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METHODS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The proposed study attempts to investigate into the methods of teaching English in Andhra Pradesh as well as methods of evaluation and means of improving the effectiveness of teaching English in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh in particular and all over the country in general. The aims of the study isto know the problems in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh and also to find out the teaching methods suitable for English learning to be adopted for the teaching purpose in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Language Teaching, Teacher's Responsibility, Importance of English.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. *English language in India - Historical context*

If we look at the history of English in the country, English language gained entry in India with the entry of East India Company. Christian schools (through their missionaries) started functioning in the early 1800s. Macaulay's Minutes of Indian Education (1835) advocated the use of English as it was felt that 'Indians cannot be educated by means of their mother tongue. English is the language'. He also envisaged that English would be the language of commerce, politics and judiciary.

Macaulay's minutes on education dated 2nd Feb, 1835 – approved by the then Governor General of India, William Bentick on March 7, 1835 – became the cornerstone of British India educational policy. English became a language of the affluent in the Indian sub-continent, as a result of this policy. The bureaucracy opened opportunities for those knowing English. It established itself as the language of the elite, intelligentsia and educated middle class.

Before Independence, the Education Act of 1835 saw many changes. William Adam's survey (1835) suggested English as medium of education. During World War-I the child's mother tongue gained attention with Mahatma Gandhi and Gopal Krishna Gokhale advocating its importance. The Sadler Commission appointed to look into problem of education called for a policy of coordination between English and the Indian vernacular languages.

After Independence several states adopted the policy of discontinuing teaching of English in primary classes in government schools. As English has become a major language to be used in scientific research, Information Technology and commerce sectors. There has been a significant change in public opinion in favour of English in the recent years resulting in revival of teaching of English as a language at the primary level.

Some of the factors behind the increasing use of English language in the recent years include growth of the middle class, rapid urbanization, changing employment trends, outsourcing of jobs to India in the IT sector, privatization of higher education institutions, widespread use of internet in daily life, popularity of India as a tourism destination, growth of hospitality sector, popularity of English TV channels and films, resulting in increased pressure of admission of young children in English medium schools. It was only a library language in the past but it is now viewed as the language of opportunity, of acquiring jobs, quest for global identity and thus prompts efforts of all state Governments to make the language accessible to all.

The research on "A Study of the Problems in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language. The Study on Teaching of English in Government Schools at the upper Primary Level in particularly in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh Although most students in in Andhra Pradesh have had years of learning English as a foreign language, the vast majority of them still cannot communicate in English effectively (NCERT). English is introduced as a subject in class I in many States. In a few states, it is introduced in class III or at class V level. The teaching and learning of English today is characterized by the diversity of schools, classroom procedures and teaching of textbooks for the purpose of passing the examination.

At present, the foreign language instruction in Andhra Pradesh remains ineffective due to two major causes.

The first cause is the teacher-centered education philosophy that dominates the country's public and private education sector. In a teacher-centered classroom, the teacher lectures and asks questions. The students must listen to the teacher, take down everything, answer to the questions, and do written homework. There is no teamwork. Individual work is limited to answering the teacher's questions. The teacher does not speak much in the classroom. Students can usually practice by answering questions or reading what they have written down during the lecture.

The second cause is the lack of opportunities to apply the knowledge of English in real life. There is no stimulating environment. There are no academic tasks to solve in English.

Among these problems, the problem of practicing in appropriate teaching techniques is an important one since many English teachers are still devoted to traditional teaching techniques, which affect students' motivation negatively.

The importance of English as a world language, the advance of technology and education reform envisaged by the new Andhra Pradesh Constitution are key determinants for new developments in English language teaching and learning in Andhra Pradesh The research focuses on the role of English language teaching in Andhra Pradesh now and in the future. The role of English in Andhra Pradesh is quite important as it is in many other developing countries. New technology and the adoption of the internet have resulted in a major transition in terms of business, education, science, and technological progress, all of which demand high proficiency in English.

The study also aims to approach the English Language Teaching (ELT) from the point of view of teachers who are teaching English and students who are studying English as a subject at Upper Secondary School level. The main objective, which has guided the study, is to obtain data related to independent variables such as the aims of ELT in India and the process of teaching English that is operating to fulfill the goals of English language teaching.

