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EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNIQUES AND LANGUAGE USE IN ACTUAL CLASSROOM  
TEACHING BY ENGLISH TEACHERS OF SECONDARY ASSAMESE MEDIUM SCHOOLS OF  
ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

English teaching in secondary Assamese Medium schools suffers from several factors. But the teacher remains the single most important cause of the deterioration of the teaching standard in the schools. English is taught by 'any' teacher in the Assamese medium schools. The required qualifications and trainings to handle the subject are totally ignored. The present study aims to bring out the effectiveness of the techniques and language use in actual classroom teaching. The paper is based on classroom observation of five teachers of Assamese Medium secondary schools. The study reveals all the teachers adopts to L1 in class which stands as an obstacle in language learning. The Teachers Talk Time (TTT) in the class is much more than Students Talk Time (STT). Scope for students-to-students interaction is not provided. No Audio-visual aids are used by any of the teachers. The investigator concludes, as language teaching is nothing but developing the fourfold skills, specialized persons should be involved in the teaching of English. Trainings should be provided on the use different techniques of teaching ESL. L1 should be used in a restricted manner. Knowledge of phonetics is needed for correct pronunciation.

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Introduction

English in Assam is introduced at pre-primary level ('*Ka-shreni*') and is taught as a compulsory subject up to the undergraduate level. Even after learning English as a compulsory subject for so many years, most of the students do not have the sound knowledge of the language, let alone mastering it. A good number of students fail in English subject in the HSLC/HS final examination. A fear psychosis of English reigns in them, an escapist attitude towards English could be witnessed. The few who have done well in their examinations also fail to get good jobs as lack of the knowledge of English or lack of the skill of communication through English stands as the main obstacle on their way. For such a situation, our attitude towards English is responsible. The teachers of English; as has been the outcry of academicians and teacher educators, are not competent to teach English. In the classroom, the teacher remains just a teacher and not a facilitator of learning; they rarely are seen

making use of teaching aids and learning materials in the classroom. Most of the teachers often resort to the traditional Grammar Translation Method; other methods and approaches being not known to them. English teaching is often a one-man show in the classroom- the teacher translates each line of the text into L1 of the learners, leaving no scope for the learners to acquire the language skills. This situation for years together has produced students who could neither speak correct English nor read and write error free English.

Teaching of English at the secondary stage is nothing but to make the student understood when someone speaks English, make the pupil express his/her feelings and opinions orally in English, make the pupil read in reasonable speed with comprehension and express in writing. In order to attain these goals, the learners need to be involved in the teaching-learning process. Second language learners often face trouble in the acquisition of a foreign language and more so in learning English as second language. Hence, there arises the need of competent English teachers. The judgement of the teacher should be fine-tuned to the need of the particular group of students. A teacher who is well equipped with the different techniques and strategies in teaching English is more likely to succeed in the classroom than the one who has a limited number of teaching strategies and techniques at command. The different techniques and strategies shall only be known to a teacher who updates himself/herself with the latest trend and/or innovation in English language teaching.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The present study aims to find out how the English teacher in the Secondary Assamese Medium Schools of Assam teach English, their techniques, method and language use in the actual classroom based on the factors viz. introducing a lesson, stages in a lesson, explanation, testing comprehension, feedback and conclusion.

#### **Area of study**

To study the problem, the investigator selected and visited 5 Secondary Assamese Medium Schools in Dhemaji town of Assam. For purpose of this study, five English classes were observed in classes VIII, IX and X.

#### **Teachers Background**

All the five teachers were from the diverse social background. Except one, all other teachers had long teaching experience. All these teachers completed their education in Assamese medium schools. These teachers had to teach subjects like Assamese, Social Science etc. besides English.

Teacher, I was an Arts graduate. He had attended a month-long training in English teaching conducted by English Language Training Institute, (ELTI) Assam. He had also undergone a week-long training conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, (SEBA) Guwahati and a seven days training in English teaching organised by ELTI, Assam, in Dhemaji.

Teacher II completed his B.A. and B.Ed. He also completed a week-long training in English teaching sponsored by ELTI, Assam.

Teacher III was also an Arts graduate. She had no training in English teaching except for a Seminar organised by Dist. Academic Council, Dhemaji.

Teacher IV completed her B.A. and B.Ed. She had undergone a week-long training in English teaching at Dhemaji organised by ELTI, Assam.

Teacher V passed his B.A. He had no training in English teaching

#### **Students background**

The students, too, were from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Most of these students were tribal. They use their tribal dialect while others use Assamese at home. English is introduced to these students in class I and is read as a compulsory subject till class X final examination and thereafter in + 2 stage and higher education

#### **Analysis of Techniques and Language use**

Motivation has a crucial role to play in language learning. The teacher's role in the classroom would include raising the level of interest of the learners in the target language. To get the learner interested in the language, the teacher creates learning set before he/she begins the lesson. This can be done by providing ample exposure to the language, suitable materials and appropriate methods and evaluation procedures.

Motivational factors in the teachers involved in this study were not up to the mark. Except for teacher I, all other had failed to create a suitable language learning set. He was teaching a lesson entitled "What is a Great Book" by Mortimer Adler. Before, starting the lesson the teacher motivates well the students by referring to 'great books' like the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata. The introduction had relevance to the topic. He used

English language throughout the class though there were minor slips. By and large, he used the target language in the classroom.

Teacher II, summarized the previous paragraphs before starting the day's lesson. Students were seen interested to know the lesson (story) further. He used English language in the beginning.

