



RESEARCH ARTICLE



SHIFTING PARADIGM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PLANS TO REORIENT INDIAN SCHOOL LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS

Dr. Pratap Kumar Dash

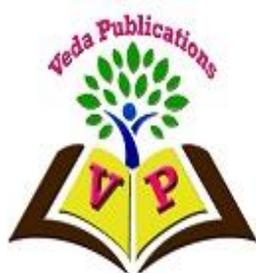
(Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Rajendra University, Balangir, Odisha.)

Email: pratapkumardash18@yahoo.com

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2022.9211>

ABSTRACT

This paper aims at presenting some of the additions and modifications in bridging the gap between the earlier planning and policies and the emerging challenges in English language education in India and then suggests how to reorient Indian English language teachers basically at primary and secondary levels keeping in view the national and international requirements. Firstly, it reviews the English language teacher education and current practices of English language teaching and learning systems both in vernacular and English medium schools in India. Secondly, it critically examines the national policy documents such as Position Papers and curricula for English. Thirdly, it focuses on the drawbacks in the existing practices of English language education and the emerging global challenges of communication and interpersonal skills. Then, it chalks out a plan for redesigning the basic teaching-learning systems which includes psychological, socio-cultural, pedagogic and professional factors to be considered in the inter-related domains. It also envisages the typical Indian multilingual and multicultural contexts and redefines rural area English language teachers' responsibilities in strategy and skill-based classroom orientation with updated scientific knowledge of teaching and learning on indigenous bases by introducing the tenets of postmethod pedagogy and *ka:rmik* language teaching approach.



Keywords: *English language education, multilingual and multicultural contexts, bilingual/multilingual competence, psychological, socio-cultural, pedagogic.*



1. INTRODUCTION

With the changing face of Indian language education, Indian English language teachers and stake holders are required to brainstorm and prepare very effective long-term plans and programmes for adopting the best provisions in English language teaching and learning systems both for primary and secondary levels. The schools in rural India have become at par with schools in urban areas. But, right now there is no uniformity of English language teaching in the schools in India. It accounts for a number of factors. There are both government as well as private schools. Further, such schools are either English medium or vernacular. In vernacular schools, both at private and government levels except English as a compulsory subject, all other subjects are taught in the respective regional languages. In general, the level of competence in English language varies from one group of students to the other. In most of the schools, students are made exam-oriented. Additionally, they may participate in co-curricular activities and competitive activities on their own interest or because of encouragement of their respective environments. In the meantime, the importance of English in India has reached at the top. The responsibility is almost like the native speakers of English. Irrespective of rural or urban background, Indian students, business people and different varieties of Indian professionals are spread across the world. Similarly, multinational companies are already present in India in which the corporate culture is widespread and challenging. All these mostly use English language for their communication purposes at an advanced level of proficiency. So, the teachers as well as teacher trainers of English language in India

should be well-equipped with all the advanced and befitting systems available.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The teaching, learning and training systems of English language in rural India (party in urban India) is not substantially adopting the up-to-date changes and developments so far taken place world-wide. Along with multilingual competence, the emerging patterns of learner autonomy, learner specific language pedagogy, learner-centred methods and materials, cultural constructs and use of technology are still at a stage of experimentation. The schools are still adopting rote methods of making the students memorise the answers and reproduce them in the Exams. In most of the schools, usage-based teaching, group work and projects, use of technology for English language learning are still a myth. Most of the school teachers do not have the knowledge and skills observation and data collection for systematic error analysis; analysis of the learning strategies; and measuring proficiency in language skills. Apart from the prescribed textbooks, they do not use relevant extra language materials and activities (for e.g. realia, field study report, etc.) in the class. The teachers in vernacular medium state level government as well as private schools find it convenient to explain English in the respective regional languages (mother tongues). Although the tribal population in rural area is substantial, no specific materials and methods have been adopted in the states as per the local requirements. The developed or developing countries across the world support a lot to the students with less IQ in order to make up the loss, but in countries like India, no such activities are there for the students with less IQ. As a result, average Indian students of



rural schools are found unsuccessful in achieving the target in English. Even though they have exposure to their surrounding and social systems and their degree of learning language in their respective mother tongues is not hopeless, they fail when it comes to English language learning and usage.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. Can we bridge the gap between the existing practices of ELT and the new methods, techniques and approaches in schools?
- ii. Will it be viable to make our learners bilingually/multilingually competent and make use of the cultural contexts effectively for English language learning?
- iii. Can we create a uniform system of learner autonomy both rural and urban areas throughout the nation?

