

Evolution of English Language in India

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Abstract

One hundred and fifty years of intimate contact has made English an integral part of our Educational system and this cannot be changed without injury to the cause of Education in India. English has today become one of the major languages of the world and Indians can neglect its study only at the risk of loss to them- **Jawaharlal Nehru the first Prime minister of India.** By accidents of history and by the rapid spread of industrial development, science and technology, international trade and by something like an explosion in the speed and ease of travel and by all the factors which have been broken down frontiers and forced nations into closer inter-dependence, English has become a world language. It is the means of international communication .it has created better understanding among the nations of the world and has been responsible for cultural give and take. It has opened worldwide chances for employment – **F.G.French** It is my considered opinion that English Education in the manner it has been given, has emasculated the English Educated Indians, it has put a severe string upon the Indian students and has made us imitators-**Mahatma Gandhi.**

Key Words: English language, education, knowledge, learning, medium, sources, system

Introduction

The position that English occupies today in our education system and in official life cannot be sustained in future- **Maulana Azad the Education Minister in Independent India.** It was a precious gift given by goddess Saraswathiand it would be foolish to throw away the babe along with the bath water under sentimental urges- **Rajaji**

The secondary and higher education should not aim at preparing students for university education alone but to prepare them for various occupations and life in general- **kunzru committee.** English brought us political awakening and national unity. So our youth should acquire knowledge from all sources and contribute their share to expansion and development. And in attain this objective the study of English is bound to play important part-**Secondary Education commission.** Void will be created if we abandon English consider in its multiple utility to us. English must continue to be studied at Higher Education. It is a language which is rich in literature-humanistic, Scientific and technical. If we give up English under sentiment lures, we ourselves cut off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge and students who desires to go for higher training or vocational course must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them access to the treasures of knowledge- University Education commission.

History of English Language Teaching in India:

English Language Teaching in India under British East India Company

The first English schools were charity schools established for the British and Anglo-Indians in the factories and garrisons. Three Charity Schools were established in Madras (1715) in Bombay (1719) and in Calcutta(1720) these schools were encouraged by the Company, but mostly survived on subscriptions and donations. These schools were not meant for general native Indian children. This laid the foundation of formalized English education in India.

An English-medium school for European and Eurasian boys was founded at Tiruchirapalli (1772) and an English charity school at Tanjore with the help of Haider Ali the ruler of Mysore. He was so instrumental in persuading Raja's (Rulers) of Tanjore and marwar to establish schools for teaching English to Indian Children 1785 These may be said to be the earliest Test schools for

teaching the English Language to Indians. These helped better understanding between company and the native Indians. Then there was a spurt of establishment of Missionary schools in Bengal. This included the first girls school—Hedges Girls' School 1760. The Serampore Trio established schools which were not particularly in favour of English education for the natives. They contributed immensely to the growth of Bengali literature; journalism and English education through Bengali medium. By 1817, there were 115 schools established by the Trio. In 1818 the Serampore College was established to instruct Christian and non-Christian Indian youth in Western arts and sciences. No doubt they had great contribution to make English education in Bengal.

Before 1765 the company restricted its attention to the education of European and Anglo-Indian children. Later, it began to feel that it must do something for the Indian people. Company maintained a strict religious neutrality. They squarely opposed any hasty attempt to impart Western knowledge: and chose, rather, to support traditional learning. Moreover, the Company wanted to educate the sons of influential Indians for their promotion to higher posts under government and, thereby to win confidence of the upper classes and consolidate its rule in India. Therefore, the Company decided to establish some centres of higher learning for the Hindus and Muslims and thus the Calcutta Madrasah (1781) and the Benares Sanskrit College (1791) came into existence. Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasah in 1781 with Islamic theology, law, logic, grammar, geometry and arithmetic as curricular subjects. The resident of Benares, Jonathan Duncan, emulated this example to establish Benares Sanskrit College (1791) with Hindu theology, law and grammar, medicine, etc., as curricular subjects and Sanskrit as the language. The principal objective of the educational policy of the Company was to encourage traditional Oriental learning in Sanskrit and Arabic.

The 43rd clause was inserted in the Charter Act of 1813, which required the Company to provide an annual sum of Rs 1 lakh for the 'revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India'.

This, in fact, laid the foundation of a state educational system in India; and the Charter Act of 1813, therefore is a turning point in the history of Indian education.

Macaulay's Minutes:

Macaulay wrote his famous Minute (2 February 1835) regarding the new educational policy. Macaulay dismissed whatsoever the importance of all the wealth of Indian and Arabic literature. Western learning alone could reawaken and regenerate the Indians morally. As regards the medium of instruction, he felt English 'stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West' and accordingly recommended English as the language 'best worth knowing' and 'most useful to our native subjects'.

