

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to English in the Indian educational system is a gift of British Rulers. Though English was introduced for sheer practical purposes, its introduction was a historic incidence as it opened the door of knowledge to the Indians. Under the British rule English occupied the vital position of the medium of instruction in the education system. But after independence deliberate attempts have been made to promote regional languages and the mother tongue is given the status of medium of instruction. Now the position of English is reduced to L3. Still the importance of English as a library language can't be denied.

A variety of factors go to influence the process of learning, particularly the learning of English. In spite of the adequate educational facilities provided by the schools and the sustained efforts of trained and qualified teachers who teach English, it is noticed that the learning of English in our schools has not reached the level of satisfaction. Learning is a joint activity of teachers, students and parents. In this dissertation an attempt is made to assess the influence of family background of the students on their learning of English.

The design of the present dissertation is as follows.

Chapter No. I -

In this chapter the place and position of English in India today is discussed. The chapter deals with different schools that gave thought to the introduction of English to the Indians and how English was accepted as the medium of instruction. The chapter also gives an account of the role played by English in the pre-independence days - such as the language that brings about cultural renaissance, growth

of nationalism etc. The chapter accounts for the factors that make our students study English.

Chapter No. II -

This chapter deals with the theories of learning, particularly, the learning of language. Moreover, it elaborates how the learning of the second language is different from the learning of the first language various factors that affect the learning of the second language are elucidated in detail.

Chapter No. III -

In this dissertation a case study has been made to assess the impact of family background on the learning of English. The selection of the sample became inevitable. This chapter gives the idea of the nature of the survey and the methodology adopted for the project. It gives detailed description of the scope of study, selection of sample and the tools of data collection. A schedule eliciting the information about the family background of the students was prepared. In order to assess the performance of the students in English a test was prepared to supplement the marks obtained by them in the school examination and their ranks listed by their teachers. Analysis of the Test results is incorporated in this chapter.

Chapter No. IV -

Family is a close-knit unit that influences the personality development of the child in his formative years. It is a crucial factor in the case of learning of the second language. In this chapter various aspects of the family background i.e. size of the family, size and location of the tenement, occupation and education of the parents and their participation in the social activities have been discussed in detail. With the help of the collected data and its analysis an attempt has been made to assess the impact of structural, occupational educational and social background of the family on the learning of English.

Chapter No. V -

All types of family relationships viz. husband-wife, parent-child and sibling relationships are close, intimate and affectionate. The interactions with the members of the family give a child the proper exposure to the language. In the case of the learning of the second language, the family relationships have a role to play. All aspects of family relationships mentioned above and its impact on the learning of English are illustrated elaborately in this chapter.

Chapter No. VI -

In this chapter the findings and conclusions derived from the meticulous analysis of the family background are included. It has been proved that unfavourable family background has an adverse effect on the students' learning of the second language. Hence a few suggestions to get over these problems have been given.

I. ENGLISH IN INDIA.

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- 1.3 Emergence of Two Schools.
- 1.4 Importance of English in India before and after Independence.
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CHAPTER - I

English in India

1.1 The beginning

The East India Company consolidated its position in India and it extended its area of operations. The company no more became only a commercial concern, but it started functioning in the field of education also. It was the need of time as the Indians were recruited in the company services. They indeed needed training. The Company assumed this responsibility of training Indians to enable them to perform their job duties efficiently. Besides, one should not forget that the Company had an eye on the spread of Christianity in this country. Hence the factories and schools engaged their attention. After 1765, the Company became a major political power in India and the educational structure in India underwent a change. To begin with, the education of Anglo-Indian children and that of the Europeans was given a priority. But the changed situation demanded that the sons of the influential natives should get the education as they were to be offered higher posts in the Government. In short, with the attainment of the political influence in India, the Company injected a change in the field of education. Hence it is held that English was introduced in India to meet the demands of their colonial administration and that to produce, in the words of Lord Macaulay, "A class of people, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect". 1

1.2 Introduction of English in the Indian Educational System

Charles Grant introduced English in the Indian educational system. He attributed the miserable conditions of the Indians to their ignorance and the want of proper religion. In order to improve the living conditions of Indians, he strongly advocated their education to be

followed by their conversion to christianity. He stressed the need of the Western knowledge for the Indians, to be communicated through the English language. Hence in 1772, he suggested that English be adopted the medium of instruction and also as the language of administration.

