

Problems of Teaching English in Primary Schools of Gujarat

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Abstract

This paper attempts to bring out the issues related to the problems of teaching English in Primary schools of Gujarat. The language policy in school education emerged as a social problem and also as a personal problem. The quality of English language education in Gujarat schools presents a very awful picture. The proficiency of teachers in language and their exposure to language and materials are major concerns for quality English language learning. In reality, rural students' situation is very difficult. They don't have opportunities as city students have, like language lab, audio visual aids and what not. Generally, rural students study English as a subject, not as a language. It is the main obstacle for them. Most students read English only for the sake of examination. They do not know how to recite poems, but they know very well how to memorize it. Actually, rural students are afraid of English. On the other hand, many teachers don't have long vision about students' life. They focus only on examination.

Key Words: Teaching, English, Schools, Gujarat

Introduction

The study of language is the base for all other learning. Language defines us as human. A language is not just a collection of words, such as we find in a dictionary. It is also the rules or patterns that relate our words to one another. To be human is to use language, and to talk is to be a person. A language is a system of conventional vocal signs by means of which human beings communicate.

Even when someone attains something great in art, or athletics or music, we immediately turn to language to tell other people about it. The huge proliferation of cell phones, instant messaging, podcasts, and voice mails simply illustrates a simple fact about humanity: we love to talk. In fact, we just cannot stop talking. It is our language; we speak defines us and identify the community we belong to. But the fact that we can talk at all, the fact that we have a language, is inextricably bound up with our humanity. Language is our medium of communication, but it can also be a barrier to understanding.

It is well known fact that the English language entered into India only after the arrival of the English. Soon after their arrival it began to exercise its impact on the intellectual life of the people and also it reduced the communication gap between the rulers and the people of India. And, with strong efforts taken by the people like Macaulay and Lord William Benedict, and also because of enthusiasm of Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, it has developed in such a way that English became a gate way to western knowledge and also it began a mutual cultural interaction between India and Britain which led the transaction of cultural heritage between the two nations.

The English language has had a remarkable history. When we first catch sight of it in historical records, it is the speech of some none-too-civilized tribes on the continent of Europe along the North Sea. Of course, it had a still earlier history, going back perhaps to somewhere in Eastern Europe or western Asia, and long before that; to we can only speculate about it. English has become the most widespread language in the world, used by more peoples for more purposes than any other language on Earth and India is one of them.

The changing times have witnessed the growing importance of English language in all walks of life. Both as non-native speakers and as second language speakers, conscious and unconscious use of the words in our everyday conversation from the English language is easily noticed. English is used all over the world not out of any imposition but because of the realization that it has certain advantages. A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world's knowledge is enshrined in English. It is a progressive language. It is dynamic and flexible.

Education has been the primary factor in the more formal transmission of English around the world. English symbolizes in Indian minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. In present times, English is the most preferred language. Indians and the Indian English language Press use many words derived from Indian languages. Indian accent is sometimes difficult for non-Indians to understand. Actually, English has co-existed in the Indian sub-continent alongside thousands of local languages.

Language learning is a natural process for the natives. The approach to this learning process is called the 'behavioristic approach'. But for the students of other languages, deliberate efforts are required to learn a foreign language, which requires a 'mentalist approach'. The students of rural and semi-urban areas in Gujarat face such problems because English is not their mother-tongue. It is neither instinctive nor intuitive. Language acquisition seems to be a process of both of analogy and application, nature and nurture. Teachers of language have adopted and invented a variety of methods to teach English.

Students of the rural schools face a number of problems. English is their second language. Learning a second language means acquiring a system of rules. But just as very little is known

about these rules, even lesser is the knowledge about how such rule systems are acquired. Students find themselves unable to express in English. They have no idea of proper sentence structure. They do not know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules.

The sole objective of the teacher and the learner remains how to pass the exams. The students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. In the past, in rural areas, English was introduced to students in the fifth class. But now there is no dearth of English medium schools in such areas; yet the standards of English are falling rapidly.

The teacher has to keep in mind the age of the student, his native language, his cultural background and his previous experience with English. The experience of the teacher and his mastery over English language are equally important. Students of the rural areas do not realize the importance of English as a language of communication whereas this is the most important aspect of the global language. They lack the confidence to speak in English; expression in the language is weak.

