

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ROLE OF TEACHER

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In the course of three centuries or so, English has expanded geographically from its original home in Britain to become the most far flung language of the globe, spoken or understood by over three hundred millions of the earth's inhabitants (Singh:33).

The new generations of management/law/engineering students suffer from a sense of shoddiness as serious linguistic lapses and atrociously bad language are found in their verbal and written communication. Pathetic linguistic aberrations like missing the syntax, rules of grammar and idiom, spelling mistakes, incorrect use of definite and indefinite articles, wrong use of prepositions, use of a mechanical kind of clichés, lack of structure, subtlety and precision in answers are found in common. One reason behind the poor language learning may be ascribed to the lack of habit of reading newspapers or books of general interest. Even regular writing habits are not commonly found among the students now days. As a result the efficiency to make a meaningful central statement, logical thinking, illustrating a point of view with proper evidence or holistic thinking does not develop. Shunning the effort to learn English language, which they consider as worthless obstacle, they try merely to be vocational experts. It is worth mentioning in this context that even the linguistic mastery with which their management/engineering subject textbooks are written are also not consider as valuable pointer to pinpoint the importance of acquiring the linguistic mastery alongside gaining the subject knowledge.

The role of an English language teacher in a professional institute in the third world developing countries in general and in India particular, though crucial, has miserably remained dubious. Despite the most pressing demand by both the corporate houses and the society for high quality communication skill for good professionals, proper attention is still amiss in developing suitable curriculum to match the demand. Identification of the most appropriate content, methodology, time and space for delivering lectures still seem to be elusive. But in the context of an upwardly mobile rising middle class of a resurgent India, professional are not confines to their laboratories or industrial machinedoms. Rather they must communicate or collapse. The present paper seeks to draw a comprehensive platform to meet the challenges faced by the teachers of English language in professional colleges in India and attempts as well to find suitable remedial measures to overcome the problem.

In their school days students learn English through grammar and English literature. For students of professional courses, English is a necessary tool for getting into a good job and for a cosmopolitan business and technical outlook. So the aim of the subject English in professional sector is to encourage the learners to involve in learning the target language and to acquire

proficiency in technical communication. Some students, out of personal interest and motivation, or even perhaps because of their family background where English may be used for interpersonal interactions, learn vocabulary through extensive reading. But many students depend on the teachers for the development of vocabulary.

English language teaching is thought to be exclusive a matter of teaching strategies. It is thought that, if teaching were above a minimum level of efficiencies, learning would naturally follow. Teaching is “considered the active skill while learning the passive skill” (Wittrock, 1986: Crystal, 1997).

For those who seek to use English for specific purposes, it is indispensable to learn about 1000 to 2000 additional words related to the field of engineering/management/law. When students want to learn the meaning of a word, they refer various sources like dictionaries, Thesauruses and other word books. Though they refer those books, they may not be sure of the usage of the word until they learn to use it appropriately. Slow learners, unless they do take their own effort to learn are caught in a difficult situation when they do exercise like reading comprehension, essay writing, etc. It is noticed that students realize the need for good use of vocabulary when they are stumped for the right word to use.

Further, to develop their basic vocabulary for effective reading, speaking and writing, it should be decided to teach them three words a day. Therefore, students learn vocabulary directly through explicit instruction.

The curriculum in English includes the objectives of teaching, methods of instruction, textbooks, learning materials, guidance and counseling, the pupils’ involvement in literary and cultural activities, their participation in seminars and conferences and evaluation. The principles to be adopted in preparing curriculum are:

- a. Meet the changing needs of the learners
- b. Follow certain objectives
- c. The subject matter should be in tune with the learning environment of the students
- d. Train the students both academically and professionally
- e. Evaluation pattern should be outlined

As verbal communication is being given utmost importance in the rapidly changing world scenario, it involves the preparation of relevant domain subject areas to be imparted. This is possible by researching and thereby designing effective functioning of English language.

The majority of the prospective employers are interested in hiring employees with good communication skills, so the English classroom methodology should be tailored to develop the verbal competency of the students. English language is the link language of the world. Its sanctity should be protected. It can be done only when the English curriculum is so designed to protect the pristine glory of the language. The activities are to be contextualized and should present language in natural situations.

