



Primary/Elementary School Teachers and Methodologies of ELT in Karnataka: An analytical study

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Abstract

In the year 2007, the Government of Karnataka implemented the English as a second language from the first standard in Non-English Medium schools. Here, I try to analyze the opinions of the stakeholders such as teachers, parents, learners, inspecting authorities and administrators in this article. The opinions of the stakeholders that I sketch here are based on the data that I have collected through the questionnaires and ethnographic interviews. My intention here is to test whether the opinions of the stakeholders meet the objectives set by the Government and policy makers or not. The Government has already declared that it had passed the order after the serious discussions relating to the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard on the public demand, and it has quoted the findings of surveys in the field of English language teaching. But some of the intellectuals blamed the Government's action and complained that it was an act to secure vote bank and it did it to please capitalists. So, here I want to know the mindset of public/stakeholders towards English language and correlate it with the official objectives.

Keywords: ELT, resource books, in service trainings, DVD's, evaluation

Introduction

Analysis of the opinions on methodology of English language teaching

The opinions of the teacher are corroborated by the data collected about the use of methodology that has been prescribed in the resource books. In Karnataka state, 86% of the teachers said that they are able to follow the prescribed methodology while 14% said that they have to make some changes to the methodology prescribed in the resource books and that they follow their own methodology depending on the classroom situation.

Among the respondents 100% said they follow the Grammar Translation Method, 100% follow the loud reading, 80% follow the story telling method, 100% follow the rhyme reciting method, 100% follow the TPR method, 63% follow the dialogue practice, 72% follow the group work method, 52% follow the play-way method, 61% follow the pair-work method, 100% follow the method of reading aloud by learners, 100% follow the chorus method, 43% follow the questioning method, 71% follow the method of language games, 100% use the audio-visual method and other 20% follow their own method. Most of the above mentioned methods are the products of communicative and structural approach to language teaching.

Some opinions on the methods of teaching were expressed by the teachers. It is documented in the video. The teachers told that they were taking the examinations in written as well as oral form also. They said that without translation the learners will not learn other languages. They began teaching writing activities to the beginners for the sake of parents. To the tribal learners, the teachers used to teach English through *phonic system*. For instance, A/a/, B/b/, C/k/. But,

they felt difficulty in using that method because while teaching silent letters in a world, the learners used to get confused (DVD 5- 2009/10 -5.1- 00:01 to 25:14). They used to evaluate the learners through the writing method. Some teachers told that they began to narrate the stories from the fourth standard. First three years they taught them the basics of English language like teaching of alphabet, words, reciting thymes and recognizing the objects (DVD 9- 2009/10 -09- 00:01 to 25:26). Most of the teachers use the teaching aides like charts and pictures. They also used to prescribe some home activities which require 10-15 minutes. In Marathi medium schools, the teachers were found to be using *trilingual method* to teach English. For instance *ondu- ek- one* (DVD 5 -2008/09 -5.1- 85:15 to 100:32 and 5.2- 00:01 to 14:11).

Thus most of the teachers are not following prescribed methods as given in the resource books. But, in the questionnaire, they opined that they followed the prescribed method that is 86%. Using translation method, conducting tests and examinations, beginning the writing skills from the first standard, giving home assignments, reading the stories and rhymes are some of the methods generally being used in the English classrooms. The inability of the teachers is reflected in their teaching. But, they complain about the learners.

Actually, the teachers are not trained in speaking English. But, they are forced to follow some methods in English teaching. So, identification and writing of alphabet is being encouraged in the classroom. A sense of 'time and space' is taught to the learners in every classroom. Though, except TPR activities and reciting rhymes, all other segments that the teachers practice in the classroom is against the

prescribed curriculum. Thus the opinions as given in the questionnaires and as expressed in the interviews are mismatching. It needs further investigation.

Analysis of the impact of in-service trainings relating English language teaching

After the preparation of resource and activity books, the Government gave the responsibility of training teachers to the Regional Institute of English, South India located in Bangalore. In the first phase of 10 days training was given to the BEO's and High school teachers and they were appointed as Master Resource Persons. In the second phase, they were given the responsibility to train up the teachers of primary or secondary school teachers at the district level in DIET and CTE centers and appointed them as Resource Persons. In the third phase, those RP's gave 5 days training to the teachers in taluk centers. In the fourth phase, RIESI and DSERT conducted 5 Tele-Conferences for the teachers. These were held at DIET and BRC's every month from the month of August 2007 onwards. There the teachers were allowed to interact with the experts and allowed to ask the questions with regard to the English language teaching and their problems while teaching the language.

Now, I come to the question of effective teacher training with regard to English as a second language. A majority of the teachers in all five regions felt that the training which they had received before implementing English language teaching was useful and effective, 48% of the teachers agreed that the in-service trainings were 'effective', 31% of teachers felt it 'average' and 21% of teachers felt it 'less effective'.

Thus they opined that the in-service trainings were effective in the questionnaire. But, in the interview, most of the teachers aired their dissatisfaction about trainings. They complained that trainings were not useful because the resource persons told about grammar only, which was not useful for learners. They were in need of training which helps them to teach the syllabus (DVD 1-2008/09-Gulbarga/Bagalkot-1-1.1- 0:00:01 to 0:16:30). In Mysore district, for the sake of tribal learners, an NGO 'Education and Technology Service Ltd., Mumbai', had given them training in English language teaching (DVD 5- 2009/10 - 5.1- 25:27 to 41:50 and 5.2- 00:01 to 02:33). Most of the private and un-aided school teachers complained that they had no provision for attending the training. They urged the government not to differentiate between the teachers on the basis of school managements. Most of the teachers from all sectors requested the Government to recruit special English Language Teachers as in high schools. Actually, the teachers are not trained in speaking English. But, they are forced to follow some methods in English teaching. Thus, the opinions as given in the questionnaires and as expressed in the interviews were mismatching. It needs further investigation.

