

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN TEACHING OF ENGLISH AT PRIMARY LEVEL IN VIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Early years of life are most beautiful and crucial as major part of the brain develops in these early years. This is the time when all round development which includes physical, social, cognitive, emotional takes place. So, the education received by child in these developing years is crucial for holistic development of child. The education given to the child at this stage, calls for most of the education imparted, later in life. The term coined by NPE 1986, Early Childhood Care & Education emphasises this holistic development of brain during these early years. Children who start their early childhood education in conducive environment on a positive note, with suitable readiness are well positioned to frame the sense of belonging that encourages their engagement in productive activities. Language development is one the major concern at this level as tussle between mother tongue and English has always been a debatable matter in our country. Teaching of English at primary level has once again come into shadows after the mandate of teaching in mother-tongue as recommended by NEP 2020. the importance of English cant be denied and different pedagogical practices are experimented to achieve the learning outcomes prescribed by NCERT.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, challenges, language development in early years, interventions for early childhood, pedagogical practices, teaching of English

INTRODUCTION

The early years of children are marked by activities and experiences that nurture them to develop themselves and help in the transition from home to school. It is proved through researches that 80% of brain develops in the early years, which means that maximum learning can happen in these initial years. Bredekamp (2011) defines the practice of providing education to children in early years of their life as, "a highly diverse field that serves children from birth through age 8". So, the 0-8 years of child's life are the most productive from learning point of view. For the holistic development of a child, early childhood education becomes pivotal point as active brain grabs maximum of it for lifetime. This engages children in exploring and discovering things through active participation. By providing a program for this holistic development which is Early Childhood Education, teachers and educators are facilitating children with safe, interactive and positive environment. Holistic development focuses on the importance of the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of children, especially in the early years. It is during these early years' child develops his/her cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills. Using mother tongue in the initial years as recommended by NEP 2020 has again baffled the language learning for students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN INDIA: A BRIEF HISTORY

India has cultural and historical background of Early childhood education and is evident from the philosophies put forth by eminent people like Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Gijubhai Badheka and Tarabai Modak. Gijubhai Badheka and Tarabai Modak contributed greatly in the field of Early childhood education in India and also evolved the concept of Anganwadis, which is a success program in the country. They were the earliest and also most influential thinkers in modern India who emphasized the importance of Early Childhood Education for our Indian Children and their initiative helped in the evolution of concept of child centric approach to early childhood development.

NEED AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA

According to Census 2011, in India there are 164.48 million children of 0-6 years of age. Recognizing the need to provide quality pre-primary programmes, a number of constitutional and policy provisions have been made such as the 86th Constitutional Amendment which introduces Article 21A as the right to free and compulsory

education for children of 6-14 years of age and Article 45 to instruct the states to provide Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for all children till the completion of 6 years.

RTE Act 2010 (The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education) guarantees children their right to free and quality elementary education. ECE is not recognized as a compulsory provision by RTE, but RTE urges states to provide free pre-school education for children above three years. The 12th Five Year Plan acknowledges the importance of ECE and improving school preparedness.

The Government of India approved the ECCE Policy in 2013 and also developed a framework for its effective implementation across the nation. The Policy framework also includes the National Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards for ECCE to ensure standards set by policy framework are put into practice. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is the nodal department for ECCE and is responsible for the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, which is a centrally sponsored and state administered ECCE programme, covering around 38 million children through a network of almost 1.4 million anganwadi centres working in rural India in the field of education, child and women welfare.

CORE OBJECTIVES

The core objective and developmental goals as mentioned in India's National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) policy document are as follows:

1. To enable a sound foundation for physical and motor development of each child- as per each child's potential and capacity.
2. Enable children for effective communication and foster both receptive and expressive language development and usage.
3. Stimulate intellectual curiosity and develop conceptual understanding of the world around by providing opportunities to explore, investigate and experiment on their own.
4. Enhance development of pro-social skills, social competence and emotional wellbeing
5. Develop a sense of aesthetic appreciation and stimulate creative learning processes.

The language development which takes place in these early years is as follows :

➤ **Birth to Three Years**

❖ **Language Development:**

- Begin to develop active listening skills
- Use expressive and receptive communication skills
- Develop functional vocabulary to engage in conversations.
- Develop verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Display emergent literacy skills (preparing children to read and write): such as identify and differentiate sounds, phonological awareness; print awareness and concepts; recognition of letters; letter- sound correspondence; building words and sentences.
- Display the use of prewriting skills (scribbling, marking, drawing, etc.)

➤ **Three to Six Years**

❖ **Language Development:**

- Begin to develop Listening and Comprehension skills
- Make use of expressive and receptive communication skills
- Develop and make use of effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Display emergent literacy skills and love for reading (preparing children to read and write): such as identify and differentiate sounds, phonological awareness; print awareness and concepts; recognition of letters; building simple words and sentences and also early writing skill.

Although parents today do realise the importance and benefits of Early Childhood Education for their little ones especially affecting all the faculties listed above, still they are misguided by wrong information. The parents are misguided by the fact that formal teaching is done at this level and it snatches the lovely childhood of their children. To clear this we have:

Early Childhood Education is:

- A balanced play and activity based program which facilitates children with a stimulating environment for the language, intellectual, social-emotional and physical development.

- It is a child centred program catering to individual children's learning and emotional needs through individual, small and large group activities.
- It lays the foundation for the development of reading, writing and number work which helps in future learning.

