



THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH IN NEP 2020

By. Dr. Shaily V. Asthana

Abstract: *English has been the link language of the entire world for ages however when it comes to India, since India is one of those countries which has very deep cultural roots that have been enhanced through languages, arts, literature, customs, traditions, heritage sites, etc., English does take a back seat. However, after independence, English became one of the dominating instructing languages especially for higher education due to many factors. But due to the insufficient and meagre facilities available in the rural parts of the country, it becomes difficult for the students to cope up with the flow when they are introduced to English at undergraduate level. The situation gets worse in the case of technical, vocational and professional courses where not only the books but the instructing medium is also English only. Thus, keeping in mind, this prevalent problem, the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020) aims at promoting multilingualism through English and local languages, as well as highlighting the importance of local languages of India through teaching and learning. However, NEP does not understand the importance of English and promotes English rather as a functional language than the language of literature so as to make the students more equipped with the practical situations they will be facing in their future.*

Keywords- Post-colonial effect, New Education Policy, Curriculum, Indigeneity

INTRODUCTION

It is a universal fact that English is undoubtedly one of the world's most popular and widely spoken languages of the world after Chinese and Latin and is the official language or one of the official languages of around 67 countries across the globe. It is understood by 2 billion speakers of the world which means that a lot of world is covered by just one language. Amongst these countries are the "core Anglosphere". These include the USA (with at least 230 million native English speakers), the UK (with 60 million speakers), Canada (at least 20 million), Australia (at least 17 million), and New Zealand (4.8 million)¹. Due to the colonial history of the British empire, some countries also have English as an official language. These include Barbados, India, Nigeria and Cyprus. As of 2020, 17 of the top 20 universities in the global rankings are English-speaking while having the knowledge of English opens the door to some of the world's top colleges and universities, particularly in the United States and United Kingdom which proves that English is one of the most widely-adopted languages of academia². Recently, a research by Cambridge English found that English is important for over 95% of employers, even in those countries where English is not an official language. The most popular entertainment mediums is in English with 66% of YouTube's content being in English³. English is also the language of online world as over half of the most visited web pages in the world are in English and around 1 billion internet users who can type in English. One of the reasons why English has gained so much popularity is the ease to learn it and acquire fluency in it. Most of the government tasks around the world are done in English and most of the official documents of most of the countries are drafted in English which makes it one of the most important languages of the world.

When we take the case of India, we are already acquainted of the fact that the current status of this country is much stronger than many other countries of the world. In India, we find different regional languages such as Marathi, Punjabi, Bihari, Gujarati, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, and many more while the number of dialects spoken are even more. Though Hindi is our national language but it is not yet made official due to the resistance of the southern states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, etc. where people either communicate in their vernacular languages or in English. Thus, we can say that in India, English is the unofficial lingua franca serving as an alternative official language. Hindi is our national language but it is spoken mostly in northern states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, etc. So according to constitution while Hindi is our national language, English is also an alternative official language.

Around 350 years back when British people came to India and ruled this country for more than two hundred years, English also came along with them. At that time, Lord Macaulay began the new education system in this country in order to prepare people to be more British than Indian as the Britishers wanted to rule over this country for a long period and they needed various officers and workers to work at different levels in their language. As a result, soon, English became the language of Railways, court, police, military, education, science, technology and press. The people who learnt English worked with Britishers and English was imparted at all the levels of education becoming the medium of instruction. However, in spite of that, English remained confined to a privileged people as education itself was restricted to a mere small circle of upper and middle class. So, during that period, knowledge of English language was regarded as a token of superiority, modernity and prestige. But this fact also cannot be ignored that English education indeed became instrumental in national integration as it bound the entire country in one string after a gap of many years after rule of great emperors such as emperor Akbar and emperor Ashoka. English also proved helpful for the freedom fighters such as Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel and other national leaders to communicate with the people of India and arise in them the essence of freedom in them. So, in a way, English was used as a weapon against England itself to drive British out of India.

