

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: THE APPROACHES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

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Abstract

The history of language teaching in India has a long tradition. Memorization of vocabulary and translation of sentences often formed the major part of such learning process in the past. In learners of English as a second language are students classified as “limited English proficient” (LEP) because they come from a home where a language other than English is spoken and score at below “Proficiency” on the LAB-R or score at the Beginning, Intermediate, or Advanced level of English as measured by the NYSESLAT. Diverse student profiles exist within the overall classification of LEP. There are LEP/ELLs who may be gifted and there are many with a high level of proficiency in their native language. Others may not be able to read or write in their native language because they have had a limited or interrupted formal education in their own country. Finally, there is a population of LEP students who have been identified as having special needs and have been referred for special education services. For ELL/LEP students, it is imperative to make teaching and learning culturally relevant and to enable access to prior knowledge upon which new skills and concepts can be built. It is critical for educators to understand the ways in which students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds profoundly influence their experiences in the classroom. The visual arts enhance language development by offering non-verbal methods for communication and understanding and by providing a platform for students to create mental images. Integrating the arts into language arts and the content areas for ELLs can give students the opportunity to engage in new and varied approaches while gaining positive emotional responses to learning, understanding others and communicating their own ideas.

Keywords: - English Language, Teaching, communication, native language, approaches



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Introduction:-

Here we discuss why English become very important in pre-independence period, changes that took place in the position of English after independence, and how it retained its supreme position in school curriculum even after six decades of independence. The history of Language teaching in India, as we know, has a long tradition. Memorization of vocabulary and translation of sentences often formed the major part of such learning process in the past. Ancient languages such as Sanskrit and Pali were mastered in India through the process of

memorization of texts and vocabulary lists. “Learning vocabulary lists indeed formed the core of language learning.” But this tradition of language teaching has been subjected to a tremendous change, especially, throughout the 20th century. In case of English language teaching in India, there are some milestones in the development of this tradition. According to D. Kanta Rao and J.M. Kanthi Thilakha: “If language teachers teach as they taught earlier, then one may not achieve the required goals of teaching English in the present global scenario.” So, there could be as many ways of learning languages as there are people learning them. The way one learnt English is not exactly the way one is teaching it. Again, the way one acquired one’s mother-tongue may be quite different from the way one learnt English. The following observation by V. Saraswathi is very important to quote in this connection. She says: “There is no best method. The history of language teaching presents a fascinating variety of methods. If there are such a variety of methods, which one are we to choose? There is no definite answer to this question, what works with one learner may not work with another. One may be a wizard in grammar but another may just hate it. Others might enjoy memorizing sentences.” She further adds: “Different methods may be appropriate to different contexts. If we start searching for the perfect method or the ideal single solution to the problem of language learning, we bound to fail”³ Like V. Saraswathi, Diane-Larsen-Freeman’s remark on language teaching methodology sums up a major trend away from unity to diversity in the following words. They comment: “There is no single acceptable way to go about teaching language today.” The statements quoted above make it clear that no single approach or method is appropriate for all learning styles. A good lesson will, therefore, be one in which the teachers use a smorgasbord of activities taken from a variety of sources. By varying our techniques, we will give students of all styles the chance to shine some of the time. In English language teaching pedagogy the three key terms viz- Method, Approach and technique are used frequently and interchangeably. This tripartite arrangement is hierarchical in order. The term ‘Method’ is very ambiguous, and refers to the overall plan for the orderly presentations of language material, no part of which contradicts and all of which is based on selected approach and procedure.

Need of the study:-

English language has contributed in bringing people and their culture closer. The benefits of learning English can be seen in the economic, social and political life of the people of the country. English crosses cultures, countries and industries. Its often used as a ‘common tongue’ of everyone. As a language learner, or teacher, it is important to understand the various methods

and techniques so that he/she may be capable to navigate the market, make educated choice and boost one's enjoyment of learning a language.

