

TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO INDIAN STUDENTS: THE TRUTH BEHIND THE CURTAIN

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ABSTRACT

India is a multilingual country, rich in scripts and cultural heritage. But what dominates us today is the lack of sensitivity towards the Golden mines of India. The prominent concept in modern India is an adoption of English in all walks of life. The fluency in English has become a notable strength and it dominates the people of all strata irrespective of their social and educational background. Proficiency in English language is a must for everyone at both personal and professional level.

Now the complexity is that as Teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) in India, we are now teaching a mixed lot of privileged but confused students who are not only adept in using the technology but they are also proficient in deforming the language. Working under such stressful situations the work of language teachers even becomes more difficult as they carry a great responsibility of moulding the nation's future. Thus the present paper focuses on the status of English in the current education system of India, the difficulties faced by the language Teachers, a critical analysis of the existing problems and the preventive measures to find out the best possible solution.

KEYWORDS: India, English Language Teaching (ELT), Status of English, Educational System

Information technology has come a long way in a short span of time. 'Go Tech-Savvy' this is the in phrase in the current culture of economic planning and educational development. The magical code words can open many doors of perception but the success in translating the phrase into action depends upon the efficiency and the strategy to be adopted by the academicians. While looking forward to the next century if there is any lever that can help India to leap-frog into the next century and emerge as a developed and prosperous nation that is the quality education system in India.

Despite all the rhetoric that has gone into condemnation of the system of higher education in India and despite all the fanfare accompanying the introduction of the reform suggested by the different commission, educational system continue to deteriorate, consequently a general atmosphere of cynicism prevails in the academic circles. In spite of the various attempts made by the Govt. of India education is in a mess. There is no definite purpose of education. There is a mad rush and as a result mushrooming of educational institutions can be seen everywhere that exist without any focus to improve the quality of education.

Under such critical circumstances the role of language teachers becomes more complicated as for the vast majority learning of English language is a means to enter the job market. But the white collared job opportunities which used to absorb a large number of degree holders in the past have already reached to a saturation point. In fact every new academic session draws thousands of aspiring young men and women to the portal of our universities without any clear idea as to why they seek higher education. Furthermore the opportunities in various fields require a specific kind of skill and training that are not imparted to students. A country like India where different languages are spoken in different part of country the need for learning a universal language becomes much more prominent.

English emerged as a lingua franca of the world in 20th century. It is the second most spoken language of the world after Mandarin. The force of English language can be felt in a way that India in spite of being a multilingual country is being dominated by English language. Here almost 40% of population speaks English in one or the other way and the rest want to speak. English is the second official language after Hindi accepted by the Govt. of India, the presence of English language in India is overwhelming and undeniable. It not only rules the minds of people but also regulates their body language. Thus teaching of English language to Indian students become more challenging for language teachers, as they constantly stay under pressure of making their students excel in the specified field. While teaching English language for the last ten years I came across many difficulties faced by the language teachers that can be categorized as follows:

1. **Competitive environment:** There is a lot of competition around. It is due to the simple fact that in India supply is greater than the demand. Companies have reached to a saturation point. Even the professional degree holders also remain to be unemployed. There has been an increase in a tendency to migrate to European countries making the task of language teachers more difficult as this requires perfect knowledge of English language. Even in certain cases one has to qualify a language test too. Now the problem is that everyone can't be perfect but as a language teacher one is answerable for each and every student. Besides there remain a lot of pressure from Management to get the students placed and it again requires theoretical knowledge coupled with fluency in English. So the language teachers constantly work under pressure that affects their output in totality.
2. **Problems of second language learner:** India is a multilingual country and everyone whosoever wishes to learn English language learns it in context with his First Language. Thus it takes a lot of efforts on part of the teachers to make the students understand the basics of English language within the short span of time. Furthermore they remain bound to complete the syllabus on time that certainly affects their performance in due course of time.
3. **Over Population:** Over population is a curse for India. Due to this miserable factor the language classes turns to be more chaotic and as the classroom gets overcrowded it adversely affect the efficiency of language teachers. In this scenario paying attention to an individual learner becomes next to impossible for them.
4. **Status of technical Institutes:** If we talk about the technical institutes in India the condition of language teachers is even more critical as the focus is given on the study of technical subjects and the students are often discouraged by others to study language in spite of their interest in it.
5. **Background:** The poor social and educational background of the students results in their deficiency in communication skills. Even their basics of English language remain to be unclear. So