He wanted to create a class of persons Indian in blood and color but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect.

After 1813, although did not withdraw from primary education, the missionaries' attention was gradually shifted to secondary—in higher education. English was consciously adopted as the medium. The Christian Missionaries had already started school and college teaching through English as the only medium of instruction. Boys and girls from upper classes died to these institutions to learn English and thus the Missionaries got an excellent opportunity to preach the Gospel to them. The Missionaries set up colleges in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra, Naspur, Masulipatam, etc. Thus, the quarter century from 1833 to 1857 can justly be called 'the period of Missionary schools and colleges' in India. English education was to convert the Hindus and Muslims into 'good' Christians.

David Hare (1775-18421) was keenly interested in the spread of English education. He believed that knowledge of the English language and literature was essential for the regeneration of the Hindu society; He established a junior school at Pataldanga, which subsequently came to be known as Hare School. In 1819, the Calcutta School Book Society started to establish English and Bengali schools and by 1821, the number of schools run by it was 115. In Madras also a school book society was formed. In -Calcutta, a few-Indian and European gentlemen joined hands together establish the Hindu Vidyalaya (or College) in 1817. Later, the Vidyalaya was handed over to the Company due to financial difficulties and was renamed as the Presidency College in 1854. This college has been elevated to a state university very recently.

In Bombay, the Bombay Education Society 1815 took the responsibility of running the charity schools established earlier.. It founded a number of new charity schools also. The Court of Directors sent their Educational Dispatch on 19 July 1854. This is perhaps the most important educational document under the Company and is even referred to sometimes as the Magna Charta of English education in India dispatch became famous as the Wood Dispatch of 1854 after the name of Charles Wood President of the Company's Board of Control. So far, as ELT is concerned the Wood's Dispatch was significant as English was to remain as the medium of instruction only for higher branches of education and particularly for the new universities as the Dispatch envisaged. For mass education purposes, the vernacular languages were preferred to English as a medium of instruction.

The most significant aspect of the Dispatch was that it removed the obstacles to English education and created the scope for its expansion. Indeed, the influence of university education firmly established by the Dispatch still holds sway. The mother tongue was accorded recognition in the Dispatch, but the monopoly of English in the universities created a pressure on the secondary schools to anglicize them. An apparent gulf appeared between primary education in the vernacular rural primary schools and urban English medium private/autonomous schools.

Wood's Dispatch and English Language Teaching:

In consequence of the Dispatch, Departments of Public Instruction were established in the provinces between 1855 and 1856 and a Central Committee was appointed in 1855 to plan the universities. In 1857 the first three Indian universities at Calcutta, Mumbai and Madras came into existence. It was also the time when Company Education Cell established presidency Colleges in the provinces. In Calcutta, the senior section of the Hindu College was merged into the Presidency College. The Madras Presidency College was established in 1857. In Bombay, the Elphinstone College, which was set up in 1856, got the Company patronage as other Presidency Colleges of India.

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 intercepted the process of implementation of any of the recommendations or of the Dispatch.

Indian Education Commission.

Two of the important recommendations made by Charles Wood were 1. grants -in-aid to Missionary institutions and 2. the spread of primary education/popular education !z. among masses. However, the events of 1857 prompted Queen Victoria to declare in her proclamation of 1858 a policy of strict neutrality in religious matters.

Hunter Commission and English Language Teaching..

The first Indian Education Commission, better known as Hunter Commission after the name of its President, Sri William Hunter, submitted its recommendations .

1. It unanimously rejected the governmental withdrawal from education and strongly endorsed secular education in government institutions.
2. It recommended that priority be given to primary education and the responsibility for this would be taken up by the local self-government bodies.

3. It decided that the Missionary educational enterprises would have to occupy a secondary position in Indian education.

By 1902, there were five universities in India, including three earlier ones. It is worthwhile to note that all the five universities were merely affiliating and examining bodies and did no direct teaching.

Turning Point in English Language Teaching:

The post-1854 era, which was one of rapid multiplication of secondary schools, mostly catered to the growing demand for English education. The Hunter Commission recommended that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at the primary stage. There was an option of either using English or mother tongue at middle school level, but nothing was said about the secondary stage. Eventually English continued to be medium of instruction. Secondary Education was to set ready link with College Education through English language teaching. In Bombay and Bengal, there were some medical schools where instructions were given in the modern Indian languages. However, these experiments in teaching in the mother tongue were discontinued by 1880 in favour of medical degree courses, which were taught in English. Since the Hunter Commission focused mainly on primary and secondary education, English was the preferred medium at the latter stage.

