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FACTUAL APPROACH TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHING – AN
EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS AND INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES
OF ELLT

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ABSTRACT

English, as a language of mobility, has a long proud history of Anglo-Saxon heritage and the glorious English, as a literature of nobility, has an admirable repute and recognition in the world. Both English language and literature have conspicuously exerted their substantial impact on world cultures and civilizations. As an international language, it also played significant role in the process of globalization. Termed as Global Lingua Franca, English has transformed human societies and stimulated the economic prosperity of the world in general and colonial countries in particular. Nevertheless, the prevailing methods of Teaching of English Language and Literature (TELL) in third world countries are apparently not comprehensive and such situation can be an impediment in comprehending the true essence of this legendary linguistic device. For all such reasons, this paper attempts to show the evolutionary changes and emerging trends in English Language Learning and Teaching (ELLT) and examines various intricacies of TELL and also investigates the newer methods of ELLT. It also makes conscious efforts to present certain Experimental Process Designs for the purpose of teaching vocabulary, grammar and different forms of literature such as poetry, prose and drama. Accordingly, the paper endeavours to bring out creative methods that can make teaching of English Language and Literature more comprehensible and less confounding.

Key Words: Syntax, Evolutionary, Anglo-mania, Paradigm Shift, Globalization

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INTRODUCTION

British Imperialism and the inherent simplicity of vocabulary and grammar have contributed to the phenomenal growth of English language. The thought provoking ideas and poetic sensibilities of English writers have enriched English literature. Innumerable creative minds today make use of English language as an efficient tool for effective communication. A great proportion of world population these days can speak and write in this popular language. English was introduced in colonial countries like India by British rulers for the purpose of Imperial Administration. Despite the initial disinterestedness among the traditionalists and nationalists, it has won the hearts of millions all over. Observed closely, one can understand that English is loved and encouraged by many people in these countries. While commenting on the essential changes taking place in the use of English language and how it has been transforming into different varieties, a scholar in English Studies said:

English is spoken everywhere, and everybody owns it because they need it. It no longer belongs to the land of its birth alone: it commands as many accents as there are nations; and it has as many varieties as there are English speaking communities and professional groups (Soundararaj 2012).

If industrial revolution has generated economic growth, the English language revolution has created a decent social order. The disheartening thing is that English is learned through ineffective methods of teaching and taught by the less skilled or undertrained teachers. Furthermore, many financially unsound academic institutions are not able to provide necessary infrastructure for teaching this important language with the right audio-visual support. Apparently, nowadays, English language is either spoken in inaccurate pronunciation or written in incorrect syntax. On the other hand, the essence of English literature is not understood properly by the budding learners. All such conditions demand the application of simpler methods of English Language Learning and Teaching (ELLT). Moreover, the present globalization trend demands the use of correct English with which the dream of a global village can be materialised completely.

Evolutionary Changes and Emerging Trends in English Language Learning and Teaching (ELLT)

