

# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 10 : 9 September 2010

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

## Teaching the Extra - Essentiality of Bringing Eclecticism into Classroom

Rajesh Bojan, M.A., M.Phil.

---

### Abstract

What they learnt is different from what we learn (today) and what we learn would be different from what they will learn (tomorrow). The difference is not in terms of what is learnt, but on how it is learnt. The field of language teaching has always remained exposed to such change.

At every specific period, learners had variety of expectations and followed different techniques to fulfill them. Learners were exposed to strategies that were believed to be effective in terms of language acquisition. Strategies like Communicative language teaching and Cooperative language learning have been accepted and acclaimed by many to be very innovative and highly effective.

But, no matter how best a strategy is, if we simply fail to look forward, update and adapt to any advancement, it is definitely impossible to retain the quality of learning. It is with the background of such a principle, this paper is specifically structured to focus on the necessity and benefits of extra-teaching as well as the essentiality of bringing the concept of eclecticism into classroom.

### Introduction

Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

10 : 9 September 2010

Rajesh Bojan, M.A., M.Phil.

Teaching the Extra - Essentiality of Bringing Eclecticism into Classroom

Learning is not just the acquisition of information. Real learning does not cease with the acquisition of subject knowledge, the success of the process lies in how well the matter has been captured, comprehended and exhibited effectively making use of the right skill. If one is incapable of expressing the ideas what he had learnt in a clear and effective manner, then, no matter how hard he may learn, his attempts will not be productive. Teachers as well as learners should understand that learning is not stuffing; it is the deliberate act of familiarizing a concept or situation in such a way that could be significant for the development of our knowledge and career. At the same time, what has to be taught must be taught effectively and that which is taught has to be immensely useful and applicable to life. If learning does not meet these conditions it is of no use.

It is no wonder to notice a great similarity with the attitude of teachers particularly in India. Teachers always tend to overload the learners by rushing through the syllabus being very particular about time and exam rather than worrying about what the learners have learnt during their course of study. In spite of concentrating on what is being expected or required by the learners, teachers are least concerned about skill development. Under such an unfortunate influence, learners are dumped with baggage of subject-matter which most of the time they tend to memorize and easily forget once the exams are over.

When the curriculum contains loads of subject, it is obvious that learners could not be provided with training opportunities to make them fit for any competitive situations. Teachers on the other hand might not take interest or extra effort to go beyond the usual subject teaching because of lack of time. As a result, they get used to see teaching as a duty than as an art. It is at this point teachers formulate an opinion that it is sufficient to teach what is required for the exam and ultimately fail to see what is essential for learners' life. Most part of their teaching they remain relying only on books. Thus, teaching as a result lacks creativity and becomes lethargic disappointing the learners.

No learners want the teachers to interpret the information already available in the books. Learners are eager to learn from the teachers the items that are beyond their imagination, experience and reach. Hence, teaching ought to be not only subjective but also unique and innovative always.

### **What to Teach?**

Learners come from different educational background. There are vast differences existing among the learners. It is not easy for teachers to manage the variety of differences and provide individual attention to every learner. Especially, Indian classroom setting is not an apt place to think of one-to-one teaching due to the overflowing condition of the classrooms. Large strength in the classrooms has always been an unavoidable barrier for effective teaching. Due to the numerous learning differences and difficulties among the learners, teachers are in a situation to teach a particular lesson until slow learners could reach an understanding of the subject being taught.

Additionally, due to the overloading nature of our curriculum, teachers are incapable to sufficiently train the learners individually and they are often discouraged unable to cover the portion due to repeated instruction for the benefit of slow learners. There are even instances in which teachers ignore a topic or two unable to complete it on time and those who try to complete may not make it effective. We may not be in a position to prevent the overflowing nature of our classes; if we do, then we may have to look for alternatives like additional classes, teachers etc which is practically not worth doing.

If it may be possible to reconsider designing the curriculum in such a way making its content minimum and practice oriented then there would be a good chance of making the best use of it benefiting both learners as well as the teachers.

As far as teaching English is concerned, the subject should train them to learn and master skills necessary for successful survival in the competitive society and shape them as communicatively competent individuals. Merely diving deep into the subject matter with no competency in language use is completely ineffectual. No one would try to construct a building without laying a proper foundation, it is the same policy that has to be followed in matters of language learning.

Learners should be trained to use language confidently, they need to be taught on how to develop presentation skills and make use of them effectively. With such a strong foundation the language acquired thereafter could be engineered successfully without much effort. Under the constant exposure of such foundational exercises, learners will be able to enhance their skills and master the dynamics of language use.

