



Teaching Of English In The Rural Belt Of Arunachal Pradesh: A Brief Analysis

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Abstract

This paper seeks to bring issues related to the problem of teaching English in the rural belt of Arunachal Pradesh. Language policy in schooling turned out to be a social and personal matter. The quality of English teaching in most Indian schools paints a very frightening picture. The language skills of teachers, the use of language and teaching materials are key concerns for quality learning of English. In reality, the situation for rural students of this state is very difficult. Students from cities like Itanagar had the access of language labs, audio-visual materials, etc., so they had no choice. In general, the students of this section see English as a subject rather than a language. That's the main obstacle for them. The majority of students read only English for exams. They are not familiar with how to recite poetry, but they know how to memorize them. In fact, rural students are not good at English. On the other hand, many teachers do not have a long-term vision of their students' lives. They are focused only on exams. Language serves as a tool to express ourselves effectively in a variety of communication situations. However, it is a second language that requires conscious, deliberate and systematic effort to learn or acquire. Acquiring a second language is a major challenge for any native speaker who works with this language.

Keywords: Language learning, second language acquisition, Slow acquisition, Remedial measures.

Introduction:

Learning a language is the foundation of all other learning. Language defines us as humans. Language is a medium of communication. As a powerful means of communication, English serves as a connective language in a multicultural and multilingual society like India, as well as a global language intermediary. Seven decades after the British left India, it still has a place in our country. But no other language can replace English as a means of communication or as an official language. Over the years, it has become the language of choice for commerce, economic growth, and social mobility. Teaching English to students has consistently been one of the top expectations parents have of schools. English has an amazing history. The first time we see it in the historical record, it tells the story of a less civilized tribe of continental Europe along the North Sea. English has become the most widely spoken language in the world today and is used by more people and for more purposes than any other language on the planet.

With the changing times, the importance of English is increasing in all fields. Doesn't look like a non-native speaker or second speaker. The conscious and unconscious use of words in everyday speech from English testify to this fact. Education was a major factor in the more formal transmission of English around the world. For Indians, English symbolizes better education, better culture and higher intelligence. Today, English is the most preferred language. Native American and Indian English-speaking press use many words that are derived from Indian languages. Indian accents can be difficult for non-Indians to understand. In fact, English has coexisted with thousands of local languages in the Indian subcontinent. It remains at the heart of Indian society.

Objective:

This paper attempts to bring in the issues related to the Problems of teaching English in rural schools of Arunachal Pradesh.

English as Language of learning:

Language learning is a natural process for the natives. The approach to this learning process is called the 'behaviouristic approach'. But for the students of other languages, deliberate efforts are required to learn a foreign language which requires a 'mentalistic approach'. The students of the rural and semi-urban areas in Arunachal Pradesh 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. Teachers of language have adopted and invented a variety of methods to teach English.

Students of the interior pockets face a number of problems. English is their second language. Learning a second language means acquiring a system of rules, but just as a very little is known about these rules, even less is known 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 remain to clear the exams. The students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. In the past, in remote areas, English was introduced to students in the fifth class. But now there is no dearth of English medium schools in such area 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 level of English mastery are equally important. To achieve the desired effects, the goal of a course must be kept in mind- whether it is aimed at reading, fluency in speech, inculcating translation skill. All these objects shape methodology.

Students of the village areas do not realize the importance of English as a language of communication whereas this is the most important aspect of this 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. This method makes them dependent on their mother tongue. Whatever they read, they translate it into

their own vernacular. During the time of exams, they cram the expected questions because they cannot write one original sentence of their own. Because of GT Method, they have no vocabulary of English words. While writing, they depend on the cheap material from the help books.

Problems of Teaching English as a Second Language in India:

In a state like Arunachal Pradesh, classes of mixed ability groups are a feature of every small town or village. In most of the rural parts of this state, learning-teaching process is done in the vernacular language or in Hindi. On the other hand, most of the competitive examinations (higher education and employment) require English as medium of instruction. The ratio of students to teachers is high, leading to ineffectiveness. The rustic atmosphere does not provide students the opportunity to speak and learn English. The size of the classes everywhere is considerably large. This is one of the reasons why individual attention is not possible to the students.

Teaching of English needs a drastic change for the benefit of learners in schools and colleges. The students of rural and semi-urban areas in Arunachal Pradesh face a lot of problems as English is not their mother tongue. English is their second language. In many places, English becomes the third language as they have a local language, then Hindi followed by English. As compared to the learners from urban areas, learners from rural areas face more difficulties during the process of language acquisition. In urban areas parents are mostly educated. So, the domestic environment helps the students from urban areas acquire the language quickly. Students do not get chance to speak or read in English in the rural parts of the North-eastern state. In villages and small towns students mainly hail from country side areas. Bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps slow-learners to some extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand in English, he or she asks for an explanation in L1 i.e. in his or her mother tongue. Consequently, the English teacher is in a state to adopt bilingual method.

Lack of trained teachers in rural areas has become a reality. Teaching is a continuous process and teachers in the village areas are often debarred from attending workshops and seminars to acquaint themselves with new ways and methods. The rural population of India, which depends on agriculture and limited income, end up sending their children to government schools where English is not taught as a skill but as a subject. "Throughout India, there is a belief among almost all castes and classes in both rural and urban areas in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill but a symbol of better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression". (Graddol p.12)

Grammar translation method is used by the teacher to teach young children, where the teacher explains every word to students in the native language to make him/her understand and learn English. However, this method faces a major disadvantage.