Students should be sensitized to the subtlety of words. The cognitive and affective abilities of the learners ought to be activated by stimulating them to make more use of their imagination. Innovative, need based exercises, vocabulary and correspondence should be a part of English curriculum.

Various schools of psychology have laid down guidelines for teachers of English to follow.

Behaviorism: This theory is base on empirical evidence obtained from experiments with living organisms (here it means experiments on students of English language)

Mentalism: Mentalism we find goes against Behaviorism. According to the mentalists, people learn language not because they are subjected to a similar conditioning process but because they process an inborn capacity which permits them to acquire a language as a normal maturation process.

Cognitive: The study of how people speak, think, perceive, remember and solve problems. It is based on the theory of monitoring and self-evaluation. Cognitive approach views learning as an active process that occurs within the learners and which can be influenced by the learner. Weinstein and Mayor state, “The use of particular learning strategies during learning can affect the encoding process, which in turn effect the learning outcome and performance” Crystal also says “Students can benefit from being taught to ‘lean how to learn’ foreign languages”.

Chamot opines that “Training students to use particular learning strategies improves their language performance”. Some observational studies of successful second language learner by Naiman, Frohlich, Stern and Todesco reveal that successful language learners employ active learning strategies in order to learn more effectively.

According to Cook, good language learners find a learning style that suits them, involve themselves in language learning process, and develop an awareness of language both as a system and as communication. They do not treat language solely as communication or as academic knowledge, but as both.

Language Environment: Language environment is something that the learner hears and sees in the new language. It may include a wide variety of situation as available in or through stories, conversation with friend, watching television and reading newspapers or books.

Developmentalism: It is the scientific study of systematic psychological changes, emotional changes and perception changes that occur in human beings over the course of their life-span. (Wikipedia) This field examines change across a broad range of topics including language acquisition.

Internal Processing: Essentially speaking, language learning occurs or materializes in the mind of the learners, where mental structure or mechanism processes or organizes the language to which they are exposed. A systematic study of the discrepancies between the languages that the learner produce and the language they hear or read provide the basis from which we can infer the attribute of an otherwise invisible mental structure.

There are several theories relating, in particular, to second language acquisition and these theories do have their own importance in the field of research. In fact, they reflect a variety of perspective with regard to second language acquisition. These theories are (A) The Acculturate Model (closely related with the nativization model); (B) Accommodation Theory; (C) Discourse Theory; (D) Monitor Theory; (E) The Variable Competence Model; (F) The Universal Hypothesis; and (G) The Neurofunction Theory. And though it is neither possible nor perhaps desirable to discuss all these theories or models in detail, one may try to identify and understand the real aim of these theories as well as the role of second language acquisition research. Second language acquisitions follow a route in syntactical development. Native speaker adjust their speech in order to negotiate meaning with non-native speakers. The conversation strategy influences the pace, the route of second language acquisition in a number of ways. Conversation, articulate conversation is at the very centre of second language learning.

Language teaching methods are the product of time as well as educational system. With the passage of time many old methods and approaches are neglected and new ways are found. Yes the basic rules of language embedded in grammar and translation are central to language

learning. This means that the methods we use for language have to be learner centered, creating opportunities for learners to use language with communicative approach. Communicative language teaching has now resulted in total functional response of language. New ways in discourse and genre analysis, pragmatics and systematic grammar are rekindling interest in functionally based approaches to language acquisition. Learning is complete only when one has mastered language skills. There is a need for a more controlled research on second language learning strategies especially when language acquisition is viewed as a cognitive skill.

Language Learning Problems:

The language problems are:

- a. Is there a demand of English for the professional students?
- b. Does such type of language is covered in the curricula?
- c. How far does the English Course aimed at college level cover the needs of the students who desire to use the language to acquire further technical knowledge?

The answers to these questions have immediate repercussions on teaching method and on the organization of the courses. It is the responsibility of the teachers to keep in mind the process of the second language learning in the minds of the students. In this connection various linguistic and non linguistic data are to be analyzed. There must be an integrated approach for grammar and discourse competence. The efforts should be such that the learner is made to reflect on and produce language. Teachers' interference will only be on required basis. There is need for adopting individualized correction method and the need to design course materials specifically according to the students' requirement.

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