



A Critical Approach to ESL Teaching in India

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Abstract

The present study is a humble attempt to examine the various problems faced by ESL teachers and learners in India. English is now one of the richest modern languages. It is a prominent source of communication at the international level. So everyone feels that in order to avail of the advantage of English, one should have to take a plunge into the task of learning English language to survive and succeed in this competitive world. Today the requirement of learning English is not only political, but technological and scientific also. The primary aim of this study is to make a critical assessment of the principal trends and features of English language teaching at the under graduate level. Thus, this study results in providing the valuable suggestions for promoting learning and teaching of good English in the region.

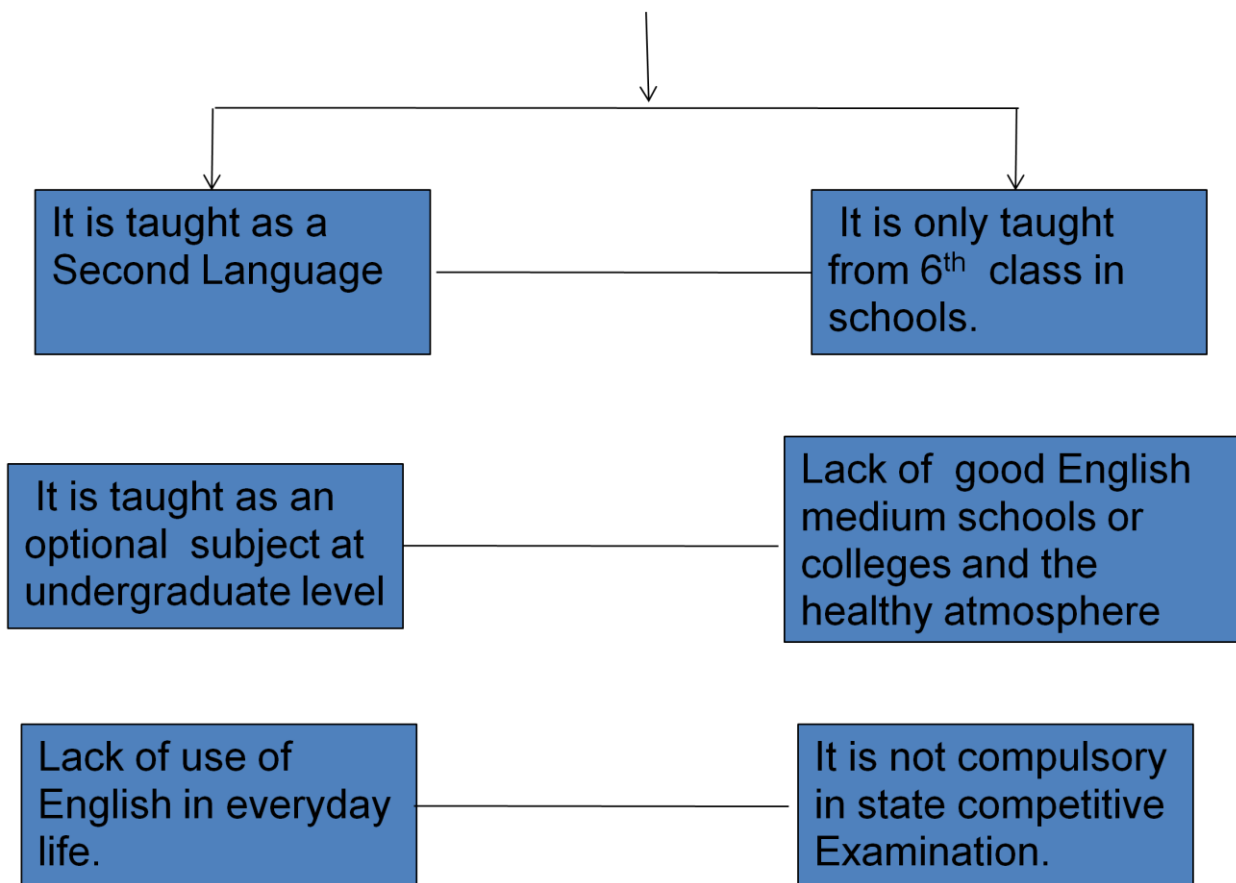
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English is now one of the richest modern languages. It is a prominent source of communication at the international level. So everyone feels that in order to avail of the advantage of English, one should have to take a plunge into the task of learning English language to survive and succeed in this competitive world. Today the requirement of learning English is not only political, but technological and scientific also.

English in India

English was introduced in India by Lord Macaulay to promote the interests of English, especially to raise a class of English-knowing Indians, in order to help the British in the administration of the country. In the long run, this has proved to be beneficial to the Indians, as English helps to keep abreast of the challenges of the contemporary times. English is the language of industry, banking and commerce in India. It serves the 'purpose of a 'link language and official language' among the educated elites in our country.

