

NEP and the Idea of Integration of Technology with Education: Problems of Acquisition of Language and English Communication Skills in Rural India

Running Title: NEP And The Idea Of Integration

Dr Ihsan-ur-Rahim Malik^{1*}

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Department of English, Central University of Kashmir

***Corresponding Author:** Dr Ihsan-ur-Rahim Malik

*Assistant Professor, Department of English, Central University of Kashmir

Abstract

The ability to communicate is one of the defining characteristics of man. This emphasises the importance of gaining mastery over various languages. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has underscored the significance of using native and regional languages as media of instruction at the primary school level and if feasible at the secondary school level as well. The policy encourages schools to teach three languages to the students out of which two must be national languages. NEP does not, as many think, detract from the significance of English language. It rather foregrounds the importance of the knowledge and acquisition of multiple languages which can have a tremendous impact for the students as far as the processes of perception, reasoning, memory and judgement are concerned. This promises to make the process of learning a language more advantageous and result-oriented. The paper seeks to demonstrate why NEP 2020 lays stress on the role of ICT and e-learning resources in dissemination of knowledge and acquisition of communication skills particularly in rural India. The paper also examines the dynamics of the problems pertaining to proper integration of technology with education with reference to rural India. Lastly it proposes possible solutions to these problems through appropriate use of ICT and e-resources.

Key Words: NEP, Technology, e-resources, Language, Communication.

English occupies an important position among the second or foreign languages spoken in India in that it is the most popular of these languages. It is expected to experience significant growth in the future and will remain a fundamental language for generations to come in India (Badyal, 2020). Consequently a variety of approaches have been adopted by teachers of English to teach the language like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Grammar-cum-Translation Method, The Direct Method, The Audio-Lingual Method, Total Physical Response (TPR), Community Language Learning (CLL). When planning for English as a Second Language (EASL) instruction in India, it is essential to consider the social aspects of English in a multilingual context (Parasher, 1998). In the progression from primary to secondary and thence to higher education students learn English language until they are competent enough to pursue a career in the domain. During this journey special emphasis is laid on studying English as a language and as a discipline. As in other subjects, the use of electronic resources has gained tremendous importance in the domain of teaching and learning of English language as well. Technology has revolutionized the process of impartation of knowledge by making the pedagogical process more effective and appealing. However in order to teach English effectively in rural India where there is lack of adequate technical support and appropriate environment, there is a need for having creative teachers who are able to leverage technology to create an interest in learning amongst learners and ultimately help them learn the language (Mishra, 2015).

India is a multicultural and multilingual country which harbours diverse mental, emotional and behavioural attitudes. A lot of importance is attached to moral values of human conduct and also to the principles that ought to govern it. In such a country the importance of English language cannot be overemphasised however it has a specific role to play in that it has the potential to serve as a popular medium of communication. The functional relationship between languages is the basis of multilingualism. Nativization of English lends credence to the relationship between English and Indian languages. In terms of grammar, semantics, and pragmatics, English has assimilated the characteristics of the Indian languages, as evidenced by sociolinguistic literature (Annamalai, 2004). The New Education Policy seeks to harmonise the dichotomies engendered by such diversity by fostering a proper understanding of human abilities and limitations which can lead to a better faith in one's perception and judgement. The policy also stresses the importance of the

impartation of comprehensive interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary education particularly at the undergraduate level so that students can have an in-depth and consistent introduction to science, art, humanities, mathematics and other disciplines. Such holistic education can ostensibly be a vital step towards the promotion of a sense of oneness and unity among the citizens of the country. This is precisely the reason why NEP 2020 lays a lot of stress on role of e-learning resources in dissemination of knowledge particularly in rural India where people belonging to various communities have a hard time getting access to and using digital technology and resources for want of requisite means like internet connectivity and software and also because of inadequate digital literacy which is vital as regards their initiation into the digital world. The government's e-Government policies are promoting the utilization of information technology across all aspects of the economy, including education. India offers a favourable context in which e-Learning could be developed in the future to address a variety of issues in the field of education, particularly in rural areas (Kumar, 2007). Although mass-mediation has improved considerably in rural India a lot needs to be done to actualise the dream of having a technologically driven rural India.

