

Chapter- 7

Challenges and Tactics in English Language Teaching from an Indian Perspective

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Introduction

Teaching English in India holds a unique and complex position, shaped by the country's colonial history, diverse linguistic landscape, and socio-economic disparities. As one of the most widely spoken languages globally, English bridges communication, education, and economic mobility. In India, it is not merely a language but a symbol of aspiration and opportunity, often regarded as a tool for upward social mobility and a gateway to global integration. However, English Language Teaching (ELT) in India is fraught with challenges, ranging from resource constraints and pedagogical gaps to linguistic diversity and socio-cultural barriers.

India's multilingual environment, with over 1,600 spoken languages, poses both opportunities and hurdles for ELT. While this diversity enriches the linguistic repertoire of learners, it also complicates the process of teaching English, which often functions as a second or third language. Moreover, the stark contrast between urban and rural educational settings further intensifies these challenges, as rural schools frequently lack trained teachers, adequate teaching materials, and infrastructural support.

This research paper seeks to explore the strategies employed by educators to navigate these challenges and to critically examine the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches in the Indian context. By analyzing the successes and shortcomings of ELT strategies, the paper aims to contribute to a more inclusive and effective framework for English language education in India. Ultimately, this study highlights the

importance of contextualized teaching practices that respect India's linguistic diversity while addressing the practical needs of learners in different socio-economic settings.

ELT in India

English Language Teaching (ELT) in India occupies a unique and multifaceted role, deeply intertwined with the nation's historical, social, and educational dynamics. As a legacy of British colonial rule, English has transitioned from being a language of governance to a vital tool for global communication and socio-economic advancement. In contemporary India, English is more than just a language—it is a marker of opportunity, a bridge to global networks, and a means of upward mobility in an increasingly interconnected world.

India's multilingual fabric, with its vast array of regional languages, presents both opportunities and challenges for ELT. While English often serves as a lingua franca in this linguistically diverse nation, its adoption and teaching are influenced by regional, cultural, and socio-economic disparities. The coexistence of English with indigenous languages in a multilingual setting creates a dynamic yet complex educational environment, requiring nuanced strategies to address the needs of learners across varying contexts.

Despite its perceived importance, ELT in India faces numerous challenges, including unequal access to quality education, a shortage of trained English language teachers, and the lack of resources in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. Moreover, the debate over English versus vernacular instruction continues to influence educational policies, reflecting broader socio-political considerations.

This paper delves into the landscape of ELT in India, examining the strategies employed to overcome these challenges and the implications for language education in a rapidly evolving society. By exploring innovative teaching methodologies, policy interventions, and the integration of technology, this study aims to provide insights into creating an inclusive and effective framework for English language learning in the Indian context.

The Basic Difficulties in English Language Teaching

First, the ELT in India, particularly in the north of Vindhya, suffered a sharp decline with a sickening disorder on account of extra academic factors. Nearly a half-century or so ago, there was turmoil all over the country on the Hindi-English issue. In the north, the advocates of Hindi or Hindustani wanted the complete removal of English from courses of school and college studies. Interestingly, in the south, the anti-Hindi activists launched prolonged and vigorous agitations and campaigns in favour of the English. According to the constitution of India, a federal structure of democratic polity, education is a concurrent subject controlled by both governments. As the result of continuous and persistent agitation, English Language Teaching in some of the states in north India was altogether stopped so that even today tens and thousands of people who, otherwise competent in their late fifties and sixties, have no knowledge of English and feel handicapped and helpless in their day-to-day life. Though the situation has improved now with considerable interest, the problem still exists in a sizable section of the Indian population which looks upon English Language Teaching as a colonial and imperialist legacy. Only a few realize that English is not only merely a link language in India but also a language of global necessity. Second, ever since Independence, the Indian educational system has encountered many commissions and committees set up for the ostensible purpose of introducing new policies and bringing out reforms in the existing policies in the education system. The commissions and committees so set up have submitted and are still submitting their reports to the government and the recommendations so made have been considered or adopted for making changes in the system of education including the ELT. It is noteworthy; regrettably, that the sudden and unwarranted, uncalled for changes have also been made in the curriculum from time to time with the result that adhocism and improvisation continue to be the hallmark of the education system and policy in India. What the need of the hour is the right kind of education, whether language learning or teaching demands elaborate and careful planning with utmost regularity, continuity, consistency and stability. Education is a discipline that should be taken care of and should not be

toyed of trifled with for the mere sake of experiments. Third, as a sequel to the second one, the ELT is delicate because it involves all three human components: the child, the adolescent and the adult. In a country like India, there is hardly any coordination at all between primary and secondary education on the one hand and higher education on the other. In other words, there is not even a semblance of coordination between primary education and secondary education. These three levels of education form separate categories, bodies or entities and are independent. It is regrettable that the system leaves hardly any scope for a proper screening of the students to be done in view of their age, aptitude, motivation, factors among others governing the process of language learning or acquisition. All these are deplorable and have an adverse and deleterious effect on the ELT in India. Last, this problem is too difficult to understand and appreciate as the nature and importance of governing bodies concerning the system of education. The various boards of education and State Councils of Education and Research Training (SCERT), the University Academic Councils (UAC), the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Department of Education at state level and the Ministry of Human Resource Development are keen on improving and updating the courses of studies in all disciplines from time to time. In this process of doing all these, the ELT is also sought to be improved, updated and rationalized as far as possible. It is disheartening to note that the whole efforts if taken have been thwarted because of an attitude of unhealthy rivalry between the language and linguistic people on the one hand and the people who pose to advocate the cause of literature on the other. The two camps are distinctly divided, and the division is maintained so well that it causes damage to the study of English language and literature. To strengthen the point highlighted and to have a better understanding of the language proficiency of the students, an analytical survey based on the data collected from the tertiary level students from the regional medium backup and students with English medium backup was taken. The following table indicates the categories and the specifications of analysis. The respondents have been selected based on random sampling with varied caste and creed.