teaching language to them becomes a Herculean task for a teacher that hampers his productivity as one has to start-up from ABCD to teach such students.

6. **Lack of training programs:** Teaching a language requires exhaustive theoretical knowledge accompanied with certain technical skills. But the majority of the language teachers don't possess these skills. It is due to the lack of proper training programs in India. Consequently very few teachers actually succeed to utilize the language lab to the fullest.
7. **Dominance of regional accent:** In India the students come from the different parts of the country to learn English language. They suffer from the dominance of their regional accent. Thus It takes long hours of efforts on part of the language teacher to free them from the dominance of their regional accent.
8. **Parents' tendency:** An inapt tendency of parents also plays a negative role in the progress of the students as everyone wants his child to be fluent in English from day one. But many times it results in the suffocation of students when they fail to speak fluently and as a result they get demoralized and sometimes even stop putting efforts to learn the language.
9. **Hindi-English mentality:** It also makes the task of language teachers more complicated as the categorization of students among themselves divides them into two classes- one who's fluent in English is labeled as superior and he belongs to the elite class and the others are considered to be misfit and get forced to join the inferior group. This sort of categorization mars the interest of students to learn English language resulting in a complicated situation for language teachers.
10. **Attitude of students:** There exists a negative predisposition among the students to learn English language in order to use it as a tool for professional success and to let others down and in reality no one is actually bothered about learning a language. Under such circumstances they cannot be expected to have expertise in a specific language. We find them more inclined towards making a fun of language rather than having a sincere approach, for example, students calling 'dean of student affairs' as 'DOSA' . No. of examples can be cited when we

find them using slang, deforming language and so on.

11. **Misleading propensity:** As a teacher we always feel inclined to appreciate an extra ordinary performance but sometimes it de-motivates other students and consequently the fluent students start dominating the class leaving the Hindi medium students with no option but to stop speaking in English. Thus half of the time goes away in motivating them to come in front and to speak even few lines.

12. **Teachers' Constraint:** Recently a circular was passed by Uttar Pradesh Technical University that 'no one should be scolded for not speaking English'. These types of circulars act as a barrier and snatch away the freedom of a language teacher. Here I don't mean to advocate the verbal or corporal punishment but as per my perception the teachers should be at liberty to work freely. Now-a-days the tolerance power of students has come down to point 'zero'. They have grown over sensitive and we as a teacher feel scared as any action from the part of a teacher might result in an extreme reaction on part of a student. Thus the dramatic change in the mindset of people leads the teachers nowhere leaving them clueless.

So under current scenario the situation of students as second language learner has become like Indian economy; rich getting richer and poor getting poorer in spite of maximum efforts on part of the language teachers.

Now the question arises what actually can be done to improve the overall condition so that the language teachers not only give their best on papers but it actually reflects in the overall performance of the students. The strategy to improve the condition can be discussed under following heads:-

1. **Categorization of students:** Students in the language classroom should necessarily be categorized into different groups as per their potential so that they get a healthy atmosphere for mutual growth and feel free from any sort of inferiority complex.

