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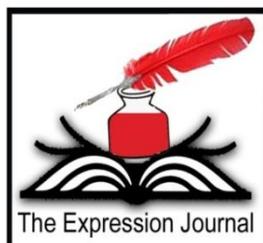
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THE BARRIERS STUDENTS ARE FACING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF GOVERNMENT HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DISTRICT ANANTNAG, J & K INDIA

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Abstract

English in India is a known foreign language since its beginning by the Britishers. For Indians it is not now foreign but a second language which is taught and learnt in every institution. The fascination of English language learning is so much among the people that they judge the intelligence and knowledge of a person on knowing English language. But unfortunately after almost two hundred years of its commencement, the students are still unable to cope with it. They find it very difficult to communicate in English in all the basic skills i-e, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Given this backdrop the present paper explores the drawbacks among the students that they face while learning and practicing the English language skills. The present paper also investigates the attitude of students towards English language. The teachers and the environment of the respective institutions were also taken into consideration and then analyzed. The sample for this study was taken from various government institutions of South Kashmir's Anantnag district. The sample comprised total no. of 50 students. The test took 40-50 minutes in the form of questionnaire, interaction, observation and student teacher relationship.

Key-Words

English, Foreign Language, Britishers, Fascination, Commencement, Skills.

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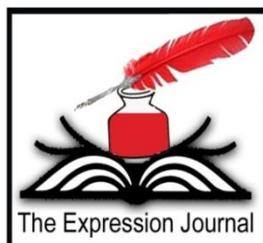
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Introduction

“Thanks to language man became man”, stated Rene Descartes, the French philosopher. Learning Language is one of the fundamental aspects of education. Mastery over language for a person is an ornamental possession for him/her especially English language which is a global and lingua franca in the present age. In the beginning of 21st century the technology has made a deep influence on academia. In the area of language learning, the teachers instead of using traditional methods use new techniques and tools through which a student can learn a language very easily. The social networking sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, messenger, YouTube have brought a sea change in language learning among the students. The magazines, pulp fiction, newspapers and online reading have reached its heights. But instead of such globalization of education there are still the students in government institutions in our country who are lacking the communication skills and feel shy and less confident of using the language in the practical field. In this regard, the researcher have surveyed some government Higher Secondary Schools in the district Anantnag (J&K) where he presented the questionnaire to the students, had an interaction with them, made them listen and read, and eventually observed the underlying problems that they face while using the English language whether in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Not only this but the researcher also interviewed and got interacted with some English teachers and discussed about the barriers and problems that a student faces when it comes to learning English language.

Methodology

The sample for this research paper has been taken from different higher secondary schools of south Kashmir’s Anantnag district. It includes 50 students; boys as well as girls from all streams. A

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questionnaire was prepared for eliciting the data and the test was taken. The test took 40-50 minutes. Each student was given a questionnaire and before filling it, the researcher gave some important instructions to the students regarding English language learning and the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: Part I, Part II, and Part III. Part I was subdivided into three sections. Section A, Section B and Section C. Section A was related to the basic queries of English language; Section B focused on the exposure and usage of English language, and section C was based on rating scale. In part II, the researcher observed the students' over all behavior towards learning English language and the basic problems of using it. The researcher jotted down the major barriers and problems which he noticed in the classroom. In the Part III, the researcher got interacted with English teachers regarding the improvement of English language skills and the basic problems that they face while teaching and learning.

Part I

Data Collection

The researcher presented the questionnaire in the classroom including boys and girls. In the first section of questionnaire some basic questions were asked to the students regarding English language learning. There were four option of each question. However the students' proficiency of English language was also based on their former schooling, educational background, present schooling and their general interest towards English language.

Findings

Section A

Listening English News

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
32%	42.85%	11.64%	13.11%

Fig 1.1

42.85% students do not listen English news. It indicates that majority of the students are lacking listening skills and also are not interested in listening English news. 32% listen English news, 11.64% listen it sometimes while as 13.11% rarely listen it.

Do the teachers hold group discussions in the class?

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
15%	35%	40%	10%

Fig 1.2

Teachers sometimes hold the group discussion and not often. And only 15% hold the group discussion regularly and 35% do not hold it all while 40% sometimes and 10% rarely hold it.

Medium of instruction of English Teachers

English	Urdu	Mother tongue	Multilingual
15%	33%	10%	41%

Fig 1.3

Multilingual method is used by the majority of the teachers-e, 41%, and only 15% teachers use Direct Method, 33% use Urdu language, and 10% use mother tongue.

Do you talk in English in your classroom?

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
2.70%	54.50%	29.55%	13.25%

Fig 1.4

Students are lacking communication skills because majority of the students don't talk in English in classroom (54%). Only 2.70% talk in English in the classroom, 29.55% use English sometimes, and 13.25% use it rarely.

Reading English books, novels short stories etc.

