Introspection into Language Acquisition and analyzing the impact after its conglomeration with Technology

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Abstract

This paper vividly discusses the flaws in the teaching sector, as for as English is concerned. Is the English being taught in Schools, colleges, Universities make the learner proficient in English? Despite of 12 continuous years of English education a learner at the post graduate level seeks a spoken English institute for his proficiency and seeks the help of another person for writing up his leave letter or any official document. We live in the technological era, ELT standard has risen, and innumerable institutions have sprouted up. But we are away from the fact that in most Engineering institutions in India, Language teachers are not the most sought, despite of the fact the employability of the learner depends on his quality of English! It is a pitiable fact, that in every institution Language teachers are deprived of the rights and privileges enjoyed by the major subject teachers. Look at the very word major subject / minor subject. Language has always been noted as secondary subject, in most institutions in India, the last hour is reserved for languages! When employability of the learner is the much talked about issue today, their incapability to deliver an English Lecture is what is discussed in every institution then a drastic change, revamping of our system is undoubtedly the need of the hour!

Keywords: *proficiency, secondary, drastic, revamping*

Introduction:

When we consider a learner, right from the first day of his presence in the school, he is expected to communicate with acceptable English, Parents and teachers train the young mind to communicate well in English. The learner continues his education for 15 long years and his successful in almost all the topics except his communication skills. We can

have some exceptions who have become greater communicators but they are very few in number. What happens to the rest of them? Let us examine the causes for their downfall. Defaming authorities or pointing out some error is not the ultimate process but to arrive at a possible conclusion that could enlighten future generations to have proficiency in English.

Are the Parents Motivating?

Most of the Indian families do not pay attention towards the studies of their children, especially their communicative skills, when the children use abusive or filthy words most parents fail to discourage. The use of Mother tongue in house hold stands as a supreme hindrance in learning English. English speaking is not instructed at home and so the children fail to understand the importance of language skills at an early age. Most pitiable fact is that parents fail to pay attention towards the marks secured in the English subject. They focus on science and other technicalities, sports and arts etc., and do not motivate the learner to speak English. Parents should change their lethargic attitude, they should motivate their children to read books, introduce Shakespearean classics, discuss on reputed novels and poems, conduct debate on current issues rather than accompanying them during their leisure hours.   Most parents believe that admitting their children in reputed institutions can alone make their children proficient in English they fail to understand that they are the greatest inspiration for learning in children.

Teachers and Teaching Methodology:

Are the institutions capable of making a learner proficient is the question of the hour. The post graduate teacher has to deliver his grammatical principles, with ample examples to make the children get through in the examination.   Teachers adopt innumerable measures to improve communication skill of the learner. Most English teachers become translators in the class; they translate the L2 content into L1 to make the learner understand a particular topic. Since the basic classes English is treated as a subject to get through rather than a mandatory mode for career. Most institutions aim to make the learner get his 50 marks and walk out and they seldom pay attention towards language proficiency in the learner. However, in this context one should not fail to point out certain schools that insists Proficiency in English, discourages mother tongue influence by the learner or the teacher. These institutions conduct frequent seminars and conferences, debates and lectures for all levels of their candidates to make them proficient in English. But such institutions are less in number whose efforts alone could not change the scenario in the society. The former kind of institutions should also adopt the methods of the later to make the next generation learners proficient in English.

On Our Way to English (OWE)

OWE, written by David Freeman, Yvonne Freeman, Aurora Colon Garcia, Margo Gottlieb, Mary Lou McCloskey, Lydia Stack, and Cecilia Silva and published in 2003 by Rigby, focuses on the development of academic language, using concepts and vocabulary from state content-area standards. The program design is based on research (Harcourt Achieve 2004b) suggesting that language development for English language learner (ELL) students is enhanced by meaningful contexts, bridges between spoken and written language, and connections between English and students' primary language. The design emphasizes the integration of literacy and oral language during a student's earliest experiences in learning English (Freeman et al. 2004).

OWE incorporates the following principles of language and literacy development for ELL students (Harcourt Achieve 2004a):

1. A focus on language functions, different means of using language to communicate in both social and academic contexts, and English grammar.
2. Culturally sensitive instruction that builds on students' background knowledge.
3. Instruction that emphasizes means of instruction comprehensible to ELL students.
4. Instruction that "recognizes that language and literacy development are two separate developmental processes, and children proceed along each process in phases" (p. 14).
5. Explicit instruction techniques, including explicit instruction in comprehension.
6. Language skills taught in context.
7. Background building experiences.
8. Direct, explicit instruction that builds phonemic awareness skills at a developmentally and instructionally appropriate pace using oral activities (that is, chanting, reading aloud).
9. Vocabulary-to-writing links.
10. Instruction that teaches "the alphabetic principle, phonics skills for decoding, and word study skills at the appropriate times within the context of reading" (p. 28).

Social Media:

Face books blogs and twitters are no longer considered as a personal vehicle in foreign universities, they are used as a tool for communication, a method for learning etc., Especially we have many edu blogs to educate young minds, train the trainer websites to use social media as a tool for learning English. Pod casts are no longer used for listening songs but are used as a vehicle of communication between the learner and the trainer.

