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**English Learning Made Easy- Strategies and Approaches**

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## Preface

Books are always our best companion. The idea of writing or editing a book remains always in our mind. Our students come from semi-urban background and not very fluent in English reading, writing and speaking. English is not just a Second language to them, but it is completely a foreign language to the rural background pupils. So, we research innovative techniques to make them familiar. This continuous research motivates us to edit a book on the topic. We can well see the potential of the book as it is not just about the 'Teaching' of English but basically about 'Learning' English as such. But of course it will be very helpful for ELT, per se.

The book making is a long process and it needs a careful study of area, topics and research methodologies, along with very intensive and extensive genuine research work before we start. The very first thing which struck our mind was to choose the topic which could be beneficial for students and teachers both. Our undergraduate students, who actually lack Basic English speaking, reading and writing standard, gave us many new topics to write. They and their problems motivated us to collect opinions of our fellow colleagues on the wider perspectives of the chosen topic and edit a book on the subject. We have endeavored to cover many areas which need to be given emphasize when we teach or learn English. Our main focus is to give tricks and useful tips to enhance and learn English as a second language.

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# Crisis of English Studies in Non-Metropolitan Cities and Towns

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"It is difficult to see adequately the functions of language, because it is so deeply rooted in whole of human behaviour that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behaviour in which language does not play its part" (Downs 1998) These lines are enough to depict the ubiquitous role played by the language. Language speaks volumes to unravel the personality of human being as his educational, social and cultural background gets reflected through it. So language acquisition becomes prime significant issue-for a person with a desire to upward mobility lucrative job recognition at social and workplace. As a teacher this is the pious duty of our community to help and motivate our students to acquire mastery over English. In this context it is necessary for most of us to realize that our contribution as a teacher remains incomplete if we treat our duties as done after completing the syllabi but we need to analyze our teaching skills and experiment with devices and techniques that turn language learning into a fun and motivate students for self-learning.

## **SOME FACTS ABOUT ENGLISH :**

1. English is spoken by over 300 million people as their native language.
2. 300 million people use English as second language and an additional 100 million people use it fluently as foreign language.
3. Latin was the medium of education in Western Europe throughout the middle ages while French was the language of diplomacy for four centuries, from the 17th to 20th.
4. In Indian sub-continent English became the dominant language of communication among the educated classes after the famous Minutes of Lord Macaulay in 1835.

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5. English has many varieties. Only British English has more than 30 varieties.

Basically the main problems encountered by an English teacher are :

- Overcrowded classrooms
- Time slot allotted to English
- Discipline Problem
- Hesitation of Students
- Fear of failure on the part of teacher
- Fear of school administration
- Lack of awareness of latest technology
- Reluctance to use innovative instructional material/technology by the teacher
- Fixed time frame to complete the syllabus

Thus it is essential even for the teachers to monitor their own linguistic skills and to make constant efforts for self evaluation and improvement. The heightened awareness of teacher can enable him/her to monitor :

- a) The sound system of different languages
- b) Differences between these sound systems
- c) Differences between varieties of native and non-native Englishes
- d) Differences between other non-native Englishes and Indian English (Sadanand, 19%).

The ideal model for imitation is not native English but Received Pronunciation (R.P.). It is the model that is spoken by a public school educated native speaker. It is standard and acceptable all over the world. Linguists believe that to enhance the oral communication of learners, teachers should not teach them about the language but the language itself, because language is not taught but caught. To develop the communicative skills of students they should be motivated to think in the target language which requires total involvement in fluency centered activities replaced by accuracy centered activities at higher level.

The reason for this drawback can be found in inadequate exposure to the language. Unfortunately we have largely ignored this fact in favour of

grammar teaching. To use language that is too formal and grammatical may actually interfere communication.

All that we have been teaching students in the language classroom is the theoretical grammar the rule governed English occupies the largest chunk of our classroom lecture. Sometimes the usage is very different from a layperson's understanding of the terms. We prescribe rules like- 'Do not end a sentence with a preposition' or 'Never split an infinitive'. All this prescriptive grammar is outdated and it has lost its relevance. This is true that over-emphasize on grammar teaching can lead to a pedantic, hair-splitting logic chopping in clever boys, and a superficial arrogance in dull.