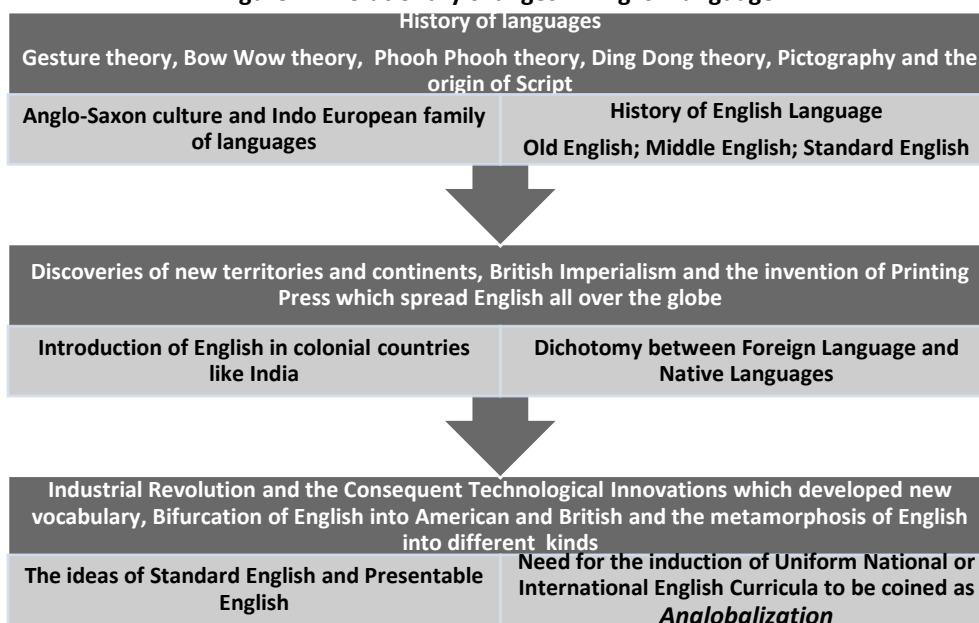
Before embarking the voyage of English studies, it is essential for both students and teachers to know the historicity of English as a popular language. The historical landmarks in the European history such as the Romans' domination over the Britons, the Germanic invasions on England, the consequent victory of Anglo Saxons, the impact of Indo-European family of languages have contributed much to the emergence of English language in the formative years. Similarly, various socio-political conditions became responsible for the origin and development of English literature. The other important factors such as the spread of Christianity, the Church as a cultural force, Anglo Saxon literature, the Norman Conquest, Renaissance, French Revolution, Romantic tradition, Industrial Revolution, the British Imperialism and the two World Wars have also contributed to the growth and expansion of English language. Observing such evolutionary changes and the ever changing nature of English language, F T Wood opined:

Secondly we must realise that language is (and always has been) evolutionary, not static. Change is constantly going on. If we look at a passage from Chaucer (who was writing towards the end of the fourteenth century) and compare it with the English that is spoken and written today, it is obvious that the language has altered considerably in the intervening five hundred years or more; and if we go even further back to the early Anglo-Saxon period, we find even greater difference (Wood 1969).

Though an "Iron Curtain" separated the East from the West, English has pierced through the great barrier with its mighty power of thought and action. The great discoveries made by Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Ferdinand Magellan and Captain James Cook have also played their significant roles in the spread of this global language. One can find significant changes in both vocabulary and syntax between old English and Middle English which finally emerged as Standard English. The invention of printing press was responsible for the standardization of English and the invention of computer is responsible for the growth of new dimensions in English. It is interesting to note that the glorious academic English used by the scholars in Oxford and Cambridge universities has been metamorphosed into different classification such as Business English,

Functional English, Spoken English, and Soft Skills etc. Figure 1 shows the origin and growth of English language.

Figure 1: Evolutionary changes in English language



Conventional Methods of ELLT

English language in our day is being learnt through different procedures but internationally acceptable procedural strategies or process designs are not accessible to the student community. For instance, lack of uniform or centralized English teaching curricula is the main reason for spreading inaccurate and imperfect English to Indian Students. One can understand that the federal system of Indian Administration facilitates formation of governments at different levels namely regional, provincial and central. Each government missionary makes its own policies for Education, Industry, and Agriculture etc. With regard to English, the multiple methods of learning and teaching strategies hamper the understanding of the true picture of this powerful language. Everyone is aware that somewhere something is going wrong in the formulation of English teaching strategies.

In some cases, irrelevant topics of English Language and Literature are prescribed for the students who do not actually make benefit of it. The study of phonetics is introduced suddenly at a wrong time in their education. The teachers who do not have knowledge of phonetics are asked to teach pronunciation at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. From the students’ point of view, it becomes a hard task for them to learn English accent at advanced stages of their studies for the reason that they have to unlearn the wrongly taught pronunciation they learned in the early stages of their education. Besides all this, the study of Shakespearean dramas is introduced to the students of Bio-chemistry and Commerce whose thoughts are oriented around their respective fields of studies only.

