

REVIEW ARTICLE



CHALLENGES FACED BY ENGLISH TEACHER IN CHANGING CONTEXT: A STUDY

K.V.S.MAHESWARA RAO

Lecturer in English, AMAL Degree College, Anakapalle, Visakhapatnam District



Article Info:

Article Received:17/04/2014

Accepted for

Publication:26/04/2014

Available online:30/6/2014

ABSTRACT

We live in a world in crisis, in a knowledge society, and in an era, in which time is fluid, nothing lasts, everything changes and is unstable. Our imperfect world is advancing relentlessly towards uncertain future scenarios, and we must try to redirect it towards sustainability, that is, towards a new way of doing things in order to improve our quality of education. While at the same time achieving justice, English teacher faces the challenges in changing context. It is studied and used everywhere in the world, and the need to eliminate the mismatch between the language taught in the classroom and the language spoken by natives or in professional environments. The present study is focused on how to overcome the challenges faced by the English teachers in the changing context, ie; through the discussion of textbooks, the variety of English to be taught, cultural background, fluency and pronunciation issues.

Keywords: sustainability, education, justice, challenges, eliminate, language, textbooks, cultural background, pronunciation.

@ Copyright KY Publications

English as a foreign language is nowadays more a commodity than an advantage. The difficulties students encounter range from pronunciation differences, vocabulary differences, through grammar and communication issues to cultural ones. The variation learners experience is as broad as the spread of English and continues to change day by day. In this respect, David Crystal recognized that 'even the best teaching materials provide learners with texts which are far from the real, informal kind of English, which is used very much more than any other during a normal speaking lifetime' (Crystal, 1978).

English as a global language it develops very fast. It is studied and used everywhere in the world as an official language, a second or a foreign language, and what people or children study in the classroom or at home is different from the language spoken by

natives. English, for example, is spoken in the whole world and the varieties of English turn into locally adapted hybrid languages. This is why many people or students experience language difficulties when they first come in touch with the language spoken by natives or speakers of a different variety of English. The difficulties encountered by students range from pronunciation differences, vocabulary differences to grammar and cultural background issues. The existence of so many varieties will pose teaching problems, and influence the way English is taught.

Textbooks, even the most recommended language proficiency books, prepare learners mostly for formal encounters. They offer the students the opportunity to carry out language and profession-related tasks that are less encountered in casual professional interactions. Textbooks have come a long

way and have developed well in consonance with several teaching and linguistic principles. However, textbooks cannot cover the broad array of teaching issues required by different target groups for which yet solutions must be found. Finally, what variety of English should learners be taught to help them come to grips with the kind of English they need, help them cope with different verbal encounters and use the language efficiently for communication and professional purposes.

Textbooks rarely present real life situations in a common, spoken language, which expresses normal feelings and contains mistakes. Language becomes a global one, learning a language from texts may have different effects on learning. In order to combat the undesirable effects, the teachers must know all the risks that this process might involve. Another factor which accounts for the learners' lack of preparation for verbal interactions with native speakers is their own cultural and linguistic background, which is most often different from that of the host people, and for which they may not have been prepared adequately.

Learners come from different educational backgrounds and have enjoyed a different way of learning the English language. The teacher of English must understand the situation and deal with it in the most efficient and adequate way. In this respect, there are several aspects that must be tackled. First of all, the difference between what a learner should study and what he will experience is a difference that cannot be ignored. The English teaching books include recorded conversations and listening exercises, which have proven to be rather formal. This difference was reported on by the students who went abroad to an English-speaking country and who experienced difficulties or needed a while to get used to the native-speakers' speech variety and pronunciation. However, once they noticed the difference and became aware of the unfamiliar language features, they could improve their speaking skills and performance. After they have overcome this barrier, they had no problems acquiring those features of the foreign language which brought their speaking performance closer to that of the native speakers.

Non-verbal communication is also very important for communication. For example, represented by facial expressions and gestures it can alter the intended message in different ways and with

different effects on the receiver. These misuses of non-verbal communication techniques may endanger the partnership or even damage it. But other people consider that doing the opposite is rude, and not intervening in conversation would indicate boredom or lack of interest. The same applies to laughing, smiling, or frowning when the listener concentrates on the speaker and he/she may understand that he is not understood, or that the listener does not agree with him. Politeness is something that can very easily be interpreted and this happens in many different ways. A pause in a wrong place, a falling or rising tone, a different intonation can easily change the meaning of what has been said and also the impression made on the other person.

People learn English for various reasons and the language they learn should be exactly the language they need. However, any variety is subject to great variations which range from pronunciation to vocabulary and grammar. In the years to follow, the teachers of English enjoyed a wide exposure to the use of English language, its culture, linguistics, applied linguistics, and benefited from scholarships abroad, formal and private visits to UK, and from other options that language teachers could benefit from. The world-wide learners of English need a guiding or standard language to tune to. It is our firm belief that a model accent and pronunciation, a grammar and rules of the use of English should be retained in a standard form. Otherwise the off-springing varieties or dialects would develop in an uncontrolled manner, very much like distinct languages adapted to the local needs and uses and that would jeopardize the future of English.

Fluency is associated with another aspect which must be understood and practiced: pronunciation. Pronunciation is more significant than it seems, because, if ignored at an earlier learning stage it might be more difficult to be improved at a later stage. The second issue faced by the teacher is how to eliminate the mismatch between the formal English, taught by books, and the everyday, casual talk of the native speakers.

Teachers must 'keep pace with the language change', in particular as it 'changes so fast' and the learners are always one step ahead of their teacher. Consequently, internet language, slang, the other varieties of English must be pointed out to the learners. Textbooks play an important part and have a

decisive contribution to the learners' learning English. They must be the learner's support when the teacher is not with him and provide him with the necessary language practice. No textbook can bring to the classroom the diversity of formal and informal spoken and written English. In general, textbooks offer a raw model of professional issues and formal language that should be used in diverse circumstances and encounters.

It is most important for teachers to foster a good background knowledge and deal with all the potential situations, since the learners need to use the appropriate language for each situation. Any situation requires a different language and behavior, which is not similar to the speaker's native language and specific interactions. Most of the time, students do not feel so comfortable in being honest in front of the others and say all they do not understand.

Work cited

- Crystal, David – Will English Always Be the Global Language?; The Effect of New Technologies on English – Video Interviews in Belgrade, 2013
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Kvs8SxN8mc>)
- Crystal, David – Documentary British Council – History of the English Language, 1943
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fJiHmR85cU)
- Orr, D. (2004) *Earth in Mind: on education, environment and the human prospect*, Chicago, Island Press, 2nd Edition
- Cachia, R., Anusca, F., Ala-Mutka, K. and Punie, Y. (2010) *Creative Learning and Innovative Teaching. Final report on the study on creativity and innovation in education in EU members states*, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission, Luxembourg (JRC 62370)(<http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC62370.pdf>)