Post independence most of the people assumed that along with Britishers, English would also pack off its bags without any delay as it was considered the symbol of slavery but nothing of that sort happened. With the time, English became the global language which made globalization possible in the world. In the modern times, English has successfully established itself in several areas such as Science, Technology, Social Sciences, Economics, Political Sciences, Philosophy and many other fields. *Most of the internationally acclaimed books are written in English while most of the standard translations have been done into English from different languages, across the globe*⁴. Today no country can sustain without accepting the presence of English as the modern time is the time of cooperation within countries as the leaders of different countries across the globe keep on meeting on various platforms such as UN, SAARC, etc. Also, when it comes to higher education in varied fields like medicine, science, invention, engineering, research, management, space research, etc., there cannot be any other suitable alternative than English not only in instructing but also in implementing. Thanks to our scientists who are fluent with English, today our country is at the third rank in launching artificial satellite after America and Russia.

PLACE OF ENGLISH IN CONTEMPORARY SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

Due to the hangover of the British rule over India, English still enjoys the status of being a language of extreme love as most of the people have a great love for English due to which, they desire to get their children educated in English medium schools rather than going for vernacular mediums. One of the major reasons behind this craze is undoubtedly the awareness that in this age of information technology, a person cannot progress without having the knowledge of English. Needless to say, even Indian government has realized the importance of English in curriculum. That is the reason, English has been introduced right from the primary school and is doing great even in the rural regions of this country.

ROLE OF ENGLISH IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP 2020)

Replacing the National Policy on Education, 1986, the Union Cabinet of India approved the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in July 2020. The primary objective of NEP 2020 is to reform the Indian education system right from the basic to advance level. *This policy is standing on the five pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability*⁵. NEP 2020 is especially aimed to prepare India's upcoming generation to face the challenges of the modern times however, it stands firmly on the pillars of basic Indian ethos that will help in transforming our country into a global knowledge power.

According to NEP 2020, *English is a language; it is not a test of your intelligence . English is an international language that everyone should learn for convenience*⁶. This statement clearly indicates that English should be promoted as a linking language in order to comprehend international culture and world heritage. This is a mis-conception that NEP 2020 denies the importance of English. In fact, there is no escape from English in NEP 2020. *The only novel thing that NEP 2020 is offering is that it is advocating that at least till Grade 5, medium of instruction for public and private schools should be the home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language however, beyond Grade 8 i.e. at the secondary level NEP 2020 is indeed considering English as a medium of instruction as English will help the students to open the doors of globalization*⁷. So, it is in fact promoting a constructive perspective to learn English.

From the time immemorial, India is a country which has always been respected across the world because of its good foundation in higher education. This country has come a long way from being popular as a “snake charming” country to one of the super powers of the world only through its exquisite education system. Today, the country has lots of reputed names to its credit who are doing wonders across the globe namely Sudar Pichai, Sanjay Mehrotra, Shantanu Narayanan, Indira Nooyi, Satya Nadella and the recently appointed Prime Minister of United Kingdom, Mr. Rishi Sounak. All these bigwigs are the products of quality public education

system of this country. *Today 53% of the GDP is coming from the service sector which is an outcome of the proficiency in English education*⁸.

In India, English is taught as the second language or the first language right from the pre-school in most of the schools. Since language skills is something that should be learnt in the initial years, most of the children learning English language reach to the 50% capacity at the age of 4 only. Thus, it helps the children to get acquainted with many new skills such as videos, apps, video games, teaching aids, online teaching, mobile phones, television, etc. Recently, at the time of pandemic, online education became a household name not only in the urban parts of India but even in the most remote parts of the country.

