

## Teaching English language and literature

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### Abstract

The status of English in social, political and educational fields in India seems to be in its developing stage. It is thought that place of English in India today is somewhere between the foreign language and second language. Though, the position of English in India seems far better than past in recent years, yet there are certain problems of teaching English in India. In order to teach English effectively, English teacher must be fully known to the aims and objectives of teaching English. The aim of teaching English in India especially is to help students to acquire practical knowledge of English. It is aimed that the students can acquire the speaking, reading and writing talent. The researchers often suggest that basic objective should make the student independent. The teaching of English as a foreign language has become more of scientific and technical nature. The learner should have linguistic competence to read literary writings. The curriculum, textbook etc. play a key role, hence need based courses should be introduced. The reading material should be interesting and be presented in the context of the students social living. It should be prescribed according to the mental age and common educational requirements of the learners.

The effective teaching of language and literature is achievable only when the teacher has command over various teaching skills and techniques'. It is equally true that along with teacher, the students too must be in active mode while learning.

**Keywords:** language, literature, multilingualism, LSRW, aims, skills and techniques, linguistic and literary competence

### Introduction

Before classifying the concept of 'Teaching English language and Literature' better to examine the status of English language, the aims and problems of Teaching English in India today. The status of English in social, political and educational fields in India seems to be in its developing stage. The first and foremost thing about India is its multilingualism. During pre-independence era English was considered a language of rulers enjoyed the dominance over all the vernaculars. However after receiving freedom the situation changed and people demanded that a free nation must have its national language. The majority of people were not fully conversant with it during that period. Though Hindi was established as a national language but it was also a matter of controversy in case of southern India. In Eastern parts of India English is being considered a first language for many people as well as in Southern part it has acquired its grand stage somewhat similar to their native language. Consequently, the issues of native or regional language played its prime role in generating a variety of differences. Hence, it is thought that place of English in India today is somewhere between the foreign language and second language.

English in India has chiefly following functions and it can be taught either for any of these or all:

- As a link Language: As stated earlier, India is multilingual country and each state has its separate regional language. After independence, states have been constructed as per the regional language spoken in that region. Hence, mutual exchange between two states depends upon the link language. The English is used as a link language in many southern and eastern part of India where Hindi is not properly understood. In such cases the communication is possible between two states through link language.

- As a library language: The medium of instruction in various fields like medicine, law, engineering etc. is English as the students have to enhance their knowledge by reading books, references and journals in English. The Kothari commission (1966) had recommended English to be taught as a library language through which students can achieve commendable stage.
- As a source language: The task of translation can be conducted by the persons who know it. Translation is the major source to enrich native literature. If we are not conversant with French or German language, we can read and enjoy it in English translation. Even many texts from Bengali or Urdu language are available in English translation. Hence, translation serves a chief medium through which we can acquire the knowledge of various cultures.
- As a window to the world: Pandit Nehru aptly considered, 'English as our major window to enter the modern world'. Hence, we cannot cut ourselves off from a language that keeps us in continuous contact with the latest innovations, knowledge and thoughts of the West in various fields of life, culture and civilization.
- As a world or International language: English has today acquired a status of world language and has become the language of international trade, commerce, politics, Education, advancement, jobs and a symbol of self-improvement. It has been surveyed that India, a multilingual nation, is the third largest English-speaking country after the US and UK.

The status of English in India seems far better than past in recent years, yet there are certain problems of teaching English in India: For example, want of good teachers of English, inability of the students to learn the true function of grammar, lack of infrastructure or exam-oriented education pattern. English is studied a second language and not a

medium of instruction for a majority of the students. The aim of teaching English in India especially is to help students to acquire practical knowledge of English. It is aimed that the students can acquire the speaking, reading and writing talent. Nowadays, English has been introduced not only a compulsory subject at school, college and university but also as a medium of instruction at many places. Though entire frame for English language has not completely been changed, is equally true.

It is very important that students should be motivated first through generating awareness towards the importance of English. The researchers often suggest that basic objective should make the student independent. It has rightly been said, "If you give an individual a fish you feed him for a day, but, if you teach him to fish you feed him for life." In order to teach English effectively, English teacher must be fully known to the aims and objectives of teaching English. The teacher should always emphasize on the aims of teaching of English. It will help him to bring the expected results.

### Teaching of Language

According to oxford English dictionary language is "the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way". It is human and social activity. It is a very important means of communication. Psychologist gave different theories like cognitive, associative, etc. about learning but it seems that these theories related to learning differ from one another but there is agreement on factors like motivation, understanding, capacity and repetition which effect learning process in general:

### Objectives Teaching English:

The objective of teaching English has two main aspects:

- Language aspect: Words, sentences, pronunciation, spelling and grammar.
- Literature aspect: Words, sentences, expressing ideas, feelings and experiences.

The English language teaching has four objectives to develop four skills:

- Reading
- Writing,
- Speaking
- Listening.

In a further logical manner the aims of teachings are:

- To enable the students for the correct use of grammar.
- To enable the students to evaluate the aspects of language.
- To enable the students to understand the meaning of prose, poetry, story and drama by reading.
- To enable students to listen English with proper understanding with stress and intonation.
- To enable the students to write English correctly and meaningfully. To enable the students to acquire knowledge of English.
- To enable the students to express themselves creatively.