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To focus on the age-old lingering problems of ELT in India and find out solutions irrespective of rural and urban schools.
- ii. To review the existing practices and suggest suitable plans to bridge the gap
- iii. Methods of implementing strategies of developing learner autonomy
- iv. Implementing multilingual and multicultural competence
- v. Major policy level steps to update teacher education and training in English

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Language Policy of India

The language policy of India has a strong impact on the language pedagogy throughout the country. In

1961, the three language formula got implemented in India. According to Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (1995) this meant that three languages could be used like English or any other European languages. That is to say, English language, the mother tongue (of states) and the Official language, Hindi, were to be taught. If the mother tongue was Hindi itself, then English and Hindi were to be taught in schools. The three- language formula was reiterated by the Khotari-Commission (1966). Politically, states have also the provision of deciding their own language policies. Mostly, they emphasized primarily on the use of the languages of their own states or regions by providing second language status to English.

5.2 Review of Position Paper: NFC on the Teaching of English 2005

It has been rightly mentioned that English in India today is 'a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life.' Its colonial origins are now forgotten or irrelevant.... the current status of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage... Quoting Das (2005), it mentions that 'the opening up of the Indian economy in the 1990s has coincided with an explosion in the demand for English in our schools because English is perceived to open up opportunities.'

According to NCF (2005), the teaching and learning of English today is characterised 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.

One way to broadly characterise English-teaching situations in India is in terms of (a) the teacher's English language proficiency (TP), and (b) the exposure of pupils to English outside school, i.e. the availability of English in the environment for language acquisition.

Approaches and methods need not be exclusive but may be mutually supportive within a broad cognitive philosophy (including Vygotskian, Chomskyan, and Piagetian principles). Higher-order skills (including literary appreciation and role of language in gendering) can be developed once fundamental competencies are ensured. (NCF, 2005. p.58)

5.3 Review of Other Major References

V.K. Gokak has said that at the B.Ed. level, 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 meagre provisions and facilities for in-service education. This lack of proper training affects the teaching-learning process as the teachers are not competent enough to teach the subjects with required methods, techniques and aids. This affects the student's overall development of language skills. They are unable to express themselves in this foreign language due to weak base of language learned since elementary level. (Kumar, R.B., 2008)

6. STRATEGY TO BRIDGE THE GAP

Some of the timely steps can be taken by facilitating the following emerging strategies and techniques.

6.1 Learner Autonomy

The concepts of learner autonomy have gained momentum, and have become a much discussed caption within the context of the new education specifically and are extended to learning in general too. It goes without saying that this is a shift of responsibility from teachers to learners, and it does not exist in a vacuum, rather it is the result of a concatenation of changes to the curriculum itself towards a more learner-centred learning. What's more, this reshaping, so to say, of teacher and learner roles has been conducive to a radical change in the age-old distribution of power and authority that used to plague the traditional classroom. Cast in a new perspective and regarded as having the 'capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action' (Little 1991: 4).

To all intents and purposes, the autonomous learner takes a (pro-) active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing himself of learning opportunities, rather than simply reacting to various stimuli of the teacher. This reasoning operates within, and is fitted upon the theory of constructivism. He is not one to whom things merely happen; he is the one who, by his own volition, causes things to happen. Learning is seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world. Psychologically, it carries forth the attributes of cognitive and metacognitive strategies on the part of the learner, motivation, attitudes, and knowledge about language learning.

6.2 Instructional Technology

Instructional Technology is a way for the problem analysis, solution design, development,



implementation, management, and evaluation of instructional processes and resources to improve learning and performance in education and at work (Whelan 2005 citing Reiser). In general, the rapid spread of participatory tools and sites facilitating social networking, interactive game playing, collaborative writing and editing, and multimodal production provide opportunities for new kinds of social encounters, new kinds of communities, and new kinds of learning environments. There are a number of non-digital as well as digital tools and technologies already existing to provide support to the learners.

