

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN NATIVE CLASSROOMS: AN OBSERVATION**

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The study deliberates upon teaching and learning English as a foreign tongue in India, especially in the context of the Jammu and Kashmir. Although English language is incorporated in the curriculum as a skill course to enable the students to use English in day-to-day practical affairs and to gain expertise in all its four basic skills, yet the centre of emphasis in the system is to look at it as a subject and to teach it from the examination perspective. The ramifications of the same are absolute failure and frustration among teachers as well as learners, as the main objective has never been realized at all.

**Keywords:** *English, Language, Learning, Teaching, Teacher*

**DESIGN/METHODOLOGY**

The article is a teacher narrative providing an appraisal of English language: how is it taught in given setup? What are the lacunae in teaching methodology and in institutional infrastructure? The evaluation is all subjective and contextual of a particular ambience.

**FINDINGS**

The paper identifies the presumably main hurdles impeding the progress of learning English as a target language, and also puts forth certain remedials as a counter to rid of such barriers in order to expedite the momentum of the process towards the accomplishment of set goals.

**ORIGINALITY**

The subject is reliable so far as the bearing of English language on day-to-day affairs is concerned. Moreover, the authenticity and originality is up to standard as everything has been scribed keeping in view the ethics of research. There is no derivation at all.

**INTRODUCTION**

Language is a singular endowment given only to humans. Language defines us as human beings. A person is to speak, and so speaking and living are complementary to each other. Language is a socio-cultural construct rather than a biological phenomenon. It is the most practical and realistic thing in life. It comes naturally and spontaneously as buds to a tree. It is organic in nature rather than mechanical in operation. A child acquires what he observes and hears in the immediate atmosphere. The realia and active involvement of a person facilitate the language learning. Such an ambience cannot be constructed, but it occurs unpredictably without any deliberate endeavour on the part of learner. This is the case of L1 or what in common parlance is termed as 'mother tongue'. It is quite affordable and feasible. It needs little effort, consumes less energy and time. It reaches its accomplishment inadvertently over the time. But the acquisition and learning of L2 or foreign language becomes a herculean task as everything goes against the spontaneous and emotional nature of language acquisition. As it turns into conscious exercise, so it demands more diligence and intelligence on the side of trainer as well as

learner. Even the painstaking labour of teacher and student does not yield satiated results. The same is the reality of teaching-learning programme (course) of English as a target language in educational institutions of the Jammu and Kashmir.

**FACTUAL STANDING OF ENGLISH IN THE INSTITUTIONS**

In the Jammu and Kashmir, English is a common and compulsory subject right from First Standard up to Bachelor's degree. Besides, the medium of syllabi is also English except in certain language courses. In this way, it can be said that English is all-pervading in the education system here, yet it is all limited to the pages of books. Theoretically, it is ubiquitous, but practically the condition is disheartened and dismayed. It is only taught as a traditional subject like other Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, and not as a skill course which speaking and writing of any language is. It is taught from the examination point of view, and thereby its pragmatic nature and exigency is neglected. Due to the same that not only after the completion of schooling but even higher education, people are not capable or competent enough to exercise it in real-life situations and in practical affairs especially its spoken aspect. Teachers' easiest way of dealing with class room situations is to go with tradition approaches and local regional languages. Speaking of English is scarcely used and the English language classes are just like rituals repeated timely but never got ultimately. The chief purpose of the system as it is termed is 'to cover the syllabus' while as teaching-learning process is intended for uncovering and discovering the meanings and mysteries, and thus to materialize the objective of achievement in different domains of knowledge.

English is a powerful vehicle of expression and communiqué used as a *lingua franca* in multicultural and multilingual social setups. At present, English is all-influencing and a supreme tongue due to its universal appeal. It has emerged as a language of global trade, common media, internet, mobility, economy, politics, philosophy, research and what not. To ignore its pressing need is to compromise with one's

importance in existence. Knowing English is to be known in the world and knowing the world. It is an identity giver entity and augments of one's demand and value.

### **SEEMING IMPEDIMENTS IN THE PATH OF TEACHING-LEARNING ENGLISH**

In the existent education system here, gaining proficiency in English speaking and writing for an average person is still a dream to be actualized. Despite the tall claims that English is a compulsory and medium of curriculum at all stages, there is a very little on the ground what may be called an accomplishment. The atmosphere is not congenial enough to foster the language learning as its technicalities and professional skills demand. The causes for the same are numerous and the common ones are as:

- ❖ It has been commonly observed that the lecture halls in institutions especially in colleges are heterogeneous and the levels of grasping among students range from almost nil to exceedingly appreciable degree. The same creates a hurdle in the tempo of teaching as the individual attention and interaction is not feasible and a teacher gets in a fix what to do and how to do.
- ❖ The mismatching teacher-student ratio is a unique hallmark in the English language classes, and in many cases, the number of trainees touches two hundred mark. This leads to an ineffective and fallacious teaching. The students attend the crowd, but they are never able to attend to what is being delivered and demonstrated. In such circumstances, English takes the third position following Kashmiri (L1) and Urdu (official language) and thereby it is neglected and the authentic aim of teaching English is forsaken.
- ❖ The acquisition and learning of a new language demands maximum exposure on the part of learner, but this tenet of exposure and practical involvement is very rare and out of focus. The classes are unilateral and everything comes from teacher's side and students are outright

dumb and mum in the process. Outside the teaching halls, speaking in English is out of custom and convention. The rural uneducated background of the students makes it alarmingly improbable to materialize the objective of mastering English language. Therefore, the gulf between the alien tongue and its equally alien speakers widens rather than abridges.