M. R. Panchal states in his preface to *Teach English This Way* that the teaching of English as a foreign language has become more of scientific and technical nature. It is nowadays more a matter of technique than that of mastery over the subject. Hence its scientific study is "a must" for the teachers of English. Besides, the aims and objectives of

teaching English have undergone a great many changes and so have the methods of teaching. That is why; every teacher of English is required to be constantly acquainted with the recent trends and techniques of foreign language teaching (Panchal, n.p.).

As far as the English language teaching is concerned curriculum, textbook etc. play a key role, hence need based courses should be introduced. The reading material should be interesting and be presented in the context of the students social living. It should be prescribed according to the mental age and common educational requirements of the learners. A good text contains adequate subject matter based on the needs and interest of the students. The text should be relevant to the people's environment, culture and civilization at the initial stage. It should also consist of certain psychological aspects of a learner. In addition to this, it should contain the sufficient vocabulary, illustrations, exercises, good printing and attractive binding. A good text helps the students in self-study.

There are various methods of teaching English. Along with old methods like Grammar-translation, the direct method, some new methods are also in practice. The psychological or natural methods are also applied now-a-days, but no method is a perfect method as it is all dependent upon the teaching-learning environment, learner's skills, ability, age etc. While teaching the English language teacher can apply any suitable method through which his learners become fully acquainted with the language and find satisfaction.

### Teaching of Literature

It is equally important that the course designed in English Literature should concentrate the improvement of both: the language and literary competence of learners. The serious efforts towards strengthening the critical sensibilities of the students should be made along with language skills. Mikaela Warner says in this context:

"I study literature because I believe there is power in stories. Literature is both intensely personal as well as a communal experience. I love examining how words, sentences, characters, plot-lines and tropes reveal who we are as humans. Humanity is a complicated thing, and requires an infinite amount of words to describe and analyze. That's the joy of studying literature; there is always a new reality to discover".

The role of a teacher is to teach the learners how to read and interpret the text. The learner should have linguistic competence to read literary writings. The students should be given a gradual and systematic training in how to read and discover the true meaning. Poetry is considered a powerful form expression. Poetry makes an appeal to the heart whereas prose appeals to the head. The aim of teaching poetry is to give pleasure and appreciate the beauty. It develops the aesthetic sense of the reader. The teacher should encourage the students for poetry recitation competition through which they can learn better intonation and enhance their knowledge. The teacher is required to have knowledge of the theoretical background as well as linguistic analysis of the poem. The teacher should enable the students to appreciate the beauty, rhyme and style of the poem. The teacher should introduce only the central elements at the initial stage. It is important that teacher while reading the poem should read the poem line by line mounting the student's interest and curiosity. The

denotative and connotative contents of the title of the poem should be classified through which an aesthetic sense of the students can be developed. It has also been viewed that poetry ought to be taught with a due regard for pupil's capacity, age, environment and above all, their linguistic ability.

As far as the teaching of fiction is concerned, the teacher should follow certain steps. The objectives of teaching fictions are: to develop the cognitive aspects and develop listening, reading and writing skills of the students. The purpose of prose writing is to generate knowledge and language proficiency of the learner. It enriches learner's vocabulary and imaginative power. It also enables the students to read the passage with correct pronunciation, intonation and articulation of voice. The teacher should use teaching aids like photographs, maps, charts etc. to make his teaching more interesting. He can ask some questions to the students to test the stage of their previous knowledge and link it with the current topics thereafter. The teacher should introduce a model reading with correct pronunciation, intonation and stress to develop the listening and speaking skills of the students. The teacher should make the exposition and exploration of the passage making the meaning of the words, phrases and idioms afterward. The teacher should throw light on the content and the form of the text while discussion takes place.

The teaching of drama leads the students to use the language to communicate. Along with grammatical structure in context, the students also experience the active use of the language to influence, control and inform people. The impressive presentation of drama in the classroom is an art. While teaching drama, the teacher will narrate its plot-construction, characters and their relation with each other, the setting as well as social or political background. At the initial stage the use of audio-visual aids prove more effective. The Teacher can introduce model reading. After defining the concept of the drama properly, the teacher can divide the students into two or three groups and involve the students in a debate. The teacher can also ask them to locate the use of diction, style, figures of speech, dialects etc. In order to make teaching more effective, teacher can involve the students in the role playing dialogues. The teaching of drama also includes facial expression, gesture, movement etc. The teacher can introduce all these facets of drama in a lively manner.

Hence, the effective teaching of language and literature is achievable only when the teacher has command over various teaching skills and techniques'. It is equally true that along with teacher, the students too must be in active mode while learning. Corder very aptly remarks:

'If language is knowledge, then learning it will share some of the characteristics of learning, say, Chemistry; if it is skilful behaviour, it will be something acquire through practice; if it is an object, we may get to know it through descriptions or thorough descriptions or thorough use, while if it is a social event, we shall wish to participate in the social interactions in which it is manifest" (Corder 2)

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