



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING:
TRENDS AND CHALLENGES**

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ABSTRACT

'There is nothing permanent except change' says Heraclites, the pre Aristotelian Greek philosopher. Change is the law of nature. A trend, innovations and challenges are the general tendency or direction towards change. With a number of educational options available before the present generation learners, the newer trends and challenges seem to have emerged in the field of education that have entirely changed the facet of traditional system of education. Recent trends and challenge of methodologies and developments portray the vital role of education sector in general with its internalization of the education process, stress on quality above quantity, increase in the adoption of technologies, necessity for professional talent etc. The theories and methods are constantly evolving in the field of ELLT (ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING) also. This paper analyses the trends and challenges, quite interesting methods we have in teaching English language. We may have a number of teaching methods in between traditional and modern. Everybody has their own understanding and conclusions on teaching English language. But this paper portrays combining these two types how we can make our teaching very effective

Keywords: *Methods, trends, peer practice, new devices Neuro-linguistics, teachers challenges, English is a foreign language*

INTRODUCTION

In the present times, so many books have been published in English about English language in general and English Language Teaching in particular. These books view the subject differently by presenting a plethora of voices trying to liberalize themselves from the clutches of traditional methods of teaching. Moreover, this article brings out the subtle distinction between the scholarly perception of language as treated in research and pedagogy. The argument advances as the paper proceeds with trends of education with specific reference to the Indian scenario, methodologies adopted, the bygone methods, the peer practice, the present trend, new teaching design, new devices, the need for change, the ICT and English language and also the CALL. To meet the present day challenges in teaching English, first of all, English should not be treated as a subject as it is to be used actively in interacting with one another throughout the world cannot put their language in practice.



In the era of competitive world, where the majority of the students are attempting GRE & TOEFL, good listening and speaking skills become an absolute necessity. Communicative approach was totally neglected by teachers and learners which has become a global demand where students are supposed to communicate across the globe. Teachers should act as facilitators, and should observe how well students organize their thoughts while speaking with their fellow members. As language changes geographically due to dialectical variations, the teacher should take adequate steps to teach their student about neutral accent and their importance while communication. Clear pronunciation, not perfect pronunciation, is the goal.

A] TRENDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

1. GENERAL TREND

English language teaching has undergone tremendous changes over the years, especially the last ten years. Students are burdened with studying, learning and grasping the materials, and of course, lectures with the collection of relevant information from prescribed texts. Many career alternatives once regarded insignificant are gaining importance at present such as communication skills, soft skills, technical skills, interpersonal skills, ICT literacy etc.

2. THE INDIAN SCENARIO

There had been much of changes in the attitude of people as to what they perceive to be a language. When the Indians were tutored by British masters, they were exposed to native language in every sense of the word. The methodologies adopted were also akin to that of what was practiced in English speaking countries. After their retirement, the glory, richness, depth and vastness of the language started fading in India little by little and it has come to a stage wherein educationalists and language experts thrive hard to choose the best out of the innumerable existing methodologies.

3. METHODOLOGIES ADAPTED DURING THE PREVIOUS YEARS

Communication is the groundwork based on which any idea can progress and develop into a full-fledged one. Without that, sustenance in any field is impossible. Some of the (recent) trends in the ELLT are quite apparent while the others are still to make their presence felt. Some are yet to come into existence and therefore subject to evolution and change. As such, audio tapes acted as medium of Audio-lingual method.

4. THEORIES OF THE PAST DECADE

A few theories and trends that shaped the ELT during the past decade include Gardener's Theory of Multiple Intelligence (1993). The same was applied to language teaching as well. This has paved a way to focus the innate skills, preferences and abilities of students. TG



grammar of Noam Chomsky gave an in-depth analysis of language learning vs. language acquisition.

5. MODERN TRENDS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

Deena Boraie highlights that there are eight trends in teaching of English as discussed further. “Change is the Goal of Teaching English” says Boraie.

6. CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATE LEARNING (CLIC)

The CLIC is an approach where the English teacher uses cross curricular content and so the students learn both the content and English.

