

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA**V. Saravanan***Asst. Professor, Sri Vidhya College of Education, Ambur***Abstract**

The student should learn English in as natural an environment as possible. He should be encouraged to talk English in the class room, in the playground, etc. Group discussions should be initiated and every student encouraged to participate. A Language teacher should know the nature of language and the way it is learnt. The knowledge that language is a system has led to selection and gradation of structures and vocabulary. The knowledge that language is primarily speech has brought focus spoken English and oral work in the class room. The awareness that language is constantly changing and evolving has resulted in the teaching of descriptive and not prescriptive grammar. According to Sweet, 'language is the expression of ideas by means of which speech sounds are combined into words, words are combined into sentences and combination of sentences gives answers to ideas and thoughts.' Language is therefore used to communicate our thoughts and ideas and is essential for our survival and development as human beings. The selected material is grouped on the basis of sound, situation, structure, structure and meaning, Material can be selected according to the following three types of sequences and the teacher can then select the order in which the sequences should be taught.

Problems of Teaching English in India

The teacher of English in India faces various problems and has to teach despite various limitations. Some of these constraints are:

1. Poor class room condition, the physical environment itself is not conducive to learning with poorly ventilated rooms. The classroom equipment is also inadequate.
2. The strength of the students is quite huge and teaching a language becomes quite difficult. No individual attention can be paid.
3. No audio visual aids are provided and English is taught like any other information-oriented subject.
4. The purpose of teaching the language is not clear. No clear objectives of the teaching of English are conveyed.
5. Different syllabi for different schools and at various levels of the teaching of English result in irregular results.
6. Poorly designed textbooks which do not use realistic situations from the students' life also contribute to the poor quality of English education in the country today.
7. Faculty methods of teaching are adopted. Instead of following the structural and situation approaches, the translation-cum-grammar approaching is followed. The

natural of the language and absorption of the structure and situational use of he imbibing language does not happen.

How to solve Problems of Teaching English

1. Oral work with the student reading and speaking the language has to be done. Textbooks should follow a graded vocabulary.
2. Should be appropriately illustrated,
3. Subject matter should be relevant, should have good language and style, an extensive glossary and well devised exercises.
4. Textbooks should be accompanied with students' workbooks, teacher's handbook, supplementary readers, and the necessary audio-visual aids like charts, records and tapes.

French permits the use of the mother with students' explaining the meaning of the words, provided the teacher immediately gets back to English. Total translation of the English textbook is not permitted.

The aim of teaching the language is that the students should speak, read and write English perfectly to this end any written work done by the students should be corrected thoroughly and mistakes should be corrected.

The examination system should focus on the concept of mastery of the language shown in the skillful use of vocabulary and sentence structure rather than on rote learning. Fluency in spoken English should also be evaluated.

Introduction

Suggestions for Improved Teaching of English

The three language formula should be followed with the regional language as the first language, Hindi being the national language, being the second language and English being as a third language.

- i) Teachers to be trained. Summer schools, crash training programmes, workshops, Seminars at regional and national levels could be held to periodically to upgrade the language skills of the teachers.
- ii) Orientation programmes, Workshops, Refresher courses for inspection staff should be conducted frequently
- iii) Textbooks should be written by experts and supplementary reader, workbooks, handbooks, audio-visual aids should be provided with them.
- iv) Evaluation of the students' language skills should focus on vocabulary, sentence structure, word-order, use of prepositions, degrees of comparison, verb forms and tenses and on spoken language and pronunciation.

Aims & Objectives of Teaching English

S Bloom has defined educational objective as, 'the desired goal or outcome at which instruction is aimed.' The result expected from teaching English in India is acquiring a practical command of the language. Along with this utilitarian aim, the twin aim of literary development is also desired. Appreciation of literature and expression of creative ideas in prose, poetry, drama are also the objectives of teaching English.

The two main-objectives of teaching English may thus be said to be:

1. Language development and
2. Literary development

During the earlier stages of schooling, the teachers should aim at developing language. At this point, in the words of Thompson and Wyatt, to aim at literature is to miss the way to language.

The students should be able to understand spoken English, speak English, read and write simple English. This is similar to the four aspects of language:

1. Semantic - related to understanding
2. Phonetic - dealing with sound, spelling, pronunciation
3. Graphic - related to writing
4. Phonetic-cum-graphic - dealing with reading

To understand spoken English

The student should be able to understand ordinary conversation, exchange of greetings, instructions, lectures, talks, etc. This can be achieved by the student listening to the English channels on radio and television, audio tapes, etc..

To Speak English

The student should be able to converse fluently in English with proper stress and intonation accurate pronunciation.

