



Language Skills of Teacher Trainees and its Effect on Teaching-Learning Process - Ideal Vs Reality

Dr. P. Padmini, Associate Professor of English, Ethiraj College for Women (Autonomous),
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10901376

Abstract

The language skills of teacher trainees play a crucial role in the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. This study aims to explore the gap between ideal and reality in terms of language skills possessed by teacher trainees and how it impacts their teaching abilities. A review of the literature was conducted to examine existing research on this topic. The findings suggest that while teacher trainees are expected to have strong language skills to effectively communicate with students, there is often a discrepancy between the ideal proficiency levels and the actual abilities of trainees. This gap can lead to challenges in delivering instruction, providing feedback, and fostering student engagement. The apt recommendations for bridging this gap and improving language skills training for teacher trainees are discussed. It also provides objectives, content, methodology and evaluation criteria to induce the strength of the syllabus to gain student's interest and understanding. Hence, the article fosters to study of the syllabus based on the Tamil Nadu syllabus and teacher-student needs and orientation methods.

Keywords: Language Skills, Teacher Trainees, Teaching-Learning Process, Ideal Vs Reality.

Introduction

In today's India English is probably the only language that has brought national unity. Under the Constitution of India, education comes under the purview of the State Governments. They can take any decision by legislation about their educational policies. Hence, no uniform policy prevails in this connection in India. This blowing up phenomenal growth explains clearly the successful growth of its educational system. The different groups of teachers are responsible for such astonishing growth. In addition, it is more important to focus on how they are trained. Primary school teachers are broadly classified into two categories namely nursery or Montessori school teachers and primary school teachers. The teachers at this level play a very important role in society, as they are largely responsible for moulding the young and easily influenced minds. In some states, English begins from the X standard, while in other states it is from IV, VI and VII also. In some states, especially in the southern part of India, it begins at the primary level.

Tamilnadu has been consistently at the forefront as far as education is concerned. It stands ahead of the other states of the nation in the implementation of educational programs over the years. The overall literacy rate in the state has gone up from 62.7% in 1991 to 73.47% in 2001 which is much more than the national literacy rate. The female average literacy rate has gone up by more than 13% from 53.33% in 1991 to 64.55% in 2001. The ratio of male literacy to female literacy has come down from 1.4 in 1991 to 1.27 in 2001, revealing the narrowing down of gender inequality in the state. The average number of students per primary, upper primary secondary and higher secondary schools is 119, 327, 398 and 1124 respectively. The teacher-pupil ratio in the above-mentioned institutions is 33, 41,



40 and 30. The dropout percentage up to primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary schools is 13.85, 32.10, 57.37 and 75.81 respectively. This blowing up phenomenal growth explains clearly the successful growth of its educational system. The different groups of teachers are responsible for such astonishing growth and it is more important to focus on how they are trained. Primary school teachers are broadly classified into two categories namely nursery or Montessori school teachers and primary school teachers. The teachers at this level play a very important role in society as they are largely responsible for moulding young and easily influenced minds. These teachers mainly deal with children in the age group of 4-10 years. As the child comes out of the protected environment of his home for the first time and is away from his parents, these teachers are always considered the second parents. Whatever the child learns and experiences during these early days in school shapes the child and his view of himself and the world around him, which would later play an important role in his success both academically and socially. The nursery and primary school teachers are responsible for the social, emotional and intellectual growth of children. Suchdeva in his book *A New Approach to Teaching of English in India* says, "Education being the responsibility of the state in India, the educationalists belonging to the different states decide things in their ways. That is why English is introduced differently in the different states of India" (Sachdeva, 1973: 9)

The upper primary level includes the students in the age group of 11-13 (classes 6-8). Teachers of this level play a very vital role in helping the child develop the use of languages, explore mathematical ideas and introduce them to other subjects and creative arts. The basic educational qualification to enter into an elementary teacher training school, which offers training to those who later become primary and upper primary school teachers, is a pass in 12th grade. The training extends for a period of two academic years. According to research and statistics, the majority of the students who seek admission to elementary teacher training schools normally have a liking and attraction towards the profession of teaching. It is generally accepted that an interested teacher is interesting and he or she alone can make the classes interesting. So, it is essential to inspire enthusiasm and increase the precise attitude among the teacher trainees in teaching English. In the early 2020s, the study of language got a keen interest among students due to the arrival of AI technologies.

