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English Class-Rooms – Present Day Challenges

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Abstract

Language is the means of communication. Communication is an indispensable tool for everyday life. In India, English is taught as a second language. Even then students find it hard to express themselves in English. Students find it difficult to learn English Language with proper pronunciations, spelling and grammatical rules. This article deals with the problems of English teaching pedagogy in Indian classrooms and some suggestions is also included for the improvement of English language learning and teaching situation in Indian classrooms.

Keywords

English Language Learning; Communication; Methods; Role Plays; Word Games; Audio Visual Aids.



Introduction

English is regarded as a 'neutral' language for wider communication and the language of technology, modernity and development. 'English' is also a social status symbol. Hence, acquiring adequate knowledge in English for today's learners is inevitable in the present scenario. It is the need of the hour for every student to learn English with proper pronunciation, spelling and grammatical rules. The role of teacher is very important in making the students confident in the use of English language.

This article deals with the problems of English teaching pedagogy in Indian classrooms and some suggestions is included for the improvement of English language learning and teaching situation in Indian classrooms.

Challenges of Learning/Teaching English Language

Students face number of problems in learning English as Second Language. Students of rural areas do not realize the importance of English as a language of communication. They are unable to express in English. They have no idea of proper sentence structure. They do not know the correct pronunciation, spelling and grammar rules. They focus on exam point of view. Heterogeneous classrooms with mixed ability students are also the major problems in Learning/Teaching English language.

Language teachers follow some of the different methodologies to teach the language. Some are listed below:

Grammar Translation Method

In Grammar translation method, the teacher explains every word, phrase and sentence in the native language of the students to make them understand and learn English. There is at least one disadvantage in this method. It makes the students to concentrate more on L1 than L2 and English class seems to be L1 class rather than L2. Students get benefited only to some extent through this method. In spite of its ineffectiveness, this method is still in use in many classrooms of India.

Bilingual Method

This method is adopted by most of the teachers in Indian classrooms. Here the teacher explains the entire English sentence in L1 and then ask the students to perform activities in English. There is a false assumption that only the teacher can use L1 in this method. When a student is in the process of constructing his own sentences, abundant help through the use of mother tongue sentences is provided. Hence this method do not provided the fluency and acquaintance in language expression. Thus, this method helps the students to learn the second language only to a limited extent.

Direct Method

In India, Direct Method is widely used in Private schools. The teacher will stick to the practice of using only English without depending on L1. The teacher is not supposed to use L1 to explain. Hence the students face great difficulty in understanding certain words and their meanings. But this method is considered to be more useful for the students to learn the second language than any other methods.

Audio-Lingual Method

This method emphasizes the teaching of speaking and listening before reading and writing. This is also known as aural-oral method. This method is based on the principle of behaviour psychology. Audio-Lingual method uses dialogues and drills with the use of target language, discouraging the use of mother tongue in the class room. This is a learner centered method where the teacher plays a minor role. Learners remain as mere imitators of the teacher's model.

All the above methods have their own merits and demerits through which the students get benefited to some extent of learning English as a second language. They learn English as a subject rather than as a language. Moreover the learners are exposed to poor English and they are unable to put their learning into practice due to lack of suitable environment.

At Present the challenges before the language teachers are enormous. It is necessarily needed that the teachers through their innovative pedagogies should be able to cater to the needs of the learners, so that the learners can be moulded in a better way to meet the demands of this competitive world.

Methods to Improve Language Skills

Role Play

English language can be taught effectively through role play. It appeals to the inquisitive nature of the students. It helps the students in the formation of sentences and to express their thoughts and also to keep them interested till the end of the class. Role play is supposed to appeal to the creative part of the brain. In this way the students are personally engaged with the stories and plays. They can bring their own interpretation of the character. It removes the dull aspects and makes the learning more colourful. The entire process is fun and not at all boring. This method brings about the total learning experience which enables the student to answer the questions. Hence it ensures that the learning process is complete.

Dialogue Speaking

Dialogue speaking is one of the most useful ways of teaching the Language. A child learns his or her mother tongue by listening to the conversations that takes place around him or her. Hence dialogue speaking plays a vital role in teaching a language. Here the language is taught intuitively. The topics can be given in prior and the time for presentation can also be fixed by the teacher. The topics can be general in nature. They should be like friends are talking to each other. The students would be comfortable in expressing themselves. This process consumes time but in the end it would be the efficient method in teaching the language.

Word Games

The most pivotal part of any language is the vocabulary. Understanding the meaning of the words and using them in day to day life is a very difficult

task. Word games can help the students to overcome this difficulty. Games like Scrabble, Housie etc. have been designed for this purpose. These game are built in such a way that the students can develop their ability of using vocabulary. In addition simple dictation, synonyms and antonyms competitions, word puzzle, anagrams can also help in improving vocabulary competency.

Using Audio-Visual Aids

Multimedia sources like songs, movies, TV shows, magazines, newspapers play a vital role in improving our language. Such sources can be used to help the students improve their language. This should be used in the final stage of learning a language. This method helps the students to understand the meaning of expressions, usage of tools of the language like comparisons, personifications etc. This method is more appealing, since it directly affects the sensory parts. Hence this method is also very effective in teaching the language.

Role of a Language Teacher

The teacher plays an important role in students learning. A teacher's primary role is not only to enable the students to understand what he is intending to say or teach but also it is the duty of the teacher to understand what the student wants and says. In teaching-learning process, two things play the vital roles: one is delivering capacity of the teacher and the other one is the receiving capacity of the students. Without these two aspects, the teaching-learning process will not be effective. The effective teaching enables the students to make right decisions and judgments. It is the duty of the language teacher to ensure self-confidence among the students to express their views without flaw. Hence a language teacher should focus on the four language skills in the process of teaching-learning.

Conclusion

Language teaching methods play a very vital role in language learning. The innovative methods help in bringing a change and most of the times for the better. It helps the students learn faster and in an efficient, interesting and

interactive manner with total involvement. Hence, language teachers should choose appropriate methodology for teaching English based on the proficiency of the students.

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