

Challenges Faced by Language Teachers in Second Language Instruction: A Critical Review

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Abstract

A second language is referred to any language that learned and used by an individual besides their mother tongue. Teaching second is considered as a key challenge for the language teachers due to diverse learner needs, limited resources, and evolving pedagogical demands. This review article critically examines the major difficulties faced by teachers in second language classrooms, including linguistic diversity, varying levels of learner motivation and proficiency, inadequate teaching materials, and insufficient professional training. The study synthesizes findings from existing literature to identify common barriers that affect the effectiveness of second language teaching and learning. The review concludes that institutional support, improved teaching resources, and effective training programs are essential for helping language teachers overcome these challenges and enhance the quality of second language instruction.

Keywords: Language instruction, pedagogical demand, professional training; second language.

1. Introduction

A second language is any language that a person uses other than a first or his native language which is a language consciously acquired by the speaker after puberty Lenneberg (1969). The significance difference between a first language (L_1) and a second language (L_2) is the age of the person learned the language. In most cases, one can never achieve the same level of fluency and command in their second languages as in their first language. Additionally in Scientific perspective the “critical period hypothesis” states that there is an ideal time frame of the brain development to acquire language in a linguistically rich environment, after which further language acquisition becomes much difficult (Birdsong, 1999).

Teaching a second language has become an essential component of modern education due to globalization, increased mobility, and the growing need for intercultural communication. Second language acquisition is very much essential for the students to develop linguistic competence and participate effectively in academic, professional, and social contexts. However, the process of teaching a second language is complex and often presents several challenges for teachers. It requires not only the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation but also the development of communicative competence and cultural awareness among learners. However, there may be so many factors affect the process of teaching and learning a second language including- attitude of the teachers as well as the students, self-confidence, motivation, duration of exposure to the language, classroom conditions, environment, family background, and availability of competent teachers (Verghese, 2009). Additionally,

maximum educational institutions are not interested to invite a language specialist to teach the second languages.

Therefore, understanding the problems faced by teachers in second language classrooms is essential for improving teaching practices and enhancing students' language learning experiences. This review paper aims to emphasize the major challenges encountered by teachers while teaching a second language and to analyse the strategies suggested in previous research to address these challenges.

2. Methodology

The present article is descriptive in nature and solely based on secondary information collected from research articles published in different journals which are available online with open access. Moreover, works published between the years 2000-2024 were screened for the purpose of reviewing.

2.1 Literature Searches

For reviewing this article, related literature was retrieved through online search engines such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Jstor, Social Science Information, Shoudhganga, Academi.edu etc. Various combinations of keywords such as second language, English language, difficulties faced by teachers, teaching second language, etc. were interchangeably used for searching the literatures. Boolean Operators such as 'AND' and 'OR' were used in order to get more productive results relating to the topic.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

2.2.1 Inclusion Criteria: Articles which were related with the title, abstract, keywords, introduction and the overall content of this review were selected. Focused is mainly given to the articles which includes-

- Different factors effecting while teaching second language.
- Problems faced by the teachers while teaching second language.
- Factors responsible for teaching Assamese as a second language.
- Factors affecting English as a second language.

2.2.2 Exclusion Criteria: The criteria considered for exclusion were as follows:

- Articles which were not published in the English language.
- Works published before 2001.
- Data from unreliable sources.
- Articles in which full-text files are not available.

2.3 Selection Strategy

Maximum of the works published related with the topic of interest have been critically assessed among them only those journals have been selected which were most relevant, having good citations, authenticity and falls under the eligibility criteria. However, regarding some definitions some old established works have been also cited.

3. Results and Discussion

Teachers frequently encounter a variety of difficulties while teaching a second language. One of the major challenges is the diversity of students' linguistic backgrounds, proficiency levels, and learning styles within the same classroom. Such variations make it difficult for teachers to adopt a uniform pace and teaching strategy that meets the needs of all learners. According to Krashen, (1982), language

