



TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

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Abstract

The most important characteristic that raises the human being above other species of animals is his ability to use a language to speak and write. Language is a medium of expression that man is bestowed with and a prized possession. In the 16th century English language was first introduced and the status of it underwent sea of changes in the 18th century due to the establishment of British rule in India. Since then, everybody is pretty aware that English is the most widely used language across the globe. English language has become the lingua franca for both domestic and international communication, in the age globalization which condensed world to a small remote village. The main purpose of this paper is that it portrays the details of how English language has gradually emerged in India through various ways. The entrance of English has not happened in an overnight but it is through the relentless efforts of commissions and committees that envisaged the need in the educational reforms. These committees and commissions have dispelled the old notions of existing traditional ways of education with introducing modern ones. Two very important concepts are depicted clearly in this study are; English teaching during post Independent period and status of English language in India in 1960s. The concept of curriculum and communication skills are re-defined to suit to the readers in a contemporary way.

Key words: English Language, Globalization, Post-Independent Period, Commissions and Committees, Science and Technology.

Introduction

Language plays a key role in the human being's life process. It leaves an indelible mark in the mind of a person and opens an avenue in one's life. Man is bestowed with the language a highly prized possession that no other species in the universe can acquire or own it. Otto Jaspers says: "Language is a set of human habits, the purpose of which is to give expression to thoughts and feelings and to impart them to others." (NP Pahuja, 2002:38). Language is the ability through which man expresses his thoughts, feelings and experiences in order to share with the fellow human beings.

English as a language with specific purpose to perform turns into power in the hands of professionals. John Honey in his *Language is power* rightly states: "Real people also get helped by the workings of language and power, and that certain kinds of language can be turned into power." (Honey, John:1922,231). As said above, language and power help the real people to work efficiently.

English and its Purpose

English has a specific purpose to serve in India as both international and intra-national language. In India English serves two purposes:



- Firstly it provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness, causing people who speak multiple languages to become united.
- Secondly it serves as a lingua franca for communication of different people covering a vast geographical area

English Teaching during Post Independent Period:

At the dawn of independence, a significant need was felt by all the sections of the intelligentsia in India to have a national language which could bind the nation cohesively. As stated by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra joining BalGangadhar's voice Mahatma Gandhi wrote in Hind Swaraj: "To give millions a knowledge of English to enslave them. And a universal language for India should be Hindi. By Hindi, Gandhi always meant Hindustani." (ISBN 81-7824-302-4). However, the English constitution of 1950 also provided that English shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for a period of fifteen years until 1965. The early 1960s, the year in which English was to cease to be used for all the official purposes, the enthusiast Hindi tried in all the ways, renewed their agitation to remove English. At the same time, the non-Hindi speaking Southern states, notably Tamil Nadu, agitated for the country reason of retaining English and against imposing Hindi on them. During the official Language Bill Debate in 1963 Nehru explained as follows: "English would serve as a vitaliser to our 'Languages' serve in the future, as it had in the past."(ISBN 81-7824-302-4.)

Consequently the Official Language Bill was brought before the Parliament in 1963 and reassured non-Hindi speaking states that English would be continued to be used in their States. After 1970s the status of English changed drastically with the revolutionary and fast paced advancement of Commerce and Technology, more so with the advent of computers, enabled the technology and the internet. By 1970s English had become a virtual lingua franca. In post-independent era till 1970s and early 1980s English language was widely recognized due to the advent of globalization connection people various corners in the world. David Crystal says in his book: "A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country." (David Crystal, 1997:8). A greater significance due to globalization which brought rapid changes in Social Sciences, Medicine, Technology, Commerce and Humanities and so on.

Educational Commissions and Committees

In view of the above responsibility, the Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. DS Kothari, University of Grants Commission, began its task on October, 2 1964. In addition the Commission had the benefit of discussion with a number of internationally known as Consultants in the education as well as scientific field. Various other Committees too had come into the forefront to bring alternative possibilities in the educational field. They are:

Year	Commissions / committees
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1979	The Draft National Policy on Education by the Government of India
1986	NEP and POA: National Education Policy and Programme of Action (NEP also known as NPE; National Policy of Education)
1989	CDC Report: The Report of Curriculum Development Centre
1990	Acharya Rama Murthy Commission

All these commissions and committees have dispelled the old notions of education. The concept of curriculum and communication skills were re-defined to make them more purposeful. English had deep roots in India by 1990s and became an essential and imperative language for youth and students of the present generation, who study in schools, colleges and various universities. From 2000 onwards, English named a global language tilting English as the window to Science and Technology. As AL Kohli perceptibly feels: "The rapid progress that has taken place in the field of Science and Technology, Engineering, Medicine, Agriculture, Commerce, Industry and Arts would require the study of English." (AL Kohil and Sharma,2006:6)

Status of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India in 1960s

Of late, the ELT situation in India is emerging day by day and it has been changing so fast that there is a need to reorient it in consonance with the situation. Retrospectively speaking, it would seem that the teaching situation as far as English is concerned, was fairly stable until independence, the English syllabi, teaching methods and testing procedures remained fairly stable. Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended teaching of one regional language in classes from V to VII, one of them being a regional and the other either English or Hindi and three languages from classes from VIII to X, one being regional, the second English, and third being Hindi. Thus, English also can be studied at least for three years in a school. There would be two stages for starting the study of English, one at class V and the other at class VIII. From class XI onwards, language teaching is not compulsory unless those who wish to study English get an opportunity. Later, other Commissions like National Policy and Education (1968), The Acharya Rama Murthy Committee (1986) reiterated that stepping up of rural schools, colleges and universities must be done with a view to strengthening of languages.

Conclusion

The present paper focuses on the teaching of English during post independent period, which includes the patronage of various scholars and their contributions to the development of English language and for the benefit of the masses of learners. It also highlights on the Indian Constitutional efforts to make English as the official language to carry official purposes of the Union for the period of 15 years until 1965. In this scenario, various Commissions and Committees felt the educational reforms would help to promote the new modes of teaching replacing the old notion of education. Then it deals with the status of English Language teaching



in India, which has been changing swiftly to suit with the situation. Many attempts are made officially to coin the relative status of English.

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