Teaching English in India: A Challenge for Teacher

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Abstract

English language is getting consolidated as a global language, it is indispensable for all the countries to teach and learn English. Otherwise, it is difficult to keep pace with the development in the world. In particular, it is very essential for a multilingual and developing country like India to learn this global language. Hence, to make the learning of English effective and successful a teacher should aim to enable the students in understanding and imbibing the English language in day to day life. There are a number of sub-skills under these broad skills of listening, speaking, and reading and writing, which have to be carefully cultivated in the process of teaching. A close study highlights that teaching of English in India has undergone major changes. First as a foreign language and at present as a second language, the teachers of the English have worked on the various aspects including the demands of globalization. The paper studies the challenges impended in Teaching/Learning English as a Second Language in India.

The teaching of English in India has been a demanding and challenging profession. This is so because of the large population belonging to divergent socio-economic backgrounds with allegiance to their first language. The cultural and religious devotion also exhibit tremendous influence on the learner of the
language. Apart from these reasons the most important factor that influx the learning and teaching of the language is lack of government policies.

There have been frequent changes in the policy of the government towards the teaching and learning of English. In the past, it was treated as a compulsory subject from class six onwards in government school system. While it was offered as a compulsory subject in English medium schools and was used as a medium of instruction, the private schools offered English as a subject from nursery classes. It means that the students of government schools started studying English at the age of eleven years whereas the students of English medium schools started studying English at the age of four years. This created a serious problem for those students who did not study English from class one with the result that students of government primary school are rated low in admission for higher education and in getting jobs. Though in the present time English is taught as a compulsory subject, only the pass mark is taken into consideration. As the percentage of low achievers has been ever increasing, the Government has decided not to consider marks in English as essential for admission into a university course. The educationists and politicians differ on the role and status of English in India. If we are to aim at good standards in English, it is high time that the Government takes a strong decision to formulate and implement appropriate policies that promote students’ learning of English.

**Challenges for Teachers in the Present Scenario**

One of the problems generally faced by most of the teachers of English at the college level is the poor standard of the students. Students are even ignorant of the basic rules and structural patterns which they are supposed to have learnt at the school level. If a teacher directly starts his teaching at the graduate level without trying to know the level of the students, his efforts will not bear any fruits as he will not be able to raise a structure over a feeble foundation.
Therefore, a teacher before starting his teaching program must diagnose the language background of the learners. Keeping in view the background of the learners, he should select his teaching items, grade them and present them in accordance with the local situations.

A teacher should begin from the simple grammatical items and proceed towards the complex ones. Each succeeding grammatical item has to be based on the previous ones taught earlier in the class. Thus, by carefully selecting the frequently recurring grammatical items and by grading them as per the background of the learners, a teacher should provide constant practice to the students in creating and using sentences based on the grammatical forms and structures in various day-to-day situations of their lives.

The fact that English grammar has its own set of complicated rules and regulations makes it a tough language to conquer. A good number of students struggle with these rules, and cannot really understand many of the principles on first or second reading.

These exacting and tricky challenges make it necessary for any teacher of English to have a formal training in teaching practices and methods. It is not enough to have sufficient skills in listening and understanding the language. Even a native speaker of the English language requires a methodical and intensive training program to qualify as a good teacher of English as a foreign language. Many of the skills like understanding specific problems related to particular regions and building basic communication skills in students etc can only be acquired through a formal learning of the same. A commonsensical approach would be of no help here. Teachers have to be prepared for the most bizarre mistakes, and need to know how to handle these delicate situations with aplomb. That is why it is important to undergo formal training in teaching English before you actually begin the process of teaching English as a foreign language.
A Challenge in Teaching English Today

At present the challenges visible before the English language teachers in India are diverse and it is necessary for them to shape up accordingly to meet the demands of the day. the changing trends and techniques in the field of language acquisition and teaching will not only help teachers in improvement but also make language teaching an enjoyable task.

Innovative Methods in the teaching of English

Group Discussions

Today the main emphasis is on communicative approach rather than the lecture mode. The main aim is to make the students effective communicators in English and to overcome any drawbacks in the use of language.

To achieve this, the students can be made to participate more in classroom activities which require soft skills, so that they will acquire adequate command over speaking skills. To create this environment, teachers can conduct group discussions, where students are supposed to speak only in English. Here, they can give their views, ideas and thoughts in English.

Various types of discussions also help students to improve their general awareness and understanding about current affairs. It gives a lot of scope for good imagination and deep thoughts. This type of discussions helps the students to listen to the views of the other participants.

Debates

Debates too play an important role to improve the speaking ability of the students both at school and at higher level. Debates not only make the students to speak boldly and fluently but also help them to take one stand and be firm and consistent on that. Along with this advantage of reasoning, it gives students some experience to control their emotions without losing their temper. This also helps them to organize their thoughts and ideas in a specific way while speaking.
Role Plays

Role-plays are another important task that can improve the basic colloquial English of the learners. In role plays, the students assume themselves as one of the characters and behave and speak accordingly involving in the given character completely. In these types of activities teachers have to play a vital role as instructors and guide the students properly so that they can act appropriately to meet the situation. They should help the students now and then to understand and take up the role given to get a grip on the tone of voice.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Now-a-days computer has become a part and parcel of our day to day life. It plays a vital role in the process of teaching and learning. It can be used to learn a foreign language like English. Computers have made language learning easy and also made the language learning process interesting and enjoyable for both teacher and student throughout the world. CALL has reduced the burden of the teacher whose teaching methods will be out dated to teach language to present day generation of the world. It is described as one of the interactive methods that can help a learner according to their own ability to learn, which enriches their language skills. CALL enables the learner to look beyond the conventional mode of learning and encourages self learning.

English for Specific Purposes

As English has emerged as a global language, it also plays a vital part in every profession with respect its importance and demand. Every profession has its own professional terminology which is used frequently in that particular profession. For example, certain terms used by the doctors, lawyers, et al. are quite different from those of other professionals. So, to benefit these professionals, English for specific purposes is introduced so that specific English words related to that particular profession can be taught by those professionals. Jargon related to one profession is different from the other. Hence every professional is taught in a particular manner that fits in well with his professional demands.
Teaching Language through Visual Aids

One of the innovative methods used by the teacher to teach language in classroom is visual aids. The teacher distributes visual aids to students by dividing them into various groups. The students are then given stipulated time to extract relevant information on the given aids. After that, those learners are supposed to speak about the visual aids given to them. This method expands the analyzing capacity of the students. By looking at the picture, the learner should think and come out with innovative thoughts which also help in learning language by creating fun-filled environment around them. The teacher acts as facilitator who motivates the students to talk freely. As each person gets their own unique thinking it helps to sharpen their thinking process.

Language Games

In addition to the above mentioned methods teachers also use various language games to teach English language apart from the conventional ways of language teaching, which helps in developing vocabulary from the language that is being learned

1. Crossword puzzles

2. Games to teach basics of grammar to the students through various structures.

Conclusion

To meet the present day challenges in teaching English, first of all, English should not be treated as a subject as it is to be used actively in interacting with one another throughout the world. By using conventional methods, maximum portion of class time will be wasted in exercises and drilling, dealing with grammar and pronunciation which takes away a large portion of class time. These methods were mostly used to develop basic skills of language learning such as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, but by following these methods listening and speaking skills were neglected as students cannot put their language in practice.
References:

