



Social Variables Influencing Second Language Acquisition with Specific Reference to English Language

Sharada Mani. N

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Training and Development

EFL- University, Hyderabad- 500007

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate through the collection of empirical data based on questionnaire into the present status of English Teaching and learning in Hyderabad based on two kinds of schooling system in order to survey the problems and drawbacks associated with the present system and how to enhance to higher level with the help of recent advances in audio-visual communication technology. The study grapples with problems related to the administration and how they can be resolved by the support from both sides of teaching faculty and government encouragement. There is an opinion that the present schooling system is adequate to meet the challenges of rapidly changing world order with migration to the first world countries where English is the language for all purposes. Command over English language is a prime necessity for the future of any work force and also adoption of new knowledge systems to improve both lifestyles as well as levels of education. It is with this view that the present survey is conducted to critically scrutinise English Language learning and teaching and whether the present efforts are adequate to address the future challenges.

Keywords

English Teaching and Learning, Present Pedagogy, Problems of Administration Suggestions for improvement.

Introduction

There is a general opinion that the present status of English Language Learning at school level in India is not adequate enough to train the students to meet the needs of communication both for higher education and employment. There is an urgent need to periodically survey, review and enhance both the theoretical aspects with evidence from syllabus designing to the



methods adopted in the classroom suited to the mindset of the students. The old methods of teacher centred learning are not only obsolete but woefully inadequate by the change brought in the innovative methods of teaching. At present the focus has shifted to learner centred mode of teaching and every aspect of teaching is concentrated on how to speed up the learning capabilities and address the drawbacks in the process of learning. The study is based on empirical data collected government and private schools by discussing and involving students, teachers and administration to cumulatively identify the key issues and also how to resolve them. In addition suggestions and innovations are offered after thorough discussion with all the members involved so that the overall, ecosystem of learning can be incrementally improved and education will have lifetime impact on the improving opportunities and lifestyle of the learners.

Second language is a language of communication other than the mother tongue of a learner also known as L2 in academic parlance. Universally mother tongue is the first language that a learner imbibes unconsciously and unintentionally. It is not an exaggeration to say that the implicit learning that takes place in the acquisition of mother tongues is not only unconscious it is without awareness that the learning possibility is harnessed, on the other hand the dynamics of the other tongue also known as a target language of instruction is completely different. The learning of any other language, L2 specifically in this context is a conscious, intentional mode of language acquisition. Another distinguishing feature is that L2 primarily relies on explicit rule application and is determined language tests and acquisition markers.

The status of second language in India is determined by number of factors. Chiefly in a geographical region the state language, the language used for communication can be a matter of concern. For example the diversity and the implications can be noticed in the two Telugu states in India, Andhra Pradesh and Telengana State. In Andhra Pradesh, English is designated second language while the status of English in Telengana State is particularly based on the language design in Government schools that accords English third language status strangely the medium of instruction remains English. This disparity renders difficulty in the way of research of English as second language. For all practical purposes in light of this practise it is incidental to go ahead with the idea of English as second language and target language in this paper.



The term ‘acquisition’ according to Rod Ellis is a subconscious process of picking a language and later following it with a conscious process of studying it. Of late Second language Acquisition (SLA) research has become more diversified and concentrates majorly on production of appropriate responses. Research currently focuses on speech responses, intake and output elicitation, lexical grammatical order and pronunciation as key concepts in establishing language retention among older, adult learners. Both Ellis and co-authors Elsa Tagrant and Carmen Munoz highlight the fact that young learners should be groomed early in this field. Ellis asserts that young learners achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults, however Tagrant and Munoz are of the opinion that young learners do not benefit from “form instruction that places high cognitive demands on them”. Young learners in SLA situation do not receive adequate attention, it is interesting to note that if guided appropriately the young learner can exhibit a natural flair for the language and at the same time the processes of recovery and repair notice through fossilization can be avoided. This paper concentrates on the socio-curricular background of the students to factorise on SLA impediments.

Review of Literature

Research in SLA began with enumerating single subject participant namely Wes, Patty and Alberto, consequently in critical work Schmidt’s study, Ladiere’s paper and Schuman’s study. It is of special interest to note that the single participant studies and limited number studies comprised of analysis of socio cultural factors and did not jump to the macro level status that SLA today engages in. Rod Ellis’ study of three classroom learners, Wang Fillmore’s investigation of SLA acquisition, and the comprehensive work of Klein and Perdue is an attempt to investigate thoroughly the external factors and the internal motivation in SLA. Subsequently research diversified into investigation of productive and receptive components of SLA. Recent research focuses on listening aspect of SLA namely listening comprehension and academic reading and endorses the view that instead of audio-lingual approach the next best alternative is audio visual approach which has been endorsed by Donna Reseigh Long and Mueller investigation of the use of the audio visual in the realm of SLA contextualization. This paper substantiates on Long and Mueller’s path breaking solutions as basic premise providing audio visual as a solution to enhance SLA.