Language could be mastered by practicing all the four skills viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The rustic surrounding does not allow the learner to practice any of the skills. Many teachers are unable to teach English effectively because they face a lot of problems due to the lack of teaching aids, non-availability of required

technical support and relevant atmosphere to teach English effectively. The majority of Indian students, particularly from rural pockets, especially in the states of Bihar, eastern U.P. and Maharashtra, consider this seven –letter word as a magical and mystical word. A feeling of uneasiness sets in, the moment they hear something in English. As a result of this, teachers who handle English classes face insurmountable difficulties. Students find it difficult to listen and to understand the English language. What are the reasons for this? What are the remedial measures to be taken to alleviate these problems? This paper is an attempt to discuss the nature of second language acquisition and the factors responsible for its slow acquisition, especially in the rural pockets of Arunachal Pradesh.

Focal points of teaching English in rural schools of Arunachal Pradesh:

- Students of the rural schools face a number of problems. English is their 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.
- Lack the confidence to speak in English
- First reason is that they have been taught English through Grammar-Translation Method.
- This method makes them dependent on their mother tongue.
- Some teachers have good accent, but they do not possess a good command over the language.
- 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. Over and above English is universally renowned for its power of expression and its rich literature.

Teacher Training Courses are not able to equip the teachers with adequate knowledge, skills and the ability to be able to teach the subject effectively in class. The situation is worsened by the fact that English is not the language of transaction in rural India, thereby giving teachers a very little chance of practicing what they have learned. Teachers need to upgrade themselves through a variety of means—periodic workshops, video/audio recordings of content to be taught, projects and assignments. The majority of Indian rural students, especially in Arunachal Pradesh find English as a very difficult subject to learn. Since most of the students are first generation learners, they need the guidance from parents and others. Even though students study English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. The reason for this is that they study subjects from the examination point of view. Our examination system is such that it makes students' rote memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. In this process, they memorize lessons, reproduce them in exam halls and forget them the same day itself.

One cannot expect a uniform standard of pronunciation for a second language in such a vast country, where even the mother tongue is spoken differently by different groups of the people belonging to the same language community. In learning to speak English, the mother tongue generally interferes with its pronunciation. The learners as well as the teachers speak English with regional language habits. Even during the English periods most teachers teach English without giving the students proper practice in speech because they are not properly equipped enough to practice it. They forget that every language differs in stress, intonation and pronunciation. The result is that after learning /teaching English for many years at school and college, most people cannot speak the language with intelligible accuracy. Listening is an important language learning skill and yet the most neglected skill in Indian classrooms. It is neglected as teachers take it for granted that learners automatically acquire this skill without any special training, peer teaching, role-play and group activities, are rare in Indian classrooms. In India, the learners are not encouraged to ask questions. The teachers must involve their students to work in pairs, groups and teams and prepare term papers, projects, etc. Therefore, in spite of being taught English in school and college for several years, learners fail to learn the language. They cannot write in acceptable English of their own, cannot use English appropriately and fluently in speech and often cannot understand conversations in English.

The teaching of English in India has been text-oriented since the beginning (colonial times) because the British Government's policy was to create a class of Indians who would act as a buffer between the British and the Indians. Therefore, elementary knowledge of English was needed for a class of Indians. Objectives of teaching and learning English have undergone a sea change in the years after Independence. Still English education in India is text-oriented.

Remedial Measures

Challenges before the English language teachers in this state are enormous. It becomes more challenging and demanding in rural areas because in such areas it is the teacher who is the model, to whom a student looks for all learning needs. They should be able to cater to the practical needs of learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and also to retrieve information all over the world Building a rapport with your class—Assuring smile and greeting from a teacher to the students, helps them bond with the teacher instantly.

The place of English should be defined—English offers vast opportunities to all. The policy regarding the place of English in our education system should be well defined. This should be determined keeping in view its use and vast opportunities in the field of science, technology, social sciences, philosophy, journalism, international trade and diplomacy.

An English teacher has to encourage the students to talk in English only. This act makes them confident. Teachers should motivate students for participative learning. This will solve all the stumbling blocks in students. Teaching learning is not a one-way process. It is a multi-way process. The hackneyed, stereotyped and traditional pattern of exams

aims at clearing English not as a language but as a subject. The students, therefore, are guided to practice pick and choose method from the sub-standard material available in the market. So that 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 their own vernacular. Poor performance in translation, lack of proper vocabulary, no knowledge proverbs all are results of a casual approach. Even after reading English for 14 or 15 years the level of the students remains poor.

Because of the rapidly increasing web of Educational facilities, the rural areas have been enjoying the facilities of the convents/missionary 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, 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.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:

- * Teachers should recite poems and not allowed to memorize it.
- * Try to create interest in 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.
- * To 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 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, It 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 with 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. Reading can also help students 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 translations.

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.

If one takes 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.

Conclusion

In India, majority of the workforce comes from rural areas as 75% of India lives in villages. The policy makers have to bridge the urban-rural divide in teaching of English. An English teacher teaching in rural schools has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at primary level. Teachers should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems of the learners. That will also help in raising the standards of English as a language at the school level.

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