It is due to the traditional methods of teaching English as a foreign language that the students and teachers are facing several problems in achieving communicative goals. Therefore, communicative approach along with technology-based audio-video aids will certainly help enrich the students as well as teachers in the use of English language.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh state. These states were selected to represent five major geographical regions in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh and variety in class at which English is introduced as a language at primary stage.

From each district two to three blocks were selected and from each sampled block schools were so selected as to represent all types of schools, urban, rural, large, small, rural interior and tribal. In all 154 schools were sampled from districts.

English textbooks in these districts were analysed using common guidelines for analysis of textbooks and other material. Information regarding the status of teaching of English in primary schools was collected through discussion with teachers and observation of classrooms to understand the lacunae in teaching of English and to make suggestions for its improvement.

Information about the content and approach to teaching of English in primary schools and teacher training programs (pre-service and in-service) as available from syllabi and other documents collected from state and UT was also analysed. In each state DIETs of sampled districts were visited to observe the training programs with specific focus on teaching English as a subject. Two in-service teacher training programs for teachers were also observed in each state.

#### **A. Main findings**

The main findings of the study are being summarized below:

The state textbooks at level 1 (classes I & II) focus less on the listening and speaking skills and do not build familiarity with the language. They also do not link the child's life at school to life outside the school.

Print rich environment was not evident in the schools. Children did not get opportunity to listen to language or speak in English. They were not able to narrate experiences, exchange ideas and carry out brief conversations in English.

Libraries in schools were found to be inadequately equipped and sparsely furnished, even nonexistent.

#### **B. Teacher Training**

The minimum qualifications of students for admission to professional training (B.Ed / D.Ed ) varied across the states/ UT .

There was greater emphasis on theory than practice in the pre-service training programs in sampled states. Linkages between theory and practice were weak. Actual hands-on experiences were not given during practice teaching in some of the training programs.

Visits to the different training institutions did not show good models of interaction or task-based approaches being adopted in training of student teachers. Most of the in-service training programmes were not organised according to the needs of the teachers. Also, the resources were not utilized properly. The transactional approach adopted in majority of In service Teacher Education programmes remained confined to the lecture method with little scope and opportunity for trainees to actively participate in the training process.

#### **C. Classroom Processes**

Observation of classroom processes in the selected States/UT brought to the light some salient points, which are summarized below:

In all the states, 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. Emphasis was more on developing reading and writing skills. Teachers felt that listening and speaking get covered in reading and writing.

The teachers in all the states/UT have fallen into what is called "The Textbook Trap", 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.

After going through primary classrooms in 8 states/UT, four practices were mainly observed through which a teacher develops reading skill amongst the students. These were: silent reading, choral reading, pair reading, and reading aloud. Amongst these practices, reading aloud was preferred by nearly 80% of teachers whereas choral reading was being practiced in about 10% of the cases and silent reading and pair reading in about 5% of cases each.

In all the states it was observed that poems were being taught line by line or word by word and not for appreciating the content.

Almost all the teachers taught grammar by making students memorize the rules and work on exercises. None of the teachers said that contextualizing grammar teaching was the best method.

Participation of students in the learning process was less in all the schools.

Most of the teachers gave and checked homework.

Technique in language teaching was not employed in an effective manner. In most of the classroom observations it was seen that the main focus in the class was on questions and answers. Mostly, the teacher asked the questions, students were not motivated to ask question, this deprives the students of practice for communication, command and confidence. It is observed that, just 5 to 10% of students asked questions.

#### **D. Teaching English**

As education has an important role in development in India, a number of Commissions and Committees set up by the Government have given their recommendations and suggestions on teaching of English. The Official Language Commission under B. G. Kher recommended seven years of English teaching in school (Kher, 1957). The report of the Education Commission (1964-1966) recommended teaching of English after the primary level. The Conference on Teaching of English in primary schools suggested changes in the thinking about the proper age and level for teaching of English in schools (Gokak, 1963). The Kunzru Committee (1959) recommended English as a second language. The Central Advisory Board for Education proposed the three- language formula, which was approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers held in 1961 and was accepted as a part of educational policy – English was to become one of the three languages to be taught at upper primary level- But later most states modified this policy and decided to introduce English at the primary level itself.

