



THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND NEP-2020

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ABSTRACT

The paper shall discuss the past history of English language and how it became the most dominating medium of teaching since post-independence times, thereby deteriorating the importance of native language in higher education. Although the reasons are umpteenth but the most pertinent one is the evolvement of English language as an international medium of communication. But in the rural areas of India, the students are devoid of the foreign language ie. English as a medium of study. The insufficient and meagre facilities available in a most part of the country makes it impossible for these students to cope up in the under graduate level where suddenly they are introduced to books that are mostly written in English and this makes them tumble. It is more so in the technical and vocational training colleges. It shall also converse upon the main hurdle that the small higher educational institutions are facing in implementing the system of language study as directed in the New Education Policy.
Keywords- Power Language, New Education Policy, Curriculum, New Pedagogy, Dialect, Post-colonial effect, Indigeneity

INTRODUCTION

The literary meaning of the word language is (1976:420) ...the ability to communicate by human speech. This is also to be known that the tongue composes speech. Thus, Language and speech is not synonymous. Speech is the action of an individual or a group of individuals, whereas Language is an organized system of means of communication. Complexities and inaccessibilities are associated with the origin of language. This is also to be noted that when a language starts dominating the academia and its proceedings it automatically ceases to

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become just a medium of communication, it acquires the position of power language; so is the case of English in India.

English, was introduced to the Indian society as a medium to acquire power and knowledge. The East India Company, whose primary aim was to do business and earn money soon realized that they can fill the void created in the eighteenth century by the slow crumbling of the Mughal empire. In 1957 after the battle of Plassey the Company became the master of Bengal and then they felt an urgent need for Indian clerks, translators and lower officials in administration. The British thus established English medium schools.

Moreover, the Evangelical Movement in Britain instilled an ideal of spreading the word of Christ all over the world and thus the Mission Schools in the Southern part of India was founded. Similar institutions were established in Bengal too.

Ironically enough the imperialist propagated proudly that the language shall thereby civilize “the lesser breeds without law”. They manipulated and subjugated the Indians; as if it was ‘the white man’s burden’ to civilize the local inhabitants, and thus humiliated the native culture, language and traditions.

The real motive behind the introduction of English language as the chief medium of education, was to assimilate the western culture among Indians and to bring stability to the British rule in India.

This introduction of new pedagogy was welcomed by many, M.K. Naik in his book *A History of Indian English Literature*, writes “...so enthusiastic was especially the younger generation in its desire to learn English that, as Trevelyan has noted, an Englishman coming to Calcutta (now Kolkata) by steamer was pressed by eager boys clamouring for English books ‘he cut up an old Quaterly Review and distributed the page’” (11) But there are many who were against this westernization of education. Naik describes in the same book that the office of the Inspector -General of Schools at Patna was referred as Shaitan Ka Daftarkhana i.e. The Devil’s Office. (p.11) “Nevertheless, the more forward -looking among the Indians were convinced that English education was not Devil’s wine...” (Naik) and so it helped Macaulay to introduce English education firmly and determinedly.

Although in the later years the Indian Universities of Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay and Madras introduced newness and freshness in the method of teaching yet English as a medium of teaching did not lose its importance.

The most prominent precursors, among the Indian writers who wrote in English, are Cavelly Venkata Boriah and of course Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Both of them were proficient in many

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languages and the credit to popularize English language and in making it the language of the elite and educated class goes to them. After the initial struggle English as a medium of study and as a voice of the educated and knowledgeable class had never had to stumble or look back. It became the symbol of knowledge, power and affluency for the commoners of India.

India became politically independent in 1947 but the British legacy still haunted the Indians mind and intellect with the language that they had very successfully implanted in the society. British sun still never sets as in this technologically small world the major medium of communication is English. The impact of the long British Imperial rule, that covered almost the whole world during the last two centuries or so, is hard to die. The language politics has overpowered the global scenario for times umpteenth and this must not be overlooked. It is not unknown that power- politics corrupts the society; unknowingly or knowingly English as a language is ruling the world.

Here it must also be mentioned that India and Indians, speaking various native languages, are present in almost all parts of the sphere, they feel strongly that their mother tongue needs to be reinvented in order to rejuvenate and refresh their native culture and tradition. A need is felt by all to give due recognition to the native languages that are struggling hard to survive in this global village.

The Indian Government in its New Education Policy has included Promoting Cultural Integration through Language. It is really a welcome gesture. It shall enhance the lost respect of the regional languages. It shall also give the regional Literature a global platform. The curriculum is so designed that the indigenous culture and the related dialects shall draw equal attention.

It is felt by many Indian intellectuals that the day has come when it becomes mandatory to popularize the available literatures of all languages; and all literatures are but a projection of the traditions and culture of a society and literature obviously uses language to do so. It is time now to show the global village that India and Indian Culture is indispensable as it proudly holds in itself so many languages for communication. This is a one of unique feature of India.

India is the only state in the world that has such a rich variety of languages. The folk literatures and the regional literature found in these various Indian languages are real treasures. To know and get the feel of India, the land of mysteries, stories and innovations, one is required to acknowledge the importance of the different languages and dialects that are spoken by the countrymen.



The Indian linguist and many foreign counterparts are doing commendable work in upgrading and popularizing the native languages of the state, yet much more has to be done. Learning language is knowing the culture and it is the primary tool to know each other, to get the feel of oneness and belongingness.

