

Learning English in Rural India- Difficulties and Remedies

Mrs. L. M. Sowmiya

Assistant Professor, Department of English,
St. Anne's College of Engineering and Technology,
Anguchettypalayam, Panruti-607110

Abstract : In the current scenario English is lauded as a Global Language. English Language has spread its fire wing all around the world and earned the privilege as the most successful language. English symbolizes higher intellect, better education, and better future. Getting the work done in effective manner has become more important than having the most knowledge. A number of studies have shown that an advanced proficiency and knowledge of English leads one to higher paying jobs, strong mobility, and a great deal of social success. It is quite evident that irrespective of the career whether it is engineering, medicine, management or history, command of the English will lead to great success. The growing importance placed on oral communication skills has been echoed in these two three decades. A success in this competitive environment depends not just on acquiring knowledge and hard skills, but also on developing effective communication skills. So it is essential that purposeful learning and goal oriented teaching have gained tremendous importance. On one hand the language has gained this status and Indians have proved their worth all over the world, with the help of English language. On the other hand, the rural India- the major population of India- finds it very difficult to cope up with it.

Through this paper I'd like to discuss the difficulties of rural Indian students and some remedies for it.

I. INTRODUCTION

Now that English language has gained "official language" status, people belonging to different parts of the world, widely use English. English is a link language which links the whole world. Indians flourish all around the world because of their mastery over this language. Though Hindi is the National language, most of the people don't speak or understand Hindi, however they understand English. Education has multiplied the role of English language, because universities worldwide often use English as the common mode of learning and communication. English is an international language. English is firmly rooted in the soil of India. Different people can communicate with one another with the help of English. English is a confidence builder language. It will get you anywhere. If you are good speaker in English means good in all.

II. FAMILY BACKGROUND

Rural students from the poor families of labors, Farmers, household worker find no atmosphere of education. English language seems to be an alien to them. Since most of the students are first generation learners, how can a student get acquainted with the foreign language with regard to

English without any guidance from their parents and others? Even though students are studying English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. Uneducated parents and neighbors get satisfied with the thought that primary education is more than enough, and a question for a good communication is never raised.

III. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

In their primary education students are promoted to upper classes without subject knowledge. This badly affects learning process making students inactive and lethargic. 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 in the same day itself. Students learn basic grammar at school level for the purpose of passing only in the tests and in the examinations and not to face any real life situations. Application-oriented advanced grammar is not taught in schools. Furthermore, adequate practice is not given to students to learn a language. Exposure too is far less to them. To such students it becomes difficult to cope up with the syllabus of English at graduation level. Students full of new dreams and aspirations enter the college but to face this language problem.

Most of the students fail to stand the testing period of learning through English, often develop a complex and discontinue their studies.

IV. LANGUAGE REDUCED AS SUBJECT

English language is taught and learnt as one of subject for examination. The examination process of universities is related with writing skill. Students' basic concern is to get marks only to clear the examination and most of the students have only this much of attitude which reduces the interest of in learning English. Interest is lost automatically Beauty of the language is also lost.

V. MEDIUM OF TEACHING

In rural India English is taught in their mother tongue (Tamil), which leads to unwanted confusion of comparing the languages. English teacher is in a state to adopt bilingual method. ELT specialists view this as a wrong methodology. In schools, students are being taught that English is an international language. To learn this language

requires constant practice and patience. The kind of feeling that prevails among students is that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery over English language. This kind of tendency prevents students from learning new languages like English. Learning second language means acquiring a system of rules, but just as a very little is known about these rules, even less is known about how such rule systems are acquired. Students find it very difficult to earn a competence in those rules and in fact they have no idea of proper sentence structure. They do not even know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules. Inwardly, they dislike the English Language and hence the sole objective of the teacher and the learner remain to clear the exams. Hence, the students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. Teacher also translates everything in mother tongue.

VI. FEAR, HESITATION, AND SHYNESS

If at all a student is capable of overcoming all this obstacles, there comes fear, hesitation and shyness to block his developing interest. Students might come to know about the importance of the English language but where is the platform to develop his interest or guidance to use the little known language. Society tends to laugh at the faults of others. When a student tries to use the language his mistakes are being highlighted. His love for learning the language is nipped in the bud.

