



AN OVERVIEW THE STAGES OF ENGLISH IN INDIA AND ITS IMPORTANT

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of English in India was a part of this exploitation. The English was introduced in India as a part of the British policy to have 'cheap clerks' and to spread their religion. The advent of English in India happened as early as in 1800 A.D but the East India company imparted English education only to the children of the European employees of the company and to the very small percentage of Anglo Indians in the country, hence English had a very limited sphere of dominance and it was an extremely marginalized language used only by the British. This status of marginalized language remained for an extremely long time with the British learning the native languages for the purpose of administration, business and communication

INTRODUCTION

The status quo was maintained with the European children being taught by private tutors or their nannies while the Indian children had their formal education in *Pathshalas, madarsas, maktabas* and the children of the aristocracy learnt through their private tutors.

This situation changed by the end of the eighteenth century when the East India Company brought the whole Indian subcontinent under their command and decided to wear the cloak of guardian for the Indians and they started thinking of 'civilizing the natives'

As stated by Lord Macaulay in one of his later speeches; "to trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages" (Web 15-09-2013)

The East India Company started the process of civilizing the natives by introducing them to their religion, according to them, the Hindus were a bunch of illiterate, superstitious people in need of divine intervention and the knowledge of Christianity to make them 'civilized'.

English Language:

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Even though the British introduced English in India to develop their business and administration, it has served as a window through which one can see the treasures of life. English is a *West Germanic language* that developed during the “*Anglo-Saxon Era*.” As a result of military, economic, scientific, political and cultural influence of the British Empire during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, it has become the *Lingua franca* in many parts of the world. From the time when English was introduced by Macaulay, there has been controversy of using English as the medium. According to research made in the 1980’s, about one third of Indians studied in schools which have English as medium of instruction. As such the impact and importance of English is not only continuing but increasing.

English as an International Language:

English is an international language, spoken in many countries both as a native and as a second or foreign language. In almost every country on the earth, English is taught in the schools. English is spoken as a native language by about 375 million people and as a second language by another 375 million speakers in the world. Speakers of English as a second language will soon outnumber those who speak it as a first language, according to research by the British Council. As a rough estimate, 1000 million or one billion people around the world have some knowledge of English, either as a native language, as a second language, or as a foreign language.

English is the associate official language of India which has over 1030 millions (over a billion) people. Pakistan, Bangladesh, and many other nations which were ruled by Britain continue to use English both as an optional medium of instruction in their schools and as one of their official languages. The islands of the Philippines continue to use English as an important tool for education, administration, and for mass media purposes. English is the chief foreign language taught in the schools of Europe, South America, Asia and Africa.

It is more widely spoken and written than any other language, even more than what Latin has ever been. It can, indeed, be said to be the first truly global language. English is nowadays the dominant or official language in over 60 countries. Even though some nations which were ruled by the French continue to teach French as their most preferred second language, English is gaining ground even in these countries. In Japan too, English is the most favored second or foreign language.

In the Sixteenth Century, English was spoken mostly in England, southern Scotland, and small areas of Wales and Ireland. There were only about two to three million people speaking it as their native language. At present one in seven in this world speaks English either as a native language or as a second language.



English is learned everywhere because people have found out that knowledge of English is a passport for better career, better pay, advanced knowledge, and for communication with the entire world. English is also learned for the literature it possesses, and for the variety and rich experience it provides.

English In India

Historical Background:

Beginning with the establishment in India of the East India Company, the British came to India as traders in the second half of the eighteenth century, and stayed on as rulers for nearly two centuries.

First Period: (1765-1813):

During this period, the British gradually introduced the English language and Western Language in order to create a class of Indians who could serve the imperial rulers as officials or functionaries, as well as, function as a communicative link between the rulers and the masses. Originally they were afraid of teaching English to Indians. Randle Jackson, a member of the House of Commons, voiced their feelings. He said, "We lost our colonies in America by imparting our education there, we need not to do so in India too." (Agarwal) However, after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the situation began to change. In order to win over whom they had begun to rule, they decided to open educational institutions. Two such institutions were Calcutta Madarssha (1781) and Benares Sanskrit College founded in 1791. Provision was made for the teaching of English there. The earliest attempts to introduce English in India were made by the missionaries who came primarily for the purpose of religious and moral preaching rather than for spreading English. The missionary effort culminated in the setting up of Christian institutions in different parts of the Indian Sub – Continent, where English was taught as one of the subjects.