6.3 Learning Strategies

The designing of curriculum for the learning strategies should take into the theoretical rationales of learner autonomy linked with instructional technology. As discussed by Thanasoulas (2000) [citing Cook 1993:114-115], it is observed that the learning strategies are the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Learning strategies are mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so. To a marginal extent, the strategies and learning styles that someone adopts may partly reflect personal preference rather than innateness.

6.4 The Instructional Management (IM) System and Emphasis on Multiple Intelligences (MI)

Learning objects can take the form of any type of media that can be digitized and sent across the internet. This opens up a wide range of materials to the instructional designer – video, print, textbooks,

magazines, slides, collaborative activities, e-mail, web pages, telephone, etc. Inculcating learner autonomy through instructional technology is proportionately related to the improvement of MI among the students. It supports Information Technology Skills; Information Literacy Skills; Problem-Solving Skills; Collaboration Skills; Flexibility; and Creativity. The design must fulfil the verbal, logical, visual, kinaesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist and existential needs. It should also focus on the dimension of artificial intelligence which is important in the context of ability to deal with machines carrying out functions that are normally associated with human intelligence, such as reasoning, correcting, making self-improvements and learning through experience.

7. LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH CULTURE AS A PROCESS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

Lantolf (2000:79) quoting the Socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) holds the view that specifically human forms of mental activity arise in the interactions we enter into with other members of our culture and with the specific experiences we have with the artefacts produced by our ancestors and by our contemporaries. Within socio-cultural theories, development occurs twice: firstly, in the process of social interaction (that is, on an interpersonal plane) and then within the mind of the individual (that is, on an intrapersonal plane). Language is integral to learning in that it is the major means by which we make and share meanings with ourselves and with others, and by which we negotiate social relationships and social values. It is language that makes it possible for people to objectify and conceptualise themselves in the world – to give



names to experiences, and make sense of the environment, objects, experiences, events and interactions leading to cognition and metacognition. In short, language is central to the process of conceiving meaning, which is integral to learning. Focus on English language learning through local cultural contexts is a very useful process.

8. SOME OTHER REMEDIAL MEASURES

8.1 Defining Construct and the Role of Translation as a Tool of English Language Learning

Introducing a system of translation of prescribed vernacular literature texts and other subject textbooks can help the learners learn well. It amounts to formation of constructs which become useful conceptual tools that facilitates communication. Once defined, constructs become objects of conceptual scrutiny in their own right leading to continuous linguistic coding and decoding.

8.2 Introducing More of Appropriate Language Activities

The teachers should design language activities and create awareness for formal and informal style in English language. They are required to make the learners learn bias-free language.

8.3 Preparing Multi-lingual Linguistic Inventory including Dialects/Tribal Languages

In order to make English language teaching and learning system comprehensive and realistic, it has to be a part of our Indian linguistic study as well as references. In other words, there should be collective efforts to prepare linguistic inventories keeping Indian languages and English for a greater benefit of academic, cultural and professional purposes. This

attempt will be useful for the tribal English language learners those who speak tribal languages.

8.4 Adopting the Tools and Techniques of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)

NLP is the practice of coding how people organise their thinking, feeling, language, and behaviour to produce the desired results. It equips people with a methodology to model outstanding performances achieved by geniuses and leaders in their field. It is also a powerful technology that helps to have new experiences in life by changing their mental maps. It helps to form our unique mental maps of the world as a product of the way we filter and perceive information through our five senses from the world around us.

9. TESTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ALL-ROUND KNOWLEDGE

There should be a provision of test of the knowledge of the teacher regarding the cultures and etiquettes across the world. In addition, the knowledge of Multiple Intelligences is necessary. There should be assessment regarding the knowledge of dealing with software, tools and gadgets meant for language teaching and learning. What's more, there should be good knowledge of the teachers regarding English language testing and evaluation, not alone conducting formative and summative assessments.