Methodology, Tools and Subjects

Data was collected mainly through administering separate questionnaires to students and teachers. A questionnaire was administered to students of IX grade. Students and teachers filled in the questionnaire with their responses. The data obtained was analysed quantitatively and statistically and is presented in form of data.

The questionnaires were prepared and the required information was collected from the subjects. Through these questionnaires an attempt was made to extract views, opinions, challenges and solutions from the students, the teachers and the school administrators. The questionnaire for students had nine questions. The questionnaire focused on an analysis of background use of English language at home, practise and use at school and their perspective on the scope and utility of English in career as professionals. The questionnaire for teachers consisted of fifteen questions related to the duration of English classes in a week, the adequacy and the utility of the hours spent in study. The questions tried to comprehend the mode of instruction, the attempts for innovativeness, the support extended to students, teacher perception about English language, teacher opinions about syllabus and finally teacher impressions about socio-economic background and their implications on SLA.

Subjects

The total number of students who were administered the questionnaire were between the age group of 14-15. All the students are in IX grade, the sample was collected from three different government schools and three private schools for parity. The gender of the students was not taken into consideration for neutral results.

The teacher's questionnaire was distributed to teachers who taught the students from the respective schools under study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaires that were distributed have been attached for reference sake. Here is the analysis of the results which are also statistically represented below the description .The students of government school confirmed that 90% of their parents are educated while the remaining answered in a negative. The students of private schools recorded a 100% in the



category confirming that about 95% of their parents were recipients of higher education, whereas only 5% of the government school students recorded that were parents have a higher degree. The students from government school did not attend any tuition classes for English whereas 20% students from private school attended tuition classes. Interestingly both the private and government school teachers agreed that teachers are genuinely interested in teaching and both categories assert that the efforts teachers put in class at school are enormous. The students from both government schools and public schools were significantly 90% and 80% happy with text book lessons and materials used in class however the percentage was slightly different when it came to teacher innovativeness in using the text book, at 90% with government schools, and 80% with private school. When it came to approaching teachers with a problem in the English lesson 100% government students preferred to consult the teacher while only 80% private school students volunteered to talk to the teacher. All the students from government schools thought supplementary materials were not required whereas 20% private school students did not mind supplementary materials.

It is obvious from reading the data that government students did not attend tuition classes they rely heavily on teacher's instruction and lessons and think that is adequate despite their not so facilitating home SLA environment. On the other hand students from private schools had the necessary cultural and educative background, some of them went to tuition classes they exhibited the same attitude of compliance with syllabus and did not greatly encourage use of external supplementary materials although both groups unanimously agreed on the importance of English but did not take great measures to advance.

Meanwhile teachers showed striking similarity regarding the number of hours a week which is 6 for both groups, 90% of both the groups expressed satisfaction with the number of hours and on average both the teachers reported 40 students in their class. The teachers from both groups recorded 100% agreement in the use of traditional teacher centred approach in classroom, regarding student encouragement in use of English in classroom and providing consultation after class was also at 100%. The government teachers resorted to lecture method while 20% of private school teachers used tech tools in class. The teachers rated the syllabus as good however 50% of Government teachers and 30% of private teachers lamented lack of support from administration only 20% government teachers and 10% private teachers



reported receiving funds for procurement of materials along with 20% teachers admitting that they indulged in additional classes for weak students. Both the category of teachers held the role of English as important for future, stressing on support from parents and agreeing with the idea that socio-economic background of the learner impacted their SLA.

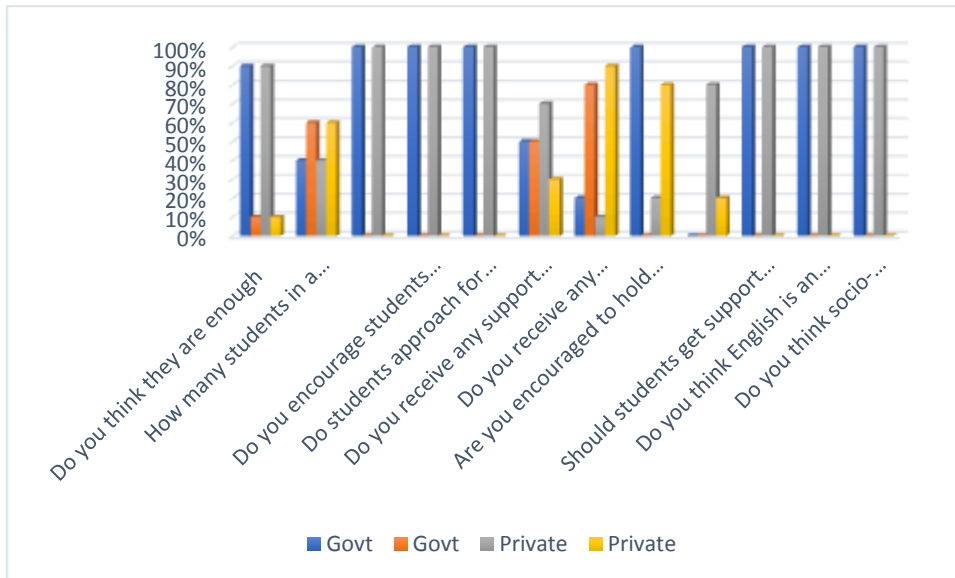
It is clear and evident on analysis that lecture method, traditional approach lack of administrative support and socio- economic factors are pivotal in shaping student perceptions about SLA. Similarly student indifference regarding English as a major subject appeared as a major drawback in their nonchalant approach.

