

## English Language Teaching in India: Communicative Language Teaching and Challenges



### English Teaching

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### ABSTRACT

*Effective teaching is not about methods. It is about developing the knowledge of implementing them in real classroom situation. Teachers introduce different methods of teaching in their sessions which they have learnt from their teachers. Some methods yield unbelievable results as learners are motivated and participate in the sessions without inhibitions. Smart teachers identify the activities and methods that work for them and implement them continuously to different levels of learners. The field of language teaching has undergone many changes in the last decades as more methods have been introduced. It is also strongly acknowledged that there is no single method that meets the needs of all learners. But language experts and teachers have agreed on a single goal of language teaching: an ability to communicate in the target language. Communicative Language Teaching is based on the premise that the crucial purpose of language use is communication. Its chief goal is for learners to enhance communicative competence (Hymes 1971), or communicative ability. This paper discusses the factors that block the progress of English language teaching development in India.*

### Communicative Language Teaching

CLT is usually exemplified as a broad *approach* to teaching, rather than as a teaching *method* with a clearly defined set of classroom practices (Wikipedia). One of the most recognized of these lists is David Nunan's (1991) five features of CLT:

1. Learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. Authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. Opportunities for learners to focus on the learning process.
4. Learner's own personal experiences as vital contributing essentials to classroom learning.
5. Linking classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is considered as a prominent theoretical model in English language teaching (ELT), and CLT is accepted by many applied teachers and linguists as one of the effective approaches. It was found from the researches, in most EFL countries, curriculum and exams are still grammar-based, and classrooms are large and not well equipped and the teachers' and learners' inability to use CLT adequately (Asmari, 2010). As EFL teaching takes place in non-English speaking countries, solutions for these problems cannot always be imported from ESL countries. Therefore, it is vital to identify the distinction between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) context, and to identify the additional challenges teachers face within EFL environments (Asmari, 2010). The 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 and social diversities, insufficient qualified teachers and material among others.

Challenges for poor performance in English language skills in India

### Lack of Motivation

As students do not find any immediate need for English, their interest naturally slackens. 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. In addition, 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 (Hedge, 2000).

### Lack of Exposure to the Language

It is believed that most of the Indian students are exposed to their native languages. They do not get ample opportunities either to speak in or listen to English. They listen to English only in the English class. The teaching of the other subjects is mostly in their regional languages as the medium of instruction is in their vernacular languages. It is only language in the cities and urban areas that we find English medium schools. Because of the poor economic and social backgrounds, they neither get adequate exposure to English outside the classroom nor sufficient chances to improve themselves in speaking it. This basically depreciates their use of English hence resulting in a poor proficiency in the language (Bernat, 2010).

### Lack of Clear-cut Policy

Lack of clear-cut policy is one of the main reasons of poor standard of English. There have been regular changes in the strategy of the government towards learning and the teaching of English. Although English is taught as a required subject, only the pass mark is taken into consideration. The politicians and educationists disagree on the function and status of English in India. If one is to aim at good standards in English, it is necessary for the Government to take a strong verdict to create and apply appropriate policies that support students' learning of English (Doris, 2009).

### Lack of Good Teachers of English

Good professors of English are got in very minimal number in India. Hence, having a bad teacher of English is an ordinary know-how of all the students of English. The professors of English are either teachers of other subjects or not trained properly. Even if they are trained, they are trained by the teachers of English in India but not by the native speakers. Even the methodology and materials applied in these training programs are outdated.

### Non-availability of Suitable Teaching and Learning Material

According to Cassidy (2006) many learning and materials like workbooks, good textbooks, handbooks and workbooks for teachers, radio, TV, charts or other useful visual material are important for successful teaching. Unfortunately most students and teachers are not provided with these materials. Hence, sometimes the learning and teaching becomes less practical and more imaginative.

### Defective Methods

The methodology that is used to teach English in schools is not suitable. The oral work which is the soul of any method is totally ignored. Writing which is a superior skill to be learnt is taught right from the start. Students are not exposed to the use of lan-

guage. Language is trained by the system and learnt by rote memory, and this makes students fail in the language (Cohen, 2004).

