

CHAPTER-II**THE PLACE OF ENGLISH AT THE
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IL.1 INTRODUCTION :

English is learnt as the first or second or third language in India. After Independence, it provides an interesting subject for study. It is no longer the language of the rulers. It is one of the important languages in the three language formula and its proper place is now realistically recognised throughout the country. The movements for 'Angrezi Hatao' or 'Angrezi Bachao' do not exist now and most of the students are learning this language as the second or the third language. Teachers of English do not have the easy task. They have to understand their students' difficulties. They have to encourage and assist when the students are struggling to be the autonomous, confident speakers of English. The research problem is concerned with the teaching of English at the secondary stage. Therefore, the research worker feels it necessary to discuss the position of teaching English at the secondary stage.

IL.2 HISTORICAL-VIEW :

A) English before-Independence

The teaching of English in India has a long history. Before independence English was the language of administration. It was vogue in the court of law, in the assemblies and in public debates and discussions. Charles Grant advised East India Company to give the knowledge of English to the natives as it would serve as a key which will open them a world of new ideas. English was supposed to be the language of elite. The British rulers accepted the downward

filtration theory and followed it in practice. They believed that if the upper classes were taught English, they would act as intermediaries in the two classes and modern knowledge would filter down from English to vernaculars. And after the passing of Macaulay's Minute in 1835, English became the medium of instruction at all levels in schools. The study of vernaculars suffered as a result. There was a protest against this which was voiced in the various educational commissions appointed from time to time. And the Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19 sought to adjust the claims of both English and vernaculars, as English for international communication and scientific subjects and vernaculars for dear and intimate things in life. Thus teaching of English came to be regarded as the prime object of the school course.

The English language teaching situation before independence can be summed up as follows :

- a) English was dominating the school stage as well as the college stage.
- b) The teaching of English was largely pedantic, dull and wasteful.
- c) There was an emphasis on the formal grammar of written English.
- d) Pupils' needs of English were severely limited, English was needed either for government jobs or for going to a university where the teaching of literature was at the top, English for wider use like communication

at the international level or in the fields of commerce, engineering, technical was non-existent in those days.

- e) The literary English was supreme in the teaching of the English. The written English was given more prestige than the spoken form.
- f) There was an excessive dependence on the British model. The teachers of English imitated the methods and techniques of teaching English in British schools.

B) English after Independence

After Independence the position changed. It did not affect the place of English in Indian life or education. Some leaders argued that English should be uprooted from the country. As Gandhiji said,

"The excessive importance given to English as cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made for life and made them stronger in their own land."¹ Despite this observation and the Angrezi Hatao movement, English continued to retain its importance. English has now become the status symbol and the gateway for entry into the urbanised group. English is the symbol of urbanisation, internationalism and elitism. Officially, it is the associate official language. It has become the 'lingua franca' of the world. It is the tourist's most current coin.

Language issues have the deepest political, cultural and personal significance. India is a country where many languages are spoken. It is difficult to take decision regarding the roles of the language in national life. The three languages formula is such a

decision that has been recommended in the sixties. It has been accepted as the solution even under the New Education Policy. The NEP says that the three language formula should be implemented effectively.

The first language should be the mother tongue/regional language. The second may be Hindi or English in case of Non-Hindi speaking States. In the Hindi speaking States, the second language may be one of the modern Indian languages or English. The third language in the non-Hindi speaking States should be English or Hindi which has not been studied as a second language. Similarly, in the Hindi speaking States the third language should be English or a modern Indian language which has not been studied as a second language. The study of second and third language should be introduced at the upper primary stage.

English is taught as a second language in nearly every country in the world. English still occupies an important place in the scheme of language teaching in Indian schools. As Dr. Pattanayak has observed,

"India fought British Imperialism, but it has retained English as a window to wider knowledge, a tool of international understanding and as the language of intellectual status, commerce and diplomacy. English has been a catalytic agent and the vehicle of modernization in the country."²

This changed status of English in education needs new approaches to the teaching of English.

IL3 THE PURPOSE OF LANGUAGE STUDY :

It has been a subject of debate as to how many languages can be learnt by pupils at the secondary school stage and at what stages the study of these languages should be commenced. One should know the purpose with which the languages are studied. There should be clear perspective of the study of the language.

