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TEACHING ENGLISH: FROM TRADITIONAL CLASS ROOM TO SELF DIRECTED
LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The present paper analyses the Indian classroom scenario and provides some techniques and models for development of students through self-directed language learning. The teacher gradually shifts from teaching to facilitating. Two models for SDLL devised by Brian Morrison have been provided for further assistance of teachers as well as students to accelerate learning and gain more accuracy. These pedagogical tools can be actually used in classrooms for better results and rapid learning.

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English came to India with the colonial migration of the British. It has not just come to India, as some people are arguing, because of one individual called Macaulay. A language gets introduced in a particular historical context and it shall grow only if the socio-economic conditions for its growth are conducive. English has grown like that in India. Now no one can throw it away. (Ilaiah 2005)

Certainly our predecessors may have thought more deeply and clearly than us when it came to language(s) in India, yet every generation should engage with them afresh, because linguistic situations and compulsions change in every period. The questions I will address here pertain to the past, present and future of English, and also to literature, language and the pedagogy of English. But before I do that, let me make my location clear so that you can judge my positions and justification without running the risk of over/underestimating them.

Much before the discussion of location became a central concern of (post) colonial critics, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the famous Urdu poet, had remarked in his translation of a poem, *Zindan se ek Khat* (A letter from Zindan) by the Turkish poet Nazim Hikamat, who participated in the war of Turkish independence, and suffered imprisonment and exile for long:

Meri jan tujhko batlaon bahaut nazuk yeh makta hai,

Badal jata hai insa jab makan uska badalta hai.

[O my dear! Let me tell you an issue of much importance,

With change in the location, a human being also undergoes a change and becomes different.]

Keeping in view the creative insight, I must mention my location here. As a student of English and comparative Literature, I am located in a centrally located college in Pune. It is difficult to determine where I stand, because I am caught between two locations. I have students coming from sub-urban areas chiefly because our college is very close to Swargate which makes it convenient for students from nearby areas to commute. At the same time I cannot say that I teach in a city-based college because that would be partially true if we look at the students in the classes. So I must say I hold an ambiguous position. Secondly I experience this 'betweenness' in terms of language also. I teach English Literature and Language and earn my livelihood but my passion for Comparative literature drives me closer to Indian languages that form the very basis of comparative literature. It makes me acutely conscious of the second layer of my existence in- between English and the Indian languages- Marathi, my mother-tongue, Hindi, and Urdu- that I know with varying degrees of competence. Despite being dependent on English for financial security, my heart lies with my languages. And I cannot hate these languages simply because I am an English teacher who should love or support English anyways. Yes, I do admire English for its flexibility, global appeal and richness, but I also love the *bhasha* literatures for their rich traditions; *bhakti* poetry that is unparalleled not only in English but in the entire world literature. We have great poets like Mir and Galib in Urdu and writers like Premchand in Hindi. So I must say that I am proud of my multilingual heritage that makes me more accommodative and adaptive towards English, allows me to accept English, though not uncritically, and also handle it in a way better than most Englishmen would handle any of our languages.

Now that I have tried to sum up my location with respect to English, let us take a quick look at how English reached us and what did it do to us? English after its origin in the 5th century has prospered through migration and (re) settlement of its speakers in different parts of the world. Its forays outside Europe began with the foundation of the American colonies and later in the 17th century with the establishment of the East India Company. The British Empire in the 19th century, 'with its Sun never setting', saw its language- English- emerge as a world language with a subtle mix of power, politics, trade and cultural hegemony. In the second half of the eighteenth century it came to India as part of the colonial encounter between India and England. English was the means by which colonizers sustained colonization.

With the establishment of Universities in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, ironically, English became instrumental to bring out scholars who would serve as bureaucrats and resist the cause of nationalism. M.K. Gandhi had foreseen the consequence of the project of modernizing India through English; the unbridgeable gulf between the English –equipped and English-unequipped, impoverished people of the country. He perceived English as the cause behind the partitioned families, he remarked:

The English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools. My father knew nothing of what I was learning... I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person: even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. (Harijan, 9/7/38)

Further, he did not see English as the means of liberation. 'Of all the superstitions that affect India, none is as great as that knowledge of English Language necessary for imbibing ideas of liberty, and developing accuracy of thought' (*Young India*, 7/4/1921).

