



Role of English Language in the Modern Era of Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The teaching of English in India goes back to the Dispatch of 1854 which is often described as a Magna Carta of English education in India. English remains the additional language of India. It is the authoritative language and judicial language. In fact, one could say that English is the official language in India for all practical purpose. There are various factors which affects the learning of English at elementary level. Incompetent parent's assistance leads to a poor performance in English. The teacher and parents themselves should be competent enough to teach and assist properly to their children. Classroom size should also be small so the teachers can teach well. English language teachers should be oriented about the role they are expected to play. For efficient teaching, lot of motivation and encouragement should be given to the students. The teaching of English should be more realistic. It should be based on modern approaches and methods so that language should be related to their life and environment.

The objectives of the present paper were: to identify the kind of the problems, which the students face in learning of English, to study the gaps between the problems faced by the students and teachers in learning and teaching of English and to study the problems of teachers in teaching of English.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English in India goes back to the Dispatch of 1854 which is often described as a Magna Carta of English education in India. It was stated in Dispatch that it was not intended "to substitute" English for the vernaculars. The policy decided upon was based on the theory of filtration, viz. an English education for the upper classes, with the idea that they would act as intermediaries, "filtering" modern knowledge from English to vernaculars. Though to some it was obvious

that a language so difficult as English, and so utterly discordant with every Indian dialect could never become the universal medium of instruction, to others, as to Lord Macaulay, in his famous Minute of 1835, it seemed quite possible to make thoroughly good English scholars of all who desired to learn the English language.

This conviction coupled with the popular demand for English education soon gave the study of English an undue importance, and the study of the vernaculars began to be neglected in secondary schools.

The education commission of 1882 noted the dissatisfaction felt in some quarters with the exclusive use of English as the medium of instruction in teaching and the education commission of 1902 protested against the neglect of the vernaculars, while the Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19 sought to adjust the claims of English and the vernaculars in a manner that was at once helpful, by assigning different spheres of activity to teach.

The commissioners wrote: "we are disposed to think that the educated classes in the various provinces of India will wish to be bilingual, to use their mother tongue for those dear and intimate things which form part of life from infancy upwards and are the very breath and substance of poetry and national feelings, and to use English as a means of inter-communication necessary to maintain the unity of India, for mutual exchange and stimulation of ideas in the spheres of scholarship and science, and for the promotion of that inter-provincial and international commerce and industry on which the economic future of India will largely depend".

The bitter memory of some aspects of the British rule in India has attached odium to English which is abhorred by a majority of the people, even by those who have never studied it. They want to turn out English lock, stock and barrel from the soil of India without taking into considerations the harmful consequences of this action of theirs is sure to bring.

Others are in favour of retaining English not as a compulsory subject but as an elective one. They favour the teaching of English as a language and not as literature. It is maintained now that for the average man, a practical command of English will always suffice and that there is no need of turning out scholars of English in large numbers, the language of true culture being the mother tongue. This gives rise to the problem of bilingualism, the solutions of which lies in finding out for English its legitimate place in the school curriculum as second language. The East India Company's authority was stabilized. English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration. The English language became popular, because it opened paths to employment and influence. English of Indians became gradually widespread means of communication.

During the governor general-ship of Lord William Bentinck in the early nineteenth century, India saw many social reforms. English became the language of record of government and higher courts, and government support was given to the cultivation of western learning and science through medium of English. In this, he was supported by Lord Macaulay.

1.2 THE BEGINNING OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Lord Macaulay was a centre figure in the language debate over which language(s) should be used as the medium of education in India. The Orientalists were in favour of the use of classical language of Indian tradition, such as Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, which

were not spoken as native language. The Anglicism, on the other hand, supported English. Neither of these groups wanted to suppress the local vernaculars, mother tongues of the people. Both the groups agreed that education would be conducted in the vernacular during the first years of the education. The Anglicism group included Charles Grant (1746-1823); H.T. Prince Sep (1792-1878) acted as the spokesman for the document, which had been prepared for the governor general. William Bentinck after listening to the argument of the two sides, came to the conclusion that a class should be formed in India, a group of people who would act as interpreters between the British and Indians, "a class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect". Macaulay's proposal was a success and the following year Lord Bentinck expressed his support for the minutes, declaring that funds "administered on public instruction should be hence, worth employed in imparting to the native population knowledge of English literature and Science through the medium of the English language."

According to Bailey & Macaulay, Indian languages would be enriched by English, so that they could become tools for European scientific, historical and literacy expression. English gradually became the language of government, education, advancement, "a symbol of imperial rule and of self-improvement".

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Out of 4,000 to 5,000 living languages, English is by far the most widely used. As a mother tongue, it ranks second only to Chinese, which is effectively six mutually unintelligible dialects little used outside China. On the other hand the 300 million native speakers of English are to be found in every continent, and an equally, widely distributed body of second language speakers, who use English for their day-to-day needs, totals over 250 million. Finally if we add those areas where decisions affecting life and welfare are made and announced in English, we cover one-sixth of the world's population.

Barrier of race, colour and creed are no hindrance to the continuing spread of the use of English. Besides being a major tool of debate at the United Nations, and the language of command for NATO, it is the official language of international aviation and unofficially is the first language of international sports and the pop scene. Russian propaganda to the Far East is broadcast in English, as are Chinese radio programmes designed to win friends among listeners in East Africa. Indeed, more than 60 percent of world's radio programmes are broadcast in English and it is also the language of 70 percent of the world's mail. English has grown to its present status as the major world language. The primary growth in the number of native speakers was due to population increases in the nineteenth century in Britain and the USA. The figures for the UK rose from 9 million in 1800 to 30 million in 1900, to some 56 million today. Even more striking was the increase in the USA [largely due to immigration] from

4 million in 1800, to 76 million a century later and an estimated 216,451,900 today. Additionally, the development of British colonies took large numbers of English-speaking settlers to Canada several African territories and Australia.

