
Challenges in English Language Teaching at the Cusp of the 21st Century and Some Propositions to Curb Them

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Abstract

This paper tries to trace out the new challenges that are being faced by both English Language Teachers at school and Professional colleges' levels and English Language Learners at school and Professional colleges' levels. This paper also tries to give some contextual techniques and mnemonic directions to be followed both by the teachers and learners/students specially to repair the damages made by the virus COVID-19 in the post-pandemic scenario. This has to be addressed and taken as the urgent need of the hour despite the oppugnation. Though much research has been done and many papers have been published on this this area, this paper makes its level best to outspread its responsibility to help the upcoming generations' English language teachers and learners as well.

Keywords: Challenges, ELT, Cusp, 21st Century, Methods, Propositions and Curb

1. Introduction

The major driving factor for me to entitle my paper as 'Challenges in English Language Teaching at the Cusp of the 21st Century and Some Propositions to Curb Them' is from the very insightful quotation '*The existing instruments do not take into account some of the strategies that are unique to students who are literate in more than one language*' by Kouidar Mokhtari and Ravi Sheorey in their publication '*Measuring ESL Students' Awareness of Reading Strategies*' which touches and

highlights the very important and an urgent challenge to be attended to and to be acknowledged in the present scenario of learning a foreign language.

The rural background students will not be in a position to understand what kind of challenges they have to face in learning English as a foreign language until they enter into a course where the medium of instruction is English. The linguistic capacity of rural students compared with that of the urban students is quite poor. When the urban student with strong background in English language can understand when English is taught by a teacher adopting the Direct Method where as a student with weak foundation in basics of English grammar from the rural background will have a tussle in the mind and struggles a lot in comprehending the content. As Woodcock et al. (2022) rightly revealed how the teacher burnout and student behavior issues negatively affect the overall classroom teaching learning environment. So, every teacher who teaches any other tongue (especially English) than the mother tongue has to walk on eggshells.

In addition to this, there are few more challenges which are commonly disturbing the teaching-learning process such as accentual patterns of the teacher, controllability of the students in terms of their discipline, behavioral pattern, organization of the classroom, dealing with lack of motivation, individual differences of students and teachers, taking care of the mixed ambiguous facial expressions of extremely weak students, spelling problems and the size of classroom (number of students). Freeman et al. (2014) explains in their study that many pre-service or in service teachers do not receive adequate training at the beginning of their teaching career and often feel unprepared to manage the behavioral challenges in the classroom. Apart from what has been mentioned here, there are a few more among the challenges that are being faced by both students and teachers as well which are deliberately left out from the purview of this present paper in order to have an in-depth comprehensive notion of the challenges which stand as stumbling blocks in the teaching- learning process.

2. Methodology

A wide-ranging literature exploration was steered to identify the existing relevant research articles using online academic collections such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Taylor & Francis. Most articles were published between 2013 and 2025, focusing on the efficiency of teacher knowledge, classroom management. Keywords were used such as challenges, English Language Teaching,

cusps, 21st century, methods, propositions and curb. The data analysis was steered succeeding the analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke. It is a widely used and stretchy method that empowers researchers to grasp a large amount of qualitative data and evidence. The process follows getting familiarized with data repeatedly, noting observations, key issues such as teachers' perceptions about classroom teaching, attitude and individual differences of the learners, mother tongue influence, school teachers impact and role of parents. Besides this, the concept explores the need of the hour by analyzing complex needs of students from diverse backgrounds, such as cultural awareness, limited strategies, teachers' time management and stress and so on. Recognizing the gap in existing research is also crucial to address the drawbacks and limitations of teachers' training programs.

3. Literature Review

The adding criteria in this paper contains the content of the published peer-reviewed journals, articles written in English, and articles that explore the teacher preparation on classroom teaching in diverse settings and the learners' preparedness in the classroom. Studies mostly focused on secondary and higher education. Much of the focus has been put upon the English Language Teaching and the hurdles faced by both teacher and learner for many decades. In India, a foreign language like English has to be taught in English. It's a very big herculean task with many challenges being faced by English teachers. While a topic of grammar is being taught lively using Direct Method, the learner has to be in a position to understand and differentiate what interpretational sentences are being used by the teacher in explaining that particular grammar concept. The bitter truth one has to accept here is only the above average students can understand the concept. Maybe because of their parental communication in English in the domestic ambience since their childhood or maybe due to their English medium background where because of the English teachers who regularly communicate and interact with students in English they are able to understand while the average and the below average students utterly fail to understand where ambiguity rules their hearts and minds. At this juncture, though the teacher recognizes that the average and below average have not understood the topic and the teacher knows very well the next method to be used viz. Grammar Translation Method or Bilingual Method, the teacher remains helpless due to the time constraint or maybe the above average students get bored of the repetition of the taught or understood concept. A wide-range of insightful research has been done on the concept so far.

