

English Language Teaching – Evolution from Traditional Classroom Teaching to Use of Technology in Classrooms

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to first highlight the major importance of English language globally and how it is taught worldwide as either a second or foreign language for different purposes. The next point is to bring to light the methods and its nature in English language teaching and learning, how as the centuries and time passes by methods have shifted from teacher-centred to student-centred methods and finally how with the development and advancement of technology plays an important role in making English language teaching and learning interesting and how English language Teaching via technology like YouTube, vlogs, blogs can be used in teaching and sharing information with students far away from the educational institutions.*

Key Words –English Language Teaching, Methods, Approaches, Technology

1. Introduction

By the end of the 20th century, English had already gained international status and became a 'lingua franca' for many people all over the world. Thus, English has become the language of technology, commerce, international trades, higher education, and military. English language created a new generation of learners who needed and were depended on it for their career.

English has been used as the first language in countries like the U.S, the U.K, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. In European countries like China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Brazil English is taught as a foreign language and while in countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Nigeria, Singapore, Vanuatu English is used and taught as a second language. Indian linguist Braj Kachru estimated approximately 320 to 380 million people use English as their first language or mother tongue and another 250 to 380 million people use English as their second and/or foreign language.

It is found that in few countries English language has an adverse effect because of colonization. One of the countries who expressed negative response to English is India and to name a few states - Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh. One of the reasons to prejudice to English language is because of the exploitation and the struggle they went through the colonial rule. The first person who spoke about introducing English education is Thomas Babington Macaulay in his famous Minute (1835) and it was supported by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Now English has been used as the language of media, it is used in printed media like newspapers, magazines, and online news websites, and in the television and radio stations, there are channels using only English. The field of advertising also uses English for their advertisements.

2. Second Language Acquisition

In Language, the terms acquisition and learning are considered as one and the same but they have two different meanings. Language acquisition is a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammar rules. This is similar to the way they acquire their first language. On the other hand Language learning is a direct instruction in the rules of language. It is a conscious and a deliberate process.

Research has shown that children from the whole live in a society where people use more than one language while conversing with each other and because of this they do not find it difficult in learning a new language. Of course this does not go for everyone. These group of people fall under category of bilingual and multilingual societies.

The experience of learning and acquiring a second language is considerably different from the acquisition of first language. Research points out that children are good at grasping a new language at a small age. Adults and students of higher classes on the other hand find it difficult to learn a new language due to many psychological barriers and factors.

3. English as a Second/Foreign Language and English Language Teaching

We live in a multilingual world, and foreign or second language learning, has always been of important concern. Today English has become an important language to be learned by all around the globe. Before English, Italian and French became the major languages of the world, with English reigning first, and French second, Latin was considered the most important language to be learned and mastered. Now Latin is dying language, though it is still a language that is being taught and made use of at Churches.

English language teaching became a profession of utmost importance in the academic field a half a century ago and many researches have been conducted in the same to help educate English



language teachers' in how to go about their lesson in English language teaching in class. And while continuing their research and studies, researchers and applied linguists came up with different terms for English Language Teaching (ELT) – Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English as Other Language (TESOL), and Teaching English for Specific Purposes (TESP) and so on. All institutions from schools to colleges of Arts and Sciences colleges to Engineering colleges have English Language departments and all students are expected to know how to at least speak and read English fluently, however English language teachers focus on all four skills while teaching their students.

3.1 Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW)

While teaching English as a second or foreign language to their students, English language teachers should give a lot of preferences to the four important skills - Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW), which play an important role in improving the student's ability to learn the English language. As English language teachers while looking into these four important skills, they should be aware that all the four skills are all interconnected with each other.

Listening and Speaking. Both these skills are said to the "two sides of a coin – both are closely interlinked." While listening we identify sounds and through speaking we produce meaningful sounds. When we listen with intense concentration to the speaker talk we get to identify the tone of the speaker and his or her attitude when he or she is speaking and we accordingly formulate our response through speaking.

All most everyone who aren't learners of language think that listening and hearing are one and the same thing but it isn't the same. Listening is a skill in which we just keep quiet while someone is talking, but it is also the process of receiving, constructing meaning and responding to the speaker accordingly. Listening is an active process that includes a lot of our energy, our mind, our concentration. Hearing on the hand is a passive activity which requires only our senses. An example for hearing is the sound of the fan when it is being switched on, or the external sounds of a car honking on the street etc. A few activities for effective listening skill while teaching or learning a new language would be a) selective listening, where we could listen to a talk by an important person or to a news broadcast and pick out only those points which we feel our relevant to us. We can either write these points down on a piece of paper or read aloud; b) Group Storytelling, in this activity we have to be alert and listen attentively. In this activity we can have a group of four to six members and one of the members is the moderator. It begins by one us starting with a simple opening and from there each of us have to give in our own contributions to the story and make it interesting. This way we not only improve our listening skills perfect but also improve our speaking skills as well; c) listening to a speech

by an important person and trying to guess who is speaking and after guessing we have to talk about that person and his life achievements.