Position of English Language Teaching In Haryana



The position of English in Hindi speaking states like Haryana where English is studied as a second language is very pathetic. In Haryana, English is taught from 6th class because majority of schools here are Hindi medium schools.

One of the chief causes for the rapid fall in the standards of English language is that, English is treated as an optional subject at undergraduate level. In Haryana upto the graduation level if a student fails in English subject he is promoted to the next class without any objection.

The position of English in the region of Haryana, is all the more miserable since it has neither the advantage of good English medium schools or colleges with competent teachers nor the atmosphere prevailing in the metropolitan cities.

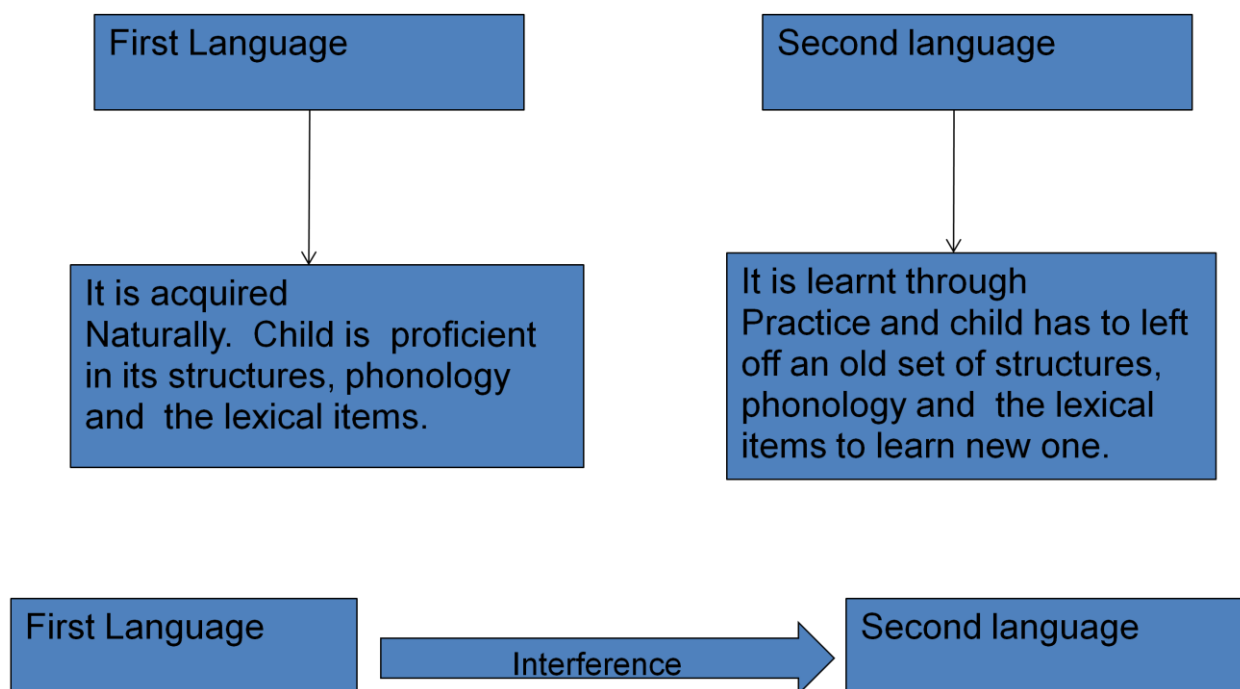
In Haryana, maximum people are engaged in the agriculture profession. So, they don't have any use of English language in their daily routine life.

In most of the state competitive examinations, there is no use of English, which further discourages students to learn English. There are certain other factors such as the lack of positive attitude and adequate motivation responsible for the shaky position of English in haryana.

Mother Tongue Interference

As explained in my study Mother tongue interference is a serious problem in the teaching of English as a second language. A student is proficient in his mother tongue which is acquired by him naturally. He is thorough with its structures, phonology and most of the lexical items. So when he begins to learn the second language, he has to left off an old set to make the path for the new ones. In this struggling process between the new and the old, it is possible that the old interfered with the new. This phenomenon is called mother tongue interference in the teaching of English.

Mother tongue interference in language learning



Objectives of the study

- To examine the problems faced by ESL teachers and Learners in India
- To make a critical assessment of the current methods of English language Teaching at the undergraduate level
- To recommend suggestions for promoting Learning and Teaching of English in India.

