

A Study of Teacher's perception with special reference to English as a second Language

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Abstract---English language is one of the most widely used languages around the globe. The international acceptability of English makes the language very unique in the world. People with a different native language like to learn English as a second or foreign language. On the one hand its uniqueness is concerned about the language itself while on the other hand the uniqueness refers to the ways of teaching it as a global language. As far as English language teaching is concerned, some issues are crucial to be considered like: What is the role of culture in teaching English language. What is the impact of local, native teachers in English language teaching? What is the role of English-speaking countries in producing teaching aids to the teaching of English language?

Keywords-L1(mother tongue)& L2(target language), Native speaker, globalization, TESEP

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Importance of English in India

In pursuance of my research "level of perception of teachers about English language teaching in India" out of 100 teachers who participated 94 percent of those were the non-native teachers of English and all of them teach English at tertiary level. The majority held either a B.A (52%) as their highest degree, of an M.A degree (42%) while the remaining 6% had a doctoral degree. I tried to explore the dynamics of English as a global language. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents viewed English as a door to better employment and higher social status. In addition, English was seen as a requirement imposed by the globalization era. So it is considered important predominantly for instrumental reasons and this is at odds with one of the characteristics of an international language, namely it should serve for people to share with others their ideas and cultures (McKay 2002: 12). The classroom does not represent an isolated world, as what goes on in it is always dependent on wider contextual factors. Classroom practice is interconnected with the socio-cultural reality in the

Environment around it. This is especially true in **TESEP** settings, where external forces play a major role in determining pedagogical practices. In the specific case of this study, therefore, it was important to find out; first of all, what were the teachers' perceptions about the role of English in India.

Three reasons for studying English that were

Indicated as important more often than the others were 'to communicate with people from other countries' (67%), 'to get a better job' (65%) and 'globalization era' (55%). The first and the third reasons suggest an acknowledgement of the status of English in the world.

In India it is widely known that foreign companies pay higher salaries than local or state companies and one of the conditions to be employed in foreign companies is precisely a good command of English. As Graddol (1997) notes, Jobs in the new enterprises may be better paid and more attractive than those in the public sector of a developing country. English qualifications may become an entry necessity, or have perceived value in access to jobs – even if the job itself does not require English. (Graddol 1997:32)

II. MATERIALS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The data analysis indicates that maximum respondents expressed a marked preference for materials from English-speaking countries, in particular for teaching pronunciation and listening skill.

The analysis of the data revealed a multi-faceted picture. Essentially, the teachers' beliefs varied considerably depending on the language skill considered. For pronunciation and speaking skills, for example, a high preference for native speakers was expressed. This reflected a commonly held belief, according to which people from Inner Circle countries (Countries in which English is the first or the dominant language: Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States) invariably speak 'perfect' and 'standard' English. For other skills, however, native speakers were considered less suitable, most notably for the teaching of grammar and reading.

The data indicates that native speaker's actual presence in schools and universities was generally found lower than the teachers' beliefs.

III. THE USE OF L1 & L2 DURING TEACHING IN THE CLASSROOM

Towards the use of the students' mother tongue in English language teaching there was a slightly ambivalent attitude. Most teachers agreed that the use of L1 had potential benefits but strangely all the teachers who were observed (with the sole

exception of a Canadian teacher) did make some use of Hindi in class and on those occasions the students generally responded favourably, especially when theoretical notions were introduced for the first time. Side by side many teachers felt unsure as to how much mother tongue it was appropriate to use and they generally felt that its use should be kept to a minimum so as not to forego opportunities for the students to be exposed to English. Many respondents found it difficult to draw the line between the use and the abuse of the students' mother tongue. These uncertainties are understandable, and reflect well the metaphorical representations of the use of the mother tongue described by Luke Prodromou: some of them are positive and some negative. The issue is made even more complex by the fact that occasionally some teachers may choose to use the L1 simply out of convenience because they do not feel confident enough about their own command of English. For some teachers, therefore, admitting to the use of the L1 may be the equivalent to revealing poor language proficiency.

IV. THE ISSUES OF CULTURE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The link between language and culture is universally agreed on, and the data analysis confirms that this is the case among the teachers who participated in this study. However, since a number of schools in India offer extracurricular activities related to cultural events of English-speaking countries, the teachers were asked to express their beliefs about these and in this case the data was much less uniform. The respondents were less persuaded that students needed to actually practice cultural events of English-speaking cultures. Interestingly, as many as one third of them were unsure about this point.

In addition, although the majority of respondents expressed the belief that English language teaching should be accompanied by the teaching of the culture(s) of English-speaking countries, many of them found it useful to relate such cultural content to the students' culture. The classroom observations evinced that the students responded positively when topics were presented cross-culturally rather than from an Anglo-centric perspective only.

Some respondents felt the need to contextualize English language teaching to the local reality, the place where the students will be more likely to use English.

V. CONCLUSION

In general, the findings indicated that the majority of the respondents saw English as belonging to English-speaking countries and related its importance to instrumental considerations, which were in turn linked to requirements imposed by the globalization era. As a result, issues mentioned

above were present in the teachers' belief system only partly. The picture that emerged was a complex and variegated one, especially when the teachers' beliefs were compared to their classroom practice.

The finding clearly demonstrates that the perception of teachers is entirely different than expected. They believe that English language has something to do with the countries in which English is used as a native language. They also responded that the language is extremely important in establishing communication worldwide.

But it is found that majority of teachers believe that only those countries may provide 'absolute' English teaching in which English is being used as a resident language. They also remarked that the teaching material produced by these countries is superior to the material that is produced in India. Apart from this perception, they believe that the culture of these countries play prominent role in English language teaching in terms of making correct pronunciation. One of their surprising observations is that native speakers of the countries in which English is being used, may prove to be good English language teachers. Often the perception of teachers is contradictory to their classroom practice. The usage of learner's native language is found to be problematic in classroom teaching.

VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Firstly, future studies could use a broader sample population from universities in all areas of India to make it possible to observe any differences between urban, rural and remote areas, where teachers do not have many opportunities to keep up to date with the latest trends in English language teaching.

Secondly, having an adequate amount of time available, actual classroom practice may be given more prominence, so that it may be possible to ascertain with more confidence the extent to which teachers' beliefs are reflected in classroom practice.

Thirdly, the potential of the use of the students' mother tongue in the classroom clearly needs further exploration. This is because virtually all literature on communicative language teaching has advocated L2-only methods for decades and is therefore partly responsible for the uneasiness which many teachers, experienced and inexperienced, feel about permitting the use of the L1 in the classroom. Finally, it might be interesting to find out about the students' beliefs with regard to the global role of English. After all, they are the ones who will be most affected by any development in language teaching methodologies and it is only fair that they have a say about the way they are taught as well as what they are taught.

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