

TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: PROBLEMS AND FINDINGS

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Abstract

English is taught in India as a Second Language as well as a foreign language. In some of the states English is introduced from class V/VI and is compulsory up to degree level. But in some other states, it is optional. This indicates the lack of uniform policy to give proper place to English in school curriculum. Now a day in most of the states a hot discussion is going on whether to introduce English from class first.

As a Secondary Language, it has got a great prominence in the school curriculum. But there are many problems in teaching and learning of English as a Second Language. Dr. V.K.Gokak says, “The study of English in our schools is in a chaotic state today.” And the research has shown that the student who joins the university hardly knows 1500 words and he will not be able to communicate properly. This can be attributed to the problem of teaching learning of English. Another scholar Michael West opines, “A language is not a subject which can be taught; it is a subject which must be learnt”. But to promote a good standard of English in India, we have to consider the problems in teaching / learning process and find proper solutions (remedies) to it. Good efforts will definitely help in this direction.

Key Words: Teaching and Learning of English, ELT in classrooms ,

Problems in Teaching and Learning of English

Large Classes:

The size of our classes at the secondary and lower levels has become unmanageable. The number of students admitted to XI and XII ranges from 60 to 100. It becomes very difficult to manage such class in terms of discipline and teaching. Students’ manifest mixed abilities and it is not possible for a teacher to cater to the needs of all students. The teacher does not find any scope for individual attention and pair work or group work. He therefore takes recourse to the lecture mode which he finds suitable and less time consuming. In such an atmosphere both teaching and learning become less effective and defective also.

Classroom Conditions:

The physical condition of the class rooms poses a serious problem. Accommodating a huge number of students in a small room does not in any way motivate students to learn. At primary school level, sometimes there will be a single teacher managing all the classes, is highly motivating for students.

Lack of Facilities:

Most of our schools (secondary as well as lower) are terribly ill equipped in terms of necessary teaching aids- audio and video. The most common aid available to the teacher is the black board that, too, is often in a bad shape. Tape recorders, TVs, wall charts and other teaching aids, which the teacher would like to use, are often not found in schools.

No doubt, the trend is changing now. In many secondary schools, computer labs have been set up. But the sorry state of the schools is that this is not available in most of the schools.

Problem of trained teachers:

Even if all schools were provided with different teaching aids, they would mean little to an untrained teacher. Good English teachers are made through the teaching and learning programmed but there are even less opportunities for their in service training. If there are already trained teachers, sometimes they remain ignorant of the new changes taking place in English teaching / learning across the globe. It is certain that the teacher should grow in his personality. He should have a good command over language. A teacher lacking such ability fails to succeed in giving his students command of spoken English rather.

Outdated methods of teaching:

Most of the teachers are using traditional methods of teaching, Especially, Grammar Translation Method. It takes much of school timing and the four language skills receive little attention. Oral work is ignored and the whole session is devoted to preparing students for the annual examination. Such an approach deteriorates the development of the students in their acquisition of the four skills of the language.

Faulty Textbooks:

Many a times, the prescribed textbooks of English suffer in many ways. No doubt, they are prepared by CIEFL and SCERT. But the blind adaptation without scrutinizing becomes defective. An average teacher also fails to recognize the shortcomings of the textbooks. A number of students face problem in their task of learning or the learning becomes defective.

Recently, majority of schools used unsuitable textbooks. Most of these textbooks contained prose texts, stories and poems written by native speakers of English. They were linguistically difficult and culturally alien. Such an active one.

But now because of a great deal of work done by SCERT and CBSE things are moving in a better condition.

Faulty Syllabus:

The prescribed syllabi of English for different school classes are not satisfactory. They are not related to the surrounding of the learners. They only pass the examinations but in their real life situations, they can hardly make use of anything learnt by them.