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
25.47%	41.81%	29.09%	3.63%

Fig 1.5

41.81% pupils do not read English books. It means majority of the students are lacking interest in reading English books, articles and other writ ups. 25.47% read, 29.09% sometimes while as 3.63% rarely read.

Percentage of teachers who use English as the medium of instruction in your classroom

Use English	Use non English languages	Sometimes use English	Do not use at all
15%	60%	25%	0%

Fig 1.6

60% teachers do not like to use English in the respective institutions. Only 15% teachers use English in the classroom with their students. It is one of the biggest factors for lacking communication skills.

Section B

In section B, the researcher investigated the attitude of students towards English language and their exposure to it. And in this regard he presented the following questions to them

Reading English newspaper

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
12%	30%	48%	10%

Fig 1.6

Majority of the students read English dailies sometimes (48%). Only 12% students read the newspapers daily, while as 30% students do not read at all and 10% read it very rarely.

Watching English Movies

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
16%	52%	24%	8%

Fig 1.7

52% students do not watch English movies, 16% watches it regularly while as 24% sometimes and 8% watch rarely.

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Using social networking sites for the purpose of English language learning

We always use it	Sometimes use it	Rarely	Not at all
14.28%	54.28%	2.85%	28.59%

Fig 1.8

14.28% students use social networking sites for English purpose, 54% use it for sometimes, 2.85% use it rarely while as 28.59% do not use it at all.

Writing personal blogs, stories, write ups and articles in English

Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely	Not interested
5	50	10	20	15

Fig 1.9

50% students do not write in English, only 5% students write regularly, 10% sometimes, 20% rarely and 15% not interested at all.

When it comes to speaking, we get stuck because

You feel less confident	You think that the person to whom you speak will correct your mistakes	You think that the people would say that you just show off	You don't like to speak
40.5%	27.5%	20.5%	11.5%

Fig 1.9

40.5% students feel less confident when they want to speak English. 27% feel nervous that if the listener(s) correct his/her mistakes, 20% think that the people would ridicule them for showing off while 11% do not like to speak it at all.

Section C

This section is based on grading point scale. The grading scale was rating on 1 to 5 point basis. 1 is for "always true", 2 "usually true", 3 "undecided", 4 "somewhat true", and 5 "not true at all".

S.no	Statement	Frequency
1	I often write in English	2.74

Fig 1.10

Students do not write often in English. They are not in favour of it. They find very difficult to collect the thoughts and shape them into English. Here they are also lacking reading skill.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
2	I read native English writing	3.58

Fig 1.11

The students are in favour of reading the native English writing so that they can enhance their reading skills.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
3	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English	2.62

Fig 1.12

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Students are in favor of reading English. It is indicate they are motivated.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I look for opportunities to listen as much as possible in English	3.80

Fig 1.13

Students are enthusiastic of listening English. They don't miss any opportunity to listen it and try to understand it.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I look for opportunities to speak as much as possible in English	2.00

Fig 1.14

Students are highly interested in speaking English.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I look for opportunities to write as much as possible in English	2.84

Fig 1.15

They are very much interested in writing English so that they can make their writing skills very much exact.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I have clear goals for improving my English skills	2.92

Fig 1.16

They have clear goal of improving English skills and learning the language.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I feel less confident and get nervous when I use English	2.44

Fig 1.17

Mostly they feel nervous and less confident when it comes to speaking.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I practice English with other students, friends, family members etc.	1.96

Fig 1.18

They feel it very difficult to express themselves in English and find their mother tongue easily to release their emotions and express their thoughts. So that they are not favored of it.

S.no	Statement	Frequency
	I ask questions in English	3.26

Fig 1.19

Students mostly prefer to ask questions in English so that they are interested in asking questions in English.

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Part II

Observation method

After the first part of the research paper that is collecting data through the questionnaire, the researcher used the Observation Method. The researcher observed the other problems of students through which they lack communication skills.

Vocabulary: It is one of the primary problems which are faced by the students. The students fall short of words when it comes to speaking and writing English. The word power of students is very weak. It is because that very few students read newspapers regularly and English books like novels, short stories, and articles very rarely. Majority of the students read it sometimes. Secondly, they just read newspapers for the information purpose and not for the enhancing word power. Thirdly, if the students try to develop their vocabulary and know the words and phrases but when it comes to writing and speaking these words do not come in their minds and they are unable to use them in the sentences (written or spoken).

Poor Grammar: From 8th class till the completion of graduation, the students have been learning grammar from their respective teachers but unfortunately they do never understand it properly and are unable to use it correctly. It is because the grammar is being taught on the examination point of view and the students learn it just for passing the examination. Grammar is a practical subject like natural sciences. They learn it in the class but does not use it in their daily lives and do not apply it on the texts, newspapers, articles or any other write up while reading or analyzing it.