So it is an admitted fact that regional languages are important. But that does not mean that the national language of the country should be ignored completely. And above all, the study of foreign language i.e. English has its own importance. Now the question arises which language should be given the top most position in the country. Regional language or mother tongue of the people should be of first preference because it is the most suitable language as a medium of instruction for the child beginning its study. The national language of the country should come at number two and the study of English should come after mother tongue and national language of the country.

A discussion of those aspects which need to be highlighted with reference to our national and educational goals as the specific objectives of school education is necessary.

Origin of the Three-Language Formula :

The Central Advisory Board of Education in 1956 examined the complex problem of teaching of the language in detail in relation to the needs of the country and the requirements of the constitution.

It devised a formula. It is known as the 'Three Language Formula'. It was simplified to some extent. It was approved by the conference of Chief Ministers held in 1961. As a result the formula established equality with regard to the study of language between the Hindi and non-Hindi areas. It was recommended that as against the third language, Hindi which pupils in the non-Hindi areas have to learn, another Indian language should be studied by pupils in the Hindi areas. This formula is recommended by Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) also.

II.4 POSITION-OF-ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOLS :

Recent trends in the study of English in Indian schools are pointing to some peculiar problems. Times and conditions in India have changed along with these needs and requirements of our people have changed. With all these changes, a change in the policy of retaining English in schools is inevitable. However, it is argued that nearly 80% of our people are satisfied with their own traditional way of living. Hence the study of English for these people will have no utility. Their requirements are to be met with their own mother tongue. But now it is realised that proficiency in science, technology, medicine can be achieved by the study of English. Secondly, we have accepted democratic pattern so equal opportunities to all should be given; that is the students should not be deprived of at least elementary knowledge of English. The late Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad had said,

"The position that English is occupying in our educational and official life cannot be sustained in future."³

From the utilitarian point of view English may be ruled out from elementary education. However, English should be retained at the secondary stage. At this stage English should cease to be taught as a literary language. It should be studied as a second language. This shift in a attitude is necessary due to the fact that its study as literature has produced unhappy results because students have to learn about things which they have never experienced. Hence, we must re-organize re-model Our courses in English at the secondary stage and recognize that the learning of English is not an end in itself but only an acquisition of an instrument for adding to our knowledge. The emphasis, therefore, must shift from literature to the simple language of every day. As the All India Seminar on the Teaching of English in schools held at Nagpur in December, 1957 recommended : "that the primary aim of teaching English in secondary schools should be to enable pupils to learn as well as possible to understand, speak, read and write the English language."⁴

The standard of teaching English varies - (i) according to the type and need of the school, (ii) in different States in India.

Generally there are four types of schools :

- a) English medium schools, where mother tongue or Hindi is taught merely as a subject.
- b) Schools where English is a predominant language. These schools have regional language as the medium of instruction.

- c) Schools in which English is given as much importance as the regional languages. Good teaching of English is necessary in these schools.
- d) Schools where English is studied merely as a foreign language. English is taught as one the optional foreign languages.

English, in India has occupied the position of a compulsory second language in the secondary school curriculum for a limited number of years.

IL5 POSITION OF ENGLISH IN MARATHI MEDIUM SCHOOLS :

English language has an important place among the subjects which are taught in the Marathi Medium Secondary Schools. The student has to learn three languages in all. The study of Hindi as well as English begins at the V standard, English is a prestigious subject among the school subjects. The student is expected to learn English to acquire four basic skills along with understanding.

Thus the Indian teacher of English needs to have the knowledge of the place given to English in the curriculum to formulate the objectives and to plan teaching accordingly and effectively.

IL6 TEACHING ENGLISH AS A THIRD LANGUAGE :

Under the new scheme of education English has acquired the status of a third language in most of Indian schools. In Maharashtra for instance, Marathi, the regional language, is now L1, Hindi, the

Union language, is L2 and English the associate link language, is L3. This is the general pattern for most pupils studying in Marathi Medium Schools.

