

# The Role of Students in Transition from School to College: Different Challenges in ELT

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## Abstract

This paper depicts the predicament of the transitional students who have shifted from school to college. The challenges of the students' tenacity in learning English have been observed from the perspective of their transitional dilemma. The external and internal challenges of the students during the phase have also been discussed in this paper. It examines the changes of the adolescents' attitude, emotions and stress. The paper also offers some strategies to come out of the crisis. In the globalization era, the classical method of teaching English that is teaching the language in the confined four walls have to be transformed into various activity based teachings which strengthen the teacher-student interaction in many ways. The subject English is helpful and effective in curriculum. The experts of textbooks have planned or designed it to prepare the learners use the language proficiently. The practice of English in secondary education is considered to be arising so many problems. The expected time frame for completion of the syllabus exceeds when the level of students are a combination of the vernacular medium and the English medium. This article unveils the factors which affects the process of English language learning among the students. A secondary level student who passed with merit or distinction cannot face the challenges after graduation. Those students struggle to write their own CV appropriately. Apart from that even the professionally trained teachers are unable to write the leave letter properly. Some of the important problems and complications of the rural students are also highlighted in the paper. Teaching in rustic and urban regions in India faces numerous issues in the academic framework like insufficient materials in government schools, lack of skilful teachers, lack of teaching quality, etc. This paper uncovers different complications in the system of education and recommend solution for them.

**Keywords:** Transition, transitional dilemma, classroom, curriculum, syllabus, adolescents, rural and urban students, secondary level.

## 1. Introduction

Transition is an effective inner process in the mind which happens while pupils experience the shift from the commonplace to the unfamiliar, reacting towards the cultural, social and individual's difficulties in the behaviour (Allard and Perry 2003, page 75). Change may happen to individuals rapidly, influencing a viable progress. An effective transition takes longer time for the individual to cope up with. Higher education can be regarded as the residing of numerous synchronized transitions. It can be both in the perspective of transfer to the new urban or town, to a different educational system and, interpersonal interactions, for instance developing a new contacts with pupils, peers, university reinforcement and academic faculty. It can also be in the form of modifications in the existing connections with school friends and family. Accordingly, transition may be regarded by means of a constant process, wherein accordance with the stages of maintenance and support.

The succeeding account offers the outline of financial, location, academic and social deviations which takes place during transition 'toward' and 'over' higher education along with possible challenges that are experienced by the individuals. Subsequently, an outline of certain contemporary transition models is presented. The highlighted models were vastly based on the significance and applicability to the transition of students in higher education. The

models are advantageous for comprehending the frequent vicissitudes of learners in the course of transition.

## 2. The changes and the transitional dilemma of the students

In the transitional period, learners experience a frame of mind which is related by means of those, include losing a loved one or even moving from one place to another or one country to another. Almost every individual encounters the transitional phase in different ways during higher education. It is a change from the familiar or common environment to unknown or unfamiliar environment.

Additionally, the shift in the life to college or university encompasses the students' challenges and changes that they experience.

The following are the overview of the changes faced by the pupils. The higher education institutions have to empower the students for the successful and smooth transition.

### 2.1. External challenges and changes of the students environment or location

- Change of place or location brings depression, isolation, homesickness and anxiety in a student. The strategy to

overcome this situation is to cultivate a new supportive and thoughtful relationship.

- Cultural shock is another factor which is experienced by the student when they are supposed to move from one place to another for higher studies. It brings a distress of being alienated from the other pupils. The core approach to deal the circumstance is to adapt or adjust oneself from the situation.

### Economic or financial

- Few students get loans for their higher studies from friends, family or bank which leads them to worry about their debt in future. Seeking the support from the institution is the only remedy which prevents them from stress.
- A few students takes the responsibility of commuting for job meant for their higher studies. It paves a way of stress factor, causes various responsibilities and commitments in job which distracts their main goal of learning. The noble way to come out of this problem is good time management.

### Social

- Some students may be introverts who do not socialize with others because of fear or anxiety of social communications. It prevents them to make new friends. An honest way to deal this problem is to be open and flexible.
- Academic faculty are another factor for the students of introvert. The individual student generates shyness or fear within themselves to ask doubts in regards of learning. It causes them to feel stressed, being isolated and an impression of alienation. The best way to conquer the situation for the introvert students is to involve in institutional and classroom activities to cultivate self-efficacy.