English was adopted as a medium of instruction despite the controversial opinions. Three different opinions held by three schools were ----

(1) The old offices of the company in West Bengal advocated the encouragement of Sanskrit or Arabic through which, they suggested, Indians should be made acquainted with the Western knowledge. In other words, they corroborated the policy of education as stressed by Warren Hestings and Minto.

(2) Men like Elphinstone and Munro had different ideas. They wanted to take the western knowledge to masses. Hence they suggested that the modern Indian languages should be the medium of instruction.

(3) The third school believed in Grant's suggestion that English be adopted as the medium of instruction for the spread of Western knowledge. Lord Macaulay upheld this view and this school assumed the paramount importance.

It is indeed interesting to note that these schools of thought were headed by the european officers with the complete neglect of Indian opinion on this issue. But later on, due to the work of missionaries, the ardent support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the awareness on the part of Indians that one would be deprived of the Government service if one is not educated in English, the public opinion rapidly grew in favour of the adoption of English as the medium of instruction. "It was rapidly becoming the royal road to black coated proffession with decent income and an important status in the society". 2.

1.3 Emergence of two schools

These controversies revolving round the medium of instruction gave rise to the two schools, namely the Orientalists and English.

The Orientalists, led by H.T. Prinsep, suggested the revival of literature of classical languages. They wanted to keep the option, English or the classical language, open to the students themselves. They suggested that the knowledge of modern science should be given to Indians through classical languages as the Orientalists were keen in preserving the existing institutes of Oriental learning.

The supporters of English school like Lord Maculay wanted to abolish the Oriental institutes. On 2nd February 1835, he argued in his famous Minute, a case of the English school. He condemned the spoken languages of India. He stressed that the Indian spoken dialects, being poor and rude, did not contain any literary or scientific information. Hence, he strongly advocated that the educational policy of India should be the same as that of the Western countries. In other words English should be the medium of instruction.

On 7th March 1835, Lord Bentinck passed a resolution to the effect of abolishing the oriental learning institutions. It was also resolved not to fund the oriental works. He promoted the learning of English, condemned oriental literature and neglected the Indian languages. Lord Auckland, a successor to Bentinck, saved the complete annihilation of the oriental learning institutions but emphasised that the main aim of the educational policy should be to communicate through English language. Lord Elphinstone, however, drifted away from this line of reasoning about the emphasis on English as a medium of instruction with the complete connivance at the oriental learning and native language. Under his encouragement, the Bombay Native Education Society was established. This society considered the study of English as of secondary importance. However Lord Macaulay correctly diagnosed the eagerness of

Indians to learn the English language. His anglicist movement, which started for dissemination of useful knowledge of science and literature through the medium of English, was solidly supported by the ardent patriots like Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

East India Company undertook the responsibility of educating the Indians with certain practical considerations. The company wanted to introduce Western literature and science in India in general. But in particular, the company had an utilitarian objective because it wanted to educate the Indians in order that they could be easily absorbed at the secondary positions in the hierarchical organisation of the company. Consequently, after a lot of controversies, English was adopted as a medium of instruction in India.