It was however the introduction of English to the indigenous peoples of British colonies which led to the existence today of numerous independent states where English continues in daily use. The instrument of colonial power, the medium for commerce and education, English became the common means of communication. What is more, it was seen as a vehicle for benevolent Victorian enlightenment. The language policy in British India and other territories was largely the fruit of Lord Macaulay's Education Minute of 1835, wherein he sought to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.

Although no one today would defend the teaching of a language to produce a cadre of honorary English men, the used English throughout the sub-continent with its 845 distinct languages and dialects was clearly necessary for administrative purposes.

The subsequent role of English in India has been significant. In 1950, the central government decided that the official language would be Hindi and the transition from English was to be completed by 1965. The ensuing protestations that English was a unifying power in the newly independent nation, a language used by the administration, judiciary, legislators and the press for over a century, were accompanied by bloody riots. Mr. Nehru acknowledged in parliament that English was the Major window for us to the outside World, we dare not close that window and if we do it will spell peril for the future! When in 1965 Hindi was proclaimed the sole official language, the Shastri's government was surely shaken by the resulting demonstrations only after students had burnt themselves to death and a hundred rioters had been shot by police was it agreed that English should continue as an associate official language.

The 65 million speakers of Hindi were a strong argument for selecting it as India's national language, But a number Anglicism of newly independent nations have no one widely spoken language which can be used for building national unity in West Africa.

So, it can be said that English is not a difficult language, it is made difficult by those who are neither proficient in English nor are fully trained to teach it. The first few years of English teaching when a taste or distaste for English can be created, are generally entrusted to teachers who know a bit of English and are ill trained.

The defects in teaching English, as stated by J. Thakur (2013), may be ascribed among other things, to the following: -

- Lack of Purpose.
- Lack of appropriate Method.

- Text Books.
- Faculty System of Examination.
- Defective Outlook.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the kind of the problems, the students face in learning of English.
2. To study the problems of teachers in teaching of English.
3. To study the gaps between the problems faced by students and teachers in learning and teaching of English.

1.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

In the first instance two schools were selected from South Delhi using convenient sampling technique. After selection of schools, five students from each Hindi medium and English medium sections of class VIII were selected from each of the schools using random sample technique. Similarly, four teachers from each sample school were taken as sample by using purposive sample technique.

1.6 DESCRIPTION OF TOOLS

A tool is a device used for collecting data or facts which are required for the research study. The selection of a tool is of vital importance for any research work to be successful. The researcher needs to select tools primarily depends on the nature and objectives of the study. Selection of the tool, thus, becomes highly important, as only a judiciously chosen tool can help us in appropriately analyzing and interpreting the data collected. This study looked into the problems and gap between teachers and students in learning English with references to their perspective and understanding regarding learning English to express their ideas in basic, simple and in an appropriate manner.

For attaining the objectives of this study following tools were used: -

1. **Questionnaire:** questionnaire was developed by the researcher both for students and teachers to know about their problems in teaching learning of English.
2. **Focus Group Discussion:** Researcher conducted a focus group discussion among students to know their problems in learning of English.

1.7 PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION

The investigator visited government Sarvodaya-Schools and randomly selected sample students and teacher concerned for test and observation and she collected

data through questionnaire and focus group discussion of the students and teachers to know their perceptions in teaching learning of English.

1.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected was of descriptive nature, the information that we obtained was used to determine the factors responsible for poor acquisition of English by elementary class students in Sarvodaya schools. The data was analyzed qualitatively to arrive at a conclusion.

1.9 CONCLUSION

English remains the additional language of India. It is the authoritative language and judicial language. In fact, one could say that English is the official language in India for all practical purpose. For many educated Indians, English is virtually their first language though a large number of Indians are multilingual.

Major findings show that family background has a considerable influence on the learning of English at elementary level students face many problems in reading and writing. There are various factors which affects the learning of English at elementary level. Incompetent parent's assistance leads to a poor performance in English. In India, usually government schools are only opportunities for poor and middle- class students to use English language. There are many factors affecting the learning of students at elementary level. School environment also play a major role in affecting the learning of English at elementary level. The improper facilities in school irregular teachers', lack of motivation in teachers to encourage students to issue and read books from library other sources like newspaper magazines story books also leads to poor performance in English.

Through the analysis it was found by researcher that lack of interaction between teachers and students, and some other academic reasons like extra classes assigned to teachers and negative mentality of teachers or students and negligence towards learning of English play a vital role in language learning process. Students admitted that teachers are not regular in taking classes. Attention is given to English medium section in the school whereas Hindi medium students are being ignored, that could also lead to the conclusion that despite of having difference from the family background, students from Hindi medium develops a negative attitude toward English language learning. Moreover, it is also to be noted that students from English medium are also not well versed in English.

Non detention policy implemented by the government up to elementary level has been playing a significant role for the poor performance of student in not only English but also in all the subjects. Both Hindi and English medium section students required individual attention but teachers were not able to do so because of

so many reasons. Size of the class in Hindi medium is one of the important factors.

The teacher and parents themselves should be competent enough to teach and assist properly to their children. Classroom size should also be small so that the teachers can teach well. More chances should be given to the students to use English language. The teaching should be done in a more interesting and innovative ways to develop the interest in language learning. Government must ensure that strong regulation for implementation is also done.

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