

Communicative English in Teaching-Learning Process: A Critical Analysis

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 13:6 June 2013

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Abstract

The aspiration for accomplished communication has brought an enviable demand for teaching English across the globe. People want to develop their command over English. Students want to master English to a high level of accuracy and fluency. The demand for appropriate teaching medium has turned out to be mandatory. Until now, different mediums and approaches have been used for teaching English in the classroom. There are many varying opinions with regard to the issues i.e. which medium is more effective in teaching English as a foreign language in classroom. Moreover, the most important issue is how to teach English in our classrooms. At present Communicative Language teaching is the call of the hour as it has been continuously adopted by textbooks and curriculum in different levels of education. Therefore, the author has very minutely emphasised the teaching of English through skill-based pedagogy.

Keywords: Lingua franca, Chunk, Language Commission, Internationalisation.

Minimum Working Knowledge

The importance of English is felt globally nowadays. But, in Indian context it is less used as a lingua franca. It is really felt that English is to be taught principally as language. Most of our students need only a communicative or working knowledge of English because they only need to express themselves clearly in English. For this reason they do not prefer to read English Literature as its function is somewhat different from that of knowing the language. English Literature should be read by choice by those who have the special liking for it. Indeed the study of literature is an advantage for the person who knows the language.

Official Position of English

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The post-independent India has laid some major steps in strengthening the position of English. In this connection I would like to quote the documentation prepared by the then *Official Language Commission* (1956),

“Since we need knowledge of English for different purposes, the content and character of that knowledge as well as the method of imparting it has to undergo a change. English has to be taught hereafter, principally as a language of comprehension rather than as literary language so as to develop, in the student learning it, a faculty for comprehending writings in the English language, more especially those relating to the subject matter of their specialized fields of studies. No doubt, to a limited extent a capacity for expression would also accrue and may usefully be cultivated along with the faculty of comprehension; however the change in the character and knowledge of English apposite to our requirements thereafter, as distinguished from the past is clear enough. The requirements of knowledge for comprehending English is mainly a matter of understanding the basic grammar and structure of language and thereafter, principally, a question of widening the vocabulary in the desired direction. A perception of the literary beauties of Shelley’s lyrics and of Shakespeare’s poetic imagery is not strictly related to the requirements of the case ...There will be full-fledged faculty available in our universities for the specialized study of the English language and literature in the same way in which there would be such faculty for other important languages and literature. The special requirements must not, however, determine the general position in the educational system” (Kohli, 6)

For Purposes of Communication in Selected Fields

Most of the people in India need English for communication purposes in the fields like business, administration, judiciary, media, medicine, science, technology and above all teaching etc. So, we have to improve the language skills like speaking, listening, reading and writing as much as we can. This is very much clear that English needs to be taught as language of utility but not for literary application to a great majority of our students.

The Importance of Learning English as Language

English is one of the world's most acclimatized languages. It has obtained its position in international, social, cultural as well as political activities. English strives as the standard language nowadays. It invites people sharing from the present to the future, from local to global, from country to continent etc. In today's hi-tech business world English is no longer regarded as a foreign language. It is the global means of communications. Officially, English has got special status among more than two billion speakers. Therefore, English is called the lingua franca. Thus we can state the importance as follows.

- i. English is used as an international language.
- ii. English is used as a library language.
- iii. English is used as a link language in communication.

English for Technology

In this cutting-age of technology, communication and entertainment have been given much emphasis. The phone call has been replaced by the text message and the letter has been transformed into an e-mail, cable TV gives us hundreds of channels at a time and movies on demand and the Internet provides unlimited and unregulated information at the click of a button. In this high-tech and fast-paced world where we are inundated with choice, few of us take time to slow down and sit down to absorb a piece of literature without relying on shallow, uninfected communication and read mostly for short bursts pieces of information.

The Goal for Teaching English as a Language

The demands as well as justification for making students learn English as a language for many practical uses and benefits. Its opportunities can open doors to higher socio-economic status and improved quality of life. It is apt to justify that "The fact that English is particularly rich in literary text. If students are to derive the practical benefits that come with learning English, we must ensure that they can use the language effectively. They must, in other words, acquire the language skills required, to be able to communicate through English" (I.E, v). Hence, we can achieve our goal for teaching English only by developing language skills.