1.4 Importance of English in India before and after Independence

In our country, the study of English started for one reason or the other long ago. Before independence, it was introduced in India by the East India Company sheerly for a practical objective—to train the Indians for the secondary administrative jobs. But its introduction, though for this utilitarian purpose, proved to be historic and of far reaching consequences. As a result the entire curriculum was dominated by the study of English Language. English was adopted as the medium of instruction, both at school and college levels. Even at the elementary level the children were taught through English. Again, as mentioned above, there was a feeling among the Indians, that the study of English was a necessary qualification for employment. Hence everybody liked to study through English language. So it became the first language of India, the linguafranca of literates. Consequently, it did enjoy the privileged position in our country before independence. The top-most position English enjoyed in our country proved to be beneficial for various reasons mentioned below.

1.4.1- Growth of Nationalism -

Britishers ruled India for 150 years. Had there been no growth of nationalism, Britishers would not have left the Indian shores. Indians could break the shackles of slavery after tremendous efforts and toil. But it must be noted that the seeds of nationalism were sown in the Indian minds by the writings of so many great thinkers like Ruskin, Carlyle, Abraham Lincoln and others who wrote in English. English Language proved as a unifying force as the national leaders hailing from the remote corners of our vast multi-lingual country could communicate with each other and chalk out their plan of action. In this connection, Khushwant Singh says, "English served us in the past and does so today. It was the language of our protest against rulers a powerful weapon wielded by Tilak, Gokhale, Shri. Aurobindo, Gandhi and Nehru. More than any other language it gives us the sense of Indianness."3.

1.4.2 Cultural Renaissance -

The study of English in India has brought about a cultural renaissance. Indian language and literature were enriched as all the Indian languages have picked up several English words and phrases. Besides, Indian languages have coined many phrases and words following the English model. English has certainly enriched the vocabulary of Indian languages. The popularity of English literature in India was so much that Indian literature came under the spell of it. Almost all the great Indian writers studied English literature, which in turn influenced their writings. Rabindranath Tagore could get the world acclaim because of his writings in English. Hence, Prof. Gokak succinctly states, "It was in the English class room that the Indian literary

renaissance was born"4.

1.4.3 Growth of Knowledge - -----

English being highly developed language has enlarged the frontiers of knowledge in India. English has proved to be a window to the world knowledge. It is only through English that we acquaint ourselves with the knowledge in the field of science and technology. Hence the proper understanding of the changing world scenario is possible if one has studied English. Before independence the picture of Indian society underwent a change due to introduction of English in India. These changes are directly attributed to the adoption of English as a medium of instruction.

Before the advent of independence in India, English language played a vital role in the growth of nationalism, knowledge and also in bringing about the cultural renaissance. Needless to mention that English occupied privileged position in India.

A change in the outlook towards English took place after independence, English being the foreign language, should not be given a privileged position that it enjoyed under the British rule was the thinking. Its role in our education was vehemently questioned. Some political leaders thought it as a shameful badge of slavery and that of exploitation. Thus, after independence the status and role of English in India became a hot point of controversy. But in 1950 when Indian constitution was drafted, it was unanimously decided to continue English as the official language of the country for fifteen years. In the period of 15 years Indian authorities contemplated to make vigorous efforts to replace English by Hindi. But the southerners came out with such a stormy opposition to the idea of replacing English by Hindi that in 1963 the Parliament passed a bill to the effect that English was declared to be the Associated Official Language of India for an

indefinite period of time.

Still, however, many problems have cropped up over the issue which are briefly reviewed below.

1.4.4 English as the medium of Instruction - -----

Before independence English was the medium of instruction both at school and college levels. Hence, after independence a thought was given to the fact whether English should continue as the medium of instruction or not. We find that the views on this point are diverse. The views of Gandhiji and Tagore and those of the common man were against keeping English as the medium of instruction. Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended that the mother tongue had a prominent claim as the medium of instruction at school and college stages. It also recommended the same medium of instruction at school and university levels.

So, there was a group of thinkers who held that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. They emphasised that it would dispel all difficulties of expression and of the learners progress in thinking and expressing clearly and effectively. Moreover, the regionalists claim that many of the modern Indian languages have the older literary traditions than that of English. Again, in the field of creative literature the regional languages are making a considerable headway. Hence, they are of the opinion that the regional languages should be given the status of the university media.