However, the Indian Education Commission did neither favour English nor specify any modern Indian language as medium of instruction. Consequently, the dominance of English in the secondary course continued unabated. The teaching of English (and not European knowledge as such) became the Prime object of the secondary course.

Indian Universities Commission. Lord Curzon has made considerable contribution in this sphere. Curzon felt the need for urgent university reformation and thus appointed the Indian Universities Commission in 1902 which suggested:

1. curriculum of over three years was prescribed for the B.A.
2. The mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction in intermediate colleges and efforts should be made to promote the study of vernaculars in secondary schools, intermediate colleges and universities.

Hartog Committee Report:

The Hartog Committee submitted its report in 1929 and it recommended consolidated improvement of education rather than indiscriminate expansion and putting particular emphasis on primary education. It deplored the low standard of English.

Abbot-Wood Report recommended technical education as an integral part of education. If English is taught to children of middle school age it should not result in an excessive amount of linguistic load. The mother tongue should, as far as possible, be the medium of instruction throughout the High School stage, but English should be a compulsory language for all pupils at this stage. The teaching of English should be more realistic.

By 1937, modern Indian languages had been adopted as media of instruction on a very large scale. Nevertheless, the use of English as a medium of instruction was not completely abandoned for reasons as mentioned below:

- a. The secondary course was still viewed as an appendage of the university course and the use of English as a medium of instruction at the university level dictated similar use at the secondary level also
- b. Government competitive examinations were still conducted in English and proficiency in that language ensured a greater chance of success in such examinations
- c. Lack of terminology textbooks, etc., were still shown as excuses to retain the use of English.

Basic Education Scheme. The case for the mother tongue as the medium of instruction was considerably strengthened by the announcement of the Basic Education Scheme by Mahatma Gandhi

in 1937. Gandhi categorically stated that the medium of instruction had to be the mother tongue. Rabindranath Tagore also rejected English education. Zakir Hussain Committee Report (1938) said that the teaching of the mother tongue is the foundation of all education. Sergeant Report. The last major educational document of the British period was the Sergeant Report. It planned to create in a span of 40 years the same standard of education as was present in England. As per recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission, the transition from English to the regional languages was to be made within a period of five years. But, by large, the universities failed to respond.

Recommendations of the Mudaliar Commission (1952-1953):

The Mudaliar Commission made important and extensive recommendations regarding curriculum at the secondary level. The suggested curriculum would include English and the mother tongue (MT) at the lower secondary stage in addition to other compulsory subjects. At the higher secondary stage, the compulsory core subjects include the MT or regional language and (b) two more elective languages including English, in addition to other subjects.

On methods, the Commission insisted that the emphasis in teaching should shift from simple memorizations to teaching with purposeful concrete and realistic situations. Methods of instruction to cater to the needs of individual students. In the matter of text books for languages, the Commission recommended that definite textbooks should be prescribed for each class to ensure proper gradation.

The Mudaliar Commission recommended a three-language formula for secondary education i.e., (i) MT (or the regional language) (ii) English and (iii) Hindi.

This formula was in general terms applied with slight amendments in different states. In West Bengal, for example, the formula became: (i) Mother tongue was to be taught all through the school stage (ii) English was to be taught as a subject from class V all through (iii) Hindi was introduced at the junior secondary stage only (iv) The teaching of Sanskrit was made compulsory in the two upper grades of junior secondary education.

Recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964-1966).

1. All modern Indian languages should be developed and used as media of instruction at the university stage. Hindi should be developed as the lingua franca for the country as a whole for purposes of internal communication and also as the official language of the Union. English should continue to be studied most importantly as a channel of international communication. Side by side, the study of other library languages, like Russian, German, French, Chinese or Japanese should also be encouraged.

It also recommended that the three-language formula should be adopted in a modified form. At the lower primary stage, one language should be studied compulsorily—the mother tongue or the regional language, at the option of the pupils—and the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue. At the higher primary stage, only two languages should be studied on a compulsory basis: (i) the mother tongue or the regional language and (ii) the official (Hindi) or the associate official (English) language of the Union. At the lower secondary stage, a study of three languages should be obligatory; in non-Hindi areas these would be—the regional language, Hindi and English, and in Hindi areas the pupils would study Hindi, English and a modern Indian language. At the higher secondary stage, only two of the above mentioned three languages would be compulsory. However, the students could study one or more additional languages on an optional basis. No language would be compulsory at the university stage.

The Commission also felt 'English will continue to enjoy a high status as long as it remains the principal medium of education at the University stage, indeed it recommended that English should be medium of instruction in all major Universities.

The findings and recommendations of the Kothari Commission provided the basis for the formulation of the National Policy on Education in 1986.