### Academic

- The environment of learning is a further issue that the students face. The sudden move from the school to college causes confusion and anxiety. The practical remedy for the problem is interaction and involving in institutional activities.
- The students create expectations about the higher studies and college when they move from one level to the next that is high school to university. More than that, the learners are influential towards media, from where they foster their desire towards college life. When the pupils meet the reality of college life, they encounter disappointment and strain. To remedy the situation, the individual have to manage the self-expectations about college.
- The other problem that the students face in the academic is stress and anxiety of making blunders while performing. Self-efficacy is an important strategy which motivates one to be more confident.
- Presentations and exams are the other factors that the students get stressed and lack their confidence because of the fear of getting embarrassed in front of the class. Developing self-efficacy and communication skills can progress them.

## 2.2. Student transition models

The following are the transition models which explain the individual's internal changes that a student experience in the

phase of transition where he/she is supposed to face new environment in the form of unruly, irregular and erratic process.

## 2.3. Model of bridges transition

Transition model of Bridges views a general process of change which differentiates overlapping of three phases. In the first phase of change, students encounter frustration, uncertainty, sadness, anger, denial, disorientation, emotions of loss and a sense of fear when they face change. These are the emotional changes that the students go through during the first week to the college or university while experiencing different academic environment, location or culture. It changes the mind of the students to isolation, anxiety, unhappiness, confusion, depression and homesickness.

The second stage in transition is 'The Neutral Zone', wherein the students had the impact of the past situation when they are accustomed to the new one. Skepticism is another aspect of transition, during the phase, the individuals often encounter confusion, low productivity, uncertainty, impatient and unease anxiety and uneasy about their part in the university. It is specific that, due to the meeting of different people and environment, the transitional students for man internal and external changes, also regarding the performance in academic which creates stress and anxiety within themselves. It also comprises the fright of exams and the embarrassment of responding the wrong answers to the questions asked by the teacher. In the next phase, learners successfully acquire the skills in the new way. The students gain confident and renew their roles and commitment adapting to the learning routines of college. This adaptation helps them to be organised to the environment.

## 3. U-curve adjustment theory

U-Curve Theory explains the three levels of change during the period of transition. This model has been modified by Risquez. It describes the three levels of changes in student transition which include 'Honeymoon', 'Culture Shock', and 'Adjustment'.

The short phases in the three periods are Honeymoon. The pupils who enter the college envision the social, intellectual growth and personal opportunities. After Honeymoon period, follows Culture Shock where the pupils are subjected to the emotional changes due to the change in social life learning and academic environment. The changes comprise of boredom, homesickness, alienation, stress, detachment, sense of loss and emptiness. (Gu 2010; Thurber and Walton 2012; Wrench 2013; Denovan and Macaskill 2013). In the phase of Adjustment, students modified themselves and effectively function their role in the university. They develop their learning practices and develop the student community with the help of motivation.

### 3.1. Student adjustment model

The model of student adjustment is developed by Baron and Menzies. It highlights the experience of the students during different phases of transition. This model is similar to the U-curve model. In the first phase, the students have the neutral feeling and during the next phase, they feel excited with the envisions of university life. When they move to another level, the pupils encounter various shocks when their envisions do not meet their expectations. In the following period, the learners feel stressed and confused due to the change in the environment, followed by that the students cope up with the new environment and become neutral in the last phase.

### 3.2. Student psychological model of retention

The previous and future experiences of the students as well as the mental characteristics and qualities play a crucial role on the

academic and social incorporation which permits for the successful transition. This model has been developed by Bean and Eaton on the basis of the students' psyche when they are subjected to newly enter the institution after completing their schooling. During the environmental changes the students experience depression, anxious, isolation, stress and a sense of loss due to the push of the new academic setting. Thus the students have to undergo various psychological factors, for this the important strategy is the behaviour of coping and self-efficacy. These strategies can develop the control of attitude that surges the motivation as well as the confidence level and make oneself to experience to be free from stress. The self-efficacy is one of the major mental practices which helps to remedy the transitional dilemmas of the students.

