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TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT U.G LEVEL: PROBLEMS AND REMEDIES

INTRODUCTION:

English has acquired a prominent place in the Educational system of Indian Universities today. English has been considered as a window to the knowledge and wisdom in the world. In itself, English is the richest most varied and most powerful language in the world. The importance of English as an International Language can be judged from the fact that there is no country in the world where a speaker is of English is not understood. With the advent of globalization of education, the significance accredited to English Language has increased in manifold ways. In an era of information and knowledge dissemination, English Language plays a foremost and vital role. The English language has become an essential requisite to survive in the fast and progressive world. English language has a special significance for us. To Indians, English has ceased to be a foreign language though it is a language of foreigner. It has brought us new awareness of individual worth, social consciousness national pride and international responsibilities. With these aims, motives our University has introduced English as one of the compulsory languages for the undergraduate classes. But now, there is a persistent cry that the standard of English is falling.

PROBLEMS:

Environment plays a important role in making of an individual's integrated personality. Learning a foreign language at its grass root level is possible only if we have that proper environment. This is the area where students are lagging behind. An interesting observation reveals that the parents of more than 80% students admitted in B.A.I, B.ScI classes are not even matriculates. More than 60% of them are illiterate. It speaks a lot about our so called urban stature and culture. Poor performance in English Language may be attributed to the conventional method of teaching. The methodology of English Teacher is bilingual or translation method. The teacher here plays more as a translator than as a genuine English Teacher. The translator method adopted by many of the teachers for class room teaching has its impact on the receptive sensibility of the students. Lack of amenities is yet another problem we face in our rural colleges' adequate stock of books, reading materials like periodicals and newspapers are rare things in many of the colleges. Students attend the classes without text books. Managements express their ability to attend the irrelevant problems.

The present state of affairs in the field of English Language learning and teaching in most of our educational institutions at both the secondary and collegiate level is highly deplorable. Several factors have contributed to the deterioration of the standard of English. The increasing politicization and commercialization of education,

overcrowding of students in schools and colleges and a faulty system of examination which lay an undue emphasis on rote –learning and blind memorization may be mentioned as the chief causes of the falling standard of English. To compound all this we come across a large scale of apathy and indifference on the part of student towards any kind of persistent and assiduous study in all subject, but more particularly so in the subject of English Language.

The attitude of the most of the students is to somehow scrape through the examination and get the Degree. Many devious and often suspect means are used for this. Even if such means are not used, almost all students just memorize the answers of some expected questions, which they put down on the answer sheets. They have just become carriers or porters of mugged up information. This has been going on right from the earliest stage of education, with the result that the students have lost the ability, if ever they had it of independent thought. Their knowledge of English is very superficial and scanty. The certificate or degree which they get cannot serve as a true mark of their knowledge and many employing institutions like the Banks, L.I.C., etc. conduct their own test of English and also other subjects, in which our spurious degree holders show a lamentably poor performance. When one observes grammatical mistakes like ‘wents’ and ‘wented’ even in M.A. paper one is bound to despair of effecting any improvement in the present moribund state of the subjects and considering such efforts as an exercise in futility.

The mother tongue influence is clearly noticeable in the formal conversation of the students. In India there are many regional languages. The biggest difficulty a teacher faces while teaching English as a second language is teaching proper pronunciation to students who have their own mother tongue accents. When English is spoken in different regions it means that it is spoken in different ways. Therefore students cannot understand even neutral pronunciation. There is a gap between students and teachers. This is where the teacher starts running into difficulty.

REMEDIES:

I think the prime cause is the lack of motivation, will and enthusiasm on the part of students, for which we may hold the teacher responsible. All children – we were all children once are endowed with a sense of wonder and curiosity. As children grow, up this sense of wonder and curiosity taper off and comes to a dead level. The teachers have to revive and enliven this sense. All learning is and ought to be a pleasurable activity. Whatever is imposed from outside soon becomes distasteful. If there is no inner urge to learn or if this urge is not engendered by the teacher no real learning takes place. The first duty of the teacher is then to kindle in the students this urge for English language learning. The teachers should inspire their students to join English conversation groups which can be friendly ad fun giving and motivate the students to talk in English with their friends who are also learning English. The teacher must encourage the students to go out together and speak only English to each other. The teacher should tell them short stories and insist them to remember the words to reinforce their minds, thus making them learn new words every day. The teacher should suggest students to read news articles in newspapers every day. The students should do ten minutes listening practice every day. The teacher must make compulsory

to the students to watch English news on television. The teacher should motivate the students to use good dictionaries and tell them its importance and way to use. Every teacher of English must stimulate the students to expose themselves to as much English as possible by reading newspapers and books.

