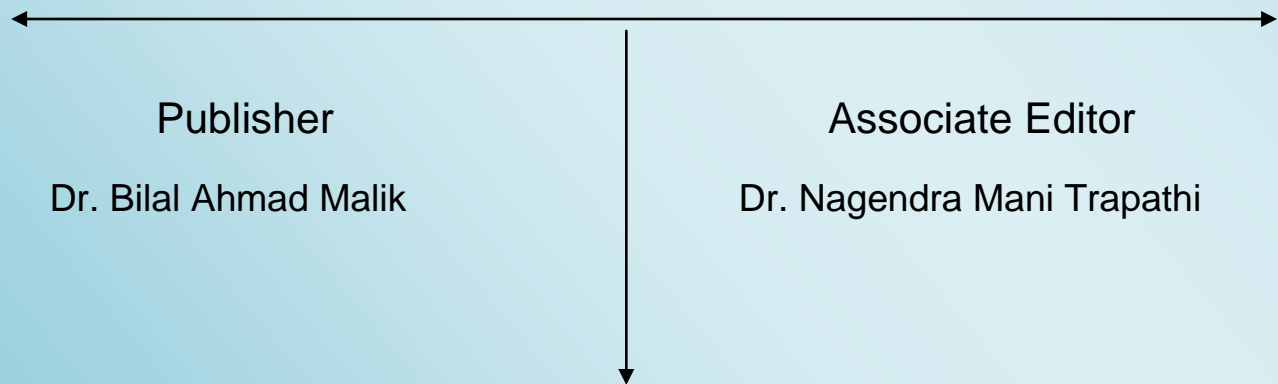


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INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: AN EVALUATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Teacher education system is an important vehicle to improve the quality of school education. The revitalization and strengthening of the teacher education system is a powerful means for the upliftment of educational standards in the country. There are many issues that need urgent attention for improving the quality of teacher education programme. One of them is the need of innovations in teacher education programme. The purpose of this paper was to evaluate the various methods of teaching English and to suggest other useful teaching methods that can be attempted in imparting knowledge to the students. Basically teaching must include two major components sending and receiving information. Ultimately, a teacher tries his best to impart knowledge as the way he understood it. So, any communication methods that serve this purpose without destroying the objective could be considered as innovative methods of teaching. The use of innovative methods in educational institutions has the potential not only to improve education, but also to empower people, strengthen governance and galvanize the effort to achieve the human development goal for the country. This includes ways of exploiting the new technology and how to manage the special problems arising from contact with learners. A number of key recommendations are made for practitioners and policy makers.

Key Words: *Teacher Education, Teaching English, Class Room Innovative Teaching Practices.*

INTRODUCTION

English in India is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. The visible indicator of this presence of English is that today its teaching being demanded by many to be taught at the very initial stage of schooling, the mushrooming of private English medium schools and the early introduction of English in State schools. The NCF- 2005 stresses the use of child's mother tongue as a medium of learning at the primary level. The English teaching profession has consistently recommended a relatively late introduction of English and this is reflected in spirit in policy documents. The level of introduction

of English has now become a matter of State policy to respond to people's aspirations, making almost irrelevant an academic debate on the merits of a very early introduction. English is introduced as a subject in class I in many States. In a few states, it is introduced in class III or at class V level. The teaching and learning of English today is characterized by the diversity of schools, classroom procedures and teaching of textbooks for the purpose of passing the examination.

TEACHING ENGLISH

As education has an important role in development in India, a number of Commissions and Committees set up by the Government have given their recommendations and suggestions on teaching of English. The *Official Language Commission* under B. G. Kher recommended seven years of English teaching in school (Kher, 1957). The report of the *Education Commission (1964-1966)* recommended teaching of English after the primary level. The Conference on Teaching of English in primary schools suggested changes in the thinking about the proper age and level for teaching of English in schools (Gokak, 1963). The *Kunzru Committee (1959)* recommended English as a second language. The *Central Advisory Board for Education* proposed the three- language formula, which was approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers held in 1961 and was accepted as a part of educational policy – English was to become one of the three languages to be taught at upper primary level- But later most states modified this policy and decided to introduce English at the primary level itself. Language learning is not just a matter of acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but it consists of developing a communicative competence where these skills are often used in an integrated manner along with several other abilities that help in conducting a dialogue. The place of English is not merely an educational issue, but it is also an issue of social change, personal advancement and national development.

