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Teaching and Learning English as Second Language

Teaching and learning English as second language is instrumental or communicative. The cultural and literary goals are minimized. In present context in India, the learner of English may have to use English for the purpose of communication which can be written as well as oral, in their day to day life in the office, market place, and bank and sometimes even in social gathering. English is used as a secondary vehicle of communication within one's own culture and social context.

Teaching and learning of English as second language is one of the important aspects in today's education system. It is considered as the second language. In 1957, it was recommended that English should be one of the three compulsory languages for student at the secondary stage, the other two being Hindi and the mother-tongue or the regional language. The teaching and learning of English as second language has value and importance, such as it is lingua franca of the world. It is the language through which we can exchange our views with the people of other countries. Its long association with Indian life has made it a language of many Indians. Its study facilitates the establishment of international contacts between different nations of world. Its study gives an opportunity to Indians to get employments not only in India but also in other countries. It has given us the opportunity study of English literature which is so vast and so rich. It has opened the gates of western science and technology for us. It has exercised a very healthy influence on Indian languages. It has developed and refined them in many ways. English is a language of trade and Industry in India at the same time; Indian businessmen can correspond with foreign businessmen only through the medium of English. It has already united Indians. It can help them further in destroying the boundary of provincialism. English is one of the most developed languages of the world. As such it has been always a source of development in the entire sphere of human activities. We may be able to translate medical, scientific and technological terms into Hindi and regional languages, but if we give up the study of English we cannot keep pace with the scientific progress of the western countries.

English teaching in India is the world's largest democratic enterprise in the world. The pressure of population, pluralism, the colonial legacy, political compulsions, illiteracy, and lack of infrastructure, vested interest and the problem of training teachers make English teaching in contemporary India a highly complex activity. The pressure of population and the craze of English have resulted in the commercialization of English teaching in India, it is market driven not welfare driven. Some estimates say that there are about 300 languages and dialects in India, the eighth schedule of the constitution of India recognizes languages as official languages. Not only in terms of language but also in culture, religion and ethnicity, India is highly pluralistic, it is multilingual, multicultural, multi-religious and multiethnic with large rural areas. This makes language planning a highly complex and emotional. This is why problem of a compulsory official language in India continues to be a puzzle.

A draft syllabus was prepared by All India Council for secondary Education (1957) keeping in mind the principles of structural syllabus, as English was assigned the role of second language. This was to begin from class VI for six years. Six periods for forty minutes duration per week were assigned to the learning of foreign language. Then the structural syllabus was introduced from class six onwards. In the traditional way of teaching, the teacher trainees and syllabus making needed an all out effort in this direction. There were number of difficulties involved in this process. These were lack of understanding of the basic principles behind the structural approach, ineffective practice of techniques of teaching, big gap in the learning of English between VIII and IX students text books as a result lack of coordination in the text book writing, Varying speeds in the pace of learning among pupils, remedial measure were inadequate etc.

The Directorate of Extension Programmes for Secondary Education of the NCERT held a conference in 1963 and found that structural approach was surely complicating the teaching of English. A study group was appointed in 1964 which submitted its report to Education Commission in 1965. It framed the syllabus of XI to XII. Since 1975 there were two parallel courses namely *õcoreõ* and *õelectiveõ* at XI and XII classes.

The new Guidelines and Syllabus- NCERT (1988) draws up Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Grammatical and lexical terms form the basic structure of language. NCERT frames syllabus nation-wide, SCERT frames syllabus for each and every state separately. It gives in-service training to the teachers. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages and the British councils have adopted the communicative, child centred approach for the teaching and learning process of English. It is used to develop English as a skill subject. In India English is taught in different types of schools in various stages using different approaches and in different circumstances.

