



## Learning English in Rural Colleges: Challenges and Solutions

*Dr. Alka Sharma*

Associate Professor, S.D. College, Ambala Cantt

### ABSTRACT

Over the years English has emerged as the most sought-after language for foreign learners throughout the world. As the demand for effective English teaching has increased, therefore, the critical awareness of both teacher and taught heightened. It is in this context that the need for more effective methods of teaching and material have attracted a great deal of attention of those who are directly or indirectly associated with this language of international repute. It requires innovative changes in the delivery of teaching services and continuous efforts are being made in academic circles to explore new paths so as to achieve the objectives of excellent teaching. It has been aptly pointed out that in learning a second language, usually reading and writing are given precedence and with the advances in technology, almost any new gadget is utilized in the service of language instruction and the use of one or more of the gadgets by particular individual or institution depends on their affluence and their adaptability to technological changes but we should not forget the technological aids become obsolete fast.

**Key words:** Emerged, effective, repute, innovative, objectives, precedence, technology, affluence, adaptability, obsolete

In the present age of globalization and liberalization English is the only lingua-franca for the entire world. Initially in India, it enjoyed the status of a first language [pre-independence era] which changed to that of second language used for official work throughout the country. Then it relegated to the position of an optional second language. Today it is used by a 'sizable' number of people in the country. English in India emerged as a result of 'historico-political accident' and has now become an imperative need. It is not only an official language but also a language of opportunity and development. Kachru observes that for the first time a natural language has attained the status of an international language, essentially for cross cultural communication.

In the present scenario, no one can deny the significant and indispensable role played by English language. Hardly any walk of life, any job profile or any vocational field is left untouched by the use of this language. Engaged in the very noble profession of teaching English one would also appreciate the problems involved in this job.

There are various problems inherent in the process of teaching English, especially in rural colleges where most of the students having a rural background pursue their studies. As they belong to poor, under-developed and backward areas so they do not have as much exposure to this language as may be sufficient for them to have a level of comfort with the use of English. In these colleges, the teachers come across such students who did not get the opportunity to possess even the basic knowledge of the set of rules governing the formation of a simple sentence of English or the use and form of tenses. The reason lies deep-seated in the lack of motivation, guidance and the support-system during their primary and secondary education.

Subsequently, when the teacher, after evaluating the students' background-knowledge of the subject as well as their present potential begins with his own plan of action, he encounters, in most of the cases, a lack of interest and motivation on the part of the learners. It might be possible that learning this 'sophisticated and difficult' language appears to be more an uphill task than a desirable learning-subject. Some of the students are eloquent enough to express their preference for managing to get just pass marks in the examination rather than bothering themselves to learn, strive marks in thee persistently and acquire fluency in English. The yearnings of the rest of them for learning the language get more or less thwarted by the confusing pronunciation (as they perceive it), difficult usage and similar other wrongly presumed concepts.

Keeping in view the time-constraint, it is generally not easy for the teachers to start right from basic English i.e., use of tenses, subject-verb concord, sentence-construction etc., as well as complete the syllabus. Some students, accustomed to rote learning, are found simply reluctant to realize and accept the importance of functional English. Apart from this, there is a multiplicity of problems which need to be addressed. In colleges, eighty to hundred students are made to sit and learn in a single classroom. These students have mixed linguistic abilities, potentials and backgrounds. Such an environment is not congenial to the learning of a language, it can lead only to the lack of interest and motivation.

However, it is high time that the teachers entrusted with the responsibility of nation-building, get firm-footed and well-determined to bring about the much required change regarding the teaching of English. This will help to realize a greater increase in the rate of the learners understanding the importance and thus acquiring knowledge of the language.

The teacher aiming at establishing a positive learning environment in the classroom, should establish effective communication by generating interactive situations in the classroom, listening carefully to the students, sincerely correcting and explaining the mistakes and appreciating them for their efforts. To quote Lorenzo Fiorito, "Good language learners are great risk takers, they must make many errors in order to succeed" Indeed, the teacher needs to keep

patience and observe perseverance in his/her efforts. Such an atmosphere would support the students in their endeavour and would instil self-confidence in them.

In certain instances, where the teachers lack knowledge and skills, they need to come forward first for their own massive self-development by improving their knowledge, writing skills, communication skills and inter- personal skills etc. They should learn to work with others as a team and discuss the problems. There should be a healthy discussion and discourse related to teaching and learning along with the active participation of all the discussion should be focused on the issue of making the learners globally stake-holders competent. The teachers need to look forward for opportunities to bring the required change in the existing system and need to learn to challenge but with conviction.

In addition to this, English, as a language should be presented to the students not as a subject to be learned in isolation from the real world and life of the students, but as a part of their real life. The teacher must make the students understand that functional English is the need of the hour. It will be required when they enter the job market in future. Lorenzo Fiorito observes that English should be taught not as a subject separated from the students' real world but as integrated into a subject-matter area important to the learners.

Apart from the lecture method various other methods, teaching-aids and skills (in which are the senses of the learners get stimulus) may be adopted in order to make the subject matter interesting. The subject-matter provides the students with the context in which they need to understand the English of the classroom. The teacher can help the students learn the language faster by making the material interesting. There should be a two- way interaction between the teacher and the learners. The learners should be motivated and inspired to participate actively in the discussion. Not only this, the students should also be encouraged to apply what they learn in their classes to their conversation in daily life. They should be motivated to expand their vocabulary, to become more fluent and to adjust their linguistic behaviour to new situations or new roles. Professor Sheridan Blau suggests that the teachers should give open-ended questions to the students regarding the topic taught and then should ask the students to discuss the answers to these questions in small groups. If required, the teacher may translate the topic first in their native tongue and then proceed with the use of English with an aim to get comparatively better results. When the students start using what they have learnt in the classroom in their daily life, they find learning more meaningful and feel all the more motivated.

Planning strategically, the teachers should set long-term and short- term goals which are "desirable but realistic. The teacher's aspirations regarding these objectives need to be in proportion to the present potential of the student. The change or the modification in the syllabus should be recommended, if required. Lorenzo Fiorito rightly maintains "The teacher is a resource that helps students identify their language learning problems and find solutions to them." The teacher must create a congenial atmosphere so as to enhance the confidence, capability and efficiency of the students and should adopt a proper evaluating system on the basis of which their progress can be traced. There should be a continuous assessment of the teacher's performance as well.

Thus the problems related to teaching of English can be solved by the determination, serious and sincere efforts of the teachers, willingness to learn and work hard under the proper guidance and full cooperation, on the part of the learners, and full utilization of the resources and support system provided by organizations and the government.

---

## REFERENCES

1. Kachru, B.B. The indianisation of English. The English Language in India. New Delhi: OUP, 1983.
2. Lorenzo Fiorito, "Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)," Assorcorce (1997)<[http://www.usingenglish.com /teachers /articles/teaching\\_english\\_for\\_specific\\_purposes\\_esp.html](http://www.usingenglish.com /teachers /articles/teaching_english_for_specific_purposes_esp.html)>.
3. Fiorito 4-5.
4. Sheridan Blau, The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and Their Readers (Heinemann, 2003)<[http://wikienglish.ucsb.edu/index.php/Professor\\_Sheridan\\_Blau\\_answers\\_six\\_questions\\_on\\_teaching\\_English](http://wikienglish.ucsb.edu/index.php/Professor_Sheridan_Blau_answers_six_questions_on_teaching_English)>.
5. Fiorito 7.
6. Fiorito 23.