocabulary expands and students learn more words. They begin to speak using one or two word phrases.

The speech emergence phase carries an even more wide vocabulary where students are actually speaking in simple sentences, but more comfortably. They may ask uncomplicated questions of incorrect grammatically error.

As they emerge in the intermediate fluency phase, they are speaking and writing in more complex sentences and are not afraid to express thoughts and ideas.

The advanced fluency phase may take as much as ten years to attain academic proficiency in the second language.

ROLE OF A TEACHER:

In teaching-learning process, two things play the vital role ;one is the delivering capacity of the teacher and the other one is the receiving capacity of the students .Teaching should be a worthy of learning a concept deeply and broadly .Teaching should facilitate the students to face the the world whichis full of political ,social ,international as well as personal controversies, without fear.It should give self-confidence to the students .By the effective teaching ,the students should enabled to gofor right choices, judgements and also decisions individually.

In the process of teaching –learning, the teacher should try to understand the students first. Theory with practice on some of the teaching topics, may enable the students to understand what the concept is taught by the teacher, depends on the methods he/she applies. As Carl Rogers said, the teacher should first forget that he/she is a teacher. Instead, he/she must possess the skills of a facilitator of learning-genuineness, praising and empathy.

AIMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA

As the English language is getting consolidated as a global language, it is indispensable for all the countries to teach and learn English. Otherwise, it is difficult to keep pace with the development in the world. In particular, it is very essential for a multilingual and developing country like India to learn this global language .Hence, to make the learning of English effective and successful a teacher should consider the following aims and objectives. They are to enable our students:

- Listen and understand English when someone speaks it at normal conversational speed
- Use English for communication
- Read English and understand the content
- Write English for communication
- Enjoy simple poems
- Develop interest in library reading and listening

A fully English proficient student is able to use English to ask questions ,to understand teachers ,and reading materials ,to test ideas ,and to challenge what is being asked in the classroom .Four language skills contribute to proficiency as follows:

Reading: the ability to comprehend and interpret text

Specifications under Reading:

- Read the passage silently and fast
- Understand the central idea of the passage

- Locate key words ,key phrases and key sentences present in the passage
- Guess the meaning of new words in context
- Give a suitable title to the passage

Listening: the ability to understand the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information

Specifications under listening:

- Distinguish the characteristics of English sounds
- Understand the tone of the speaker who may express feelings of politeness fear, anger etc.

Writing: the ability to produce written text with content and format fulfilling classroom assignments at the age and grade-appropriate level.

Specifications under writing:

- Write grammatically correct sentences
- Use appropriate words, phrases and sentence patterns
- Follow a logical sequence
- Organize writing in paragraphs
- Avoiding unnecessary repetition
- Write with correct spelling and using marks of punctuation its unique features.

Speaking: the ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively in learning activities (such as peer tutoring, collaborative learning activities, and question/answer sessions) within the classroom and in social interactions within the school.

Specifications under speaking:

- Produce the correct sounds and clusters of sounds
- Use the correct stress patterns ,pauses and intonation
- Use the appropriate words and sentence patterns

COMMON PROBLEMS AFFECTING TEACHING / LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA:

There are so many factors that affect the teaching-learning process in India. The students in India can be categorized into two; the one is having the regional language as medium of study from the primary level and the other is having English as the medium of study.Hence,the problem of teaching English as a second language ,to the Indian students starts from the pre-schooling. Teaching of English in India has always been in difficult circumstances .This is so because of the large population of the country, bleak economic conditions, the cultural diversities, etc.

LACK OF CLEAR CUT POLICY:

There have been frequent changes in the policy of the government towards the teaching and learning of English. The educationists and politicians differ on the role and status of English in India. If we are to aim at good standards in English, it is high time that the Government takes a strong decision to formulate and implement appropriate policies that promote students learning of English.

LACK OF EXPOSURE:

Most of the Indian students are exposed to their mother tongues. They do not get adequate opportunities either to listen to or speak in English. Because of the poor social and economic backgrounds, they neither get enough exposure to English outside the classroom to improve themselves.

LACK OF MOTIVATION:

As students do not find any immediate need for English, their interest naturally lacks. Similarly, as there is no immediate reward for their achievement, the interest decreases. The poverty and the insecure sociological conditions also force them to neglect the language. Learning a foreign language is not an easy task and the much needed exposure and practice are not available to achieve fluency in the use of the language.

DEFECTIVE METHODS:

The methodology which is practiced to teach English in schools is not appropriate. The oral work which is the soul of any method is totally neglected. Writing which is an advanced skill to be learnt is taught right from the beginning. Students are not given exposure to the use of language. Language is taught by the rules and learnt by rote memory.

EXCESS STRENGTH IN CLASS:

With our large population we do not find any class where students number is less than 60. As the student in the class are always heterogeneous, there is hardly any time to pay attention to the weak or creative child. Even the average child do not get enough experience in the use of language. There is no scope for individual attention. This certainly, hinders the intellectual growth.

LACK OF EXPERT TEACHER:

Good teachers of English are found in small number in India. Hence, not having a good teacher of English is common experience of all the students of English. The teachers of ENGLISH are either not trained by the teachers of English in India but not by the native speakers. Even the materials and methodology used in these training programs are

outdated .As such, it is the same limited experience that is shared .There is hardly any scope to improve intuitive and spontaneous knowledge of the language .Though there are institutes like CIEFL .RIEs and ELTCs to train teachers of English, they are hardly enough for the large demands of the Indian teacher population.

With all problems, discussed above, the standard of English in our country is deplorably low .Hence, a lot of responsibility is thrown on the shoulders of the teachers to make their classes interesting and learning of English fruitful. They have to gear up to meet the demands of the situation and successfully perform their duties.

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