English Language Teaching in the State Board Schools Today with reference to Learners’ Communicative Competence

V.Vijayan¹, Research Scholar, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore.
B.T Assistant/English
vvijayan1963@gmail.com

Dr. T Ravindran², Professor of English, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering, Sriperumbudur.
T_ravindran@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Language is a vehicle through which one communicates one’s thoughts and ideas to the other and it is the mode of communication through which the conceived notion is transmitted to be perceived. If the language is not used appropriately, the encoded message may not be decoded appropriately. So language plays a vital role in a man’s life. English Language is known to be the global language today, as it has become an essential mode of communication. This paper researches the status of English Language Teaching in state board schools today with reference to the learners’ communicative competence.

Keywords: Communication, Competence, Language, English Language Teaching.

Language is a vehicle through which one communicates one’s thoughts and ideas to the other and it is the mode of communication through which the conceived notion is transmitted to be perceived. If the language is not used appropriately, the encoded message may not be decoded appropriately. So language plays a vital role in a man’s life. English Language is known to be the global language today, as it has become an essential mode of communication. The universality of
English Language has become indomitable to an extent to say that English Language is the language of survival. Today, the world is the world of survival of the fittest and it is apt to think and imbibe English as a language for the survival all over the world. It is this language that considerably bridges the vent between languages so as to build proper understanding through proper communication. Teaching English language has become ultimately essential to equip students to meet the global demands as English is a foreign language for some and a second language for some. Keeping this in mind, this paper researches the status of English Language Teaching in state board schools today with reference to the learners’ communicative competence.

The prevalence of strong degradation in the process of teaching English language to the learners has become the concern of the present time when compared to days past. English is basically a language, but the sad part behind the story is that it is taught only as a subject and the learners are also tuned in such way, so as to consider English as a subject rather than as a language. There are various factors that contribute to the above concern. The factors are described in detail. Some of the factors include:

1. The mindset of the students and their background.
2. The role of teachers in English Language Teaching.
3. Designing of English Curricula.
4. The system of teaching English language.
5. The evaluation process in English Language Teaching.
1. The mindset of the students and their background

   The Mind is characterized as a cognitive faculty that includes imagination, thinking, perception, consciousness, language and memory. It is a complex apparatus that regulates the complete thought process and the actions that continue. Mindset is nothing but the preparedness of the mind to do certain things in a certain way. The mindset plays a major role in acquiring and mastering a language. The mindset is of two kinds: they are ‘fixed’ mindset and ‘growth’ mindset. The fixed mindset is immune to change, whereas growth mindset is dynamic and adaptive. As Dweck says, it is the mindset of the person that holds a strong conviction with respect to the immutability and permanence Vs dynamism and flexibility (Dweck 2006). Most of the scenarios that are prevalent today are that the teachers of English Language have to face the challenge of dealing with fixed mindset students who are immune to change. The mindset of the students is strongly fixed towards a concept that English is an easy subject and must concentrate to score well in English. This really disturbs the nature of learning a language on the part of learners and also demotivates the teacher in teaching English as a language. The very crux of English as a language is lost. Change in the mindset of the students is the need of the hour. This can only be achieved by creating a proper understanding towards the importance of imbibing English as a language.

2. The role of teachers in English Language Teaching.

   Teachers play a vital role in the lives of the students with respect to the teaching-learning process. Teachers of English are vested with greater responsibility in creating an environment viable to learn English as a language to achieve mastery in it on the part of the students. The current scenario in State Board schools is different. Teachers of English are very conscious about
the results they are destined to achieve rather than disseminating knowledge in English language learning to the students. This is a crucial problem that makes the stakeholders possess unresponsive mindset. The second problem that is all prevalent in most of the State Board schools is that the teachers use either regional language or mother tongue to teach English. As understanding is the objective of any teaching, the teachers of English comfortably resort to teaching English in regional languages which does not suit the game. This in turn makes the learners choose rote learning. Rote learning is a biggest threat to learning English language. In a Synthesis Report Prepared by Dr. Usha Dutta, NCERT & Dr. Neeru Bala, TSG - SSA, EdCIL regarding the classroom processes of teaching English Language, it is stated that

In the states like Nagaland and Kashmir where the medium of instruction is English as per state policy, teachers were seen to resort to regional/ local languages to facilitate child’s learning. (Dutta & Bala, 2012)

It is the same case in most of the schools in Tamil Nadu. It is essential that the teachers of English must realize the fact that they are responsible in producing a global personality. The mode of teaching, if corrected consciously, the outcome would be awesome. If such conviction prevails, there can be expected change in teaching and learning of English Language.

A Teacher has to plan well in advance regarding handling the classes within the stipulated time, covering academics as well as interpersonal skills with various teaching techniques which is obviously a path to practical approach. (Archana & Rani, 2017,3)

It is very clear from the above citation that the techniques teachers take to create a practical impact is crucial to develop optimum learning.
3. Designing of English Curricula

Designing curricula are very crucial in the process of English language teaching and learning. The objectives must be very clear before planning the curricula. As far as English Language is concerned the curricula must be designed to teach non-native learners of English communicate proficiently in English. A learner-centered and the learners’ need based curriculum is the benchmark to be aimed at. The curricula must contain activities and learning modules where the student has to practically learn the usage of English and the evaluation system too must be appropriate in evaluating through standards fixed. English language can be learnt easily through practice than rote learning and remembering fixed texts. The curriculum that is witnessed now is completely narrowed down to reading, memorizing and replicating. Students gain knowledge instead of skills. Knowledge without skill becomes ineffective for real time use, as far as English Language is concerned. Communicative competence based curriculum designing is essential as advocated by Abdul Hakim Yassi and A.Kaharuddin Bahar, professors from Hasanuddin University of Makassar, Indonesia. The modules must include more practice oriented courses and practical subjects so as to aim at achieving communicative competence.

4. The system of teaching English language

Theorizing a language through written materials can improve the knowledge regarding the subject, but it is practicality that can really actuate the person to equip oneself to the soaring global demand for communicative excellence. To be very factual, it is essential to train students in the aspect of language acquisition by involving the learners participate in communication process continuously. If properly exposed to the communicative scenario, the author is of great conviction that good communicators or learners’ proficiency in English Language can be
considerably developed right from the school days itself. As practice makes a man perfect, more practice and practical evaluation can only help in upgrading the teaching learning process of English Language. As Erwin Balla rightly states

Language allows that product of teaching can be treated as a measurable product. It considers teachers as “experts” and students as simply receptors and not responsible for any process of teaching. As a result of that students are characterized frequently passivity, create little experience and don’t understand what goes on. A typical experience of learning occurs frequently in lectures with “chalk and discussion” with very little opportunity for students to participate, contribute or share point of views about topic or various types of learning. As it is understood hardly any learning occurs under such circumstances. The process of learning should be much more than that. (Balla, 113)

Learning a language is more than “chalk and discussion”, it is “practice and perfect”.

5. The evaluation process in English Language Teaching

The process of evaluation is also main criteria for the system of teaching goes redundant. Evaluating and awarding based on the written knowledge of the learner can only test the partial knowledge of the learner whereas the communicative part of the learner is not evaluated. The subject should be practical and the evaluation attuned to it. Once the evaluation process is tuned to the needs of the growing demand, it is very sure that the system or the mode of teaching and framing curriculum will automatically undergo radical change. This paper is further open for research into the methodologies to be inculcated to develop the communicative capability of the state board school students.
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