Focus on the utilization of various electronic tools both within and outside the classroom has the potential to bring about positive and energetic transformation. It not only encourages learners to comprehend the subject-matter with interest and enthusiasm but also facilitates a better understanding of complex problems.

In this day and age ICT is playing a vital role in facilitating the acquisition of English language as learners are getting easier access to a variety of digital content to improve their language skills. Moreover e-resources are accessible ubiquitously and link the prospective learners to applications, websites and digital libraries which can be used consistently to hone language skills to the desirable degree. Besides e-resources also place effective audiovisual material covering the crucial areas of vocabulary development, grammar and pronunciation at the disposal of learners. It also facilitates comprehensive acquisition of the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing while acquainting the learners with the challenges of using the language with the kind of efficiency relatable to native speakers. E-resources not only cater to specific learning needs, vis-à-vis English Language but also promote global understanding allowing the learners to connect and share their linguistic knowledge and expertise. The utilization of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the educational and learning process with respect to English has at least two advantages. It facilitates the implementation of engaging and enjoyable learning activities by teachers, as well as the promotion of learner autonomy, which encourages students to learn with enthusiasm. Furthermore, the opinions of teachers regarding the use of ICT in the English teaching process are generally positive (Al-Munawwarah, 2015).

It is often assumed that learners possess the necessary language skills which they can employ in different situations. However this often turns out to be a mistaken opinion. This is the reason why the University Grants Commission (UGC) has underscored the significance of acquiring English Communication Skills through the use of ICT. Consequently communicative English established its place in UG curricula across the country. The National Education Policy (NEP) carries the same idea forwards. However it has often been realized that at the undergraduate level learners have an ordinary and undistinguished understanding of language skills. It is therefore imperative that the teaching-learning process with regard to English communication transcends conventional and traditional modes to equip learners with skills required to excel in a fast changing world where boundaries are blurring and the importance of communication is becoming more and more important.

The utilization of ICT and e-resources by teachers and learners plays a vital role in making advantageous use of relevant knowledge to gain language proficiency. The use of technology brings in more precision and clarity in pedagogical activities and creates an aura which is more conducive to effective teaching-learning exercises. Learners feel less burdened as they are able to participate in classroom activities – receiving instruction, taking tests and completing assignments – more easily. The more familiar a learner is with the dynamics of technology the better would be his prospects with regard to situating himself in a technology-driven global society. A part of the teacher's role as a facilitator of the acquisition of competent language skills is to bring about a beneficial synthesis of technology and curriculum. The implementation of technology in the classroom significantly enhances the development and attainment of English language proficiency. (Gilakjani, 2017). Moreover technology also has the potential to facilitate cooperation among the learners which can help them to work together in intellectual endeavours, generate knowledge and accomplish challenging tasks with ease.

Education is a continuous journey of knowledge, encompassing elements such as consciousness, perception, rationalization, and judgement. With the implementation of NEP, the concept of education is likely to be redefined in a variety of ways. NEP emphasizes the acquisition of effective communication skills and the optimal utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as these are means whereby learners can express themselves with conviction and clarity. It is clear that ICT is important for students to learn and get ready for the real world, but it's also clear that their motivation comes from their self-assurance and confidence, as well as their knowledge of how ICT can

help them succeed in their future (Levett-Jones et al., 2009). This can contribute significantly towards ensuring a secure and successful future for them early in their lives.

