

PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE A NEW CHALLENGE

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INTRODUCTION

With increasing globalization and mobility of men, there has been created a huge market for Communication skills in English. Nowadays a sound knowledge of English is an elementary and essential condition to attain competence in the professional world both at the national and international level. English being the major language of international business is spoken as a second or third language in many countries of the world including India. Proficiency or deficiency in the knowledge of this language makes or mars the career prospects of job-seekers, apart from making them acceptable in the socio-economic set up. Another aspect of the need to know this language is that it possesses a huge and rich treasure of literature, which though available in translation, can be better relished in original. The present status of this language asserts the binding compulsion upon us to know it better because of its attaining the status of Global Lingua Franca. Our aim through this paper is not to give a recipe of the solution to the problems we face in day to day classroom teaching but to share some of our observations in this regard and to tell how we can tackle certain problems in certain circumstances.

It is an open secret that English is a kind of taboo among the student of rural area. When we talk to our students we come to know that to go through English in the examination is their main concern. Thus there are many fold challenges before the teachers. Moreover, it is really a challenge to bring together students who are of a different bent of mind and temperament to the study of English language. We have to bring the students in the class room, remove the havoc of English, create interest, develop the skill, and complete the syllabus. In such a challenging situation what method, technique, strategies the English teacher should use is also a challenging task. Moreover, it has always been a debatable issue which method will be the most suitable and effective for a particular targeted group of students. Notwithstanding a number of language teaching methods like grammar, translation, direct, audio-visual and the latest communicative language teaching (CLT) being used for teaching of English, the debate on effective English language teaching still continues. In fact we have reached the stage of "beyond methods". Irrespective of the focus on literature or language, the fundamental target remains that of improving communicative competence among our students.

Few factors need to be looked up for this purpose:

Which is the first language or the mother tongue because it interferes a lot in our spoken English?

2. How a Teacher can become a role model For his students?
3. How much amount. of exposure the students have to English language outside classroom?
4. 1-how often do they Consult dictionary?
5. Whether the student has any motivation for learning English.
6. What is the Culture sensitivity index of the students in the classroom? If the learner's only aim is to pass, how can we lower this barrier?
7. To locate factors which hamper their innovation and experimentation, Syllabus compulsion can be one of the factors in this respect.

Tools

Classified theories of teaching methodology:

A number of methods, approaches, techniques have been evolved for the teaching of English with the course of time and the requirement of situations. Let us first analyze the classified theories of teaching methodology under three categories:- Subject Centered, Teacher Centered and Student Centered.

The Subject centered approach lays emphasis on content and information and to transmit knowledge by those who consider themselves knowledgeable to those who know nothing. This approach is undemocratic because at the centre of this approach is teacher's belief and

International Advance Journal of Engineering, Science and Management (IAJESM)
ISSN -2393-8048, **July-December 2020**, Submitted in December 2020, iajesm2014@gmail.com
conviction. This process is only one way and the students are passive receptors and this approach kills their creativity as it only allows them to take down notes without laying emphasis on their critical sensibility. While following this method, a teacher should deliberately invite disciplinary conflicts in the class through debate. This way several interpretations may come out and it will raise the confidence of the students.

The Teacher centered theory emphasizes teacher's performance, speaking ability and the way the teacher expresses and not just his intellectual ability. Due care should be taken while following this approach so that the teaching performance may not be carried too far resulting in its becoming showy, pretensions and artificial.

In the Students Centered theory, the whole shift is towards students. In this theory, a teacher is no longer a performer but just a facilitator, Students approach text straight and are active participants and teacher is not longer a star performer.

The teaching of English language or any other literary text to the students could be direct i.e. without using any vernacular language or indirect involving some Indian language. There cannot be any particular methodology for teaching English to the students like task based methodology or interactive methodology. It has to be a combination of all the methods. One can impose one's own methodology to the students and it has to be in accordance with the demand of the students.

