

Teaching of English in Indian Schools: Problems and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The pedagogical practice of instructing and acquiring proficiency in the English language within the Indian educational system has historically presented a formidable obstacle for both the educators and learners involved. English, which is extensively used across the globe, supplanted Indian languages subsequent to the advent of colonialism. Over time, it assimilated into the academic curriculum of institutions and became a language of communication used by the upper echelons of society. The imposition of the English rule encountered significant opposition from the indigenous ruling authorities in different parts of the country. As a result, the utilization of English as a tool for instruction and communication in the land was impeded. The outcome of this phenomenon is that acquiring proficiency in the language poses a significant obstacle and a formidable undertaking for the majority of individuals. The proliferation of private and commercial educational establishments has underscored the need for English language educators to develop a heightened awareness of how to effectively address and guide students across the spectrum of academic and personal development. This paper aims to elucidate prominent objectives by increasing cognizance regarding contemporary trends, issues, and obstacles encountered by language educators and pupils. The implementation of quality education and skill orientation is fraught with various obstacles such as a high student-to-teacher ratio, a predominantly rural background, low motivation and confidence, illiteracy, insufficient reading and writing abilities, an unsuitable curriculum, inadequate participation and responsiveness, and, above all, a scarcity of trained and qualified educators. The paper highlights a range of pedagogical aspects pertaining to teaching and learning. The significance of imparting language instruction for meeting the continuously increasing requirements of career advancement and succeeding in diverse competitive assessments is underscored. This study concentrates on the manner in which students may apply their learning via proficient communication abilities. The significance of instructing the English language as a means to satisfy the continually increasing needs of the English language is also emphasized. Furthermore, the prevalent issues that commonly occur within a classroom setting are analyzed, and solutions are proposed for the purpose of addressing and resolving such situations. It is essential to establish a means of overcoming the disparate conditions of individuals categorized as either possessing or lacking resources, or residing within urban or rural settings. The need to revamp the pedagogical approach in language education and to implement apt instructional practices are also being addressed in response to worldwide requisites. Present-day challenges faced by educators are also being addressed.

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

INTRODUCTION

India is a nation that is currently experiencing growth and development, and among the challenges it faces is the effective instruction of the English language, a challenge that has persisted since the early days of English language pedagogy up to the present time. Language is an integral component of civilizations and cultures globally. Nevertheless, a prevalent concern among individuals in our country pertains to the declining state of English language proficiency in educational institutions. The language of English exhibits a deficit in proficiency amongst a significant portion of pupils enrolled in schools, particularly those belonging to government-run institutions, within this country. Paradoxically, despite investing 10-12 pivotal years in acquiring proficiency in English language from elementary education up to secondary education, a significant proportion of students continue to struggle with spoken and written English. Consequently, a sizable cohort of functionally illiterate learners in English is perpetuated into the tertiary level of education, with students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree being the most affected. Furthermore, the expectation of favourable outcomes from higher authorities places teachers in a dilemma, as they must decide between meeting syllabus requirements and enhancing the English language proficiency of their students.

It is a remarkable observation that the English language has attained a position of global stature, or commonly referred to as the "International Language". The prevailing evidence strongly indicates that the primacy of English as a global language shall continue to gain strength. With this being said, it stands to reason that the instructional aspect of spoken English for the Indian student body has proven to be a formidable hurdle for language educators over a prolonged period of time.

The present paper elucidates prevailing trends, concerns, and impediments encountered by both language learners and instructors. Several noteworthy obstacles impede the implementation of quality education, such as the significant volume of students within cramped classrooms, students' backgrounds originating in rural areas, a dearth of confidence and motivation, apprehension toward English language acquisition, inadequate reading habits and curriculum that fails to cater to the specific needs of English learners, insufficient feedback mechanisms, and an absence of trained and qualified teachers.

Additionally, there is an emphasis on the significance of instructing the English language to meet the constantly increasing requirements for English proficiency. The contemporary challenges encountered by English instructors in the realm of English Language Teaching shall also be expounded upon. The present discourse aims to delineate the various means by which students may effectively apply their cognitive acquisitions in a practical context, by virtue of their adeptness in effective communication, beyond mere proficiency in the English language. In order to address the disparities between individuals who possess ample resources and those who lack them, or between urban and rural communities, it is necessary to establish methods of bridging such divides.

This paper examines the contemporary state of teaching English as a second language at the level of school education. In ancient times, the English language was primarily regarded as a means of communication within the confines of a library setting. However, contemporary times have seen a significant shift in this perception, as the traditional notion has been subjected to questioning and scrutiny. Currently, a diverse array of challenges confronts English language instructors in India, necessitating their efforts to adapt and keep pace with contemporary demands.

OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of English language instruction in India ought not to be centred upon the cultivation of an excessive appetite for books or an excessively narrow focus on linguistic proficiency to the exclusion of other cognitive, communicative, and social skills. The fundamental aspect lies in motivating students by generating awareness about the significance of the English language.

Another significant aim is to centre attention on the secondary/higher secondary pathway. Many students approach studying English as a means of passing the course rather than genuinely learning the language. Consequently, these learners perceive their future prospects in this area to be a daunting and uncertain journey ahead.

The primary objective of English language instruction in India should focus on fostering effective communication capabilities among students. Achieving this goal should entail the implementation of pedagogical approaches that engage students in playful methods of language acquisition.

The impediment of reluctance or trepidation concerning the acquisition of English language skills, specifically among secondary students must be surmounted to facilitate genuine and effective learning.

The present English language curriculum for the different streams of Higher Secondary also fails to cater to the comprehensive demands and requirements of learners, as the pedagogical approach predominantly revolves around examinations and the pursuit of degrees.

TEACHER AND METHOD

The historical discourse on language education encompasses a captivating array of instructional strategies. Diverse techniques may be suitable for varying types of information. The pursuit of an optimal approach or a single definitive solution to the challenges inherent in language acquisition is inevitably futile. It is imperative for educators to exercise their discretion in making informed judgements regarding the selection and timing of pedagogical methodologies. The authors Richards and Rodgers may be recounted as having made significant contributions to the field.

It has been suggested that an educator should consider adopting an eclectic and pragmatic approach, as it has been posited that no singular methodology may prove efficacious in all instructional contexts. In instances where the instructor becomes subservient to a prescribed teaching methodology, the teaching process may become disordered and chaotic. In the field of education, it is imperative for a proficient teacher to possess a wide range of methods at their disposal, in order to successfully meet the diverse learning requirements of their students, as well as to adapt to the varying classroom conditions. Hence, a capable educator is expected to employ an appropriate method, contingent upon

the individual student's proficiency level and learning prerequisites. The prudent utilization of any pedagogical approach may prove advantageous for the learners. Acquiring knowledge of contemporary language instruction methodologies can be likened to obtaining a loan from a financial institution absent a comprehensive understanding of the optimal parameters for investing it to realize maximum utility.

It is deemed valuable for educators to consider diverse instructional techniques instead of a singular pedagogical approach. In the context of the English classroom, the development of adaptability and flexibility for students is a plausible outcome if the teacher articulates clear expectations regarding coursework, discipline, and homework, as well as establishes unambiguous goals and objectives from the outset. By demonstrating respect towards our students and implementing a curriculum tailored to their specific requirements, encountering obstacles would be a rare occurrence. Many educators do not confine themselves to a single teaching approach or tactic; rather, they amalgamate various components of multiple strategies to foster fruitful classroom deliberation. Adapting teaching methodologies to suit the unique local contextual factors constitutes a crucial aspect of effective pedagogy. There does not exist a singular infallible technique, so to speak. The task of determining the appropriate circumstances and objectives for the employment of different teaching methods ultimately rests with the educator's discerning and applicable common sense.

COMMON PROBLEM IN THE CLASSROOM

As a Second Language (ESL) teacher, it is imperative to maintain a continuous process of adapting to the needs of our students. Frequently, this entails addressing a diversity of challenges encountered within the learning environment. An effective instructor of English as a Second Language (ESL) should be capable of identifying prevalent issues and undertaking measures to address them.

The phenomenon of over-reliance on teachers is a pressing issue in pedagogy. The perpetual provision of accurate solutions by instructors fosters a culture of dependence and spoon-feeding, which hinders students from developing problem-solving skills. Consequently, students habitually seek the assistance of teachers when confronted with challenges instead of attempting to resolve them autonomously. Therefore, the concentration should be on providing affirmative motivation and refraining from manipulating individuals into subservience to the teacher's will.

One of the primary challenges educators face is engaging students who may exhibit a lack of interest, attentiveness, or motivation. It is therefore essential to implement strategies that promote active participation and prevent boredom or feelings of exclusion among learners. Consequently, fostering a stimulating and inclusive classroom environment is crucial for achieving academic success. It is incumbent upon the teacher to ensure that the study of language is rendered engrossing to the students. To enhance engagement with the topic, it is recommended to establish a connection between the subject matter and the daily duties and personal experiences of the audience. Such an approach imbues the topic with purpose and meaning, thereby generating a more pleasurable learning experience. When delivering oral or written compositions, it is advisable to avoid utilizing topics such as "Polar Bear" or "Dinosaurs" which are outside the audience's prior experiences. Instead, provide them with subject matter such as Diwali or their preferred educator. A juvenile exhibits a lack of engagement towards acquiring knowledge on subjects that are fundamentally dissimilar to their personal affairs and surroundings.

