

STATUS OF ELT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL IN KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT: A DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching (ELT) should be effective for all concerned at the secondary level to meet its objectives so that in higher levels the learners as well as teachers would carry out the process without constraints. Keeping view of the above, a study is conducted amongst the secondary institutions of Karbi Anglong District of Assam. In this regard, 50 institutions are surveyed to find out the status of ELT through field investigation, interviews with both learners and teachers. The survey found out some observations that reveal a very poor status of ELT at secondary level that consequently affects the teaching of English at the senior secondary and undergraduate levels. This article discusses the status of ELT at the secondary level and the reasons behind its weakness in the said region. It analyses how the teachers of undergraduate institutions face trouble to deal with the students coming out of those secondary schools. It also tries to find out the reasons, and puts forward suggestions and recommendations to develop the present status of ELT.

Keywords: Status of ELT, Secondary level, Undergraduate level, Karbi Anglong

1.0. INTRODUCTION

ELT has been considered very extraordinarily today due to the importance of English language in the present context of globalization. Today, it is almost impossible for us to survive without learning English. In the employment market, the dominance of corporate industries has increased the importance of English, too. Again, in the field of science and technology, interdisciplinary studies, business, law, and other fields, English has got special importance. So, in the present context of academic progression, ELT has got special relevance and significance. F.G. French asserts: “Every advance in science, in engineering, in trade, in

politics, in every branch of human thought is discussed, printed, disseminated and made available in English.” [1]

Regarding the aim of teaching English in India the following remarks are noteworthy: “What an Indian student at the secondary school stage requires is competence in the language of a degree which would enable him to use the language with a fair amount of command and ease in all the domains where he needs to use it. Therefore, the primary objective of teaching English should be to help the students to acquire Practical Command of English so that it may be useful to them in their ordinary life.” [2]

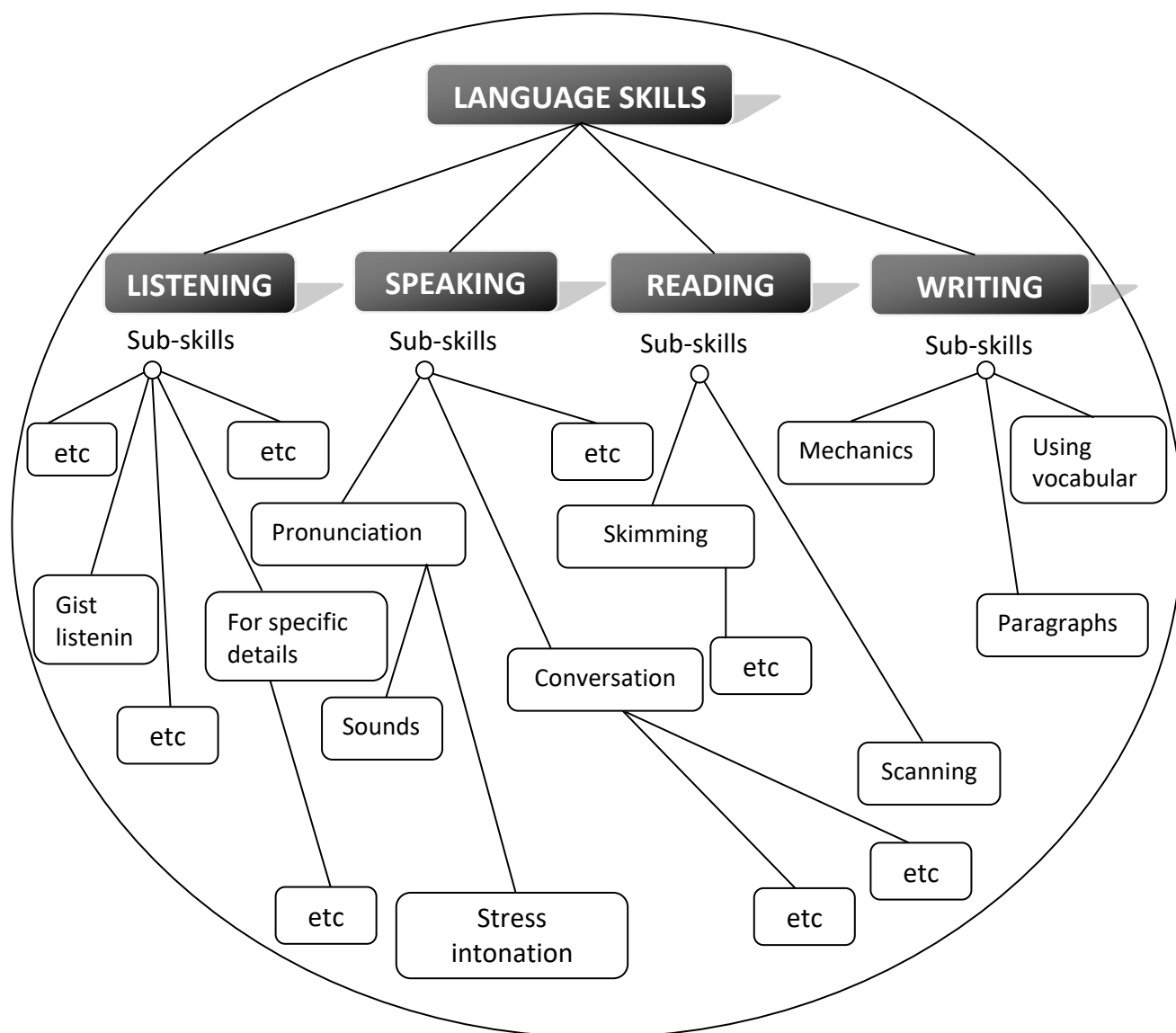
The National Curriculum Framework 2005 states : “The goals for a second language curriculum are twofold : attainment of a basic proficiency, such as is acquired in natural language learning, and the development of the language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition through (for example) literacy.”[3]