It is disheartening to note that this popular language is not properly learnt and perfectly taught for the obvious reasons that academic institutions have been using traditional methods of TELL. A uniform method or design of learning of English is not made available in a single comprehensive book. It can further be noticed that numerous books are available for teaching vocabulary and grammar and varied methods are adapted by the teachers to teach English in their individual styles. This infuses confusion in getting a panoramic picture of word power, syntax, speaking skills and writing skills. The fundamental activities like LSRW skills are given emphasis with improper infrastructural facilities. An average learner of English does not know where to start the learning of vocabulary and how to begin the study of grammar. More alarming situation is that Phonetics which is the most essential part of English learning is not included in the curricula of many educational

systems. Hence English is used in numerous accents and dialects. The MTI (Mother Tongue Influence) becomes an obstacle in the process of speaking with correct pronunciation.

tudents are forced to learn similar exercises in vocabulary such as synonyms and antonyms at almost all levels of their education. Likewise articles, prepositions, paragraph writing, letter writing, and comprehension are taught at all levels which normally become monotonous and uninteresting. Everybody studies vocabulary and grammar without knowing the fundamental meanings and definitions of such terminology. The heterogeneous natures of society from which the English teachers emerge also make it difficult in understanding the essence of this language. Yet another disturbing element is that English students at the post-graduation level in many universities are taught the aspects of literature only. But when they enter the teaching profession they are asked to teach the details of LSRW skills, pronunciation and soft skills. All these conditions make it so confusing and make it difficult for better learning and effective teaching.

Contemporary Socio-Economic Conditions: Need for Paradigm Shift in English Studies

Language is a science and literature is an art. Language is a means of verbal medium for expressing or communicating ideas, feelings, experiences and realizations (Sharma 2005). A dedicated grammarian is interested in expressing an idea with perfect syntax where as an imaginative poet or writer likes to convey thought provoking ideas thorough symbolic expressions and metaphorical meanings with various denotations and connotations. A student of language using the structural aspects of sentence namely subject and predicate may say “Mumbai Port is helping us in many ways” but a creative writer in literature using his/her poetic sensibilities and magical rhyming words may say “Mumbai port is our support”.

The essence of fruits can be had in different forms and flavours. In a similar fashion, the glory of language and literature can be learnt or taught in different styles without disturbing the central theme to suit the needs of present day learners. When it is believed that there is a need for paradigm shift in ELLT methods, the fundamental elements of language need not necessarily be changed but the manner in which we comprehend and teach can be done in varied approaches. Figure 2 depicts the main aspects of English studies and makes it convenient for quick understanding of major functions of language and Literature.