English in India has become a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. The visible indicator of this presence of English is mushrooming of private English medium schools. The pressure of admission in various states in the schools where English is taught from class I or is a medium of instruction from class I itself, shows that English language has acquired an important and an inclusive place in the Indian psyche. It is now a known fact that the *English medium* schools have become popular as many parents want their children to study in such schools. Education being on the concurrent list of every state, the level of introduction of English has now become a matter of state policy responding to people's aspirations. This has made many states to accede to the demand of early introduction of English in state schools.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To ascertain the status of teaching English at the present scenario.
- To make suggestions for improvement of English teaching on the basis of the discussion of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Innovative practices focus on learners too, aiming to motivate, tutor, support and actively involve learners in learning process. In this paper the traditional or innovative methods of teaching English are critically examined, evaluated and some modifications in the delivery of knowledge are suggested. As such, the strengths and weaknesses of each teaching methodology are identified and probable modifications that can be included in teaching English are suggested.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

The researchers suggest some of the methods that can very well be applied by the modern teachers. As the researchers feel that basically the core objective of teaching should never be deviated by the use of an innovative method. The following methods which are suggested are an extension to the traditional methods of teaching English.

Know your students

Increase your understanding of who are your students, their backgrounds, and educational experiences. If your students have been in schools having poor environment for several years and/or were educated in their native language, were unable to understand the English language properly, may provide you with a better understanding of their educational needs and ways to support them.

Classroom

In Jammu & Kashmir, the major reason for multi-grade classes is up-gradation of several primary schools to middle schools recently without the enhancement of staff and infrastructure. As a result two/three teachers are teaching two or three separate classes simultaneously in a single room.

Know the language of your content

English has a number of “Polysemous” words. Once a student learns and understands one meaning of a word, other meaning may not be apparent. Review the vocabulary of your content area often and check in with ELs to assure they know the words and possibly the multiple meanings associated with the words. For example, a ‘plot’ of land in geography class *versus* the ‘plot’ in a literature class. A ‘table’ we sit at *versus* a multiplication ‘table’.

Teacher’s Preparedness

The teachers in general are not very confident when they come to teaching English. Given below are the reasons behind it:

- ❖ Teachers are not the English teachers; they have to teach English;
- ❖ Teachers’ pronunciation is weak; they cannot speak English correctly and fluently.
- ❖ Teachers are not trained in English

This indicates that teachers are not prepared specifically to teach this subject and their own content knowledge may be not adequate enough to take up the task.

Language Generally used for Teaching English

The language generally used for teaching English is the mother tongue or regional language. In general the teachers generally use both mother tongue and English for teaching English. Teacher mostly used translation method for teaching English.

Methods of Teaching English

The most of the teachers are not using appropriate and adequate teaching aids for making classroom teaching learning process interesting and participatory for the students. In a few schools there were charts, maps, models, sheet/flash cards, storytelling props and cassettes/CDs. Most of the teachers are confident of their written and spoken English. However they did not go beyond text-book while teaching. There is no practice of giving feedback of assessment to students and parents. Teachers are not clear about their strengths and weaknesses.

Teacher Training

Teacher training is provided in different training modes such as regular campus training along with practicing school experience, correspondence-cum-contact programmes and recently, distance learning programmes in teacher education. However, the basic features of these programmes as well as the theoretical premises have not altered significantly. NCF-2005 says that Language proficiency of the teacher needs to be enhanced and the existing teacher education programmes do not recognize the centrality of language in the curriculum. Existing teacher education programmes neither accommodate the emerging ideas in context and pedagogy nor address the issue of linkage between schools and society. There is little space for engagement with innovative educational experiments (NCF-2005).

Multimedia

Multimedia sources like songs, movies, TV series, magazines, newspapers play a very vital role in improving our language. We don't even realize that they have helped us. We just wake up one fine day and realize that we are better than it than we were yesterday. Such sources can be used to help the students improve their language. But great precautions must be taken. This method should be used in the final stages of learning as that is the only place where there is no scope of damage as most of the movies and songs etc. use colloquial English most of the times which is grammatically wrong and it is very important that the students understand that fact so that they do not use that form of the language in their everyday usage.