However, as things stood, the British tried to use English as the means of colonization, and it persists and prospers in the so-called post-colonial or neo-colonial period, for attitudes attached to it do not die even after the end of colonization. Now English does not belong purely to the British, but also to us in good measure- it has been with us for more than two hundred years- and Indian English emerged as a variant of English, and Indian English writing as a means of creativity, have carved a niche for themselves.

Let us turn to the present scenario. After Hindi, English is the most commonly spoken or used language in India particularly in financial, legal, educational, business and communication systems. The belief that English is used for expressing ideas and official communication rather than expressing feelings and emotions does not hold completely true. By 1970s and 1980s about one third of the Indian schools had English as the first language. Brij Kachru in his survey (the questioned were the graduate faculty of English in universities and colleges) found that only 65.64 % had occasional interaction with native speakers of English. 11.79 % had no interaction and 5.12 %

claimed to have daily interaction with native speakers claimed to have daily interaction with native speakers of English. English represents the scientific knowledge, modernization and development. It is to be noted that English is on the third rank among the languages spoken in the world. According to the Ethnologue, (2015, 18th edition), first language speakers are 339 million and English as second language speakers are 603 millions and the total no of English speakers is 942 millions.

The Indian sub-continent, in terms of members of speakers of English, ranks third in the world after the USA and the UK David Crystal estimated 4% of the Indian population used English in 1994 and that comes to about 35 million. According to Kachru, English functions in the Indian social context to perform roles relevant and appropriate to the social, educational and administrative network. It is recognized as the official language in the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. India is the third largest country that produces books in English after the USA and UK in the world, and the largest number of books published in India is in English. Indian English writing has now been accepted as a part of Indian literary tradition.

Let me state a few contextual facts here. At the moment there are about 300 universities, excluding deemed universities in our country, and over 20,000 colleges and more than 3 lakh high schools where English is being taught either in the form of English as the medium of education or English as a major component where language or literature is taught. English has emerged as a link language of the country with its varieties within Indian English. Today, not only English language, but also Indian English writing- particularly Indian English novel- have become industries. In fact with the melting of English Empire, the sway of English was supposed to decline. Ironically, that did not happen. At present, English enjoys the status of global language, flourishing in the world as the language of communication and commercial transaction, the prospects are that it would led to the extinction of many languages. Makarand Paranjape claims, '**From being the master's language to becoming the master language, English seems to have vernacularized the rest of India**' (Paranjape, 2010: x)

As we can perceive English has become the language of power, because it has the power to reconcile. Consequently it belongs to no one, so it belongs to all and hence can be used by all."

The twentieth century has seen an immense amount of activity in English language teaching, and the same commitment is being carried forward in the millennium. In the past few decades the emphasis on English language teaching has shifted from the teaching of language to the teaching of language use i.e. more importance is being given to communicative aspects of language. Communication has been the stated goal of language teaching. Many academicians and teachers in this field have tried to evolve new strategies to encourage comprehension and the age old traditional methods are avoided by them which emphasize on literary and grammatical competence.

Literature is used as a pedagogic tool in language teaching and teaching of communication skills. English language has an immense wealth of literature. The scenario has changed drastically in the past decade. There has been a drift from the narrow methods to broader, more integrated approaches in language teaching. These approaches encourage the teaching of the four skills within the general framework of using language for learning and motivate for communication. In India, English is taught on compulsory level from primary classes to undergraduate classes and it is the role of a teacher to be a good communicator. Undeniably; English today has become an international commodity. It is not just necessary for developing literary aesthetic sense, but it is more required for mobility, and social and economic success in the world. Progress in any field is largely dependent on interaction, which is possible only through good communication skills. With this view a new emphasis is now being given on spoken and functional communication in English.