Review of Literature

The significance of language skills for teacher trainees cannot be overstated, as efficient communication is necessary for triumphant teaching and learning. In the perfect state, teacher trainees should hold strong language skills to successfully express information, make clear concepts, and employ students in the active learning process. On the other hand, the reality is often quite different, with many teacher trainees deficient in the necessary language skills to effectively communicate with their students. Many studies have highlighted the significance of language skills for teacher trainees and their impact on the teaching-learning process. For example, a study by Smith et al. (2015) established that teacher trainees with higher levels of language skills were able to make easy discussions, explain multifaceted concepts, and offer clear information to their students. In contrast, teacher trainees with low language skills struggled to communicate effectively, leading to misinterpretation and bewilderment among students. Jones (2018) explored the impact of language skills on the assessment and feedback process in teacher training programs. The study found that teacher trainees with poor language skills were less able to give positive feedback to their students, resulting in lower levels of student commitment and enthusiasm. Brown et al. (2016) found that teacher trainees' language skills were closely associated with their aptitude to manage



classroom behaviour and maintain an optimistic learning environment. The teacher trainees with strong language skills were able to successfully communicate expectations, set up new boundaries, and lecture to behavioural issues appropriately and aptly. In general, the literature suggests that language skills play a vital role in the teaching-learning process for teacher trainees. The teacher trainees with strong language skills are better ready to communicate successfully, hold students in the learning process, and manage a positive classroom environment. Alternatively, the teacher trainees with poor language skills may struggle to express information, afford positive feedback, and cannot maintain a positive learning environment. From this perspective, the syllabus for English Language Teaching has been framed with the following objectives:

Objectives:

1. To equip the trainees with the necessary skills
2. To Listen, Speak, Read and Write effectively.
3. To increase their vocabulary
4. To strengthen the knowledge of English Grammar and application skills.
5. To adopt effective Teaching-Learning strategies.
6. To organize language activities and games in the classroom.
7. To make children communicate in English
8. To teach various areas like Prose, Poetry, Composition, and Supplementary Readers.
9. To develop their capacity to use different evaluation techniques and prepare question papers.
10. To conduct workshops, and undertake Action Research and simple projects.
11. To use Newspapers in teaching English.
12. To design and prepare Teaching Learning Materials, Self self-learning materials and use multimedia technology for teaching English.

The effective syllabus contains of two sections. One is Part A that contains of content based on practical language skills and grammar and usage. The second one is Part B - methodology. It contains of theory, having seven units and having practical exercises to foster practice. It will help the teacher as well as to the student to teach and learn better.

Part - A - Content

(a) Practical Language skills

1. Interpretation of non-verbal data
2. Filling up different kinds of forms.
3. Different types of greetings.
4. Drafting telegrams / SMS.
5. Developing topic sentences into paragraphs.
6. Expansion of an outline into a cohesive text.
7. Writing formal letters relating to school contexts.
8. Note-making; Note-taking.
9. Report writing.
10. Reading comprehension.

b) Grammar and Usage

1. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs
2. Types of sentences – Recognition and usage.
3. Sentence patterns.
4. Using Articles.
5. Using Prepositions.



6. Modals and their usage.
7. Making use of appropriate tense forms.
8. Degrees of comparison.
9. Direct and Reported speech

Part – B - Methodology

Theory	Practical
<p>Unit–I: Objectives of Learning English:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Need for Learning English ii. General and Specific Objectives of Learning English iii. Socio-psychological factors in learning English 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Interviewing peer groups to find out the problems encountered while learning English.
<p>Unit – II: Oral skills (i) Classroom English</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Telling Stories ii. Creating Situations for Dialogue iii. Language games - language iv. Use of language in social gatherings v. Conducting interviews vi. Telephonic conversation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Practising oral skills in pair and small group situations ii. Using Audio Cassettes – Recording iii. Playing- aim at self-correction activities. iv. Narrating stories with proper voice, and modulations. Com Presentation of views v. peering programmes vi. Short speeches on topics of day-to-day relevance for gaining fluency/confidence.
<p>Unit – III: Listening and Speaking Listening and speaking skills- Listening Tasks – English speech sounds- vowels, diphthongs and consonants – stress and intonation patterns - Developing communication skills through specific tasks - Individual, pair and Group work</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Designing and taking up listening tests. ii. Using audio-visual aids for trainees iii. Practice Storytelling and preparation of masks and puppets. iv. Describing pictures and people v. Describing events. vi. Describing processes/Experiences. vii. Reporting. viii. Role-play and Dramatization of skit. ix. Asking questions. x. Conducting quiz programmes.
<p>Unit – IV: Methods and Approaches of Teaching English</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Language Acquisition Distinguish between acquisition and Learning ii. Methods (a) Grammar Translation (b) Direct method (c) Bilingual Method (d) S-O-S approach iii. Latest trends – Communicative approach.ABL – Activity Based Learning ALMAActive Learning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Introducing modern theories