Internationalisation and English

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A close scrutiny and survey reveals the fact that “With the increasing ‘internationalisation’, English has become a global resource or rather a global lingua franca. According to an estimate by the British Council, there are 800 million speakers of English worldwide, out of which, a staggering 450 million are non-native speakers. This research affirms that in today’s world, no country can stake its claim on English. So, unlike in the past, English does not belong to a particular society or community. The concept of global or world language, stress on the fact that English is the possession of any country that uses it” (Chaudhary, 2009)

The Cultural Fashion of Teaching English

Culture and language are like the two sides of a coin. English language introduces us to the civilization of another country. Through this language it is possible to share and communicate the wisdom, philosophy, science and technology etc. Our national consciousness was accelerated by the writings of Rousseau, Lincoln, and Burke. Through English, Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru have also been able to communicate our real aspirations to the whole World. Therefore, it is befitting to say that our cultural fashion is to be prioritized in giving place to the language as a medium for transferring our superb thoughts and intelligence.

Current practices in using English as the medium of instruction and where does it lead?

i) School level English

A new learner finds English as a new language. Teacher teaches it as per the fixed syllabi prescribed by the board or council. The number of classes is fixed in the time-table. The text book is the main source and means of learning in the classrooms.

ii) English studied as second language

In a country like India, where diversity exists in culture as well as languages spoken, most of the High Schools deliver the subjects in regional language. English is learnt as the second language. English is taught as any other subject again in a regional language. This aspect restricts the thinking process only to the vicinity of the regional languages. The terminology of second language also

reduces the priority of teaching and learning in English. Surveys indicate a high failure rate in the subject called Second Language that is English. Also educators feel the quality of English usage becomes degraded. Some state that even those students who pass the subject do not know reading, writing and speaking English properly.

iii) Regional language to English as medium of instruction is not a smooth transition

It is a widely prevalent truth of learning that during teaching – learning process the regional language interrupts as well as helps to a great extent to learn English. Mostly, the teachers and the learners receive their understanding through the sheer intervention of the regional language.

A survey has been made taking 1000 students of different classes of Kalinga Polytechnic, Bhubaneswar, which reveals the demand of learning English with the help of regional language. This observation is based on the fact that 64% of students are of the opinion that regional language is not the right way to have an understanding of the English language. And 28% of students give their positive response accepting regional language as the means of learning English, whereas the rest 8% of students remain indifferent in their opinion either positively or negatively.

iv) Understanding still difficult

In spite of the use of the regional language as a means of teaching English to help the learners understand, the subject is still very difficult for the learners, since they have not learnt English from kinder garden class. The original thought and objective of the author remain hidden. It is due to the rendering of the thoughts of the author in the regional language (most of the time the teacher is not able to do that very well). Therefore, it still seems to be hard for the students to understand English language.

v) Can there be ease in usage?

Though it has been a tough task, still there are simple ways to learn English through the adoption of the methods of communicative approach. The correct understanding of the original thought is possible not only by the so-called structural idiomatic usage of the language, but by the communicative means.

Can there be Changes?

Certainly by adding the changes to the existing pattern of teaching, one can easily bring about a great transformation. It is possible if the language teachers adhere to the principles of the new methods such as audio-visual aids, modern pedagogy; teaching through smart classes etc. to convey the meaning to the learner through simple, relevant and useful words and phrases.

Using Communicative English as Method of Instruction

In the class rooms, the teaching and the learning processes ought to be in the form of highly intelligible systems. The original text and its real meaning need to be explained using the communicative approach. Both teacher and learner should try to elucidate the original thoughts using modern technology. The methods of instructions will be of much significance while using communicative English.

The Possible Benefits

There has been a lot of discussion about the acceptance of English as a medium of instruction at different levels of study. In my opinion English should be taught as a compulsory subject at the school level. By virtue of the usage of communicative English as a method in the process of teaching-learning, it will be most useful in bringing many benefits and results to the learners as well as to the society at large. Our students need to know English to pursue higher education. A big chunk of students opt to study medicine, engineering, management and many other professional courses which are of great demand these days. So, English has to be offered not only as subject but also as the good medium of instruction. There has been a trend to teach the English language in many countries of the world. So the significance of English has been felt internationally. In addition to it, the real knowledge of English will benefit students in getting job anywhere across the globe.

To conclude, keeping the utmost attention to the need-based achievement, one ought to be in touch with English. English is very much associated with better education, better opportunities, inter-regional mobility, communication and higher social status. English has become a pervasive presence in the social matrix of India. Hence, we need to be updated with the acquisition of vocabulary to learn, or to make others learn the English lessons through the formalities of language learning which will really enrich our knowledge of English, as well as gain a real understanding of the English language. Therefore, it will be good to teach English as a simple language of communication.

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