

TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN INDIA: NEED AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

English has risen to prominence as lingua franca of the world, permeating all aspects of our lives. Owing to its widespread availability and rising relevance, it is now an essential part of academic institutions' curricula in India but students are still struggling to use the language effectively. If we want to join the international domain of knowledge and intelligence, the teaching learning process of English language has to undergo a transition. To meet the demand, we must trounce obstructions. As infrastructure, educator, learner, education system and the society are the foundation pillars of the teaching-learning process, their imbalances have made teaching English in India a big challenge. The current study is structured with the assistance of personal experiences and related works to provide an insight into the necessity for teaching English in India and the challenges that block the process and render all efforts null and worthless.

Keywords: English, language, teaching, educators, students, challenges.

Introduction:

“Language is the dress of thought” (**Samuel Johnson**). “With language you can move from one social situation to another. With languages you are at home anywhere” (**Edmund De Waal**).

Language is a vital tool to express and impress, to convey values, cultural beliefs and customs, inventions and innovations, as well as possibilities to enhance cultural and educational linkages and flourish economically. Generally, the national language connects people whereas, in India, a multilingual country, it is really a hard nut to crack to place any one of the regional languages as the national language. English invaded into India's periphery during the colonial era, established itself not only as the connecting language among the people locally and internationally, but also stepped up earning the title of associate official language in India. With its increasing relevance and widespread accessibility, English is an essential part of academic institutions' curricula in India for many years; still a challenge for educators and students to use it to its fullest potential.

Necessity of Teaching English in India:

According to **NCF (2005)**, the teaching and learning of English today is characterized by, on the one hand, a diversity of schools and linguistic environments supportive of English acquisition, and, on the other hand, by systemically pervasive classroom procedures of teaching a textbook for success in an examination, modulated by teacher beliefs influenced to varying degrees by inputs from the English-language teaching profession.

Associate Official Language:

English is an official language of about 70 countries all over the world. In India it is an associate official language. Hindi as well as non- Hindi speaking states in India use it in government and semi government official works. English communication and basic literacy are preferred in all Indian offices, both private and public.

Global Language:

According to Crystal (1997) “It is spoken all across the world....English is spoken as a second language and as an official language in over seventy nations (including India).English has gained prominence across the world”.“English, in addition to being the world language and international lingua franca, also functions as ‘lingua economica’ (business advertising), ‘lingua academia’ (research and higher education), ‘lingua culture’ (in entertainment)” **(Khan, 2014, p. 21)**

Language of Employment, Business and Trade:

Fluent English speakers are in great demand by established trades and commercial firms all over the world as they have better opportunities to obtain high-profile employment in the private sector. **Nunnan (2003, p. 605)** considers proficiency in English as a basic requirement for success both in educational and professional career. He further states that ‘One of the most common requirements in job advertisements is proficiency in English (another is computer skills)’.

Link Language and Library Language:

The Secondary Education commission (1964-1966) declared English to be the “library language”, a “Link Language”, and a “window to the world”. English serves as a link in India, connecting individuals from various states and regions. English has one of the most extensive literary canons in the world. In terms of language, science, politics, administration, and many other facets of contemporary life, India has benefited immensely from its link with English. English is a library language having enormous literature, plentiful resources, and large collection of information.

Assessable and Conversational Language:

During the colonial era, English was the medium of learning to know the cultures and customs of ruled nations. Since then new words and phrases are regularly been added to make English more assessable and conversational. Every year, an estimated 1000 new words and phrases are added to the Oxford English Dictionary.

Language of Higher Education:

The University Education Commission (1948) headed by **Dr. Radhakrishnan** recommended: “English is studied in high schools and universities in order that we may keep in touch with the living stream of ever growing knowledge.”Most of the international professional universities have English as the medium of instruction.

Language of Press and Publishers:

English is the language of preference for the world's press and publishers. It gives access to a plethora of textual media, both online and in print, with written resources in national and regional languages, and is thus the first preference of press and publishers, all over the world.

Language for Scientific and Technological Education:

Utmost scientific and technical researches, discoveries, and experiments undertaken across the world are easily accessible because they are either written or translated into English. “...nearly 85% of all the scientific and technological information is written in English” mentions **Mauranen (2003)**.

Language of Law:

The British introduced the Indian Penal Code, which now serves as the cornerstone of our legal system. Many laws, concepts, expressions, and phrases that were created during British rule are still in use today. As a result, the core of our legal system is English. The majority of key legal materials are available in English only.

Language of Internet and Web-based Learning:

English paves the way to a world of opportunities through internet. The majority of websites utilize English on the internet. The ability to translate a web-material is frequently available, even on sites in different languages. As English is preferred in the current world of academia and research, there is probably even more instructional information on the internet that is significantly slanted toward English domination.

Language of Travel and Tourism:

People related to travel and tourism industry mostly relies on English to communicate with travelers and tourists. A little knowledge of communicative English will help to interact and deal with the localities while travelling.

