



## Teaching English Language Using Internet: An Effective Endeavour

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### Abstract

English Language Teaching (ELT) in India has always been a curious and fascinating phenomenon. It is more so because, the task has been challenging and does not yield expected results most of the times. The primary objective of ELT is to enable a student to use English language confidently and comfortably. However, even after following various popular methods, an English teacher remains clueless as to what goes wrong as s/he fails to attain the much desired goal!

Reasons can be plenty for this phenomenal failure. Between faulty curriculum and ill-equipped teachers, there have been several dark areas that hinder this noble endeavor to succeed. With the passage of time and the need for the idea to materialize, teachers and experts are in constant search for newer approaches and methodologies to achieve the mirage-like target.

Many a times, use of internet and technology in a classroom by an inquisitive and resourceful teacher adds fillip to the English language teaching-learning process. Internet, in addition to audio-visual aids, can be of great help to attract students' attention to learn the basic skills of listening and speaking. The present paper tries to explore the ways in which internet can be used to assist English language teaching in a classroom to facilitate a learner to acquire and improve the much sought after language skills.

**Keywords:** Phenomenon, ELT, methods, goal, teacher, classroom, internet.

### Introduction

The present paper has been divided into three parts; the first part deals with the status of English Language in India, the second part throws light on English Language Teaching in India and the last part tries to offer a few Internet sources that could be beneficial in teaching English for students especially of college.

### Part 1: Present Status of English in India

Everything around the language English in India is curious, strange, funny, and makes an interesting area for research. Basically, English as a language is the legacy of British who ruled India for nearly two centuries. Hence, it can be considered as the language of oppressors who have left some abhorring, indelible scars in the history of the nation. Still, English is revered, probably, more than any other Indian language in the country!

Then, English is the language which has been the reason for the death of innumerable languages worldwide. Even in India, a rich and classical language like Sanskrit which has a history of several centuries is struggling to survive the onslaught of English. Indians have least bothered to rejuvenate this language instead all the efforts are being made to enrich and promote English as it is considered the language of 'success!' There is lot of politics going on around English too. At present, in Karnataka, the government is mulling to introduce English from the elementary level of education not heeding

the warning of litterateurs, educationists, and pro Kannada activists. The government is trying to safeguard the interests of the 'commoners' in promoting English, but the 'commoners' do not know that only private schools which are mostly run by rich and powerful would be benefitted from this move. Lack of quality English teaching would ultimately prove death knell to already suffering government schools. One needs to understand this politics. English should not be promoted at the cost of regional languages.

As a dominant language of commerce and globalization, English has been a culprit for the death of many languages across the world. A native language dies when it is abandoned by the people of the region because they begin to believe that another language is more prestigious and useful than their own (Trask1994:69). There are many other languages which survive the onslaught of English and still prosper like German. But, not all the languages have that potential and end up on their death bed!

Keeping all these vital facts aside, if we look at the present state of English in India, it is the most sought-after language than any other Indian languages. People in India have a strange craze for this language because they are of the opinion that English is one language which can alter their lifeline. They believe that English is a readily available passport for success. Hence, most of the people here do not consider English an alien language, but an Indian language itself! Therefore it is not uncommon among people to have wishful

thinking to master this language against all the oddities they face!

## Part 2: Status of English Language Teaching in India

What is the role of English Language Teaching in such an atmosphere? And what is the present status of English Language Teaching in India? are the two pertinent questions one need to answer. One can dislike or hate English, but one can't neglect English in India. Such is the formidable power of this language. Education in English began in India in the year 1765 when the British East India Company became a political power<sup>1</sup>. It has never stopped from then. Therefore, English Language Teaching in India assumes great importance here. As Devika Malini has pointed out, there have been 3 approaches to English Language Teaching in India<sup>2</sup>.

- i). English for Academic Purposes.
- ii). English for Occupational Purposes, and
- iii). English for Specific Purposes.

Among these three approaches, English for academic purposes is of great concern to all of us English teachers. Because, here we meet a large chunk of students. The main intention in this approach is to enable students to learn English that can be used in day today life.

When it comes to the issue of the present status of English Language Teaching in India, generally, it looks abysmal. Reasons for this are many. To have a quick look at these problems which are usually known by English teachers,

- **Mother Tongue Influence:** When students learn English as a second language, the biggest problem they have is, their mother tongue influence on English learning. Due to this influence, they cannot think in English, cannot pronounce English as it should be pronounced, or they fail to write English correctly as the sentence structure would differ in these two languages.
- **Lack of English Learning Environment:** In schools and colleges, students get an opportunity to listen to English only in English classes and not in other classes. Starting from primary education to the university level education, it is true. This is more so in government institutions. Many a times, even English teachers too use bilingual method and students are not given ample opportunities to learn skills of English language.
- **Overcrowded Classrooms:** Many government colleges face this problem. When the classes are overcrowded, the activity of teaching-learning takes backseat. The situation is worse in language learning.
- **Ill Structured Classrooms:** Usually most of our classrooms are uniformly designed. A teacher has to stand and teach and students are made to sit in desks and listen. Not much scope is there for both of them to move around, even if such a scenario arises. This kind of ill equipped and ill structured classrooms definitely hinder learning outcomes of a learner.
- **Faulty Syllabi:** Most of the times, English syllabi lack proper objectives and hence, the learning outcome would be poor. The syllabi are designed not keeping in mind the changing trends and use of language in society. The syllabi force teachers to follow the same old methods of teaching, and hence they too fail miserably.
- **Incompetent Teachers:** It is unfortunate that a vital area like Education too is not devoid of corruption. Ill-equipped and business-minded education training institutes breed incompetent teachers and such teachers

get absorbed by the corrupt recruitment system. Such teachers often fail to deliver in the classroom and generations of students suffer.