Language learning is not just a matter of acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but it consists of developing a communicative competence where these skills are often used in an integrated manner along with several other abilities that help in conducting a dialogue. The place of English is not merely an educational issue, but it is also an issue of social change, personal advancement and national development.

English in India has become a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. The visible indicator of this presence of English is mushrooming of private English medium schools. The pressure of admission in various states in the schools where English is taught from class I or is a medium of instruction from class I itself, shows that English language has acquired an important and an inclusive place in the Indian psyche. It is now a known fact that the English medium schools have become popular as many parents want their children to study in such schools. Education being on the concurrent list of every state, the level of introduction of English has now become a matter of state policy responding to people's aspirations. This has made many states to accede to the demand of early introduction of English in state schools.

### **3. INTRODUCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS -PRESENT STATUS**

Recently, most states have introduced English at the primary level, some even in class I (when students are 5 or 6 years of age). English is introduced as a subject in class I in 27 states. In Odisha and Andhra Pradesh English is introduced in class III. In states like Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, English is introduced as oral skill in class I and II and as a written skill from class III. A table showing the level of introduction of English in the States/ UTs is given below.

*Table 1: Class at which English is introduced in the States/UTs*

English teaching has contributed to the rapid mushrooming of private schools that have English as a medium of instruction

#### **4. ISSUES**

The National Curriculum Framework-2005 (NCF 2005) lays stress on the use of child's mother tongue as a medium of learning at the primary level. At the same time Teaching of English in an appropriate manner to enable the child to acquire sufficient proficiency in the language has also been given due importance in the NCF-2005. As per the National Curriculum Framework- 2005

Class	States/ UTs
I	Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Andaman & Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Lakshadweep, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Puducherry,
III	Andhra Pradesh, Odisha. In West Bengal Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh (Class I & II oral, Class – III written).
V	Gujarat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu.

at the initial stages, English may be one of the languages for learning activities that create the child's awareness of the world.

The English teaching experts recommend that English should be introduced late and not from class I and this is reflected in spirit in various policy documents.

The NCF 2005 lays stress on the use of child's mother tongue as a medium of learning at the primary level. It has stated that it should be the effort of the Indian educational system to teach English to every Indian child and to ensure that she/he gains a sufficiently high level of proficiency in it and not suffer discrimination for lack of it.

The teaching and learning of English today is characterized by the diversity of schools and linguistic environments, and by systematically pervasive classroom procedures of teaching a textbook for success in an examination. The emphasis should be on teaching language use in meaningful and often multilingual contexts. For the majority of our learners, what is needed is a basic or fundamental competence in the target language. We are all aware that some children come to school with the knowledge of more than one language and always have the potential of learning several languages at the same time. Knowledge of more than one language helps children in many ways. It helps them to:

- a) acquire higher level skills in the languages they already know;
- b) learn other languages and new subjects with ease;
- c) understand new cultures;
- d) become sensitive to other children and their languages;
- e) appreciate different perspectives on the same issue; and
- f) develop higher level analytical abilities.

Thus, teaching of English along with the mother tongue has other advantages too as pointed out above. With reference to teaching of English at primary level, the following three major questions need attention:

1. Are policy planners clear about the policy of when and how to introduce English?
2. Are the teachers prepared?
3. Have adequate materials been prepared by the states?

Another question in this connection which also need to be answered at some stage is: what efforts are being made to promote development of languages in a multi-lingual country like India?

These questions bring us to reflect upon the main goals of English language learning which are

(a) Attainment of basic proficiency in English and (b) development of English language into an instrument for further knowledge acquisition.

This study has attempted to answer the above questions on the basis of data collected from schools and teachers in eight states.

## 5. TEACHER EDUCATION

As education spread, the need for teachers inevitably increased. This resulted in the establishment of teacher training schools both in the metropolitan and provincial areas to prepare teachers for elementary and secondary schools in Training for teachers of English -

The Ministry of Education made projects focused on improving the English language proficiency of in-service teachers. The Ministry works closely with international agencies, including the British Council and the Regional English Language Office of the United States Embassy, as well as the AUA Language Centre, and ERIC Centres.

