Proceedings

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ICEL 2013

The First International Conference on Education and Language (ICEL)

28,29,30 January 2013
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The First International Conference on Education and Language

ICEL 2013

28 -30 January 2013

PREFACE

The activities of the International Conference is in line and very appropriate with the vision and mission of Bandar Lampung University (UBL) to promote training and education as well as research in these areas.

On behalf of the First International Conference of Education and Language (ICEL 2013) organizing committee, we are very pleased with the very good responses especially from the keynote speakers and from the participants. It is noteworthy to point out that about 80 technical papers were received for this conference

The participants of the conference come from many well known universities, among others:
University of Wollongong, NSW Australia, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kyoto University (Temple University (Osaka), Japan - Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India - West Visayas State University College of Agriculture and Forestry, Lambunao, Iloilo, Philipine - Bahcesehir University, Istanbul, Turkey - The Higher Institute of Modern Languages, Tunisia - University of Baku, Azerbaijan - Sarhad University, KPK, Pakistan - Medical Sciences English Language Teacher Foundation Program, Ministry of Health, Oman - Faculty School of Arts and Sciences, Banga, Aklan Philippines - Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Banten, - Pelita Harapan University, Jakarta - STIBA Saraswati Denpasar, Bali - University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta - Ahmad Dahlan University Yogyakarta - Sriwijaya University, Palembang - Islamic University of Malang - IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang - Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia - Universitas Haluoleo Kendari - State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung - Tadulako University, Central Sulawesi - Sanata Dharma University - Lampung University and Open University,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the International Advisory Board members, sponsors and also to all keynote speakers and all participants. I am also grateful to all organizing committee and all of the reviewers who contribute to the high standard of the conference. Also I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Rector of Bandar Lampung University (UBL) who gives us endless support to these activities, so that the conference can be administrated on time.

Bandar Lampung, 30 January 2013

Mustofa Usman, Ph.D
lCEL 2013 Chairman

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(ICEL 2013)
BANDAR LAMPUNG UNIVERSITY
Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
January 28, 29, 30, 2013

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LINGUISTICALLY GROUNDED TECHNIQUES FOR ENGLISH IN THE PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF RURAL INDIA

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Abstract

This paper discusses some of the linguistically grounded techniques for teaching English. It sets up the story of English in the context of education in India. Its implications in the professional institutes would help students become aware of the intricacies of language. This awareness will help overcome difficulties in learning English. Students in professional institutes can be prepared with this methodology to acquire English not only as a second language but as a part of international education. It would provide them a landscape through which it is possible to take various journeys; its horizons are redefined by each approach.

Keywords : ELT, international education, linguistics, professional institutes, rural India.

INTRODUCTION

Language makes us human. Whatever we do, language is central to our lives, and the use of language underpins the study of every other discipline. It is a medium for the construction of all kinds of knowledge system (Agnihotri 2007). Understanding language gives us insight into ourselves and a tool for the investigation of the rest of the universe. In this paper, we aim to provide the modern learning styles for ELT (English Language Teaching) explaining its necessity in the rural states of India. English as a language becomes a bigger block for the students from the rural parts of India. Though, issues discussed in this paper may be of relevance to many places in general, we would like to focus on select academic institutions of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan. We report the present condition of these states where the students of professional courses are in a predicament; they get through in the renowned institutions like IITs and IIMs, and some other famous institutions with a concept that they don't need the knowledge of English language. But interestingly enough, they find a totally changed set up and surrounding inside these institutions with English language 24x7. Keeping in mind the various multicultural backgrounds of students in academic institutes of national significance, we cannot deny the necessity of English for two most crucial reasons: we need the uniformity of a language to teach all of them in an impartial way, we need to prepare them for the global international market where English is the means of survival.

