

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: NEW PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

This Paper Presents an overview of English Language Teaching in India and its role before independence and after independence. This paper also discusses Learning and Acquisition models in teaching of English. Language is a biologically triggered off behavior like walking or sexual behavior. Language develops in the children at an early age. Children growing in different cultures start speaking their language more or less at the same age. This is not much difference in the level of their skills they perform. Because of innate language system children growing in different speech communities start speaking their mother-tongue at the same age. This is also uniformity in their linguistic performance as well. According to NCF 2005, in Language Education, a renewed attempt to implement the three- Language formula is suggested along with an emphasis on the recognition of children's Mother-Languages including tribal Languages as the best medium of education. This paper emphasizes the Discourse Oriented Pedagogy, (D.O.P) approach, a new perspective in teaching of English from Primary to Secondary or Higher Secondary Level. This approach is emerged from constructivism as communicative approach as well as Discourse Oriented Pedagogy. And this paper highlights the other perspectives in Teaching of English such as Task Based Learning and other strategies including Digital Classes, virtual Classes which enhance the process of learning. This paper also mentions the proposal of AP Government in converting Telugu Medium to English Medium which leads to equalizing the Society to some extent. In this connection, a lot of exercise is being carried out in our state in introducing a task based approach from next Academic year 2021.

Keywords:-English Language, Constructivism, Perspectives, Acquisition, Learning, D.O.P-
A new Paradigm.

Introduction:

"It is now nearly 400 years since the English language came to India with the British. As colonial subjects we had no other choice but to learn English. It is often remarked that the English let India free on 15th August, 1947 but their language stayed with us even after we become a free nation. The choice was ours-and we chose to retain English.

So, English has been playing an important role in our educational system as well as in our national life for a very long time. It was the official language of the country and also the medium of instruction in educational institutions. Though the British introduced English in India to develop their business and administration it has served us as a window through which we can see the treasures of life. It developed the growth of nationalism and unity. Some years back the use of English in daily life was restricted. Students used to learn English to face examinations and acquired qualifications to equip themselves for employment. "Is learning English beneficial to students ?" is the dominating question in the minds of the people. English is one of the subjects in the educational area and also in the examinations conducted by various recruiting boards. Proficiency in English will therefore be of very high utilitarian value for our students. It is a language of Communication throughout the world and also occupies a coveted role in the seats of higher learning especially in Science and Technology. Once a student leaves the educational institutions, competence in English is considered as an asset and assures him employment in private firms and industries.

Naturally it leads to the economic development in him and provides him a social status in life. It is needless to say that the language skills acquired in schools will permanently be in use within and outside the educational setting. In this context the role of English teachers gains prominence and demands a lot of expectation and objectives, methods of teaching, types of materials used careful consideration on the part of education planning as well as teaching of English. They must be able to convince the learners that they must not be enveloped in the dark curtain of ignorance by neglecting the study of English. It is their duty to inculcate in the learners the skills of language expressions.

Present Scenario of English Teaching and Learning in India:

The magnitude of the problems encountered by both learners and teachers of English is high at psychological, sociological, cultural, and linguistic levels on account of the maternal, methodology and the learning environment. The ELT centers are keen on producing teaching and learning materials that are in strict conformity with the behavioral paradigm, which are advocating practice-based programs meant for developing LSRW and are proposing fragmentary approach to language putting the holistic nature of language at stake, which is not for facilitating non-conscious acquisition of language. Even after completion of at least 8-9 years of formal learning of English at schools, most children come out with a defective language apparatus, even the highest scores in examinations are weak in performing

in interpersonal communicative situations. A variety of learning materials and teaching techniques have been suggested and tried out in order to resolve the problems faced in this domain of the curriculum. Nevertheless, no significant change has taken place in the quality of English learning. Our children are learning language facts but not acquiring the language.

The notion of learning a language:

Since there is no English speaking community there is a problem of lack of exposure to the language, as a result of which the learner's performance always falls short of the expected level. Most often English is taught by teachers who are not professionally equipped for teaching the language. Consequently, the quality of English teaching is at stake. The prevailing examination system gives more weight age to the content of the text books. At no point the authentic performance of the learner in terms of language skills is tested.

Constructivism:

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models", which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences.

Within educational contexts there are philosophical meanings of constructivism, as well as personal constructivism as described by Piaget(1968), social constructivism outlined by Vygotsky(1978), radical constructivism advocated by Von Glasersfeld (1984;1995), constructivist epistemologies, and educational constructivism (Mathews, 1998). While constructivism takes on different philosophical meanings with different theorists and contexts, the common agenda hinges upon the nature of knowing and the active role of the learner. One of the common threads of constructivism is the idea that development of understanding requires the learner actively engage in meaning making. Constructivists argue that "knowledge is not passively received but built up by cognizing subject"(Von Glasersfeld 1995) .Thus constructivists shift focus from epistemologies and educational constructivism knowledge as a product to knowing as a process.

"From the Constructivist perspective, learning is not a stimulus-response phenomenon. It requires self-regulation and building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction" (Von Glasersfeld 1995. p14).