When instructing English as a Second Language, educators may come across pupils with a diverse range of learning abilities and proficiencies in the target language. Among such learners are those identified as introverted or reluctant participants. It is imperative to prevent select extroverted and overly confident pupils from monopolizing the spotlight. The pedagogical approach centres on activating introverted and academically disengaged students, encouraging their participation in class discussions and activities, with the aim of cultivating their self-assurance and enhancing their learning outcomes.

Insufficient engagement or the impediment of reluctance should be addressed through the promotion of individual involvement and a greater emphasis on collaborative learning. The pedagogical initiative of imparting knowledge of the English language as a secondary linguistic competence necessitates the virtues of forbearance and meticulous strategizing. It is imperative that the classroom is continually observed and unsatisfactory levels of engagement are identified. In an educational setting, the instructor serves as the catalyst for student engagement and motivation. Effective techniques to promote active participation from reticent students might involve activities tailored to their interests, such as inviting discussion about their hobbies, acquaintances, or current weather conditions. One may also engage students in participatory interactive games or activities that require communication amongst themselves to accomplish a given objective. It is recommended to employ pedagogical strategies that foster an engaging and enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom, thereby enabling students to comfortably acquire proficiency in the English language.

The utilization of the native language exhibits a substantial advantage in foreign language instruction. In particular, when teaching English as a foreign language, the astute and apt use of the mother tongue can be of immense assistance.

It is widely acknowledged that learners of English encounter a stilted learning environment and are often plagued by the predisposing influence of their mother tongue. The students are instructed in various academic disciplines in their vernacular language, with English being solely introduced during their designated English class. The utilization of the first language (L1) within the classroom setting fosters a sense of protection and a calming ambiance that stimulates the educational process. Conversely, some scholars posit that a student cannot attain the skill of thinking in English if they persist in relying on their native language. Encouraging students to utilize their second language (L2) to the fullest extent feasible is a crucial aspect of the role of an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor. However, prudent employment of the students' native language may also be beneficial and cause no detrimental effects. Hence, the attainment of English language mastery cannot be guaranteed even after a period of 12 years of formal education. During their educational pursuit, English instruction is inadequately delivered. Due to the fact that a significant portion of the student population originates from rural regions, a bilingual approach is employed within language instruction. This method is found to be effective in aiding individuals identified as slow learners to a certain degree. Furthermore, this action ultimately detracts from the authentic educational experience in its entirety. If a student encounters difficulty comprehending English, they may seek clarification in their native language, denoted as L1. In accordance with their native language. As a result, the English instructor is obliged to incorporate the bilingual approach. In the contemporary educational landscape, teaching of grammar beyond the rudimentary level is often not emphasized in academic institutions. This holds especially true for application-oriented advanced grammar, which appears to receive minimal attention in formal schooling. Their level of exposure is considerably lower. The educational focus is primarily centred on the assimilation and comprehension of regulations rather than their practical implementation.

The apprehension towards receiving feedback should be overcome in order to facilitate the acquisition of a second language (L2) by children. It is recommended to engage in the same corrective approach as that applied when nurturing the development of a child's native language (L1), wherein mistakes are promptly addressed and corrected. If a student were to mistakenly write the erroneous forms "catch-cateched-catched" instead of the correct forms "catch-caught-caught," it is imperative that they should not be a subject to ridicule in the presence of their peers. This error may indeed demonstrate a certain level of familiarity with the "ed" rule of grammar and its application, and as such, should be treated with understanding and empathy by educators. There exist certain developmental errors that cannot be deemed abnormal, as they are an inevitable and integral component of the process of learning. It is imperative to refrain from criticizing a child regardless of the pace at which they may be progressing. It is imperative to bear in mind that a student exhibits a tortoise-like characteristic, whereby progress is achieved solely through the act of extending oneself and this behaviour is only observed when a sense of safety is established.

The education system in India is hindered by a deficiency in unambiguous and clearly defined aims and objectives pertaining to the instruction of the English language. Academically speaking, educators possess a cognizance of their responsibility to impart knowledge relating to a particular topic, chiefly due to the fact that it is a mandatory component of the prescribed curriculum. The students engage in the study of English not solely as a knowledge acquisition exercise, but rather with the specific goal of achieving a passing grade. This phenomenon leads to a state of addiction to inexpensive market guides, which consequently exposes individuals to the deleterious effects of rote memorization as well as the short-lived and surface-level acquisition of knowledge. For numerous students facing such circumstances, the future presents itself as an extended, obscure tunnel. The convoluted state of instruction and acquisition of the English language in Indian educational institutions can be attributed to this underlying factor.

