

Role of English for Specific Purposes in the 21st Century-Paths and Challenges

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***Abstract:** The paper reviews the ever changing significance of English in brief in order to know about the trends of teaching that revolutionized the language learning especially as the Second Language in India. The emergence of increased importance of English language is traced peeping into retrospect with a view to feel the pulse of Higher Education in India. This enables the reader to realize the widened gap occurred on account of fighting for freedom from British English, which was to be replaced by regional languages. The advent of Information and Communication Technology, ICT and its influence exerted globally, made it a language used for various purposes. Visualizing the scenario in the field of Science and Technology, the paper sorts out the problems cropping up there of and furnishes a certain solutions clubbed with experiences of classroom teaching giving scope for further research by exploring the areas open for meticulous and close study through Action Researches.*

Introduction:

Language for special purposes in register based enunciation of methods for promoting language skills required in a particular field of study. The language mechanism has to be disseminated in terms of the special purposes bridging the previous knowledge with the abridged grammaticality unlike that of the one exclusively for enjoyment of literature. The communicative aspect has to be safe guarded by a judicious administering of language components. The destiny of empowerment lies in the innovative ways of acquiring language skills.

Role of English:-

Retrospect and Prospect

"A University stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the onward march of human race towards even higher objectives. If the Universities discharge their duties adequately, then it will be well with the nation and people."

- Jawaharlal Nehru in his address to a convocation of Allahabad University in 1947.

There are three aspects of higher education, which are of relatively recent origin_Social, economic and industrial specialisation. The tendency has been strengthened due to expansion of knowledge since, within given time it is not possible to include vast areas of disciplines or

subjects in the curriculum. For example philosophy gave birth to psychology and many specialisations including various sciences. Because of specialisation today's student in higher education knows more and more about less and less and sometimes special efforts are necessary to create a broader understanding of subjects and disciplines. The second aspect is that societies grew complex, more selective and efficient means of cultural transmission evolved. The curriculum has crystallised into clear-cut papers of courses.

The third aspect is creation of knowledge. There exists a symbiotic relation between research and specialisation of knowledge and skills.

In Europe the trivium (study of grammar logic and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). These seven liberal arts were added to medicine, law and administration in medieval period. The process of refinement, transmission, and exploration widened the arena of learning.

The Education commission (1964 – 66) by D.S. Kothari says, "The universities should seek and cultivate new knowledge, engage vigourously and fearlessly in the pursuit of truth and interpret old knowledge and beliefs in the light of new needs and discoveries."

Higher levels of per capita income are also based on higher levels of scientific and technological attainment. Economic development depends upon intelligent and wise consumption Education contributes to both.

"Woods Despatch"(Charles Woods) of 1854 gave support to technical education and women's education.

Making a case for the study of English under ESP:

Calcutta University commission Report (1919) and University Education commission (1948) strengthened the view that sciences, technology and selective institutions remain firmly anchored to English.

In the wake of globalisation and the age of Information Communication Technology (ICT), the working knowledge of English has to be devised in order to cope with the fastly changing scientific development. For instance every few months or even every few weeks we hear of new discoveries and new applications in computers. In order to keep pace with this speed, the educator should devise means for quick acquisition of language skills needed for each area of operation. This raises a curtain for the study 'English for Specific Purposes'

Need for ESP:

The explosion of knowledge has hastened the learner to shift him/herself to pour through a number of books of technical nature in order to up-date his assumptions. Communication is the

medium through which he/she can assert her influence of learning and apt attitudes. He / She must be in a position to communicate with energy. The ' ACE ' system of technical worthiness to manage things to become a promising youth of career building is the objective of Technical Education. The assumptions are formed as a result of in-depth understanding of the content subject. English language has to be studied for the acquisition of skills. The energy refers to the personality development. With the advent of the emerging urgent needs the age-old method of learning a language for pedantry and argument are not workable. So the objective based programming of the language study is named English for Specific Purposes. The structures, vocabulary and the functional grammar are to envisaged by the teachers / planners of curricula, accordingly. Instant and precise practice - items of language are to be brought to light.

Content Subjects and Register:

Every branch of knowledge uses words and phrases particular to the specific branch. It is more so with science and technology, purely literature mode of language is not desirable. The rhetoric has no place in technical studies. As such the straightforward and clear expression in language is of greater importance today. The changes in computer usages have given rise to registers, peculiar to science and technology. Humanities too are studied according to cause and effect mode and so the use of English language has turned to be functional rather than theoretical. They have created a particular way of putting things named as register. Hence the teachers of English have to modernise the very grammatical approach, in line with the needs of the branches concerned

Innovative Language Learning:

To day's classrooms have to be furnished with gadgets useful for communication in addition to the teacher as a programmer. The language lab assistance has helped the teacher in the 21st century. For example exposure to radio and T.V has been replaced by speaking and correcting devices in language learning. In the days to come grammatical rules are to be arrived at by a certain games in the usage. In other words there is more feasibility of exposure to language than it was felt earlier in the last century. Just like the chapters under content subjects English Language learning is going to be conducted in programming process rather than in teaching learning ones. So the teachers of English have to devise their teaching with the help of innovative methods of teaching. In the place of deductive method of rule to explanation, we the teachers have to lead the learners to arrive at the principles after scanning and analysis of the examples to frame rules through inductive method.

