



Importance of English Language for Higher Education

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ABSTRACT:

Language is the vehicle of social interaction and effective language functions properly in the work place, social interaction, and indeed, for functional literacy. English as a medium to communicate undoubtedly plays a major role in various aspects of development. Nevertheless, the importance of English should not be exaggerated nor the importance of other languages should be undervalued. There is no denying the fact that English has established itself as a language of trade and commerce. The spurt of technical revolution too conforms to the accessibility of English. English empowers both the young and the adults and its application seems an unavoidable reality right from the kitchen's oven to military sirens. Moreover, effective English Communication skills provide better job opportunities. With the speedy wings of technology, the scenario in the job market has become more lucrative. The use of English in polishing our life-styles and also in imitating decencies in terms of human behavior is a fact not to be forgotten. It has become a language of communication and does not seem to be a liability in our everyday life. But to say that it has attained a hundred percent familiarity is not true. There are still many districts in India where despite the expansion of modern amenities of life, English seems to be revered as a very prestigious language and its users a facilitated lot. The reasons for the slow pace of its spread are varied. A major chunk of population has started realizing the need of subtle nuances of using English more as a skill than merely as a subject. The significance of this study is to confront that gap, which is widening. Its importance can easily be understood when one goes through particular terms like ELT, EFL, ESL, TESOL, etc. which deal with the study of English language as per requirement for specific purposes and situations.

Key Words:*vehicle, social interaction, effective language, importance, job opportunities, human behavior, purposes and situations*

Introduction :

It would be no exaggeration to say that English communication skills are passports to white collar jobs. Proficiency in communication skill has proved to be a major contributor in raising standards of higher education. But, the majority of students have a general aversion to the language course. Most of them remain ill-trained in the languages and are unable to use either the mother tongue or adequately the essential idea in the other subjects they have to learn at the undergraduate level. The inability of the students to use languages effectively as a means of communication is a major problem of university education. The poor linguistic skills of the college students seem to have a bearing on the method of instruction as well as the nature of the reading material used by them. Teaching at the undergraduate level, and in some universities even at the postgraduate level is almost entirely identified with the delivery of lectures and the dictation of 'notes'.



The system of education that the British introduced was modeled after the system prevalent in their country. This was particularly true of higher education. The striking feature of this educational transplantation was English, which was not only taught as a language but also became the medium of instruction. While the secondary school certificate examination was conducted only in English till. English was almost exclusively used at the university stage right through the colonial period.

Indian universities were nowhere near it in terms of the quality of education imparted. The content of this education was biased in favour of languages and the humanities as against science and technology, as well as vocational training. The spread of national awakening and growing prospects of independence brought to the fore the question of the national language and the replacement of English by Indian languages in education. A consensus in favour of Hindi as a replacement of English and as the language of all- India communication, deliberation, business, and administration was gradually built up. Regional languages were also expected to be developed once the states were linguistically reorganized.

Objectives:

The main motto of Education is to provide individual children with the knowledge and skills. But, parents' education level directly correlates to the importance and influence of education in their children's lives. Academic strengths and weaknesses of a child can be recognized and rectified only if parents are well educated. It is with this background of the colonial implantation of English and English education, the sweep of national implantation associated with the freedom struggle, the subtle attempts to impose Hindi as the national language in the post-independence period, the consequent emergence of linguistic chauvinism in different states and the continued dominance of English as the language of elite communication in the country as a whole that we have to understand the problems and prospects of reforms and innovation in relation to the language question in India's education.

In all the states, especially the non-Hindi-speaking ones, there has been considerable ongoing controversy about the instruction of languages. The context for the debate on language instruction at the school level is provided by 'the three-language-formula' which was first suggested by the Central Advisory Board of Education⁷. According to this formula, every secondary school student should compulsorily learn at least three languages. In the non-Hindi-speaking states these three are: one's mother tongue or regional language, Hindi as the national language and English as their foreign or official language.

At the collegiate level, the main points of debate are: (a) the relevance of teaching a language as an optional subject at the B.A. level; (b) the content and orientation of language curriculum in the undergraduate course; and (c) the need for teaching language(s) in such professional courses as medicine and engineering.

As of now the students pursuing the three-year general degree courses, study English and any one other language of their choice (depending upon the languages offered by the college) in the first two years of their course. In conformity with the recommendations of the Education Commission, no language has been made a compulsory subject of study at the collegiate level, and the classical and modern languages of India together with some important foreign languages are offered as elective subjects.

Students taking up such professional courses as engineering, medicine, pharmacy and others are not required to study any language as part of their course. At the postgraduate level no study of any language is prescribed. Those interested and qualified can pursue a Master's degree course in any language in which instruction is offered.



The scenario of Learning and Teaching of English can give a real picture only if one goes through various aspects like Teaching Learning Models, ELT Theories, Approaches and Methods in ELT, Environmental & Socio-Economic background, the Role and Responsibilities of Administrative Authorities and others that affect it to a great extent.

