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**The Status of English Language in Uttar Pradesh and Its Impact on  
Technical Communication Teaching**

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**Abstract**

Technical Communication or Professional Communication is a compulsory subject in the first year of professional courses. It is being taught with an objective to enhance the level of communication skills of students pursuing these courses. But, practically the teaching of technical communication/professional communication has taken the place of a theoretical subject. Students merely go to few books to learn questions on effective communication skills, speaking skills, listening skills, presentation skills or business correspondence while its purpose would have been to enhance the verbal and non-verbal communication skills to efficiently carry out the duties in a professional set up. An attempt is being made to study the teaching-learning environment of English to find out its impact on the teaching of technical communication.

**Introduction**

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The ability to speak and write clearly is not only important to the communication of technical concepts; it is an essential part of the innovation process itself. Translating an idea into the written word is one of the better ways of validating the soundness of one's thinking.

Ian M. Ross, President. AT&T Bell Laboratories,  
Holmdel, New Jersey

The above statement shows the importance of communication in professional life. In view of the above statement, it can be said that teaching of Technical Communication has become an inevitable part of professional education. As it covers business and scientific writing in English, it is treated as a sub-field of English Language Teaching. Good communication skills in writing and speech both have become a key to success in the present time. All professionals are required to have effective communication skills. The time has gone when the matter was dictated to the secretary and it used to be the secretary's duty to look for all technical features while preparing the final script. With the increasing role of Information Technology, today all managers, engineers and other professionals are supposed to key their writing into the computers on their own. Therefore, they are supposed to acquire not only the knowledge of the content to be produced but also the knowledge of the document to be framed. They are also required to be familiar with the use of computers. They have to carry out routine correspondence, telephonic communication, video conferencing, facsimile messages. Therefore, it becomes their prime need to develop efficiency in technical communication, and to have this efficiency, they need to know the language. Language works as a tool in their hands to prove their skill. Those who fail in expressing themselves, fail to achieve success too.

Today, in Uttar Pradesh, we come across a new generation of students in technical institutions who lack language competency and lack the confidence to express either in writing or in speech. There are several reasons responsible for their lack of proficiency in communication skills. To see why a great number of these students lack competency in language, some important factors need to be discussed here.

### **The Status of English in the State**

- i) Uttar Pradesh is basically a Hindi dominated state. Hindi is the official and most widely spoken language in Uttar Pradesh [1].
- ii) In government offices it is mandatory to use Hindi.
- iii) English is used in the central government offices and offices of private companies only.
- iv) Newspapers in Hindi are more popular than English newspapers.
- v) At Railway booking offices, banks and Post Offices all official work is done in English but verbal communication is mostly done in Hindi or regional dialect.
- vi) Advertisements and hoardings are majorly in Hindi, however they are also in English at times. This includes the hoardings of famous brands displayed in big cities and the signboards of local shops in small towns and villages also.

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- vii) Shopkeepers, auto rickshaw drivers, tonga-man, grocers, porters, conductors in buses and hospital staff etc. speak and understand Hindi only.
- viii) Hindi channels are popular in comparison to English channels.

### **U.P. Government Policy on ELT**

1. In U.P. government schools English is taught from class I onwards.
2. According to 'three languages formula' English is taught with Hindi and Sanskrit up to class VIII.
3. Class IX onwards English becomes an optional subject.
4. ITIs and GTIs offer vocational courses in various trades. No provisions are made to teach English in these institutions. Hence, the students of these institutions face difficulty in moving to other states or abroad where they can grow faster.

### **English in Convents and Private English Medium Schools**

1. These schools provide education of English from primary to secondary level as a compulsory subject.
2. These schools are affiliated to CBSE or ICSE Board and follow their syllabi. They prescribe English books for all subjects, except languages like Sanskrit and Hindi.
3. They appoint qualified English speaking staff to provide and maintain English speaking environment, consequently the learning of language is better. Students of these schools develop fluency in speech and writing. Though they make mistakes, yet their English is intelligible.
4. They are trained in writing for business and science through correspondence/projects etc..

### **English in Mushroom like English Medium Schools**

Today, we see English Medium schools in every nook and corner of in the urban areas. . They have grown like mushrooms and their purpose is only to earn money. They fail to provide quality education and a good learning environment. Even the worst of these schools prescribe books in English as other good English Medium Schools do, but they do not comply with the rules of the government regarding appointment of teachers. They pay a consolidated salary that ranges from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1500. Qualification of teachers is no bar for these schools. Even class XII pass convent educated candidates are selected to teach English and Social Sciences.