		Govt		Private	
1)	How many hours of teaching per week are you allotted to teach English	6 hours		6 hours	
2)	Do you think they are enough	Yes 90%	No 10%	Yes 90%	No 10%
3)	How many students in a class per average	40		40	
4)	Do you adopt traditional teacher centred approach	Yes 100%		Yes 100%	
5)	Do you encourage students to speak in English in classroom	Yes 100%		Yes 100%	
6)	Do students approach for help as far as English is concerned	Yes 100%		Yes 100%	
7)	Do you receive any support from the administration	Yes 50%	No 50%	Yes 70%	No 30%
8)	Do you receive any additional funds for procurement of materials	Yes 20%	No 80%	Yes 10%	No 90%
9)	Are you encouraged to hold additional classes	No 100%		Yes 20%	No 80%
10)	What is your opinion about the syllabus	Good		Good	
11)	What modes of teaching do you employ	Lecture		Lecture 80%	Tech tools 20%
12)	Should students get support from home	Yes		Yes	

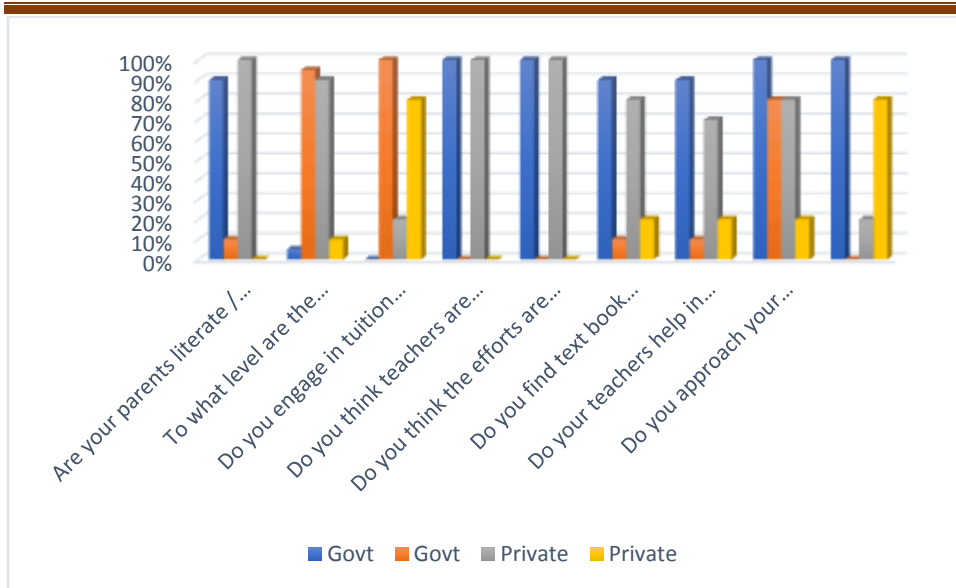


	and other sources to improve language skills	100%		100%	
13)	Do you think English is an important factor for future career of students	Yes 100%		Yes 100%	
14)	Do you have any suggestions for improvement	More use of language In classroom		Read more books Participation in extra curricular	
15)	Do you think socio-economic background of the learner's impact their performance in the studies?	Yes 100%		Yes 100%	

Students Response



Teachers Response



Findings

This study helps to identify both hidden and open drawbacks in the changing ecosystem of learning and how to capitalize on them to improve both speed and efficiency of learning capabilities of students.

The prime target is to ignite interest and passion of the students to learn English Language so that they develop self learning method with support from the teachers.

To design appropriate study material based on cultural exposure of learners so that they will not be discouraged in their learning process.

Suggestions

- 1) Adaptation of learner centred model
- 2) Investigating ways and means of how to create interest in the learner.
- 3) Development of appropriate study material
- 4) Regular feedback to weed out flaws and how to improve on them.
- 5) Maximization of visual methods.
- 6) Re-training the teachers and offering incentives to them.
- 7) Creation of a monitoring and supervising body.



Conclusion

In the present of increasing globalization in advanced communication technology English has become the foundation for Higher Education and employment, one of the prime factors in the process of modernization. The process of teaching learning English should be inaugurated on a war foot so that all the segments of the society are benefitted by modern education. In other words English is the master key for the future which should start from school level. This can be made possible by revamping of the present outdated stereotyped model of teaching and assimilating guided by modern audio-lingual technology so that learning English in the daily world of experience should be co-related with classroom experience. This will enable students to understand the need and relevance of English Language. The course material should be tailored to average level of learners with increasing levels of difficulty, so that the students are not discouraged due to teething problems.

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