Thus, when it comes to teach, we need to concentrate more on enhancing the learners' language aptitude enabling them to be competent enough to survive in any language requiring situation. Implementing this kind of learning at the elementary level by introducing suitable skill-enhancing exercises could be more effective. When subject-teaching is limited and examination point of learning is minimised, learners as well as teachers could have abundant time to focus on mastering language skills.

### **Necessity for Alternative Teaching**

Industries and IT sectors have bloomed all over India. In a fast-developing nation like India, employment and business opportunities have become easily accessible. World leading companies are at tight competition trying to launch their several business centers throughout the country. High-paying jobs are not anymore mere dreams. Anyone with the ability to communicate effectively and fluently in English could easily prosper making a wonderful career.

In India, unfortunately even the most skilled learners and job-seekers face difficulties in securing placements due to their language incompetency.

Having a good academic record alone may not be sufficient to convince a job provider instead they look for several other capabilities. Most of the candidates who are unsuccessful at

interviews and campus placements regretfully say, it is their language incapability, lack of training that are main reasons for such hindrances.

While as learners in schools and colleges, they ultimately fail to realise the importance of building their individual talents and most of the learners are brainwashed to believe that the only purpose of learning is to clear the forthcoming examination.

Under this false assumption learners take effort to improve their academic records completely neglecting other areas. Only when it is time to seek for a job, these learners realise out of their own experience that their years of educational exposure is indeed unsupportive and irrelevant. What else could be more shocking than this!

### **Provide Opportunities**

A solid development is not an instant achievement. What could not be learnt early cannot be learnt later. This is especially true in terms of language learning. Unless learners are provided opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in an earlier stage, there will be no possibility to see effectiveness in their performance.

### **Dual Mode of Instruction**

Another major issue regarding teaching English in India is the dual mode educational system. Education provided under the vernacular medium has to be discontinued making English the only path for all future learning. Learning a vernacular or developing interest to learn different languages is something that has to be welcomed, but trying to promote and restrict education within a localised language which means nothing to the rest of us could probably be a disaster.

When English is making its way as the prominent and governing language leading the whole world into the future, what are we trying to achieve making our learners to sit under our vernacular umbrella? How long are we going to be addicted to this political trick is a question that needs to be raised.

No language in the world could be so flexible and adoptive in nature as English is. I could not see any prediction of any language attaining in future the status that English has managed to attain.

Education under the vernacular medium is creating a situation where learners have no room to enhance their knowledge of English. It is undoubtedly evident that learners graduated under such conditions are not suitable for platforms where English is dominant. They are indeed poor when it comes to performance unless they emerge on their own and develop skills and competence in English.

Government is not going to lose its funds imparting education in English as the medium of study. Even if it does take much expense compared to that of the vernacular way of education, it is primarily for the betterment and welfare of our future generation to whom English would be the

bread and butter. If all learners regardless of their background are bestowed with the gift of English education there would be better chances of professional and academic growth.

### **Eclectic Approach to Teaching**

Teaching English in India has been a challenging factor due to various reasons including learner diversities, lack of facilities, large classes, examination-centered education, inappropriate application of methods, mother tongue instruction, insufficient training of teachers, ineffective curriculum so on.

Though different methods exist and are being implemented to teach English, it is very essential to focus on something that is highly suitable to our own environment. Simply importing an approach and applying it without changes is not going to be helpful in anyway. We need to understand our local context, analyse the conditions under which our learners and teachers operate, we need to identify what is really required to increase the quality and effectiveness of our education particularly in teaching English and finally adopt or introduce an innovative method that would eradicate the defects of the existing learning problems in teaching English.

### **Lack of Focus in the Classroom**

Unfortunately, in the excitement of so-called advances made in theoretical frameworks, language teaching shows a lack of focus in the classroom, its ecology, its socio-economic fabric, its organization and management and the number of learners and their problems.

The models we are trying to use now have been developed in monolingual countries like England and the USA and the ELT ‘specialists’ from these countries come and advise Indian teachers on how to teach a second language; the Indian subcontinent is a vast multi-lingual area where for centuries people have learnt and taught several languages. Most teachers of English in India know at least two or three languages. It is unfortunate that we have to import second language teaching models from monolingual countries! (Krishnaswamy, 2003).