Syllabus oriented: Teachers as well as students are syllabus oriented. They do not study text books for learning the language and enhancing their communication skills but they focus on finishing the syllabus. The students just mug up their text but do not try to understand it deeply and practically.

Inadequate time: students as well teachers have very less time for improving the communication skills. The teachers are bound to the text book and teach the students on the syllabus and subject point of view as we have discussed above. On the other hand, there is large number of students in classrooms and the teacher finds it very difficult to make each and every student to listen, speak, read and write.

Poor Reading Skills: The students are at sea in reading skills. They read English monotonously and do not make any difference of punctuations. Not only have this but they also falter in reading. They lack pronunciation skills because they are not made practice by the tutors.

Lack of exposure: The students are having very less exposure to English language particularly the students who belong to far flung areas. No doubt that the technology has brought a revolution in the present day world and majority of the people are under its grip but still the students are very little exposed to English language. They are not motivated to watch English movies (only 16% watch English movies, fig 1.7), listen English lectures on you tube and other social networking sites, speak English in classroom, listen English of natives, read English dailies, and have debates/discussions in the classroom.

Lack of well Trained Teachers: It is also the biggest factor responsible for poor communication skills in Jammu and Kashmir. Majority of the teachers are not exposed to English language. The teachers do their Masters degrees from the institutions which are not academically developed. In

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these institutions there is no compact structure for teaching and learning the subject. No doubt the teachers bring their number of degrees but they deprived knowledge and exposure. The teachers even after their PGs are not able to teach a student satisfactorily because they themselves use the guide, unauthenticated sources and are fully confused about the basic concept of a subject. It is the menace in the academia in Kashmir.

These are some major factors which are responsible for poor communication skills among the students. However students are very enthusiastic and passionate towards English language especially speaking and listening skills but they are not motivated about it. On the other hand, the teachers are also not well trained in language. They are not language trainers but just making their syllabus finish as fast as they can. They teach the students the English texts as a subject but not as a language.

Part III

In the final part, the researcher got interacted with the teachers and also observing some classes while teaching.

Using Multilingual and GT Method: Majority of the teachers use multilingual and Grammar Translation Method. The methods they have been using for many decades and did not bring any change among the students. The students learn just the meaning of a word, sentence or phrase either in their mother tongue or regional language. This hampers their communication skills and do not improve their vocabulary.

Teaching Subject not language: As we have already discussed it above that the teachers don't teach the English texts as a language but a subject. They are concerned with the syllabus and not the language development.

Faulty pronunciation: Not only the students but some of the teachers have also faulty pronunciation. They are unable to make out which pronunciation is correct and which is not.

Inadequate time and large number of classes: There are more students and very less teachers. A teacher has to deliver 4 to 5 lectures in a day. And he has to finish the syllabus in a proper time. So it is very difficult for him/her to concentrate on language development.

Less Confident and non-supportive environment: The students feel shy, embarrassment and less confident while reading or speaking English in the classroom. They get embarrassment that if they speak the teacher will correct their mistakes. Secondly, the environment of the institutions are not favorable for the students, i-e, students are not being motivated by the teachers, not giving them assignments or project work, not making their teaching and learning practical etc.

The above mentioned factors are the basic causes of poor communication skills among the students Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir. The researchers also observed that in these respective institutions in Anantnag, there is great paucity of infrastructure which could be used for language skills. On the other hand, the prison of traditionalism and conservatism in Kashmir as to some extent is also responsible for lacking the English language.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the present paper highlights some major problems and issues related the improvement of English language among 10+2 students in the district Anantnag Kashmir. The

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finale of the present paper shows that the students are taught their respective texts on the subjective point of view rather than language point of view. The students are also not motivated that how to grasp the second language. The students are just bound to their syllabus and cramming up the subject for passing the examination. They don't use the language in the practical field. The students are not fully exposed to language which is one of the basic fundamental of learning English language. The teachers and the environment of the respective institutions are also not so much favorable. But instead of all these things the students are very much fascinated towards this language and its use in the present day world.

Remedial measures

There are some remedial measures that the researchers have found useful for enhancing English language skills.

Interactive class: The teacher should give the time to students to interact with one another in the classroom. After teaching them the lesson, he should make them understand how to interact with one other and discuss the lesson in their own words. He should also make them write a passage or paragraph related to lesson or any other thing.

Watching English Videos: The learner should watch English speaking videos and lessons. He/she should make out the speech and try to look up the difficult words into the dictionary.

Reading as much as they can: The learner should read whatever he finds in English. He must not leave any stone unturned to read everything in English: be it novel, play, short stories, newspapers, magazines, pulp fiction etc. it can help him/her to develop his communication skills at a very breakneck speed.

Usage of social networking sites: in the present day world the social networking sites have caught almost everyone under its grip. The teacher should motivate the students that how they can use internet in general and the social networking sites in particular for enhancing communication skills.

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