The terms L1, L2 and L3 and foreign language are indicative of the range of uses to which languages are put in the life of a speech community. A language chronologically learned as a second language, does not necessarily become L2, in this special sense, if the purpose for which it is learned is restricted, nor does it become L2 if at a later stage in education L3 is dropped from the sequence. In Maharashtra, for instance, three languages are taught at the secondary stage viz. Standards V to X, while at the higher secondary (now Junior College) stage only two languages are taught, English being the second language at the latter stage. This does not mean that in Maharashtra English is taught as L3 at the secondary stage and L2 at the Junior College stage. At both these stages English is taught as L3.

The relevant question is which is the dominant language, comparatively speaking, and not which is the language learnt or taught after the mother tongue has been acquired. Chronology does not always determine dominance of a language. The terms first language, second language and third language are often used to indicate chronology of learning languages. They may be used to indicate the relative dominance of languages in the life of speech community.

The three language formula was introduced with a view that the child should study mother tongue or regional language, national language and foreign language. Of course there are several difficulties in the implementation of the formula. Some States opposed to it for the following reasons :

- i) Heavy language load in the school curriculum.
- ii) The lack of motivation for the study of an additional modern Indian language in the Hindi areas and
- iii) The resistance to the study of Hindi in some non-Hindi areas.

Some of the Southern States like Tamilnadu have been following in practice the two language formula instead. The situation became worse because the planning was defective. It was carried out half heartedly. Valuable resources were wasteful.

Many students in many areas have gained very little knowledge of English because it is taught in the unreal situation. As Dr. V.K. Gokak rightly said,

"The teaching of English in our schools, is in a chaotic state today."⁵

The facilities provided for the teaching of English have been inadequate. The syllabus, the teaching and testing procedures have practically very little relevance in the context of our educational needs. There is a wide gulf between intention and implementation. It was until the mid-forties English was taught as a regional language.

The late Mr. Bruton pointed out,

"One of the great difficulties in India is that before independence the methods used for teaching English by and large the same as those used in England for teaching English children, with the unfortunate consequence that a study of belief and practice was built up that are entirely inappropriate to the present situation."⁶

English was taught as first language until the mid-fifties. The methods and materials suited the English child were highly unsuitable to the average Indian child growing in an Indian cultural context. Where English could never be the first language. The great men like Tagore and Gandhiji questioned the place of English in our national life. Serious efforts were not made to look at the problem in its proper perspective. Nobody thought of suitable methods and materials for teaching of English as a third language. The Central Institute of English at Hyderabad in 1958 paved the way for foundations of Teaching English as second/third language. This transition was not easy or sudden.

Mr. Bruton felt, "In my experience, in India, the greatest difficulties in convincing the teacher of this necessity for control of the fact that English is a foreign language." It stands to the credit of the CIE that it paves a new orientation to the teaching of English in this country."⁷

According to 'Three Language Formula', the place of English is either 'The Second or the third' language. It required a methodology

and materials of its own. It required teachers of English to aim at the linguistics aims only. In this context Palmer rightly says, "To aim at literature is to miss the way to language. To aim at language is to pave the way to literature."⁸

The emphasis shifted from literature to language. The teaching of English tended to become sane and natural. This has proved to be a passing phase. Mr. Bruton alone voiced the need for a change in our syllabi. According to Prof. Randolph Quirk, Indian students should be given solid linguistic practice and a training in the practical use of mid-20th Century English. The students should not be compelled to pass the examinations by means of bazaar guides. The interest of the students should be cultivated and nurtured. According to ^a Critic,

"The English language to be taught in our schools should be simple and utilitarian. All that we can do in school is to lay the foundations of English and set the ball rolling and we must keep our aims and standards in view in order to make English of practical and permanent value to our children but our teaching should not become dull, insipid and lifeless - we must endeavour to make our teaching interesting, attractive and if possible inspirational."⁹

According to Halliday and Strevens the foundations of English should be strengthened. If it is done so, then and then only the teachers would be able to discuss and teach great works of literature. For this they must master this practical aspect of language teaching.

The knowledge of English provides a privileged position to a person. There are so many jobs for which a person with a good knowledge of English considered to be an asset. The prospects of employments are then not only in our country but also in other countries of the world. S.K.Chatterji's words from his book 'Languages and Linguistic problems are worth quoting, "It (English) is, therefore, ^{-e}preminently the language which opens to as prospects of employment at home and abroad and offers means of cultural communication with other parts of the world."¹⁰ A person with knowledge of English stands good changes of employment anywhere and everywhere in the world. F.G.French rightly says in this connection, "English is rapidly becoming a world language. It is spoken and read by many millions of Europeans, Africans, Chinese, Indians, Japanese and South Americans as a second language."¹¹

Thus, a study of English is a necessity and advantage for us. But we cannot help mentioning here the real situation prevailing in our country.