### **Limitations of Methods**

The time has led us to a point where we have understood quite well how ineffective we have or in appropriate terms, our learning conditions have been so far. It is not altogether to deny, all that we have followed so far has not been productive, but it is the question of how well the conventional teaching is applicable now and in future.

Every method has its own level of limitations. Some methods that may have proven effective in certain conditions might not be favourable elsewhere. Neither could a teacher implement the same strategy for the entire curriculum. Unless a dynamic, well- planned multi-approach is integrated into the field of second language teaching, the learning condition could experience no great improvement.

Some argue that there can be no right method for everyone. They point out that some methods are more suitable for older learners; others for younger – or that some might be more appropriate for beginning-level language study, but not for intermediate or advanced. They say that some methods call for a level of language proficiency that not all language teachers possess (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

### **Demand for Variety**

Learners expect variety. They need variety in the curriculum, they need difference in the way they are taught, in the way they are treated, and in the way they are tested and evaluated.

Learners are sick of teachers' book-reading and text-interpreting business. They feel monotonous when teacher do things what they could do well by themselves. Teachers must realise that the employment market does not worry about learners' depth of knowledge in literature, they do not require our Shakespeare and Dickens. They are in high need of communicatively qualified candidates.

As an ardent lover of literature, I personally value teachers who take literature to its maximum. Though the idea of instigating the knowledge of various literatures to our student community is a great service, it is vital for all of us to keenly focus on equipping the learners with the necessary language skills as a strong foundation.

### **Maximize the Potential of Our Students**

As language teachers, we are expected to maximise the language potential of our learners regardless of their background. Our task is not some kid- stuff that we could teach in a day or two, we are indeed dealing with an occupation that requires highest commitment, endurance and up-to-date intelligence.

We are not only involved in the process of protecting the language, in fact, we are establishing unlimited opportunities and securities for the lives of forthcoming generation.

### **Required: Change and Update**

As mentioned earlier, a change as well as some update is required to retain the quality of learning. The incorporation of eclecticism in the field of language teaching could be a phenomenal achievement for all second language learning perspectives in future. This multi-approach instructional strategy has widely attracted many scholars into its fold. Many teachers around the world have indeed realised the need to be eclectic in order to manage variables associated with the learning environment.

A successful TESOL teacher is not necessarily biased in favour of one method or another. She should be first of all competent in and comfortable with the methods she wants to use. She tends to select different teaching strategies from different

methods and blends them to suit the needs of her materials and students (Thirumalai, 2002).

### **Cultivating Eclecticism**

Since practical application of eclecticism is somewhat complicated, teachers must possess an excellent knowledge about the various instructional approaches and should be in a position to analyse properly which strategy would be suitable to a particular audience, situation etc. Unless teachers are familiar with a wide range of teaching methodologies, the theories and practices behind them, it is certainly difficult to be successful in being eclectic.

### **Conclusion**

The condition of learning English in Indian classrooms is very pathetic. Learners are taught by teachers who are inefficient themselves. The condition is so worst that some colleges do not even have enough staff to teach English. There are rarely few who go out of their way to work effectively doing justice to their profession.

Understanding the concept of eclecticism and trying to create an approach fit for our own teaching environment may be a way through which our task would be simplified and effective. Unless teachers possess expertise of the different instructional styles, it is indeed difficult to construct an effective method of teaching that could work out well in our classrooms.

Eclectic style of teaching provides an opportunity for teachers to try out different instructional strategies and figure out which method is quite effective depending on the purpose. Inappropriate selection of the methods of teaching could lead to a disaster. Hence, it is essential for teachers to consider variety of factors such as content, availability of time, audience, teaching aids, etc., before implementing an approach.

A detailed account regarding the condition of the teaching atmosphere has to be made by the teachers before fixing any strategy. It is necessary for them to pre-determine ideas such as, whether a particular method is suitable, whether there is sufficient time to deliver the content using the selected approach, whether it would prove effective among the learners so on. Being familiar with variety of techniques along with the ability to apply the right kind of strategy to the right audience is vital for every teacher.

---

---

### **References**

Krishnaswamy, N. and Lalitha Krishnaswamy 2003. *Teaching English: Approaches Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited.

Diane Larsen-Freeman 2000. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thirumalai, M. S. 2002. *An Introduction to TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. *Language in India* <http://languageinindia.com/april2002/tesolbook.html>

---

Rajesh Bojan, M.A., M.Phil.  
Department of English  
Anna University  
Coimbatore 641 047  
Tamilnadu, India  
[rajeshbojan@gmail.com](mailto:rajeshbojan@gmail.com)