Students especially in rural areas are scared of English. Teachers should see to it that this fear is removed and that they feel comfortable while learning the language. A good teacher can unravel the marvels of English in an unconventional manner. There are several ways to arouse the curiosity and urge among students. For this the teacher himself has to become a fountain head of enthusiasm and zest. Learning could be regarded as a pleasurable game. In fact a new way of teaching called the play-way method has been in vogue in education for quite some time. All children and even adults love to play instinctively and this method of learning and teaching has proved very effective. Several word games could be devised such as rhyming words, words beginning with the same consonants, anagrams, homonyms, synonyms, antonyms and so on. Several books are available explaining these games.

It is obvious that our mastery of any language is directly proportional to the number of words and their proper use in sentences. The word games should have a contextual connection with the lessons from the text that is being taught. The main purpose of teaching a particular English text is to acquire the language skill, which consist in knowing the words and their proper use in sentences i.e. the structures. While teaching any lesson, the teacher will choose certain core words and structures and emphasis on them. A kind of competitive spirit should be fostered among the students in the formation and use of such words and sentences. Suppose the word 'President' occurs in a lesson, after telling the meaning of the word, the students may be asked to derive other words from it such as preside, presidential. This words lead to another similar sounding word 'precede' from which we could form such words as 'precedent' 'unprecedented'. This again may lead us to the word 'decide' from which we form the words decision, decisive, so on. Similarly with reside we can form the words resident, residence, residential and so on. In this way one could play the game of word formation with their meaning and use.

Students today are lagging behind due to lack of command on English. Student should learn English to establish themselves in their fields and sustain competition. They should sharpen their communicative skills before they face the wide competitive world. The reason why students are unable to write independent essays or letters is the extreme paucity of words in their memory. Even if they have ideas on any subjects, they cannot express it for want of vocabulary. After all words and sentences are the clothes and apparels of thoughts and ideas. Words themselves denote ideas thought and feelings. The more words are known the better one is able to express effectively.

The teacher must instill among the students a love for reading and writing. Students should cultivate a reading habit in this era of information explosion. Reading improves the standard of living of human beings as it makes one think. Everybody, I think, should develop a small library of its own as library is a vast stock of knowledge and wisdom. Reading leads one to a path of transforming oneself into a cultured human being. Students should enrich their knowledge with books which is necessary to build up multi –dimensional personality. Reading habit enriches our knowledge.

Therefore we have to keep the culture of our reading alive. Students can attain prosperity and enlightenment through reading. 'Read a page and Write a page daily' should be the motto of the students. As Bacon has remarked 'Writing makes man perfect'. So writing something daily on basis of new words that students have learned, can go a long way in acquiring the much coveted language skill. Regular reading and communicating in language can make one confident.

Language is primarily used for speech and spoken communication. The proper pronunciation of words is as much necessary as their meaning and used. Students must be thoroughly acquainted with English Vowel and Consonant sounds. For this loud reading on the part of the students is essential. The teacher should read the text with proper intonation and expression. An expressive reading with proper intonation goes a long way in understanding the written material. The key to good reading is the ability to relate the melody and rhythm of speech to the lines of printed words. Actually intonation is the glue that holds the words together in an orderly familiar way. In speech, intonation carries so much meaning that even if we miss hearing some of the words, we understand perfectly the message being conveyed.

A teacher has to have histrionic talents in order to be a good teacher. There should be a dramatic approach to teaching which will sustain the interest of the students. Adequate number of trained staff is the need of the time to popularize effective teaching methods. New methodology with emphasis on the four language skills is to be initiated in colleges. These methods of teaching should adopt techniques, which will motivate students not only to learn English but also to enjoy it.

The universities should organize the training camps before introducing the new syllabus. Teachers of English must have a formal training in teaching practices and methods. Skills of understanding specific problems regarding to particular regions can only be acquired through a formal training.

Teachers must be provided with audio visual aids and ideal models for the proper pronunciation of words.

Self up gradation of English teacher is the most important factor. Rabindranath Tagore says - A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame, a teacher can never light another lamp unless he upgrades himself continuously.

CONCLUSION:

Globalization has created a good deal of competition in education, financial and commercial fields. Apart from the field of knowledge, a person also needs to concentrate on English. The language has acquired a universal status. It is necessary that student must develop command over English to stay in the cut throat competitive world. This language is very essential to make one presentable and develop confidence. If we take into consideration the role of a teacher in acquiring the knowledge of language, the problems can be solved effectively only then the students will realize the practical use of English language. They will be able to use English as a language of communication. Fluency in the speech, proper knowledge of sentence structure, confidence of speaking in public will make them able to keep their pace with the developing world. A competitive spirit should be develop among students as healthy competition enhances self confidence and prepares one for challenges.

Knowledge of English has become very necessary in today's competitive world. Students should equip themselves with knowledge of English to scale new heights. Thus English is very necessary for the all round development and to increase one's morale and confidence.

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