



**TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TO VERNACULAR STUDENTS: SOME ISSUES
AND CHALLENGES**

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Abstract

In the present age of globalization and information technology, importance of English Language and Communication Skills immensely help the growth of an individual develop holistically. The onus lies on the English teachers to make them confident and competent to interact with one another and meet the challenges in the society.

Keywords: English Language and Communication Skills.

Introduction

Communication skills are an essential part of any profession. In spite of having intense knowledge of the subject; one cannot communicate or convey the message or information properly to the receiver. English symbolizes in Indian minds better education, better culture and higher intellect. Students in the rural areas do not realize the importance of English as a language of communication, whereas this is the most important aspect of this global language. They lack the confidence to speak in English; expression in the language is dainty. Even after reading English for 14 or 15 years the level of the students remains poor.

It is acrimonious that the teaching of English in India is still to a great extent, examination-oriented only. Therefore, the vernacular medium students suffer from a syndrome that does not allow them to perform well in higher education courses. They draw a periphery around themselves that doesn't permit them to exercise their talents in the process of learning English and other subjects. At the moment, it is the duty of teachers to cater to the practical needs of the learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and remove the fear from the minds of the students by imparting them moral support more as a facilitator rather than a traditional type of teacher. They should have an extensive ranging enthusiasm and insight that can ignite the spark of learning in the students. Teachers' own personality and command over language counts a lot. An English language teacher should be adept at arousing the interest and imagination of the students. It is a requirement for a teacher to be resourceful and knowledgeable to meet the grave situation and promote better standards of achievement. Today English language teaching as a second language has been witnessing



unprecedented changes in curriculum as well as in teaching methodology. Teachers should be made cognizant of the latest approaches, emerging technologies and methods.

English is considered to be one of the most widely accepted languages for international communication. And for that reason, effective competence in the English language has become very essential for access to the opportunities of livelihood, knowledge and power for a citizen of any nation. English being important to learn helps us to get success in various fields like engineering, commerce, science and technology etc. For that the teaching of English has to play a critical role in achieving this extreme goal. The attitude of the people towards English has now altered and there is a great demand for education of English in the country. Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (1994) have rightly said, "English has become an international commodity like oil and the microchip and more than a quarter of the world people use English; the world has become a global village. English has become necessary for social mobility and economic success in the world today." Mukalel (1998) has stated, "English has become a status symbol and a student without a reasonable command over English is perhaps not very comfortable with the attainment of any educational goal. Similarly, teaching of English holds the key position in the entire curriculum of education. Teachers of English, in this context, owe the responsibility to enable the learners to achieve the educational goals in general and language aim in particular."

Issues and Challenges in Teaching and Learning English Language

English has emerged as a major language which is bringing the world closer. It is the human tendency to think in a language which is very familiar to us. Usually our thinking, language is our mother tongue or native language. When anyone learns a second language, he tends to translate the words from his mother tongue to the language he is learning. But the grammar structures of English and Indian languages are not similar. So, naturally, vernacular medium students tend to make mistakes while translating. This same mistake is carried forward when these students are writing their English paper. Obviously, grammar, aural comprehension, reading, and even oral production are, to varying degrees involved in writing. Certainly we cannot teach a writing course which never touches these areas. But at the same time teaching a writing course which covers only those areas is redundant. But that is what is happening when we are teaching English to vernacular medium students. This leads to vernacular medium students showing poor performance when writing English papers. Encouraging errors in learning English challenge students, but they typically learn from their mistakes and progress. Teachers of English as a second language and English as a foreign language typically refrain from providing an overload of corrective feedback so that feels more comfortable expressing themselves in English, even if it is not perfect.

