

Barriers in Teaching English

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Abstract: *When teaching English a teacher may face many problems or barriers. Not all these problems can be removed, but an effort must be put to tackle those problems that can be tackled, and must be dealt with patiently and effectively. By eliminating these barriers there is a more effective communication between the students and the teacher and the teaching becomes more effective. The barriers may be due to the teacher or the student or between the teacher and the student. The barriers faced by the students and between the students and teacher must be dwelled upon and should be tackled with the help of their teacher's. Even the barriers between teachers and students must be worked out patiently. The barriers faced by teachers on the other hand cannot only be worked out by the teachers themselves as they may not even realise them. Here is where the students can help by pointing them out and even giving suggestions. This research paper analysis the different kinds of barriers prevailing among the present day learners.*

I. Introduction

Some of the barriers faced by the teachers may be obvious to them, Barriers such as difference in culture can be felt by them and must be slowly dissolved and removed. The students must feel comfortable with the teacher so that there can be effective learning. Some other are not so obvious to teachers such as poor teaching methodology. These can be felt by students, and should respectfully ask for some changes where needed. Some other barriers are not so apparent or visible but when found can be dealt with such as lack of innovation. There exist some more barriers which cannot be solved but do still exist. Dealing with these is not in the hand of the teachers or the students, one of them is the lack of infrastructure. For any barrier the first step to overcoming it is knowing it. Only by knowing a barrier can we overcome it. One of the best ways to finding out a problem is from the people involved in it. Students are an integral part of teaching and are very important for finding the barriers in teaching.

II. Student's attitude towards learning English

English is one of the mandatory courses offered in professional colleges, because it's a globally accepted language and knowing how to handle English effectively is vital to survive in today's competitive world. But, most students ignore this fact and do not put much effort in learning English.

Most students have a care free attitude towards learning English. When compared to science subjects, English is given far less priority by the students. They don't attend their classes regularly, submit their assignments on time or even prepare for the exam properly. They bunk English classes whenever possible and spend time with friends. Most students have a misconception that they can get good grades in English without preparing for it. Students do not take into consideration that even if they can converse in English well does not necessarily mean that they would not make any grammatical mistakes and that English classes are very important for developing written communication skills which are necessary when they start working.

One of the main reasons for this kind of negative attitude towards learning English is that, they are more comfortable learning English rather than a foreign language like English. If a student is always surrounded by friends who speak a common language other, other than English, do not feel the need to practice their English. But being in the field of science and technology at some point of time they will have to communicate with people who would not speak their native language.

Students learn English for short term goals like passing their exams, and attending job interview rather than the pleasure of learning a new language. This will lead to a tendency to mug up text books which may let them pass the exams but would not be of much help in the future. Teacher's attitude can also cause indiscipline on the part of students. A good English teacher must motivate his students to learn and use English even outside his classroom. He should have adequate knowledge in English and he should correct his students without insulting them or hurting their ego. He should try to make an informal environment where students are allowed to communicate with him freely.

But most students do not feel that their culture and their ways are threatened by learning it. With right amount of encouragement on the part of teachers and parents we can change the negative attitude of students towards learning English. Students need to recognize how useful English is going to be in their future.

III. Poor teaching methodology

One of the major reasons the standard of education is going downhill is the poor teaching methodology. While teaching English, the teacher has to help the students in many aspects, and not just textual matter. This calls for interactive sessions between the teacher and the students, and among the students. In the present scenario, students are seldom allowed to express their opinions in class. There is little or no space for debates and discussions. Students should be allowed to choose their own topics and discuss about it, so that they can practice talking in English comfortably. When it comes to literature, more often than not, students end-up mugging up classroom notes instead of acknowledging and enjoying the beauty of the language. Textual matter includes someone else's point of view on any matter. It does not bring out the student's views on the topic. This way his creativity to read into things and his own thoughts are suppressed. Also, very often, the focus is on grammar, instead of the language in general. Many fail to understand that the language is not limited to grammar and syntax. Lack of tolerance and patience in some teachers towards students, who are slow in grasping what they are taught, is another problem to be addressed. Some students have the problem of stammering while speaking. Teachers should help them overcome this by imparting them confidence and giving them enough practice in spoken English. One of the most inadequate methods of evaluation of one's knowledge of English, is the present system of theory examinations. Written examinations mostly judge students' ability to memorize literature and by heart formats for letters and other writing skills. They don't effectively bring out students' understanding of the language, nor do they help them express their creativity. Students are often forced to write what the teacher or the education board thinks is right and seldom allowed to write his own views.

These issues can be resolved by taking appropriate steps to improve teaching methodology. Teachers should have a better understanding of what should be delivered and how. Teachers should pay more attention to slow learners, to help them improve their language. Teachers should come up with more interactive ways to teach the subject. There should be various open sessions where students can talk and express their opinions on different topics. Debate sessions, skits, role plays, extempore speeches, etc will help to build up confidence in students. In literature, beauty of novels and poems should be brought out rather than asking students to mug up questions and answers. This way, teaching and learning of English language can be improved and can be made more enjoyable.

IV. Lack of innovation

To overcome the poor teaching methodology teacher must bring innovation and variation in their teaching. Generally English teachers hesitate to bring changes in their teaching style which could crop up as a barrier in their own profession that is teaching English. Innovation sounds weird in English teaching but in contemporary world there are many ways that can be merged with the existing ways of handing over the knowledge of English to next generation.