Appreciating/Teaching of Poetry

In teaching English, poems are being taught line by line or word by word. The emphasis is more on explaining the meaning of words, rather than understanding/enjoying poetry. Following five things should be kept in mind while teaching Poetry (I) I am Poem (II) Shape Poetry (III) Turn Poems into Illustrations (IV) Use music to Teach Poetry (V) Create Your Own Poem in Your Pocket Day

Teaching of Grammar

By and large, English teachers, teach Grammar by memorization of rules. Most of the teachers are using traditional methods leading to monotonous class and rote memorization which is adversely affecting the students' interest in learning English. Only few of them teach grammar through context and pattern practice. Recently I

have observed that Grammar is not included in the syllabus or the curriculum. The emphasis is only on the literature part in the teaching of English. As we know the Grammar is basic in the teaching of any language.

Increase your understanding of English language proficiency

Social English language proficiency and academic English language proficiency are very different. A student may be more proficient in one vs. the other. A student's level of academic English may be masked by a higher level of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) compared to their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). For example, a student may be able to orally recall the main events from their favorite movie but struggle to recall the main events that led up to the Civil War.

Evaluation in English

The students as well as the teachers have become the examination minded. They do everything just for the sake of examination. The paper setter, the examiner, the teacher and the students also don't bother about real teaching-learning of any language. Things important from examination point of view are taken up. The efforts are made to score good marks rather than to teach English as a language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teaching innovatively does not require that you reinvent the wheel. By committing to listening to your students, providing opportunities for real-life learning, fostering creativity and making the material meaningful to them, you will achieve the implementation of innovative practices in your classrooms. The researchers believe that the core objective of teaching is passing on the information or knowledge to the minds of the students. Any method using computers or modifying the existing conventional chalk-talk method are innovative if they ultimately serve the attainment of core objective of teaching.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above discussion the following suggestions are drawn:

- ❖ The syllabus for pre-service training programmes at state level needs to be redesigned keeping in view the guidelines of NCF-2005 and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2009).
- ❖ Government should meet the shortage of teachers and problem of buildings.

- ❖ **Recruitment rules** for teachers in various our state need to be reviewed keeping in mind the role of teacher at different level in existing scenario where a teacher has to teach all the subjects to the children coming from diverse backgrounds.
- ❖ **Poetry needs** to be taught for appreciation, enjoyment and pleasure with proper feelings and recitation with proper rhythm, music and sound.
- ❖ Homework should be made use of to identify learning deficiencies and teachers should make efforts to address these.
- ❖ Teachers need to be trained to teach English as a language. Efforts need to be made to improve their content knowledge and communication skills. In this context there is a great need for devising course content at central/ regional level keeping in view teachers' academic qualifications and professional training.
- ❖ The concept of language teaching needs to be viewed as the teaching of skills and not just the drilling of content in the teachers.
- ❖ **Mnemonics words- words –words approach** should be used by the teacher to teach English. Here he goes on saying only words instead of sentence, and once they come to a basic understanding of the meaning of a particular concept then the teacher will explain in sentences. For example in teaching language courses this technique can be used as an effective medium by the teacher to develop word power.
- ❖ **Emphasis must be laid on study skills**: note-making, note-taking, and reference skills; and spoken and written communication skills: public speaking, interviewing, and debating, rather than on writing essays on well-worn topics.
- ❖ **Grammar** can be introduced after basic linguistic competence is acquired, as a means of reflecting on academic language and an intellectually interesting activity in its own right. Some grammar is in any case necessary for the ability to meaningfully make use of dictionary entries, as learner-dictionaries now incorporate a fair amount of “grammar” and usage as notes and in their coding. Grammar is not a route for developing primary or usable knowledge of language, but it can serve as a tool for increasing the language repertoire and for understanding the construction of text “rhetoric” and argumentation.
- ❖ **Language evaluation** need not be limited to “achievement” with respect to particular syllabi, but must be reoriented to measurement of *language proficiency*. Evaluation in language must be objective in nature.
- ❖ The teachers should be trained to implement innovative methods and techniques in the classrooms. They should be funded and facilitated to conduct action research for improving teaching learning process in the subject of English language.

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