



EVOLVING A SUITABLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY FOR INDIA: A CRITICAL STUDY



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ABSTRACT :

Developing a single language policy is a complex business for multi-lingual countries like India. It has been a question get proper response prior to independence. Due to advancements in technology globe has become smaller as a result of it the world is becoming a village. This is also the consequence of colonization by European countries. India being the world's second largest populous country attracts global attention and is global human resource hub. There is lot of demand for English educated people all over the world. It is the great opportunity for India better utilizing and developing the English language skills of its citizens by making them industry-ready. It is simple to say than to implement in practice especially in a country where there are more than fifteen hundred mother tongues are in existence as per latest census. Here through this article I would like to focus on some of the areas there needs some special attention.

KEYWORDS : Language Policy, Globalization, Populous Countries.

INTRODUCTION

Language policy in India has been a very complex area due to large number of languages almost

one thousand five hundred spoken. From the beginning India is a multilingual country. These languages belong to three distinct families- Indo-European, Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman. First major landmark in Indian English education system was that of Macaulay minutes (1835). Formally English language teaching was started based on the recommendations of Wood's Dispatch (1854). It is the 'MAGNACARTA' of Indian English education system. Though after independence Hindi is given constitutional priority, but due to objections made from southern part of the country English is accepted as an official language for 10 years initially. Now it is English which is spread like anything in a stepped manner with some imbalances of standards for reasons many. This spread is never ending since world recognizes English as global language. According to David Crystal (1997) English is spoken as a first language in the United States, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and several Caribbean countries. As a second language, foreign language and official language English is used in more than 170 countries. According to BBC report (2012) today "there are more English speakers in India as second language than anywhere else in the world."

English language teaching was initially started with a method called Grammar Translation Method. It is the most ancient way of teaching languages. This method uses mother tongue of the learner to teach the rules of grammar. Due to scarcity of bilingual able teachers, this method could not succeed in providing English education to Indians as a result it paved the way for Direct Method or Approach also known as the natural approach. Here no mother tongue is used. The advocates of this method have faith in the principle of

exposure as major source of learning. By the end of 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, with more research into teaching has changed the teaching perception. Then came selection of words as essential vocabulary and attempted to identify them. This was later used by Michael West, a teacher educator, who refined the entire processes and expanded the scope of work. The method developed by Michael West is known as Dr. West Method/ The Reading Method/ New method. All these methods are used prior to independence. At the two world wars a need has arisen for quick learning and as a result of behavior psychologists' research, there becomes an apparent approach known as Structural Approach. This approach endured longer than desired. There after this approach was criticized for lack of meaning. Later this criticism paved the way for another meaningful approach called Situational Approach. This method of teaching focuses on particular situation and teaching grammar suitable to that particular one. This approach acted as a precursor to a more innovative and useful method of teaching called Communicative Approach. This approach distinguishes learners from machines. To realize this, it is essential to provide opportunities to the learners in the class to talk interact or communicate.

After National Curriculum Framework 2005, there is a paradigm shift from teacher centered teaching learning to child centered teaching learning. Keeping this in mind, now all the boards-central and most of the states- are framing their curriculum in line with NCF2005. Any language teaching must be viewed from child's point of view. Here a teacher's role is to be minimized to a mere facilitator where the child gets maximum benefit out of exposure. To cut down the imbalances in imparting English education, common school system is a way forward. This will help build confidence levels among the students equally.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LSRW

Since English language has gained wide spread acknowledgement and acceptance all over the world especially due to colonization. As Albert P'Rayan rightly says (Engineering English: A Critical Evaluation) that English language skills are employable skills, life skills or survival skills. Here it is understood that in the context of LPG (Liberalization – Privatization - Globalization) students from all corners of the world especially from developing nations looking towards Western (developed) nations like U.S.A., U.K., Canada, and Australia etc. for their higher education. Examination through which foreign country universities take the students quiet focus on their English language communication skills at different levels of admissions under Graduation programmes (SAT), Masters programmes (TOEFL/IELTS/GRE/GMAT), Research Degrees. In this context, in researcher thinks that whether we can have such a model for testing English language competence to give admissions into different programs of study at various levels like higher secondary schooling, intermediate, under gradation and Post-Graduation level. Here to cater the requirements of students from different backgrounds like rural/urban, medium (English/Vernacular languages), Gender (Male/Female), Parental Education/Literacy background, subject areas, and vernacular languages spoken at home. All these are going to play a key role in influencing the English language skills of students. The researcher wants to develop a model keeping an eye on all these issues where there is lot of scope to improve the skills necessary.

