

English Language Teaching: Importance and Challenges (With Special Reference to State of Haryana)

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Abstract: *The Sub Continental country India has been one of the most linguistically diverged regions of the world. From Indira Col to Indira Point there are thousands of languages spoken by the people of this country. Some of these languages are slowly coming to an end while others are flourishing from generation to generation. According to David Lalmalsawma “A new study, the People’s Linguistic Survey of India, says that the official number, 122, is far lower than the 780 that it counted and another 100 that its authors suspect exist.” (Lalmalsawma) Further he continues with the facts in the same field saying, “220 languages have disappeared in last 50 years and 150 could vanish in coming half century.” (Lalmalsawma) Moreover, in some of the clans, an absolutely different language is spoken which has no recognition. Such languages disappear with the death of the people who spoke that language because their children avoided using that language. For communication, the young generation adopted some other common language with which they could communicate with the people of the other languages also. It clearly shows that there is a language that serves the purpose of those people who have stopped using their own mother tongue; and this language also helps the people who speak 780 languages in communication with each other. It is non-other than English language.*

Therefore, English language was adopted as a link language in India. This interlinking language, despite being a foreign language, acts as the ‘lingua franca’ for the linguistically diverged Indian population. This clearly answers the commonly asked question, “Why should we teach our children English, even in a completely Hindi speaking area?” Not only Hindi, in all the states of India, regional languages seem to be dominant yet English has got a

special preference. In a state like Haryana, English language is really treated as an alien. That is why the students of Haryana have to suffer a lot in the field of English language. This study brings to the fore some of the importance, challenges, problems, suggestions to tackle them and some solutions regarding English language learning in Haryana.

Key Words: *language, Communication, Challenges, Problems, Dominant etc.*

1. Introduction

Teaching of English began in India when East India Company acquired administration and political power. It was not so effective until Lord Macaulay introduced his education policy in 1835. He made learning of English mandatory in all schools of India. “Lord Macaulay wanted to make the people, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste and opinion.” (Vijaylakshmi and Manchi 2) At this time, it was their need to educate Indians in English. They needed human resource and it was a difficult task to satisfy such a need without teaching English language to the Indian people. Indians understood all those things and were not willing to learn English. Only the temptation of joining higher class, white collar jobs, a feeling of supremacy, and a chance to go in Civil Services encouraged them to learn it. English is not only international language but it helps us in communicating with the people of our own nation also. From top to bottom states of India, English language has become a supportive tool of communication. It has become instrumental in solving the language problem of people of different areas. If Hindi is blood for nation, undoubtedly, English has become Hemoglobin. We can’t imagine a single day without speaking English. Even illiterate

people use many words of English in their day to day communication such as television, programme, mobile, phone, sugar (diabetes), computer, bike, table, bed, gas, button, heater, road, bus, rail, hotel, time, school, college etc. Today, English has become inevitable in present society as the maximum books that we read have been written in English worldwide. People use computer in one form or the other and the language of computer is mainly English. Due to globalization jobseekers are expected to be fluent in English as India is a hub of many multinational companies and they prefer English to any other language. India is producing best engineers and scientists of the world but without English it seems that it is impossible to groom at any level. Moreover, many Indian states are not ready to declare Hindi as their official language. English has been their official language since independence.

In the present scene, the situation has totally changed. English is no more an attraction but has become our need also. Every student wants to beat others in competition and most of these competitions are in English language. In many of the examinations, if a student doesn't qualify English examination, he is not considered eligible for that post. Going abroad is also one of the most fascinating opportunities for the youth nowadays. Here also, they need the knowledge of English, spoken as well as written English.

To fulfill all these needs, a lot of challenges are required to meet in teaching of English. Students know the importance of English but either they are not taught properly or they don't learn properly.

2. Common Challenges in English Language Teaching

The profession of English Language Teaching is full of challenges in India. With a keen observation it has been noticed that it is neither too difficult nor too easy to understand. That is why "Challenges before the English Language teachers are enormous and apparent." (Thakur: 2013, P125) A Teacher of English has to face Social, Political and Regional pressure. If he doesn't teach he is not a good teacher. If he teaches he is considered similar to an alien who is living in a Hindi Speaking country and teaching English Language. He is not considered a patriot as he teaches a language of Britishers who enslaved Indians for more than 200 years and tortured them.