4. Discussion

Though there was nearly a one-and-half-a-decade of time that graduate students who had been taught English by different teachers from LKG to Intermediate, even after joining Engineering or any graduate course, many still struggle to speak in English. Some still do not know how to introduce themselves. Out of the field survey that was made specially and specifically for tracing out the truth of the challenges faced by teachers and learners the following observations found crept on the way which is worthy to be mentioned here. When approached and cabled many graduate students mostly Engineering graduate students, it was noticed that there are four five categories of students that came into existence in terms of using their language skill.

4.1 Students Who Do Know Rules of English Grammar and Use Them Appropriately

To talk about the tracing of the reasons why this type of category exists is because their parents are educated who communicate in English at the domestic ambience which sounds enhance the accentual patterns and segregation of suitable vocabulary is also appropriately selected. In addition to this, when they enter the educational ambience at school and college levels the teachers are found communicating in English and they start teaching English grammar and the students who are readily equipped with enough practice of the language will now come to know the rules of grammar and then apply them and start enhancing more. Russell & Qiu (2024) in his research paper wonderfully explores the impact of teacher-parents dynamic collaboration in which they found very positive outcomes such as teachers can know more about the students' circumstances at home and use appropriate behavior management strategies.

4.2 Students Who Do Not Know Rules of English Grammar but Use Them Appropriately

It is noteworthy to make a mention here of the opinion of Ekornes and Bele (2021) who cited in their study that students' behavior difficulties are rational and contextual phenomena which highly depends on the student's relationship with teachers, classmates, parents and the school environment. The reasons behind the existence of this kind is because these students learn how to speak in English because their parents right from the beginning of their childhood communicate mostly in English where they receive the accentual patterns also on par with certain standards who do not concentrate on the rules of grammar when taught in School or college because their minds are preoccupied with the notion or thought that they know English. This kind of students utterly fail in competitive structures like Group Services Exams, Banking

and Business-related exams and could not show their well-organized performance in tests like TOEFL, IELTS, GRE and so on.

4.3 Students Who Know Rules of English Grammar but Do Not Know How to Use Them Appropriately

As it is meticulously drawn by Fu et al. (2022) who found in their study that parents-teacher active collaboration strengthens the student's support system, which leads to better behavior and academic achievements. The major reason for the existence of this kind of category, these students are the ones who because of the excessive like they have towards this language would right from the beginning of their childhood focus mostly upon the rules of grammar who do not concentrate on practicing speaking. These students can excel in all academic and competitive exams but utterly fail to communicate and these are mostly found with glossophobia.

4.4 Students Who Do Not Know Rules of English Grammar and Do Not Know How to Use Them Appropriately

Though we could see in-depth research has been done so far about why many students fail in language tests academically is because of their Xeno glossophobia. As Cook et al. (2018) explains that the idea of parents-teacher collaboration has to be supported by both parents and teachers mutually. Nobody is bothered about how their wards are developing in language skills focusing mostly on LSRW Skills. Here, the lack of interest in teachers in infusing the basic grammar elements in the students, parents who do not know the importance of learning a foreign language like English and students who are not encouraged by their parents nor by their teachers. Many parents keep silent in the Parent-Teacher Association meetings.

5 Implications

The curriculum construction committee members and policy makers need to pay attention to teachers training programs and add practical training for teachers with the integration AI tools now. It is also essential to provide sufficient resources about the different category of English language learners and the problems faced by them contextually. In addition to that, the suggestions of the experts are to be incorporated and student-centered learning procedures are to be adopted. Furthermore, it is very necessary to ensure that teachers are provided with good working ambience which embraces access to adequate resources and practicable workload to prevent teachers' stress and exhaustion.

6 Recommendations

Breen (2000) explains that instead of the teacher representing the centre knowledge and the student revolving on the periphery like a satellite, process syllabus

had started to see learning as interactive, negotiated, and reflective. A process syllabus addresses the overall question: 'who does what with whom, on what subject matter, with what resources, when, how, and for what learning purpose?' (Breen, 1984, p.54) Huge number of Faculty Development Programmes are to be organized even in the present AI-Driven scenario.

7 Conclusion

It is to be treated as an urgent need of the hour that both students and teachers are facing so many challenges and certain immediate steps are to be taken up in order to curb the challenges mostly in Indian context. The Education Policy also has to be thoroughly updated based on the changing needs and challenges that arise time to time. In addition to this, the education settings, researchers should study more about how the English language has to be taught in the context of the four category students particularly comparing the Language teaching methods adopted and followed by teachers.

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