But looking at the other side of the coin the issue of medium of instruction appears to be a perplexed problem. The adoption of regional language as the medium of instruction will give rise to academic fragmentation in the country. The exchange of examiners and teachers will not be possible on the national level. Dr. Gokak states, "A kind of academic inbreeding will set in each State and its results may well be disastrous for the intellectual life of the country as a whole"⁵.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also categorically opined that the regionalisation of medium of university education would tend to isolate learning in higher stages. In his inaugural speech of 'All India Punjabi Conference' held at New Delhi on 23 rd July 1961, Prime Minister Nehru contened, "Regional language should serve as a medium of instruction for the purpose of primary and secondary education. But to adopt them for university education will cause a lot of confusion. It would not then be possible to have any meetings of minds."6.

This controversy adequately proves that the golden days of English in India are over. In our multi-lingual country, the use of Hindi is rapidly increasing. Most of the regional languages have grown well enough to deal with the abstract concepts, which were expressed till recently in English terminology.

Thus it is clear that efforts are being made in the country to replace English by mother tongue though one has to depend largely on English as it contains the latest information and knowledge. This is particularly true with the teaching of scientific and technological subjects. Hence, in the field of science and technology and in the advanced levels of teaching and learning, English should be kept as the medium of instruction.

1.4.5 English as a compulsory subject - This is another issue on -----

which the views of the educationists in the country are not unanimous. The regionalists claim that the regional languages which are developing should be adopted as the official languages. Considering the life style of so many students in India, English is of very little use to them. Compulsory teaching of English to such students is indeed a waste of time and energy. Again, one should not ignore the fact that the majority of the students fail in English only. In other words, those students who do not have either the love for language or any aspirations of building

up the career should not be asked to study this language. Hence, Kothari Commission Report stresses that the mother tongue should be taught to the children studying from 1st to IVth class. Thereafter, i.e. from Vth to VIIth class two languages should be taught, viz. a regional language and English or Hindi and a three language formula be adopted from class VIIIth to class Xth, viz. a regional language, Hindi and English. The Commission has further suggested that after Xth class there should be no compulsion of the study of any language. Its study was left to the students themselves.

1.4.6 Study of English and the level of schooling - -----

Though the English is not the medium of instruction, it is not totally banished from the curriculum. It is now L 3 for the majority of the students in India. But the question is at what level of schooling should it be introduced? We find the views of the psychologists and other thinkers stand apart from each other. The psychologists advocate that the lower age level is better for picking up as many languages because of the children's great capacity to learn. The others told the view that for the first 4 to 5 year of schooling, the children must learn the mother tongue. The children should be exposed to the learning of the foreign language only with the attainment of the ability to read and write the mother tongue. Education is a subject on the concurrent list. Hence, the introduction of English at the school level was left to the discretion of the States who decided it in their own way. In Panjab and Madhya Pradesh it is introduced at the VIth class, in Maharashtra at the Vth class but in Gujarath, the introduction of it is delayed upto the VIIIth class.

1.4.7 English in the school Curriculum - -----

What should be the core of learning English is an oft-debated question. The debate revolves round the point whether the teaching of

English be oriented to literature or to language. It is to the credit of the Central Institute of English, established at Hyderabad in 1958, that it gave a new orientation to the teaching of English in India. It is realised that the teaching of English at the school level should be made more practical, language oriented and there should be clear-cut but limited objectives before the teachers and students. The report of the official language commission appointed by the Government of India states, "English has to be taught, hereafter, principally as 'language of Comprehension', rather than as a literary language so as to develop in the students learning it a faculty for comprehending writings in the English language"7. Dr. H.N. Sethana, President of the Maharashtra Academy of Sciences, suggested, "Language must be taught as a means of communication rather than as a mere study of literature. By the time the student passes class XIIth, he should really have acquired the facility to express himself clearly and concisely in English and in a regional language as well as comprehend without difficulty books and journals published in English in the disciplines of interest to him"8.