Multilingualism as a teaching resource in an English class room: -

Multilingualism, defined as speaking more than one language, is a growing worldwide phenomenon nowadays. A section of English teacher believes that Mother tongue may not be of great use while teaching English rather they suggest monolingual (English through English) framework of ELT. But research evidence suggests that acquiring more than one language create different kinds of connection in the brain which gives multilingual individuals an advantage as compared with monolingual individuals. The demand of growing international commerce/business has engendered a large amount of interest and attention to multilingual education and training programmes. So the ELT pedagogy needs to be oriented towards using multilingualism as a framework and mother tongue should be considered as an important asset as far as teaching of English is concerned because mother tongue has a facilitating role and is a key factor of education. Thus a judicious use of mother tongue in the classroom is an effective tool to learn English language.

Determinants of Response in Teaching— Learning process:

Usually our complaint as teachers is that our students do not answer our questions as we expect them to, their answers being memory based and not original in approach or perspective. So is the case not only in teaching of literature or language but also in critical approach or examination. But it is too much to expect them when they do not even understand a text properly. Various factors affect the understanding of a text, the lack of which lead to the lack of critical understanding of a text; language or literature. A text can be approached in different ways e.g. from the point of view of its form, structure, theme, subject or location, It is necessary for a student to understand beforehand a text and then give positive or negative response. The next approach is to understand the way a text is handled by a teacher. A teacher can adopt various methods to help a learner. These methods can be structural, interactive, grammar translation or audiovisual. The teacher should change the form of text in the classroom to make understanding easy and create creativity in the class e.g. a poem or a short story can be enacted in the class with dialogues to simplify it. Sometimes comprehending the words creates problems as there may have different geographical setting not known to the learner. Depending on the problem a teacher should move from general to the particular area. We can also create or recreate a text to make it understandable.

Diversity of Courses: Need for Register-Based courses:

Our first important role as teachers of English is to make the reader ready to learn. This depends on many things but more important on the mental and chronological age of a learner, Sometimes

a text is out of the social setting of the learner and becomes unintelligible and at other times the learner understands only after a particular chronological age. Another way is to modify or simplify a text with simple words and vocabulary. This is called register of a subject in the mind. The meaning can be transferred from one register to the other as understood by learner. Another way of making text easy is to use sandwich vocabulary where words are chosen from original register i.e. the original utterance used in a different area of knowledge, but in such cases functional aspect should be carried and literary aspect left otherwise situation may become ridiculous.

Being teachers of English, we feel that it is necessary to introduce the student to the particular kind of English which he may need for specialized study in his own subject. It is felt that there are many different registers of English, and the student should be able to command the register of his own area of study. A student who has a general proficiency in the language may, on the other hand be able to acquire the special registers of English quite easily.

Need for Motivational Strategy for the Class Room: - In the present environment, there is a dire need to adopt a motivational strategy for the class room teaching. In order to motivate the students for attending classes and performing well in tests, we can give them prizes at the end of the academic session so that the feeling of completion may inculcate among them. The element of competition motivates the students to work hard.

We can also enact stories and plays in the class room. To teach Shakespeare's plays one can adopt the means of performing dramas on the stage. The dramatic element as a strategy of teaching makes Shakespearean plays easy and interesting for the students. I, myself made arrangements to let the students watch the movie 'The Messenger: Joan of Arc' before teaching the play Saint Joan by G.B Shaw.

One can also encourage students to have more exposure to English language by reading on their own. The students from rural background are afraid of English language as if it is a ghost. These students should be given a kind of assurance that English language is not something you must be afraid of. They can learn English by speaking English as a matter of practice. They should be motivated to make a good use of the libraries by reading newspapers, short story books and magazines so that they can feel more comfortable with English language.

Need for Testing Oral Communication

There is a tendency to set direct questions from the exercises given at the end of lessons of a prescribed textbook. Students mug up the readymade answers from guides or help books and reproduce them in the examinations. Even questions on précis making, translation and grammar are also set from the exercises given in the textbooks of grammar and composition prescribed by the university. That is why students don't take much interest in any other activity related to English language. They are more concerned about completing the syllabus or passing the examination.