Non-verbal assistance in language learning:

Now that the scientific terms have gained ground the graphic representation speaks more than the verbal directions. The nomenclature and terminology has to be revamped so as to suit

the concept of scientific presentation. For example the term Affirmative or Assertive has to be known as positive and the opposite sense, opposite to it may as the negative. In the place of subject and predicate division the segmental names like subject(s), verb(v), object(o), and complement(c) can be introduced. This attitudinal change in acquisition leads to realise English for Specific Purposes.

ESP CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Condensation of learning units:

ESP entails the lessening of burden of students in the wake of pressing overload of content subjects. The competitive examinations are coercive on the part of the students so as to almost neglect the comprehensive knowledge of English Grammar.

Francis Bacon opined that grammar is learnt only once in one's life. Grammar once ingrained cannot be forgotten. But the present day explosion of branches of knowledge does not enable the learner to attain a comprehensive knowledge of the mechanism of the language. The tit bits of pragmatic use of language items are difficult to be earmarked. No frequency tables are available to follow except the basic words to be found in advanced dictionaries. So the learning of language items covered may prove to be inadequate for communication. The proposed ESP poses challenges to be faced by the educator to realise its purpose.

The remedy of this short coming can be met by taking up gradation of structures useful for technical communication and the communication for human relationships and management of enterprises. Now that teaching learning has emerged as an enterprise the teacher of English has to be an explorer cum interpreter of second language, that has got amalgamated with new global culture.

Declensions and Juxtapositions:

An imaginative teacher draws the attention of students towards various forms of categorical words i.e, parts of speech. Instead of giving a wide range of rules for defining each item, the teacher can make the students realise the difference when the form of a particular category undergoes, a change in structure. The learner has to place them in appropriate blocks of a structure. Even the common structures employed in technical text books (eg. active and passive voice, position and its way of stating or the use of be-forms) can be taken as examples. This will make the language learning an easy task.

Non recognition of a word (modern grammar calls it as 'origin ') and how it inflects is a major hurdle experienced at the tertiary level. For example students cannot distinguish between 'sale' and 'sell' and commit errors in usage.

Common Error Approach:

An error is to be kept away from exposure. In its place a correct form should be repeated intensively. Most of the grammatical enunciations take up errors to give the correct ones later. Errors in English usage are based on the influence of the regional languages. Of course a few errors can be taken up when the students have grappled with the usage to a great extent. It is posing a challenge in that the teacher has to manage both the corrected ones and the mistaken ones.

The utility of a grammatical chapter:

We as teachers ask the student to transform a sentence into another mode e.g: from Direct to Reported speech, from Simple to Compound, Complex and Compound Complex sentences. The purpose of doing so, is not made clear. Language moves from one mode to the other basing on context, aiming at brevity, lucidity and vividity, depending upon the mode of expression. Even the text book of content subject cannot use a stereotyped expression let us say only the simple sentence mode and active voice mode. The challenge of this type can be solved by giving stress on utility of transformation. For example, a sentence in passive voice can avoid the mention of the real doer. It can go on with the assumption of familiar or known doers. For example, in a sentence, 'The results were announced', a passive voice is clear to a set of taker of an examination. The importance is attached to 'results', the topic of statement and the reference of the 'time' here is the past tense. Some other structures of the kind are to be graded in order to make ESP program a success.

Observation of grammaticality by content teachers:

Though English is the medium of instruction in technological (higher educational) institutions, grammar is given a holiday when a teacher of a content subject deals with his own chapter of study. These teachers can be encouraged to follow the rules of grammar. The staff rooms should maintain the decorum of using English for communicative purposes leaving the love of mother tongue aside for the benefit of students, English language is proved to be a bread winner in global village of the world, beside being the part and parcel of new culture of language of the communication and technology.

Notice board and announcement systems:

The officers, heads of departments and Directors release notices with poor management, of statements, paving the way for ambiguity. Even after struggling against ambiguity the taker of the notice, never bothers about the erroneous usages. The official jargon should be well maintained in order to overcome the challenge which seems trivial in the beginning, but it will tell upon the writing skills. Likewise, clear and well managed announcements, orders and appeals on audio recorders too should guard the language aspect.

Assignment evaluation a hurried affair:

The language aspect in ESP is not that serious while we refer to content subjects. Written exercises in content subjects too are to be taken care of as far as its language usage is concerned. “Writing makes an exact man” is the maxim. Writing is a prompt skill to be attained. In the process of writing there lies the knowledge of communication done after a careful self revision the practice of which goes a long way in communication through other means. So assignment evaluation should not become a hurried affair but a calculated one.

Conclusion:

English for Special Purposes is the order of the day, inevitable in its practice and prompt in usage. Though there are challenges as the stumbling blocks, we as teachers of English can overcome with some resourcefulness at our side. Action researches have to be encouraged at the institutional level in order to make the programme a success. Teachers of English have to keep abreast of changing cultural scenario by way of research and development especially regarding the cultural ethos of English in the interest of the taught

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