

CHAPTER -II

2. THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

(Historical Background)

Although the East India Company was established as early as A.D. 1600, it undertook no educational activities for nearly 100 years of its existence in India. Originally it was a trading Company and naturally it was not interested in educating the Indian masses. However, the Charter Act of 1698 required the company to run schools. But these schools were meant more for the children of the Company's European Servants than for the Indian people.

By 1765, the company was successful in becoming a major political power in India. It was only then that the company was called upon to encourage education among its subjects. But the directors of the company were unwilling to take the responsibility of educating the Indians. However, it was compelled to accept this responsibility by the Charter Act of 1813. This Charter authorised the Governor General-in-Council to spend "a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees on the revival and improvement of literature and for the introduction and promotion of the knowledge of Science"¹

The Charter was silent about the nature of literature and the strategy for improvement as also the medium and agency of education through which knowledge of Science and literature was

1. The Charter of 1813. Quotation from A student's History of Education in India. Sayed Narullah and J.P. Naik. 1964, Page 48.

to be spread. This led to great controversies between the Anglicists and Classicists and the Anglicists and Vernaculists for a period of about 20 years. These controversies were partially set at rest by Macaulay's Minute of 1835, which was accepted by Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General-in-Council. He emphatically pointed out the importance of English language and the necessity of it's being the medium of instruction. It was declared that financial help would not be given for publishing books in oriental languages in future. Macaulay wanted in India, "A class of people Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in morals and in intellect."¹ It gave Indian Education a definite direction which prevailed in future for more than a century.

In 1854 came Wood's Dispatch. It is an important document and a landmark in the history of education in India. The Dispatch allowed an option of choosing the medium of instruction English or Vernacular, depending upon the public demand and local environment in a particular district. In 1882 the situation was that, English was invariably used as the medium of instruction at the highschool stage in almost all the provinces. In 1883 the Report of the Indian Education Commission (Hunter Commission) came out. It did not even refer to the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the secondary stage. Leading social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy also

1. Macaulay's Minute. Quotation from "A Student's History of Education in India". Sayed Narullah and J.P. Naik. 1964, Page 62.

contributed towards forming favourable atmosphere for English education.

After the establishment of Provincial Universities at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1855, English education began to spread. All education in the universities was imparted through English. The adoption of English as the sole medium for higher education, naturally led to its use as a medium of instruction in highschools. The regional languages were totally dropped from the university and highschool curricula. Even the knowledge of English was a passport for Government service.

In 1921 the control of education was transferred to provinces. The modern Indian languages were adopted as media of instruction at the secondary stage on a large scale. But for several reasons the use of English as a medium of instruction was not completely abandoned.

But one thing must be admitted the educated leaders, the elite class were imbued with new ideas due to the study of western literature and philosophy. They brought about Indian renaissance in all walks of life. They became conscious of their political rights and the National Congress took up the cause of political freedom in 1885.

2.2 THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN INDIA AFTER THE ATTAINMENT OF INDEPENDENCE.

When India got freedom in 1947, a great controversy arose regarding the language problem in secondary schools in general and the position of English in the curriculum in particular. Two views came upon the scene. The first held that the study of English should be abandoned and the study of the regional languages should be more encouraged. The second view-point, however, took the objective outlook instead of looking to the problem emotionally or with a prejudiced mind. It pointed out that the study of English language has brought the message of political democracy and the knowledge of western civilization could reach Indians only through the medium of English. So it's study should continue for further scientific progress in India. When the dust raised by the controversy began to settle down, it was generally agreed that the continuation of the study of English in free India was both desirable and necessary. Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India declared, "one hundred and fifty years of intimate contact has made English an integral part of educational system and this can not 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 it's study at the risk of loss to themselves."¹

1. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Quoted in "Teaching English as a foreign Language." K.K.Bhatia. Robit Publishing House, Ludhiana (1975) Page 4.

In the continuation of the Indian Republic, Hindi has been accepted as the official language of the union, however, it was decided that English would continue to be used until 1965. This lease of 15 years from the adoption of the constitution in 1950 was required to be extended further due to anti-Hindi agitation in the South. And it was declared in 1961 by Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, that English would continue as an associate official language at the centre almost indefinitely. Thus English retains this position even now and it will also continue in future.

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) arrived at the conclusion that, "Study of English should be given due position in secondary schools and facilities should be made available at the middle school stage on an optional basis."¹

The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) considered the language problem in all its directions and upholding the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board of Education (1957), suggested the following three language formula :-

- " 1) The mother-tongue or the regional language.
- 2) The official language of the union (Hindi) or the associate official language of the union (English) so long as it exists; and
- 3) A modern Indian or foreign language not covered under (1) and other than that used as the medium of instruction."²

1. Report of the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) Government of India, Ministry of Education, Page 59.

2. Report of the Education commission (1964-66) Government of India, Ministry of Education, Page 192.

This three language formula is again stressed by New Education Policy , 1986. It is stated in the programme of Action. "The three language formula provides for a study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states."¹

The basic aim of the British rulers in teaching English to Indians was to introduce European literature and science to Indians. Literature then available was used for teaching and mastering the English language. Nowadays, teaching a language is of primary importance. Special literature suited to Indian conditions is being prepared and used after the attainment of independence. Fluent expression in English was the aim of teaching English in good old days. While at present the aim of comprehension prevails. English is no more the medium of instruction at the secondary stage, as well as at the higher education stage. The regional languages are being used as media on a large scale. Objectives of teaching English in India are totally changed. So we have to think of them in this changed context.