VII. AT GRADUATE LEVEL

The system followed in colleges is different from that of schools. Moreover, students have their own whims and fancies about college life because of the tremendous influence of mass-medias like theatres and satellite channels on them. These Medias project a false perception about colleges and students. On seeing such things in movies, students take it for granted. As a result of this, they have formed an image for a college and want to act upon those images. The general thinking about college among student community is that college is very liberal in dealing with the students. No one cares for anything. They do not have responsibilities at all. Whatever they think they can implement them. Attending class is not compulsory. Keeping these views in mind they find it difficult in sitting in classrooms and listening to the lessons being taught to them. All their views about a college are shattered into pieces the moment when a teacher enters in a classroom and begins to teach and impose certain restrictions on them. At this juncture, severe problems start with the slow-learners. These students too passed in the higher secondary examinations. For them, sitting and listening a language class is something an uphill task, while others listen the class with rapt attention.

The student was never given a chance to show off his little knowledge; he is often pointed out for his ignorance. Moreover teachers, even in the graduate level, fail to make the students feel at home with the language. The teachers blame the primary educational system and they don't find time to train the students from the very basic level.

VIII. REMEDIES

Awareness about the importance of communicative English should be created. Students from rural background should be encouraged to use their little known English. We need to build a systematic approach which should later be followed seriously. The teachers should be trained on modern skill. Teachers should find some way of helping pupils to enjoy their language activities by spending sometime inside the language laboratories thereby building their confidence. The English teacher should have both wide-ranging enthusiasm and Imagination. Further, for tackling the lack of vocabulary in the students, Productive and receptive use of words should be kept in mind. The students should be made to learn simple words and their usage. This will help in inculcating a habit of learning new words in them. Their newly learnt words will become a part of their own vocabulary and they will be in a position to use those words very purposefully. This enhancement of vocabulary will result into better expression.

An English teacher has to encourage the students to talk in English only. This act makes them confident. By taking extra care, the English teacher will impart the nuances spoken aspects of a language once/twice in a week as a remedial measure. When such type of spoken English classes begins, student-friendly or learner-centric environment will certainly prevail, as more and more students will participate in the session. Teachers should motivate students for participative learning. This will solve all the stumbling blocks in students. Teaching learning is not a one-way process. It is a multi-way process. As soon as the teaching is over, students should raise their doubts, clarification, etc. By doing so, students' communication skills in English will grow. To develop this, sufficient practice must be given to students in their preliminary stage. While maintaining classroom management concurrently learner-friendly atmosphere should also prevail there. This ensures students to learn more and participate more. Above all, a teacher is not only a teacher but also a friend, guide and a philosopher to students. He/she guides students not only to pass in the exam but also to face challenges and take right decisions during the time of crisis in life. This is, of course, a real and tough task ahead of a good teacher.

Inner Urge to learn the language should be developed. Need to Enrich Vocabulary and Sentence Construction. Language consists of words and sentence structures. Each day they must learn at least five new words and try to use them in their own sentences. The old method of displaying charts of difficult words, phrases and their applications on the walls and daily observance of them will help a lot.

Students must develop a habit of careful listening of English news, lectures, and explanations during tutorials, practical sessions, seminars, technical presentations, academic discussions, and academic interactions and so on. The modern Language Labs cater all their needs. They must make most of it. One cannot be an effective communicator unless one becomes an effective listener.

Speaking skills are very important for a person's professional survival and growth. It gives practice of articulating words and boosts confidence in speaking. The students of rural area must be encouraged to ask questions in order to remove their fear, as they hesitate to ask questions considering that they may commit error or go wrong. Opportunities must be given to them to voice their opinions, agreements, disagreements, and suggestions, the credits should be given for participating discussions, making presentations of project, product, graphs, tables, charts plans, maps. They must be ensured that speaking skills are the single most important criteria in hiring professionals.

Like listening and speaking, reading is crucial to effective communication. Students need to read technical and business documents: reports, proposals, magazine articles, letters, and instruction manuals. It is hard to imagine any academic professional or business work that does not require efficient reading skills.

It is said that "Reading maketh a complete man, speaking maketh a ready man and writing maketh a perfect man". Writing is very important for students and professionals in all fields. They should practice writing projects reports lab reports, summary, synopsis, abstracts, and subject notes. As they go higher on the ladder of their career they will have to handle the correspondence independently. They will require writing business letters memos, email messages, proposals, minutes, notes reports, professional summaries and so on. Both professional and students need excellent writing skills to survive and excel in their pursuits as there is hardly any academic or professional activity that does not require writing skills.

IX. CONCLUSION

Students must try hard to reach the goal. They must analyze their pros and cons and improve themselves. Teachers should always be a moral support to them. They may come across the hindrances in their path but they are not to discourage them but to improve their quality of excellence. The excellence is never a chance but it is a result of hard and sincere efforts. In this modern era the advance technology is at their disposal. They must make the best use of it and grow as a shining star.