



TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Everyone has become conscious about the role and value of English language. Over the years English has emerged as the most important language in the world. English is foreign language to Indian students. So students face some problems in learning of English language. The present paper highlights the problems in teaching of English and provides suitable solutions to make English teaching more effective.

KEY WORDS: Foreign language, herculean task, essential, remedy, encouraged.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years English has emerged as the most important language in the world. Modern era of globalization, increasing international trade, tours and travels have made it imperative to learn English. Hardly any walk of life, any job-profile is left untouched by the use of this language. English teaching in colleges is a Herculean task, especially in rural areas of Haryana and Utter Pradesh where the strong pull of the mother-tongue makes students shrink away from the language. In these colleges, the teachers come across such students who did not get the opportunity to possess even the basic knowledge of the set of rules governing the formation of a simple sentence of English or the use and form of tenses. The reason lies deep-seated in the lack of motivation and the support-system in their primary and secondary education. This paper is an attempt to present some problems and solutions in teaching and learning of English language.

Lack of basic knowledge is the biggest problem in teaching of English in colleges especially in rural areas. Most of the students do not possess a minimum level of interest, aptitude and intelligence essential for making the teaching of English effective. Since the students do not have the basic knowledge, they can not relate college teaching to their previous school teaching and consequently, they cannot retain the new learning for long. Lack of opportunities and a spirit of healthy competition amongst students is a critical problem. The students from a rural background and a public school background sitting in the same class. If groups are made keeping their aptitude in mind teaching would be more effective. As teachers we have need to take some pain to improve the students from their weakness.

Too much dependence on textbook on the part of the teacher/taught without proper synchronization is a serious problem. A teacher explains only what is written in the book. Reference books or books on similar subjects are seldom cited. Since the ultimate aim of the students is to pass the annual examination and of the teacher is to maintain a pass percentage above the university pass percentage, objectives of teaching take a back seat. Moreover, the aim of teaching English in colleges is to pass the examination and not to learn or acquire knowledge. The remedy lies in bringing radical reforms in examination system.

The authorities have fixed the student-strength of sixty to eighty for each section. Handling large classes for teaching English in colleges is perhaps the biggest problem today. Over-crowding makes paying individual attention virtually impossible and affects learning adversely. The solution is that there should be comparatively smaller classes in English so that individual attention is paid to the students and a teacher is

able to cater to individual needs. If the students are not seated properly and feel discomfort in the classroom, they do not pay attention to teaching. This result in a restricted free- flow of ideas.

During the course of study hardly any emphasis is laid on the cultivation of basic skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although there is letter-writing, précis or paragraph-writing set in the syllabi, yet the students cram some important topics and clear the examination. The knowledge of the subject remains almost negligible. Teachers come and deliver their lectures and leave without bothering to know how much they have been able to understand the topic discussed in the class. They are hardly ever encouraged to speak about whatever is taught to them. Students should be encouraged to communicate and interact in English quite often. It should be very clear to them and the teachers that English is not an informational subject like History. It is a skill that has to be acquired by practicing and exercising.

The problem of teaching English in colleges arises from the lack of interest among students. When the students enter college they come with a pre-conceived notion that English is the toughest language in the world and they can never learn it, not to talk of mastering it. So they do not even try. Their sole purpose in attending the English classes is to get their attendance marked. They simply pass away their time in the classroom without any inclination to learn. In a seminar on language, one of the speakers cited an example where students were able to learn and speak French better than English. It was so because they did not have any pre- conceived notion about French language. And they also had no fear to speak French incorrectly. The phobia for English language has to be removed from the minds of students.

Before designing the syllabus for English classes, instructional objectives are not clearly specified. Right from the beginning of the class to the end of the class students are not sure why they should learn a particular topic, for example, chapter on clauses in BA111, Paper B is so sketchy that the necessary expectancy level is not aroused among the learners. The syllabi committee should have a clear objective as to why a certain item is being included for a particular class. Sufficient practice exercises should also be included.

In addition to this, English, as a language should be presented to the students not as a subject to be learned in isolation from the real world and life of the students, but as a part of their real life. The teacher must make the students understand that functional English is the need of the hour. It will be required when they enter the job market in future. The teacher should have command over the language and act as a controller, organizer, prompter, advisor and observer. Every college should have not only the standard books, journals and magazines on English language but also language laboratories and the use of books and language labs should be ensured.

Classroom environment that restricts student's freedom to participate or express his view-point is not conducive for effective teaching and learning. Lack of opportunities and a spirit of healthy competition amongst students is a critical problem. There are students from a rural background and a public school background sitting in the same class. If groups or sections are made keeping their attitude in mind teaching would be more effective.

When the content is not easily understood by the students it becomes a major hindrance in teaching. When the content is not in accordance with logical hierarchy of concepts i.e., from simple to complex, observation to reasoning, concrete to abstract teaching fails to be effective. Unless the students are motivated to take keen interest in English, teaching would become ineffective and purposeless. The remedy lies in bringing radical reforms in examination system. There is a dire need to arouse the student's interest and make teaching of English more participatory.

When the teacher has to meet the university deadline and complete the prescribed syllabus within the time-table constraints, teaching suffers a lot. Teacher's pace may become fast or he may fail to cover details to the extent needed for the students' understanding. Teaching synonyms, antonyms, one-word substitution, common errors, précis-writing, letter-writing all in one class confuses the students. If only some items are taught in each class and their learning reinforced, teaching of English would be more effective.

Teaching of English in colleges conforms to the conventional methodology-lecture method. A teacher enters the class, marks attendance and delivers the lecture in a mechanical manner. This leads to boredom, monotony and lack of interest. In an age of information technology the use of multi-media should be incorporated in classroom teaching. The solution lies in boosting the student's self-confidence and helping him in achieving a realistic-self concept.

If the suggested solutions are sincerely incorporated the day is not far when the teaching of English will become really innovative, meaningful and result-oriented.

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