It is imperative to learn more about the dynamics of NEP and the way it perceives the importance of learning languages and language skills. This is vital given the fact that the world is transforming fast through the integration of Knowledge and technology. Without proper communication skills it is difficult to come into agreement with the demands of an intricately interconnected and interdependent world. With the relationship between humans and technology taking a new form there has been a sudden growth and expansion of e-learning resources in diverse fields of education including English language learning. These resources have revolutionised the process of acquiring communication skills. However appropriate measures need to be taken to enhance the range, scope and effectiveness of ICT particularly in rural India. This can bring about desirable and constructive changes vis-à-vis acquisition of communication skills. Rural India however is beset with a numbers of problems which hinder proper understanding and implementation of NEP. Moreover there is a conspicuous lack of the necessary technological infrastructure, like digital classrooms in rural India. Since the vast majority of India's population lives in rural areas and has little or no access to education, they face significant barriers to participating in India's fast-growing economy. ICT has tremendous potential to transform the lives of the rural poor, but unfortunately, it remains largely unexploited (Bartolomé, J. 2014). Besides this, things naturally associated with ICT and e-learning like electricity and internet are also erratic. Teachers as well as learners, in most cases, are not efficient enough when it comes to the use of computers and modern technology. Last but not the least the rural Indian populace have to contend with the problem of socio-economic backwardness.

In order to ensure holistic development of the learners is necessary to put the recommendations of NEP into practical effect. The use of technology must be brought into agreement with quantitative as well as qualitative curricular requirements. Language educators must promote use of technology for acquisition of effective communication skills and should take requisite steps to engraft technology into the process of learning to produce desirable results. The highest working standards in the use of technology to promote language learning view technology as a means to improve teaching and learning through improved input, additional language practice opportunities, and a platform for interactive and task-based learning (Hoopingarner, 2009). People proficient in the use of technology across all the educational institutions at all levels need to take the responsibility of ensuring efficient use of technology so that it can be utilized in the teaching learning process. In the rural areas of the country in particular all possible technological assistance should be extended to the educators to organise the teaching materials using technology so that they can shift the focus on to the learners and cater to the individual needs for each learner.

The role of the traditional teacher has undergone a radical transformation in recent years due to a variety of factors. With technology making unprecedented strides and turning the world into a global village the teacher needs to make the necessary adjustments so that he is able to provide guidance, assistance, encouragement, motivation required for academic excellence. This is achievable through competent use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which has the potential to facilitate the development of a paradigmatic learning environment.

English Language enjoys the status of a lingua franca. Any attempts towards devaluing the language are bound to evoke a negative reaction particularly from people whose status necessitates proficiency in that language, as well as from those who consider competence in English language a means of socioeconomic upliftment. India is a truly multilingual country where a small percentage of the population has command over English language. Many of the scheduled languages in India are a direct product of the local or regional cultural milieu and are therefore an integral part of socio-political fabric of these regions. In rural India many students fail to devote time to acquisition of proper communication skills which becomes a hurdle in the progression and advancement of their careers. This accentuates the need for proper implementation of NEP which provides for better understanding and acquisition of language skills through integration of technology with education.

References

1. Al-Munawwarah, S. (2015). Teachers' perceptions on the use of ICT in Indonesian EFL learning context. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 3, 70-80.
2. Annamalai, E. (2004). Nativization of English in India and its effect on multilingualism. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 3, 151-162.
3. Badyal, P. (2020). Development of the English language in parallel with the changing socio-cultural trends in India. *Indian Journal of Language and Linguistics*.
4. Bartolomé, J. (2014). How has India's rapidly growing ICT sector impacted its rural poor?.
5. Gilakjani, A. (2017). A review of the literature on the integration of technology into the learning and teaching of English language skills. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7, 95.
6. Hoopingarner, D. (2009). Best practices in technology and language teaching. *Lang. Linguistics Compass*, 3, 222-235.
7. Kumar, A. (2007). E-Learning: A tool for education in rural India. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 3, 113 - 122.

8. Levett-Jones, T., Kenny, R., Riet, P., Hazelton, M., Kable, A., Bourgeois, S., & Luxford, Y. (2009). Exploring the information and communication technology competence and confidence of nursing students and their perception of its relevance to clinical practice. *Nurse education today*, 29 6, 612-6.
9. Mishra, B. (2015). Innovative ways of English language teaching in rural India through technology. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 6, 38-44.
10. Parasher, S. (1998). Language policy in a multilingual setting: the Indian scenario. *Asian Englishes*, 1, 92-116.