To Read English

He should more over be able to read and understand English newspapers, books, magazines and develop adequate vocabulary to understand the major news items and stories.

To Write English

He should be able to write simple letters, fill in applications, write descriptions and report any event. This will enable the student to work effectively and to take notes of lectures.

At the senior level, along with the above four aims, further results to be expected are that the student should be able to compose and write independently, should use audio-visual aids acquire a vocabulary of 2500 words and is able to use reference materials such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc.

Nature of Language

According to Sweet, 'language is the expression of ideas by means of which speech sounds are combined into words, words are combined into sentences and combination of sentences gives answers to ideas and thoughts.' Language is therefore used to communicate our thoughts and ideas and is essential for our survival and development as human beings.

Language is a result to cultural experience. We use the language in which we are brought up and we follow its thought patterns, structure and design. Tarzan, brought up in the jungle, learnt the language of the apes! Initially, the child learns language by imitation, beginning by making isolated sounds like Ma-M<a, Pa-Pa and going on to imitating grammatical constructions and speech patterns, Language has its system of words and symbols and quite arbitrary. Very often same symbols audio-visual aids different pronunciations, same sounding words are spelled differently, etc. It is never static. It keeps changing with the demands of the times and is therefore a living, growing, developing thing. Language is also a system of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary. These in themselves are systems, made up of a complex whole.

Importance of Knowledge of Nature of Language to Teacher

A Language teacher should know the nature of language and the way it is learnt. The knowledge that language is a system has led to selection and gradation of structures and vocabulary. The knowledge that language is primarily speech has brought focus spoken English and oral work in the class room. The awareness that language is constantly changing and evolving has resulted in the teaching of description and not prescriptive grammar.

The modern teacher nowadays focuses on language drills instead of rules of grammar. Knowing the arbitrariness of the English language, the teacher of English teaches the language as it is spoken by the English people and not as they ought to use it. An audio-lingual approach is adopted while teaching English and no haste is made in introducing reading. More time and practice is given to the student to listen and speak English. New material in spoken form is given to the student before the same material is presented in book structures and the translation method of teaching is audio-visual aids is avoided.

Principles of Language teaching

The student should learn English in as natural an environment as possible. He should be encouraged to talk English in the class room, in the playground, etc. Group discussions should be initiated and encouraged o partipicle. Charts should be displayed in classroom, slides shown, student taken to watch English movies, and the use of the mother tongue should be minimized. The student should be taught to listen carefully, distinguish between different sounds, imitate and repeat correct pronunciations, read aloud with clear articulation, to use words in their appropriate context, to use correct grammar, to read

silently, to consult a dictionary, to go to the library, to read newspapers, magazines, story books, etc.

The teacher should bear in mind that the whole system of the language cannot be taught in the school years. Hence the teacher should select matter which will be of the most use to the student. Those words or sentences which are used frequently are used frequently should be introduced. For example words like pen, book, able. Etc. Words with a longer range, that is with multiple usage should be selected. Also words which are convenient and can be taught by visual representation like, chair, blackboard, plate, spoon, etc. should be selected. Words which audio-visual aids a wider covering capacity should be selected. Coverage refers to a words capacity to display the number of words. For example the word cereal covers wheat, rice pulses, etc. Similarly words which can be taught easily should be selected, like flower instead of the word affection. It is important for teacher to keep in mind the age and the learning capacity of the student. A student of Standard XII can learn much more than a student of Std VI. The teacher should proceed systematically, from the easy to difficult, from the more useful to the less useful. The principles of gradation should be followed. These are as follows:

Principles of Grouping

The selected material is grouped on the basis of sound, situation, structure, structure and meaning, For example, in phonetic of sound grouping, words like go, row, sow, toe, show, flow, throw are grouped together. In situation or lexical grouping, words like father, mother, brother, sister are grouped together Grouping on the basis os sentence structure is called grammatical grouping and grouping on the basis of meaning is called semantic grouping.

Principles of Sequencing

Material can be selected according to the following three types of sequences and the teacher can then select the order in which the sequences should be taught.

Grammatical Sequence: Sentence Structures audio-visual aiding the subject-verb-object pattern should be taught first and the subject-verb-object-extension pattern should be taught next. For example I am going to Bangalore should be taught first and only later the sentence I am going to Bangalore for an interview.

Lexical Sequence

Words of the same or similar meaning are taught one by one. For example: we all take meals

We take breakfast in the morning

We take lunch in the afternoon.

We take diineer at night.