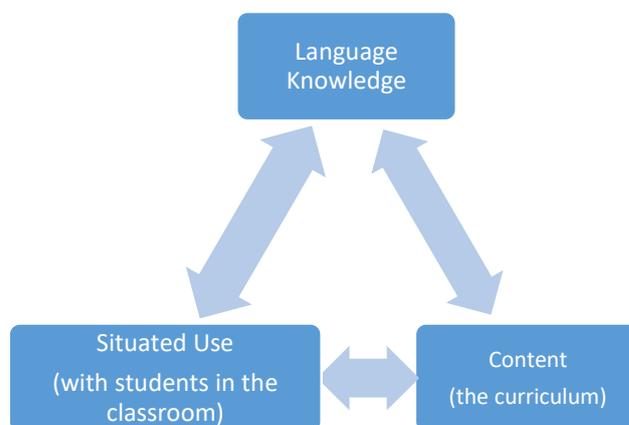
Until recently, English in Indian classrooms was taught in a mechanical way which discouraged students from engaging in sustained literary activities. The teachers face the following obstacles in teaching English language and communication in it:

- Students are exposed to English in artificial situations, text based situations with a nominal exposure to authentic use.

- Language skills are developed in isolation, without using them for real communication or for deriving any meaning.
- Greater emphasis is given on the receptive skills.
- It has created a serious gap in the productive use of language.
- Fear is one more aspect that restricts learners to learn the communicative manner of English; hence they are reluctant to use English language in day today life.
- The social class, family background, area of living, the mother tongue effect are some unavoidable hurdles faced by the aspirant to learn the English communication
- The Single-Teacher schools in the remote areas are one of the hurdles in teaching and learning communication in English as the emphasis is given on completing the syllabus within limited time.
- Students are reluctant to learn English as a 'language'.
- The size of Indian classes must be considered as an obstacle.

Hence minimal use is made of the target language for communicative purposes. Students in India learn English only as a library language or for higher studies or better job opportunities. The process of teaching and learning English communication must start at very early age and considering this since 2000, the teaching of English is made compulsory at school level from the first standard. Unfortunately the results are not satisfactory. According to the GR of 13/12/2013, there are 67000 primary schools in Maharashtra run by the Government; the number of schools must have increased but in many of them, students are taught by a single teacher in many remote places; which is not commendable thing. For them 'effective communication' is not a reachable thing. There are some schools using the digital ways of learning and imparting education in a fun-learn way. However, the percentage of these types of schools is very low.

In colleges also we teachers face many problems. Considering this; we as teachers must focus on the classroom situations and the classroom situation differs from place to place. Learners of English in an Indian environment face a real hurdle achieving communicative proficiency using the target language, and hence give up from speaking or writing in it. We, as teachers of English, need to create situations that necessitate communication; exposing students to understandable inputs. It would engage them in interesting tasks and would make the class more interactive and facilitate better language output. Nowadays, to some extent the scenario has changed. The new electronic gadgets and use of ICT, interactive sessions of teaching-learning, e-classrooms, special coaching of these skills are of a great help for teachers. But still majority of students rely on the traditional and affordable classes; so the responsibility of a teacher is greater than any other factor.



As teachers we need to take up certain responsibilities to make English a user friendly language. I think there are four fundamental responsibilities:

- ❖ **Creating the need:** If we can persuade students of the need to do something- and give them a powerful enough reason for doing it- they have a very good chance of succeeding. Many of the tasks, games, role-play and projects that we ask our students to do have exactly this aim. But unless we can bring this 'need' into being- however superficial or profound it is- there is little chance that the students will willingly engage with the task before them, and without this engagement, proper learning is unlikely to take place.
- ❖ **Giving feedback** – Teacher's formative feedback makes one of the most important contributions to successful learning. It is crucial to student's progress.
- ❖ **Creating the right atmosphere-** One of the chief responsibilities of conscientious teacher is to create the right kind of respectful, supportive learning environment for learning to take place. This involves setting the right kind of challenges, practicing effective group leadership and ensuring that all are treated equally. This can be achieved when students are working on their own, of course, but trained teachers are uniquely equipped to make sure things go smoothly and to intervene when things get awkward.
- ❖ **Passing on the knowledge:** It is true that we can find out all sorts of information online (that is, if we have access to the internet). This might suggest that all knowledge resides on some server somewhere. But that is not so. People have wisdom and judgement and accumulated knowledge about many things- in this case, the English language and how best to learn and teach it, and about how to work in groups in classrooms. This human interaction done face to face cannot be substituted by online information as we cannot trust the resources or understand the expressions or emotions involved.