Early Childhood Education is NOT:

- NOT a syllabus bound program for teaching 3R's (reading, writing and 'rithmetic)
- NOT a teacher-centred program that follows formal classroom approach as in a formal school
- NOT a downward extension for the Primary Grades
- NOT a program which demands non-challenging obedience or exercises strict classroom discipline for children
- NOT a program to conduct tests to know how children are learning.

Teaching of English in Indian set-up

English till date is considered a second/ Foreign language in India due to its advent after Britishers left. Still there is a debate on teaching of English in Indian schools as today one cannot survive without it and on the hand the country is not ready to accept it as its own. Today English is the language of the majority of world and is a window to the world. Indian parents wish their child to be proficient in English no matter the policy talks about teaching in mother-tongue in the foundation years of Education. Every parent dreams of his/her child speaking fluent English. The English teachers at schools have been experimenting various teaching methods/ pedagogical practices to train Indian students in English like Grammar Translation method, structural method, communicative methods and adopting different techniques like Role, play, Stories, Poems, Rhymes. Songs, Drama, Make belief plays, puppets etc.

Objectives of Teaching English at Primary Level

1. To develop love for language
2. To develop vocabulary of students
3. To develop listening & speaking skill of children
4. To develop linguistic creativity among students
5. To develop comprehension
6. To develop basic reading and writing skills

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH

According to studies teaching of English in maximum states is done for the sake of teaching especially in Government schools with first generation learners. In these schools English is used in a low immersion context that is taught for sake of subject in curriculum and not for life and its functional use. The teachers at these schools have this perception that no innovative techniques are required to teach English to these children and they themselves have no passion to teach English for life.

Pedagogical Practices for Teaching of English at Primary Level

Teachers have been adopting number of methods to teach English at Primary level since its inception in Indian Education system. From grammar translation method to direct method, from formal acquisition to functional approach; from structural to communicative approach and from deductive approach to inductive approach teaching of English has undergone so many transitions till date and teachers are still experimenting with the pedagogical practice to be adopted. Teachers today adopts functional method adopting usage of language among students but also focussing on structure and grammar rules.

The pedagogical practices at Primary level:

1. **Through play:** Children in transition from early childhood education to primary school level learn better through play-way method though with an improvised version.
2. **Happy Environment:** Children learn better and faster if they get a conducive environment and they are happy to practice the English learnt.
3. **Viable practice:** Give ample exposure to children to learn the foreign language.
4. **Learning from Environment:** Examples from real world to enhance vocabulary unburdens children.
5. **Learning from stories/ rhymes/poems/ songs:** Children take a lot of interest learning English through these techniques.
6. **Read alouds:** Teacher can engage students in aloud reading which develop their listening, speaking skills.

7. **Basics of Spellings:** This technique can work wonders to perfect the spellings of children.
8. **Practice of parts of speech:** This technique strengthens the grammar of students to make appropriate and meaningful sentences leading to linguistic comprehension.
9. **Opportunities for creative writing:** This technique proves to be motivating for students as they are given freedom to write and also not judged upon their creativity.
10. **Role play:** This technique is an age old one used by English teachers to develop speaking skills and language skills among students.
11. **Re-writing sentences:** This technique is effectively used by teachers to develop correct writing skills of children.
12. **Corrections on the spot with motivation to learn correct:** The errors shall be corrected when students make them as later they are concretized and difficult to correct. But the errors must be corrected with positive reinforcement so that students are motivated to learn and do not lose their confidence.
13. **Rhyming scheme:** This practice can be used not just with beginners but with students at formal stage of learning as well.
14. **Handholding with parents/ Guardians:** Cooperation with parents and working hand in hand as stakeholders also proves to be a helpful pedagogical practice for teaching English at primary level.
15. **Never Judge students for wrongs or errors:** The students must not be judged on their poor English rather must be motivated to practice and learn English.
16. **Online Tools:** Teachers can effectively use technology to teach English to learners using vocabulary games, word games, sentence making worksheets, listening games, writing live worksheets etc. story narrations, poems recitations are also available which can be easily used these days to develop and enhance English learning of students at their pace.
17. **Opportunities to express themselves:** Students shall be asked to speak about their feelings and emotions or any topic of choice in a span of time and motivated to practice English accepting their errors and rectifying them.

English Teachers in Making

There is also a dire need to change the methods of teaching at Teacher Education level as English teachers are prepared and taught the limited pedagogical practices which delimit their scope of teaching. Teacher Education Institutions must make changes in the curriculum and training part of teachers as faulty English teachers prepare students with faulty English skills. English teachers must be taught to explore and experiment new techniques in teaching of English keeping in consideration the language skills of students in the class. There are lots of change in teacher education training curriculum which need review and certain changes. Training in using different techniques and their practice online and offline shall be made mandatory and eligibility criteria for English teachers in order to develop good English language skills in children of today's India.

CONCLUSION

The transition from home environment to school environment is a big one for these little ones and its impact is no doubt good enough. This transition involves child's socio-cultural contexts: Family, community, and school. Early childhood education helps children to excel academically and socially. They witness change in their identity and their prospective role which accounts for their readiness and holistic development as an individual and member of a community. Despite, the importance of ECE recognised by the Government of India, the challenges in its implementation across the nation still remain unachieved. There are still substantial numbers of children not enrolled in preschools or any kind of early childhood education programmes so teaching is a far off dream and language development will be compromised as well. Learning assessments done also show that literacy skills are poor in early primary grades and this affects the dropout and stagnation rates in elementary level. It claims for an urgent need for aiding children, particularly first generation learners, develop adequate school readiness through a good quality ECE programme, to enable them to make a smooth transition from early literacy to primary classes. There is also a dire need that all English teachers must explore new dimensions of teaching English and developing linguistic creativity among students.

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