Owing to such a thinking, some of the major problems in English Language Teaching are:

2.1 Plea for Patriotism

We Indians want to sustain Hindi; a dominant language over English. Doing so, we reflect ourselves patriotic by using our native language more than the foreign language. Such an attitude is one of the biggest hurdles in English Language Teaching. Though, we know clearly that we can't survive well without English language. On many occasions, some people can be seen making fun of not only English language but their own mother tongues also. They express their views making fun of English. But occasionally and unknowingly, they make fun of their own mother tongues. This can easily be seen on Hindi Diwas, when they seem unable to deliver their complete speech in Hindi language (their mother tongue). It creates a wrong impression in the mind of the students. Such people must understand that now we are not learning English as an imposed foreign language but we are learning it as an international language.

2.2 Hatred for the British

India was under the domain of Britain for more than 200 years. Indians have given a lot of sacrifices to achieve independence. English, being the mother tongue of the Britishers is hated by most of the Indian people. They learn it only for the sake of their livelihood. No doubt that British rule helped India indirectly to achieve independence and become A Union. Before that India was ruled by Mughals and it had been divided into several principalities. They didn't have any common aim or common language. Whereas, at that time English was not so widespread but with the passage of time it gained the title of International language, language of science, language of technology etc. This single language is enough to move round the world. In pronunciation it has a lot of variety but in writing it is the same nearly in all countries.

2.3 Unavailability of Expert Teachers

The major drawback of Teaching of English is unavailability of expert teachers. The best time of language acquisition is infancy, as infants accept all the concepts without argument. They are good imitators also. They imitate all the activities of their teachers. They also adopt the pronunciation of their teachers in the similar way. But most of the schools

in India don't have expert language teachers in their pre-primary wing. Phonetics is taught to higher level of education, especially in post-graduation. Students who have real interest in English Language teaching have to go for higher studies. They don't wish to teach in schools at lower level. Generally teachers who teach English language in schools are either from S.S. background or not so much well versed in English. They take help of guides or help books to answer the questions of the students. In such a situation it can be well said that when they themselves don't have knowledge of their subject how can they do justice with their teaching? Teaching in India means word to word book reading and translate the contents in mother tongue and writing a few words and phrases on board. In this process, contents may be clear in the mind of the students but they can't express themselves in the target language. Students face same problem while studying grammar also. "Almost all the teachers taught grammar by making students memorize the rules and work on exercises. None of the teachers said that contextualising grammar teaching was the best method." (Dutta and Bala 8) There is a lot of difference between teaching of literature and teaching of grammar. Literature needs imagination and emotions like art and music, whereas grammar needs facts and rules like mathematics and science.

2.4 Dependency of Students on Teacher

Indian students are generally habitual crammers. They need answers of all the questions from the teachers only. Even grammar part is also solved by the teachers and they merely cram the answers. They are not habitual to solve their problems or find out the answers of the questions by their own. If the teacher doesn't guide the students in proper way it will become a detrimental problem. Teacher should focus on providing positive atmosphere and encouraging them to do tasks by their own. It will break their comfort zone and make them comfortable with target language. They will definitely try to answer; no matter if incorrect.

2.5 Tenacious use of First-Language

Everyone likes a comfort zone and he doesn't try or is not willing to come out of it. In term of language, comfort zone is the communication through mother tongue. People, even elders don't want to leave it, then how the students can change their habit of using the mother tongue. They try to speak English but as soon as they feel uncomfortable

they rush to their comfort zone. Many schools have made speaking English mandatory for their teachers. But reality can be seen in the staffrooms of the schools of Haryana. To make somebody disciplined first we ourselves have to be disciplined. In the words of Dr. Kalam "Teachers are the backbone of any country, the pillar upon which all aspirations are converted into realities." (Kalam 176) They "should be role models" (Kalam 171) He must do the same whatever he expects from his students. While teaching the students teachers must remember Dr. Rajender Prashad who said, "In attaining our ideals, our means should be as pure as the ends!" (Sondhi 18)

Teachers should encourage the students to use only English language. They must be participants in the process of teaching and learning. If students try to speak their mother tongue, teachers should move to them and ask if they have any problem/question. In this way, students will remain conscious that they are being observed properly and if they really have any problem that may be solved. Some teachers establish a set of rules and create a penalty system. But it hardly works. After some time teachers themselves forget to collect fine or punish the students for not bringing fine. Developing set of rules is good but instead of penalty system, students must be encouraged.