The present study is a humble attempt to examine the various problems faced by ESL teachers and learners in India. The primary aim of this study is to make a critical assessment of the principal trends and features of English language teaching at the under graduate level. Thus, this study results in providing the valuable suggestions for promoting learning and teaching of good English in the region.

HISTORICAL VIEW OF PROMINENT ELT Methods and Approaches

The teaching of English in India, as also elsewhere, has necessitated rethinking about the existing methods and materials, which now seem inadequate and largely unproductive. So in my study an effort has also been done to peep into the history of English language teaching techniques starting from the old times of the Greeks and Romans to the present time.

Prominent ELT Strategies and Approaches

Some of the prominent methods and approaches explained in my study are:

1. The Grammar-Translation Method
2. The Direct Method
3. The Structural Approach
4. The Reading Method
5. The Audiolingual Method
6. The Army Method
7. The Bilingual Method.
8. The Silent Way
9. Suggestopedic Method
10. The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching
11. Student-Activated Multi-Skill-Approach
12. Communicative Language Teaching
13. Modern Educational Technology in language Teaching.

1. The Grammar-Translation Method:

In the end of the nineteenth century “Grammar Translation Method” had become the popular method of teaching a foreign language. This method emphasizes reading, writing, translation, and the conscious learning of grammatical rules and practices of exercises with the use of mother tongue. It is easy to test, evaluate and grade the learners. But in this method the speaking skill is neglected and class becomes dull and boring.

2. The Direct Method:

Teacher taught directly by the use of gestures, expressions and illustrations without the use of mother tongue. The learner is active; he sees, listens, thinks, speaks and writes. Only the highly intelligent students and only competent teachers can make use of this method.

- 3. The Structural Approach:*** In 20th century, The different structures are used in different situations to transmits the ideas. The order of teaching a language, according to this approach, is listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is not a practical approach as it is difficult to remember all these three hundred basic structures.

4. *The Reading Method:*

Main emphasis on reading skills in the early stage of learning according to West the method suffered due to the lack of adequately trained teachers who could use it effectively.

5. *The Audiolingual Method:*

The main emphasis on listening and speaking skills. The students listen and practice with a variety of drills with the continuous use of language laboratory. The audiolingual method does not focus on the grammatical knowledge.

6. *The Army Method:*

Directly contacts with aimed language in Small groups of the trainees with Long hours of drilling and active practice by the use of specially prepared graded materials. But, the Army Method, could not work in the average classroom with average teacher, and average English language teaching and learning situations.

7. *The Bilingual Method:*

In the Bilingual Method Writing and speaking skills are integrated by the use of mother tongue by the teacher in a controlled and systematic manner. The learners learn to weld together meaning and sound, and to switch over speedily from one language to the other. But the pedagogic viability of the Bilingual Method at the college level remains to be tested.

8. *The Silent Way:*

The teacher remains silent and the learner is insisted by the teacher to remain active in the classroom. It is not effective in the average classroom situation.

9. *Suggestopedic Method:*

The main emphasis on learning through the comfortable and relaxing environment by the use of music and setting of the classroom, not from the direct teaching. The suggestopedic method puts several challenging demands on both the teacher and the administration in the existing Indian teaching situations.

10. *The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching:*

The language skills are learnt effectively by presenting orally first and after in written form in different situations. The main principle of simple grammar to complex structure is used in the language teaching classrooms. But the teacher must be an expert.

11. *Student-Activated, Multi-Skill-Approach as advocated by the CIEFL :*

The teacher's function is to prepare the student for the activity of reading followed up by adequate practice and exercise, oral discussion which suits to the existing conditions of the classroom.

12. Communicative Language Teaching:

The main role of CLT teacher is to develop the communicative ability in students and to organize the classroom to encourage the process of communication

13. Modern Educational Technology in language teaching:

The growing use of modern educational technological aids such as tape-recorder, film-strips, film-projector, radio, T.V. , Video and Computers is playing important role in language teaching to make learning more realistic, interesting and productive. But these technological aids involve huge expenditures, there is also lack of experts to efficiently handle these sophisticated gadgets.

What, above all, the language teacher needs today is a right attitude to language learning- teaching rather than a formal method. The efficiency of a teaching method, surely relies on a complex of factors which differ from situation to situation and place to place.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Problems faced in ELT classrooms broadly can be classified into categories:

- Teacher Related Problems
- Student Related Problems
- Curriculum Related Problems
- Teaching Methodology Related Problems
- Learning Environment Related Problems

Let us list out specific problems within each category.