Thus, understanding of English with ease, reading at a reasonable speed, writing it correctly, acquiring the knowledge of the elements of English for the practical command of language, translating the common English words in the mother tongue and speaking English with reasonable accuracy and fluency are some of the objectives of teaching English at the school stage. However, English is to be taught in our schools primarily as a 'Language of Comprehension.'

1.5 Importance of English Today

English was condemned as the instrument of colonial exploitation. Politacally motivated people raised a hue and cry against English to banish it altogether from the Indian soil. It means that the hey-days

of English are already over. But looking at this issue rather objectively, one has to admit that abolishing English will not be a wise step. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru justified this point of view. He says, "All the regional languages must be developed and promoted. But that does not mean that English should be discarded. To do so will amount to closing a window on the world of technology..... Foreign languages serve as a window on it and to suppose that translation could take their place was a mistake. It was no use getting into an intellectual prison after achieving political Independence".⁹. Considering the experience of the other countries, most of the educationists have come to the conclusion that we cannot do away with English in the present circumstances. V.V. Yardi states, "In Shrilanka and South-East Asian Countries there has now been a growing realization that English has a place and that it would be unwise to throw the baby with bath water."¹⁰. The below mentioned points explain very clearly that English is still an important language in India.

1.5.1- English as a Link Language -

Importance of English in India as a link language can hardly be exaggerated. Education being the concern of both the Centre and State, the regional languages are promoted with an aim to replace English. But every State having a regional language of its own can not communicate with other States through its regional language. English acts here as a link. We have a precedent in the Pre Independence days. During the struggle for independence the leaders of the various States could converse with each other and could work out their plan only through English. Hence, the unifying value of English can not be ignored. In this context, Shiverdra K. Verma says, "It is an important promoter of social mobility for ordinary people; It is also a promotor of geographical mobility. It has been playing an important



role in bringing in national unity and integration."11. In 1964, Indian Education Commission also recommended the continuance of English for national integration and higher education in India. Thus English is the associate official language for the inter-State and the State-Centre communication. Morarji Desai says, "We can not deny to ourselves the practical as well as cultural benefit of familiarity with English, this most eloquent and popular of languages"12.

1.5.2 English as an International Language - -----

English is a language spoken and understood throughout the world. Almost 350 millions of people on the globe speak this language. It is obvious, therefore, that so far as the linking of the nations in the world is concerned, there is no vehicle other than English. There is no parallel to English as a common language of communication. It helps in international trade and industry and in the development of diplomatic relations. English alone plays a vital role in the world affairs as it is mutually intelligible language. Hence, T.C. Baruah says, "English has ceased to be the language of its native speakers only. It has attained the stature of the world language."13. Thus, with the rapid spread of the means of communication and that of industrial development, science and technology, the isolation of the nations has been broken down and the face of the world economy underwent a change — a change from self-sufficiency to close inter-dependence. Hence, a place of English as a world language became unassailable.

1.5.3 English as a Library Language - -----

Kothari Commission which used the word 'Library Language' recommended the mother tongue as the best medium of instruction but did not forget to add that some proficiency in English was essential for the award of a university degree. This

recommendation has a practical worth because the standard books on all branches of knowledge are written in English. These works in English are so rich, abundant and ever growing that the translation in the regional languages will be an unending task. Hence one has to acquire some amount of proficiency in English in order to be in touch with the latest developments in all the branches of knowledge. It must be noted that 60% of the world's technical journals and periodicals are published in English. Hence, a knowledge of English is indeed a key to the store house of knowledge, which is not available in the Indian languages. In the entire world the explosion of knowledge is taking place, particularly in the field of science and technology. The scientists, technologists, and professionals have to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in their own fields in order to make further progress in their career. How can they achieve it without the proficiency in English? English must continue to be studied. Radhakrishnan Commission elaborates, "If under sentimental urges we should give up English we would cut ourselves from the living stream of ever growing knowledge... our students who are undergoing training at School, which will admit them either to university or Vocation must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them access to the treasures of knowledge and in the universities no student should be allowed to take a degree who does not acquire the ability to read with facility and understanding works of English authors."14.