The responses of English teachers and students make it clear, that the English teachers give over emphasize on theoretical aspect of grammar, which is taught through explanation of rules and definitions. The only option lying with students is to cram these rules. Cramming is an intellectual exercise, and memorization of theoretical rules does not guarantee learning as cognitive domain is far from application and psychomotor domain. Moreover, grammar itself is dull and mathematical in nature, and usually learners are uninterested in learning traditional grammar and if any language contains the complex method of grammar, they tend to dislike the same gradually.

This study establishes the fact that the ultimate goal of our teaching is to impart information. Teachers take their duties as done if their students secure good marks in examination. No effort was ever made by teachers to evaluate written skill, or oral skill of students outside their classroom. In most of the cases, our present examination system evaluates the memorization or cramming power of our students. They are never motivated to speak or write a few words on any general topic that shows their creativity, imagination or expression power. So, it can't be claimed that students studying in class 11 or 12 have acquired efficiency in expressing themselves in written form.

Moreover, the direct method has been found less effective than the interactive approach, Now, if the efficacy of interactive method has been established, why teachers in this part of our country still adhere to the traditional grammar-translation method? Why these new methods are not practiced in class-room teaching? Why grammar generates horror and fear

among students, who regard it as an abstruse subject, and why it is detested as dull and boring by learners who find it difficult to cram rules and definitions? All these questions are inter-related and need to be tackled simultaneously.

- (a) To generate interest among students, we have to concentrate on what is to be taught.
- (b) The syllabus of English has to be revamped and reconstructed.
- (c) Communicative syllabus and interactive approach should be introduced in the classroom.
- (d) English teachers have to refrain themselves from creating an autocratic ambience in the classroom. Democratic set-up of class helps students to express themselves, and put their queries to teachers.
- (e) The existing syllabus of language and methods of teaching grammar focuses on developing accuracy, while fluency is totally ignored at present. So, task based on fluency work can be designed by English teacher or the readymade task prepared by experts can be used for this purpose.
- (f) English newspapers, magazines and even comics can enrich the vocabulary of students. Picture books, illustrated books and comics etc. are good for beginners, as these are helpful in removing the fear from the mind of learners.
- (g) Programmes like English quiz, group discussion on a certain topic, debate, declamation, mime and extempore, must be introduced in schools. The introduction of these changes will break the monotony of English classrooms.
- (h) Students should be motivated to adopt following procedure to improve their English :
  - i. Read a quality newspaper.
  - ii. Read classic novels.
  - iii. Join a library
  - iv. Learn a word a day
  - v. Write short stories, poems e-mails etc.
  - vi. Buy a dictionary and a thesaurus



- vii. Do crosswords
- viii. Play word games
- ix. watch news channels like BBC and CNN
- x. Speak and listen
- xi. don't be afraid of making mistakes

National Knowledge Commission also emphasizes that proficiency in English is widely perceived as an important avenue for employment and upward mobility. which also greatly facilitates the pursuit of higher education. It advocates on incorporation of English into the curriculum from Class I because most of the language learning takes place in formative years of a child's life. It would help reduce the divide between English medium schools and regional language-medium schools. Since language learning takes place not only through direct instruction but also through assimilation from the environment, the classroom needs to be equipped with appropriate supplementary audio-visual and print material. Resource libraries could be set up in every classroom. comprising of a collection of books, magazines, newspapers, audiovisual material and posters, appropriate to the age of the students, on a variety of subjects. Language learning opportunities should also be created outside the classroom through specific bi-lingual radio and TV channels, which could be introduced for formal and informal teaching and learning of English only then language teaching can also become a fun for teachers.

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Dr. Monika Jaiswal has attained M.A & PhD in English literature. She has achieved her doctorate degree from S.S.J campus Almora Kumaun University, Nainital. She has taught in the deptt. of English in S.S.J campus Almora during session 2012-13. She also taught in the deptt. of Applied English M.J.P.R. University campus Bareilly for six years. Presently she is teaching as Assistant Prof. in the deptt. of English, IFTM University, Moradabad.