



# Problems of Teachers to Teaching English in the Secondary School Students

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**Abstract :** In India, majority of the workforce comes from rural areas as 75% of India lives in villages. The policy makers have to bridge the urban-rural divide in teaching of English. An English teacher teaching in rural schools has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at primary as well as secondary level. Teachers should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems of the learners. The present school education system poses many challenges to teachers, parents and children. Even after the development of many new and innovative theories in teacher education, learning is still perceived as receptive knowledge. Rather it needs to be recognized as continuously developing process of reflective knowledge, which can be employed to solve the problems posed by the society. As long as education is treated as a receptive skill, it becomes a burden to the students. Hence, the learning needs to be more inclusive, reflective and it must address the needs of the learners as well as the society. Several studies in the teacher education concluded that a teacher is to act as a guide, facilitator, philosopher and friend to make learning more meaningful. More importantly, the teacher's role is not to transfer the knowledge from the textbooks rather, he/she has to play the role of mediator for the successful transaction of the knowledge and values enshrined in the curriculum.

**Keywords :** English language, Teacher, Learners, Secondary school.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Even though India is rapidly developing, the major problem that is plaguing the country is it could achieve only 66 percent of literacy (according to 2011 census) even after the 60 years of independence. It is a known fact that the progress of any country depends largely on the literacy of its population. The number of illiterate population is highly concentrated in rural India due to the prevalence of socioeconomic and gender inequalities. In spite the government is taking many educational initiatives to achieve the universalization of elementary education, cent percent literacy is still a distant dream in rural India due to corruption practices, negligence of bureaucracy and lack of vigilance over the schemes being implemented in rural schools. Besides, lack of awareness among the parents and lack of teaching learning materials, lack of teacher competency and lack of ICT infrastructure are major factors that became hindrance to provide the quality of education to the rural children.

For the holistic development of any individual in the later stages of his/her life, childhood experiences play a very crucial role. Thus, the education at the secondary level should help the child become physically, mentally and intellectually strong. Thus, the government should take initiatives to bring social justice to those who were deprived of their fundamental rights and to improve their living conditions through the provision of financial assistance. The government of India has set up the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) at national level and the State Council of Educational

Research and Training (SCERT) at state level to take care of research and training on par with the NCERT. Both these councils at national and state level conduct training programmes to teachers and also suggest necessary changes to the school curriculum.

However, even in the present day, teachers are using traditional and age old methods which result in rote learning. Students are not encouraged to speak in English in the classroom. Reading is still perceived as a receptive skill which is not true as there is a lot of interaction between the reader and the intentions of the author. Writing is the most neglected skill in the English classroom. It is evident from many studies that teachers are not likely to update their knowledge according to the needs of their learners. Apart from this, the government also is not providing enough funds to set up libraries in schools. Though some schools have access to library, they do not have books that help learners to become independent in thinking. The English teacher should act as a friend and guide to the learners in motivating them to read books, analogies and English newspapers.

## II. Objectives of the study

- (i) To know the barriers of teaching english in secondary level students.
- (ii) To know suitable methods of teaching english to secondary school level.

## III. English Language Teaching in Rural Context

Even though English has been made compulsory to teach at school level for decades, learners lack competence. There are many factors such as lack of fund allocations, lack of commitment to teachers in adopting new methods and innovations in technology. More importantly, there is a wide gap between the curriculum at national/state level and the realities at school level. Due to the poor foundation at school level, the students fail to improve their ability to communicate in English even at tertiary level. Hence, the problem lies not with the learners but with the policies and teachers.

There would be several factors due to which the effectiveness in teaching got paralyzed, particularly, at school level. The researcher aims to study the teacher effectiveness in teaching English at secondary level. The researcher would also like to produce the facts with regard to teaching of English at school level in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, where she belongs to. In this context/backdrop the researcher tries to examine the teacher effectiveness, teacher's attitude towards his/her students and the learners' perception towards their teachers. Though students are interested in learning English, most of the times they do not have the support or motivation from their teacher. Hence, they try to by heart the answers so as to pass the examination.

Besides lack of teaching learning materials, many schools in India either have little access to language labs and libraries or no access at all to these facilities. Moreover, the ratio between the teacher and students is very high, which becomes the major hindrance for teaching effectively and innovatively as the teacher may not be able to control the entire class. Moreover, the curriculum designers may not be aware of the local needs of the learners and their culture. Hence, the opinions of the teachers in this regard must be taken to consideration. Teachers need to be given enough freedom to select the materials that are suitable for their learners' needs and the choice to evaluate the learning outcomes.

## IV. Major Challenges for Teachers to Teaching English in India

Teachers in my context face numerous challenges in and out of the classroom. Core among them is the limited classroom language opportunity for the learners to practice the language. In secondary school, the learners' only opportunity to use English language is limited to the daily 35-min English lesson. Further, these learners are not given ample opportunities to practice the English language in the classroom when learning other subjects because of switching from one language to the other. Teachers of other subjects keep changing the language of instruction from English to Mother tongue either because they are incompetent in

English language or in order to have the learners understand the subject matter. This situation results in minimal exposure to the language. Given that language learning requires a lot of exposure as postulated by Cummins (2006), the teacher of English is left with the sole burden of helping learners develop competence in English within a 35-min lesson because the language outside the classroom and at home is majorly mother tongue in towns and other local languages in rural areas. The major challenges of teaching English is as follows :

### **1. Lack of English Instruction**

In a country like India, classes of mixed ability groups are a feature of every small town or village. In most of the rural parts of India, learning-teaching process is done in the vernacular language. On the other hand, most of the competitive examinations (higher education and employment) require English as medium of instruction.