Second Period: (1813-1834):

The second phase of the presence and spread of English in India is identified with two names, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and T. B. Macaulay. Raja Ram Mohan Roy led a group of Indians in demanding English Education for Indians. This group was convinced that English would be more useful for Indians than Indian languages for academic, socio – economic, scientific and international purposes. The effort of this group considerably strengthened the hands of Lord Macaulay whose famous minute was passed in 1835. As English developed stronger roots in Educational system in India, the whole sub – continent witnessed more and more Indians being taken in by the lure of English, native Indian languages suffering a great set back in the process. By the end of the nineteenth century five universities had been set up (Madras,

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Calcutta, Bombay, Allahabad and Lahore). With the spread of English and increase in the number of English – knowing Indians, the language came to be established as the official and academic language of India. It also acquired great prestige and replaced Persian and the Indian languages from several areas of education, administration, trade and business.

Third Period :(1834-1853):

In 1834 lord Bentinck invited Macaulay to preside over the General committee of public Instruction. This gave Macaulay the occasion for writing his famous minute (1835). He strongly recommended that the spread of western learning could only be possible through the medium of English.

Wood’s Despatch:(1854):

Wood’s Despatch is often described as *the Mogna Carta of English education in India*. It confirmed, what Macaulay had said, English was to be the medium of instruction in the higher branches. The demand for English education was already there. Hence, the number of schools and colleges began to increase by leaps and bounds. The predominant position was given to English and the vernaculars began to be neglected.

The Education Commission:

The Indian education commission expressed its dissatisfaction at the exclusive use of English as the medium of instruction. The Indian universities commission (1902) raised its voice against the neglect of vernaculars. The Calcutta University Commission (1919) tried to compromise the claims of English and vernaculars and wrote:

“the educated classes in the various provinces of India which wish to be bilingual, to use their mother- tongue for those dear and intimate things which form part of life and to use English as a means of intercommunication necessary for the maintenance of the unity of India, and of touch with other countries.” (Web 15-09-2013)

Status of English in India:

The twentieth century witnessed further strengthening of the roots of English in India as an influential language. Kachru states that,

“After World War I, there was a significant increase in educational institutions, and schools and colleges spread to the interior of India. This



naturally helped in spreading bilingualism in India further among the middle and lower classes of the Indian society". (Kachru)

The period since then has seen tremendous increase in English – knowing Indians and, even after the British formally left India in 1947, English has continued to gain ground and has become more and more firmly entrenched in the Indian soil. As a matter of fact, since Independence, several committees and commissions have, on different occasions, stressed the need to learn English. The government, on its own part, has consistently lent support to English and encouraged the teaching and learning of English. Government policies are also given official recognition to English as associate official language. The situation as it obtains today, is that English is recognized

"Officially as the associative National official Language, and as inter regional link – language; educationally it is recognized as an essential component of Education and as the preferred medium of learning, with specialized education in Science and Technology available through the medium of English only; socially it is recognized and un-held as a mark of Education, culture and prestige." (Gupta & Kapoor)

In the present scenario it is mandatory for any employable Indian in the global market to have some proficiency in English. Proficiency in English has become an added merit for Indians in the fields including legal, financial, educational and business in India.

English also dominates the field such as Media, Tourism, Trade and Internet. Over half of all personal letters / SMS / E-mails are also written in English. The majority of all information that is electronically stored around the world is English. More than 150 years of intimate contact had made English, an integral part of our educational system. *Act of 1965*, declared that English would continue to be used as an associate language of union. Officially English is accorded the status of associate official language, but in fact, a stage has now been reached where English is considered to be an integral part of the socio-cultural, educational and administrative domains of Indian life. Besides, quite a number of Indian states and territories have adopted English as the official language. India is the third largest English book-producing country after the United States and the United Kingdom, and the largest number of books is published in English.