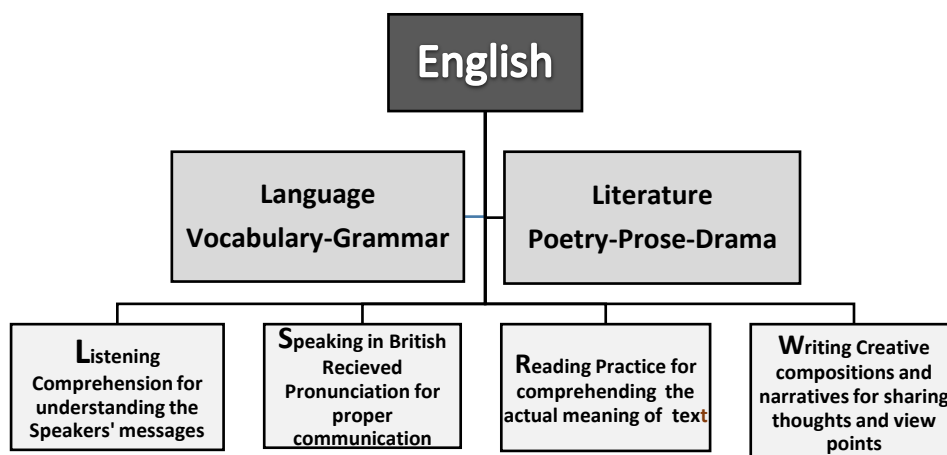


Figure 2: Classification of English Studies

English terms are proliferating with additional knowledge being discovered in Science and Humanities. Learning activity done through simplified language tools can make the revival of thought more meaningful and less unintelligible. The new employment conditions and job markets demand the use of soft skills in business organizations and public administration. All such conditions compel the paradigm shift in English learning methods and teaching practices.

Experimental Designs and Innovative Techniques of ELLT

The natural phenomena of falling apple brought out the significant law of universal gravity in science and fascinatingly enough the same apple becomes the first word in learning English vocabulary. The uniform methodical design of enriching English vocabulary is not made available to the students in many educational institutions. Hence, an average learner is puzzled in understanding various functions of words namely spelling, pronunciation, specific category in parts of speech and different shades of meanings conveyed through it. The learning or teaching of vocabulary can be done in different phases such as:-

- a) Understanding the significance of words
- b) Illustrations to understand the value of word power
- c) Different techniques for memorising words and meanings
- d) Certain facts about vocabulary
- e) Classification of vocabulary
- f) Making phrases by combining the words
- g) Teaching literature to budding creative minds

Significance of English words: Words do possess some magical powers. Like sparks of wisdom they illumine the ignorant minds. Words give knowledge and knowledge is believed to be power. So, logically speaking people with rich vocabulary obviously become so powerful to comprehend the world or to manage the employees in organizations. Again one can say that words can govern human thought and action. One cannot imagine the life of humans without using these words in their social relationships and administrative systems. Words can motivate and inspire human minds and can also make and unmake things. People come across many words in their life time which help them to comprehend the world around them. Every single word contains piece of information or knowledge.

Illustrations for knowing the purpose of words: As part of an illustration, students can be taught small little tales for understanding the significance of words. A sample story for this purpose narrates an adventurous voyage in sea in which a ship wreck causes the loss of many lives. The sole survivor reaches an island of pearls, diamonds, sapphires, jades, rubies and emeralds and he would become so greedy to collect as many stones as he can and all those diamonds give him the light of joy and scintillating happiness. The diamonds like words with their bright meanings can illuminate the ignorant minds with their light of wisdom. Sometimes thoughtful sayings can also be used to explain the significance of words such as *Know the Word; Know the World; Many words have worlds in themselves; Some words emit the halo of magical powers* etc.

Different memory techniques for gaining rich vocabulary: English words are expected to be learnt by heart. Half-hearted study of words does not help to register the meanings and other functions of words in human memory. They can be remembered through various memory techniques. The following illustrations may be useful for enriching one's English lexis. Human mind is a lazy organ to receive and record new sets of words but if those minds are persuaded to register the new words with memory techniques they will never go out until the last breath of a person. All that is required is Anglo-mania or true love towards words and meaning. O Henry's saying "When one loves one's Art no service seems too hard" is an apt reference to understand the utter simplicity of word power development.

One can find the meaning of many terms in the words themselves such as:

- Grasshopper (a creature that hops on the blades of the grass)
- Biology (Bios means life, ology means study → Study of life)
- Bureaucracy (Bureau means writing table, Cracy means rule → Rule by public officials)

Attaching a password or making word associations can also help in good remembrance of English words. For example the word *lectern* which means *a wooden table for delivering lectures* may be linked with the already known word 'Lecture' and it helps to surface the required word from the unfathomable depth of human mind and create an everlasting memory.