2. **Liberty of Teachers:** Freedom of the teachers should be respected and they should be allowed to work at free will so that they feel free to introduce creative techniques in the classroom. Working with a free spirit will surely increase their productivity and the standard of work performed.
3. **Training Programs:** Training programs for language teachers should be mandatory so that they succeed in keeping pace with the use of modern technology for the betterment of students. Computer literacy is still quite insufficient in India as many teachers still lack in fundamental ICT skills, especially those of older generation but teaching language surely requires special skills and training to implement technology in the classroom. Deficiency on part of the teachers adversely affects the efficiency of students.
4. **List of software:** A complete list of useful software should be provided to all the language teachers to be used in the language lab so that they succeed in extracting the maximum out of the language lab.
5. **Avoidance of negative trends:** Hindi-English mentality should be avoided among the students. Everyone should be treated with respect and they should get an equal opportunity to learn and perform for their mutual progress. Students should be encouraged to participate in literary activities to build up their confidence and to boost up their morale. Even the parents should be told to wait patiently for fruitful results as learning a language is a constant process and it requires a lot of hard work and dedication to be proficient in language.
6. **Change in Govt. schemes:** There are many loopholes in educational system of India. Talking about the current scheme of mid-day meal or the distribution of laptops in Uttar Pradesh there appears to be no inclination towards the improvement of education, e.g. UP Govt. distributed laptops to all those students who passed out intermediate in 2012 and continued their study without a break. Undoubtedly it would have been appreciable provided the Govt. would have set some criteria of judgment. But contrary to that the meritorious students have been leveled with the weaker ones under this scheme. Besides it also

de-motivated those students who took a break for preparation to crack some competitive exams. Thus the Indian Govt. should focus on overall development of the entire education system by implementing the strategies to motivate the students to perform better in their academic and professional domains. Certain schemes must be introduced to encourage the learning of English language as it remains to be an unavoidable factor for professional excellence.

7. **Moral values:** We as language teachers should not only focus on teaching of a language rather than we must try to inculcate moral and ethical values in the students so that they develop a tendency to honor the Goddess of language rather than using her as a mere tool for professional success.
8. **Change in curriculum:** There should be a change in the present curriculum and more emphasis should be given on practical implementation of language and literary activities. It should be the responsibility of all to make the students realize the importance of English language.
9. **Uniformity of accent:** The language teachers should put maximum efforts to let the students come out of the dominance of their regional accent and there should be uniformity in the use of accent too. Talking about RP or BBC English does not make students proficient in it but it demands rigorous work from both sides to excel. Thus the teachers should be trained thoroughly as per the need of the hour.
10. **Students' mindset:** The mindset of the students should be changed for better cause; they should take learning English language as a challenge rather than an opportunity to move ahead in life. Use of negative abbreviation should also be avoided. They should focus on in-depth knowledge of English language instead of superficial knowledge.
11. **Use of modern technology:** The effective use of Internet and multimedia in language lab help in making teaching interesting and more productive. Modern technology is one of the most significant drivers of both social and linguistic change. It lies at the heart of the

globalization process; affecting education work and culture. Technology is utilized for the upliftment of modern styles; it satisfies both visual and auditory senses of the students.

12. **Sufficient infrastructure:** Most of the time insufficient infrastructure results in the failure of a language teacher. So it is essential to provide them proper infrastructure to ensure better language teaching facilities and there should be an up gradation of all the sources on regular basis.

In conclusion English language is the throb of professional success. It is true that little variant strains of communication skills exist but these strains do not present the entirely new face of our present teaching system. To unravel the snarl into which our teaching system finds itself it is essential to go into the deeper analysis.

In brief we can say that English language and success go hand-in-hand in the present era of globalization and in order to succeed professionally, knowledge of English language has become unavoidable. In the current scenario what we need to realize is that this goal can only be achieved through co-operation and co-ordination. The growth of students entirely depends upon their teachers as they consider them to be an embodiment of the spirit of knowledge so if everyone commits together for the mutual growth, the impossible can be made possible. The road to success is simple but instead of reciting the obvious mantra of making learning language compulsory we should make it compulsory to have proficient teachers and committed students. A task that is awesome in its perception but fairly simple in its execution.

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