



ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: A REVIEW

Mr. RAJENDER PONDRA

Ph.D in English (Linguistics & Phonetics) The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad.

ABSTRACT

English in India is a symbol of people’s aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. The visible impact of this presence of English is that it is today being demanded by everyone at the very initial stage of schooling. ELT in India is vibrant and dynamic today. The context of the whole teaching paradigm has changed totally. This article traces the course of this change, along with the causes and consequences while comparing this with the course of ELT in other contexts where it has always been a first language.

KEYWORDS

ELT in India, evolution of ELT, Foreign language and Educational programmes.

INTRODUCTION:

“I would have English as an associate, additional language, which can be used not because of facilities, but because I do not wish the people of non-Hindi areas to feel that certain doors of advance are closed to them. So I would have it as an alternative language as long as people of India require it”

- Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

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. This is a learning experience and evaluation. English has become a global language and teaching it as a foreign or second language has increasingly become a universal demand.

Due to its association with the British colonizer, English started life in India as not just a foreign language, but as a much-hated language. From the despised instrument of oppression to the reluctantly adopted lingua franca to the status symbol of the upper classes to its position today as a second language, English has come a long way. In fact, it won't be an aberration to label it a first language for some echelons of Indian society. Just as the status of the language underwent constant reinvention, the whole ELT paradigm also travelled the complete gamut of modification. In the closing years of the Twentieth century when English began to emerge as the global language, the Indian classroom was transformed because of the change in the environment of the learner. Whereas the earlier surroundings had been acquisition poor with regard to English, suddenly every language user seemed to be jumping upon the learn- English- bandwagon.

The liberalization of the Indian economy ushered in all kinds of reasons to learn the language. While earlier in the century students who had specialised in English joined either teaching or the civil services, now a whole new spectrum of job opportunities has opened up. There are now call centres that need trainers to equip their employees with communication skills, there are multinationals who have been recruiting marketing staff that needed to be taught spoken English, there are medical transcription centres which need efficient translators and reporters. Those desirous of immigration to the west needed professional help for clearing tests like the IELTS. Hence, the avenues where ELT came to be required in India are unlimited today.

Although a foreign language is now as much an Indian lan-

guage as any other. English has been taught in our schools and colleges for many decades. It occupies the position of associate official language. It is used widely as a link language in offices and among the educated people. It is not only a compulsory subject at school, college and university but is also the medium of instruction to the large extent. It is the language of science and technology. It occupies the position of a second language in the school curriculum and for higher education. English language has been assigned the role of library language. Without exception every secondary school child has to learn English as a subject, usually for six years but in some cases for three years only. This contemporary position of English in India shows English language teaching occurring at all levels of Education, mainly as a second language. This brings us to our present topic of interest - a history of English language teaching in India. English language teaching as a discipline has come into its own during the past several decades both in India and abroad and along with it English language teaching historiography also has gained prominence. It is now possible to cite a large body of literature devoted to this area of study. But in India, even though English language teaching has been going on for many decades there is no document, which contains a comprehensive history of English language teaching in India. Now English language teaching has gained the status of a new discipline and also has gained relative importance on our educational programmes. It is felt that a comprehensive history of English language teaching in India is needed.

LEARNING A LANGUAGE:

Each language is structured differently, and the different structures offer users different suggestions to meaning. so when we learn our first language, our brain / mind ‘tunes into’ the way the particular l1 works, and we learn to pay attention to particular cues to meaning that are most helpful. When we meet a new language, our brain / mind automatically tries to apply the first language experience by looking for familiar cues. Part of learning a foreign language is developing new understandings about the particular cues to meaning that the new language offers, and that differ from those of our first language. The transferability of knowledge, skills and strategies across languages depends closely on how the two written languages work.

ROLE OF A TEACHER:

As said by Sir Philip Sydney, teaching is the end of all learning. A teacher’s primary role is not only to enable the students to understand what he is intending to say or teach. It is also the duty of the teacher to understand what the student wants and says.