- **English is taught as a Subject Not as a Language:** It has been a tradition to teach two languages along with other compulsory subjects in schools and colleges. The result is that even these languages are taught like that of other subjects. Thrust is not given to teach and test language skills of students. Hence, students fail to learn skills and in the examination their sole aim would be to 'pass' it. To do this, they take refuge in guides and other secondary materials which assist them in clearing the exam but not to improve their language skills.

## Part 3: Use of Internet in English Language Classrooms

English Language Teaching in India is often considered to be a failed enterprise due to the above mentioned reasons. It is successful mostly in institutions where education is available only in English medium. Other institutions fail to meet the expectations of not only students but also the society. Several methods have been in place for English Language Teaching. One wonders whether the fault lies with these methods themselves. The popular methods followed in Indian classrooms are:

- **Direct Method:** It is considered to be the best method for teaching a foreign language. This method does not allow the interference of native language in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the learning of target language becomes easy. It is followed by English medium institutions where such an environment exists.
- **Language through Literature Method:** In this method, which is in vogue even today, English is taught using poetry, prose, and plays, the popular literary genres. Often students enjoy these classes but fail to learn the language.
- **Grammar Translation Method:** This method gives priority to translation to and from English and importance is given to learn grammar rules. Not much scope is given here to improve speaking skills of a learner.
- **Structural Approach:** In this method care is taken to teach sentence structures and patterns to learners. The belief behind this system is that language is best learnt when there is a scientific selection and grading of structures or patterns of sentences and vocabulary.
- **Total Physical Response:** It is a method developed by James Asher, a professor of Psychology at San Jose State University. This method involves commands by the teacher with physical gestures and the learners learn structures of the language and improve their language skills.

There are several other methods followed by teachers depending upon their classroom environment. But, teaching of English as a second language has got its own challenges and as mentioned earlier teachers often struggle to materialize their sole aim of enabling their students to learn English in a proper way. In such a situation, internet can be used effectively to improve the teaching-learning environment.

With the passage of time and advancement of technology, there have been efforts to bring in technology into classrooms. Therefore many institutions have introduced Language laboratories and smart classrooms in order to improve the level of teaching-learning activity.

There has already been a concept called Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in this direction. Internet plays a

pivotal role in these methods. Even ordinary classrooms can be transformed greatly with the use of computers and internet. Students of today are much addicted to computers and mobile phones. As internet has become fairly cheap these days, they tend to use it recklessly. However, if we teachers channelize them in a proper way, internet can be of greater help in English language learning. Below given are a few websites, channels and applications that assist students to improve their language learning.

- **YouTube:** YouTube is a video-sharing website owned by Google. It offers hundreds of English language learning lessons hosted by numerous persons and agencies. 'Let's talk' is one such institute in Mumbai that offers viewers many English language lessons by experienced trainers. Even a prestigious institute like British Council offers language learning lessons that are of great help to learners.
- YouTube also offers English language lessons through regional languages. A well-known person like Prakruthi N Banavasi has his English-through-Kannada lessons on YouTube as its reach is far and wide. These lessons are definitely of great help to those people who are not that well versed in English and who wish to learn through their mother-tongue.
- 'Ted Talks' is one more programme that inspires listeners to follow English. These short talks are given by well-known personalities from across the world. The speeches are informative, educative and sometimes funny which quickly draw the attention of the listeners.
- There are also many channels like Daily English Conversation which offer lessons in vocabulary and conversation practice. Lessons in this channel are usually lengthy and include even listening practice.
- There is one more channel EnglishLessons4U which provides lessons on grammar, vocabulary, confusing words, phrasal verbs and conversation practice for particular situations. Learners can follow their website [www.engvid.com](http://www.engvid.com) for these lessons.
- There is also a website [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com) that helps one to improve his/her writing skills. The concentration here is on correct use of grammar in writing.
- A website by name [www.shawenglish.com](http://www.shawenglish.com) claims to post 3 videos every week on English grammar, vocabulary, listening and speaking skills. Videos on these are available in their library and users can make the best use of them to enhance their language skills.
- Most of these services are free of cost. However, there are many web services that are paid. Websites like [www.fluentu.com](http://www.fluentu.com) and [www.effortlessenglishclub.com](http://www.effortlessenglishclub.com) offer English lessons at fixed prices. But, most of these are not Indian websites and they are not suited for Indian learners.
- Apart from learning, one can even test his/her language skills online. Prestigious institutions like Cambridge and Oxford universities assist us in testing our level of English through their online tests.

Apart from these online channels and websites, there are several mobile phone applications that assist people to learn and improve their English. A teacher needs to guide the students to these applications so that they can use them during their free time effectively. A few notable applications are: Extramarks – The Learning App, Utter – Speak Better English, Hello English : Learn English, Learn English Daily, Basic English for Beginners, Learn to Speak English, English

Listening and Speaking, Spoken English in 10 days, Learn English Step by Step – Spoken English App, etc.

## Conclusion

English Language Teaching in India has always been a difficult task for teachers who serve in government institutions, small cities and towns. The case is worse in rural areas. In such a situation, computers and internet can be used effectively to improve the English language teaching-learning environment, at least in higher education institutions. Whatever may be the tool and mode of teaching, it is left to the discretion of a well-equipped teacher to enhance students' language skills. Only a resourceful teacher can bring in positive changes in students, with or without these facilities!

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