Objectives of the study:-

The specific objectives of the study are:-

1. To know the real issues and challenges of an English teacher who faces in the class room.
2. Effective methods to teach English language..

Methodology:-

Main aim of the study was focused on the non native English speakers and the difficulties they face while learning English as a second language (ESL) and the part of teachers. It is generally felt that English language plays a vital role in the job market so it is mandatory to learn the language. when the students enroll for the courses to develop the language most of the time they do not succeed because of various reasons like in-effecting teaching, lack of motivation, lack of practice sessions, poor training modules etc. The data from degree pursuing students' shows the result which indicates that the teaching methodology of the teachers is more important to develop the English language of the students.

Approaches to English Language Teaching:

Firstly, let us analyse what is the role that English language plays in India. Even when a language does not function as the mother tongue of any sections of the populations of a country, it may, none the less, fulfil such an important role within the country that it can be termed a second language. Apart from the fact that there are small sections of the populations that speak it with native proficiency, far better than they speak any Indian languages. English plays a very important role in education, business and administration. It is the medium of instruction for higher education, both academic and technological. Those who seek jobs in private companies or the professions must be proficient in English. It is recognised as an official language for purpose of administration at the national level. It would follow that it should be considered as a second language rather than a foreign language.

This approach as Kripa K. Gautam states "is based on the belief that language consists of 'structures' and that the mastery of these structures is more important than the acquisition of vocabulary. Since structure is what is important and unique about a language, early practice should focus on mastery of phonological and grammatical structures rather than on mastery of vocabulary". This approach, according to Kulkarni 'emphasizes the teaching and learning of the basic items or materials that constitute the framework of a language'.

The cause of the emergence of this approach was the extensive research conducted on English language teaching as a foreign language at the University of London Institute of Education. This approach, as Dr. Bhat asserts 'is definitely an improvement upon the Direct Method, though the techniques and principles are not widely different'.⁸⁰ The exponents of this approach consider that language consists of 'structures' and structures are more important than the vocabulary. These structures are carefully graded in terms of both meaning and form.

The two essential features of this approach are careful grading of structures, and vocabulary control. J.B. Bruton in a working paper presented at the Nagpur Seminar in [1958](#) summarizes the basic assumptions regarding the nature of language and the methods best suited for the presentation of linguistic items. He says: "a) language is primarily a spoken thing and... therefore, our approach to a foreign language should in a first instance be through its spoken forms, b) ...mastery over the signaling system of a language is more important than detailed knowledge of the forms of the language; c) ...this mastery is best acquired by repetition of the various components of the system in varied forms; d) ... since language arises from situation, the teacher's task is to create meaningful situations from which language will arise easily and naturally; e)... mastery over a given range of structures and confidence in their use are best imparted by concentrating on the teaching of one item at a time; f)...each item must be firmly established orally before pupils encounter it in their textbooks".

The Communicative Approach: Dr. Sharada Bhat opines that the communicative approach to teaching of English is organized on the basis of certain communicative functions, such as apologizing, describing, inviting, promising etc. that the ESL learners need to know. She further, adds that this approach, as applied to English explains the language in terms of the functions it performs. This approach, according to Dr. Bhat, does not ignore the role of grammar in the process of language learning, but it insists that the grammatical rules are useless unless they are applied to real-life situations. Communicative approach focuses on the significance of language functions because the learner needs knowledge of both meaning and functions. It lays emphasis on functional, communicative and social interactive activities. It also lays emphasis on the semantic aspect of the language. In order to improve the ability of reading comprehension it is essential that the learner knows the semantic aspect of the language.

Looking at it from the point of views of the learner, one notes that exposure to English in large cities is considerable. In a city like Mumbai, English newspapers are widely read, English programmes on T.V are widely watched, and advertisement, shop signs, street names,

announcements at stations and other public places make use of English. Certainly, no foreign language would occupy such a position in any places.