For effective speaking skills we could have a) a group discussion, where each of us get the chance to talk and put forward our points. This activity helps us gain confidence to speak up and talk without falter; b) Debates, is more or less the same as having a group discussion but here there are two teams, one for the topic and the other against the topic. Both teams should bring up points to support their argument. Debates help us to become confident and bold while speaking; c) on the spot presentation, we can choose any topic be it about a person, place or thing and we have to talk about without any prior preparation.

The next two skills are Reading and writing. Like how listening and speaking are interconnected, reading and writing also have connection. A few activities we could follow for better reading skills include a) Reading together, this is a simple activity which is usually followed in small classes in school where all the students are asked to read aloud together from their textbooks. This activity helps us to gain fluency in the language we are learning and also helps us in expanding our vocabulary; b) Comprehensive passages, we could read long comprehensive passages and try and come up with an appropriate heading for the passage or write what we understood from the passage on a piece of paper or read it aloud.

For an article or research paper to be perfect we have to have good writing skills, for good writing skills we have to be an expert in listening, speaking and reading. The various activities that can help us improve our writing skills could be a) Picture story writing, here we can observe an image say from a newspaper or a magazine, observe it properly and try to make an interesting story out of it. This activity can be quiet fun and entertaining as all of us see things differently and so all of us come up with different point of views of the image or picture; b) writing a travel log, this is another effective way of keeping our writing skills in check. In this activity, observation and listening attentively play an important role. While travelling be it through flight, train or bus we could start by including all the details like where to where we are travelling, the timings, etc.

Learning a new language is not an easy task and the four skills explained briefly above play a vital role in language learning. Scholars have a shared feeling that language is something that cannot be taught but caught, observed and learned. After all practice always makes a man perfect in whatever he does.

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When students decide to learn a new language, language teachers should put forward the question as to why they have the drive to learn a new language and language teachers should also encourage their students to find out for themselves the complexity of language learning.

The major generative force, the drive to learn a new language, comes from the students in a language teaching classroom and so in connection to this there are few psychological factors that we have to keep in mind –

i. Attention

The first and foremost factor in language learning is attention. The student should give her 100 per cent attention to what her teacher is teaching in class, take down notes if possible as it will definitely help her in the future and will produce a positive result. When the student puts her full attention into the class, interest automatically comes in.

ii. Curiosity

Students interested in learning a new language, will definitively have a curiosity about that particular language. For instance, students learning English, they will definitely be curious about how and where it originated, which all countries make use of language, its importance and so on.

iii. Motivation

Learning a language is considered a very essential tool for specific purposes like work, going to another country, education, interest and so on. In all these cases,

motivation plays a major role in language learning. The teacher from her side should motivate the student and the student also should be able to self-motivate herself as well in learning a second or foreign language.

iv. Memory

Learning a second or foreign language is no easy task. There is a lot a student has to know about the language they are going to learn. When the language is English, an English learning student should know the different theories by different theorists in relation to English (Saussure, Chomsky to name a few), the syntax, and phonetic aspects of the language so on and with the right amount of information given to the student, it becomes easy for her to understand and memorize them. And truth to be told is that language learning is not very interesting, it is like learning maths and yet again it is a true saying that language learning is not for anyone who does not show interest and hence cannot be motivated.

v. Age

Age is another factor that plays an important role in language learning. Research says that children of smaller ages learn more than one language easier than adult students of the college level and even older people.

vi. Drive

Students are driven to learn a second or foreign language because of many reasons, shifting to another country, educational purpose, love for that particular country and so many other reasons.

American linguist Noam Chomsky came up with an abstract tool in learning language known as Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Chomsky argues that the human mind has the special ability to process language and so through this mechanism tries to prove his argument this device is innate in us. He points out that what language we learn is later decided by the speech community in which we belong. This device in spite of it being an abstract device, with its absence we wouldn't be speaking any language. Chomsky further argues that there is a special zone in our mind which deals exclusively with the knowledge of language as distinct from other knowledge such as hunting, riding, solving problems etc.

The significance of Chomsky's stand point is the role of human mind in learning and using language. Hither to, language was considered a habit formation like cycling, singing etc. Chomsky opposes this view point of learning language as a habit by stating that a parrot never generates a new utterance, it never transforms into an older utterance; whereas a two year old child can both generate new, newer utterances and transform and modify them accordingly.

4. Methods and its Nature and its influence in English Language Teaching

Tradition was for a long time the guiding and major principle second and foreign language teaching. The Grammar-Translation Method is known to be the oldest, time-honoured and scholarly view of language and language

study. Practical realities of the classroom determined both goals and procedures of methods used in second and foreign language teaching. Theories derived from linguistics and psychology was used for bringing and developing philosophical and practical basis for and to second and foreign language teaching. As the study of teaching methods and procedures gained central role, a lot of attempts have been made to explore and widen search on the relationship between theory and practice within a method.

A few of the early applied linguists, Henry Sweet (1845-1912), Otto Jespersen (1860-1943) and Harold Palmer (1877-1949) tried to introduce a few principles and approaches that might help in designing the programs, courses and materials in second and foreign language teaching. The main aim of three applied linguists was to find the answers to questions regarding principles in creating the selection and sequencing of vocabulary and grammar.