Language of Entertainment, Fashion and Glamour:

English is a source of amusement and useful leisure employment. A proficient English learner can enjoy not only the finest plays, novels, tales, and other works created in the English language. It is equally dominant in the world of radio and television, telecommunication, fashion, and glamour. Youngsters in India are enthralled by Hollywood films and TV series, as well as their personalities. English web-series and private albums are in great demand in India.

Language of Elite:

A person well versed in English is considered advanced, highly educated and classy. English has given this dominance in India. It not only boosts up the confidence, creativity, inventiveness and motivation of the learners but also brings respect in the community, in Indian viewpoints.

Language of Sports:

English is also the most widely understood and spoken language among athletes and sports persons worldwide. Regardless of the sporting event or location, you will almost certainly hear a running commentary in English in addition to the native language.

All of the above assertions illustrate that English has completely permeated all facets of our lives. If we want to be a member of the global community, we must focus on teaching communicative skills rather than attaining native-like fluency in English with all four macro-skills of LSRW.

Challenges In Teaching English in India:

Challenges provide possibilities for positive transformation that come out as a result of changing circumstances. The growing demand, continually fluctuating position and prestige across the world and India's multilingual, multi-cultural and multi-racial society within the country, makes teaching English in India more challenging. Actually, the diversity of Indian realities is deep and bare, hence need to be tackled skillfully and tactfully approach. English educators in India encounter manifold challenges some arise within the educational system while others from outside influences. Some of these challenges must be resolved forcefully, while others call for deft management.

School Buildings and Their Location:

Some rural and remote areas hardly get an enclosed structure in the name of school and if one does exist, it lacks basic amenities where in urban areas poor ventilation, low lighting, uncomfortable furniture and overcrowded classrooms of schools (both public and private) worsen the learning atmosphere. Massive school buildings show little regard for the regulations and standards imposed by the authorities thus hampers teaching of English. Places of hustle and bustle in the vicinity of schools distract the learners and jeopardize English teaching.

Colossal and Multilingual Classrooms:

“According to the students the over-crowded classes create number of problems like; discomfort in the class; lack of individual attention; effective evaluation, classroom management, maintaining learning process etc”. (Gमित, Jatin R., 2012). Other challenges that crop up due to overcrowded classrooms include lack of motivation and creativity, reading and conversational abilities, along with frequent and essential feedback from the educator.

Interference of Mother Tongue:

The impact of vernaculars and mother tongue is palpable in communication and interaction but the challenges for regional medium schools' English educators differ from that of English medium schools' educators'. To confront such challenges educators' need technical assistance and professional competency. The diverse linguistic backgrounds of educators and learners sometimes raise the bar of difficulty in language acquisition.

Heterogeneous Classrooms:

Indian classrooms at all levels of education comprise students from varied backgrounds, languages, castes, classes, cultures, and faiths. It becomes challenging for the English educator to identify and plan as per the learners' learning pace, learning styles, exposure, and usage of English.

Insufficient Budget and Lack of Amenities:

“Effective teaching can be possible only when supplied with proper teaching aids like good text books, work books, hand books, T.V., Radio, Charts etc. etc. Unfortunately some institutions are not in a position to provide such materials to the teachers as well as to the learners.” **(Bhardwaj, Dr. N., 2012)**

“Input-rich communicational environments are a prerequisite for language learning, whether first or second. Inputs include textbooks, learner-chosen texts, and class libraries, allowing for a variety of genres: print (for example, Big Books for young learners); parallel books and materials in more than one language; media support (learner magazines/newspaper columns, radio/audio cassettes);and "authentic" materials” **NCF(2005).**

Lackof finances limits the availability of resources, restricts educators from providing better learning opportunities and results. Much needed well-stocked library and language labs are not available to all pupils. Only a few well-equipped schools provide random assistance to their students.

Different School Boards and Educational Policies:

Indian schools follow various streams/boards with different goals and curricula and medium of instruction. English is introduced at different stages of learning in such varied medium schools. It poses difficulty for policymakers not only in developing a uniform educational program but also in implementing them. The situation worsens for educators at higher level educational and professional institutes to deal with migrants other then regional and English medium students in the same class. Educators and policymakers work hand in hand to help their students gain fundamental and communicative proficiency in order to attain better employment in all sectors or to pursue a teaching career, both nationally and globally.

Ignoring Goals of Teaching:

“The objective of teaching English in India should not be 'producing bookworms' or 'linguistic robots'. What is important is to motivate the students, by creating awareness amongst them regarding the importance of English and then gradually helping the student to attain hisgoal. The basic objective should thus be, to make the student independent.” **(Sindkhedkar, Dr. S.D., 2012)**

Impractical and Inappropriate Curriculum, Textbooks and Study Materials:

All boards' English curriculum and textbooks, and study materials designed for homogeneous learners y either do not fit or are rendered worthless in actual classroom situation because they typically lack authentic illustrations, impressive language and style, appropriate subject matter,

relevant and suitable anecdotes and stories, and above all, fail to attract learners. “Most of the students found the text books very difficult and uninteresting...”(Bisht, A.R., 1972). All this leads to a monotonous and repetitive learning environment. “...In addition, prescribed text books are just tools to pass written exams and educators as facilitators. Books are prescribed that bear no relevance to the needs of pupils at the stage”. **Prof.V.K. Gokak**.

