

# Style and Strategies of Teaching English As a Second Language (ESL): An Overview

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## Abstract

English as a second language has become the language of the world. This article examined the style and strategies of teaching English. More people in the world use English as a means of communication. In India also, English has been widely used for the last two centuries. Teachers follow some strategies for teaching English as a second language. Therefore, teachers need to have some effective strategies of teaching for the better understanding of the learners. The objective of this paper is to study the teaching style and strategies followed by the teachers during classroom transactions.

**Key word:** Teaching Style, Strategy, ESL, Secondary Level.

### Introduction

English language is one of the important languages widely used in the present day all over the world. Teaching English as a second language (ESL) is quite a complex task for the teachers. "As teachers, we need to explore more fully the factors that are involved in motivating students to perform tasks well because this is something that teachers have some control over" (Ellis, 1997). Teachers must follow effective teaching strategies for the learners to grab better in learning English. Everywhere English is learned because people have realized that knowledge of English is just like a passport for a good career, better pay as well as advanced communication with the entire world. With the rapid advancement in science and technology and with the advent of ICT, English has not only increased employment but also has helped a lot in communication. English becomes the window to global communication. English is in all over the internet, books and in all media that is followed by almost all the developed and developing countries of the world today. Today English is generally viewed as a language of opportunity and a language of empowerment and is seen as a tool for upward social mobility. English continues to be a compulsory subject in school syllabus. Knowledge and proficiency in English is essential for appointment in any private or government jobs, to pursue higher education as well in all other professional or technical courses.

The aim of the present study is to make a far-reaching understanding of the strategies used by the teachers for teaching English language as a second language in secondary level.

### Objective of the Study

1. To study the style and strategy adopted by English teachers for teaching English.
2. To examine whether the methods/approaches for teaching English are suitable with reference to prescribed standards.

### Scope

The scope in this study is to investigate the strategies of teaching English at secondary level and the methods/approaches adopted by the teachers teaching English. Further, it is delimited to Odia Medium Secondary Schools only that are under control of Department of School and mass Education, Government of Odisha.

### Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey method to check the common strategies applied by the teachers in secondary school of Bargarh district. Such a design was followed to collect data from 130 teachers through questionnaire and observation schedule. The teachers were selected from one hundred sample schools of Bargarh district. Questionnaire was used for the teachers to study the style and strategy of teachers' teaching English in the classroom and an observation schedule was used to conduct a reality check of the classroom situation.

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**Results and discussion**

Questionnaires were distributed to 130 teachers teaching English. Questionnaire consisted of 42 closed-ended and 19 open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions enquired different style and strategies adopted by the teachers while open-ended questions sought opinion on issues that were qualitative in nature.

**Motivation and encouragement by Teachers**

Motivation has long been identified as one of the main factors affecting English language learning (Gardner, 1985). Parson, Hinson and Brown (2001) stated “motivation as an important component or factor in the learning process”. With regard to motivation and encouragement given by teachers 47.69% of the teachers estimated their students’ level of interest in learning English is high, 6.15% estimated as ‘very high’, 36.15% as ‘low’ and 10% estimated their students level of interest as ‘very low’ in learning English. It was also found that 58.46% of the teachers opined that their students felt bored, inattentive or de-motivated ‘sometimes’ while teaching in the class, 16.25% stated as ‘rarely’ motivated and 21.54 % of the teachers opined that their students never felt bored, inattentive or de-motivated while teaching in English class. Thus, it was observed that more than 70% of the students feel bored, inattentive and not motivated in the English class.

The above two findings demand improvement in teaching style, preparation and presentation of the content. Something more needs to be done to improve the teaching style of the teachers, so that students will be attentive and motivated in English class.

Again 23.07% of the teachers stated that their students were always unprepared and overly dependent on the teachers in the classroom, 63.85% stated that they were ‘sometimes’ dependent on the teachers in class, only 10% stated this condition as ‘rarely’ and 3.08% stated that their student generally do not depend on the teachers and are found prepared in the class. Thus it was found that more than 85% of the students were less prepared and highly dependent on the teachers. This might be due to possible fear towards the language and lack of confidence in learning a foreign language.

The various motivational techniques used by teachers before starting a task were by showing pictures, by telling stories, through word games, with reward programmes, personal experience, and brainstorming activities, giving various examples and asking questions.

Therefore, it was observed that all the teachers start activities in a generic way by employing traditional/classical techniques. Use of ICT or audio-visual aids, or any blended learning technique is not used by the teachers. Dawes (2001) stated “ICT has the potential to support education across the curriculum and provide opportunities for effective communication between teachers and students in ways that have not been possible before”.

The teachers need to be oriented to use modern techniques/blended learning methodology to motivate the students towards teaching learning situations.

