

Outstanding Deterrents In Learning English As A Second Language With Special Reference To Bengali And Nepali Speaking Students

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ABSTRACT

The chief aim of this research paper is to discover the notable challenges and deterrents in learning English as a second language (ESL) with special reference to the South Asian languages (Bengali and Nepali) speaking students. It critically describes language learning methods with respect to these two South Asian languages. The research is based on experience and an experimental study. The paper has conducted an experimental study on 150 students learning English through various methods. There is a critical analysis of teaching methods with the help of the experimental study. It discloses the various patterns and features of these prominent South Asian languages of these countries. The paper concludes that the Direct Method is the best of all methods on account of code fixing habit in other methods with special reference to these speakers because these languages have quite different patterns and features. The paper finally gives some recommendations.

Keywords Direct Method, Indirect Method, Bilingual Method, code fixing, Bengali, Nepali

1. INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH

English is truly an international language. It is globally the second largest language in view of the number of speakers. It comes after Mandarin Chinese (Standard Chinese). Mandarin Chinese is globally spoken by almost 1.1 billion speakers (number of native speakers: 897 million, and the number of non-native speakers: 193 million). English is globally spoken by almost 983 million speakers (number of native speakers: 371 million, and the number of non-native speakers: 611 million) (George Julian). There is no unanimous positioning of English, and other languages. According to another source, English is the largest language after Standard Chinese, and Spanish (Alex Waltner). This language is learnt either as the first language (L1) or the second language (L2) in the world. As of 2019, there were 55 sovereign states, and 27 non-sovereign entities where English was an official language. (Wikipedia)

It was initial medieval England, where English was first used. It was gradually, undisputedly and agreeingly established as a global lingua franca. Its language family is Germanic which is a sub-family of Indo-European. The language is closely related to Frisian, and Low Saxon, and its vocabulary has been significantly influenced by other Germanic languages, particularly Norse (a North Germanic language), and to a greater extent by Latin, and French. (Finkenstaedt, Thomas; Dieter Wolff)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the worldwide studies discloses that there are so many problems related to the learning of English as a second language. Most of these problems are caused by the interference of the native

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language. The reviews disclose that the interference of native languages is neither same in number nor in intensity. It depends on similarity with English.

Some languages, i.e. Danish, Dutch, French, and Italian are similar to English. English is easy for the speakers of these languages. But, some languages, i.e. Albanian, Polish, Armenian, and Russian are dissimilar to English. English is difficult for the speakers of these languages (Language Difficulty Ranking- Effective Language Learning). Much work has been done as regards the problems faced by speakers of many native languages. While a little work is done in case of the problems in learning ESL faced by speakers of Bengali, and Nepali.

Hashmi, Qudsia Iqbal. (2016) searches, and examines the learning difficulties handled by Hindi and Urdu speaking-students in India, and Saudi Arabia. Tahir Jahan Khan (2016) examines the learning difficulties handled by Urdu, and Saraiki speaking students.

Cappa C., Fernando J., Giulivi S. et al. (2012) reveal the differences between South Asian languages, and English. They say that South Asian languages are syllable-timed whereas English is stress-timed, and has unpredictable word stress.

Gan, Z. (2013) examines the challenges sixteen non-native pre-service English as Second Language (ESL in a Bachelor of Education (English Language) (BEEdEL) programme from Hong Kong experienced in an eight-week teaching practicum. Cruz, Shella D. Dela. (2019) examines the use of code –switching in Philippine Literature.

It was also concluded by some researchers that the L2 learners often make systematic errors in grammar, and these errors are usually based upon their first language. The Second language learners over and over again commit errors, and mistakes on account of interference of their native languages. A considerable amount of research has been conducted as regards the problems faced by the speakers of many prominent languages except Bengali and Nepali. The research is not precise, and specific in view of Bengali, and Nepali speakers who learn English. There is a need to explore, and research the problems in learning ESL exclusively faced by the speakers of Bengali, and Nepali, and the best method for these South Asian languages. There is indeed scope to go deeper to discover the distinguished challenges in learning ESL.

3. METHODS OF LEARNING ENGLISH

Learning styles, and attitude play an important role in language teaching, and learning process. Natividad, Mary, Rose A., and Batang, Boyet L. (2018) English like any other language can basically be learnt by three methods— Direct Method, Indirect Method, and Bilingual Method. There is no other method to learn, and teach a language in the world, whether the language belongs to Balto-Slavic, Germanic, Indo-Iranian, Romance, Albanian, Afro-Asiatic, Altaic, Austro-Asiatic, Austronesian, Japonic or any other group. I have carried a study regarding Bengali, and Nepali speaking students learning ESL through various methods. The students who were covered in my study are studying in B.A., B.B.A., and B.Com first year. They are chiefly from two South Asian languages backgrounds (Bengali also known by its endonym Bangla, and Nepali, also known as Nepalese) in the age group of 18, and 19 years.