In view of the above, i.e. importance, significance, and aim of English teaching the first thing comes to our mind- how to teach English to the learners? What are the methods and techniques of teaching English? In this connection, the meaning of the terms ‘technique’ and ‘method’ should be understood well. In simple words, ‘How a thing is done in a class is a technique’ [4]. According to Anthony, a technique is ‘implementational- that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective.’ [5] To understand the differences of the terms and how they are closely related, the following interpretation is worth to be mentioned: ‘Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned (the approach), imply different ways of teaching language (the method), and different methods make use of different kinds of classroom activity (techniques).’ [6]

Our experience of teaching English at the senior secondary and undergraduate levels in an institution of Karbi Anglong District of Assam reveal various deficiencies in the students that made us bound to think over the status of ELT at the school level (secondary). It is to be mentioned that the mass weakness found in the students makes us conclude that the present ELT process at the secondary level in the district of Karbi Anglong is not able to fulfil its objectives satisfactorily. Before going to the main discussion, let us see the objectives of ELT put by an eminent scholar as the following:

- (i) “To understand English with ease when spoken at normal conversational speed.
- (ii) To speak English correctly and fluently.
- (iii) To read English with comprehension and at a reasonable speed so as to use it as a library language for gathering information and for enjoying reading.
- (iv) To write English neatly and correctly at a reasonable speed.
- (v) To enjoy simple poems in English.
- (vi) To acquire knowledge of the elements of English.
- (vii) To translate common English words, phrases, and sentences into their functional equivalent in mother tongue and vice versa.
- (viii) To develop interest in English.”[7]

If the above objectives are fulfilled accordingly, then a secondary pass student is said to have acquired sufficient knowledge of the different ‘skills’ related to English. Hence, the four basic language skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) must well be acquired by the secondary pass learners. Further, each skill has been divided into sub-skills as available in the chart below prepared by Geetha Nagraj [8]



2.0. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) To find out the deficiencies in the students of secondary pass students.
- ii) To find out the actual status of ELT at the secondary level.
- iii) To interact with both learners and teachers concerning the problems of ELT.
- iv) To put forward suggestions/recommendations for improving the status of ELT.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

In the present study, both primary and secondary sources were used. Primary sources include information collected through field report, interactions, interviews, etc. while secondary sources include books, journals to gather related information.

4.0. DISCUSSION

It has been observed that a majority number of students (except a few) are not fully equipped with the language skills. Rather, they are deficient beyond the mark. This naturally raises the question- what are the reasons for such deficiencies? In this regard, some 50 secondary schools of Karbi Anglong District of Assam have been visited and interactions with

both teachers and learners have been made. Consequently, it has been observed carefully that points out the following issues:

4.1. Deficiencies in the Teaching Method

Language is considered as ‘skills’ more than a ‘subject’, and therefore, effective teaching method is very important for students to acquire the ‘skills’ correctly and appropriately. Following words of a great scholar is worth-mentioned: “The benefits of English would only be our possession, provided we employ proper ways and means, techniques, methods, skill and practices of learning English, in the best possible ways” [9]. But after learning the language for 10-12 years up to the secondary level, if students are not able to pick up the essential requirements of the ‘skills’ it can be assumed that there are faults with the teaching methods.