Learning any given language is genuinely a very complex phenomenon, and as mentioned in the first chapter language is something that cannot be entirely taught but observed, caught and learned. While teaching a language, we should know the different disciplines it follows – linguistics, literature, psychology, anthropology, sociology and so on.

When applied linguists and language theorists go in for describing the methods of language teaching and the nature of language teaching they have to keep in mind how important it is to acknowledge the difference between what philosophy of language teaching at the level of theory and principles and what a set of derived procedures is used in language teaching. To clearly put forward this difference American applied linguist Edward Anthony identified three levels of conceptualization and organization namely –

- 1.1 Approach
- 2.1 Method
- 3.1 Technique

According to Anthony in his model, he says that approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs are considered in regard to language teaching and the nature of language teaching. Method is the level at which these assumptions and beliefs are put into action and consider on which all skills they have to focus on while teaching a language to a classroom, and also the content with which they are planning to teach with and they have to also focus on the order of the content as well. The third element technique is the level at which the procedures discussed are described. Anthony's model became a very useful model in distinguishing different degrees of abstraction in different language teaching proposals.

5. Traditional Methods used in ELT Classrooms

Since the 19th century to the recent years so many methods and approaches have been developed and it is still an on-going discussion today to bring out newer and effective methods. When it comes to learning a



language and when the language is English as a second and foreign language to native students all over the world.

The methods that teachers choose in their classrooms can be divided into two types, one falls under the traditional methods that went on through the 19th century and towards the end of the 19th century like grammar-translation method, audiolingualism, the direct method, after that from the beginning of the 20th century to the recent years students, teachers and applied linguists demanded better methods and approaches to English Language Teaching and a few of them include Communicative Language Teaching, Whole Language, Content Based Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, Cooperative Language Teaching, The Natural Approach, Community Language Teaching.

6. Technology in English Language Teaching Classrooms

Technology has dramatically evolved, developed and has begun to take over all the classrooms in every educational institution all over the world. It plays an important role in English language teaching and learning. Use of technology in classrooms have become an advantage for the students for various reasons like –

- It gives students all over the world to have access to English Language Lessons and courses online.
- Distance education is encouraged by students who cannot be physically present at the educational institutions perhaps due to financial, personal reasons and the students also have the option to either have the examination done online or go to the educational institution for attending the examination.
- Students get a wider exposure on the English language, the different theories how to implement them practically, how to pronounce certain words, the phonetics part of English and so on.
- Technology also gives the opportunity to expose the students to different learning styles in learning English.
- They are given the opportunity to improve on their skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing through different and interesting activities online.
- It allows the students to be less stressed and increase their interest and motivation level to learn English.

Technology may also have a major role in supporting methods and approaches in English Language Teaching like Communicative Language Teaching, Task Based Language Teaching Cooperative Language Teaching by providing students with opportunities to talk and communicate with each other and increase their communicative resources, and also give them the chance to apply, use and link various sounds, words, texts and images in the process through chat rooms, English language labs, discussion boards to name a few.

Another advantage of technology in English Language Teaching, is that it provides a wide range of authentic materials to help students learn and also enables students in different locations to actively collaborate and work together

in group activities and other language related tasks given to them by making use of a variety of different modes of communication like print, audio and visual.

Computer based technology has changed the world of classroom teaching and learning. Anything that is displayed on the screen be it a picture, a graph, a map it is projected on a white screen fixed against the wall or the wall itself with the help of an Over Head Projector (OHP). One such presentation software that makes use of an OVP is the Power Point Presentation software. Nowadays, students use the OVP and Power Point Presentation for all of their group and individual project presentations.

Interactive White Boards (IWB's) have other aspects such as the ability to move graphics and pictures from one position to another. They are attractive technological devices to beginners of English language learning and somehow encourage them to move forward and learn dedicatedly.

Another online source, that would help students to increase their vocabulary and pronunciation are online dictionaries like Oxford dictionaries, Cambridge dictionaries to name a few which include both the pronunciation both of British and American pronunciations. A few other dictionaries have pronunciations of words from other languages like Spanish, French to name a few. There is also a device known as electronic pocket dictionaries which students can carry with them and use them whenever they want to use it.

Other technological tools that were used in English language teaching classrooms were CD-ROMs, floppy disks which are now seldom used in educational institutions. Now each classroom has the advanced setting of television set through which study materials in relation to the educational system and course can be shown, taught and shared with the students in the classroom itself, instead of students rushing away with writing important points into their notebooks, the teacher can directly share the soft copies of all the notes to their mails.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, English teaching in second and foreign classrooms have become important all over the world and is considered as one the first international languages to be used throughout the world. Approaches and methods have constantly been developed by applied linguists and theorists in regard to English Language Teaching in educational institutions from the 19th century to the present, approaches and methods that are still made use of even today. Finally, one major development in English Language Teaching is technology, which has had a huge impact in educational institutions and has made teaching and learning English easier to access, even from distant countries and areas. Language teachers have mixed opinions on using both traditional methods and technology in the classroom.



Some of the teachers feel that there should be an equal balance between both and they consider it as a blessing in disguise.

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