### Large Classes

With our large population in India, we do not find any class where student's number is less than 60. As the students in the class are always varied, it is rare to pay attention to the weak or creative child. Even the average students do not get sufficient experience in the use of language. There is no span for individual attention. This, certainly, blocks the intellectual growth.

### Faulty Examination System

Examinations of English persuade the students for rote memory since many times the questions are based on summarizing either a narration or a poem. The language skills are not tested to any appreciable degree. Speech skills are completely ignored. Teachers also find it hard to encourage the students in the class since the students always aim at memorizing the notes from low-standard guides and reproducing them in the examination (Cohen, 2004).

### Teachers Feeling Discouraged

It's quite normal for inexperienced teachers to feel discouraged while facing all these difficulties, it's also necessary for them to know that although large class EFL teaching has its disadvantages, it also has some advantage compared with small class teaching. When there are many students in a class.

### Professors

P'Rayan (2011) found out that English Professors can be good communication skill trainers, but they cannot teach other soft skills. He also finds that most professors of English have been trained in English literature and not in English language teaching (ELT). Most of the professors are from literature background (master degrees in literature) and do not have ELT training. They lack competences required to be effective teachers of English communication at institutes of technology.

Past studies have found that most EST practitioners had PhD in English, small number had MA and Mphil in English literature, and one of them had only an MA. Their area of specialization in MA and Mphil was literature. Small number of the professors had training in English Language teaching. All the others are from literature background.

The professor's lack language proficiency and no training prior to joining workplace hence there is a gap between the target situation (employment market) and the existing proficiency of learners. The reasons for this gap are absence of effective syllabus, methodology, course organization, assessment and learning outcome.

Most of the English Professors lack the skills of teaching the engineering students. Most of them have never taught in English thus lacking the skills necessary to teach. They are unqualified to teach since they mostly use traditional methods of teaching.

Focus on effective and innovative ELT methodologies around the globe

English language materials need to be contextualized. Materials have to be contextualized to the curriculum they are projected

to address for the duration of design stages, the goals of the curriculum, syllabus are kept to the fore. Materials should be contextualized to the experiences, realities and first languages of the learners. Materials should connect explicitly to what the learners already know, to their first languages and cultures, and very importantly, should alert learners to any areas of significance cultural difference (Cohen, 2004).

Materials should inspire interaction and be constructive in terms of language. Language will be maximally improved if materials designers are capable of recognizing the interactive problems intrinsic in a communicative teaching methodology and deal with the different norms of interaction, such as preferred personal space, for example, directly within their teaching materials. Materials designers have to ensure their materials allow adequate scope for their learners to be stretched at least some of the time, to build on the form what is provided to generate new language, and to progress beyond surface fluency to proficiency and confidence.

English language teaching materials need to encourage learners to develop strategies and learning skills. It is hard for teachers to teach their learners all the language they have to know in the short period of time that they are in the classroom. Language teaching materials also teach their objective learners how to learn and also help them to take advantage of language learning chances outside the classroom (Hedge, 2000). The teaching materials should allow for focus on form as well as function. This is to develop active, independent language learners. Well-designed materials can help considerably with this by alerting learners to underlying forms and by providing opportunities for regulated practice in addition to independent and creative expression. English language teaching materials should be authentic. English language teaching materials should offer opportunities for integrated language use. English language teaching materials need to be attractive hence user-friendliness and the physical appearance. Language-teaching materials should be good to look at. Materials should be attractive in terms of their 'usability'. English language teaching materials should link to each other to develop a progression of skills, understanding and language items (Hedge, 2000). English language teaching materials should have appropriate instructions. For instructions to be effective, they should be written in a language that is appropriate for the target learners, and the use of the correct language might help with making instructions more efficient and concise. The materials should be flexible.

### Conclusion:

Though English has been taught in India for many years, the quality of teaching hasn't improved a lot due to many factors listed in this paper. It is necessary that the authorities of Indian educational system must work together to incorporate the latest developments of Communicative Language Teaching methods in the curriculum. All engineering colleges in India must recruit teachers with updated knowledge of English language teaching methods besides the mandatory qualifications. Besides degree certificates, teachers must undergo rigorous training programs in order to conduct a vibrant and lively classrooms where students learn the language with passion and motivation.

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