10. REFERENCES TO INDIGENOUS MODERN THEORETICAL BASES

10. 1 Focus on Post-method Pedagogy

Post-method pedagogy as outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2008) can be visualized as a three-dimensional system consisting of three pedagogic



parameters: particularity, practicality, and possibility. They interweave and interact with each other in a synergic relationship where the whole is much more than the sum of its parts.

The parameter of particularity is any post-method pedagogy must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular socio-cultural milieu. It then rejects the very idea that there can be one set of teaching aims and objectives realizable through one set of teaching principles and procedures.

The parameter of practicality means that if context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge has to emerge from teachers and their practice of everyday teaching, then they ought to be enabled to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize.

The parameter of possibility owes much of its origin to the educational philosophy of the Brazilian intellectual, Paulo Frère (1921-1997). He stresses the importance of acknowledging and highlighting students' and teachers' individual identity, and they encourage them to question the status quo that keeps them subjugated. He also stresses on the need to develop theories, forms of knowledge, and social practices that work with the experiences that people bring to the pedagogical setting.

In sum, the three pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility constitute the conceptual foundation for a better teaching-learning ambiance relating rural India.

As Kumaravadivelu(2008) outlines in his theory, the post-method teacher is considered to be an

autonomous teacher. It promotes the ability of teachers to know how to develop a reflective approach to their own teaching; how to analyze and evaluate their own teaching acts; how to initiate change in their classroom; and how to monitor the effects of such changes.

10.2 Ka:rmik Language Teaching Approach (KLTA)

This approach is proposed by Bhuvaneshwar (2009) as an alternative argument against the earlier approaches and methods. He argues that the so called methods and approaches are not in line with the natural processing of language and its learning in the ways of: 1. *atomicity*; 2. *lack of universality*; 3. *inadequate networking of components*; 4. *improper time management*; 5. *nonexperientiality*.

According to KLTA, language is not only *used* and *created* but also learnt *dispositionally* by constructing one's language learning *ka:rmik* reality (i.e., cause-effect experiential language learning reality) which is derived from the dispositional reality of learning. He proposes a network of three basic strategies which are: *sa:ttvik*; *ra:jasik*; and *ta:masik*. This division is based on dispositional, socio-cognitive psychology and not on a religious basis by taking into consideration the three basic types of learners from pedagogy and psychology: active, inert, and balanced (intelligently active) learners. The Interconnected-Interrelated-Interdependent (I-I-I) networking of the learning activity can be visualized and motivated in the following stages: 1. Ka:rmik Contextualization of Learning (KCL); 2. Ka:rmik Causation of Learning (KCaL); 3. Ka:rmik Processing of Learning (KPL); and 4. Ka:rmik Production of Learning (KPrL). Once learning activity is contextualized, the desire to learn causes the activity, and then it is *strategically* processed,



produced, and applied (practiced) to bring in the experience of learning and finally learning.

11. CONCLUSION

Emphasis has been always put on the teaching of English, but what is required is the expertise in making the learners learn better. Worth saying that English language education in is very much identified with Second Language Acquisition (SLA). But, the fact is that this language is very much associated with our livelihood, our future global position and development of economy. What matters most is the development of positive and encouraging attitude towards English language acquisition as well as fluency meant for all communication purposes. To an appreciable extent, concerns such as multilingualism and validation of local knowledge or choices need to be focused. Input-rich theoretical methodologies (such as the whole language, the task-based, and the comprehensible input and balanced approaches) aim at exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the mind. What's more, we observe in the passing years that English language has become an integral part of Indian lifeline. We cannot treat it any more as a British industry. It is rather high time to assimilate the language with Indian culture and language corpora in a more convenient, flexible, and accessible in a scientific manner so as to use it in all relevant contexts and strengthen the formation of potential Indian English.

Instead of confining only to classroom teaching using textbook of English, the English language teachers need to develop critical sensibility and commitment to foster the renewed opportunities, involve in lots of practical activities, and apply all the

technological tools and techniques to help the learners avoid shyness, utilise their local socio-cultural knowledge and translate their personal ideas and interests into English. The policy makers have equal responsibilities in this regard too.

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