There can be no learning without exposure. Group discussions can be arranged. Texts should be read loudly by the students. Simple usage of words will become a part of their speech only when they are exposed to deliver a speech and express their own ideas. The zeal for learning



will help them in their own advancement. The problems of the students and the teachers are inter-related. It is necessary to assure that the learner makes a tremendous contribution in the process. Presentations by the students can help them enhance their level of confidence. Teacher can change subject matter from prose to poetry, from essay writing to letter writing to prevent the class from monotonous routine. Audio-Visual aids can add to the presentation of the topic. Students can be encouraged to listen to English news and English commentaries broadcast on Radio and telecast on TV. Motivation in the initial phase, proper methodology in the next phase should be followed. Teachers own personality and command over language counts a lot. Faculty improvement programmes should be held periodically.

Teachers should be made aware of the latest techniques and methods. An English language teacher should be capable of arousing the interest and imagination of the students. In any language study, there are four important skills which a child has to master- reading, writing, speaking and listening. All the skills are equally very important. But it has been observed that most of the vernacular medium students score very less in English written examination. As in Indian education system, maximum evaluation marks are allotted to writing skills, many students scoreless in it, though otherwise brilliant. This creates an inferiority complex in students. Many a times, because of this, students come under lots of stress. Every student of vernacular medium is facing this problem; only the extent of it is different. Only if we know the reason why students find English writing examination difficult, can we try to find a solution to the problem.

Problems in Teaching English Language:

The three most critical problems of the English language teaching and learning classroom given by Lynch (2008) are as follows:

1. Lack of Learner Motivation:

Students may not have inspired and interested towards the learning of the English language. They have even feared of failure in exams and they cannot get involved easily in classroom interaction and learn the language comfortably. They need enough motivation for teachers and scope to learn English in classroom interaction.

2. Insufficient Time, Resources and Materials:

English being a foreign language cannot be learnt and taught as easily as mother tongue or first language. And when it is learnt or taught as a second language, it requires a long time and simultaneously adequate resources and materials to create an English classroom climate which facilitate teaching-learning process.



3. Over-Crowded English Classes:

The number of learners in a class can range from “multitudes of 60 or more learners packed into a language learning situation. The over-crowded classes create a number of problems like; discomfort in the class, individual attention, evaluation, classroom management, maintaining learning effectiveness etc. Also there are a number of other problems in English Language Teaching like social problems, psychological problems, academic problems, administrative problems and so on. But these being the most critical of them are necessarily needed to be overcome to improve quality of English Language Teaching in India.

If we take into consideration the role of teacher and learner in acquiring the knowledge of a language; the problems can be solved effectively. Only then the students will realize the practical use of English language. English will be used by them as a medium of expression. They will be able to use English as a language of communication. Fluency in the speech, proper knowledge of sentence structure, confidence of speaking in the public will make them able to keep their pace with the developing world. It will also help in raising the standards of English as a language at the college level. On the basis of the suggestions given above, the critical situations in the teaching of English can be checked from further deteriorations.

Decidedly one or two persons can't do anything concrete. Let everyone concerned with it take the responsibility only then we can create a congenial environment to achieve better results in the teaching and learning of English. Both written and oral communication skills have to be imparted in such a way that students in their contexts are able to identify their own language learning needs and to set their own language learning goals. At the college and university level, teachers may act as facilitators, just as they would need to teach with positive attitude for inter- and intercultural communication, the skills of negotiating linguistic and cultural differences. Also, both teachers and students need to be aware of what to do, how doing it, and when and why to do it, as part of practicing self-regulation strategies.

Conclusion

Challenges before the English Language teachers in India are enormous and apparent. They should be able to cater to the practical needs of learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and also to retrieve information all over the world. The ELT community as also the other stakeholders in the country should, therefore, revise and reformulate appropriate strategies and policies, with tolerance and multilingualism at the core, to remain relevant in the coming decades communicating, of understanding that we can start but cannot finish. There is no universal teaching method or ideal teaching material suited to many contexts of language teaching. Whatever didactic techniques one knows without excluding the behaviouristic drills, and practice and the use of mother tongue, are appropriate and valid at different points in the teaching process, practices should be inbuilt.



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