3.1. Direct Method

Under the Direct Method, the medium of teaching is the language which is taught. No help of any other language is sought. It is also called the natural method. Under this method, a relation is made between action, and language; indication, and language; view, and language. Under this method, the target language is learnt the way the L1 is learnt. A child does not know any language at that time so he/she is not dependent on any other language to learn the L1. A student learns the target language like a child learns his/her ((L1)). He/she does not seek the help of any other language. He has to learn the language by observing actions, and kinesics, reacting to voices, listening to sounds, judging, and guessing the meaning, and making sounds. This is how a learner of a language learns it in the environment.

3.2 Indirect Method

Indirect Method of learning, and teaching a language is the method in which the medium of teaching is other than the target language. Indirect Method, and Bilingual Method of learning, and teaching a language are difficult, and time-consuming. However, they seem to be very easy. Hence, the students studying in the schools where English is being taught through Bengali or Nepali or any other native language are too poor to converse, pen, and read. In fact, these students are accustomed to translation. Many problems are caused by the Bilingual Method in general, and Indirect Method in particular.

3.3 Bilingual Method

Some help of another language is taken under the Bilingual Method of learning, and teaching a language. Another language is generally the mother tongue (L1). The L1 is especially used in the oral handling of grammatical structures, i.e. in bilingual pattern drills. Some help of translation is sought in this method. This method is the mixture of the two methods. It has some features of the Direct Method, and some features of the Indirect Method. Hence it draws some merits and demerits from Direct Method and some merits and demerits from Indirect Method.

4. A STUDY REGARDING THE STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH VARIOUS METHODS

I have conducted a research regarding the students learning English through various methods. In this research, the focus was on the efficiency of the learning methods, i.e. Direct Method, Indirect Method, and Bilingual Method. The details of this research/study are as follows:

4.1 Statement of the Problem

This study is to find out the significances, and effectiveness of various methods of learning English as L2. It has been observed that many students are unable to learn English even after studying it for 12 years or so. On the contrary, some students achieve satisfactory skills within two years or so.

4.2. Objectives

- To compare all three methods of learning English.
- To examine, and analyse empirically the use of English as L2 in the four skills:
 - Reading
 - Writing,
 - Speaking
 - Listening

4.3 Sample

50 students of each B.A., B.B.A. and B.Com. were taken for the study. These students recently completed their senior secondary class from different schools. They studied English through different methods viz Direct Method, Indirect Method, and Bilingual Method. Total of 150 students were covered in this study. The study was collectively conducted on all 150 Bengali, and Nepali speaking students studying together. They were taught by the same teacher.

4.4 Place, and Time

Place of study is Kalimpong College, Kalimpong, Dist. Darjeeling, WB, India. The study was conducted between August, 2019, and January, 2020.

4.5 Research Methodology

This study involves a qualitative research methodology. It emphasises on the effectiveness of learning methods, i.e. Direct Method, Indirect Method, and Bilingual Method.

4.6 Tools Used

The proposed tools used in this empirical study were:

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- Viva-voce
- Response in the class
- Compositions
- Specially intended assignments, questionnaires, and quizzes
- Test/Examination scripts

4.7 Scale

The students were judged and examined on the scale of very good (VG), good (G), average (A), and below-average (BA). The criterion of the scale is as follows:

very good (VG) = between 76 % marks, and 100 % marks

good (G) = between 51 % marks, and 75 % marks

average (A) = between 26 % marks, and 50 % marks

below-average = Below 26% marks

No. Of Students	Language Learning Method	Result (Reading)	Result (Writing)	Result (Speaking)	Result (Listening)	Result-Total in %
50	Direct Method	VG= 42 G= 5 A= 3 BA= 0	VG= 40 G= 5 A= 5 BA= 0	VG= 45 G= 3 A= 2 BA= 0	VG= 46 G= 4 A= 0 BA= 0	VG= 84 G= 10 A= 6 BA= 0
50	Indirect Method	VG= 12 G= 15 A= 16 BA= 7	VG= 14 G= 17 A= 12 BA= 7	VG= 7 G= 8 A= 24 BA= 11	VG= 10 G= 11 A= 23 BA= 6	VG= 23.5 G= 25 A= 36.5 BA= 15
50	Bilingual Method	VG= 29 G= 7 A= 7 BA= 7	VG= 31 G= 9 A= 6 BA= 4	VG= 37 G= 6 A= 4 BA= 3	VG= 38 G= 7 A= 5 BA= 0	VG= 67.5 G= 14.5 A= 11 BA= 7

Table- Response of Students

5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TEACHING METHODS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BENGALI, AND NEPALI SPEAKING Students