In spite of many efforts made, some of the drawbacks in the field of teaching English are: India has failed to fix the aims for teaching of English. So the teachers are free to have their own aims. Their sole aim is to encourage pupils to mug up the answers. Some of the Indian schools introduce English from III standard and some other states introduce from II Standard. So there is no uniformity in policy. Text books which are available for the masses are mostly sub standard and the teaching material contained in these books hardly satisfies the need of the students in learning English as second language. Students pass the examination by preparing some expected questions and not by picking up the skills in language use. Due to population explosion the classes are overcrowded and there is hardly any scope for individual guidance in these circumstances. English teaching is mostly done by Translation Method or Bilingual Method in which teachers generally use English and regional languages both side by side. English speech is used to 25 to 30 percent, while mother tongue plays a major role. Teaching of language requires model of good language. There is less or no chance for this in Indian Schools. Students are not encouraged to use



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supplementary readers to improve their English language skills. In Language laboratory, teaching learning materials are not available in their schools. So the teachers cannot create a proper atmosphere to improve the language. The present system to teaching English in many school is examination centric, it does not test the learner's competence in English.

Learning English as second language- In learning a second language the learners tries to get the communicative competence which includes the knowledge of the grammar and the ability to be grammatical. In other words learners are expected to acquire knowledge of the rules of the language and also the ability to use them. Second language learning has to be looked in a social context. Language learning is individual but occurs in society. While social factors are not necessarily direct in their influence, they have strong and traceable indirect effects on the model at several critical instances, especially in the spoken form of language. The learners are in a multi-linguistic society. Hence the influence of the first language is visible which is acquired while learning a second language.

Social context influences learning of English as second language. The social context includes components such as socio-linguistic situation, the general exposure of learners to other languages and the role of target languages. The influence of social context is in the provision of opportunities for language learning which may be grouped roughly into formal and informal situations. Formal situations are the various institutionalized educational opportunities provided by a society for language learning. The availability of formal and informal opportunities also depends upon the social context. More precisely when there is a formal instruction in the school the social context and various parent factors, determine parent's rationales: goals and priorities modified by any independent ideology of the school offering the programme determines school rationales, goals and priorities accounts for the formal learning opportunities. It is also the social context that is the source of informal opportunities for language use and learning. Thus social context determines the actual intercourse and other communicative transaction. Learning of second language is also influenced by learner's personal characteristics such as age, previous knowledge, and language learning aptitude, learning style and strategies and personality factors. The combination of the social and personal factors accounts for the use of learner make consciously or unconsciously of the socially provided formal or informal learning opportunities.

There are some problems in learning English as second language these are: difficulty in the learning of English lies in that of having mastery in its vocabulary. Another problem is mastery over the sound system of language to understand the stream of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their productions and also the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of language. The interference of the mother tongue or the previously learned second language is also a problem.



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The language teaching operations takes place in a context where there are highly variable external factors which are as follows:

1. The geographical situation, policy, economic conditions of the country.
2. The internal linguistic situation in the country.
3. The students age, intelligence, educational, cultural and social background, motivation etc.
4. The teachers training, experience, cultural background etc.
5. Characteristics of second language.
6. Characteristics of first language and especially difference between first and second language.

These factors should be taken into account when designing a method. English may primarily be needed as an instrument of practical everyday life in certain sphere of activity like telecommunications, commerce, technology, higher education etc.

While teaching of English as second language the teacher should know the difference between the first and second language in all respect. The area of difference and partial overlap needs intensive treatment. Classroom treatment should be made as lively and as realistic as possible. Designing of the teaching process should involve proper selection, grading and presentation of language elements. Learning material should take into account the findings of contrastive studies of first and second language. Whereas while learning English as second language the learner does not need to know the language in order to perform in it. But occasionally explicit comparison of first and second language may prove helpful to them. Language teaching programmes depends on various factors which are in turn constituted of various components. The focal point in such programme is the classroom because this is where the contact between the teacher, the learner and the material occurs, the other components being the policy, approach, syllabus and materials. Thus teaching and learning of English must be emphasized in all the aspects of learners as well as the teachers.