Faulty Examination System:

The teaching and learning process of English has become examination oriented in India. Most of the teachers prepare their students to face the annual examination and thus they neglect the overall development of the student in his task of language learning activity. Moreover there is no examination for spoken English. Even the objective aimed at is not properly observed with great care. For example - trimester system. It is more burdensome for the students to face only the written examination, neglecting the aspects of developing spoken English. Objectives are set to aim but there are not at all observed. Students and teachers become examination centered/mined.

Lack of Suggestive Correction:

The exercise books of students lack in suggestive correction. There should be a good deal of suggestive correction for the student which improves him or provides him an opportunity to learn the things once again otherwise his learning becomes defective because of faulty suggestion by the teacher.

Lack of Awareness and Purpose of teaching/learning English.

The lack of awareness and real purpose of teaching and learning among teachers and students is also one of the main draw back in education. Mainly the teacher must take a great care to promote a good standard of English in schools and colleges.

These are the main problems in teaching and learning of English as a Second Language in India. These problems come in the way of teaching/learning process. In turn they are the main causes for the falling of the standard of English. To overcome these problems, we have to look to the remedial.

Improving Teaching of English Learning

To retain the standard of English some remedies or suggestions are needed. The following suggestions will surely help to overcome the problems of teaching of English.

The aims and objectives of teaching of English must be obvious to the teacher: The teacher should always teach English to promote the four language skills in the student. He should lay emphasis on each skill and enable the student to acquire the essential skill and proficiency in the language.

Special Attention to the physical conditions of the class room: the physical conditions in the schools should be given special attention by the concerned authorities. The classrooms should accommodate the students freely and the atmosphere in every class should motivate the student. Proper care should be taken to provide the class with good blackboard, chalk pieces, desks and etc needed.

Proper Facility of Audio-Visual Aids: Adequate facilities should be provided to schools. Good classrooms, audio – video aids, congenial atmosphere etc would go a long way in making our teaching of English purposeful. The teachers should also be trained for the handling of different types of sophisticated aids. And other extra needed teaching aids should be provided to schools and colleges.

Teacher Training Programs: Teacher training programs and in service training programs should be undertaken. So that proficient teachers can come out and undertake the teaching of English more effectively. Some Refresher courses should be organized and the attendance of the teachers in the programs should be made compulsory. At the time of recruiting teachers for English, preference should be given to the candidates having ELT training.

Orientation programs for teachers to be acquainted with new teaching methods: Teachers should be given training in orientation programs. They should be introduced to the new techniques of teaching from time to time. Teachers should also adopt new teaching methods.

Text Books must be scrutinized by experts. No doubt, they must have been written by CIEFL and NCERT experts. Even then, some drawbacks in the books continue to be there. Workshops should be conducted so that teachers bring into notice the faults in the text books. It will improve things further.

The curriculum of the school should be carefully planned. It should be less burdensome and more useful for the learners. The text books and other activities in the school must fulfill the need and requirement of the children. The curriculum should be practical type.

Examination system should be improved. Examination should test the students' proficiency and abilities in all the four skills of the language. Importance should not be given, in the examination, only to the writing skills. Annual examinations should not become the criteria to check the ability of the student. More and more practical examination should be preferred. Internal Assessment should be equally important as the final examination.

Scope for suggestive correction. Schools should give due importance to correction work done by the teacher. The teacher should not be burdened with heavy work load. It should be congenial to the atmosphere of teaching. It will certainly improve the whole situation and help the teacher better and in an effective way.

Teachers should be encouraged to carry on research in their day today working in the schools. Research mindedness on the part of the teacher will certainly improve things. With some of these remedies, we can achieve a good atmosphere for both teaching and learning of English. Students should be provided with supplementary Readings and teachers with handbooks. Students should be encouraged to solve the work books provided and the teacher shall check it up and enable the students to acquire much more proficiency and fluency in the language. Both teachers and students should be aware of their aims and objects of teaching and learning of English to make their endeavor effective, delightful and interesting as well as fruitful.

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