

Challenges in English Language Teachings: Indian outlook

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Abstract—The ‘English-speaking culture’ is deep-rooted in India and its dominance initiated when language imperialism started along with the aggressive colonial rule. India is a land of diverse cultures, heritage and languages with about 19,500 regional languages and dialects. This paper aims to focus on some of the key objectives by creating awareness on the current trends, issues and challenges that language teachers and learners have to face. Several obstacles such as a big number of students in the classroom, students from rural background, lack of motivation and confidence, illiteracy, inability to read and write, lack of participation and response and above all unavailability of trained and qualified teachers make the entire process of implementing quality education and skill orientation futile. The focus is given that how students can put their learning into practice through effective communication skills. The importance of teaching English in order to fulfill the ever growing demands of English language is also stressed. Moreover, the common prevalent problems in the classroom are discussed and solution is provided in order to tackle such situation. We need to bridge the gap between haves and have not or ‘urban’ and the ‘rural’. The needs to reform teaching methodology in literature and to adopt appropriate teaching strategies are also taken up to face the global demands. Challenges before the teachers in present day scenario are also taken up.

Key words: Quality education, skill orientation, effective communication skills, teaching methodology and strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

In India, the teaching of English has posed a significant challenge since it is in the beginning stage of English language education. Despite the universal importance of language to civilizations and cultures worldwide, there is widespread concern about the declining status of English in Indian schools and colleges. The global status of the English language and its recognition as an international language is remarkable. All indications point towards the continued strengthening of English as a global language. However, we must acknowledge the venerable challenge that teaching spoken English to Indian students has posed for language teachers.

This paper throws light about current trends, issues and challenges that all language learner's and teachers are facing. Various obstacles regarding large number of students stuffed in small classroom, rural background, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, barrier of hesitation, lack of reading habits, phobia in the minds of learners, inappropriate curriculum that do not fulfill the requirements of English learners, lack of feedback and lack of trained and qualified teachers are some important factors that makes the entire process of implementing quality education futile.

In addition, there is an emphasis on the significance of teaching English to meet the increasing need for English language skills. The current obstacles faced by English teachers in today's English Language Teaching (ELT) will also be addressed. The methods for students to apply their learning in everyday situations to meet practical communication needs and improve their English language proficiency will be highlighted.

II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The most commonly used language globally is English. It is essential not only for global connectivity communication, but also for academic pursuits and employment opportunities in India. Many companies prioritize candidates with strong English communication skills to engage with international clientele effectively. Additionally, English facilitates the understanding and appreciation of diverse global cultures, promoting better comprehension of people's emotions and viewpoints. Moreover, English serves as a medium for comprehending various subjects like science and mathematics, necessitating a proficient grasp of the language to enhance comprehension of these fields.

III. INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Since from the late 19th century, English has held a significant influence in India after being introduced by the British during their colonial rule. Consequently, it has been utilized as an official language for government functions and within numerous educational institutions. This has contributed to the elevated position that English currently holds. Macaulay's renowned Minute on Indian Education in 1835 greatly impacted the educational policies of the era, as he advocated for the advancement of English education in India to establish a group of Indians who could act as intermediaries between the British rulers and the Indian populace. His policies stressed the adoption of English as the primary language of instruction in higher education, leaving a long-lasting impression on India's educational system. The use of English in India has expanded to encompass various communication domains such as business, education, media, and technology. This has facilitated increased connectivity with the global economy for more individuals in India, providing access to a wider array of opportunities.

IV. ENGLISH - GAP IN RURAL AND URBAN INDIA

The lack of English proficiency is predominantly noticeable in rural India, where educational resources and infrastructure are underdeveloped. Schools in rural areas have limited access to technology, books, and other essential tools required for the students' growth. In urban areas, there is a higher concentration of private educational institutions that have better access to resources compared to their rural counterparts. This also clarifies the high demand for English medium schools among parents in urban areas. The high student-teacher ratio leads to inefficiency, particularly in rural settings where students have limited opportunities to practice and grasp the English language. Large class sizes contribute to the inability of students to receive individual attention. For the benefit of learners, a significant transformation in English language education is needed in schools and colleges. Rural and semi-urban students in India encounter numerous challenges due to English not being their native language. English serves as their second language, following their local language and then Hindi and French in some areas.

V. STUDENTS NOT INTERESTED ENGLISH – WHY?

Students often struggle to learn English in schools due to insufficient practice speaking the language. Teachers may prioritize grammar instruction over providing ample opportunities for students to engage in English conversations or utilize the language for projects and assignments. English classes tend to emphasize theoretical learning rather than practical application, and many schools lack the necessary resources and support for English language education. Despite the fact that Hindi is the first language for 528 million people, which accounts for nearly 44% of the population, English serves as the language of the Supreme Court, elite business, much of the government and national media, and is associated with success.

VI. ENGLISH LANGUAGE- ELITE IN INDIA

In India, English is still viewed as a language for the privileged, providing access to employment and prospects. It is regarded as an indication of higher education and social standing. Individuals who are fluent in English are frequently viewed favorably by employers and have an advantage over those who are not. According to the Lok Foundation survey, English is far more an urban than a rural phenomenon; just 3% of rural respondents said that they could speak English, as against 12% of urban respondents. There is a clear class element at work—41% of the rich could speak English as against less than 2% of the poor. - Livemint.

VII. COMMON PROBLEM IN THE CLASSROOM

As ESL teachers, we need to continuously adjust to our students' needs. This often involves addressing a range of issues in the classroom. An effective ESL teacher should be able to identify these typical problems and strive to find solutions for them.

VII.I. THE RELIANCE ON TEACHERS IS EXCESSIVE

When the teacher consistently provides the correct answers to the student, it fosters a habit of spoon-feeding, causing the student to rely on the teacher rather than trying to figure things out on their own. Therefore, it is important to provide positive encouragement and avoid turning students into puppets controlled by the teacher.

VII.II. LACK OF PARTICIPATION OR THE BARRIER OF HESITATION

Encouraging individual involvement and focusing on collaborative learning experiences is essential. Patience and meticulous planning are necessary for teaching English as a second language. It's important to observe the classroom and identify those who are not participating. The teacher serves as the catalyst in the classroom, and to engage quieter students, involves them in activities they enjoy, such as talking about their friends, family, or the weather. Interactive games and activities that require

communication to accomplish a task can also be used to encourage participation. Making English learning enjoyable will help students feel comfortable and at ease.

VII.III. THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE

In the instruction of a foreign language, using the native language wisely and appropriately can be extremely beneficial. When it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, it is often done in an artificial setting where the influence of the native language is more prevalent. Students learn other subjects in their native language, and English is only heard during English class. As a result, this approach hinders the overall learning process. If a student doesn't comprehend something in English, they seek clarification in their native language. This forces the English teacher to use a bilingual approach. Schools do not teach grammar that is focused on practical application. Additionally, students have limited exposure to the language. The emphasis is on memorizing and understanding rules rather than applying them.

VIII. CONCLUSION

It is important to dedicate as many hours as possible to practicing English. Language learners must understand the intricacy of the language learning process and focus on honing their speaking and writing skills independently, with guidance if available. Self-education and language practice are irreplaceable and independent activities. However, it is crucial not to be overly particular or excessively critical about the language. Pronunciation is ingrained and does not require the same level of attention as native speakers for effective communication. Ultimately, the individual's effort and initiative should take precedence over advanced technology.

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