

Readers' Forum

ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE

Consequent upon the governmental decision to introduce English as the second language in our curricula a good number of our educational thinkers has spoken on the subject. The New Nation commenting editorially rightly stressed the pragmatic aspect of teaching the subject in our educational institutions. The readers have also ventilated their view-points on it through the columns of the New Nation and other mass media. All these speak of a healthy and realistic attitude towards this issue of national importance. The following are however intended to reflect our humble view-points on the subject, of course, from the pedagogical stand point.

To determine the locus standi of English in our curricula we must at the very outset pinpoint the why's and how's pertaining to the teaching and learning of the subject at different stages of our education and then only embark upon the drafting of pragmatic curricula and syllabi for different grades which will ultimately lead us to our goal. Why must we learn English? In our opinion, firstly, because it is one of the richest media of international communication. Nations of to-day are so much interlinked with one another that to fit ourselves to the modern world we must be conversant with one of more foreign tongues besides our own mother-tongue. And in our case English ought to be the choice as we have inherited it as a legacy of the British rule here. Secondly, because the proper treatment of scientific and technological education particularly in higher stages is well-nigh impossible without a fair knowledge of English. Thirdly, because English is the store-house of indepth knowledge of every faculty of learning.

Keeping in view the above three broad-based aspects of English we should formulate our curricula and syllabi for different stages of our education with provision for logistic support to achieve the objectives set for each stage. The primary stage of our education consisting of classes I to V enrolls the youngsters of the age group of 6 and over to 11. And so far child psychology is concerned, it may not be advisable to overburden these immature minds to learn English through the modern innovative approach known as the sentence structure method under the instructional guidance of teachers apathetic towards this approach of teaching. Instead, we propose that classes I and II may be assigned to learn the alphabets in all their characteristics, while classes III to V may be assigned to learn English version of words and terms of our everyday use and quite

a very few simple sentence patterns may be added to the text-book in addition to a few nursery rhymes. Though a departure from the modern innovative approach to language teaching, nevertheless we believe this will suit the genius of our tutorial staff of this stage, as well as the classroom situation. We further believe that it will considerably help in creating a fair background of English learning in our young learners to follow the course under the modern methodology from class VI onward.

The secondary stage comprising classes VI to X may be assigned to learn the subject under the innovative approach known as the sentence structure method. Much care should however be taken in order that the learners at this stage become sufficiently proficient in the four skills of the language viz. Reading, writing, speaking and listening with understanding. Only carefully compiled and graded text-book on the subject with provision for their effective teaching in classrooms can assure us of attainment of the objectives. Classroom achievement will depend upon the provision of requisite number of teachers especially trained for English teaching in each school. A short course training programme of 7-day duration may be conducted at the national level for training a batch of teachers drawn from the experienced English teachers per district three teachers prorata ultimately to create an English teachers trainers pool at the disposal of each of the District Education Officers. The DEO's in their turn will arrange for training of English teachers of different schools in batches under one month training programme for each batch with the help of the members of the said trainers' pool in their respective district. This will make feasible to provide each school with the requisite number of teachers especially trained for English teaching.

English at the higher secondary level should be taught as an advanced learners' course of study. It should be so disciplined as to help grow in prospective learner the natural propensity and capability for further study of the subject in graduation and postgraduation levels. It should also help the students of medicine, engineering, science and technology in English.

Would the authorities for curriculum development and implementation take cognizance of our suggestions in formulating their policies for introduction of English as the second language in our educational institutions?

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