Principle of Phonology

It is always desirable to link written symbols with spoken symbols. Therefore, spoken English should be taught first, and only later should written English be introduced. Oral speech is the quickest way of learning a language. Prof. Kitson puts it aptly, living language should be taught as living speech. Part of the problem for students lies in the fact that the use of English to impart information requires them to produce long exchanges of speech, which are more difficult to plan and produce than the short turns typical in conversation. The longer the turn, the more planning the speaker is required to do. Long turns used to communicate ideational content place great demands on the speaker to control the flow of complex information skillfully and efficiently according to the needs of the listener. Students may be quite competent in producing conversation, including long exchanges where the transfer of content is secondary to the establishment of an amicable, cooperative atmosphere. However, when required to impart more complex information, as in justifying a position, refuting an argument, or explaining how something works, the need to quickly plan and organize what they must say often results in an immediate drop in fluency and confidence. The spoken English skills that most urgently need to be taught seem to be those that relate to selecting appropriate information on a subject, and then ordering and expressing it in a clearly comprehensible way.

Motivation and the need to talk

How does this need to teach skills for transferring information relate to the problem of motivation? In our attempt to develop effective instruction in spoken language, we need to address an important issue. To develop fluency, we must generate a need to speak, to make learners want to speak. The learners themselves must be convinced of the need to relate to the subject and communicate about it to others. They need to feel that they are speaking not simply because the teacher expects them to, but because there is some strong reason to do so for example, to get or provide information that is required for a purpose.

A popular approach used by teachers to encourage students to speak is to assign a topic and require them to discuss it or to come up with a short talk. Such discussions, which do not lead to any outcome apart from the talk itself, intimidate most students. This approach assumes that the students are highly articulate and able to argue and express abstract notions in rapid sessions become boring and talk quickly peters out. Student participation fizzles out because they have nothing more to say and look to the teacher to supply most of the language and ideas.

The underlying problem is that students have no reason to say anything more. We have to recognize that we cannot expect students to produce long turns of speech by simply giving them topics and requiring them to get on with the discussion. We must arouse

in the learners a willingness and need to talk by providing them with something they feel they have a need or reason to talk about.

Telling students to talk about popularly offered topics like pollution or abortion is not very helpful. This seems to require the students to create talk simply for the sake of talking for a required amount of time. Students recognize the artificiality of the activity. The resultant lack of interest and motivation can be attributed to the purposelessness of the language they are being asked to produce.

Two Specific difficulties

Brown et al. point out that many of the general essay type topics that pupils are asked to talk about are particularly difficult for inexperienced speakers to control. They see one aspect of the problem in the difficulty speakers have in assessing the background knowledge of their listeners. When speakers are required to talk about something they know about and their listeners do not, they make judgments about the uneven distribution of background knowledge their listeners have and tailor the talk so that it presents an appropriate amount of new information.

Task-based activities

It is perhaps inadvisable to require students who are not competent in spoken English to perform such complex tasks. However, without having to abandon the traditionally popular class discussions, a possible way of stimulating more informative talk might be to provide a lot more support for the learners by introducing activities that are more structured, organized around a definite purpose or objective. There might be some advantage in placing greater focus on purposeful, task-based activities for developing competence in the use of spoken English for transactional purposes. The task-based approach has been gaining prominence in recent years, and it appears to be particularly relevant for eliciting spoken language for the transfer of information. Brown et al. describe a variety of task-based spoken-language activities. These have been categorized into:

1. Tasks that involve the speaker in describing static relationships among objects.
2. Tasks that involve dynamic relationships among people or objects, with events that change over time and space. Tasks that require the speaker to communicate abstract ideas for instance, in argument or justification.

Such task-based activities are one way of encouraging the production of spoken English that learners recognize as a means to achieving an objective. It is possible to transform general discussions into different tasks with definite objectives/purposed in the form of expected outcomes resulting from the long turns of student interaction and talk/discussion. A practical example of this: Instead of a free talk or general discussion on a topic like "cigarette smoking should be banned," it might be possible to have a structured activity in which a group of students are required to organize a propaganda campaign to convince the authorities or the public that smoking ought to be banned. This is likely to be

more meaningful and motivating than the traditional approach because the speaker's attention is focused on performing a real-life activity. He/ she is speaking not because the teacher expects him/her to say something for a certain length of time, but for the real purpose of convincing people of the need to ban smoking.

Conclusion

Learners often have tasks imposed on them that may seem on the surface to be simple and direct, but, are, in reality, formidable in terms of what it takes to select appropriate information and structure it according to listener's needs and states of knowledge.

The teacher who organizes activities will be required to do careful planning and to give consideration to providing appropriate stimuli of all sorts, pictorial or textual, with suggestions and guidelines for their exploitation. This will encourage interaction in the course of interpreting and discussing the stimulus material.

References

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