To benefit the teaching of English language various approaches were propounded followed by different methods to support these that may be mentioned under two categories- Traditional Approaches (Grammar Translation Approach, Direct Method, Behaviorist Approach, etc.) and Other Approaches (Humanistic Approach, Communicative Language Teaching/ Communicative Approach, Task Based Approaches, Lexical Language Learning, etc.).

Grammar-Translation approach (1850s - 1950s) involves providing written exercise to translate into the student's mother-tongue. Vocabulary is learnt through lists of translated lexical items, with continued assessment to test a student's memory rather than to assess the student's ability to use language in a natural and meaningful way.

The Direct Method (1890s – now) considers, speaking and listening more important tenets for learning a foreign language. This would provide students the opportunity to acquire atomization in their second language as well as learn suitable vocabulary or grammar forms which are used in particular contexts.

The Behaviorist approach to language learning developed the Audio-lingual method (1960s - 1970s) which focuses on learners' acquisition of a foreign language through habit formation and atomization. Teachers that incorporate Audio-lingualism in their class can see immediate results that are positive but their disadvantage is that long-term memory is redundant and habit is poorly formed.

The Humanistic Approach (1970s – now) to language teaching focuses upon what the student knows, feels or thinks about language learning. The approaches developed with the Humanistic Method includes; the Silent Way, Total Physical Response, Community Language Learning and Suggestopedia.

The Communicative Approach (1970s – now) to language learning focuses on learning to communicate through interaction in target language. Furthermore, emphasis for real-life spoken discourse is paramount for students to acquire. Accuracy work is used to focus on form and new vocabulary whilst fluency work is often focused upon spoken tasks.

Task Based Approach (1985 – now) in teaching was more popular in the 1990s with Business English classes where students had to acquire language in specific contexts. The use of tasks, problem solving activities or information jigsaws were used a lot within class which supported particular topics. As with the Communicative Approach, Task based teaching supported communicative competence.

In Lexical Language Learning (1990s – now), Vocabulary is chosen as the main focus for teaching in the classroom, with introduction to collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs, etc. for students. The Lexical Approach is usually included in class with gap-fill vocabulary worksheets.

Society and economic status plays a vital role in bringing up and developing a language among the inhabitants of that particular region/area. The two terms 'society' and 'economy' combined together refer to 'Socio-economic factors', which includes in it; the level of family income, parent's education level, race and gender, all influence the quality and availability of education as well as the ability of education to improve life circumstances, etc. The poor financial status of a family hinders a child in gaining education and obtaining



supplemental education sources. Financial stress on the parents can cause a child to leave school early to work. It may also fill the children's ability to learn with negative effect.

Role and Responsibilities of Administrative Authorities

In a democratic country like India, people have the right to choose their language for instruction at schools. The people's demand for English and the Government's protective policy of the mother tongue has created confusion in the minds of the people, policy makers, teachers and children. The anti-English spirit or English hatred is dying out and will slowly diminish in coming years as the language is perceived as language of hope and better life. While some of our native languages are losing their battle for survival where English is taking the 'killer' role. This dangerous trend may lead to mass conversion to English medium instruction in our schools, both urban and rural schools.

In our country, as already said 75% of the students are from rural areas and they are coming through regional language medium schools. Hence, based on their background, we have to design the syllabus and adopt methods to test their English language proficiency. Therefore, it is necessary to go for a detailed discussion as to whether the existing curriculum is fulfilling the need of the hour and suitable to the students in achieving their goals, the present methods for testing the proficiency of the students are suitable and opinion and suggestions from the teaching faculties of the English language in technical institutions are to be obtained. Rajendra Dixit suggested 'The Three Language Formula' in 1968 Education Policy:

- The first language to be studied must be the mother tongue or the regional language.
- In Hindi speaking states, the second language will be some other modern Indian language or English and in non-Hindi speaking states, the second language will be Hindi or English.
- In Hindi speaking states, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language.

Summing Up:

Language is the vehicle of social interaction. A rich and stimulating language environment during the early years and beyond is essential for language learning. No doubt, English as an international language has established itself as a mandatory part of a well civilized life style; the confusing state of policy makers for the past 25 years has left a very sorry figure. The government is often found to be unable to decide what steps should be taken to improve the scenario. Policy making and its implementation contributes a lot to the education system. The language policy in school & college education emerged as a political and social consensus. Most states refuse to move beyond the good old structural approach of the 1950s and the 60s, while they stress for communication skills to help the learner for an upward movement.

The increasing demand for English – both as a language and as a medium driven by the instrumental motivation has compelled most governments at the state (provincial) level to introduce English as a language from class One. English is an institutionalized subject in the school curriculum. Twenty six out of the thirty five states and union territories introduce English as a language from class I and the remaining states introduce the language either from class three or five.

In this regard, the present research work aims to explore the reasons that impede the teaching of English communication skills in the Jhunjhunu districts of Rajasthan. The researcher is of the view that the findings of the study and proper implementation of the suggested remedies based on it will become an eye-opener in connection to overcome the challenges being faced”.



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