TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA – A REVIEW
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INTRODUCTION

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.

Thanks to the globalization in all the fields, it necessitates the learning of a language which is international. Undoubtedly, English has become a world language rather than the language of only the English speaking countries such as the UK and the USA because the number of the people who use English as a means of communication exceeds much more than the number of the people who speak it as their mother tongue. In the case of English in India, more than two centuries, India has been directly and indirectly had influence of the language , English on all the fields, such as Education, Medical Science, etc.

Text materials relating to the subjects of Science, Engineering and Technology as also Medicine are available only in English. Moreover, all over India, there is no single language to unite the whole country. Since, in India, several languages are spoken and also one set of people are reluctant to learn one common Indian language, we have to borrow a new non-Indian language.

Considering the above facts, learning English, the universal language, as a Second Language, becomes inseparable branch as also unavoidable in Indian education system.

COMMON FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHING/LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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.

Further environment and family background play vital role in success of learning process. For example, countries like India, where majority of the people are farmers, have the poor background in education. Moreover, the income of majority of the families is not adequate. Hence, the parents are not interested in giving good education background to their children. In contrast, they are willing to engage the children in some jobs in order to earn money. This is the very basic reason and the affecting factor in teaching.

Secondly, the infrastructure, viz. school buildings – class rooms, labs, etc. is not adequate as required. The first category of the students are almost compelled to attend their classes under the trees even after several five year plans.

Majority of the students are coming from village and also their parents are farmers and uneducated. If the nature fails, the survival of the farmers will be questionable. Hence, the students are mentally discouraged due to the family conditions.

In the second category, the students are having enough background in basic education since their parents are educated and they do not depend on the nature much. Many of the students from second category are joining in English medium schools and hence, they do not find much difficulty in pursuing their higher education.

Moreover majority of the families of second category are dwelling in towns and cities and hence, they have easy access of quality education. But, the first category of students are scoring good marks the examinations conducted. It proves that they are having good writing skill in English. The only thing is that they have to be given training in oral English communication also. Hence, a common programme for English Language Teaching must be framed in the pre-schooling itself.

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 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.

As Carl Rogers said, the teacher should first forget that she/he is a teacher. Instead, she/he must possess the skills of a facilitator of learning-genuineness, prizing and empathy.

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:

1. *Reading* - the ability to comprehend and interpret text at the age and grade-appropriate level.

2. *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.

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

4. *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) (p. 82).

They describe language tests based on the discrete point approach in the following way:

Following the discrete point model, a test could not be valid if it mixed several skills or domains of structure (Lado, 1961). By this model, presumably the ideal assessment would involve the evaluation of each of the domains of structure and each of the skills of interest. Then, all the results could be combined to form a total picture of language proficiency. (p. 82).

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

Considering the all the above facts, the Anna University, Chennai has designed the English syllabus for Engineering 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.

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