From the various perspectives, it is considered that the student transition is balancing to the preceding models. It is important to view that, those models research the problems, barriers, and challenges to the positive transition. The study of those issues can empower the students throughout the years but not just in the first year of college level.

### 3.3. General characteristics of adolescents

Adolescence delineate the years of teenage around 13 and 19. Maier marked that, numerous changes take place during the period of adolescent transition in those people's life. They move from the unbothered world to the matured adulthood. This crucial period marks numerous changes which include emotional, physical and moral growth. The first change that the people encounter is physical change. They experience growth and maturity physically and mentally.

The next change which occurs in adults' life is socialization. They socialize with friends rather than their relatives. They tend to become independent and develop ethical values and judgement. During this stage, they were aware of the fact of being judged by people about the appearance and behaviour which makes them to pay attention to fit in "their society".

The next is the characteristics of adolescents in the cognitive process. In this phase, they develop their verbalization and language skills in an extensive way. According to Piaget, during the adolescent period, the individual think logically and have the ability to broad envisions.

Maier claims that adolescents also experience emotional changes. They become moody and irritable reacting to any situations detested by them. Parents and teachers may frequently find these behaviours because of the fact that they take advantages of their given independence by their parents. They create willingness and curiosity in knowing forbidden things such as cigarettes and alcohols and also lead them to discipline problems. It is considered to be the critical phase of the adults.

### 3.4. Adolescent english language learners

The teenagers are considered to be difficult learners. Even though, their ability is huge than the young learners, they show their struggle in learning because of the lack of encouragement and motivation of the language teacher. Mostly, the teenagers do not show their interest to acquaint with the instructor or to be a favourite student of the teacher. They show their interest in forming a peer group.

Adults do not give their priority to English lessons. Students are extremely firm in other activities so the teachers have to give their effort in activities to grab their attention in learning. Penny Ur acclaims that, "teenage students are in fact overall the best language learners" (Harmer 2001: 38).

Teaching language to the adolescents is the challenging task to the teachers. Adolescents are the people who experience the transition externally and internally. It is the stage, they move from High school to tertiary level. In this case, the changes of adolescence and transitional dilemmas make them feel stressed. So the teacher

has to handle the students with care by knowing their attitudes and their mental state in learning. The tutors have to imply various strategies for teaching as well as learning according to the necessities of the learners.

### 3.5. The ramification of school to college transition in learning english on early adolescents

Adolescents encounter various changes especially when they shift from school to college. Some students pass the stage easily without any problems or stress. Unfortunately, other students meet a downward in their academic. Nowadays the pupils are having the impression that the English language is a tough and challenging subject so that they cannot achieve the fluency in it. But they are unaware of the fact that if they show the attention and interest in learning the language, they are able to obtain the language quickly. Some other students are over confident which makes them to think that English is just a subject and in some way, it is like a guide to pass the exam by the last hour learning. When it comes to the circumstance of speaking or writing in English they become unsuccessful at the moment. Another cause is that the students do not engage themselves in the class introduction because of their dearth in language proficiency and the complex of making errors in front every student in the class so they do not show their interest to participate in class conversations.

### 3.6. Rural students

In rural areas, mostly the education is in the local/vernacular language. Students from rural areas may not develop their English speaking skills because of the environment. The environment does not support them to speak English because it is not given importance in the school, thus they lack interest in learning English for better communication. As a consequence, the rural area students do not gain speaking skills in English either in secondary schools or colleges. These students when they move to a college in city, it becomes difficult for them to adapt to the new atmosphere with ample facilities. They become ill or nervous when those students encounter the transition; in consequence they collide in a dilemma.

### 3.7. Psychological factors affecting the rural students during transition

The rural students, when they face completely new environment tends to be nervous. They face frequent emotional outbursts and intense feeling of fear and anxiety. They tend to be moody because of the suppression. Some students feel homesick and miss the old structures and routines. Pupils are ambivalent and overwhelmed by the large classrooms consisting of mixed abilities of students which is challenging for them.