In the Constructivist paradigm, learning emphasizes the process and not the product. Learning is a process of constructing meaningful representations, of making sense of one's experiential world. Multiplicity is an overriding concept for constructivism.

Constructivism is a theory of teaching, the basic idea of constructivism is:

Knowledge cannot be instructed by a teacher, it can only be constructed by a learner .This means learning is not just a direct result of listening to a teacher. The students have to organize and develop what they hear and read.

Constructivism is an example of **Cognitivism** applied to teaching.

Learning and Acquisition

Language learning involves two distinct, though rarely understood, concepts. One involves information about the language, transforming it into knowledge through intellectual effort through memorization. The other involves developing the skills of interacting with foreign languages, understand them and speak their language. The first concept is called language learning, other is referred to as language acquisition.

Language acquisition:

- Language learning is associated with the traditional approach to the study or languages.
- Lot of formal teaching of language takes place in our schools.
- Students are expected to understand the structure and rules of the language through application of intellect and logical deductive reasoning.
- The form is of greater importance than communication.
- Teaching and learning are technical and are governed by a formal Instructional plan which needs a predetermined syllabus.
- The teacher is an authority figure and the participation of the student is Predominantly passive.
- Language Learning progresses in a linear mode,
- Language acquisition refers to the process of natural assimilation, involving intuition and non-conscious/ subconscious learning.
- Acquisition takes place as the product of real interactions between people where the learner is an active participant.
- Acquisition involves knowledge of language.
- Acquisition is a process that produces functional skills in the spoken language without theoretical knowledge. which is similar to the way children learn their mother tongue.
- Acquisition is responsible for oral understanding, the capability for creative communication and for the identification of cultural value.
- Language acquisition is a process of intuitive theory construction.
- Language acquisition is an organic process and progresses in a spiral mode.

Learning and Innateness:

The nature-nurture debate is one of the biggest areas of controversy in language development. Are children genetically "hard-wired" to learn language, or is it something that they have to be taught? And as such social and environmental input necessary at certain stages in their development, without which, language will never be acquired. We have already looked at studies of chimpanzees to see what the effect of raising nonhumans in human environments would have on language development; the reverse of this looking at humans raised in non-human environments is an attempt to analyze the nature-nurture debate from a different perspective.

All humans talk but no house pets or house plants do, no matter how pampered, so heredity must be involved in language. But a child growing up in Andhra Pradesh speaks Telugu whereas the same child brought up in New York would speak English, so the environment is also crucial. Thus there is no point in asking whether heredity or environment is involved in language. Likewise, it is meaningless to ask which of the two is "more important". It is natural to expect that language acquisition might help us find out how heredity and environment interact. We know that all adult languages are extremely complex, and we know that children become adults. Therefore something in the child's mind must be capable of attaining that complexity.

New Perspectives in Teaching of English:

Ever since the emergence of cognitive psychology, as conceived by psychologists like Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner and the theory of UG proposed by Noam Chomsky, the constructivist paradigm has emerged. Accordingly, the profile of classrooms across the world has changed. The mind of a child is no more looked at as John Locke's 'tabula-rasa' but as one with innate potentialities. The teacher-dominated classrooms where the child is always a recipient of information has transformed into child centered, activity oriented experiential classroom, where the child constructs her knowledge in a collaborative environment. This change represents a fundamental shift in the understanding of the learning relationship. It is seen that most of our teachers seek to transmit vast amount of information, within a limited time, using textbooks, and multimedia. This is how human brain is not properly utilized in our schools. It requires a paradigm shift and the willing abandonment of familiar perspectives and practice; and the adoption of new ones (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). The shift from a totally teacher-centered instructional paradigm to the learner-centered paradigm demand a change in our teaching practice from a constructivist point of view.

The paradigm shift in SLA involved a move away from the postulates of behaviorist psychology and structural linguistic and toward cognitive and later, Socio-cognitive psychology and more contextualized, meaning-based views of language. Jacobs and Farrell(2001) enumerate the major components that involved the shift.

- The shift is generally known as the move from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered or learning-centered instruction.
- The shift is a move from product-oriented instruction to process-oriented instruction.
- Focusing greater attention on the social nature of learning rather than on students as separate, de contextualized individuals.
- Viewing individual differences not as impediments to learning but as resources to be recognized, catered to and appreciate.
- Focusing greater attention on the views of those internal to the classroom rather than on the outsiders.
- Along with the emphasis on context, connecting the school with the world outside as a means of promoting holistic learning.
- Helping students to understand the purpose of learning and develop their own purposes.
- A whole-to-part orientation is focused instead of part-to-whole approach.

- An emphasis on the importance of meaning rather than drills and other forms of rote learning.
- A view of learning as a lifelong process rather than something done to prepare for an exam.

Discourse Oriented Pedagogy:

Language is the most important road that thoughts and emotions take to travel from one mind to another. We know that we use language for thought, for problem solving, for dreaming, for display of group solidarity, for deception, for introspection, for Communication of emotions and to share information.