1. Training activities to strengthen professional standards of teachers-

It was expected that the first round of training should have been completed in 2006, with further rounds of training implemented in 2007 and 2008.

2. Completion of the Bachelor's Degree in Education for in-service teachers: Rajabhat universities have been conducting a special program since 2003 for in-service teachers who must meet this requirement. It was expected that all in-service teachers would have attained at least a Bachelor's Degree in Education in the year 2007.
3. In-service programmes for a Post-graduate Certificate and Master's Degree in Teaching: Teachers holding a Bachelor's Degree in fields other than teaching are encouraged to undertake in-service programmes leading to a Post-graduate Certificate or a Master's Degree in Teaching.

## 6. IMPROVING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH CERTIFICATION

In fact, teaching is the only profession so specified in this highest law of the country. This strongly substantiates the importance of teachers in the F society.

be developed so that teaching will be further enhanced and become a highly respected profession.

1. The ultimate goal of licensing teachers is full development of learners and teaching profession
2. Teachers are guaranteed to receive at least the same welfare and benefits as they are having at present.
3. Participatory approach will be employed in developing and assessing teachers.
4. A system to license teachers will be delegated to local authority and School Board for initial selection and approval.
5. A proposed system to license teachers must be fair, transparent and accountable.

## 7. TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

For becoming a professional teacher, one must complete the following criteria.

1. Indian nationality.
2. At least 21 years of age.
3. Bachelors or higher degree in Education. Holders of degrees other than education need to be trained to meet the standard of teaching profession.

## 8. LEARNERS AS THE CENTRE OF LEARNING

In order to have the child-centered learning provided by law, Section 22 of the National Education Act states that, "Education shall be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development."(Kaewdaeng, 1999, 5)

To reform teaching learning, both teachers and learners must change their roles. Teachers must change from a 'teller' to a 'facilitator', while learners can learn by themselves, provided they are assisted by teachers how to learn, where to get information, and how to make use of it.

## 9. TEACHERS AS AGENTS OF LEARNING REFORM

The Office of National Education Commission (ONEC) in collaboration with the Learning Reform Subcommittee has initiated two major projects for teachers: National Teacher Award, and Master Teacher Award. These projects are created with the belief that there are a large number of capable and hardworking teachers, but they may not be able to progress in the wider public due to the lack of opportunity. Therefore, we have to sort them out, reward them and set them as ideals for other teachers in terms of teaching-learning reform.

The Ministry of Education, with the approval of His Excellency Minister Somsak Prisananantakul, has accepted the idea of learning reform through national teachers and master teachers. Teachers who are likely to change their teaching methods under the child-centered concept will be selected as the so-called "Lead Teachers." They will attend the workshop on child-centered learning, under the supervision of national teachers and master teachers. It was expected that in 1999 about 30,000 teachers will participate in the workshop. While implementing their teaching methods, these lead teachers will also expand their methodology to their network of ten teachers. Thus, within two years, all 600,000 teachers were expected to be completely transformed to be "Teachers of the new Millennium." These teachers would be agents of change for the learning reform in schools all over the country.

It is imperative that all concerned carry out the development of teachers and education personnel to contribute to the success of learning reform and to benefit all stakeholders, especially the target of these efforts, the learners.

## 10. CONCLUSION

In India, English plays a major role as the most important foreign language. In the educational fields, English is the compulsory foreign language for all the students from upper primary school level-Standard V up to the higher secondary level-Standard XII. The English Curriculum aims to cultivate two linguistic abilities: an ability to give access to the society and culture and an ability to use English to communicate effectively grammatically and appropriately. The main contents of the English Curriculum are language for communication, language and culture, language and relationship with other learning areas and language and relationship with community and the world. Students in India spend many years in studying English; still many

of them cannot communicate in English grammatically, appropriately and effectively. The present study proposes to find out the problems in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. It aims to approach the English the English Language Teaching (ELT) from the point of view of teachers who are teaching English and students who are studying English as a subject at Upper Secondary School level. It attempts to find the solution to the problems identified and to satisfy the needs of both the teachers of English and the learners of English in Andhra Pradesh It is expected that the communicative approach along with technology-based audio-visual aids will certainly help enrich the students as well as teachers in the use of English language efficiently.

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