2.6 Atmosphere and Duration of School

Atmosphere affects a student in all aspects. If he belongs to such a family where English is commonly used he doesn't need a lot of help from teachers. Contrarily, if he belongs to a family where English is hardly spoken, he totally depends on the teachers, his school mates, school atmosphere and the time he spends in the school campus. "Some children, who grow up in a social environment where more than one language is used, are able to acquire a second language in circumstance similar to those of first language acquisition." (Thakur 126) If a child stays in a hostel and proper atmosphere is provided to him, he can learn with the same pace as others; no matter whether English is used at his home or not. Friend circle also plays a vital role in language acquisition. When the students remain in the same group they acquire similar vocabulary, accent and style.

2.7 Discrimination and Discouragement of the Students

It has been generally observed that some teachers like a particular group of students and have a dislike for others. Generally, those who know well get the opportunity every time. Hesitant and slow learners are not able to avail opportunity and are normally left behind. If they try to speak or write initially, after knowing the progress of escaping they stop working. They feel inferior to others and acquire 'can't do' attitude. Sometimes teachers are very rude towards them and insult them in front of the whole class. It totally puts their morale down and they don't rise up. Good teacher is one who doesn't compare the students with one another.

2.8 Taught to Score High

Teachers in schools teach with a method that students may score high and this method leads them to cramming only. "They have even fear of failure in exams and even in classroom interaction and so cannot get involved easily in classroom interaction and learn the language comfortably." (Gamit 180) English is taught generally as a simple subject and not as a language. Any other subject can be crammed or understood but a language can only be acquired and it needs practice instead of cramming. Teachers don't have innovative methods of teaching and use traditional methods which lead to monotony and boredom. Therefore, students lose their interest in learning. Mainly the literature is taught in translation method and answers are crammed by the students. In this way, they get high score in examinations but learn nothing. They neither develop reading habit nor understanding.

2.9 Grammar cum Translation Method

One of the biggest hurdles in English Language Teaching is use of Grammar cum Translation Method. This method might be useful in early days of English language teaching but "If language teachers teach as they taught earlier, then one may not achieve the required goals of teaching English in the present global scenario." (Thakur 126) This method moves towards the target language but needs the vehicle of mother tongue. Mother tongue is, as discussed earlier, the comfort zone of the students. As soon as they feel difficulty they show their dependency on mother tongue. They start comparing both the languages which is a wrong method. Expression of two languages may be same but they can't be translated in the same way. e.g. If we try to translate "वृक्ष दुर्गम के तूक" into English, we get "The nature of fire is to burn". But the translation of /keZ

is religion and translation of nature is ॐ—fr. In this way we can say that we neither translate Hind into English nor English into Hindi exactly.

2.10 Diversion and Escapism

Generally, teachers don't take responsibility of their failure. They show that they did well but the students haven't learnt anything in the previous class. If the same question is asked from the previous class teachers the answer will remain same which shows basics are not made clear to the students at the very beginning. In the next classes these are left as they have been taught in the previous class. In this way a student who once starts lagging behind always remains behind. It is well understood that all the students have different IQ level and they learn on their own pace. But teachers have to finish their syllabus on time. So, they ignore them and go ahead. They focus only on completing the syllabus.

Some schools try to make some solutions for these students by arranging them in different sections. But this way is not accepted by all the parents. They think if their child sits with some poor student he will also become poor.

They consider that their child is the best. No doubt, for parents all the children are best. But they should give independence to the teachers for the academic growth of the child. They should not interfere in their working. If they are so vigilant and observe all the things minutely, they should attend Parents-Teachers Conferences and discuss their concern. These Parents-Teachers Conferences should be a platform for healthy discussion for the development of the students. But it is seen that these conferences become wrestling rings for blaming each other. Where no one wants to be defeated. Finally, the loser is no one but the students. Neither teachers nor parents understand their responsibilities.