acquisition is influenced by learners' exposure, input, and affective factors, which can vary significantly among students. As a result, teachers often need to adjust their instructional approaches to accommodate different learning needs. Another significant challenge is the lack of adequate teaching resources and supportive learning environments. In many educational settings, teachers may not have access to modern teaching aids such as multimedia tools, language laboratories, or updated instructional materials. Brown, (2007) emphasizes that effective language teaching requires interactive activities, meaningful communication, and appropriate materials to engage students in the learning process. Additionally, many learners feel shy, nervous, or afraid of making mistakes while speaking a second language, which reduces their participation in classroom activities. Dörnyei, (2001) highlights that motivation plays a crucial role in second language learning and for that teachers must create supportive classroom environments to encourage students' confidence and active participation. In addition, large class sizes and limited instructional time often restrict teachers' ability to provide individualized feedback and attention to learners. Language learning requires continuous practice, interaction, and corrective feedback, which becomes challenging when teachers must manage many students in a limited time (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Harumi (2011) noted that most of the teachers from Japan faced challenges in teaching second language because of a lack of proper and adequate teaching materials which eventually negatively impacts in teaching and learning process. Additionally, lack of parental involvement, absenteeism of learners, lack of motivation and negative attitude of learners were key hindrance for teaching the second language. Makhathini & Mncwango, (2020) have conducted research on the challenges with the teaching and learning of English language in a bilingual classroom of Johannesburg, South Africa and reported that majority of teachers lack of grammar training. Through this study the researcher recommended the re-skilling of language teachers to improve their approaches to the teaching of English grammar. It was also noticed that, the shortage of well trained and specialist English language teachers is the main hindrance of teaching of English Language as a second language in the secondary schools of Kogi State in Nigeria (Obiakor & Malu, 2020). Haufiku et al., (2022) carried out a study on the challenges of teachers teaching English as a second language in the senior secondary schools of Namibia and put forwarded the inference that overcrowded classes, absenteeism by learners, lack of parental involvement, learners' lack of motivation, learners' poor altitude was found to be the prime challenges in teaching English as a second language. Okoyeukwu et al., (2023) also reported that unavailability of trained teachers; inadequate instructional materials; poor teaching strategies adopted by teachers and students mother tongues militate against the teaching of English Language as a second language. The study recommended the employment of trained and skilled teachers in the educational institution along with providing of adequate instructional material by the government will mitigate the problems of teaching English as a second language in the secondary schools.

Anjaneyulu, (2015) reported that the prime problem of teaching English is the inadequate classroom facilities. Additionally. 63.33% of secondary schools of Telangana were not interested to inviting language experts for teaching English. It was also noticed that schools having regional language as their first language give more importance to that language rather than English (Banerjee, 2016). Moreover, high ratio of students to teachers is noticeably affect the process of teaching English as a second language, leading to ineffectiveness (Roy, 2017). Also, the rural atmosphere does not provide opportunity to the students to speak and learn English. Adhikari, (2019) reported that English language teachers need to abreast themselves with the latest developments in the context of language teaching.

The study recommended the co-operation from the school, teachers, parents and students fetch fruitful results while teaching English. Apart from old method of teaching, lack of effective faculty, faulty curriculum there were some other factors which play a significant role in teaching of English as a second language. Among them environment and family background of the student play a crucial role in success of teaching - learning process (Syal, 2019). Kottairaj et al., (2020) reported that there is a significant difference between male and female secondary school students in learning English language. To improve that, the teachers should organize language lectures periodically, arrange group discussion, debates etc., among students in English language. Excessive use of mother tongue, shortage of time, improper infrastructure, crowded classroom, lack of activeness in the classroom are some important hindrances while teaching English as a second language (Nandi, 2021). Dash, (2022) reported that most of the students from Odisha are incompetent in speaking skill and feel uneasy to convey their message in English language. For them, communicative language teaching method, audio-lingual method, grammar translation method, silent way method, direct method, reading method; will help effectively to acquire the second language properly. Amin & Sharma (2023) reported that 80% of the teachers from Shimla, Himachal Pradesh have facing difficulties while teaching English in the secondary level. They also reported that there is lack of audio aids and visual aids for teaching English in the secondary schools of Shimla, Additionally, students did not have the habit of reading an English newspaper daily which negatively impacts the teaching English in the classrooms as a second language.

In the preset education context of Assam, Ahmed, (2016) found that English is often called a 'skill' rather than a 'subject' and is rarely practiced in the Secondary Schools of Assam. The study recommended that the Government of Assam should incorporates learning of 'English sounds' in the syllabus of Elementary Schools so that the students can acquire the spoken English skill from the primary level. Changkakoti, (2020) reported that most of teachers neglect the use of teaching aids during the time of teaching English, additionally they have also lacking of necessary training in English teaching. Additionally, the study inferred that division of huge classes into smaller sections and use of teaching aids can made the second language teaching more effective and comprehensive. Saikia, (2020) revealed that in most of the schools of Jorhat district, Assam, English is taught as a subject not as a language. Moreover, the methods and techniques of the English teachers are found to outdated and defective as well. The study suggested that the teachers should try to develop students' four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing and must encourage the students to think in English rather than thinking in their mother tongue. In the vernacular medium schools of Assam, the prime focus has been given to the scoring marks in the examination lead to treat English as a subject rather than a language which eventually emerge as a hindrance in teaching English language Brahma, (2022). The study stated that the main factors behind the below par performance of the vernacular medium schools includes- inadequate teaching methods, inexperienced teachers, translation methods, no proper speaking, listening and reading practices in the schools. A recent study conducted by Patgiri, (2023) on the issues and challenges of teaching Mishing in Assamese medium schools revealed that the vacancy of the Mishing language teachers is the prime challenges. Moreover, the locational disadvantage has also been mentioned in the study.

4. Conclusion

Second language teaching is a complex process. It requires teachers to tackle various teaching, language, and contextual challenges. This review has highlighted several key difficulties that language teachers

often face. These include limited teaching resources, diverse backgrounds among learners, different levels of student motivation and skill, lack of training in modern teaching methods, and limitations related to the curriculum and classroom environment. Addressing the challenges faced by language teachers is essential for improving the quality of second language education. Greater attention should be given to teacher training, resource availability, and research-based teaching practices.

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