Analysis of the opinions on testing and evaluation

Assessment is used to mean all those activities the teacher performs to get feedback on his/her teaching, the learner's learning and the relevance of the teaching learning materials. Assessment is also one of the ways for the learner to understand what he/she has learnt and to measure his/her success in learning. The teachers want to test

- To see if the learners have understood what they have been teaching

- To see if their achievement levels have increased
- To give feedback to the learners, parents and other concerned authorities about their performances

Considering above notions, a question was given on testing and evaluation of the learners at the primary level relating with English language in the teachers' questionnaire. Most of the teachers that is 49% of the teachers said that the teaching of English should be informal, recreational and an enjoyable exercise. So, apart from the formal tests, they are in favour of oral tests. 19% of the teachers opined that testing, in one form or the other, was necessary even at the primary level. Only this can bring some kind of seriousness and purpose to the whole process of learning and teaching English at the primary classroom. But 32% of the teachers felt that testing should be optional and should depend on the situation of the class and on the teacher concerned (see Table No.4.13).

At the time of their interviews, some of the teachers opined that they used to conduct examinations for the sake of parents as they wanted to know the performance of their children in the form of marks not in the form of grade-system (DVD 6- 2009/10 -06- 30:16 to 43:24). In some of the school the teachers showed me the progress cards of the learners where they gave the marks and grades to all the subjects including English language subject. It seems to me that the teachers are not following the instruction of the policy makers or the guidelines relating to the evaluation. Thus, the opinions as given in the questionnaires and as expressed in the interviews are mismatching. It needs further investigation.

Analysis of the opinions on testing areas

After knowing the teachers' opinion on testing and evaluation, they were also asked 'which skill and language area that they would like to test' in the primary classes. 57% of the teachers are in favour of oral communication, 13% of them want to test only listening skill, 21% opined that evaluation of reading and writing skills is necessary and 9% of teachers want to test the grammatical and vocabulary knowledge of the learners.

In the guidelines, the policy makers instructed to conduct oral examination for the beginners. Most of the teachers are also in favour of testing the oral communication skills. So, it matches with the objectives of the curriculum.

Analysis of the opinions on inspecting authorities and their inspecting areas

The teachers were also asked to share their opinion on inspecting authorities. 24% of the teachers felt that inspecting personnel look at academic matters, but 72% of them opined that they are worried only about administrative matters. But 4% of teachers thought that they neither give importance to academic nor administrative matters. For the sake of formality, they just visit the schools. Most of the teachers from different medium schools opined that inspecting authorities are only worried about administrative matters during their visit to the schools. The same opinion emerged at the time of interviewing the teachers. According to 22% of the teachers the inspecting personnel give importance to the attendance and punctuality of the teachers, 33% of the teachers opine that they inspect the maintenance of records of the school, 23% of the teachers opine that they observe the classroom practices, 17% of the teachers

express that the inspecting personnel give the guidance if they ask and 5% of the teachers opine that they interact with the teachers as a resource person.

So, most of the teachers were dissatisfied about the work of inspecting authorities. They expected the guidance from the inspecting authorities. But, the inspecting authorities were busy in paper work related to plan. The same opinion was reflected at the time of interviewing teachers.

Conclusion

I have already stated my intention in the beginning of this chapter that I want to know the proficiency of the teachers and see if they are competent to teach the English language or not, if they understood the plan of implementation of the policy of English language teaching thoroughly or not; and the circumstances under which they teach. With regard to the teachers' educational qualification, 67% of the teachers have more qualification than the minimum necessary qualification. The proficiency level of the learners in South and East-Karnataka is more than the other regions. But, with regard to the habits of the teachers, the regional language seems to be exerting big influence on their reading habit. The reading habit in English is very less which seems to have some effect on teaching levels and competency of the teacher. Teachers, who read more in English, seem to be more aware of the issues and are capable to doing justice to the plan.

Most of the teachers found the resource books to be difficult in the beginning. After, getting the revised version of resource books, they were satisfied to some extent. Actually, the teachers are not trained in speaking English, but they are forced to follow some methods in English teaching. So, identification and writing of alphabet is being encouraged in the classroom. A sense of 'time and space' is taught to the learners in every classroom. Though, except TPR activities and reciting rhymes, all other segments that the teachers practice in the classroom is against the prescribed curriculum. The teachers opined that the in-service trainings were effective in the questionnaire. But, in the interview, most of the teachers were dissatisfied about trainings. With regard to the testing and evaluation, most of the teachers told that they used to conduct examinations for the sake of parents as they wanted to know the performance of their children in the form of marks and not in the form of grade-system. It seems me that the teachers are not following the instruction of the policy makers or the guidelines relating to the evaluation.

Thus, the opinions of the teachers as given in the questionnaires and as expressed in the interviews are mismatching. It needs further investigation. And moreover, there is no co-ordination between the teacher community and inspecting authorities. Most of the teachers were dissatisfied with the work of inspecting authorities. They expected guidance from the inspecting authorities. According to them the inspecting authorities are busy in administrative matters than academic matters. Similar opinion emerged during the time interview with the teachers.

References

1. Based on Questionnaires, interviews and ethnographic study
2. DVD materials
3. DVD 1-2008/09- 00:00 to 03:24 hours

4. DVD 5-2008/09- 00:00 to 02:52 hours
5. DVD 6-2009/10-00:00 to 01:31 hours
6. DVD 9-2009/10-00:00 to 01:34 hours