



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE SEMI-URBAN CONTEXT OF TAMIL NADU:ISSUES AND PANACEA

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### ABSTRACT



The English Language Teaching and Learning situation in the rural schools of Tamil Nadu presents an abysmal picture. The Learners in the rural regions of Tamil Nadu face numerous challenges and difficulty in the English Language Acquisition. The present study is conducted to analyse the Uniform Syllabus and Curriculum of English prescribed for the vernacular language learners of the state. It understands the teaching and learning methods, the mode of evaluation and the challenges faced by learners in the classroom. A field study was undertaken by the researcher in three Government Schools in the Erode District to understand the problems faced by the learners in the English language instruction. L1 is students' Mother tongue or regional language and L2 is considered to be globally accepted language which is English. Mostly L1 is not expected to be taught using various teaching methods and the teachers are not finding it difficult to teach L1. The learners find less difficulty in learning L1 than L2. The learners have sufficient cultural exposition to learn L1 but not L2

This is due to lack of exposure in the English language and unfavourable surroundings they belong to. In the state like Tamil Nadu where traditions and culture are followed in stringent the learner finds difficulty to connect between the language they learn and the culture in which they live. This paper explains the learners various levels of difficulties in learning a Foreign language. The paper discusses the problem and possible implications to the same.

**Keywords:** *Second language Acquisition, Tamil Nadu, Uniform Syllabus, Culture, Teaching Methods*

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The English language has been spread widely and spoken by many people around the world so it has been considered as the global language. It has been considered as a medium of communication among many people around the world. At present English language has been dominating all the

languages around the world due to its spread and acceptance by many people.

### ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA

English in India is a question of linguistic centralism while the other Indian languages lead to linguistic regionalism. A foreign language existing so



firmly and distinctly has posed a problem to the country. The growing modernization and internationalism in the world prevented us from doing away with the English language. Besides, Indian languages are often associated with tradition and are understood to be anti-modern. Therefore, a complete switchover to the Indian languages would lead to educational chaos and total isolation from the developments on the international arena. We could not risk this because of the cultural, social, political and economic reasons. Hence, this situation needed an urgent solution. The only resolution that could be thought of was a need for coexistence of English with Indian languages. As a result, we had to define the role of English in India and its relationship with Indian languages. This gave rise to language planning. Consequently, the major Indian languages became the Regional Languages.' Hindi was given the status of Official Language and English was accepted as the other Official Language. It was considered that English would promote integration as it cannot be identified with any region. Further, the role of English was strengthened and consolidated as English was recognized and perceived as:

- The language of knowledge (Science and Technology)
- The language of liberal, modern thinking
- A window on the world
- The language of library, reason.

### UNFAVOURABLE SURROUNDINGS

In the regional areas, the people strictly follow their culture and tradition. The vernacular language they speak is naturally connected to their culture. They have the presupposition that learning English language and practicing it may lead to detachment to their culture and traditions. The people are not inquisitive in learning the English language and this leads to the unfavourable surroundings to the young learners. The learners are not exposed to the proper usage of English by any means.

In the classroom, the teachings of other subjects are happening in their vernacular language and even the English subject is instructed in the regional language. These learners neither get enough exposure in the classroom nor outside. They also don't get enough opportunity to develop themselves in the acquiring the English language. This obviously

brings a poor performance of the learners in the English language.

### PAUCITY OF SUITABLE TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIAL

To enhance the learner's language acquisition many teaching/ learning materials like good textbooks, workbooks, and handbooks for teachers, TV, radio, charts or other useful visual material-are essential. The learners will get bored of the same methods of teaching to elevate their learning spirits these materials will be helpful. Unfortunately, many teachers and students are not provided with these materials. Hence, sometimes the teaching and learning become more imaginative than practical.

### LACK OF GOOD TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Good teachers of English are found in very small number in India. Hence, not having a good teacher of English is a common experience of all the students of English. The teachers of English are either not trained properly or they are the teachers of other subjects. Even if they are trained, they are trained by the teachers of English in India but not by the native speakers. Even the materials and methodology used in these training programmes are outdated. As such, it is the same limited experience that is shared. There is hardly any scope to improve intuitive and spontaneous knowledge of the language. Though there are institutes like CIEFL, RIEs and, ELTCs to train teachers of English, they are hardly enough for the large demands of the Indian teacher population.

### ERRONEOUS METHODS

Learners are not given exposure to the use of language. Listening and speaking skills which is the soul of any method are not at all given importance in the classroom. Writing skill is the advanced stage of learning the foreign language but it has been given priority and taught first. The methodology which is used to teach English is not updated and it is not properly used. Language is a skill it must be acquired by continuous practice but it has been taught by the rules and made to do rote memory of it.

### LACK OF INCENTIVES FOR LEARNERS

Learner's sociological conditions and their environment which they belong to never motivate them to acquire the English language. They lack exposure to the English language and intense



practice is not available to them. Acquiring a foreign language is not an easy thing; relentless practice is needed to get well versed in the language. But these learners don't get easy exposure to the English language even at the school. More or less they spent an hour in class to learn English subject even that is not taught full-fledged. In this kind of environment, the learners, as well as the teachers, find difficulty in handling the English language.

### **CRAMPED CLASSROOM SETTING**

In a classroom, the learners' population is high in number, especially in public schools. In such situation, the learners, as well as the teachers, find difficult to get a good environment. Due to this inconvenience, it is difficult to pay attention to every child individually and also there is no special method used to teach the slow learners. The cramped classroom setting is a huge hindrance to learn and teach the English language. They also lack technology-equipped classroom. No initiative is taken to disrupt the traditional way of teaching and these learners are still learning by an old pedagogical method.

### **FAULTY ASSESSMENT METHOD**

Our examination system encourages the students to memorize the syllabus and give an exam. The language skills are not tested by any proper method. The four major skills of language learning listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW) are not tested properly during the examination. The main focus of the examination is just on the written exam and to know the student's memory power. The examination system which is followed is not focused on LSRW skills. To get well versed in a language these four skills are important for the learners. But the examination system is merely focused only on writing skill. These four skills are not tested to any appreciable degree. Listening and speaking skills are totally neglected. With all these educational systems, learners find it difficult to adopt the English language properly. In this scenario, the teacher's role is very important to teach the English language in a different method so that learners could learn it interestingly and the assessment should be done on all these skills. This will help the learners to improve the language skill in a proper way.



Figure 1, PC: Miruthulavarshini. Typical Classroom.

In this government school, there is no technology development. English is taught by the teacher who struggles to make the children be quiet and even the children find bored of the typical classroom. The learners say that they need projection system and video screening so that they could learn the language in an interesting way. The teacher also says that they are expecting for the equipped classrooms so that they could teach many aspects of the language in a different and interesting way.



Figure 2, PC: Miruthulavarshini. Technology Equipped Classroom.

Students are more interested and enthusiastic about learning through the visual content. They could easily learn and understand the phonetics. In this government school, teachers took initiative and collected funds to arrange these facilities in the class. Thus the teachers as well as the



learners finding it easy to acquire the English language. The government should implement these facilities in all the schools and that should be maintained properly. The teachers must have the responsibility to make the learners well versed in the English language. The learners must also take initiatives and spend some time to acquire the English language.

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