### 3.8. Adjustment areas of the transitional students

Adjustment is the fluctuating behaviour to achieve the pleasant relationship with the environment. The "Adjustment Period" naturally means the acceptance or balancing with the new environment. Environmental adjustment is the problematic and difficult task for the students. Many students move through this phase with serious problems and great stress. The pupils in college face a great change in time and punctuation and also in the learning concept which is autonomous. The students who hailed from the same gendered school feels uncomfortable when they adapt to the co-educational academic background. Beyond social adjustments, the students also face health and emotional adjustment during the phase of transition.

### 3.9. Education system

In the ancient times, people followed the Gurukula education system which was entirely different from the current system of education. The student is accepted by the guru and then they were allowed to stay in Guru's place. The learning of the student is independent and is linked to the nature, there is no way for memorization.

The modern education system in India was introduced by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay. The curriculum was limited to subjects and also confined to classrooms. Assessment of the students is done through written examination which leads to competition among schools in scoring the highest marks. As a result students learn the language and other subjects by memorizing the content rather than understanding it.

The medium of instruction is optional, in Indian schools, which is the indigenous language or English. The schools can be sorted as government aided, matriculation, CBSE and ICSE. The students from the government or aided schools fail to acquire the fluency in English because of the lack of exposure and facilities in learning the language. They lack confidence in speaking and writing in correct English. Even in these schools, the teachers fail to interact with the students in English. As a result, the students do not get any exposure to the language. The English subject in schools are taught from the examination point of view and thus students give importance to mugging up rather than learning the language. These reasons made a contrast with the other schools while comparing with government schools.

The government schools in this district have no proper facilities like language labs. Apart from these, it is highly important for the students to have a personal interest to learn the language with curiosity. The students especially from the aided vernacular and English medium schools mostly struggle to communicate in English during the period of transition from schooling to college. This is because of the lack effective communication in schools. As speaking English is necessary in college, the students face a lot of struggle because of their schooling background. The reason behind the push in stressing the students to learn English is that, the fluency in the language offers employment opportunities and set a path to greatness. This transition stage is complicated enough in especially for the rural and vernacular students. Even for vernacular medium students, English is taught as a subject and none of them can speak grammatically correct English. So, the students of poor social background suffer during the period of transition. In college, English is a compulsory medium of instruction. At this juncture, the students realize the importance of learning English as a language for communication rather than as a subject.

The great difference between the government and other boards of schools such as CBSE, matriculation, ICSE and ISC schools is that the government schools lack the facilities of teaching language skills and do not provide much exposure to the students. There is no effective language teaching. There is no interaction between learners and teachers in developing the proficiency in language. Even though the curriculum in those schools covers the teaching of the four skills, it is fact that some students, even at their college level, are unable to grasp the fundamental English. This is because of the less experience of practicing and lack of interest. On the other hand, in English medium private schools, the teachers are proficient in English language teaching. There is exposure inside and outside the classroom with ample facilities.

This article stresses the need of developing communication skills at the school level. Developing students' communicative competency is one of the main responsibilities of a teacher of English. It is possible that some of the students have the feeling of fear or anxiety of committing mistakes while communicating in English. It is true that they could manage and control their nervousness of communication to some extent. The main question to be addressed here is the view of the ELT teachers, their tasks and duties in connection with the transition and the trials they face

in a language classroom. The factors and challenges are to be analyzed from the perspective of the transitional students to make them attain the communication skills from the school level.

English Language Teaching has been summarized by Kurrien according to the current circumstance in the Indian perspective. According to him, there are four types of schools in accordance with the quality of teachers as well as the acquaintance of the English learners at schools.

- i. English medium private/government- aided elite schools: proficient teachers; varying degrees of English in the environment, including as a home or first language.
- ii. New English-medium private schools, many of which use both English and other Indian languages: teachers with limited proficiency; children with little or no background in English; parents aspire to upward mobility through English.
- iii. Government-aided regional – medium schools: schools with a tradition of English education along with regional languages, established by educational societies, with children from a variety of background.
- iv. Government regional - medium schools run by district and municipal educational authorities: they enrol the largest number of elementary school children in rural India. They are also the only choice for the urban poor (who, however, have some options of access to English in the environment). Their teachers may be the least proficient in English of these four types of schools.

The teaching and learning differences as well as the language exposure in schools varies according to the level or category. Prabhu notices that "typologies of teaching... should thus be seen as an aid to investigating the extent of relevance of a pedagogic proposal." Traditional methods of teaching language do not reach all the students. It is considered an ineffective method of teaching. Advancement in teaching induces interest among the students in learning the language.

