

## DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSIFIED LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

**Ms. Sunayana Chowdhury Varma**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Hojai Girls' College  
Gauhati University,  
P. O. Hojai, Dist.: Nagaon,  
Assam, PIN: 782435

**Dr. Bishnu Prasad Varma**

Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
Hojai College  
Gauhati University,  
P. O. Hojai, Dist.: Nagaon,  
Assam, PIN: 782435

### Abstract

Language teaching depends on the mass of people engaged in the process of learning any living language. A living language is shaped and formed by its use by the population that uses it. A language could undergo many considerable changes along with both formal and non-formal depending on the population and its use. For example, the aged population uses more of a formal English than the younger who prefer mostly the 'txting' or 'smsing' kind of English featuring less letters and depending more on 'phones'. But for all, the major fact remains that all want to be well educated in the proper use of English and so approach the English Teacher / English classroom. The present paper focuses on the issues and problems related to English language teaching in a demographically diversified language classroom.

**Keywords:** English Language Teaching, Demography, Linguistic.

Demography, in recent years, has become a subject of study which encompasses all most everything under the social sciences. By demography it is generally meant that it focuses on the human population, but the impact that it creates on the population brings into consideration, along with other aspects, the relation that exists between population and education.

The two way relationship between demography and education has been described by many researchers and had put forward a great deal of extensive research work. Education has its impact on human population, it could bring down the mortality rate of human population, in fact it can be seen that more educated people can be expected to live a longer life with the knowledge that they get through education; they become more aware about the hygiene and get more conscious on the prevention of various diseases.

Education also plays a major role on the growth and slowing down of population. Educated people are more aware of the economic and other financial activities related to the upbringing of a child, hence they, mostly, decide to have one or two children. In fact, India recently had a slogan '*Hum do humare do*' which has created greater impact on the mind of the people—this has also contributed in slow growth of population. On the other hand, India is a country in which a vast majority of population lives in villages, where the importance of education has not yet spread widely; in such a situation the village folk thinks to have more children to help them in future with income. They even get an early marriage which further reduces their chance, particularly of women, to get exposed to the ever growing demand of education; whereas people in urban areas, who are educated, marry later in life than those with little or no formal education.

The demand of formal education or schooling has gathered importance in the recent years, and with the rise in the demand for schooling, the demand for English language teaching has also risen.

English language teaching in India is a very much talked about topic. Various methods and approaches have evolved out of discussions and researches on English language teaching; still the continuous changing scenario of the society make researchers, particularly from the field of ELT, to discuss the issues, related to the teaching of English further. Any virtual / literal change in the population or the composition of the population of a country/region shows visible impact on the language of the place. Demographic changes have its impact in the language of the classroom population too. The changes in population of a region present before the language teacher a challenge to teach a multilingual classroom, in India, with different degrees of competencies of vernacular languages.

English is taught, in India, primarily as a second language, emphasizing the communicative aspect of English. English, being considered as an international language-spoken globally, open greater opportunities of employment in a scenario where the developing nations, like India, have change in the demography and are also being influenced by the demographic change in the developed nations. Such a situation presents the ELT teacher with further challenge to prepare the English learners to get the benefit of learning English in a demographically changing world comprised of developed and developing countries.

The change in population is also caused by the process of migration and immigration. Learners nowadays are conscious about the rising demand of education and the competition therein. Therefore, the learners and their parents choose to go to better educational institutions. As a result of the movement for better educational facilities and better knowledge acquisition the present classroom, in India, is full of ethnically and linguistically diverse learners. It can be said that the impact of demography has affected the mainstream classroom, and with these has been

affected the language classroom, particularly the English language, where the teacher has to teach a multilingual and multicultural classroom.

In the scenario of globalization, the impact of demographic change could be felt throughout the world. The world becoming a global village has put an increasing demand on an international language, the purpose of which is presently served by English. The advent of outsourcing of business to countries like India by America, Britain, and other nations has further increased the demand of English. The demand of English in international communication has compelled the educational systems of many Indian states, including Assam, to introduce English as a subject in the lower primary curriculum.

In the global world, the demand of English language in India has increased many folds. English is so much of importance that students with little knowledge of English or with lower proficiency level of English are considered as disadvantaged citizens. It can further be added that people learning academic English are at an advantage of achieving better socio-economic success. English literacy skills could also be a determining factor of the future educational and employment opportunities. In India, the population could be divided into two groups based on the knowledge of English. Though there is no division of population on the basis of English, but surely the population knowing English creates a linguistic isolation.

The acquisition of English language is affected by many factors, for example the society, the culture, the region, etc. Mastering the skill of a language is a process that involves the psychological, social and linguistic aspects of the learner set within the context of the use of that language. In Assam, the teacher of English has to develop the skills of English language to a group of learners whose acquisition of English is affected by the knowledge of mother-tongue, regional language (Assamese), and the cultural variations. A language classroom, in Assam, is a classroom of mixed language population, consists of learners whose first language might be Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Bodo, Dimasa, Karbi, etc. They have varied culture at their home which also gives them different degrees of- or not at all- exposure to English. Their English is also based on the fact as to which ‘age’ they belong to.

Apart from the social, cultural, regional and at home language the learners of English also differ in their objective of attaining proficiency in English language. They also differ with respect to the prior language experiences and how the language was taught.

With the diverse factors of learning English and its various impacts on the learner along with the population changes the English teacher is put with greater demands to make the learner learn the correct way to read, write and speak English along with providing proper training to the ear.

The diversity of differences with respect to the language, culture, home, society, region, etc. makes the teacher of English to go beyond the notion of fitting all into one size. Therefore, the English teacher has to have the sincerity of developing the linguistic competence of the learners. Apart from the academic English, which requires more of reading, the teacher of English should also focus on the communicative aspect of the learner. For example, an English teacher of Assam should focus on developing the fluency and to eliminate the mother tongue influence of the regional language and other vernacular accents, so as to make the learners speak English with neutral accent, which would also help them to take a job in the BPO / Call centre industry. It is the mother tongue influence (MTI) that is one of the greatest hurdles in getting people from Assam into booming call centre industry in India.

The English teacher should also target on the development of the writing skills in English of the learners and inculcate in them the art of creative writing in English which once developed could make the learners to work in various private industries including the KPOs.

The teacher is a primary source of motivation and inspiration to the students in a classroom. The students, even, try to imitate the teacher. They imitate not only the gestures but also the way the teacher speaks, pronounces, utters utterances, etc. Therefore, it becomes a moral obligation of the English language teacher to know the correct pronunciation, accent (neutral), etc. so that he could be a good source of imitation and the students could learn more by, even, imitating the teacher. The teacher is the most important element in the whole teaching learning process, so it's very important that the teacher should be aware that through him quality teaching-learning takes place.

English is an international language, a global language. It is the dominant language in the present day world. It becomes even more unavoidable when the speakers engaged in a communication do not understand each other's regional language and do not share any common language, saving English. The learners of English, in India, should be taught English language with the view that English is the dominant language in national and international business. It is the language which opens the gates of many opportunities of job. English is the language with which deals the wide spread and high paying jobs in the outsourcing industries. Therefore, the learners in an English classroom should be given training on listening and speaking skills, along with a course in accent reduction. The English language teachers should focus on the communicative and other skills of English language acquisition of the learners to prepare them to meet the demands created by the wide spread of English in an era of globalization.

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