Over-reliance of Educators and Learners:

The over-reliance of students on educators and over-reliance of educators on textbooks creates a poignant situation in which students are unable or unwilling to consider using the text independently of teachers. On the other side, the educators do not come out of their cocoon of text based studies, rather provide learners with solutions reducing their critical thinking capacity and discouraging their zeal of learning by doing. Studies that are narrowly focused or exam-oriented result in a high percentage of passing exams with little or no knowledge. Learners lacking basic and comprehensive knowledge may pass the exam with a high percentage but will be ineffective and inefficient teachers in future.

Inattentive, Unmotivated, Reclusive Learners:

Lack of practical relevance to the learners' day-to-day routines and experiences, a stereotypical and dull classroom atmosphere, and teachers' desire to finish the curriculum in the allotted time distract the students and drive them to adopt a passive and withdrawing attitude. In crowded classes, it is difficult for educators to focus on more vulnerable and constricted students, resulting in a lack of confidence, curiosity, and reciprocal commitment in learning. Due to these constraints, educators are unable to serve as mentors and facilitators. “Teacher and the taught both look at this subject as an unavoidable hurdle and try their level best to cross this hurdle anyhow.”

(Pande, Dr. Vijay B., 2013)

Tech-Novice Educators for Tech-Savvy students:

This technological revolution has caught educators off guard. It is widely recognized that advancements in information technology and new innovations in learning strategies provide a variety of new opportunities and latest trends for educators and learners through well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, low-cost, high-efficiency, and flexible digital learning environments. An educator must utilize technology with caution, since unexpected or excessive usage of technology can lead to disengagement and a negligent attitude toward English.

Traditional, Outdated, and Ineffective Teaching Techniques and Methods:

Another significant challenge is the use of traditional, out-of-date, and ineffective teaching techniques and methods. Most of the senior or experienced educators continue with the age-old lecture or translation methods. For some others reading the text followed by explanation and yelling at the students is all that is required in the name of English language teaching. Educators have to fix

that approach must be properly tailored to the needs of the educational environment and the active participation of the students in the classroom. “The students learned English only as a subject rather than as language. They feel themselves unable to put their learning into practice due to lack of a favorable environment. They never get a chance to converse properly in English as the teacher neither use the other methods like direct method in the class, nor encourage them to converse in English.” (Ali, S. M., 2012)

Diverse Social, Economical, Professional and Linguistic Background of Learners’:

In “Teaching of English in India: Problems and Prospects” Sarangi, Dr. J. (2010) has highlighted the problems of teaching English under socio-cultural, socio-linguistic and socio-geographic aspects. Students from underprivileged and marginalized communities lack a literary foundation and struggle to grasp the grammatical concepts and beauty of the English language and literature. Learners’ discrepancies are frequent and will remain in Indian society, but educators have to deal with them with effective and compassionate approach.

Subpar Testing and Evaluation Techniques:

“Our examination system is such that it makes students’ rote memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. In this process, they memorize lessons, reproduce them in exam halls and forget them in the same day itself.”(Kannan, Dr. R., 2009). Students have devolved into cramming machines devoid of originality and inspiration with an aim to clear exam. The written examinations assess only the writing ability of the learners’ in English rather than assessing all four basic abilities-RSLW.

Lack of Professional, Effective and Skillful Teachers:

Prof.V.K. Gokak has said, “The fundamental years for the teaching of English in schools are in the hands of teachers who neither know enough English nor are familiar with the latest and far reaching development in the pedagogy of English”. Now teaching of English should be learners’-oriented instead of teacher-oriented. Teachers as professional are given least developing opportunities. Metropolitan educators have better exposures and more opportunities than their rural counterparts. Lacks of in-service training program, the educators remain ignorant from the innovations and latest techniques to update their knowledge and enhance their skills.

Lack of Proper Teachers’ Education and Selection Procedure:

The majority of licensed English teachers are not graduates, are unfamiliar with basic grammatical structures, and rarely talk or interact in English in class. Robert Lado (1964) said, “... the language teacher must be educated, at least to the level of his peers. He must have a general preparation of a teacher.....he must know the target language well enough to be imitated by his students.” Inexperienced or inadequately equipped teachers are unable to communicate effectively in English. English literature experts are made-up to teach English language with a number of

pedagogical constraints at secondary level. Teachers fail to distinguish between literature and general English classrooms in terms of goals and objectives. Much required English grammar study is rarely chosen by M. Phil. or PhD scholars and is hardly sponsored by educators.

Conclusion:

Teaching English without challenges will be dull and formulaic. Challenges, as driving Forces for advancement, put educators' efficiency and inventiveness to the test, motivating them to change their methods as per the requirement. Taking on difficulties helps instructors improve professionally and philosophically. Teachers must have the courage to approach issues as challenges. It may instill in them a desire for renovation and innovation in teaching and assessment techniques, materials creation, analytical and experimental research, and classroom management abilities. The emphasis should be placed on the practical application of the English language, and appropriate approaches need to be used at different levels.

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Example