Thus, the study of English is a challenging job. It requires expertises. Syllabi which has relevance to national needs should be prescribed. Different courses should be arranged such as -

1) A course for university entrants which comprises English grammar and usage and relation to the needs of Science and Technology.

2) A course in reading and listening gives orientation in library reading and practice in listening.

3) A course in productive English trains the students to select information and organise camps in relation to particular needs of a given audience such as the layman, educated groups and scientists.

4) A course in thesis writing and popular writing is meant for post-graduate students. The above views are quoted from the reports of the Times of India dated July 22, 1976.

The English language teaching situation in India is currently undergoing a significant change. The revised syllabi for Stds. V to X in Maharashtra are the same old syllabi for English as L2. The syllabus for English cannot be designed mechanically by reducing the number of structures and vocabulary items prescribed for English as L2. In framing the syllabus, attention is to be paid to all factors that may impede learning.

This is not ^{an} easy job. It needs research in these areas. It is difficult for the average student to know more than two languages actively. According to Michael West and others, a multilingual who can handle more than two languages effectively is very rare. It is a need of time to teach English for certain restricted purposes. In India English is used freely in several walks of life. It is the language of the intelligentsia. According to Prof. V.V. John, the teaching of English of a library language involves the teaching of all the four skills. Even if we in India learn English as the library language, the development of reading skills needs a broad base linked with all the fourfold language skills (LSRW). Reading skill can be very well developed if there is a good oral-aural base and therefore, there is

an imperative need to teach at school stage how to listen, speak, read and write English. It seems that an over all environment of English should be created.

IL.7 CONFERENCE-OF-PROFESSORS-OF-ENGLISH :

It is important to study the views recommended by a conference of Professors held in Delhi on 23rd and 24th January, 1953. The Conference made the following recommendations :

1) English should continue to occupy an important place in the curriculum of secondary schools.

2) The pupils should attain a good working knowledge of English at the end of the secondary stage.

3) The course in English should consist of detailed study of texts. The texts should be simple modern English prose. It should be written within a vocabulary of about 2500 essential vocabulary. There should be rapid reading section for non-detailed study of prose and poetry. Simple composition should be prescribed.

4) The objectives of teaching English should be taken into consideration. English should be taught as a compulsory subject for a period of six years at the secondary stage because the standards of teaching are low at present. The teachers should be given training to improve the standards of teaching English. By doing this, it would be possible to curtail the duration of the course by one year. English should be taught for six periods of 50 minutes each per week.

5) It desired the pupils should have an option to offer an additional course in English.

6) Facilities should be given for the training of administrators and diplomats in the use of English both spoken and written.

The above expressed views by the conference prove that English has a definite place in India and in the school curriculum of secondary school stage, English cannot be removed from its compulsory study stage in the school.

II.8 CONCLUDING-REMARKS :

Despite the problems and controversies, English occupies an important place in the scheme of teaching languages at the school stage. It is to be taught as one of the second languages (Hindi being one) from Standard VI as per New Policy of Education. NCERT publication under the caption "National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education : A Frame Work"¹² suggests its introduction at the upper primary stage (i.e. Standards VI to VIII) and its continuance at the secondary stage. This implies that the duration of teaching English as the second/third language at the school stage will be five years. At present, English is taught for six years at the school stage in Maharashtra. It is taught as the third language in Marathi Medium Schools.

We in India have to learn English as the second/third language because of its usefulness as the language of science and technology and the international language. It is, therefore, to be taught with an aim rather different from that which the mother tongue

is taught in secondary schools in England. The aim therefore, of teaching English is to develop a practical command of the language rather than the mastery of details regarding English literature. Indian students have to learn this language as a language because it is primarily taught as a language of comprehension. Therefore, they have to be taught the necessary language skills. For this, the teachers of English must understand the need and the way to update their content knowledge and do the best in the teaching of English.

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