It has been seen that unlike teachers of other trade teachers of English subject find less scope bringing variation in their teaching style. They mainly stick to writing and grammars during their classes but forget that pronunciation, interaction and verbal command over the language is equally important in the context of subject. And these can be achieved by innovation. Talking about innovation what is innovation? It's mainly an off track path in right direction. English teachers can innovate in number ways like giving different kinds of assignments, projects, paper presentation to improve their writing skills and make students more interactive. Drama, plays for strengthen verbal and communicative part there personality. Adding gems to the crown can done by arranging language lab for upgrading their pronunciation. As it has been already proven that more the senses one engage in learning more one acquire.

It would be rather great if teacher shake hands with existing technology and impart their knowledge through them. As students are so close and comfortable with gadgets and new technology that learning via them would no longer be learning rather it would turn into day to day exploration of things, knowledge and more importantly fun. Today's learner enjoys life full of gadgets and teachers can exploit the same, they may use projectors for class based learning and website especially social networking sites for non-class based learners. Thus a teacher can be very effective and efficient if he/she puts above changes to his/her teaching style.

Practical teaching

English is a language which is necessary and compulsory for most people. English is basically needed for communication. It is being tested in all education levels and is even being checked in interviews for jobs. English is spread throughout the world and is used to communicate between people of different parts of the world. English should be taught in ways that allow the person to be able to properly communicate. In many institutes the proper practical aspects such as proper communication and speech skills are not taught. They simply make the students mug up literature answers and the rules of grammar. This is not useful for improving the practicality of English that is speech skills. Written exams are not very practical they do not promote imagination or extemporaneousness. One of the most practical aspects of a language is spontaneity. To promote

this, there should be various open sessions where students can talk and express their opinions on different topics. Debate sessions, skits, role plays, extempore speeches, etc. will help to build up confidence in students. Only through confidence and practice can a student gain the ability to properly communicate using a language. Even to improve written skills we need to nurture the imagination of students. An English teacher's job is not just to teach their students the rules of grammar and mug up literature. It is in fact to, make them open minded, spontaneous and confident in their skill in English language, so that they can speak with confidence.

V. Difference in culture and accent

When we learn a language, we learn the culture of the place where the language belongs to. In many parts of the world people are hesitant to accept new cultures and inculcate them. English has many cultures in it and as it spreads more and more added to it. This hesitance also acts as a barrier for teaching English. For an English teacher he or she has reach across these barriers to teach students. Culture is taught in a situation which prepares students for a visit or work in a new environment even though the student is physically away from the place. A teacher can make the student comfortable and prepare him to adopt a different culture and more importantly the language, which is English here. Each situation determines the aim of teaching culture and range of topics that are considered important to be taught. The main aim is to provide cultural knowledge as it is often the case in the first situation. There may even be problems for students to understand what the teacher is teaching due to their difference in English. A new teacher must first go slowly so that the students can get used to it.

Cultural barriers can be overcome by blending the student to new horizon of global language and culture. To achieve this teacher must go for the philosophy theory and principals of English language. Other problem a teacher and a student faces is difference in accent. It has been seen that English teachers are not native one and possess alien accent to the students bound to their own mother tongue which may work well for his/her community or circle but student have to adjust to a very different tone and vocabulary. Teachers must understand that he cannot succeed in his goal of imparting knowledge unless and until he tries to matches his tone to the native one. For example if a teacher is south Indian and students belong to western part of world then listening to the lecture would be as difficult as talking shower under boiling water.

VI. Lack of infrastructure

One of the basic problems faced by teachers in teaching English is lack of infrastructure. Lack of infrastructure is basically the lack of availability of good material and methods of teaching. For teaching the common methods are through the reading of literature and teaching the basics and rules of grammar. Even finding the right literature is difficult. For one, reading too old a literature can be found to be very difficult for students and for starters they may not be able to keep up. Also the difficulty in old literature is very great compared to modern day word usage. Many words in old literature are no more in use now and may not be useful to students who only want to learn English for communication purposes. There are not many new substantial literary pieces which are available and also affordable to students. In many remote areas there may not even be general books of English are available. The new books are based on easy communication to the reader and do not use tough vocabulary. These may give a basic grasp on the language but not the language itself. A person learning English only from new material may be able communicate what he is thinking but it may not be proper and may be full of misplaced words. He would also not be able to grasp completely, what is said to him as he will not have a good command on the language.

Taking about the infrastructure what kind of infrastructure can we put into for teaching English? Well it may consist of Language labs, eBooks, blogs for teaching different aspect of the subject in more interactive way depending upon the circumstance and the level of student's understanding. Another main problem faced by English teachers is teaching grammar. This is also mainly due to lack of proper infrastructure for teaching. When a teacher simply keeps teaching or repeating the rules of grammar most of the students will not be able to keep up and will lose interest. Even those who are able to follow will not be able to apply it readily. Even if taught more intuitively, the current methods and infrastructure is not enough. We need more interactive methods where the student is kept interested and which enables the teacher to actually know whether the student is understanding or not. It should not be a weekly or even a daily event like putting tests, but should take place simultaneously with teaching and should not be differentiated from it. Tests only burden the students and are not really ways of testing whether a student has understood or not. Tests do not allow a student to apply his knowledge to its entirety and only test some specific parts. When testing is integrated directly and spontaneous with teaching the student doesn't miss any point and with every mistake he makes he will learn. Also testing continuously increases his application of the grammar.

This lack of innovative technology which can keep up with the student in each step of his learning and lack of good material makes it difficult or act as barriers for a teacher teaching English to his or her students.

VII. Conclusion

We have seen many barriers in teaching English to most barriers of these; there exist some means to overcome them. These means should be found out and inculcated. To learn English is not difficult but to use it, is. Teachers should not only teach English but should also teach the students to use it. This cannot be done by the teacher alone but needs the complete cooperation and obedience of the students. When all is said and done the teacher and student must coordinate to create a harmonious and non-problematic teaching environment.

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