7. EARLY START OF TEACHING ENGLISH

Many countries have started teaching English in earlier grades at school. For example, since 2011, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam have introduced English from Grade-IV. Also in 2011, Japan introduced English in the primary stage and in 2012, Dubai introduced English in the KG stage instead of Grade-I.

8. CHANGE IN THE APPROACH TO TEACHING CULTURE

Both the local or native and international culture dominates in English language classes. There is less focus on teaching the culture of native speakers of English unless there is a specific purpose for doing so.

9. CHANGING THE VIEW OF AN ENGLISH TEACHER

It is increasingly being recognized that the quality or effectiveness of teachers is determined by their linguistic, teaching and intercultural competence rather than their being native speakers of English.

10. CHANGE IN TEACHING CONTENT AND TEST DESIGN

Teachers use a range of local texts or English translations of literature in the classroom. The use of language as well as the use of a variety of accents in listening activities or tests is encouraged in the English language classroom.

11. E-LEARNING

With the proliferation of tablets and smart phones, it is believed that textbooks will disappear in a few years. Furthermore, the access to knowledge in terms of flexibility and mobility has changed drastically.

12. STRATEGIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching in English language classes focuses on fostering the students’ thinking as well as language content, outcomes and learning activities. There are significant and complex student-teacher interactions inside and outside the classroom.

13. TEACHERS AS LIFELONG LEARNERS

In a knowledge based society and to remain competitive and employable, teachers are expected to engage in a continuous professional development or the professional learning activities from the beginning to the end of their careers. As with any other profession, teachers are also expected to assume a greater responsibility for their own professional learning, continually developing their knowledge and skills. Apart from the abovementioned items, Andrian under Hill lists out the following as the recent trend which are very much prevalent in English language teaching. They are

1. Networking, interest and support groups.
2. Learner centeredness and learners needs.
3. Reflective practice and teacher learning.
4. Portfolio development for teachers.
5. Syllabus design /materials development.
6. Criticism of published materials.
7. English as an International language.

14. THE PRESENT TREND

All over the world, the student centred English language teachers seem to have realized that gone are the days when teachers reigned their class with all monopoly where the students remained as passive. There is rethinking regarding the growing interest of implementing the basic educational goals. Having realized the need of the hour; the English teachers convene different types of conferences and seminars to create a platform and to get to know the upcoming ideologies in the ELIT and also to upgrade themselves professionally.

15. ENGLISH TEACHING AND THE ICT

The third dimension of globalization which is inseparable from English teaching is an advancement of Information and Communication Technology [ICT]. The field of the ELLT has been deeply pervaded by the ICT. The easy access to technology has made information possible for enhancement of learning programe and about 80% of it is in English (MC – Crum. R. et al... 1986). At the outset, the English teachers regarded internet as one of the alternative media to teach language (Warschauer, 1995). The followings are some of the ICT enabled teaching activities.

16. COMPUTER MEDIATED ENGLISH

English has been undoubtedly the lingua franca of the internet. The Computer Mediated English uses the language as per convenience and not by convention. For instance, using a single letter, or number for a word. For instance „c, “ for „see“, „u“ for „you“ and „2“ for

„two“; the use of acronyms like TTYL (talk to you later) WUATB (wish you all the best); using asterisks” *” for emphasis and emoticons for smile, for frown etc. Realizing its significance as a source of communication, the linguistic elements and discourse of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), need a serious concern.

17. COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING [CALL]

Computer Assisted Language Learning is yet another manifestation of Computer Mediated Language Learning. The first phase of the CALL was conceived in 1950 and was implemented in 1960s and 1970s. In this method, the computer gives a stimulus to the learner by being not a mere tool but also a tutor.

18. WEB BASED LEARNING

A web based learning also called technology based learning/distance learning/on line education/e learning is one of the fastest developing areas. It provides opportunities to create well–designed, learner–cantered, affordable, interactive, officiate, flexible e-learning environment (khan, 2005).:

18.1. E-mail

The students can correspond with native speakers of the target language using e mail by creating a personal email account (g-mail, yahoo, Hotmail, etc.) which is free. The students can mail their home work to the teachers concerned and get it corrected in turn. The teacher can also provide revisions, feedback, suggestions for the betterment of every work and send them back.