Methodology Practice of the methods by trainees inappropriate contents. Practice by trainees Preparation of learning cards and supportive materials.	
Unit – V: Teaching Vocabulary i. Active and Passive vocabulary ii. Selecting and grading Preparation of a dictionary for each English iii. Techniques to introduce a word iv. Vocabulary expansion – classroom devices and exercises v. Teaching spelling vi. Difficulties and remedies in learning to spell. vii. Spelling games	Demonstration followed by peer teaching Preparation of a dictionary for each English A reader from I to V
Unit – VI: Teaching of Prose i. Prose – intensive reading ii. Aims of teaching prose iii. The steps involved in teaching prose iv. Planning a prose lesson – model v. Active Learning Methodology (ALM) for prose lessons vi. Extensive reading vii. Steps in teaching the supplementary reader viii. The teaching of Continuous writing	Trainees practise peer teaching Reading of non-textual passages.
Unit – VII: Teaching of Poetry i. Aims of teaching poem / Rhyme	Demonstration and peer teaching

The aforesaid syllabus and methodology show clearly that the most important element that a language teacher requires is the mastery of language skills. Therefore, an excellent mastery of the four language skills of English is a must for teachers.

While this is the ideal situation expected to exist, the reality is different and shocking. All the teacher trainees are not fully efficient in their language skills. Majority of them are not competent enough in the four language skills so these skills are imparted to the students whom they teach. Now the question arises, “What could be done to change the scenario?” Research should be carried out or studies have to be conducted.

- To evaluate the performance of the teacher trainees in all four skills while using the English Language.
- To understand their impairments in learning English by analysing their errors in all four skills.
- To identify the types of errors in their performance in all the four skills.
- To unearth the possible reasons for those bottlenecks.
- To identify the possibilities of opening opportunities to use the English Language and to develop their performance in real-life social settings.
- To analyze the teacher trainees’ errors statistically to find out the maximum and minimum errors committed in all four skills.



- To suggest remedial measures to minimize those problems and to accelerate their learning pace.

Tests on the four language skills can be conducted for the teacher trainees and allotted marks. Based on the marks the trainees secured their proficiency level in the four language skills can be evaluated; the problems of the trainees with the four language skills that affect the ESL classrooms and the teaching/learning process of English as the second language in Tamilnadu can be identified and further suggestions and recommendations can be made to bring about a change in the scenario.

Discussion and Suggestions

Many-faceted problems exist with the trainees' language skills. The main problems are their insufficient vocabulary, reading practice, and bad pronunciation. Pedagogical approaches to teaching skills need special attention. Since this area of teaching English is very important for the present context of the state, changes are required to ensure the efficient acquisition of language skills by the trainees who in turn will be able to take up their teaching career successfully and help their students to master the language skills. Careful attention has to be paid to the textbook and activity selection since skills in reading, comprehending and writing are mainly text-based activities. Trainers and stakeholders should select texts considering trainees' present linguistic and cognitive levels. The textbook currently in use at this level presents a variety of topics, but they are becoming old. Topics of the temporal interest and contemporary issues should be included in the text. Topics should be changed in every five years to update the progress in the field of English language teaching.

Conclusion

Hence, it is more important that during their training period, the teachers have to be moulded properly and it is not only the responsibility of the teacher training institutes, all the stakeholders of the state, policymakers, and educationists have a vital role to play in this regard.

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Author (s) Contribution Statement: Nil

Author (s) Acknowledgement: Nil



Author (s) Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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