Teachers III, IV and V read aloud the lesson and asked the students to follow them. Explanations given by teacher III was mostly in English and in case of Teacher IV and V, the entire talk of the teacher was in Assamese.

In such classes students rarely get exposure to English and learning of the 'listening' and 'speaking' skills are not attained.

The different stages in the lesson were somewhat faulty and not systematic. Teacher, I followed a Lesson Plan, but often looked into the LP and carried forward the class. Teachers II, III, IV and V did not follow any Plan. Teachers II and V were seen more comfortable with the students.

Regarding interaction with the student, it was more in the case of Teacher V while Teacher III gave no interactional opportunity. The teacher herself spoke most of the time except for students' explanations in Assamese towards the end of the class.

Teacher V prompted her students to speak English and provided sufficient time for students to speak. Teacher II allowed the nominated student to speak. In the case of Teacher IV, one/two students only responded, while others did not respond nor did the teacher help others to speak. Students used Assamese language in their interaction with teachers IV and V. In the classes of Teachers, I and II students spoke English but in chunks.

In all the classes it was the teacher who talked most of the time. Nominated students were given chance to speak a little. Teachers I and II were seen as comparatively democratic while Teacher III dominated the entire class. Teacher IV was the best so far as student interaction was concerned. Though her students answered questions in chunks the teacher elicited students to speak and students were seen responding to the teacher.

Teacher V nominated students for interactions but here too, the teacher ruled the classroom; giving little chance to students to talk.

There was no student-to-student interaction in the classes being observed. Teacher, I gave all explanations in English, except for the meaning of difficult words where he used Assamese language. He was seen precise in his explanations and used simple words.

Teacher II also used Assamese language in explanations and giving meaning of difficult words.

Teacher III, used English but her whole approach was pro-Assamese. After explaining in English, she asked students to explain the passage in Assamese. Students read and explained the passage in Assamese. There was zero student interaction in this class.

Teacher IV too, used Assamese in class. She was elaborative and explained the passage as well as the difficult words in Assamese. Her students made errors in answering in English.

While entire class of Teacher V was in Assamese except for the reading and writing works.

To test students comprehension all the teachers put questions while explaining. Teacher II nominated students to explain the passage in English. The students did quite well. Teacher III also adopted the same techniques but she allowed her students to explain line by line in Assamese. Except for Teacher I, all others gave class activities. Teacher III wrote the answers herself on the board while Teacher IV discussed the answer in the class. Students in all these classes when asked to answer in English, could reply in chunks.

Feedback was provided very skillfully by Teacher II. He gave an activity to solve in the class and completed evaluating the copies. He also adopted Peer Feedback; nominated students to summarise the lesson in English. Teacher IV resorted to open discussion before written works. Teacher V had given an activity in the class but did not provide feedback. Instead, she moved on to the next stage of the lesson, i.e., loud reading by the students which naturally should not have come at this stage. Students kept waiting for the answers but the teacher monitored students' loud reading.

Teacher, I concluded the lesson as per Lesson Plan and teacher V too, followed the same pattern. They both gave home assignments and established a link with what to follow in the next class. Their time management was well.

Five of the three teachers taught stories. Teachers followed traditional ways of teaching. No newer or innovative method could be seen. No Peer Feedback was provided.

**Conclusion**

Almost all of these teachers resorted to L1 which stands as an obstacle in language learning. If teachers do not speak English students will never develop their listening and speaking skills. Teachers were not seen encouraging students to speak English. Students' inability to speak English could be due to a lack of language ability, lack of content knowledge and shyness. It is the teacher who has to remove these factors. For instance, lack of content could be handled comfortably if the topics are from their textbooks or they are asked to prepare before the class. Likewise, lack of language ability can be dealt with by providing a set of phrases, terms and expressions alongside the activity to which the learner can refer when required. All these can happen only if the teacher uses English in class.

Teachers Talk Time (TTT) was found much more than Students Talk Time (STT). This tradition should be given up. Brown's Interactive Analysis System (BIAS) says- in a learner-centred classroom there should be maximum student participation. This can be done by working through the course through group and peer activities. It has been proved that active engagement by the pupils with the text through discussion results in developing the confidence level of the learners.

There wasn't any scope for student-to-student interaction. Whatever little interaction had taken place was in the form of question and answer. When students talk to one another there are many functions they perform. They might ask questions of each other, seek and give clarification etc.

Teachers in the study were seen asking "comprehension check question", but students' response was not at all satisfactory. Except for a few others remain silent. This indicates, either they have not comprehended well or have a problem expressing their ideas. In both cases, it is the teacher whose techniques and language use are responsible.

No Audio-visual aids had been used by any of the teachers. Audio-visual aids make teaching effective. The teachers have not explored the situation where audio-visual aids work well.

**Suggestion**

The teachers were found using too much of L1(Assamese). Use of L1 should be minimised. Therefore, teacher training programmes should focus on methods of teaching English as a second language that can be applied in various socio-linguistic settings.

The investigator witnessed teachers errors in pronunciation. Knowledge of phonetics is a must for an English teacher. This knowledge would enable the teacher to acquire correct sound, stress and intonation. Training programmes normally avoid the phonetics component. It should find a major place in the training schedules.

Audiovisual aids are an integral part of the learning situations and are as important as the blackboard and chalk. Teaching English in Assamese medium schools suffers as a result of the inadequacy and poor availability of audio-visual aids. Govt. should emphasize the supply of English teaching resources to schools. The training programme should guide the teachers on how to prepare in-expensive teaching aids.

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