18.2. Blogs

A blog is a personal or professional journal frequently updated for public consumption. The blogs enable uploading and linking the files which is very much suited to serve as on line personal journals for students. Pinkman (2005) indicates blogging becomes communicative and interactive when participants assume multiple roles in the writing process, as readers/reviewers who respond to other writers’ posts, and as writers-readers who, returning to their own posts, react to criticism of their own posts.

18.3. Skype

Every internet service has audio functions, and technological instruments like laptops with cameras. The students could communicate with their teachers and friends who are far away. Likewise, they could very well communicate with the speakers of native language and get their pronunciation checked so as to improve their speaking.

18.4. Mobile Phone



Learners can search for new words using dictionary option in the mobile phones and enrich their vocabulary. They may verify the spelling, pronunciation and usage of the specific word they searched for. Moreover, they can use Short Message Service (SMS) to send queries to their instructors and get their doubts cleared.

18.5. Ipods

iPods, one of the multimedia devices, enhance the users to generate, deliver, exchange texts, image, audio and video scripts as per the requirement. The teachers send text messages and the students can read and answer to them. In addition to this, the students can record and listen to their speeches, poems, news, short stories etc. Thus, iPods give a chance to the learners of English to improve their listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and also writing.

19. THE NEW AGE DEVICES

This year, the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) which was held at Las Vegas, gave a glimpse of ground breaking devices purely meant for students. These 'showpieces' ranged from 3D printers to smart watches. The youth's requirements are matched by a new age device, be it studies or social media, travel or portability. The media streaming devices like the Google chrome cast and the Roku make group studies become interactive and presentations surprisingly fulfilled one. One has to stream the media on to a smart TV using a dongle.

20. LANGUAGE TEACHING DESIGN

Geetha Nagaraj says A vital development in the area of language teaching design is the Council of Europe's- A Common Frame Work of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment, now mostly known as CEF/CEFR is a document consisting of nine chapters and four appendices and is available on the Council of Europe website: www.coe.int. The CEFR aims to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum... what learners have to learn... skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively.

21. THE LEARNER

The CEF analyses the factors that go to make up individual differences.

22. THE LANGUAGE

A clear description of the content in terms of linguistic competency, sociolinguistic competency and pragmatic competency constitutes a language.

23. LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

Using descriptor scales, learner's proficiency is measured. Descriptors consist of a series of „can do“ statements which received a great deal of attention.

24. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The learner's involvement and teacher's empowerment are stressed during the teaching and learning processes.

25. THE TRANSITION OF FOCUS ON THE LEARNER

The conventional method of teaching wherein the teacher enjoys the monopoly of teaching sometimes even obliterates the pressure of the learners. It is Dewey (1938) who originated the term “learner centeredness” which has gained popularity in the ELT. The Humanistic Approach which was developed during the second half of the Communicative Language Teaching, developed in the 1960s and 1970s was an outcome of the desire to make language teaching more flexible and more responsive to students (Tudor 1996, 7).

26. THE ROLE OF A MODERN TEACHER

Dornyei and Murphey (203, 109) have defined the term ‘role’ as a technical term which originally comes from sociology and refers to the shared expectation of how an individual should behave. Several methodologists like Little Wood [1981]; Richards and Rodgers [1986], Tudor [1993], Harmer [2001] have evolved different roles for a language teacher

B) LANGUAGE TEACHING –THE PRESENT DAY CHALLENGES

If language teachers teach as they taught earlier, then one may not achieve the required goals of teaching English in the present global scenario. Challenges before teachers in present day ELLT are taken up in this study. The way in which students can put their learning into practice in day-to-day use to fulfil their practical demands through effective communication skills apart from gaining command over English language is highlighted.

1. Importance of soft skills in communication

Soft Skills are part of Communication Skills. You may soft skills or hate these but you cannot ignore soft skills in any learning process, more so in learning and teaching a language.

As English has turned into a universal language, its presence and value in the world has expanded enormously in the past decades... Prof. Jacob Tharu says, “English is no longer some remote but a powerful mystery, lying hidden in the world of textbooks and examination.”