### **2. Teacher students ratio**

The ratio of students to teachers is high, leading to ineffectiveness. The rural atmosphere does not provide students the opportunity to speak and learn English. The size of the classes everywhere is considerably large. This is one of the reasons why individual attention is not possible to the students.

### **3. English as Second or Third language**

Teaching of English needs a drastic change for the benefit of learners in schools and colleges. The students of rural and semi-urban areas in India face a lot of problems as English is not their mother tongue. English is their second language. In many places, English becomes the third language as they have a local language, then Hindi followed by English.

### **4. Language acquisition**

As compared to the learners from urban areas, learners from rural areas face more difficulties during the process of language acquisition. In urban areas parents are mostly educated. So, the domestic environment helps the students from urban areas acquire the language quickly.

### **5. Bilingual method**

Students do not get chance to speak or read in English in the rural parts of the country. In villages and small towns students mainly hail from rural areas. Bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps only to slow-learners to some extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand in English, he or she asks for an explanation in L1 i.e. in his or her mother tongue. Consequently, the English teacher is in a state to adopt bilingual method.

### **6. Lack of trained teachers**

Lack of trained teachers in rural areas has become a reality. Teaching is a continuous process and teachers in rural India are often debarred from attending workshops and seminars to acquaint themselves with new ways and methods.

### **7. Lack of funding**

The rural population of India, which depends on agriculture and limited income, end up sending their children to government schools where English is not taught as a skill but as a subject. "Throughout India, there is a belief among almost all castes and classes in both rural and urban areas in the transformative

power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill but a symbol of better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression". (Graddol p.12)

### **8. Grammar issue**

Grammar translation method is used by the teacher to teach young children, where the teacher explains every word to students in the native language to make him/her understand and learn English. However, this method faces a major disadvantage. Both the teacher and the student concentrate more on L1 rather than L2. In this method English language class seems to be L1 class rather than L2 class. Students get only limited benefit through this approach. Unfortunately, this is still in use in many rural schools throughout India.

### **9. Lack of teaching aid**

Language could be mastered by practicing all the four skills viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The rural surrounding does not allow the learner to practice any of the skills. Many teachers are unable to teach English effectively because they face a lot of problems due to the lack of teaching aids, non-availability of required technical support and relevant atmosphere to teach English effectively.

### **10. Workshop for teachers**

Teacher preparation courses are not able to equip the teachers with adequate knowledge, skills and the ability to be able to teach the subject effectively in class. The situation is worsened by the fact that English is not the language of transaction in rural India, thereby giving teachers a very little chance of practicing what they have learned. Teachers need to upgrade themselves through a variety of means—periodic workshops, video/audio recordings of content to be taught, projects and assignments.

### **11. Examination system**

The majority of Indian rural students, especially in the states of Bihar, U.P. and Maharashtra, find English as a very difficult subject to learn. Since most of the students are first generation learners, they need the guidance from parents and others. Even though students study English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. The reason for this is that they study subjects from the examination point of view. Our examination system is such that it makes students' rote memorization rather than testing their analytical and creative skills. In this process, they memorize lessons, reproduce them in exam halls and forget them the same day itself.

### **12. Lack of Proper practice**

We cannot expect a uniform standard of pronunciation for a second language in such a vast country, where even the mother tongue is spoken differently by different groups of the people belonging to the same language community. In learning to speak English, the mother tongue generally interferes with its pronunciation. The learners as well as the teachers speak English with regional language habits. Even during the English periods most teachers teach English without giving the students proper practice in speech because they are not properly equipped enough to practice it. They forget that every language differs in stress, intonation and pronunciation. The result is that after learning /teaching English for many years at school and college, most people cannot speak the language with intelligible accuracy.

### **13. Negligence**

Listening is an important language learning skill and yet the most neglected skill in Indian classrooms. It is neglected as teachers take it for granted that learners automatically acquire this skill without any special training.

#### 14. Lack of team work

Peer teaching, role-play and group activities, are rare in Indian classrooms. In India, lectures speak. Teacher talking time is more than half of the prescribed time. The class listens passively. The learners are not encouraged to ask questions. The teachers must involve their students to work in pairs, groups and teams and prepare term papers, projects, etc. Therefore, in spite of being taught English in school and college for several years, learners fail to learn the language. They cannot write in acceptable English of their own, cannot use English appropriately and fluently in speech and often cannot understand conversations in English. Why does this happen? Does it mean that the English teachers in India cannot teach?

#### 15. Old Teaching style

The teaching of English in India has been text-oriented since the beginning (colonial times) because the British Government's policy was to create a class of Indians who would act as a buffer between the British and the Indians. Therefore, elementary knowledge of English was needed for a class of Indians.

#### V. Conclusion and suggestions :

- The school can facilitate the teachers in developing material and strategies. So the teachers can improve their strategies includes using the technique, methods and media that will be implemented to the students.
- Teaching English is not easy, teachers need to find appropriate strategies to teach students based on the problem. Teachers should be patient to grow up the students confidence and practice to talk English. It is also need to the teacher to make the classroom atmosphere enjoyable. Teachers can play some games to make the students enthusiasm in learning English. They also implement the other technique that is interesting and also use the other media.
- Learning English as a foreign language is not easy. Students must to be learn more and more again.
- Recommended to give more activity and make a good idea for your research.

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