5.1 Direct Method: The above study shows the best result for the students who learnt English through the Direct Method. However, it is observed that no learner wants to learn English through the Direct Method if given an option. It is due to the fact that under this method a learner has to learn English through English. He /she psychologically thinks that it is too difficult to learn a language through a language which he/she does not know. There is one more problem with this method. Only a trained teacher with sound knowledge of English can teach through the Direct Method. There is, of course, scarcity of such teachers. The teachers who can teach through Indirect, and Bilingual Methods are logically more than the teachers who can teach through the Direct Method in non-English countries. It is observed that this method cannot succeed without the environment in which English is spoken. A learner learns not only from the teacher, but also from the environment. In fact, he/she learns more from the language environment, and less from the teacher. Creating a classroom setting that has diverse perspectives, and styles to learning supports the growth of all students in the classroom (Tatyana, Panushkina, and Anna, Ilintseva, 2019). But it is easy to achieve with the help of Direct Method. Though the Direct method seems to be a very difficult method, it is empirically not so. Those students who learn English through English learn fastest. Within the span of two or three years, they can satisfactorily learn the four

foundational skills of English. A teacher, and a learner do not need the knowledge of another language. If a language is learnt or taught through Indirect or Bilingual method, there is a condition of a common language between them. In this method, a student learns L2 like a child who learns the L1, i.e. mother tongue. When we learn a language through Direct Method, we generally learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and lastly to write. Listening progresses to speaking, and reading progresses to writing. Listening results in speaking, and reading results in writing. A newly born baby likewise begins to learn L1 from the time she/he is born. A student, who learns English through Direct Method, speaks it the way he/she listens. Listening English helps him/her speak it well. The same fact has been disclosed by the above study in which students studying through Direct Method have performed almost equally best in listening, and speaking. Those who are very good in listening are also very good in speaking. 46 students out of 50 students under the Direct Method are very good in listening according to the study. Thus, the success rate in VG category in listening is 92%. Likewise, 45 students out of 50 students under the Direct Method are very good in speaking. Thus, the success rate in VG category in speaking is 90%. In the same way, a student who learns English through Direct Method writes it the way he/she reads English. Reading English helps him/her write well. 42 students out of 50 students under the Direct Method are very good in reading according to the study. Thus, the success rate in VG category in reading is 84%. 40 students out of 50 students under the Direct Method are very good in writing. Thus, the success rate in VG category in writing is 80% according to the study. There is a direct, and intrinsic connection between listening, and speaking, and between reading, and writing. This connection can be seen in the above study. Such connectivity has been possible because there is no intervention of L2 at all. In view of this, the overall success rate in VG category through this method in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is 84% in contrast with 23.5% through Indirect Method, and 67.5% through Bilingual Method according to the study. Hence, there seems to be no outstanding challenges, and deterrents in learning ESL for anybody irrespective of nationality.

5.2 :Indirect Method It is ironic that the Indirect Method, which seems to be the easiest method, is the most difficult method of all methods. Moreover, it is a time-consuming method. The above study apparently reveals the worst condition of the students in all the four skills of the English language. It stems from the fact that code fixing makes the process of learning and teaching English or any other language most difficult, and time taking. Code fixing is transferring the patterns and features of the native language to L2. A learner compares the native language with the language he/she learns on account of code fixing. He/she wants to fit the patterns, and features of the native language to L2. Fitting most of the patterns, and features of the native language to L2 is not possible at all. As a result of which, the process gets faulty. Bengali is an Indo-Aryan language chiefly spoken in Bangladesh, and India. Nepali, also called Gurkha, Gorkhali, Gurkhali, or Khaskura is also an Indo-Aryan language chiefly spoken in Nepal, Bhutan, and neighbouring parts of India. Both languages are noticeable South Asian languages. In both languages, their many patterns, and features are the same, e.g. verb pattern. But these languages are different from English in the view of patterns, and features. The verb pattern of English is a subject + verb + object. While the verb pattern of Bengali, and Nepali is: subject + object + verb. I have translated a sentence (I help all) into Bengali, and Nepali-

- **English:** I help all. (subject + verb + object)
- **Nepali:** म सबैलाई सहयोग गर्दछु।

[subject + object + verb] = म (subject) सबैलाई (object) सहयोग गर्दछु। (verb)

- **Bengali:** আমি সবাইকে সাহায্য করি।

[subject + object + verb]= আমি (subject) সবাইকে (object) সাহায্য করি। (verb)

It is, because of this, impossible to fit the patterns, and features of the native language to L2 in most of the cases. If the verb patterns of two languages are same, even then there must be other patterns, and features which create distinctions, and problems, e.g. in English Prepositions are followed by a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase. While in Bengali, and Nepali prepositions are placed after the noun or

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pronoun. There is no system of upper, and lower case in these languages, unlike English. There is another problem with articles. It stems from the fact that Bengali, and Nepali do not have articles at all. Moreover, Bengali (Bengali script), and Nepali (Devanagari script) are phonetic languages, i.e. the words are pronounced the way they are spelt. There is no concept of silent letters, capital, and small letters in these languages, unlike English. This feature of these languages eases the pronunciation. Target learners of English through Indirect Method commit mistakes by pronouncing English words the way they pronounce their languages. It has already been studied that a target learner of English through Indirect Method wants to fit the patterns, and features of the native language to the target language, and fitting the patterns as well as features of the native language to the target language is not possible at all.

