

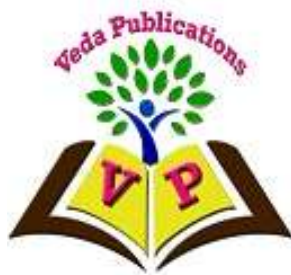


ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA : THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT



English Language has played a vital role in all the stages of India's freedom movement, formation and evolution into a nation of unique identity. English has been the language of diplomacy, administration, education, and judiciary and information technology. Its role is further widened in the present day needs of creating opportunities. With the changing indispensable role of English, the teaching of English in India is in a deplorable state. The Education Commissions and think tanks have emphasized the importance of inculcating right skills among the students in order to meet the present day needs of employment at global level. The problems of teaching English in India are due to policy makers' follies to poverty and population. The identified problems like lack of clear-cut-policy, deficiency exposure, non-availability of suitable material, lack of qualified teachers, improper methodology, lack of motivation, teacher student ratio and faulty examination system need attention to rectify the problems in teaching and learning of English in India.

Keywords: *Spread; Progress; Problems ;Prospects; Phonology; Harmony ;Diphthongs; Flash Cards; Gramophone records ;Curriculum; Audio; Favoritism; Vocabulary; Printing; Illustrations; Glossary; Reverence; Spring.*

**INTRODUCTION**

In 1920, Bloomfield has informed the native speakers of English were 170 million. In 1965, Blood worth concludes that about 3000 million people of the world speak this language. In fact may more people than this figure speak English these days? This language is spreading over the world by leaps and bounds. The main cause of this is that the original speakers of this language were once the rulers of a greater part of the world. Another cause is that English language has some characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

- I. A language is called progressive if it has its past, present and future. English is also a progressive language because it has been subjected to change in the past and at present in progressing for greater clearness.
- II. English is an ideal language. An ideal language expresses the same thing by the same; this is true, to a great extent, with English.
- III. English has its own system of words, phrases and sentences.
- IV. The phonemes, morphemes and syntax which are the parts of a language structure are its own.
- V. English has its own grammar.
- VI. English has its own script.
- VII. English has a vast treasure of literature which touches every part of life.

According to Otto Jespersen, a living language has the following characteristics:

- I. A living language is subjected to change as "It is in the progress of achieving the ideal".
- II. The more advanced the level of its development, the greater the power of expressing abstract ideas or general ideas.
- III. Any number of delicate shades of meaning can be expressed with equal ease.
- IV. In a living language, sound and sense are in perfect harmony. English is a living language because it has all these characteristics.

LANGUAGE IN ITS RELATION TO SOCIETY

- a. It helps man to live in the society.
- b. It is an index of personality.
- c. It restores relationship between man and his environment.

- d. It is the medium of literature.
- e. It is a language of immense international importance.

English has its own phonology. Phonology is the science of sounds. English has the following two characteristics related to phonology: English has 26 letters but 45 sounds. (b) The English vowel sounds are divided into two-pure vowel sounds and diphthongs. Consonant sounds are also divided two-consonant sounds and consonant closers.

The English grammar has the following salient characteristics:

- a. In English a sentence can be of either a single word or a group or words.
- b. A sentence has two parts: (i) A subject which is a theme. (ii) A predicate which is a statement related to the theme. For instance, there is a sentence – I am going. In it 'I' is subject and 'am going' is predicate.
- c. Subject usually precedes the verb and is always in the nominative case from the grammatical point of view.
- d. There are two types of sentences: (i) full sentences, e.g., you are singing, (ii) minor sentences, e.g., Thank you.
- e. In English, sentences have the following grammatical structures:
 - Subject – Verb (S.V)
 - Subject – Verb – Object (S.V.O)
 - Verb – Subject – Object (V.S.O)
- f. The grammatical structure follows this principle – the most important concept should be placed first.
- g. Some suffixes have no meaning, e.g. 'the'
- h. Verb in English has no gender. It is same for males and female, e.g.
He is eating.
She is eating.
- i. Interrogative sentences are framed by putting either an auxiliary verb before the subject or interrogative word in the beginning followed by an auxiliary verb.
Eg: Is he eating? What are you doing?
- j. ii) The helping verbs of English are divisible whereas they are not in Hindi.

**PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA**

There are many problems of teaching in India. Although the English Language Teaching Institutes at Allahabad and Hyderabad have done a lot to improve the English Teaching in India by producing new text-books; gramophone records; flash-cards; pictures; training teachers; popularizing structural approach of teaching English, yet there are the following problems which create unhealthy conditions for adequate for adequate teaching of English in our country:

Neglecting the Aims of Teaching English:

The teaching of English in India is not in accordance with the aims of teaching English. Many times, neither the teacher nor the student is acquainted English. The teacher only wants that his students should pass the examination. The main aims, in this way, get neglected.

