

## STRATEGIES AND STYLES IN ENGLISH TEACHING

**Dr. R.V.Sheela**  
Associate Professor  
English Department  
M.E.S. Degree College  
Malleswaram, Bangalore-03

The History of English Language Teaching in India is traced back to the historic moment of Lord Macaulay's declaration in 1835 that the intention behind English Education was to further individualism, industrialization and scientific knowledge by training elite Indians in English language and culture and they would be a class of people 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, morals and Intellect'. Since then, English has been growing on Indian soil, constantly modifying itself to meet the needs of Indian context, influencing Indian languages and also getting influenced by them, creating controversies and contentment, expanding and enlarging itself in multiple dimensions so much so that in the past 150 years of 'official' English education it is seen both as a 'Boon' and a 'Bane' in India. Boon because it 'opened the window upon the world' to India as our former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru said and facilitated India's progress giving it an edge over other nations particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ICT world. Bane because it is considered to have invaded Indian culture and caused the 'hybridization' of culture.

With Indian independence and the Three Language Formula implemented for the country's education, English found a more fertile ground to grow. India's need for a lingua franca was fulfilled by this language and it also facilitated the transaction of Knowledge and Business in the international scenario.

What kind of English education was to be given to Indians was the question that Lord Macaulay answered with his most controversial statement 'all the literatures of native India don't equal a single shelf of European Literature'. Though it was opposed by well-thinking Indians, English education by default took the route of Literature Studies. Post independent India saw the need for learning English as a language but through Literature. As any language has two dimensions of 'Culture' and 'Communication' to it, we continued our English studies through literature hoping to gain mastery over English language.

A few decades of English literature studies in India proved that language learning was neither focused nor emphasized language learning and the researches indicated that English had to be taught as a language. That marked the beginning of English language being taught and learnt for self-expression in India. In no uncertain terms had English literature influenced and contributed to Indian literature in different ways but the masses' ability to use it for communication was still at large.

In the last two decades significant changes have taken place in ELT in India.

1. The Paradigm shift (literature to language)
2. Changes in Literature content in prescribed syllabi at HE level
3. Change in our approach to it (taught as a language and not a subject)

4. Methodology
5. Strategies of ELT (classroom techniques, interaction, translation group work etc)

As Braj.B.Kachru says in his phenomenal work ‘The Indianization of English’ in 1983, ‘Whatever the controversies and attitudes towards the future of English in India could be, one thing is certain. The diffusion of bilingualism in English, creative use of English in the country and its use as a pan-Indian language has continued during the post-Independence era’.

As we consider the different stages of ELT in India, we find that the study of English literature had its elitist dimension and the supremacy of English tradition did continue long after the independence. Indigenous literatures, written in English, formed a different branch of English Literature, starting from Shri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Anitha Desai and moving down to contemporary writers like Arundathi Roy, Aravind Adiga and Chetan Bhagat. But it is in the last decade that Indigenous Literatures have gained more importance with an awareness created by writers like Edward Sayeed, Gowri Vishwanathan and Ngugi Wa Thiango. Thus Literatures of one’s own country have once again become the focal point and no doubt English literature with its multiple manifestations studied in comparison to it. For Instance, the current Degree Texts, include but one or two of Canonical pieces like Shakespearean sonnet or Milton’s poem with a wide variety of literatures from different parts of the country and the English speaking world outside.

The 1970s and 80s, after the establishment of CIEFL(at present it is English and Foreign Languages University, EFLU, Hyderabad) English language education began to dominate the scenario. English language learning followed the methods and norms of the English researches in India and came into criticism for its lack of applicability in Indian context. For example, The Direct Method of teaching English, without using the learner’s mother tongue would fail in nearly 70% of our colleges as they are rural or semi-urban basically. The Regional Institute of English, in Jnanabharathi Campus conducts courses and seminars to enable the teachers from different parts of the country to keep pace with current trends.

