

PROBLEMS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The current scene in the country regarding English language teaching calls for special efforts to be made to remedy a number of deficiencies and to solve the essential problems of teaching the language. On the pedagogical side, many of the problems that existed 20 years ago still continue to exist. Many of them appear to be insoluble. So much of time, thought and expertise have gone into these, but the situation is still not what it should be. No matter what direction is taken, no matter what policy is adopted, the results are not very good.

1. **Lack of Teachers' Competencies:-**

One reason why we have not made much progress is that education, especially language teaching is a very difficult task as it involves two aspects, the content element and the skill-element. There are not enough competent teachers of English. The average teacher needs upgrading of his proficiency in English. This lack of proficiency in English of the teachers at the school stage has added a further dimension to the problem. While there are specialist teachers in Science, Sanskrit, Hindi, Mathematics and Social Science, English is more often taught by non-specialist teachers whose own competence in English is questionable.

2. **Overemphasis on Grammar:-**

It is a surprise that grammar and composition still occupy an important place in the curriculum. It is a waste of time especially when there is a pressure on the time available for teaching. Developments in language teaching methods which enable one to learn better in a shorter time with the help of aids must be taken note of.

3. **Variation in Syllabi:-**

Another problem is the variation in the English syllabi in different states in the country. This possibly causes variation in the expected levels of achievement at the end of Board examination. One way of facing this problem is to design syllabi with clearly stated objectives. English begins to the level where English ceases to be a compulsory subject in the curriculum.

4. Use of Traditional Methods:-

The methodology and the materials of learning create another problem. Although a large number of innovations in methods, approaches, techniques and materials of learning have come out, teachers are still preoccupied with the traditional methods, techniques and approaches. Strangely enough the same set of methods and materials are being used for all types of learners, whether rural or urban, disadvantaged or privileged. This results in a tremendous gap in the achievements of our pupils who belong to various socioeconomic statuses.

5. Defects in Evaluation:-

The evaluation system in English language teaching poses another serious problem. The criteria for a pass in English in the public examinations are not enough help to motivate the learner. The marks awarded in English do not indicate clearly the level of achievement of the learner in relation to the four language skills. Examinations in English are, at present, knowledge ó oriented, not skill ó based. Examinations should be conducted for purposeful evaluation and not just to pass or fail a candidate. The results of annual or public examinations contain a lot of valuable öfeedbackö data. But no Board of Studies ever uses this information for the purpose of evaluating the syllabus, the materials, the examination schemes, etc. Examinations in English language are still pre-occupied with writing. Speech has been ignored very considerably. Here it is reasonable to ask what has reduced our English language examination to such a level. It was not so when English was the medium of instruction and all teachers and students spoke some English at school. Even today, a merely written examination seems to be adequate in the English Medium School, where daily life takes care of speech. But in the vast majority of our schools where the mother tongue is the medium of instruction, English gets no chance to be used as a language and there are very few competent teachers who can speak it. In these schools, English is learnt as a set of formula and charts which have to be learnt off by heart, thrown up on the examination paper and then forgotten. There generally appears a considerable degree of mismatch between stated objectives, prescribed text materials and the systems and techniques of evaluation. In most cases, while syllabi and text-books have changed, examinations have remained rigid and

unrealistic, thus promoting rote learning at the expenses of the development of language skills.

6. Lack of Clear – cut Policy:-

Apathy, inertia or indifference and lack of a well-defined policy in respect of the teaching of English have created innumerable problems in the past. As for example, when teachers are sponsored by institutions or State Government for the engineering students or higher studies, they are often not sent on the basis of some clearly conceived plans for their subsequent utilization. In many instances, they are not even treated as on deputation or given full salary for the period of training.

7. Teaching through Translation:-

In some schools, English is taught through translation method. For example, in the schools of Himachal Pradesh, each word / each sentence in English is translated in Hindi by the teacher. Such teachers think that once a student understands the meaning of English words or sentences he is assumed to have learnt English. Students have no or very little chance to speak in English. Even B.Ed. students are instructed by the teachers of the school to follow translation method during their Teaching Practice (TP). Strangely enough the University examiners also ignore this.

8. Language Laboratory:-

Language laboratory is very essential for training of teachers of English. Since teachers are expected to teach correct pronunciation to students their own pronunciation must be correct. Teacher training institutions should, therefore, have language laboratory facilities. But the fact remains that most teacher training institutions do not have such facilities. In some cases, institutions have language laboratory just to meet the requirement of University affiliation, but it is not used for the purpose for which it is meant.