### 4. Problems and challenges of second language learners

Indian speakers of English face the difficulties in speaking English fluently. The influence of the mother tongue is the main factor in this. They face the problems of poor vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear, and nervousness, lack of grammatical knowledge, lack of the knowledge of body language, educational system without much focus on speaking skills and no provision to separate English classes in schools.

Speaking is the crucial and fundamental mode of communication in the human society. It is the expression of ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc. In schools, the focus has been laid largely on texts rather than on communication skills. Maximum students do their schooling in the native medium and the unusual change in the medium of instruction corner them in the state of confusion. While hunting for a job, this crucial stage poses as a hefty block. In most of the job interviews, people are selected for their good command over English. Even most knowledgeable people, could not express their ideas in English and get rejected in interviews, due to the poor command over the language.

Another important problem associated with the English language teaching is the presence of large number of learners. The examination system is more achievement oriented than performance oriented. In addition, there is less time for the teacher to focus on individual student's exact language requirements of reading skills, note making skills, writing skills and speaking skills.

In college, an individual would meet different pupils hailed from different schools. The students can be characterized into two, those who have the medium of vernacular language from the primary level and the other who have English as the medium of study. Accordingly, the complication of teaching English as a

second language starts during schooling and proper training is to be extended to students depending upon their mental ability and diligence. In most of the cases, the learners are the first generation learners, and the opportunities like peer group interaction, guidance of the parents are not available. These are the major challenges encountered by the students. Beyond these factors, the main issue of the students from learning English is seen as the failure of current curriculum.

#### 4.1. Curriculum

The word curriculum means, the overall design of the course. The content of the subject is changed into blueprint for the desired learning results. The current curriculum is seemed to be failure. For instance, the child learns its mother tongue without any imposition of grammar rather by naturally acquiring it through listening, speaking and then tries to read and write the language (LSRW). The same applies in the case of learning second language by the adults. The present curriculum implies the skills in reverse pattern by teaching reading and writing first and subsequently impart listening and speaking skills. According to Willy A. Renandya "curricular elements such as the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teachers and the assessment procedures play an equally, if not more, important role in the success of a language programme." Thus, the curriculum development is necessary in the present scenario of English Language Teaching. The students need to get practice in the skills rather than understanding the grammar rules.

Curricula have to be reviewed after particular time. It has to be student centred and also to promote the language through activity based learning and not as a subject. It also has to be centred on methodologies of modern teaching. English text book has to be included with innovative exercises based on developing the four skills of language of the students. Acquiring the new language needs repetition in the learnt language skills. The learner have to actively practice the skills in everyday conversation which is called language recycling.

Higher education students are facing complications towards learning the English language as they fear of speaking and learning English. Those pupils do not have great knowledge over the four skills of English language that is listening, speaking, reading and writing. Twelve years of English language learning in schools did not help them to read any passage without mistakes. They are unable read difficult words even at the college level. The students are unable to understand the meanings of the words. They make errors in writing, letters, applications, etc. They also face difficulties in writing in the English language because of dearth of vocabulary. They are unable to differentiate informal and formal language in writing applications or letters. They create fear within themselves of speaking English with blunders which stop them to get exposed to it. So, that they face problems in simple as well as technical English. It is considered that if one listens properly, he or she could read properly, if one writes properly, he or she could speak properly. Listening is a prominent skill among all the other skills. Some students are confronting difficulties with listening too. Listening is important without which the students cannot express their views or ideas in the class. Creative innovations, new experiences, and appropriate strategies are being developed and tried out to improve education at all levels. E-learning is one of the modern approaches of language learning. It facilitates and augments learning using communication and information technologies.

#### 5. Conclusion

Students learn English as a subject, their aim of learning the language is to score good marks. Mostly the students in the classroom are passive listeners because of the confined to the typical classroom teaching. The vocabulary in English comprises

almost focuses on all the topics or subjects of humanities and science and also all the expressions and emotions that the human beings perceive and feel. The global markets have implemented English as their language for communication. The above causes and problems of English Language may change the development of the English Language at Higher Education. The change in the curriculum can bring solution to the dilemma of the students.

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