• TEACHER RELATED PROBLEMS

- Inadequate Knowledge and Skills —
- Inappropriate use of Language Skills
- Lack of Motivation to accept teaching job —
- Inaccurate Perception of Students —
- Personal Prejudices and Biases —

• STUDENTS RELATED PROBLEMS

- Lack of Basic Knowledge, Aptitude and Inability to relate new knowledge with existing knowledge —
- Passive Attitude of students—

Lack of Motivation —
False perception of the world and unrealistic self-concept —
Sensory Deprivation to the subject —

• **CURRICULUM RELATED PROBLEMS**

Absence of Clear Objectives —
Supremacy of text —
Technical and Irrelevant Subject-matter —
Inappropriate sequencing of Content Matter —
Too much Information to cover in the limited time—

• **TEACHING METHODOLOGY RELATED PROBLEMS**

Emphasis on Conventional Methodology —
Lack of Integration of Media —
Too much dependence on Prescribed Textbook —
Inappropriate Examination System —

• **LEARNING ENVIRONMENT RELATED PROBLEMS**

Large Classes in English —
Improper Classroom Arrangement —
Psychological Problems of students —
Restricted Classroom Environment —
Lack of Feedback regarding effectiveness of teaching—

Implications

Thus, the findings of my study suggest certain ideas for making the existing ELT situation more relevant so as to cater to the needs of our learners and to make it learning oriented.

My study suggests implications regarding teaching methods, examination system, teachers training, textbooks and syllabuses

(a) Teaching Methods

- Selection of an effective method
- knowledge of all the methods to an English teacher
- physical organisation of the classroom

Nowadays the main burden of deciding on an effective approach lies with the teacher himself.

It has been recognised that changing methods and approaches is not the solution for ELT problems. All methods work in the hands of a skilled teacher. In fact, the basic components of all successful methods and techniques have a great similarity. Though none method, approach or technique can be advocated or is self-sufficient, the teachers of English should be familiar with most of them-so that they can use them all according to their need or as per the situation in their classrooms. In short, the effective teacher can apply teaching methods that are easier, quicker, better, safer, more rewarding, less labour intensive, and more suitable.

The physical organization of the classroom is also an influencing factor on the success of an activity. The teacher will have to take into consideration the size of the classroom, availability of open space, lighting, physical arrangement of furniture, materials and the appropriate use of modern teaching aids and so on.

Examination System

- Use of oral test, written test and the continuous recording of the students progress report
 - The replacement of old examination system
 - Restriction of essay type questions
 - English spoken test
- (i) To improve the examination system, my study suggests that oral test, written test and the continuous recording of the students progress report during the session should be used to derive reliable and concrete results.
- (ii) The existing system of examination should be dismantled and replaced with a system of continuous and comprehensive internal assessment which will enhance the ability of teachers and learners of ELT.
- (iii) Objective and essay type questions should be absolutely banned as they encourage students for rote learning and cramming the answers.
- (iv) In addition to it, a test of spoken English should be included in examinations at all levels.

(c) Teacher Training

- Inability of academic excellence
- Lack of professional Teachers training institute

It is recognised that the only good academic record acquired by teachers in higher education is not sufficient to teach college students. The college teachers are required professional training to teach effectively in their classrooms. Our teachers need to keep themselves in techniques of teaching

and researches, upgrade subject-matter, develop evaluation skills and administrative capabilities and so on.

Therefore, we must open professional teachers training Institutes of English on the pattern of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages for imparting specialised training to the teachers of English.

(d) Text Books

- Selection of textbooks
- Evaluation of textbook

Textbooks should be selected according to the suitability, need, language background of the learners. Textbook should be evaluated and reviewed by the eminent persons before reproduction. The new areas where textbooks are in short supply, eminent persons should be motivated to write the books.

(e) Syllabuses

- Clear cut objective
- Use of communication skills and language skills
- Introduction of English subject from the very beginning in schooling

Syllabuses should clearly state the level of English which the learners should attain after the completion of their graduation course. Many different skills for business, banking should be included in the syllabus of English at the higher level. Besides, language skills should be given due importance in the syllabuses. English as a subject should be introduced from very beginning of the schooling.

Criteria for Effective Method for Teaching and Learning

1. It must be simple, satisfactory and flexible to cope with various class conditions for both teacher and learner
2. Testing constant revision and active participation of student must be part of the method.
3. It must enable the teacher to cope with modern teaching aids and to speed up intercommunication between himself and students
4. Teaching material should be graded from simple to complex.
5. It should include all the four language learning skills (writing, learning, reading, listening)

To conclude, a clear understanding of the principles and assumptions underlying the various language teaching methods and approaches as presented in the body of this research work will enable the classroom teacher to plan and organize his teaching activities as to maximize learning in the class. This study will thus serve as a very useful resource for both practicing teachers and students aspiring to take up teaching as a career and will deserve fervent consideration by ELT

experts and educational authorities involved in the task of promoting and improving the teaching of English in Indian setting.

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