Pod casting:

Podcasting is the syndication of audio files using RSS. Podcasting works the same as a standard RSS feed reader or news aggregator, the only difference is that the feed you subscribe to contains an audio file in it. Instead of reading content in your RSS feed reader or aggregator, you can listen to the contents of your feed using a reader or aggregator that supports podcasting, or you can listen to them on an iPod or similar device. While podcasting was named for the iPod, you do not have to have an iPod to listen to a podcast. Podcasts can be displayed on websites with clickable links to audio files and many of the standard RSS readers, like FeedDemon's latest beta, have begun supporting audio enclosures. (Sharon Housley)

Podcasting can be used for:

1. Self-Guided Walking Tours - Informational content.

2. Music - Band promotional clips and interviews.

3. Talk Shows - Industry or organizational news, investor news, sportscasts, news coverage and commentaries.

4. Training - Instructional informational materials.

5. Story - Story telling for children or the visually-impaired.

Pod casting is a much talked about module in the recent trends of English teaching. Indian teachers should also adhere to these technological innovations in the teaching sector and thereby create more effective learning ambience in the classroom. The affordability and other practical disadvantages do arise as an obstacle but there is a dire need for the change of methodology. Students can no longer derive benefits through, out dated methods of teaching.

Responsive Instruction for Success in English (RISE)

RISE, a professional development program written by Clara Amador-Watson and published in 2004 by Harcourt Achieve, familiarizes teachers with research-based best practices for use in instruction with ELL students. The fundamental principles of teaching ELL students as reflected in RISE are also reflected in the content and format of the OWE curriculum. RISE is guided by several fundamental principles (Knox and Amador-Watson 2002, p. 2):

Active learning as an appropriate teaching-learning strategy:

Effective teaching and learning requires the use of appropriate methodologies and pedagogies to meet the demands of the current generation of students, new technologies, and the ever-changing educational environments. The challenge is to find new ways to stimulate and motivate the creative abilities of today's generation who have a different set of orientations toward learning than most of us did as students. The traditional "chalk and talk" lecture approach with the student as the passive recipient of knowledge may not be suitable for today's generation. The traditional lecture approach has its own merits, but it is increasingly critical that educators employ a wide range of pedagogies and strategies to encourage students' participation. Learning by "doing" is a theme that many educators have stressed since John Dewey's convincing argument that children must be engaged in an active quest for learning new ideas. Students should be presented with real life problems and then helped to discover information required to solve them (Dewey 1966). Piaget and Inhelder (1969) stressed the need for "concrete operations" in early childhood. Silcock and Brundert (2001) define learner-centered approaches as those where the tutor guides and facilitates the learner, rather than asserting control, towards targeted learning goals. Accordingly they further elaborate that learner-centered is a process in which individuals take the initiative to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources, select and implement learning strategies and evaluate learning outcomes. Similarly, for Kolb (1984), 'learner-centered learning' is student participation in the learning and teaching process, where students themselves engage with and, to an extent, create their own learning experience. Learner-centered learning changes the focus from teaching to learning, and from students acquiring and processing knowledge to students actively, independently and critically creating meaning for themselves. The role of teachers in student-centered learning will become that of guides and mentors helping students access, interpret, organize and transfer

knowledge to solve authentic problems, while students gain expertise not only in the content areas being studied, but also in learning. In fact teachers become more like a guide on the side of helping students to find answers to real life problems. Schools need to be organized around the work of students instead of the work of teachers. Active teaching and learning involves the use of strategies which maximize opportunities for interaction. Indeed, some literature makes reference to 'interactive' rather than active approaches. Our main focus here is on the kinds of strategies that are frequently put in opposition to so-called transmission methods. By transmission methods, it is meant formal, didactic, expository and teacher-centered approaches, such as the fifty minute lecture that most of us are so familiar with. In contrast, active teaching and learning offers opportunities for interaction between teachers and students, amongst the students themselves, as well as between students and the materials, the topic itself or the academic discipline.

Typically, the kinds of strategies we would employ in order to promote active learning are small group work, research based projects, case studies, discussions, role play, field trips and so on. Use of active learning techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful

impact upon students' learning. Student-centered learning is more aligned with the life long learning skills needed in the workforce of the information age. With the rapid changes in history and culture, textbook based and teacher-led learning has become obsolete. Instead technology resources are replacing these obsolete approaches to create an interactive learner centered classroom. The most fundamental justification for taking an active learning approach to the delivery of lessons is the widely agreed-upon assertion that the degree to which students Tension between Traditional and Modern Teaching-Learning Approaches in Ethiopian Primary Schools understand a concept is in direct proportion to the amount of personal energy they have expended in trying to master it. A second, justification for students learning in this fashion is that it may closely model what students will need to do when they leave the schools and enter the work place. Derebssa Dufera Serbessa (130-131)

Conclusion:

This paper presents a vivid picture on the current scenario in the teaching sector pertaining to English langauage teaching, despite of its much acclaimed emphasis, English language proficiency is a much challenging part for an individual. When the causes for the downfall of proficency stated in the paper is dealt with utmost care, the successful methods suggested are followed then undoubtedly there will be a drastic change in the perception of Language acquisition, the paper is indent to become an eye opener for the teachers and trainers of English to have a wide angled ideology on the current scenerio and therby enable them to set their goals to create proficient speakers of English.

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