In teaching-learning process, two things play the vital roles; one is the delivering capacity of the teacher and the other one is the receiving capacity of the students. Without the two aspects, the teaching-learning process will not be a successful one. Teaching-learning process is just like making sound by clapping. Without two hands we cannot clap. Like that without a right teacher and the students, the teaching learning process is meaningless. Teaching should be a worthy of learning a concept deeply and broadly. Teaching should facilitate the students to face the world which is 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 be enabled to go for right choices, judgments and also decisions individually. In the process of teaching-learning, the teacher should try to understand the students first. Then only, he can enable the students to understand him or his teaching. Theory with practice on some of the teaching topics may enable the students to understand the concept easily. Success of a teacher in his/her attempt in enabling the students to understand what is the concept taught by the teacher, depends on the methods he/she applies. The teacher may be a good, but the students' physical problem may lead him to ignore the teaching. Or sometimes, the background of family of the students may drive him to be dull. Hence, the teacher should take into account everything. At the school level, the teaching-learning process is checked up by the teacher by repeated class tests and examinations. Based on the result (marks scored by the students), different methods are adopted to improve teaching in case of negative result. At the college levels also the same traditional (Macaulay) method of examinations is used. The only difference is the volume of syllabus prescribed for the colleges students will be more than that of the school level.

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), U.S., defines English language proficiency in this way:

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 at the age and grade appropriate level.

Listening - the ability to understand the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional discourse through which teachers provide information.

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

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.

Hence, the teacher should keep in mind while teaching English as a second language to the students.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TESTS:

Oller and Damico (1991) indicate that language proficiency tests can be associated with three schools of thought. The first of these trends, the discrete point approach, was based on the assumption that language proficiency:

...consisted of separable components of phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, and so on, each of which could be further divided into distinct inventories of elements (e.g., sounds, classes of sounds or phonemes, syllables, morphemes, words, idioms, phrase structures, etc) A discrete point language proficiency test typically uses testing formats such as phoneme discrimination tasks where the test taker is required to determine whether or not two words presented aurally are the same or different (e.g., /ten/ versus /den/). A similar example might be a test designed to measure vocabulary which requires the

test taker to select the appropriate option from a set of fixed choices.

TECHNICAL/BUSINESS ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERS:

Students comprises of the four skills as below;

- a) Listening
- b) Speaking
- c) Reading
- d) Writing

The subject title is "Technical English", a theory subject and "Communication Skills Lab ", a practical subject. The former is taught to the first year students of the four years engineering degree course and the lab course is conducted in second or third year of the same students.

TECHNICAL ENGLISH-THEORY:

The main objective of this course is to help students to develop listening skills for academic and professional purposes.

1. To help students acquire the ability to speak effectively in English in real-life situations.
2. To inculcate reading habit and to develop effective reading skills.
3. To help students improve their active and passive vocabulary.
4. To familiarize students with different rhetorical functions of scientific English.
5. To enable students write letters and reports effectively in formal and business situations.

The lab training is given with the assistance of Networked Computers and specially designed software. The objectives of the practical training are given below.

- To equip students of engineering and technology with effective speaking and listening skills in English
- To help them develop their soft skills and people skills, which will make the transition from college to workplace smoother and help them to excel in their jobs
- To enhance students' performance at Placement interviews, Group Discussions and other recruitment exercises.

The lab practice is divided into two categories as "English Language Lab" where the listening comprehension, reading comprehension and vocabulary and speaking tests are conducted, and "Career Lab" where writing tests on Resume/ Report preparation and Letter writing are conducted. Also the students are given training in presentation, Group Discussion and interview skills. Forty per cent of the total marks (100) in final examinations is given for the English Language Lab practice and the rest of 60% is given for the Career Lab Practice, for which the test and evaluation are decided by the examiners during final examinations.

CONCLUSION:

In our country, as already said 75% of the students are from rural areas and they are coming through regional language medium schools. Hence, based on their background, we have to design the syllabus and adopt methods to test their English language proficiency. Therefore, it is necessary to go for a detailed discussion as to whether the existing curriculum is fulfilling the need of the hour and suitable to the students in achieving their goals, the present methods for testing the proficiency of the students are suitable and opinion and suggestions from the teaching faculties of the English language in technical institutions are to be obtained. Taking into consideration of all the above points and undergoing a detailed analysis, a real solution may be found out for the betterment of the students as well as society.

REFERENCES

1. Applbaum, L.et.al., 1973, Fundamental Concepts in Human Communication, Confield Press, London
2. Brown, H.D. 1981, Principles of Language Learning & Teaching, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

3. Corner, J. et.al., 1993, Communication Studies:An Introductory Reader, Edward Arnold, London.
4. Covey, Stephen. Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. New York, Simon and Schuster.
5. Dickinsen L. and Carver D.J.1980. Steps Towards Self-direction in Foreign Language Learning in Schools. ELT. Vol.35:1-7.
6. Dickinsen L. 1987. Self-instruction in Language Learning. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
7. Draves, W.A. (2000), Teaching online. River Falls, Wisconsin: Learning Resources Network.
8. Gotschall, Mary.E.Learning Strategies for executive education and corporate training