2.11 Improper Division of Labour

From class VI onwards science is divided into three parts i.e. Physics, Biology and Chemistry and Social Science is divided into History, Civics and Geography and different teachers are assigned to them, but English, even having four different areas of teaching, remains English only. It should also be divided according to the need of different skills or teaching areas i.e. Literature, Speaking, Advanced Writing and Grammar. "As regards the skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW),

it was seen that the teachers' effort to develop skills of listening and speaking was not there." (Dutta and Bala 8) Generally, writing skill and grammar are treated as single skill, whereas both are totally different. These all four areas of language should be taught by different teachers and separate periods should be allotted to them. As per experts there should be 4 separate periods for 4 separate teachers. In this way English should be given 16 periods a week. Contrarily, hardly 8 periods are given to 1 teacher of English four sixteen as is well said by Gamit. "English is foreign language and hence cannot be learnt and taught as easily as mother tongue or first language. And when it is learnt or taught as second language, it requires long time." (Gamit 180)

2.12 Dependency on Text-Books

Teachers in Haryana use Text-Books as a tool and bags for them are Tool-Kits. Instead, explaining any concept they just read the book and translate them to the students. They do the same with grammar also. It seems that they don't have any confidence and enthusiasm while teaching. A synthesis report by NCERT tells "instead of treating the textbook as a tool, the teachers and students were entirely dependent on the books; they adhere only to the written word and printed instructions. The teachers do not move beyond the textbooks." (Dutta and Bala 8) It is the reason the books of private publications are flourishing nowadays because teachers rely more on books than themselves. A new concept of smart classes can also be seen in present scenario. New technology is appreciated but in the name of contents a huge amount is being snatched by these so called national and multinational companies. If these smart classes are so good and efficient, why do they not replace the teachers? The book, e-book, computer, smart class etc. are only helpers and not masters. If a teacher is good, he has a faith on him; he can print his own book, make his own e-book and prepare his own smart class contents.

2.13 Injustice with Poetry

Teaching of poetry is too difficult in the schools of Haryana. "It was observed that poems were being taught line by line or word by word and not for appreciating the content." (Dutta and Bala 8) Only few teachers in Haryana do justice with teaching of poetry. It is also taught with loud reading, instead reciting and appreciating the contents. Figures of Speech are totally neglected while teaching poetry.

Most of the teachers don't know meter, intonation, rhythm, rhyme scheme etc. They don't explain them to the students. They should know that these are the basics of poetry and without them poetry can't be taught.

2.14 Given less Importance

Language is always taken for granted and thought that it will be learnt easily. Same is applied to English also; no importance is given to it in comparison to other subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology etc. in higher classes and Mathematics and Science in lower classes. Whereas situation is completely different. "The reason for this might be that students begin to work harder in preparation for graduation, and therefore judge English as less important than the other school subjects." (Knudsen 78) Those who give importance to other subjects don't know that to study those subjects, they do need language that is generally English. If they want to explain their concepts well they must learn the language as well.

Most of the teachers don't tell the students that after schooling they will have to face competitive examinations. In most of these exams English is compulsory. Here, cramming doesn't work. Literature, if studied well, helps in reading comprehension only.

2.15 Traditional way of Teaching

English taught in schools in Haryana is totally different than what is necessary for competitive exams. After schooling this education is of no use. Even the brilliant students who topped the board examinations have to study this language again from the beginning. Students also feel that they have wasted their precious time in schools. The education departments, SCERT and NCERT should look into this matter. The syllabus of English in school education should be redefined as per the requirement of current scenario.

3. Conclusion:

In conclusion we can say that a lot of modifications are needed in teaching of English in the schools of Haryana. If we want to improve the performance of the students, it needs efforts by students, teachers, parents, society, education department and government also. Teachers should be provided by the authority as per the requirement of different skills in schools. It should be kept in mind

that specialists are needed for perfection. Social Science teachers can teach English to some extent but English teachers can teach English effectively and efficiently. Students can be taken to the point of perfection only by the expert teachers or trainers.

The problems in the field of English Language Teaching can be sought-after at every step. So is the solution if the quadruplet of Government, Teachers, Parents and Students is willing strongly to bring a change. There remains hardly any hurdle in finding a solution to the challenges of English Language in Haryana if the chemistry of these four proponents matches irrevocably.

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