A discourse is a mode of communication of certain ideas meaningfully in a particular situation. In day-to-day life the communication takes place in the form of interconnected units of language, called discourses. It is fairly easy to recognize that linguistic units such as sounds, words, and sentences are in isolation. They become meaningful only when they appear as part of discourses . There is language everywhere around us; it is there in the print media (in news papers, magazines, etc.,) in visual media (TV, Movies, etc.) and in day-to-day life. How does language exist in these?

Types of Discourses:

- what are the items we find in News Papers, magazines and periodicals?
- What are the items that appear on TV channels?
- What are the forms in which language appears in day-o-day life?

If we list down these items will get something like the following:

Print Media:News reports, editorials, advertisements, notices, obituaries, articles, cartoons, Jokes, stories, poems, interviews, review reports, letters, screen plays, skits, puzzles, language games, rhymes etc.

Visual Media:News telecasts, TV phone-in, IV serials, interviews, Songs, movies, comedy shows, debates, conversations, lectures, skits, etc.

Daily life:Rhymes, Chats, dialogues, debates, Songs. stories, descriptions, announcements, enquiries, etc.

The above listed items are nothing but, various discourses that we come across in our day to day life.

The discourse is a mode of communicating certain ideas meaningfully in a particular situation. Development of basic skills in language learning is listening; speaking, reading and writing should be continued. But the emphasis at this level is on the use of varied modes of discourses through the basic skills. Learning experience should be targeted to provide the learner sufficient scope for the integration of the basic skills in their language acquisition process. Language exists in different discourse modes. Moreover, one Language function can be served through different forms of language and one form of language can have different functions. These possibilities should be addressed in the language acquisition process. To ensure this, we have to make use of different modes of discourses.

A student should be able to communicate ideas easily and effectively in English. No sentence conveys its full meaning in isolation. Hence the context is very important. The context will be a part of discourse mode. Therefore discourse level processing of learning experiences is necessary in language learning. This and only this helps the learner to read in between and beyond lines. Discourse level processing holds good to all four basic skills. The full meaning of the sentence lies on the load of experience received by the listener or learner. Therefore, to have holistic language experiences, discourse level processing of activities is inevitable.

Some general features of discourses:

When we think about discourses two different kinds of language serve as potential objects of inquiry:

- An abstracted one in order to teach a language or literacy, or to study how the rules of language work.
- Another kind of language that is used to communicate something and has coherence. The first kind of language is an artificially constructed language. In a way it is idealized language. This is exemplified by the discrete sentences that usually appear in English textbooks.

The second kind of language is communication and is seen in discourses.

This is not idealized language but language in use.

E-Learning

The term “E-Learning” may be described as “online learning” and “virtual learning”. At home individuals are granted access to programs that offer them the ability to earn online degrees and enrich their lives through expanded knowledge. Experience in the area of teacher training has shown that teachers attending courses about e-learning, computer notebook-classes, or teaching with new media expect demanding interactive content or multimedia applications. Apparently, teachers widely believe that in order to implement e-learning in the classroom they have to learn how to use flash or other programs first. It is not easy to convince teachers who are often enthusiastic about and eager to work with the new media, that e-learning is actually about learning and teaching and thus requires didactics above all. In particular in computer notebook-classes, the development from teacher-centered to student-centered learning often results in content-centered learning, which reduces the students’ activities to mouse clicks in an interactive, content-based environment. This development is far from the concept of the construction of knowledge through free action in realistic situations. Teachers in notebook classes have a universal tool as their disposal, which combined with a bit of imagination can help them to find new ways of learning. In this context, Eva Grostenberger has developed a new method of language teaching, which relegates technology and content to the background and focuses on the individual student’s language work as cognitive activity.

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Just like teachers, government agencies in Asia specially the Eastern part take special interest in Task based language teaching (TBLT), a much more modern and advanced version of language teaching. TBLT in the initial stages proved very successful in the primary and secondary schools for its readymade and appealing tasks. In this connection it may be said that TBLT helped communication language teaching (CLT) to make room for itself as a language teaching technique. Many methods, techniques and approaches like Grammar translation method, audio-lingual method, functional national method etc., were used in Bangladesh in teaching and learning a foreign language. From time to time various new methods and approaches replaced the older ones with new tips, techniques and with extremely new prospects.

“In the long search for the best way of teaching a foreign language, hundreds of different approaches of methods have been devised”. (Azam 2005) In this connection the most popular and effective method which has already become the most popular in the west - communicative English, started making educators all over the globe feel “that students were not learning enough realistic, whole language. They did not know how to communicate, using appropriate social language, gestures, or expressions; in brief, they were at a loss to

communicate in the culture of the language studied". (Galloway 1993) As a result, Bangladesh students who are good in English can correspond with a foreigner very smoothly in written form without any hesitation. But the same person proves dumbfounded and silent in face-to-face meeting and cannot write for journals of education and practice.

Conclusion:

Language is dynamic. It always changes from time to time depending on needs of the society. In connection with, teaching of English and converting Telugu medium to English medium may bring phenomenal changes in Andhra Pradesh in near future. It is because when the Government is committed in providing equal educational opportunities to the children, without discrimination, the coming generations will not see social and economic imbalances and a balanced society will be enjoyed by future generations. So, English Language plays a key role in fulfilling the dreams of our coming generation.

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