But meanwhile we must not overlook that language reflects our knowledge. Martians and dolphins, bonobos and bees, may be just as intelligent, cute, adept at social organization, and morally worthwhile, but they don't share our language, they don't speak 'human'. We, therefore, believe to be knowledgeable in science and technology that is unexpected to them. This need of language turns our attention towards linguistics, the scientific study of language, which seeks to describe and explain this human faculty. It is concerned with three things: discovering precisely what it means to 'know a language'; providing techniques for describing this knowledge; and explaining why our knowledge takes the form it does. Our main concern here is the linguistic knowledge which provides the techniques to acquire a language in a way that it can be one's own. The abrupt change in the language setting of a student may depress him or her causing the distraction from his studies and failure in his professional career. We, generally speaking, say that the professional students don't need much English, and that's where we are mistaken; according to a few language teachers, what they actually need is just to use the language in order to fulfill their need. I have always thought of this kind of language as "use and through language" which is never going to work. They are into an environment where their life is surrounded by English; they need English to read all their books, to understand the lectures, and even to maintain their society there, to eat, to play and to laugh. To cater this requirement in the academic institutes, we need to take up this issue of English seriously. English is dominant in most of the functional domains. The role of understanding how we learn language and what constitutes 'knowledge of language' appears imperative for effective 'performance' or 'communicative competence'. In this global scenario, we need to develop the strategies which would inculcate the feeling of the language into them.

We propose to provide new linguistically grounded techniques for better use of English; and new strategies to learn this language as if one could feel the language. These techniques are devised for the students of IITs and

IIMs who belong to a rural area; moreover, it would be benefitted for students in general. The next section reports the present situation of rural India for an empirical study.

ENGLISH IN RURAL INDIA

The history of English in India can be traced from the time India was subjugated by the British; the British realized the inaccuracy of our education which was basically meant for the spiritual enlightenment. They started a new education system as a part of British bureaucracy with a purpose to train the Indians for their official purposes. Mahatma Gandhi opposed the British education policy propounded by Macaulay in 1835 who emphasized on the medium of English education considering that not related to the problems of India. He propounded the theory of "Nai Taalim" or 'basic education' in 1937 to reform the evils of the system of education handed down by the alien rulers. This system of basic education gave a rural form to education and made it practical and purposive with 'learning with earning' methodology. But it was not in favor of learning English language. The focus was nowhere on English though it failed to revolutionize the education system due to lack of properly trained teachers. Moreover, it couldn't cope with the growing needs and form of scientific society. Today, India has crossed many milestones with the world-famous premier institutes of technology and management like IITs and IIMs which have proved their scientific and intellectual caliber all around the world. If one looks back to the condition of English, we have well-equipped English medium schools in every nook and corner. But despite various experiments and recommendations undertaken for the reform of the present educational system, we find the problem of English becoming more and more accentuated. If we look at the academic scenario in government schools, the fate of the millions of students appear to be bleak. There is shortage of English teachers; it's rare to see a good English teacher there, and the children can barely read and write after spending five years in school. And they find themselves lagging behind other children who received education in some private schools. The government schools are the main sources of education for the vast majority of our children, and in absence of their proper structure and good teachers, rural children have to suffer a lot. The overall picture of English in India is not as bright as it is supposed to be.

The input of the target language is prerequisite to learn any language (Krashen 1985), and even if students somehow manage to learn the structure of English language from the Grammar books, it doesn't help them much to give outputs without receiving the input. Consequently, what we see is myriad of students having no exposure to English language and no aptitude for speaking English. The irony of the situation is it doesn't end here. Apart from all the problems arose on the basic level, which are pretty enough to discourage a student from learning and speaking English, we get to see several teachers who cultivate a feeling in the students of the professional institutes that English is just a tool for them to get jobs, it's nothing else than a means of survival. It's even undeserving in such cases when it's being called as 'auntie tongue' (Dasgupta 1993). The consequences that this kind of mindset leads have been discussed in the next section.