There are various established methods of teaching English such as the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Functional Approach, the Structural Approach, Communicative Language Teaching, etc. Research is going on that adds new methods time and again to make ELT more effective. The teachers should be aware of all those methods while teaching English. The teacher should know which method or combination of methods are useful for effective teaching and act accordingly. Moreover, the teacher should be aware of the fact that all methods may not be suitable for all students, and therefore, he/she must be aware of it and apply the methods as per requirements through dividing the students in different groups. As asserted by Geetha Nagaraj, “A teacher who has a repertoire of technique to teach different skills/sub-skills is more likely to succeed in this objective than one who has a limited number of techniques at command” [10]

4.2. Lack of innovative outlook

Besides the established methods, the teacher should have innovative techniques to motivate the learners so that they concentrate more which is a requirement for effective learning. A single established method may not be fruitful, and therefore, the teacher has to choose a method/ combination of methods suitable for his purpose. Innovative methods/technique by a teacher might have unbelievable impact on the learners’ ability to understand a topic.

4.3. Dearth of Qualified/Trained Teachers

The study reveals the fact that a large number of teachers involved in the teaching of English are not qualified or trained. Besides, an adequate number of trained teachers have been found incompetent in the task which again reveals another side of the story. In other words, those teachers have obtained the certificates of training but indeed, without a proper training.

4.4. Inappropriate Teacher-Student Ratio

Inappropriate teacher-student ratio had been a reason behind the deficiencies for a long period which has recently been tried by the authority concerned to bring into a balance. Still, the process through which the infrastructure has been set up in the government/ provincialised institutions should be modified for better output. It must be mentioned that decreasing number

of total students in such schools is a matter of observation for all concerned because it affects the process of modifications of the institutions.

5.0. FINDINGS

5.1. The issues furnished above are the most striking ones, although there are some others which would require wide discussion. But as a teacher of senior secondary and undergraduate level, it is to be mentioned how the deficiencies have an immediate impact on our teaching of English language and literature. The teachers face such problems faced by the teachers of secondary level that is in fact very difficult to resolve in case of a large number of students. As a result, not only the teachers but also the advanced learners (less numbers) face difficulties in the completion of the syllabus.

5.2. Since there are a large number of students in the senior secondary/undergraduate levels, it is not possible to take care of the learners like the secondary stage. Too many deficiencies in the students decrease the spirit of teachers.

5.3. The previous weaknesses do have impact on the performances of students as a consequence the department/institution suffers concerning result which again affects its accreditation grade.

6.0.SUGGESTIONS

Considering the importance of English in the present context of globalization, it is necessary to take the case of ELT seriously by all concerned. In this regard, some suggestions are put forward as the following:

6.1. There should be adequate survey/research on the status of ELT. The government/non-government authorities concerned are required to appoint/engage researchers, academicians, and teachers initiating projects/scheme, etc.

6.2. Provision should be made available for teachers of English to take training, participate in workshop/ seminar/ orientation program, etc.

6.3. Special care should be taken in respect of institutions belonging to remote/rural/hilly region.

6.4. Selection of teachers should be free from partiality and competent teachers only should be recruited.

6.5. The authority concerned should keep in mind that appropriate teacher-student ratio is maintained in the institutions.

6.6. Provision of inspection by experts may be arranged to supervise the ongoing process of teaching.

7.0.CONCLUSION

Keeping note of the importance of English worldwide, the topic on ELT and its concerned study is certainly significant. The observations on particular aspects and status of ELT in different regions will definitely help find out ways of improvement. Since language learning, particularly English is necessary for academic purpose, the study concerning ELT must be stressed on. English is a library language for which it deserves appropriate and updated methods of teaching, too. Most of the learners of disciplines like Arts, Science and Technology, Commerce, and Public Administration deal with books written in English. Therefore, it is essential to learn the language well. For effective teaching of English, there

should availability of well-trained teachers along with necessary infrastructure and teaching aids. A good teaching requires necessary teaching aids because “teachers have always known that TEACHING AIDS can be used effectively to capture and sustain the attention of a class”. [11]

From the above, it is pertinent that study on ELT and its concerned topics deserve significance. Hence, the present topic would surely contribute to the field of ELT.

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