Problems in Teaching and Learning English

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Abstract

The cultural disparities and socio-economic backgrounds of the learners tend to develop an aversion towards English language acquisition. Also among the learners, who live in a background where English is not put into use, lack primary exposure. Awareness regarding the importance of English language acquisition minimizes the challenges in teaching and learning the English language. The syllabus has to be designed in such a way that, language is not superimposed and learner should be given enough time to adapt. Technology and various other social media can be widely used in order to make the teaching-learning process an interesting one. Choice of words and methodologies adopted during classroom sessions should focus on developing an interest among the learners. Teachers or language trainers are the official flag bearers. They should be sensible and sensitive towards the learners. The mother tongue influence and grammar related issues have to be neglected so as to motivate the learners. Teachers are the primary source of language exposure. Through them, learners acquire language and adapt to a new culture. This paper focuses on the methodologies that can minimize the cultural disparities. The problems faced by the teachers while developing LSRW skills by analyzing the challenges faced during language acquisition from a student-centric perspective.

Keywords: Teaching and Learning English, Problems, Challenges, Culture, Technology, Aversion, Methodologies

Introduction

Man's unending quest for knowledge and his exploration skills demands a global language for communication across multidimensional boundaries. As a need of the hour, the growing importance of English Language and its acquisition has evoked a sense of realization. Nations have started adopting numerous methodologies and practices to promote language learning. In the current competitive global scenario, English language acquisition makes survival easier. The socio-economic background of the learners plays a significant role in language teaching. The English language appears more or less like an alien language for people who do not get to use it in daily life.The cultural disparities and lack of exposure seem to have developed numerous challenges in teaching and learning English.

Aversion towards Language Learning

The cultural disparities and socio-economic background of students have created a lack of interest among students. They find it difficult to associate or relate to their existing culture. To

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Devi Raj. V., B.A., M.A.
Problems in Teaching and Learning English   27

an Indian Language learner, Idli or Dosa would make sense to them than a Hamburger or Pizza. The textbooks that we follow are usually adapted ones. This way language is superimposed along with an alien culture. Language trainers or teachers do not attend to this cultural dilemma. They being the flag bearers of English Language should address this cultural dilemma and help the learners acquire language with much ease. The choice of warmers and methodologies adopted play a significant role during the initial days of language acquisition. It is difficult to make students aware of the importance of language learning. It is better to act accordingly to inculcate a curiosity. Instead of imposing Big C culture through literature, primary level language teaching can be done in an inter-cultural manner. Instead of imposing Big C culture through literature, English can be introduced slowly and gradually. The language they have learned should be consistently made into use. Vocabulary and phrases that can be interchangeably used in day to day life have to be introduced.

While Imparting LSRW Skills

It is usually believed that listening to audios and watching videos would always make language acquisition an easy process. But Indian learners find it difficult to follow both British and American accents. To them, Indian English makes a lot more sense than any other. The use of stressed and unstressed syllables, the silent cues between conversations are all part of a small c culture which again creates a cultural dilemma. Indian speakers follow a rhythmic pattern when they speak. They impose that rhythm to their acquired language too. They should be given enough time and space to listen and acquire language through various sources. An organized use of technology and social media can help them listen to English through numerous sources. Speaking is followed by reading because before putting them to speaking exercises, they should get over with the inhibitions and hesitations. In India, people seldom focus on speaking skills but this is the most important skill. For learners to get acquainted with their own way of speaking, it is better we make them read first. The mother tongue influence and the accent are the biggest challenges when they start speaking. At this point, one on one speaking exercises in a repeated fashion would help them acquire pronunciation easily. For eg; words such as 'accept' (|ak'sept|, 'quality' (|kwo'-li-tee|) are often mispronounced. To overcome this challenge, the teacher should expose her mouth and tongue in such a way that the learner understands the positioning of organs of speech. It has to be done in a broken pattern like,

|a|
|ak'|
|ak's|
|ak'se|
|ak'sep|
|ak'sept|

Numerous games and activities can be wisely used to develop strong speaking skills among learners. The biggest challenge is to develop a strong vocabulary. The listening and reading activities may not be sufficient to build a vocabulary. This is because the students do not associate these words with their own surroundings. Small phrases and sentences can be taught in a limited fashion. It has to be repeatedly used in a natural way by the teacher during the class and

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Problems in Teaching and Learning English   28

this would allow them to pick up those words along with the context. They should be able to use these words interchangeably in their natural setting. Developing a strong vocabulary is the first step to writing and speaking skills. At the earlier stage, grammar can be ignored. They can be trained with various word games. Picture description is the best way to start with writing skills. Let the learner identify the words that would help him describe pictures. At a later stage help them phrase sentences in their native language and help them translate it into English.

Activity-Oriented Learning

In the textbooks that are being followed, much emphasis is given to activity-oriented learning. Activities like diary writing, debate etc. at a beginner level adds on to the aversion towards language acquisition. When the learners are at the beginning level, they should be motivated voraciously. These activities may affect the process of language acquisition adversely.Imparting grammar knowledge is yet another task for language teachers. They hardly understand the significance of a noun or a verb if they have not acquired enough vocabulary. Numerous games such as Name, Place, Animal, and Thing help them distinguish what nouns are. Picture descriptions help to distinguish between an adverb and adjective. Actions have to be repeated multiple times to teach what nouns are. Grammar has to be taught at different levels for different stages of learners. Group based learning often facilitates language acquisition. Application-oriented syllabus for language learning focuses on the output and end results. It does not allow the learner, to acquire and assimilate language. Language classes should give them space to reveal and realize themselves. They should be given chances to express themselves. Neither English language nor a culture should be superimposed upon the learners. The language trainers should be able to make use of technology while imparting the skills. The methodologies they adopt play a crucial role. Presentation, Practice, and production methodology place the teacher in the frames of a performer. A language teacher should teach without any inhibitions. The learner- trainer relationship can also help in language acquisition.

Conclusion

The socio-economic background of the learner and his lack of awareness is the prime challenge to be addressed in English language classes. The lack of interest and aversion the learner shows in language classes is due to these factors. Inculcating an interest among the learner is the biggest challenge. The choice of activities and methodologies adopted while imparting each and every skill is important. The language trainer should be sensible and sensitive towards the struggle of every learner. The cultural dilemma that the learner encounters has to be addressed diplomatically letting the cultural transformation a subtle one.

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Devi Raj. V., B.A., M.A.
Problems in Teaching and Learning English   30