2. Conventional English Teaching

In the past, students were introduced to English only in their sixth standard. Students learned English just as another subject like Physics and Mathematics and got very little opportunity to



using it within the school as well as outside the school, the above context was appropriate for the use of methods that did not focus much on communicative competence. Language teachers adopted and followed some or all of the different methodologies listed below to teach the language.

2.1. Grammar Translation Method

Grammar translation method was used by the teacher to teach young children, where teacher explained every word to students in the native language to make him understand and learn English. But in this method there was at least one disadvantage. Both the teacher and the student concentrated more on L1 rather than L2. In this method English language class seemed to be L1 class rather than L2 class. Students got only limited benefit through this method.

2.2. Bilingual Method

May be we should declare this as **the method**, our own favourite method in our schools. Most teachers follow the bilingual method to teach the students in Indian schools, where the teacher first of all explains the entire English sentence in L1 and then asks the students to perform activities in English. Here, it used to be a main assumption that only the teachers have the freedom to take the help of L1 and students are not supposed to use it, However, this constraint is found mostly on paper, not in the classroom.

2.3. Direct Method

Earlier, teachers used to follow the direct method to teach Indian students mostly in private schools, which usually charge a higher tuition fee, etc. These teachers will stick to the practice of using only English, without depending on L1. Here, teacher is not supposed or authorized to use any single word from L1. This forced seclusion made students from many families with no past history of learning or using English face great difficulty in understanding certain words and their meanings.

3. Computer assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Now-a-days computer has become a part and parcel of our day to day life. It plays a vital role in the process of teaching and learning. It can be used to learn a foreign language like English. Computers have made language learning easy and also made the language learning process interesting and enjoyable for both teacher and student throughout the world.

4. Teaching Language through Visual Aids

One of the innovative methods used by the teacher to teach language in class room is visual aids.



The teacher distributes visual aids to students by dividing them into various groups. The students are then given stipulated time to extract relevant information on the given aids. After that, those learners are supposed to speak about the visual aids given to them.

5. A Challenge in Teaching English Today

Challenges before the English Language teachers in India are enormous and apparent. They should be able to cater to the practical needs of learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and also to retrieve information all over the world.

English has a base in several countries and is considered as the most suitable and convenient tool for International Communication. The people who have proficiency in this language could access large number of jobs and also were seen holding high positions in many National and International Organizations.

6. Methods Adapted to Improve Spoken Skills

6.1. Group Discussions

Now due to the world wide growing trends in English, teachers give more emphasis to communicative approach rather than the lecture mode. Their main goal is to make the students effective communicators in English both inside and outside the class room.

6.2. Debates

Debates too play an important role to improve the speaking ability of the students both at school and at higher level. Debates not only make the students to speak boldly and fluently but also help them to take one stand and be firm and consistent on that. Along with this advantage of reasoning, it gives students some experience to control their emotions without losing their temper. This also helps them to organize their thoughts and ideas in a specific way while speaking.

6.3. Role Plays

Role-plays are another important task that can improve the basic colloquial English of the learners. In role plays, the students assume themselves as one of the characters and behave and speak accordingly involving in the given character completely

CONCLUSION

The traditional method lays more emphasis on a teacher himself and is teacher centred. Repetitive practice, mechanical drills and memorization are the hallmarks of the traditional methods. Wilkins (1976,2) calls a synthetic in which different parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up. It is imperative to understand the current trends and evaluative methods of the ELLT. The theories and methods are constantly

evolving in the ELT. The teachers of the ELT are aware of the best practices in teaching and learning English and how they can be made beneficial to the students. It is possible for every child to learn English in the most enjoyable manner if it is supplied with the right kind of materials and pedagogy produced by one's own native wisdom

To meet the present day challenges in teaching English, first of all, English should not be treated as a subject as it is to be used actively in interacting with one another throughout the world. By using conventional methods, maximum portion of class time will be wasted in exercises and drilling, dealing with grammar and pronunciation which takes away a large portion of class time. These methods were mostly used to develop basic skills of language learning such as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, but by following these methods listening and speaking skills were neglected as students cannot put their language in practice.

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