MAJOR ROADBLOCKS

Indian mentality has somehow always taken English as something alien, it considers English not as a language, not as a part of education but a form of the ruler. After the independence of India, the feeling of nationalism urged the adoption of Hindi as the official language of the Indian union and as the link language between different states. It was laid down in Indian constitution that Hindi would function as the sole official language of the Indian union from January 26, 1965, and that the use of English as the associate official language was to be discontinued from that day. This revolutionary step of Government was announced by Sir Lal Bahadur Shastri. Apart from the actions taken by the Government, in certain Hindi-speaking states, there is an agitation to ban the use of English in public life. Mostly in cow-belt states and areas, some political parties have lent support to a movement styled as 'Angrezi-Hatao Aandolan' or 'Banish English Movement'. They wanted to get rid of English because it was not their own. It's really unfortunate of a country's fate when its people start relating their sentiments with education.

English was alien for most of the people, and English is, unfortunately, still alien for these sort of people after the long years of modern and scientific education. The only difference is in those days people didn't want to use it at all; whereas now there are people who promote this 'modern alienage' saying that Indians don't need much English. What they need is just to know how to face others in English, and that's all for them: 'English is not our language; if we speak it, it should be just a means for survival'. We call this 'use and throw' policy for a language. They use English for their own selfish gains so that they can remain faithful to themselves. But they forget while propagating this policy that if they are not honest to their learning, they can never learn something properly. This mindset is a major roadblock today in teaching and learning English. It's being seen in most of the professional colleges and institutes where they don't take English seriously. They don't want to learn or acquire it but know it by any means. And the output is very obvious. We come across chain of students influenced by these

propagators whose English is neither English nor Hinglish. They parrot some important words, sentences and what they speak; only they can understand it. The students of the professional institutes need more a good command over English; but despite having an inclination for English, they are being motivated to decline its importance.

Secondly, the structure of our Grammar books for English is also a roadblock for learning English. Without being aware of the sound system of a language, it's really difficult to learn it. The teachers teach the morphology, syntax, and semantics of English, but they leave out the most important part, phonology of a language, from where we start the journey of learning any language.

LINGUISTICALLY GROUNDED TECHNIQUES

This section deals with the importance of linguistics for learning English as well as it provides the techniques that can practically help professional students in having an aptitude for the speaking skills of English. We start this section presenting the reasons for why English can be learnt properly even if the students have crossed their critical period by the time they reach these institutions. Human children are hardwired to learn language in their immediate environment as they are all born with the species specific ability namely language acquisition device to acquire language (Chomsky 1965) In this process, we do not get to learn the factors responsible for learning language, in other words the components of what Chomsky (1986) calls 'Knowledge of Language (KoL)'. Therefore, teaching/learning second language becomes harder as we do not know what to put in very well. We examine the counter evidences for language learning being rather conventional than natural. After that we provide the techniques for how English can be learnt and spoken properly and proficiently.

No account of language can ignore the fact that language is ordered and regular, based on an inventory of types and rules of combination that constitute linguistic form. A central function of language is to enable communication, and the organization of linguistic forms has some relation to the organization of meaning. The first attempts at explicit theorizing about language in ancient Greece occurred among the itinerant teachers known as the Sophists (late 5th century B.C.E.). It is, though, in the Sophistic period that language first becomes the object of sustained reflection. A consistent picture emerging from the texts of that period is that language was devised by humans themselves, in response to the needs of early communities. It came into being through a set of decisions about what names should apply to what objects, and in that sense is conventional rather than natural. The Sophist Protagoras, in Plato's dialogue of that name, speaks of language as the product of a techne, 'skill,' analogous to building or agriculture which implies that one set of names, may be better crafted than another. It suggests us that language is a skill that can be acquired at any stage by understanding all its part. The learning and teaching of English should start from phonology of English, and should gradually cover up the technicality of English. It would prevent the general mistakes like using the aspirated bilabial voiceless plosive 'ph' of 'phal' which means fruits in English for the English word 'fun' where the first sound is a fricative one.