- ❖ Non-availability of professionally competent teachers in the prevailing circumstances is a stark reality. The teachers are not adequately equipped with technical know-how of English language. This is a colossal barrier in the path of assimilating the target language as a skill and to use it in transmitting the thoughts and feelings in the form of speaking and writing. By employing paraphrasing methods and explicating English words, idioms and phrases in indigenous tongue or in Urdu, the class becomes a 'chutnification' of many languages and teaching of none. The learners meditate more on intermediaries rather than on targeted one. Thus, L2 classes seem more L1, and the ramifications of the same are absolute failure and frustration.
- ❖ The existing system focuses on reading and writing, while as the more obligatory skills of language- listening and speaking are overlooked. The skills of speaking and listening are more practical, while as reading and writing a language are comparatively more professional. The class rooms are teacher-centered and teacher-dominated. Students hardly open their mouths as though it goes against the protocol of teaching-learning process.
- ❖ The process of teaching a target language is also impeded by the absence of audio-visual aids, language laboratories and updated libraries. The presence of these facilities may expedite the progress and thereby provide a technical support to such classes. Moreover, there is not any provision for teachers to be oriented and

refreshed with advanced and innovative knowledge through workshops, seminars and project works and so on. With the passing of time as it has been observed, the teachers forget their own learning and consequently render themselves invalid, inept and outdated.

- ❖ As the majority of students hail from the first generation learners, so they do not get additional assistance and guidance from their families. Though they are trained in English language, yet they never speak and write it correctly in terms of grammar, semantics, syntax, and phonology. The basic cause behind this whole stagnation and stasis is that they study English from the examination point of view. The texts are rote without any comprehension. Internalization of analytical and creative skills of language never catch the attention of trainers and trainees.

### PROPOSITIONS

The basic obstacle in the path of teaching English is its indefinable nature and indeterminate position. Therefore, the need of the hour is to define its position and demarcate its ambit keeping in view the vast opportunities in the field of science and technology, philosophy, research, journalism, commerce, diplomacy and politics.

- ❖ The institutions are in exigent need of updated language laboratories and well equipped libraries to facilitate English language classes. It may help to produce well adept speakers of language.
- ❖ Teacher is undoubtedly a nucleus in the teaching learning process. So they are required to upgrade and overhaul their methods and manners of teaching. They are expected to cater all the practical requirements and pressing demands of the students. A teacher has to construct a rapport with the learners and kindle their spirit as M. Parel states in *English Language Teaching*: "I have to create opportunities for the students to use

English in meaningful, realistic and relevant situations."

- ❖ All the four basic skills- Reading-Writing-Listening-Speaking must be carried forward with equal impetus and the promotion of all facets of the language is to be ensured simultaneously. One aspect should not be exaggerated at the cost of other. Moreover, the contextualization of grammar is also the need of the hour.
- ❖ Direct Method is an ideal approach of teaching a foreign language. So an effort is to be made to use target language to the utmost possible degree and to avoid all paraphrased items.
- ❖ Orientations, bridge courses, short term training programmes and refreshers like exercises need to be undertaken for the enrichment of teachers' lingual proficiency.
- ❖ Use of multimedia for training of teachers as well for teaching of learners is suggested to synchronize the practical demands of language learning.
- ❖ State Institutes for Languages ought to be established to improve the quality of language learning at various stages of education, and organizations like Resource and Training Centres should be set up for efficacious outcome.

### CONCLUSION

Looking upon these aforesaid statements with analytical insight, it becomes evident that the existing mechanism of teaching-learning English as a foreign language needs an overhauling if the purpose is to be attained. The teacher has to shun away the outdated approaches and reactionary methodology, and take recourse in interactive and innovative ways of teaching. The teacher dominated atmosphere is to be ended up and student involving ambience to be flourished. The trainees are needed to make use of all situations and resources whether it is classroom or outside it anywhere till the level of an adequate proficiency and self-assurance is arrived at. The system is to ensure that all the dimensions of target language are aimed at with equal impetus. One facet ought not to be given an exaggerated importance at the



cost of the other. An additional effort is to be made to unravel the causes of all demotivating factors among students and to ensure the ideal outcome in this transaction of teaching-learning process. Moreover, the teachers have to revitalize their know-how with updated information of English language through refresher courses, orientation programmes, workshops and like other academic activities. The ideal teaching of a teacher and the optimal response of a learner demand the diligent and intelligent interaction with each other. Executing all such measures may yield the returns of expenditures spent profusely and tirelessly in the shape of means like time, money, and energy which are otherwise knowingly wasted.

**BOOKS CONSULTED**

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