The official languages of the Republic of India are *Hindi* and *English*. According to the Article 343 (1) of the Constitution of India, "The Official Language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script." The individual states can legislate their own official languages, depending on their linguistic demographics. Accordingly, the states of Maharashtra, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa (Odisha), Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and so on have adopted their respective native languages i.e. regional languages as their sole official language, whereas some

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other states like Jammu and Kashmir have adopted two or more languages as their official language. The state of Jammu & Kashmir has adopted *Kashmiri, Urdu, and Dogri* as its official language. Until the Twenty-First Amendment of the Constitution in 1967, the country recognized 14 official regional languages. The Eighth Schedule and the Seventy-First Amendment provided for the inclusion of *Sindhi, Konkani, Meiteilon and Nepali*, thereby increasing the number of official regional languages of India to 18. English is now recognized as an associate official language, with Hindi the official language. It is recognized as the official language in four states Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura in eight Union territories. Various political and nationalistic pressures continue to push for the choice of Hindi as a national language. However, it is hard to remove English from its place as a language of wider communication, lingua franca, especially among the educated elite, or to replace the regional languages in mass communication by Hindi.

Indian Constitutional Provisions for English Language:

The articles of the constitution which deal with language of English are as follows:

- **Article 120: *Language to be used in Parliament*** – Here it is mentioned that all the procedures in the Parliament shall be transacted in Hindi or in English.
- **Article 210: *Language to be used in the Legislature*** – Here it is mentioned that all the procedures in the Legislature of a State shall be transacted in the official language or languages of the State or in Hindi or in English.
- **Article 344: *Commission and Committee of Parliament on official language***- As per this article a commission has to be constituted, comprising of a chairman and other members. These members would represent different languages mentioned in the eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. The duties and the aims of the commission and committee of parliament on official language are also specified in the article.
- **Article 348: *Language to be used in the Supreme Court and High Courts***- According to this article, all transactions in the Supreme Court and all the high Courts of the country and all texts of Acts, Bills and orders should be in English language. With permission of the President, the governor of a state can use Hindi or any other state official language for the proceedings. However, in such case, English version of the documents has to be published in the official gazette of that state.
- **Article 349: *Special procedure for enactment of certain laws relating to language***- It is specified that without considering the recommendations of the commission and the



report of the committee of Parliament on official language, President should not sanction any bill or amendment regarding usages of language for official purpose.

Uses and Functions of English:

The spread of English has been accompanied by its increased functionality and use in different domains and spheres of Indian life. Some of the domains of life where English has come to occupy an important place follow.

Education:

Even a casual glance at the way our education system is organized and structured will show that English plays a crucial, central role in Education. While a child goes to an English medium school or an Indian language medium school, she/he has to learn English for a period ranging from six to twelve years. No student can pass out of school and go on to vocational or higher Education without having learnt English as a subject. Specialized education in pure and applied Sciences, technology, medicine, law, business management etc. is available only through the medium of English. Several English language teaching centres and regional institutes of English have been setup in order to train teachers of English in new method and techniques of teaching English.

Business and Administration:

Business and administration are the “*receiving systems*” that provide gainful employment to educated young men and women, which insist on formal training and proficiency of English. Most of the competitive Examinations require the candidates to pass a compulsory or qualifying paper in English big and middle – level business establishments require aspiring candidates to be fluent in spoken English and proficient in Written English. This means that, as far as employment opportunities are concerned, most white – collar jobs in the government and in the Industry (both production industry and services industry) are available to those who know English. So if one wants to become an official in the government of India, a manager in some Industry, an officer in the armed forces, a doctor of surgeon, an air – hostess or sales executive, one has to be proficient in English.

Conclusion:

The English language has shaped modern India's development in many ways, here are a few... First, it helped establish a link with the West in the post colonial era whereby ideas and information could be exchanged easily, especially in the realm of higher education . Subsequently this enabled members of successive generations to emigrate to developed English speaking nations as professionals thereby helping India establish a people to people

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link with the West which has come in very handy after the economic liberalization. Despite the inward and myopic outlook of less than stellar post- independence governments for decades on end and the political barriers of the cold war, India's fortunes changed radically in a very short period of time after it liberalized. This would not have been possible without the English language skills (as minimal as they might be) and the people to people link I mentioned. The fact of the matter is that possessing English skills as a young Indian today opens up a greater number of opportunities.

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