First reason is that they have been taught English through Grammar-Translation Method (GT method). This method makes them dependent on their mother tongue. Whatever they read they translate it into mother tongue. During the time of exams, they cram the expected questions and answers, because they cannot write sentences of their own. Because of GT Method, they have no vocabulary of English words. While writing, they depend on the cheap material from the reference books (called *Notes*).

The stereotyped and traditional pattern of exams aims at clearing English exam not as a language but as a subject. The students merely pass the subject, far from learning any level of the Language. It is more shocking to learn that even the questions that students are supposed to answer are told to learn through translation from English to Gujarati. Poor performance in translation, lack of proper vocabulary, no knowledge of proverbs all are results of a casual approach.

Because of the rapidly increasing web of Educational facilities, the rural areas have been enjoying the facilities of the English medium schools. But it has neither helped in raising the level of the students, nor made them learn English as a language. The infrastructure of such schools is weak. Some teachers have good accent, but they do not possess a good command over the language. Now in the rural and semi-Urban areas, study of English language begins at an early age, at the KG level, and it continues up to Senior Secondary or first Degree level. Even in the Professional Courses, the teaching of English as a communication skill is an integral part of the curriculum or the course obligations. It is quite unfortunate that whatever our English language teachers gain in the completion of their course or education as eligibility for seeking a job or an employment, it stays there, and the teaching learning stagnates.

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- They have been taught English through Grammar-Translation Method.
- This method makes them dependent on their mother tongue.
- English language is taught as second language.
- Students find themselves unable to express in English.
- Students do not know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules.
- Students never realize the importance of learning English as a language.
- Students lack the confidence to speak in English
- Some teachers have good accent, but they do not possess a good command over the language.
- They don't have opportunities as urban students have like language lab, audio visual aids etc.

To solve all the problems, a systematic approach should be followed. The teachers should aim at teaching primarily, not knowledge but skill, the different skills required for good Listening-Speaking-Reading-Writing. Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities, and of building their confidence. A teacher who tries to help his pupils in this way has rightly rejected the image of the teacher who acts as the arbitrary dispenser of all knowledge. As children learn by way of imitation, similarly, the students tend to follow the example set by their teacher. The English teacher should have the wide-ranging enthusiasm and Imagination, this can make English course 'a sort of clearing house' for ideas and interests which branch out into all the other subjects that the pupils are studying in school, and beyond them.

To tackle the problem of lack of vocabulary in the students, Productive and receptive Use of words should be kept in mind. The students should be made to learn simple words. This will help in inculcating a habit of learning new words in them. Their newly learnt words will become a part of their own vocabulary and they will be in a position to use those words. This is the natural process of movement at need from receptive to productive use of the words. This enhancement of vocabulary will result into better expression. The common errors made by the students in the different usages of the same word can be cured by this technique.

By noticing all such components of the language, they can enjoy the richness and flexibility of language. Once their interest is aroused, they will show tremendous improvement. Reading can also help them in making aware of spellings. When the students have practiced different uses of words and have developed habit of reading, they can avoid the common errors of Translation.

There can be no learning without exposure. Group discussions can be arranged. Texts should be read loudly by the students. Simple usage of words will become a part of their speech only when they are exposed to deliver a speech and express their own ideas. The zeal for

learning will help them in their own advancement. The problems of the students and the teachers are inter-related. It is necessary to assure that the learner makes a tremendous contribution in the process.

It will also help in raising the standards of English as a language at the school level. On the basis of suggestions given above, the critical situations in the teaching of English can be checked from further deterioration. Decidedly one or two persons can't do anything solid. Let everyone concerned with it take the responsibility. Only then we can create a congenial environmental and we will be able to achieve better results in the teaching and learning of English.

Possible Solutions

- Teachers should recite poems and not allow simple memorization of the poem.
- Try to create interest to taste poems.
- Should avoid GT method.
- Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities, and of building their confidence.
- The English teacher should have the wide-ranging enthusiasm and imagination.
- Group discussions can be arranged.
- Texts should be read loudly by the students.
- English will be used by them as a medium of expression.
- Motivate the students think through English.
- They will be able to use English as a language of communication.
- Create confidence of speaking English in the public.

To Conclude

If we take into consideration the role of teacher and learner in acquiring the knowledge of a language, the problems can be solved effectively. Only then the students will realize the practical use of English language. English will be used by them as a medium of expression. They will be able to use English as a language of communication. Fluency in the speech, proper knowledge of sentence structure, confidence of speaking in the public will make them able to keep their pace with the developing world.

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