**Methods, Techniques and Approaches adopted by Teachers**

While using technique, almost all the teachers were in the habit of using make-up questions in the class. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has emphasized correlating pupils’ knowledge, past experience and local culture in teaching children. Most of the teachers used students’ experience or relevant past knowledge before introducing a topic in the class. Note making now-a-days has become a very popular and effective method of recording students’ understanding. Cognitive psychologists have proved note making is more effective than writing summary. Nearly all the teachers followed note making techniques in the class. Most of the teachers have done group or pair activities while teaching English and used pre-instructional activities.

Students are more valued members in the class. They should feel dignified in the school. As NCF 2005, suggested for critical pedagogy, student talk time should be more in the class; the teacher should give emphasis on the opinion and ideas of the students while teaching. It was seen that 44.62% of the teachers have always used students’ ideas and opinions in teaching and sixty percent have always paid individual attention to academically weak students. All the teachers discussed previous years’ English question papers in the class.

While introducing a topic, teachers introduced the topic by asking questions related to the topic, by using teaching aids, by telling stories and showing pictures, by

giving examples they introduced the topic, by applying peer group discussion, by using video clips in ICT lab and by using brainstorming activities.

Regarding the use of techniques to convey the meaning and usage of words and phrases, 25% of the teachers used synonym, antonym and group matching for the meaning and usage of new words and phrases.

Regarding the use of style and approaches to teach extensive and intensive study, 62.31% of the teachers used various techniques for extensive and intensive study.

#### **Facilities for effective teaching and use of modern gadgets in teaching**

In English language teaching, TLM plays a great role. In second language learning, use of TLM facilitates the teacher to teach effectively. So all the schools should be equipped with adequate TLM and teachers should be trained well to use them effectively. More than 52% teachers did not have the facilities for using such teaching aids and 34.61% had facilities which were insufficient. So there is a need to equip the schools with TLM and to train the teachers to use them effectively. The teachers should also be trained in preparation of low cost and no cost TLM and should be resourceful and innovative in procuring TLM from different sources like collecting old calendars, photos and charts, posters from the community.

All the teachers (100%) have expressed that they did not have a language laboratory in their school and none of them have received training in the use of language laboratories. So in the era of ICT, steps should be taken to have smart classrooms and language laboratories in all the schools and teachers should be trained to use them effectively. For this internet connectivity should be made available in all the schools.

#### **Practice in LSRW skills**

It was found that 30.31% of the teachers opined that most of the students understood English without difficulty.

A majority of the teachers (83.85%) claimed that students used both English and Odia language in classroom transactions. Most of the teachers gave loud reading practice. With regard to students' correct pronunciation, only 3.08% of the teachers opined that all students could pronounce correctly. This indicates that there is a problem of correct pronunciation among the students. So care should be taken by the teachers and suitable strategies need to be designed for correct pronunciation by the students.

Some teachers never corrected students' pronunciation errors. This indicates that the teachers need special training on how to correct the errors of the students both in pronunciations and written work.

As regards to students' writing skills in English, 90% of the teachers were of the opinion that only a few students could write correct English at their level.

It was a good indication that nearly 50% of the teachers were found giving importance to writing skill. But in the secondary stage there is also a need to give importance on speaking and reading skills. So the teachers need to be made aware of the importance of skill development in the secondary stage.

With regard to assigning writing tasks to develop students' writing skills 57.69% of the teachers gave tasks on essay writing, letter writing, precis and report writing.

When the practice of other activities for developing listening and speaking skills was examined, it was found that teachers used audio visual aids to develop listening and speaking skills, question answers activity, conversation in English, encouraged storytelling, encouraged role play for developing listening and speaking skills of the learners, conducted group discussion and asked the students for loud reading of books to develop listening and speaking skills of students, also involved their students for speech practice in the class.

**Use of teaching aids**

Regarding the use of audio visual aids 44.62% of the teachers stated that they sometimes used audio visual aids, 33.83% rarely used and only 1.54% always used audio visual aids during teaching English.

It was found that 100% of the teachers used dictionaries, handbooks, and workbooks in class.

The level of interest of the students when TLM, audio-visual aids were used was examined, it was found that 67.69% of the teachers stated that their students were interested and motivated to learn English while teaching aid and audio visual aids are used in the classroom. Regarding techniques used when teaching aids are inadequate, multiple responses were found from the teachers' that they just described the theme when teaching aids were inadequate; used sun-diagram, flow chart, tree diagram; explained topics with examples, engaged the students in classroom activities, used internet, telling stories and encouraged for sharing of self-experience when teaching aids were not suitable/inadequate in English teaching.

**Conclusion**

Teaching of English is a challenging task for the teachers in Odia medium secondary schools. Thus, teachers have to explore the right style and strategies to arouse and sustain interest among the students towards the English language. The Board of Secondary Education and ELTI should jointly organize a massive English language in-service training programme for teachers to strengthen English teaching. Further, University PG Department of English and Teacher Education Institutions should also take initiative for strengthening the standard of teaching English in secondary schools

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