Thus it is no good denying the fact that English has become the world language. It is the language of international commerce and diplomacy. It contains a store house of knowledge. Khushwart Singh maintains, "English is not only the link language which would keep India together but also the language of opportunity. It opens the window of a village novel to the city. It opens the window of India to the world."15

It is needless to mention then that English is going to play an important role in the world affairs. Consequently, it will be advantageous for us to continue to learn English. Still, however, one should not be under the illusion that English may continue to hold that unique position which it enjoyed in the past. It was the medium of instruction not only at the university level but also at the school level. The objectives of learning this foreign language today have become very limited. English is to be learnt and taught mainly as a language of comprehension so as to enable the students to comprehend the writings in English, especially, those related to their specialised subjects.

Mother tongue has been adopted as a medium of instruction in every State in India. Almost all the universities have made switch-over from English to the regional language as a medium of instruction. Maximum efforts are being made to develop the regional languages in the field of science and technology. Besides, the claim of Hindi as the link language is emphasised. It is one of the plans of the national movement to give primacy to Indian language, particularly to Hindi. 40% of the Indian people understand Hindi and 1/3 rd of the total population of India can speak and write Hindi. But the usage of Hindi as a link language has created political problems in the country, particularly the southern States are hostile to the use of Hindi as a link language.

Within the first decade of independence, the areas were marked on the basis of language and these were reorganised into separate States. Every State did give patronage to its regional language required for its promotion. But it must be noted that these languages could not grow without the will and the help of the State. In many States in India, English has not received the State patronage but still it has grown in strength and stature. The example of Punjab University will be a case in point. In order to get through the S.S.C. examination, one is not

required to get passing marks in English. However, soon after they had to revert back to the traditional practice which demanded passing in English. This shows that people have realized the disastrous effects of banishing English. The inherent strength and the advantages that it confers on those who choose to learn it are the factors responsible for the triumph of English.

Our own languages could not displace English not because people are not interested in the growth of their mother tongues but the plain fact is that these regional languages can not give the social mobility which people look for. The knowledge of English is indeed a passport of employment. It not only provides a privileged position but also new openings in the world to those who learn it.

Again, English, as mentioned in the preceding pages, is a store house of knowledge. The knowledge of English is, in fact, a key to all scientific and technical information. It is a window on the rapid progress of science and technology. Hence any one who likes to acquire knowledge in any field of activity has to turn to English. This kind of knowledge is not available in our own languages as there is no demand for it. This causes a vicious circle which is not broken up to now. Consequently this situation has led to unrivalled position of English over all languages.

In short, the regional languages have been promoted by all the States in India after independence. Education and administration through the mother tongue has become the motto today. A thought is also given to evolve Hindi as a link language for which the planned steps are being taken. It is therefore, certain that English will not be studied in India as it was studied before. It will not be used in the way it had been used. But it should not be construed that English will be banished from the Indian soil. Because attempts to close this

window on the world will be like committing 'Intellectual Harakiri'. It is true that the national pride is the motivating force behind the removal of English. As a result the mother tongue is adopted as the medium of instruction. But it must be remembered that the neglect of the study of English will be a major risk on the part of Indians. One should pause and ponder over how and to what extent it would help or hinder one's social and economic mobility. So, English can not occupy the same place in India as it did in the past. But it will surely continue to be studied. The Education Commission's report realistically points out "Although English has the status of a compulsory third language today, and may continue to have it for a fairly long time to come, the likelihood of its becoming a foreign language can not be ruled out."16.

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