If we want the teacher to function effectively and teach English not as a subject but as a language, we must be prepared to introduce certain changes in the examination system for, clearly, the existing system will not allow the kind of teaching which we envisage. Testing oral communication must be a part of examination. Some activities through which the students can be assessed are:

Reading aloud a piece of prose selected or written for the purpose or a part in a dialogue with the other taken by the examiner or someone else; answering questions put h the examiner; and speaking for a few minutes on a given topic of a sufficiently personal nature for the student to be at home with the topic. The examiner has, however, to select items which he will look for in each examine, like appropriateness of language used, fluency, grammaticality, range of vocabulary used, rhythm and intonation. Similarly, questions may be set for testing of listening with comprehension. The material for testing may range in form from single words or phrases to

Tips

Here are some measures/observations which can enable students to get interested in the subject to some extent. The course design is a vital component in teaching, as we all know that the basic aim of English language is to teach language communication skills and to familiarize them with contemporary ideas. So the course of the syllabi should be designed in such a manner as to make the students feel inclined towards literature/subject.

Occasionally, in the classroom the text should be supplemented with physical and electronic aids like the multimedia to make teaching more interesting. Mere dogmatic presentation of notes is not enough. Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) makes things easier in classroom. As there is multiculturalism and multilingualism in the English classroom, the use of regional literature is also permissible. Neuro Linguistics, a new concept, has come up which deals with repetition of words. There should be mutual interaction session among students so that they may exchange ideas. Thereafter the teacher should supplement the lecture with personal experience, knowledge and reading. Moreover, we should relate literature to life because literature is not something to be merely read, it is life itself. Communication is an important component of a good teacher. In order to make the learner proficient in understanding and speaking English, the teacher must acquaint him about the important features of the pronunciation of English language. Importance of language labs, audiovisual aids such as tape recorders, computers C.D. and television is a must for teaching English language. We can also organize work shops where competitions like creative writing, quiz, joke telling, Ad-writing competitions in English language can be held. Such extracurricular activities will help them in expressing themselves. Functional English laboratories are also of great help for teaching English language. Emphasis should be laid on Language activity which includes: listening to the language, speaking it, reading in the language and writing in it. The more the language activity is used by the students, the greater will be the chances of their learning the language. The teacher should make his teaching Dialogue Oriented rather than a monologue. Moreover, the teacher should lay emphasis on making the students themselves speak, read or write the exercises than doing these things himself. All language learning and teaching is based on activity; the richer and more varied the activity is, the more effective the learning is likely to be.

A teacher should work as a facilitator to the students. He should motivate students to read just 4-5 chapters daily. Active participation on the part of the students is a must for learning. Students should be inspired to read a poem himself and respond to it. The original impressions are very important. To make students understand the meaning of symbols, simile, metaphors, puns etc, examples from Hindi songs can be given as cinema is an important form of art. Emphasis should be laid on the importance of originality and writing. The students should be motivated not to copy from guides but they should be inspired to write their own.

Above all that the atmosphere of the class should always be light. A Teacher should not be monotonous in his lectures. He should bring changes by one means or the other. He should make the students enjoy the lecture. He must love his students. To love, the students will definitely respond.

The more a path is used, the clearer it becomes, Thus in order to be a good teacher, we must keep our teaching skills updated. The teacher should be given Pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher training. Instead of aiming at perfection, his job should be to make the learner intelligible.

Conclusion:

No single method could be a panacea but a combination of method will work if decided only by the teacher where, when and which one is to be applied. Basically, teaching is a two way transaction, like buying and selling. We cannot sell anything if no one buys yet there are teachers

International Advance Journal of Engineering, Science and Management (IAJESM)
ISSN -2393-8048, **July-December 2020**, Submitted in December 2020, iajesm2014@gmail.com
who say that they have done a good day of teaching but without bothering about students. Good Teaching involves listening as well as talking. In this way teachers and students are jointly responsible in the process and in it all grow.

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