The sound system of a language is known as phonology, and knowing all the sounds of the language not only eradicates the possibility of these mistakes, but more than that, gives a feel of language. It makes people familiar to the language; and then learning language is nothing more than child's play. It takes us to the intricacies of language providing their solutions as well. Apart from that, it adds sublime charm to one's language. We all must have come across some illiterate Hindi or other native speaker having a good speaking skill though they cannot write; similarly if Indian students are taught the sound system of English with the help of IPA chart (International Phonetic Alphabet) and prosody, English would no longer remain a second or a foreign language for them. The term prosody refers to the grouping and relative prominence of the elements making up the speech signal. One reflex of prosody is the perceived rhythm of the speech. Prosodic structure may be described formally by a hierarchical structure in which the smallest units are the internal components of the syllable and the largest is the intonation phrase. Units of intermediate scale include the syllable, the metrical foot, and the prosodic word (Selkirk 1984; Hayes 1995). Prosody reflects the various features of an utterance as which may not be encoded by grammar or by the use of vocabulary. The knowledge of general phonological rules is adequate enough to use to English charmingly. We no longer need to worry why the vowel in 'write' is shorter than the vowel of 'ride' if we know that English uses short vowels before voiceless sounds and long vowels before the voiced sounds (Gussenhoven 1998). It gives us proper account and

description of why a word is not pronounced as it is alphabetically written because English pronunciation is not orthography-oriented. But to understand this, one needs to know what this voiced and voiceless thing is; and here comes the need of teaching IPA sounds to the students.

English teachers should take IPA chart as the basic strategy for teaching English instead of the grammar books. IPA stands for both the association and the alphabets; IPA is the major as well as the oldest representative organization for phoneticians. It was established in 1886 in Paris, and in 2011 it completed its 125th anniversary of the founding of the IPA. The aim of the IPA is to promote the scientific study of phonetics and the various practical applications of that science (Handbook 1999). It provides the notational standard for the phonetic representation of all languages. The latest version of the IPA Alphabet was published in 2005. Thus, it serves to familiarize the technicality and essence of English language which is vital for speaking skills. It would also help to mend the structure of English grammar for the students. The vocabulary and syntax of a language are not difficult to learn, but it doesn't provide the essence unless one knows the phones of a language. The approach of a teacher in being more successful is very crucial if the teacher with the help of customized lessons and activities uses this pedagogical approach. English learning and teaching require proper methodology and techniques with the text and available teaching materials. It is imperative that the priority of good listening skills for the better output as effective speaking should also be underlined.

CONCLUSION

English may not be taken as second or foreign language in the present scenario; it has become a part of one's personality. The status of English is not just a language but a matter of international education. So, the students of these premier and professional institutes like IITs and IIMs need to have an aptitude for English. The moment they enter these places, English becomes the part of their life; not only for their books and lectures, they need it even to maintain their social life in these places because of the different multicultural background of students. It such a situation, these techniques and methodology used by their teachers would help them to avoid the reasons for depression and other harmful ideas.

One more important thing, we need to change the mindset which prevents us to adopt English heartedly. These people have to understand that they are not avoiding English language but their progress and the country's as well. Needless to mention, when Rabindranath Tagore translated his *The Gitanjali* into English and spread its divine, metaphysical lores in the Western world, he got international attention and Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. We can understand that English had not added any special flavor to the songs of *The Gitanjali*, but this language has made it international opening the gate of this book for the whole world. Edward Said (1978) said that the West acquired the knowledge of the Orient out of their strength, and in that way they say that they created the Orient and the Orientals. It became possible only because of their attitude to acquire more knowledge without being partial. If we change the mindset of the 'other' for English, we would be more powerful and knowledgeable having more educated people. We would conclude with the lines of Said which sums up the problems of Indian students for learning English in an apt way:

'Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember the maxim.'

Sir Alfred Lyall

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