1990s experimented with different methods of ELT methods of teaching English in a classroom. The non-native context, the multi-lingual backgrounds of students and lack of proper methodology plagued ELL. Moreover, the student-teacher ratio in the classroom forced the teachers to use the ‘Lecture’ method and this method failed to reach out to the really needy students or impart the necessary skills of the language. Thereby, the general English Syllabus in higher education made changes to include a workbook and course book to make sure the skills of the language were given importance. The paradigm shift did cause a few ripples in the field with extreme views regarding the importance of language and literature but subsided later. The study of English further branched out as Language and Communication.

With the turn of the century, English language education got a boost with globalization, liberalization and computerization. Information, Communication and Technology Age catapulted English to an all important position resulting in English Centres emerging in every street corner of major cities and unfortunately the closure of Government schools with Kannada Medium Instruction. As all of us are aware the debate and discussion on the medium of Instruction doesn’t seem end amicably. Having Communicative labs for intensive training in language skills has become the order of the day and the demand on the language has increased multi-fold. To further it, the fact that Bengaluru is the IT capital of the country and the world, the language of IT has gained significance. Corporate and Industry forces do have a say in the matters of academics and syllabus design to tune the graduates to suit the work scenario. In

addition to competence in technical skills, communication skills enhance the students' employability.

It is in this context that we teach English today. This has put the English fraternity under pressure to perform. The Strategies of English Language Teaching need to be well thought out. Considering the multi-lingual backgrounds of the students, migration of rural students to city colleges, first generation learners on the one hand and students from affluent backgrounds, computer efficient, internet-savy, and with multiple sources of information on the other, the English teacher's job is in unenviable. (challenging)

With skill development (LSRW) being emphasized, teacher becomes a facilitator in a work book classroom, helping students to self learn through the exercises and discussions. More than the rules of grammar, it is the correctness of the structures that need to be emphasized. Interaction of teachers and students, motivating and encouraging them to speak the language, using audio tapes, visuals, and discussing meaningful films in classroom from an academic point of view will not only attract their interest but also facilitate self expression, thereby facilitating the learning of the language.

The course books contain literature from across the world, giving a glimpse of life in different contexts and varied perspectives. One important strategy here is to involve the students in discussion and build on the information they bring to the classroom. The large classes can have group work and pair work and then an open house discussion which can build the confidence and conviction of the students. Such debates and discussions promote learning. They need to be encouraged to take a stand on any issue pertaining to the text or the society around and justify it through their arguments. This strategy would improve their cognition and competence undoubtedly.

One reality of Indian Classroom has been the use of Mother Tongue in teaching English. There have been different views on it, but judicious use of L1 would definitely facilitate comprehension. Translation as a tool in a classroom is indeed of great help. Comparison of the contexts of literature to the indigenous contexts can also provide for a better understanding of the same. But students need to be motivated to use the language and make it their own to have proficiency in it. Ultimately, the role of the teacher assumes greater responsibility and plausibility of the teacher to adapt to the changed situation and deliver the goods is extremely important in the present scenario.

As we all know, the teaching – learning situation is a situation of very many variables, like Students, Syllabus, Method, Purpose and Teacher. It is a teacher who can ultimately make the variables work in any situation. The use of technology in teaching is imperative in the present context. Online resources need to be used, of course with caution in teaching. The challenge for the teacher today is to cater to the need of the student in terms of acquisition of knowledge as well as skills as both are integral components of education today.

Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee (1864-1924) Indian Educator and Vice- Chancellor of the University of Calcutta had aptly discussed the meaning and purpose of Higher Education in his Convocation Address (1922) and said "To my mind the University is a great store house of learning, a great bureau of standards, a great workshop of knowledge, a great laboratory for training of men of thought and men of action. The University is thus the instrument of the State for the conservation of knowledge, for the discovery of knowledge, for the distribution of knowledge and above all for the creation of knowledge-makers". These words reinforce the expectations from and responsibilities of the Higher Education Sector in the Country.