One of the chief sources of learning is SDLL- Self-directed language learning that is student centered and ensures learner autonomy. Brian Morrison supports SDLL through two frameworks, they are PIME and PURE. These can inform student centered, class-based activities which are integrated into courses; and then 'homework', or at least some of it, can be linked to student-*led*, out-of-class learning.



- The first is a PIME framework (Planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). This involves an initial *planning* phase- ie. Goal-setting and learning plan development- and then works through a cycle of learning plan *implementation, monitoring and evaluation*. As the cycle continues, the learning plan may be adjusted, to fit each student's experience of using it.
- Within this PIME cycle, another framework is used: PURE which is more of a tool for categorizing activities, so that the balance of activities can be attended to when we follow PIME.
- To sum up PURE:
 - *Prepare (to use)* could involve the students learning new language, or preparing to use specific language in the context of their goals.

- *Use* is about using the language which has been prepared, in the setting of the language learning goal.
- *Review* is there to check what has been remembered, and whether anything has been forgotten
- *Evaluate* clarifies that the goal-oriented language skills are improving, and is to verify that there is a connection between *Prepare* and *Use*- ie. That what is *prepared* is then *used* later.

PIME: Planning

At the planning stage students have to consider their language learning goals and come up with a learning plan. To keep everything simple the first time we do this, we limit the students to choose one language skill- ie. Reading, writing, speaking or listening- and ask them to consider the genre and situation.

- *I want to be able to read a newspaper article without the help of dictionary.*
- *I want to be able to chat with my friends in English about my village/city.*
- *I want to be able to watch a play / movie and understand most of it.*

At this stage, it is feasible for students to come up with a learning plan, but diagnostic activity can guide them to focus more on their needs. A diagnostic activity involves asking the students to do the following:

- ✚ *Try the goal activity (read an article, chat with friends; watch a film)*
- ✚ *Analyze and assess their performance.*
- ✚ *Consider what they have to do to improve.*
- ✚ *Prioritize these improvements.*

The next step is for the students to come up with learning plans connected to their goals, with at least one activity for each part of PURE. These plans provide a schedule- which potentially helps with time management- and a reference document to check both *what to do* and *what has been done*. Here is an example of a learning plan for the following goal:

Goal: *I want to be able to chat with my friends in English about my village. I need to develop my fluency so that I can say what I want to say. I know a lot of words, but pause too much when I try to remember them.*

Prepare

- Keep a diary about my life here.
- Use a dictionary when I can't think of the words.
- Keep a note of the words I check at the back of the diary.

Use

- Talk to my friends in English every day at lunch time.
- Use my diary vocabulary notes if I need to.
- Ask friends more about their native places.

Evaluate

- Record myself once every two weeks, and compare with the previous recording.
- Check if I can speak for longer.
- Check if I can speak with fewer pauses.

Review

- Read through the whole diary every Sunday evening- the daily entries and the checked words.

Interestingly PIME and PURE are about identifying strengths and weaknesses, adjusting, modifying, continuing, transferring and halting specific learning activities (and the use of resources and materials) as the language is being used. Teachers are regularly called upon to develop learner autonomy, to personalize or individualize learning, and to take account of individual differences. There are variety of ways that this call is answered, both in the lessons and away from the classroom. In whatever way teachers choose to support their students' language learning, framework such as PIME and PURE can be used as tools for students (and teachers) to check what kind of activities are occurring, and to consider the influence these activities have on learning outcomes.

These models have been given with researcher's own modifications so as to facilitate the language classes that we have in India, obviously considering the diversity and heterogeneity of the students in the classes.

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