Certain facts about vocabulary:

Until senior secondary class, language learning is a forced activity to many students. And in the later stages the self-motivated students with high career aspirations get the true essence of English language but rest of the people gain the superficial and insufficient language skills only. According to lexicography sources, nearly 600000 words are incorporated in various English dictionaries. An average speaker in London has approximately 5000 words of word power. In fact, a word power of 2000-3000 is sufficient enough for daily conversations but if the word power is increased to higher levels; one can speak fluently with dense confidence. It is said that Sir Winston Churchill had 60000 words of vocabulary with which he ruled his people, delivered inspiring speeches and also conquered the dictatorial tendencies of axis powers during the period of Second World War. Making use of rich vocabulary, a person today can know his/her natural and social environs more comprehensively.

Making phrases by combining the words:

Teaching sentence construction and other aspects of grammar without proper training in making phrases may not really develop students’ syntax skills. So, it is advised to teach the art of composing meaningful phrases using creative faculties such as emotions, feelings and imagination. The phrases like *Earth and Heaven; the blue sky and green fields; the setting sun and twinkling stars; the waning and waxing of moon; colourful flowers and singing birds, God’s creation and man’s procreation; human misery and heavenly bliss* can inspire the learners to generate numerous thoughtful word combinations. The learners must know that thought springs first and language is only a tool for expression of thoughts. So they are advised to develop creative thinking first and learn language next. Later on, the elements of grammar can be taught with methodical procedures. Figure 3 illustrates the logical order of teaching English vocabulary and grammar.

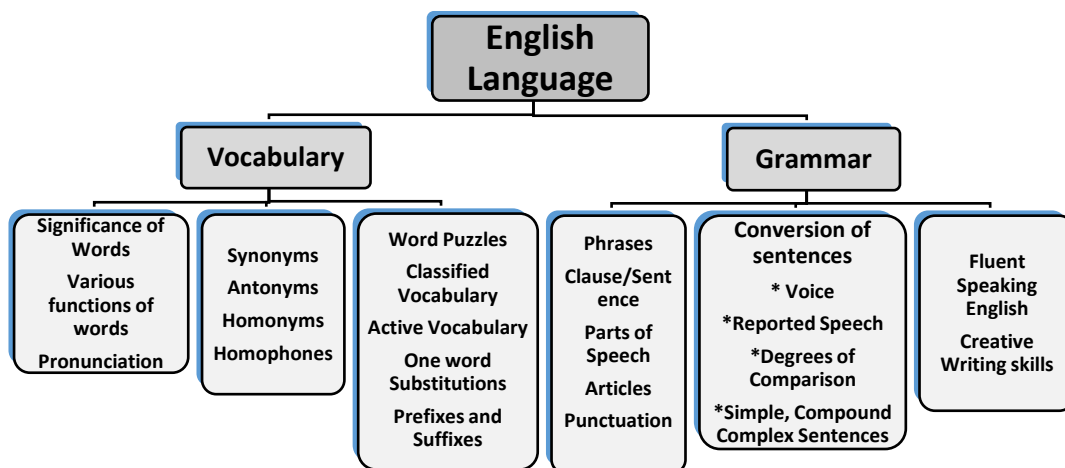


Figure 3 Categories of English Language

Teaching literature to budding creative minds:

Nature is abounding with enchanting beauty of vales and fields and the diversity in the lives of living beings. A sensitive poet or writer who is moved by the moving situations and circumstances begin to become emotional about it, feels much on the subject and becomes very imaginative to bring out inspiring thoughts and finally presents them in musical lyrics or meaningful essays. Sensory perceptions and thoughts supplied by mind make literary treatises and they again stimulate innovative ideas.

Students in educational institutions are asked to study poetry, prose and drama without explicating to them the meaning, significance and classification of literature. English words become literature when the writers blend their creative imagination with them. Literature is replete with thought and philosophy with

which people can comprehend both physical and metaphysical worlds. In short, literature is an expression of human experiences (both mundane and divine) with which they can become seers to know the mysteries of God's creation. It also develops the creative faculties of students to become talented artists or skilful artisans. Figure 4 can serve the purpose of having the panoramic picture of literature and this graphical presentation also demonstrates its different aspects.