It must be acknowledged that a need is felt by the Indian government to make the student know the importance of their native language, as already mentioned, language is not only a means to communicate it is a messenger of a particular culture and tradition. Knowing a language is getting the feel and warmth of that civilization where the particular language is spoken. Unfortunately, the fact and figure vary. The actual condition of the existing age long education system of the country has drastically failed to promote the regional languages of the country. For the all-round development of an Indian, it is felt necessary that one must also give due respect and recognition to ones' own culture well represented by the language one speaks and sometimes write. The irony is, many Indians are although fluent in their mother tongue yet they are not habitual to write.

The emergence of language politics and the superiority of one language that is English guided and tempered the Indian individuals. They are made to believe, that it is the language of the imperials, which has the capability to pave their way to economic and material progress. This worked as an unwritten rule; an after effect of the long regressive foreign rule.

This fact cannot be denied that most of the European countries and in USA, where the intelligent Indian brains prefer to pursue their higher studies, speak English. However, there are Indians who have realized that this rat race is a hindrance in the way to societal progress. This is an established fact that society progresses with the progress of indigenous culture and tradition. The culture and tradition, is best communicated, through its native communicative mode and that is their own local language.

The post independent education system of the country helped in creating living robots. As a popular Hindi proverb goes, if one wants to become *Nawab* (Aristocrat) one has to just cram and write; making affluency and education synonymous. The imperialistic and capitalistic society paved way towards the birth of power language.

Today's Indian youth read the native folklores in English. They are unable to read and write in their mothers –tongues. It is time to realize the truth and accept it. It is also time to correct the wrongs. It is time to investigate and contemplate the reasons of the extinctions of the native voices and try to re-invent and initiate research.

The reasons are varied and multifaceted. It is not possible to lay down all the reasons. The most important one is economic. A student pursuing knowledge in technological or medical

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field is unable to have easy access to any books written in native language. This compels the student to rely on English. The same is the story in most of the genres of higher education. Thus, just to recommend multilingualism is not enough.

The time is now of multiculturalism and multilingualism. The virtual world has helped in making the world small. At the same time, the social media has the acumen and caliber to bestow recognition to variant languages. It is time to acknowledge the variant culture of the Indian society by giving importance to the multiple language system of this great civilization. The scholars and intellectual class of this society must come forward and try to develop a coherent policy that helps the student to learn and write in their mother tongue.

It is very necessary to sort out the existing problem. The new education policy must ensure the availability of textbooks and critical books in the native tongue. A need is there to inspire and encourage the scholars and intelligentsia and make them write in their native tongue. The publishers must also encourage publishing of books written in local Indian languages.

One of the most important measures is to promote translation work. Books should be translated in native languages. The scholars and academicians are already busy in doing such works but much more is needed. They have to realize the problem of the students pursuing higher education in different field of knowledge. They have to come up to the expectation of the students who are not fluent in English.

The need of the hour is to build more and more centers that will devote time, energy, manpower and of course money and motivate translation work in all fields of knowledge.

Major and important works of renowned scholars of all field of education must be sorted out. They must be translated. This is no ordinary task. This is a herculean chore. The Indian intellectuals must bear it as a moral responsibility. This is the only way out to promote native languages. It is the requirement of the time. It is the need of the day. It is a step to save the Indian culture.

The need is also there to encourage language study. The overdose of commercial, scientific and technological studies has pushed back language studies. The New Education Policy has found a solution to it and it has employed language as a different faculty of studies other than humanities.

But the implementation of such an education system is not easy. Most of the small higher education institution is finding it difficult to cope with it, as till date the institution used to offer languages with other social science subjects at undergraduate level; but as NEP separated the humanities and the language faculty a void is automatically created. The small

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higher education institutions where there are lesser economic and human resources it is more than impossible to provide a multi-lingual faculty to the students. These institutions are devoid of surplus government grants unlike many IIT's, IIM's and Central Universities for example and thus most of them have either no economic support or negligible one in which it is not possible to provide the students any extra facilities. New and innovative infrastructure is the need of the day but these HEI are not facilitated with any measures. Their hand is empty yet they are compelled to introduce new course of pedagogy. In the absence of sufficient resources change is more than impossible.

The need is to introduce more languages as subjects at Under Graduate and Post graduate level. Till date most of the small higher educational institutions had only four to five languages as subjects because of the unpopularity of the native languages. Furthermore, the affiliated colleges have to undergo a long and time taking legal plus technical procedure before implementing any new subject for teaching.

NEP2020 pushes ahead the need to introduce and teach regional and foreign languages other than English in the institutions so that proper language study is possible in higher education. In the Small Higher Education institutions, there is an unavailability of both, teachers and teaching subjects which is making it near to impossible to promote multi-lingual study. A quick and beneficial remedy is the demand of the time, the remedy to it shall pave the way to proper study of multiple languages and be beneficial for the promotion and overall development of the Indian culture, ethos and tradition.

To conclude it is necessary to mention that development of a single language in the society, like India, cannot be fruitful. Even after the passage of so many decades after the political Independence of the country, higher education is still dependent upon a single language. This led to a position that only a certain class of people is lucky enough to enjoy the fruits of true knowledge. It is so because language is the only tool that makes knowledge possible. All knowledge is communicated through the medium of a language and it is the duty of Indian intellect to ensure that the path of knowledge becomes smoother and understandable to all without any discrimination of class and creed. The need is not only to develop and implement but practice a system of education that imparts higher education to students in their native language.

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