English instructors encounter numerous challenges when dealing with overcrowded classes. The standard class size is typically between sixty to seventy students, although certain schools may accommodate as many as 100 to 120 pupils in a single class. Providing appropriate attention to each individual student can be challenging.

The insufficiency of qualified educators is deemed as the prime predicament pertaining to English language instruction, as unsatisfactory teachers pose a significant challenge to this field. They have received training in obsolete methodologies and have shown a lack of interest in seeking out innovative and contemporary techniques that can be implemented in educational settings. Numerous educators lack familiarity with the recent and extensive advancements in the pedagogy of the English language. The materials and methodology employed in the training programs are deemed obsolete. The potential for enhancing the innate and impromptu understanding of the language is limited. In order to maintain vitality and innovation, a proficient educator must prioritize self-renewal.

The pedagogical practices employed in teaching English in India are found to be defective. Many educators remain entrenched in the Elizabethan period and derive considerable satisfaction from selecting texts, translating passages, identifying the meanings of challenging vocabulary and assigning homework. These individuals believe that such actions fulfil their professional responsibilities and obligations. It is essential that each pedagogical approach be customized to the specific contextual and situational factors relevant to the act of teaching. The effectiveness of a given method, correlated to a specific circumstance and purpose, relies heavily on the discernment of the teacher's practical common sense. Adequate language proficiency training is not provided to students. The acquisition of language relies heavily on the comprehension and application of its governing principles, which are imparted through instruction and

subsequently memorized through repetitive recollection. Consequently, students are obligated to engage in rote memorization of language content, thereby precluding genuine acquisition of knowledge.

Insufficient provision of pedagogical resources is a pervasive obstacle in the pedagogy of English language as a second language. A conspicuous deficiency of audio-visual aids is a notable impediment to effective English language teaching. The use of instructional aids serves to enhance the quality of teaching by making it more engaging and dynamic. It is recommended that students be provided with ultra CD's and LCD projectors as part of their educational provisions. This phenomenon additionally instills a sense of fascination in pupils, rendering them eager and zealous participants.

The educational system is faced with a problematic examination approach, whereby the English language course outline is exclusively constructed to address exam-oriented objectives. Consequently, the primary focus of the content is limited to the requirements of the exam paper and does not prioritize the development of the students' communicative competence. Despite being engaged in English language studies, students are unable to create a grammatically correct sentence in English. The primary rationale for the students lies in their exclusive focus on subjects from the examination-oriented perspective. The current examination paradigm fosters a culture of memorization and rote learning, prioritizing the acquisition of knowledge over the development of critical thinking and imaginative capabilities in students. Educators face significant challenges in motivating students during classroom instruction, owing to the tendency among students to rely on rote memorization from substandard resource materials, subsequently regurgitating this information during examinations.

The deficiency in motivation among students to learn English is attributed to the absence of any urgent necessity for the language, leading to a gradual waning of their inclination towards the subject. The impoverished and socially insecure conditions also compel them to disregard and neglect linguistic development. Furthermore, attainment of fluency in utilizing a language may prove elusive due to the unavailability of adequate exposure and consistent practice. Educators ought to explore effective measures to facilitate the enjoyment of language-related tasks among students while fostering their confidence. The fervour, passion, and engagement of an instructor have the potential to ignite a desire and drive among pupils towards acquiring knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The instructor and the student are the complementary components that together form the essential framework of the instructional and educational enterprise. The symbiotic relationship between teacher and learner should be preserved in perpetuity for the purposes of advancement and development. According to the renowned scientist and former President of India, Abdul Kalam, successful individuals do not necessarily engage in novel approaches to achieve their goals; they instead adopt unique methodologies. In the context of education, it may be feasible to enhance pedagogy by imparting conventional concepts through unconventional means, such as utilizing games and music to facilitate an enjoyable and effective learning experience.

The energy and enthusiasm of teachers are paramount as neither instructional methods nor materials can compensate for inadequacies in one's personal attributes. Children possess an exceptional and intriguing aptitude for acquiring language proficiency, which diminishes gradually over time, culminating when an individual reaches their adolescent years. Regrettably, it is typically at this juncture where we initiate instruction of the second language to them. The outcome of this phenomenon lies in the clandestine strategy employed by accelerated spoken English institutions, which charge exorbitant fees from unwitting individuals, thereby propelling their rapid growth. The possibility exists that an overemphasis on the acquisition of theoretical guidelines, rather than practical application, may have consumed a disproportionate amount of our educational endeavours. There exists a current imperative to reform the content of language instruction and revamp the curriculum in accordance with the contemporary demands of the learner. Such a renewed syllabus should prioritize practical usage of everyday English, while the implementation of appropriate pedagogical methodologies ought to be tailored specifically to learners at varying stages of development.

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