2.3 OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA

It is of vital significance to know clearly the aims of teaching a subject. A teacher can not hope to achieve anything without a proper study of these aims. His teaching, without pre-conceived aim will be like the journey of a passenger who does not know where he wants to go.

For our convenience we may divide the aims of teaching English into : (a) General Aims; and (b) Particular or Specific Aims. The general aims are long term aims of English teaching. Therefore, these are meant to be achieved during the schooling period of the pupils. On the other hand, particular or specific aims are the objectives, which the teacher aims to achieve in his day to day teaching.

2.3.1 General Aims

The study of a language has four aspects, viz., The semantic aspect, the phonetic aspect, the Graphic aspect and the Phonic-cum-graphic aspect.

The Semantic aspect deals with comprehension. The Phonetic aspect deals with pronunciation of words. The Graphic aspect deals with the written form of a language and phonic-cum-graphic aspect means the reading aspect. Two more aspects are also added to these four aspects: i) the Literary aspect; and (ii) the Linguistic aspect. All these aspects of language work in co-ordination with each other and none of these can work in isolation. So we can conclude the Four general aims of teaching English.

- 1) To enable the pupils to listen and understand spoken English.
- 2) To help them acquire proficiency in spoken English.
- 3) To enable them to understand what they read in English.
- 4) To enable them to write English correctly.

With these aims, the task of an English teacher is to train the listening, reading, speaking and writing abilities of his pupils with understanding as the main ingredient in each. Some other objectives are also added to these objectives. They are as follows-

- 1) To develop spoken and written expression in English
- 2) To develop a taste for English literature its various forms, e.g., prose, poetry, short-story and extensive reading material.
- 3) To develop critical abilities.
- 4) To develop the ability to translate ideas from the mother-tongue into English and from English into their mother-tongue.
- 5) To develop conversational abilities of the pupils, so that they may speak English fluently, freely and correctly in a social situation.

2.3.2 Specific or Particular Aims :

Besides the general aims of teaching English, the teacher should have definite, clear-cut aims for each lesson. These are objectives of teaching the content of each lesson. Hence they are short-term aims; They should

be clear, precise, pointed and expressive in terms of achievement. These specific aims will vary according to his teaching points, it is very necessary for a teacher to specify his objectives of teaching. This helps him to know exactly what he is required to do during a particular lesson.

As we have accepted three language formula in our education system, we are going to teach English in our schools for in coming years also. But it is not necessary to stress the objectives of appreciation, expression, translation etc. We have to think of comprehension more than these objectives. And so English teacher has to train his pupils in listening, speaking, reading and writing with comprehension.

2.4 LANGUAGE SKILLS

Generally language teaching courses are defined in terms of four skills: understanding speech or listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking and writing are said to be active or productive skills where as listening and reading are said to be passive or receptive skills. Listening and speaking, these two skills are intimately related to each other, though one is a recognition skill and other is a production skill.

2.4.1 (1) Listening :

Listening is often said to be a passive skill while speaking is described as an active one. This is not wholly true; for listening is also an active skill as it is concerned with decoding a message and understanding it, moreover the listener has to show that he has or has not understood the message from his response. This skill can be developed through systematic teaching. It can be cultivated through ample listening practice, both extensive and intensive. Extensive listening equips the students to listen with understanding to English later in real life situations. Intensive listening practice is primarily for language items as part of the language teaching programme. Both kinds of practice can be done with the help of the recordings the teacher makes himself or by presenting recorded models also.

2.4.2 ii) Speaking :

Listening practice becomes helpful to speaking at the phonological level. But listening does not lead naturally on to speaking and oral fluency in communication unless listening is followed by practice at the grammatical and lexical levels too. While giving practice in speaking, the teacher may start with dialogues. Dialogues on simple, contextualised situations may be tried between pairs of students. The teacher should control and guide the students without curbing their freedom of expression. This will give the students enough opportunities to practice certain phonological, grammatical and lexical items.

24.3 iii) Reading :

There are two kinds of reading skills : the skill of reading aloud and the skill of reading silently. Reading aloud is primarily an oral matter, it is closer to pronunciation than to comprehension. The greatest amount of reading that is done in the world is silent. The following are the uses of the silent reading.

- 1) to make a survey of materials to be studied and to look through indexes, chapter headings and outlines,
- 2) to skim,
- 3) to familiarise oneself with the material and its thought content,
- 4) to study the material in depth; and
- 5) to study the language in which the material is

written from a literary or linguistic point of view.

To inculcate this skill among the students, the ample opportunities are to be provided to the students by providing them the books on various topics. At first the books provided must be simple and interesting.

2.4.4 iv) Writing :

Writing is a thinking process. It is much more than an exercise in transcription or copying. The student who learns to write English has not only to deal with the mechanical problems connected with the script of the language but also with the problems of ease and fluency of expression, of grammatical and lexical accuracy and of the appropriateness of the style of writing as demanded by the occasion or situation. Learning to write, therefore, is learning to use grammar with ease and facts in some sequential order as tools.

Ample opportunities are to be given to the students to write upon various topics. Teacher should guide him as well as correct him and thus this ability can be improved among the students.

English is repeatedly referred as a library language in report of the Education commission of 1964-66. And various commissions and study groups also admitted that we have to prepare our student to read books in English in his subjects of study. It means that the skill of reading is more stressed than the other three. So we have to think of this skill minutely.