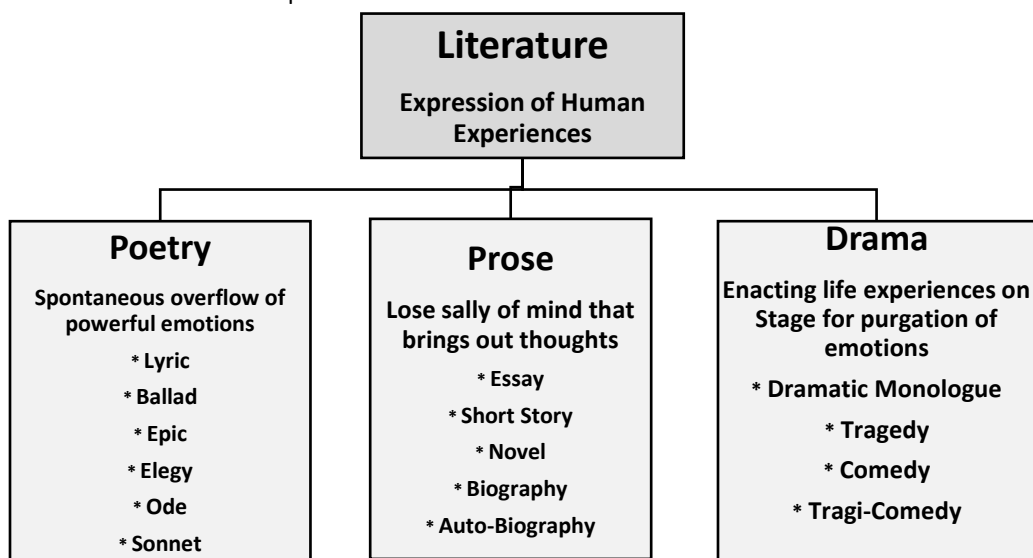


Figure 4 Elements of Literature

Conscious Efforts of Contemporary English Teachers and the Educational Institutions

Promising scholars and teachers of English need to make practical experiments in linguistic studies and evolve internationally acceptable TELL strategies to make it more purposeful. Using their creative abilities, they can suggest some experimental methods of clearer learning and better methods of teaching vocabulary, grammar and forms of literature. Expressing their ideas about the need of adapting various approaches in language teaching, eminent ELT experts stated:

Despite the changing status of approaches and methods in language teaching, the study of past and present teaching methods continues to form a significant component of teacher preparation programs. The reasons for this are the following:

- The study of approaches and methods provides teachers with a view of how the field of language teaching has evolved.
- Approaches and methods can be studied not as prescriptions for how to teach but as a source of well-used practices, which teachers can adapt or implement based on their own needs (Richards & Rodgers 2001).

Educational institutions need to provide necessary infrastructure for imparting the technical aspects of English language. They need to set up language laboratories in which the students can have good practice in the technical aspects of language like phonemes, syllables, stress, tone, intonation, accent and dialect. As soft skills became the order of the day in industrial, business and administrative circles, it is again imperative on their part to provide proper soft skills training through Skill Development Centres to enable the students, job seekers, employees and general public for becoming better communicators.

Conclusion

To sum up the important findings of this paper, it is necessary here to mention the importance of paradigm shifts in the methods of learning and teaching of English Language as well as Literature. The genesis of English Language and Literature has been discussed in the paper for understanding their real significance. The present day practices of learning and teaching English have been examined to know their usefulness. The important aspects of vocabulary and grammar have been presented in graphical designs for knowing the logical sequence of studying them. A new word **Anglobalization** may be coined at this juncture to emphasise

the need of providing *one single process design* of TELL to the students in all countries where English is loved, learnt and disseminated.

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