In this process of learning, a student first endeavours to learn reading, then to write, then to speak, and lastly to listen. This approach is contrary to the approach practised in the Direct Method. Reading progresses to writing, and speaking progresses to listening. Reading results in writing, and speaking results in listening. Those who are below average in reading are also below average in writing. Only 12 students out of 50 students under the Indirect Method are very good in reading according to the study. Thus, the success rate in VG category in reading is merely 24%. Likewise, 14 students out of 50 students under the Indirect Method are very good in writing. Thus, the success rate in VG category in writing is 28%. Those who are below average in speaking are also below average in listening. In the same way, a student who learns English through Indirect Method speaks it the way he/she listens English. Speaking English helps him/her listen well. Merely 07 students out of 50 students under the Indirect Method are very good in speaking according to the study. Thus, the success rate in VG category in reading is 14%. 10 students out of 50 students under the Indirect Method are very good in listening. Thus, the success rate in VG category in listening is 20% according to the study. It displays, and proves a direct, and intrinsic connection between reading, and writing as well as speaking, and listening. This connection can be seen in the above study. In view of this, the overall success rate in VG category through this method in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is 23.5% in contrast with 84% through Direct Method, and 67.5% through Bilingual Method according to the study. Hence, there seems to be several outstanding challenges, and deterrents in learning ESL with special reference to Bengali, and Nepali speaking students. The process is faulty. Moreover, it is time-consuming, and contrary to the natural process of learning a language. This is one more reason of poor performance shown in the result in the Table of the study.

5.3 Bilingual Method: It can be understood by the above study that the target students studying the English language through the Bilingual Method are mediocre. They are neither good like the students learning through Direct Method nor poor like the students learning through Indirect Method. This is because this method has features of both Direct, and Indirect Methods. That is why it is sometimes thought that this method is the best. But the present study clearly unfolds that the best method is the Direct Method, which has superlative results. The effect of code-fixing like the verb pattern in this method is not as much as in the Indirect Method. This is due to the fact that a learner of English does not entirely depend on his/her L1. For this reason, the target students studying the English language through Bilingual Method are neither as fast as students studying the English language through Direct Method nor as slow as students studying the English language through Indirect Method. In view of this, the overall success rate of the target students in VG category through this method in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is 67.5% in contrast with 84% through Direct Method, and 23.5% through Indirect Method according to the study. Hence, there may be only a few outstanding challenges, and deterrents in learning ESL with special reference to India, Pakistan, and Nepal.

6. CONCLUSION

According to the Foreign Service Institute, the languages like English should be learnt in 750 hours (Language Difficulty Ranking- Effective Language Learning). If English is learnt for an hour a day, it should take merely 2 years, and 20 days. But as the mentioned study indicates several learners of

English do not possess satisfactory knowledge of all four skills of English language in the four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening even after learning it for more than 12 years. The reason is a faulty learning process. It has been observed that English is crammed not learnt, and vomited in the exam in such cases. It is regarded as a subject in lieu of a language.

This is how it can be concluded that the target learners who learn English through Direct Method have the best performance in English. Those who are learning English through the Bilingual Method have better performance than those of the Indirect Method. It simply means that those who are learning English through the Indirect Method have the worst performance in English. The reasons have been brought out into the open. The problem is more with Bengali, and Nepali speaking students because it has been proved that these languages are quite different from English. If the patterns, and features of these languages, i.e. verb system subject + object + verb, rule of placing preposition, system of capital, and small letters, rule to read the way the words are written, provision of silent words are shifted to learning (on the part of learners), and teaching (on the part of teachers) of English, it must create problems. Learning ESL poses specific challenges for students whose first language bears little similarity to English. (James B. Wold)

7. RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results, and conclusions, the following are some of the recommendations, and suggestions:

- Direct Method should be followed to avoid comparing two languages, and shifting patterns, and features.
- Much attention should be paid to the listening of English as it leads to speaking. Attention should be paid to reading also as it leads to writing.
- An apt diagnostic approach, and a proper strategy need to be developed to cater to the needs of the multilingual learners of English.
- Create an environment of English, and appropriately use the language lab.
- An empirical, and a remedial study should be carried out to deal especially with the poor students, and facilitate them.
- Teachers should be empirically trained.

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