TEACHING THROUGH LSRW

In the globalization process English Language has become a link language. Though there are many languages all over the world, the importance of English language gaining acceptance from all the corners of the world day by day. We cannot think the world without English. In this context, the researcher focuses on critical evaluation of training programmes for students attempting TOEFL & IELTS overseas tests for foreign education. These two tests are accepted in most of the countries all over the world. These are the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) exams. TOEFL stands for test of English as a foreign language which is for 120 points. Most of the students who wish to study abroad especially United States of America have to take this test along with GRE (Graduate Record Examination). Top universities accept TOEFL scores only with GRE scores. Out of 120 points in total in TOEFL students should get around 90 points which is considered to be a good score, but to join (get i20) in top universities 100 plus score is a must along with GRE scores (260-340 points). TOEFL tests four skills of English Language. These are Listening skills (30 points), Reading Skills (30 points), writing skills (30 points) and speaking

skills (30 points). It is an internet based test (iBT). Listening section and Reading sections are objective type, whereas writing section and speaking sections are subjective type. This test is conducted by ETS (Educational Testing Services).

IELTS stands for international English Language Testing Systems. It is acknowledged all over the world. It is conducted by university of Cambridge, Australia; British Council and IDP (International Development Programme). In India IDP and British Council provide the IELTS test. Here in this test the score is called bands. It is a 9 bands score test. Based on the good band scores (6+) Universities give i20 (admission) into Masters Programmes in different fields of study. It is a paper based test. In IELTS test unlike TOEFL, every section has nine bands score, Listening Skills (9 bands), Reading skills (9 bands), writing skills (9 bands) and speaking skills (9 bands). Average score is calculated by aggregation of the scores in all four sections (L.S.R.W) for IELTS scores, i.e. 9 Bands. This IELTS exam is provided in two modules one is academic module which is for higher education admission (Masters) purpose, another one is General Module which is for job purpose or immigration purpose. Out of these two overseas tests (TOEFL & IELTS), IELTS test is accepted in many countries including USA, but TOEFL is mostly accepted in USA. These two tests measure the proficiency levels of a candidate in terms of English language skills i.e. L.S.R.W.

There are different approaches in training programmes in various coaching centers. Most of students who take coaching for TOEFL and IELTS exams are from engineering background. Sometimes even 2nd year & 3rd year students also take coaching as the TOEFL & IELTS scores are valid for 2 years. As the researcher observes that the approach adapted by many coaching centers though similar has few limitations. It is found that there is no individual care as students' background is very important to understand individual differences in imparting any language skills especially English language skills. If the class is considered on a whole, giving instructions to the class won't be helping all the students. For example students who come from vernacular medium background up to their 10th or 12th standard, may not be having English language skills on par with other students. It is observed that such students who lack Basic English language skills should be given separate classes in grammar, constructions, collocations usage and vocabulary. Then the students get the concept to understand the intention of the TOEFL and IELTS examination and can perform better. As per the personal observation of the researcher in PROMAC (one of the leading institutions for GRE, TOEFL and IELTS coaching) there are no such criteria or plan to improve the students. In other institutions like VISU Educational Academy where researcher's senior Mr.Pavan Chakrawarty works the situation is more or less same. Basically the approach adapted by these institutions is class room instructions and practice, but as per researcher's observation there is lot more to do before that like testing their Basic English language skills required to be given. Then one can think of coaching in terms of listening, reading, writing and speaking. In assessing the students' ability we have to take into consideration many things such as parental background, medium of instruction up to their 10th or 12th standard, languages spoken at home, urban/rural locational factors, and standard of educational institutions.

The researcher thinks that these kinds of tests are good to measure the standards of English language skills possessed by the students. It is observed that due to lack of English language skills many students are not employed. In researcher's opinion these kinds of English language proficiency tests should also be conducted for students entering intermediate, under graduation courses and the Graduation courses. Since there is lot of scope for people in different fields of study with English language skills (Engineering English: A critical Evaluation by Albert P'Rayan). He says English language skills are employable skills, life skills or survival skills. He rightly observed that many engineering students are not "industry-ready" due to lack of English language communication skills. So the researcher wants to suggest a model to overcome the problem of English language difficulties.

There is also difference between public funded institutions, charitable trusts on one side and commercial organizations on the other side. In researcher's observation commercial institutions are not up to the mark as per the expectations of the students. Since commercial institutions take class as a whole, giving least attention to the individual needs of the students. On the other hand, Public funded Organizations like CELT (Center for English Language Training)-OU, British Council (funded by British government), Maxmuller Bhavan

Goethe Zentrum (funded by German government) and charitable trusts like Ramakrishna Matt's Vivekananda Institute of languages really caters the needs of the individual students. Moreover the results are showing the same.

METHODOLOGY

In this critical study, researcher would like to use mainly primary data, survey descriptive method to examine all the objectives but the last one. The primary data includes questionnaires to students, survey of coaching centers providing coaching for students aiming foreign education, testing standards of teaching faculty, infrastructure available over there, pre-test, post-test evaluation by selecting a section of students from different variables like gender, location, medium of instructions, and parental education background.

To fulfill the last objective, the researcher wants to use secondary data in order to overcome the problems faced by the students, coaching centers and suggest an alternate model.

Independent Variable: Training Programmes

Dependent Variable: Gender, Discipline, Location, Medium, Parental Education, Vernacular Languages at Home.

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