The next significant landmark is the National Policy of Education and the Programme of Action (1986). says: 'The Education Policy of 1986 had examined the question of the development of English education which is as relevant today as it was before The Policy will be implemented more energetically and purposefully. The 1968 policy does not make any mention of the medium of instruction in its chapter on Higher Education. It says that a major effort will be directed towards the transformation of teaching methods and that urgent steps will be taken to protect the system from degradation. One important step that the Programme of Action recommended was the establishment of a rural institutions.

The Acharya Ramamurti Commission Report (1990):

The Acharya Ramamurti Commission, appointed to review this 1986 policy, submitted its report in 1990. It observed, however, that whatever the difficulties or the unevenness in the implementation, the 'three-Language Formula' had 'stood the test of time' and that it was not 'desirable or prudent to re-open it. About the learning of Hindi and English, the Ramamurti Commission also made the pertinent observation, reiterating a statement made by the Education Commission Report (1964-1966) that the criteria should be not years of study but hours of study and even more importantly, levels of attainment. In view of these considerations,

Report of the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC):

One more report with regard to the place of English education in India is the Report of the Curriculum Development centre which gave its recommendations in 1989. It says that the new undergraduate curriculum comprises a general English course and a special English course. It is well known that not all teachers can teach the gifted, the average and below average students; the 1986 report said that 'methodologies will be developed for evaluation of teacher performance through self-appraisal, through peer groups and also by students. This was forgotten completely and it was taken for granted that all teachers of English can teach the subject to the gifted group! The concept of streaming the learners has been applied only to the teaching of English but not to the teaching of other languages or subjects. It is encouraging to note a few words from the CDC report in English: 'If Education was to be viewed as an instrument of human resource development, then, it was argued, why should we continue an MA programme in English 7 '5, Literature (and that too chiefly British Literature) only. It was felt that we would introduce a multiplicity k• of MA courses in English such as MA in Creative Writing in English, MA in Modern English Language, ' and MA in ELT, and so on,-as several universities in Britain and America currently do. While there was a broad agreement on this view it was felt none the less that the time was not yet right for such diversification—chiefly because we do not have the human resources necessary to implement it.

Recommendations of the Ashok Mitra Commission:

It was felt that unless students learn English from the primary stage, the prospect of their being able to hold their own position in competitive examinations and in other spheres at the national level seemed to be bleak. In the circumstances, it was felt that it would be wise to return to the earlier system of teaching English from the primary stage.

1. English education in India has aroused a lot of interest, enthusiasm and controversy-in different parts of India at the same time. This has resulted in the publication of several reports of different Commissions. The most current report is the Pabitra Sarkar Commission Report.
2. This Commission recommends that the teaching of English in West Bengal should be started from class III with the aid of an appropriately devised text.
3. The committee also feels that the government should pay more attention to teacher-training and orientation programmes for effective teaching. In addition to this, measures should be taken to break the compartmentalization that exists between the primary and secondary levels, teachers of both these levels should interact with each other and language cum literature education might also be regarded as a single process—this will perhaps enrich the teaching-learning process.

The guidelines of NCF 2005 (references to English):

Several studies have shown that bilingual proficiency raises the levels of cognitive growth, social tolerance, divergent thinking and scholastic achievement. Societal or national-level multilingualism is a resource that can be favourably compared to any other national resource.

Today, we know for certain that bilingualism or multilingualism confers definite cognitive advantages. The three-language formula is an attempt to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic situation in India. It is a strategy that should really serve as a launching pad for learning more languages. It needs to be followed both in letter and spirit. Its primary aim is to promote multilingualism and national harmony. The following guidelines may help us achieve this aim:

1. Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource.
2. Home language(s) of children, should be the medium of learning in schools.
3. If a school does not have provisions for teaching in the child's home language(s) at the higher levels, primary school education must still be covered through the home language(s).
4. Children will receive multilingual education from the outset. The three-language formula needs to be implemented in its spirit, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country.
5. In the non-Hindi-speaking states, children learn Hindi. In the case of Hindi speaking states, children learn a language not spoken in their area. Sanskrit may also be studied as a Modern Indian Language (MIL) in addition to these languages.
6. At later stages, study of classical and foreign languages may be introduced.

Conclusion

All the decisions during British rule were taken from colonial and imperial standpoints. During the post-independent period, the Government of India had considered the question of ELT very elaborately and decided to keep it as one of the scheduled languages in India. Now, it is established that there is a constant need for ELT in India to keep pace with over-advanced countries of the world and for competing at the international level where English reigns supreme. In these 400 years, English in India has essentially become an indispensable part of its socio-political and cultural matrix. No wonder, English language has got its present status not only as 'any other Indian language' listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, but also as the 'Second Language' to be taught throughout India. Hence, teaching of English has become such a big as well as a challenging issue in India.

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