Place of English in School-curriculum

The problem of giving a proper place to English in school-curriculum is still untackled. The following questions need answers:

- From which class should the study English start?
- Up to which class should its study last?
- Should English be a compulsory subject?
- If yes, up to which class should it be a compulsory subject?

Condition of Classes: The following conditions of classes hinder the smooth teaching of English.

- Overcrowded classes,
- Shortage of buildings.
- Lack of furniture.

Due to overcrowded classes, the teacher is not able to tackle individual problems. Due to shortage of buildings and lack of furniture, students often feel inconvenient and their attention is distracted from learning.

Old Method of Teaching English: In Indian schools, teachers are still using the old and faulty. "Translation-cum-Grammar" method of teaching. The new approaches – structural and situational – are not popular with our teachers. As a consequence, our students are facing all the demerits of Translation-cum-Grammar method and are devoid of advantages of new effective methods and approaches.

Lack of Uniform Policy: There is no uniform policy regarding the beginning of English teaching in our schools. At present, there are three different stages at which the teaching of English is introduced.

- Early stage (age of 6 to 9 years) – in parts of West Karnataka, West Bengal, Rajasthan and in public schools, it starts from classes I or III.
- Middle Stage (age of 11 or 12 years) – In parts of West Bengal, Kashmir, Orissa, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, English is introduced at the beginning of secondary education.
- Later Stage (age of 14 years) – In some states, e.g. Gujarat, English is taught during the last four years of secondary education.

Low Standard of Text – Books: The text-books of English are needed to be a high standard. Pointing to this problem of Prof.V.K.Gokak has said, "Either because of the distribution of patronage or because of fears of charges of favoritism a reader which is an organic part of one series is another series... Books are prescribed which bear no relevance to the needs of pupils at the stage". The English Text-books need improvement in the following spheres:

- Selection and graduation of vocabulary,
- Good printing,
- Genuine illustrations,
- Suitable subject-matter,
- Language and style,
- Exercises and glossary,
- Relevance and
- Abridgment of English stories to suit Indian conditions.

In fact, the standard of text-books can be improved, if they are written by teachers teaching English in schools. In the words of Guy Boas, "The only persons quipped to choose these text-books are school-teachers who really know the fodder, suited to their flock.

Less Use of Audio-visual Aids: In our schools, there is very much less use of audio-visual aids. Due to lack of funds, expensive aids cannot be purchased, but whatever cheap aids, eg. Pictures, charts, models, flannel-boards are available, are not used by teachers. Only during training period, some enthusiasm is found among pupil-teachers in this regard. As soon as they become teachers they shirk from using audio-visual aids. English can be best



taught by using audio-visual aids and they are neglected in our schools.

Lack of Effective 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". This is very much true. There are four main reasons of the lack of effective and competent teachers:

1. Lack of adequate training at the B.Ed. Level.
2. Teacher who had not offered teaching of English at B.Ed Level.
3. Lack of initiative and innovation in teachers and
4. Absence of right motivation as teachers are motive only to get their students through examinations.

Prof.R.L.Mehta observes, "His sole aim is to get the pupils through the examination by fair means or foul. The result is the graduate who cannot write a correct sentence of English".

Traditional Examination System: The new method of examination with oral and written tests is not used by teachers. They still cling to the traditional method of examination. Besides, no attempt is made to realize the real aims of teaching English through examination.

Lack of Proper Teacher Education: The teachers are not trained thoroughly and properly. At the B.Ed. and L.T. levels, more periods are given to compulsory papers than to methods of teaching. At the same time, the duration of training is very short. There are also very meager provisions and facilities for in-service education.

Lack of Suggestive Correction: The exercise books students lack in suggestive correction. All the exercises of students should be corrected thoroughly and the correct forms for the mistakes must be written. For instance, the pupil has written 'sitting'. It is not sufficient to go cross the word. The teacher must write 'sitting', so that the student can appreciate his mistake and know the correct form.

These are some of the main problems of teaching English in India Prof. Ronald Mocking has listed them as follows:

"The old fashioned type of benches and desks which restrict movement; the bad light; the noised from neighboring class which may be separated from them by nothing more than a bamboo screen, insufficient provision for their subject in the time-table, lack of aids of all kinds; interference from parents or a dominating, conservative Head-Master; and finally the requirements of an examination system which places a premium on the written language and consequently seems to favor the grammar-grinder of the old school".

Thus, there is much to be done to improve the standard of teaching English in India.

CONCLUSION

Language class shouldn't be a one person show and the students as well-as the teachers should play multi roles. Sometimes the students should be silent listeners and at other times they should be active participants. The basic and the needed skills have to be developed in language class which acts as a stress reliever at times and a refreshing spring which makes the students ready to compete, withstand and excel in this world of rat face. And the new and emerging technology makes it possible and now learning and teaching are becoming joyful experiences.

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