Yet there are aspects in which the position of English for many Indian learners is more alien to that of a foreign language than a second language. Added to this, there is a fact that both the structure of the language and the expression of concepts make it more difficult for an Indian to learn English than another Indian language. English thus becomes an alien to the learner as any other foreign language. Thus the position of English in India is in some respects alien to that of a second language, in some respects that of a foreign language. A further complication and a serious one arise from the number of languages to be learnt and the order in which they are learnt. English may be the third language introduced in schools after the mother tongue and Hindi. It may even be the fourth language, when the mother tongue of the student is different from the regional language of the state. All these considerations will affect not only the goals we set ourselves, the level of proficiency at which we aim, but our assumptions about the way the language will be learnt.

Prospective teachers of the language must be conversant with the theories of language learning. Since divergent approaches to what is taught and how it is taught, syllabus and method. Skinner is a leading exponent of behaviourist psychology, according to which, to put it broadly, all behaviour may be explained in terms of the organism's responses to stimuli from the external environment. Behaviourists restrict themselves to the observation of overt acts of behaviour and exclude from their sphere the underlying mental processes which are not directly observable.

Animal as well as human learning is explained in terms of 'conditioning' when the right response is emitted; it receives a reward or 'reinforcement', which encourages a repetition of the same response when the stimulus is repeated. For an animal, this reinforcement may consist of food. For a child learning its native language, it may take the form of praise or approval or the granting of its demands, resulting from adult comprehension of its speech. Repeated reinforcement establishes the response as a habit.

Skinner's Verbal behaviour (1957) is the most through- going application of behaviourist psychological theory to the study of linguistic phenomena. All mentalistic terms, such as 'idea', 'meaning', 'concepts', and 'intention' are eschewed and the emittance of verbal behaviour is explained entirely in terms of responses, which are reinforced by a listener. An utterance is termed a 'verbal operant's operant being a unit of behaviour which operates upon the environment. Most recent writers on language learning regard Skinner's account on quite

inadequate and it certainly appears to be so. Chomsky, in an extended review of Skinner's book in the journal *Language*, demonstrates that whereas terms such as 'stimulus', 'response', 'reinforcement' and conditioning have a well – defined meaning in the laboratory in experiments involving animal behaviour; when used in the restricted sense they do not satisfactorily account for verbal behaviour, while if the terms are used in a broader metaphorical sense, the description offers no improvement over more traditional formulations.

According to Chomsky, normal linguistic behaviour is stimulus – free and innovative and he dismisses as a myth the belief that it is 'habitual' and that its fixed stock of 'patterns' is acquired through practice and used as a basis for 'analogy'. He also points out that where as normal speech is somewhat distorted manifestation of linguistic competence, the child does not merely imitate and reproduce what she/ he hears, but from the performance of the adults around her/ him learns the underlying ideal theory.

Most researchers in the area of child language acquisition have noted the child's ability to deduce rules and would endorse this fundamental premise in Chomsky's argument. They have, however also noted the mother's role in presenting the child with simplified input, unobtrusively through repetition, supplying corrections and the child's recourse to imitation and repetition. This would point to the part that habit formation also plays in native language acquisition. Let us take as instance, the manner in which the child learns the irregular past tense forms. It has been observed that children begin by using these correctly as a result of direct imitation of adult speech. But children then pass through a stage when they have derived a rule regarding the formation of the past tense and through over generalisation apply this rule universally, producing forms like 'good' where they had earlier used 'went'. It is only in the third stage that they revert to the correct form, apparently realising that a rule may permit of exceptions.

Children acquiring their native language are not merely learning a specific language; they are learning control over their speech organs and are also learning to organise their experience, partly through the use of language. Experience leads one to believe, however, that students of average and below average ability may not be able to verbalise their awareness of how concepts and relationships are categorised in their life.