It is a well-known fact that English is a non-native language in India hence there is a practical need to learn. Till now, English has been taught at various levels such as English as foreign language, English as an additional language and English as a second language. In spite, of that, the confusion between learning English as a subject and learning English as a language still goes on. Keeping in view, the same fact, NEP 2020 gives special importance of learning English as a language of communication along with stressing on a holistic interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach at the undergraduate level that integrates varied streams such as arts, humanities, social sciences, mathematics, science, management and allied professional courses. This integration is possible only through a common language which can act as a bridge between these streams. Though, home language/ local language/ regional language or even mother tongue can be the language of instruction but no one can deny the fact that English is best suited for this purpose as it not only helps in acquiring ICT resources but also gives essential exposure to international standards especially in the case of science, technology and management. Thus, acquiring English language proficiency becomes imperative in this scenario as it understands the importance of e-learning resources. Acquisition of language skills has always been a necessary component of UG curriculum and NEP 2020 does not provide any exception to it. However, most of the times what we fail to understand is the fact that merely teaching language is not enough. After teaching a language for 4-5 years it is assumed that the students have acquired language skills which they can easily use but in spite of getting good grades, they fail in practice as in order to make the students proficient with language, both teachers and students have to go beyond textbooks and concentrate on its functional part especially in the case of English. At present, most of the curriculum of English language is overloaded with literary part where great literary names such as Shakespeare, Frost, Wordsworth, etc. are introduced in the curriculum from the early classes in English medium schools. The literary part of English literature is particularly very fascinating as the literary world of English is vast, depicting various colors in the form of genres to the students. But, in spite of having a good knowledge about these literary geniuses many students fail in using English in the practical part. As a result, many students fail to perform well in the campus placement interviews conducted by the multinational companies as they are unable to perform in Group Discussions held by these companies. In the modern times, most of the companies are multinational companies who want to employ those students as their employees who are fluent in functional English so that even as interns, they can be a part of the smooth functioning of the company. Hence, they look for those students who are good with spoken English and have excellent communication skills which they test in the GDs followed by personal interviews. The GDs and the personal interviews conducted by many organizations in the campuses are more about testing the confidence and the managerial skills of the students rather than the technical skills. Also in the traditional university system, a lot of time of students is gone in preparing for examinations, giving them less time to learn languages in real sense. In such cases, teaching language from the functional aspect is the need of the hour. To help the students, a lot of e-resource material is available for them along with them a plethora of websites for English Language Learning such as SWAYAM, NAPTEL, MOOCS. These websites are absolutely free to practice English at home. Such language training along with a comprehensive course in practical English will help students in their personality development. Ideally, more importance should be given to comprehension and communication skills in English. Along with literature, communicative/ functional English should also be an essential part of the curriculum comprising basic aspects of English language such as grammar, writing skills including drafting business letters, reports, agendas, minutes, etc. situational English which will train students to communicate right in various situations and basic aspects of communication skills which will concentrate more on usage of appropriate body language. Such training will help the students to refrain from committing mistakes when they will appear for interviews, Group Discussions, etc. for their placements. In general, after the completion of such trainings in communicative English, students should be able to utilize different parts of English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing for their proficiency and communication.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, it can be said that language is indeed one of the vital facts that affect national and international communication activities to a large extent. There are more than 7000 languages spoken over the world but English still continues to enjoy its indispensable position of being the link language of the world. In India, English enjoys a more respectable position as it still continues to be known as the language of prestige. In spite of only 3 percent of the population being fluent in English, it cannot be abolished from India as our constitution itself has accepted three language formula in which the first language is the naturally the mother tongue, the second language is the national language which is Hindi and the third English which is known as the library language. In fact, English is the language of our constitution itself. It is also the language of the supreme-court, the High-courts and other advanced offices. Along with this, its knowledge is also very much vital for technological and economic progress so any student who wants to get further study in abroad must have sound knowledge of English. Even, the traditional countries like Japan and Korea had to accept

English. Considering this fact, NEP-2020 also doesn't deny the importance of English. It is flexible enough to give the individual schools the freedom to select the medium of instruction which will satisfy those students who are aiming for global education. At the same time, it also gives the freedom to the states to educate students in their regional languages or their respective mother tongues. Thus, it clearly helps to convert SDG Goal 4 a practical reality which is a commitment to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. What is required to develop innovative courses along with ingenious teaching techniques to cater to the needs of the students making the learning more well-rounded and useful to the learner. As the Prime Minister said, that today's need of the hour is the change the mantra from "what to think" to "how to think".

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