English Language Teaching Methods:-

Before independence, several generations of Indian studied English through what has come to be termed the grammar – translation method. They were systematically presented with the rules of grammar and given practice in the construction of correct sentences, through

translation from the mother tongue. Explanations in the early stages at least were offered in the mother tongue. Explanations in the early stages at least were offered in the mother tongue. Reading and writing were emphasised, speech and listening comprehension ignored. The approach suited those with a capacity for grasping abstract concepts. But it is hardly an approach adapted to an age of universal education.

The grammar -translation method, the Direct method, Audio-lingual method, Bilingual method, Dr. Michael West's the new method, and Suggestopedia etc., are among the methods used commonly by the teachers of English in India. An attempt, therefore, has been made to review these methods as below:

The Grammar - Translation Method: This method, also known as the classical method, is one of the oldest or traditional methods of teaching English. In Europe it was used in the teaching of Latin and Greek for several centuries, and got introduced in India with the arrival of the British. This method as Tickoo said: "came to English Language teaching in most of Asia in general and India in particular with support in the long- established tradition of teaching classical languages in the United Kingdom. The system of education in the country served as a model for schools in most of its colonies. The psychological beliefs that prevailed then were (a) that classical languages with their intricate systems of grammar were capable of training human faculties including memory, and (b) that learning these languages was part of a truly liberal education. Teaching and learning primarily aimed at the ability to read full texts rather than to communicate orally in everyday situations.

"It is one which treats all languages as if they were dead, as if each consisted essentially of a collection of ancient documents to be deciphered and analyzed... It is the one which categorically ignores all considerations of phonetics, pronunciations and acoustic image, and boldly places language on a foundation of alphabets, spellings and writing systems... It is the one which assumes translation to be the main or only procedure for the learning of vocabulary... It is the one which assumes that word and sentence structure is to be attained mainly or solely through the memorizing of the so-called rules of grammar."

In spite of the weaknesses catalogued by Palmer, the method could best be put in use by discarding the overemphasis on the grammatical rules and by making a room for imparting training in the spoken aspects of English. The grammar-translation method in its modified form continues to be widely used in some parts of the world even today. In the mid-and late 19th century opposition to it gradually developed, and as a result of this it lost its hold in the domain of teaching of English.

Soon after independence, the structural approach was introduced in India on the advice of experts from the British council. Most states appointed committees to draw up a grammatical syllabus for each year and to prepare text books based on it. The principle of selection and grading of language items was given prime importance when drawing up the syllabus.

English Language Teaching has become a specific discipline in view of the growing global demand for the language and the geographical spread of its use for various purposes. English is taught and learnt by speakers of other languages and this involves a larger set of issues in its teaching and learning. Language learning and teaching occur in such varied contexts that it is difficult to generalise precepts or advocate practices. Ultimately it is the individual teacher in the immediate situation of his/her classroom, who can best decide upon the methodology to be adopted. What has been attempted here is to collect prevailing principles and practice, in order that prospective teachers are equipped with the necessary information and insights that will help them to benefit from the experience of others and the expertise available. It will be of help to the prospective as well as practising teacher to be aware of the history of the methods used as well as problems that beset the classroom teacher in finding solutions to what may be encountered in the English Classroom.

Techniques in Teaching English:

It is clearly important for teachers to introduce variety of learning strategies to their students. Some students even do not recognize some other strategies in learning as if they do not have choices. Richard and Renandya explain some considerations in the form of test of a technique's potential for creating or sustaining intrinsic motivation of which represents a facet of principle of intrinsic motivation. For instance, the technique should appeal to the genuine interests of the students, the technique should be presented in a positive, enthusiastic manner and the students are clearly aware of the purpose of the technique. Furthermore, they add that the teachers should consider whether the technique encourage students to discover for themselves certain principles or rules rather than simply being 'told' and whether it also encourage students in some ways to develop or use effective strategies learning and communication. There are some techniques that can be applied by teachers in teaching their students to speak English, such as role play, naive-speaker visitor answer questions in specific topics, pen friends, group presentation, inter class debate, speech competitions, concerts etc.

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