### **English in Higher Education and Professional Colleges**

University colleges offer English Literature as a subject for graduate and post graduate classes.

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In MBA, MCA, B.Tech, BBA, BCA and B. Pharma courses Technical/Business Communication is taught, which includes communication skills, business correspondence, scientific articles, abstracts, report writing and presentation strategies etc.

In degree colleges, the medium of instruction is majorly Hindi as a great number of students (from Hindi Medium and pseudo- English Medium schools) fail to understand English.

For subjects other than English, students write their examinations in Hindi. In professional colleges too, a great number of students want the teacher to deliver lectures in Hindi, along with English, though the medium for examinations is only English.

### **Parents' Attitude**

Parents are crazy to send their wards to English medium schools. Even a low income group family aspires to be able to send their children to English medium school.

**Parents send their wards to English Medium Schools for two reasons –**

- i) English medium schools have become status symbols. So parents want to remain distinguished by dint of their financial status and choose schools accordingly.
- ii) They are aware of the importance of English, so, they send their wards to English medium schools to train them to meet the job requirements in future.
- iii) A large community of parents does not want to send their wards to government run Primary Hindi Medium Schools due to the latter's pathetic conditions in terms of infrastructure and human resource.

### **Teachers' Attitude**

Today, the meaning of teaching has changed. Teaching is not considered a social service. Most people adopt teaching profession for their living, so is true with English teachers also. There are only a few teachers, who are working for the noble cause of the welfare of the society. Such exceptional teachers pay attention to the development of the learner. A large number of teachers remain indifferent from the teaching-learning situation, which in turn results in the weaker performance of students. These teachers quote various reasons, ranging from their involvement in duties outside the school, e.g. duty in election, pulse polio campaign, in-service training programs, lack of infrastructure and lack of manpower [2], for not devoting their time and skill for the development of students' skills. . They are given a two room building to accommodate students from 1<sup>st</sup> std. to 5<sup>th</sup> std. with as little as two teachers. To make situations worse, these two teachers might have additional duties of principal or clerk to carry out. Also, most students in these schools come from financially weaker section so the parents may engage their wards in vocational jobs taken up by the family instead of sending them to school. Therefore, such children may be absent from classes for a long period ranging from one month to three months.

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## Learners' Attitude

Students at the primary level just imitate what their teachers say. They are not aware about learning for growth.

Students of Hindi medium secondary schools study English as a subject in which they have to pass an examination. Students of good English medium schools also have the same attitude, but their language output is better due to the exposure to the language.

Students of university and professional colleges are interested in **need based language items** and activities.

Most of the students, weak in language proficiency want instant knowledge to master English and communication skills, and enhance their confidence level.

## Teaching of Technical Communication & ELT

In Professional Colleges of the state, Technical Communication/Business Communication is prescribed as a subject. The syllabus of this course consists of language items to improve the communication skills of learners in writing and oral presentation. The aim of this course is to develop the linguistic as well as communicative competence of learners.

## Present situation

- The present situation is bleak as the government sector has failed to spread proficient learning of English language. "To bring the students of government run schools at par with those studying in private convents, the government had decided to introduce English as a subject from class one" [3].
- The private sector English Medium Schools have also failed in achieving the same. Every day, we come across students who cannot write a leave application correctly. Senior managers often complain that a large percentage of newly recruited professionals are unable to express themselves clearly and convincingly in written reports, letters or discussions.
- Not only students but teachers of Hindi Medium schools lack fluency and proper pronunciation.
- Students of a few reputed convents, Central Schools and public schools are exceptions.
- Code-switching is very common. English words are so combined with Hindi that they seem to be a part.
  - E.g. **Reservation** kara liya hai. **Morning** mei **Delhi** Jaunga.
    - **Sunday** ko milte hai **lunch** par.

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- *TV switch on* kar do.
- *Vegetable soup order* kar do.
- Now Hindi words are also being used in English speech.

### Problems Faced in the Classroom

1. Students in professional colleges come from different backgrounds (culture, area, school and boards), and form heterogeneous groups so their requirements vary from one another.
2. Students from Hindi Medium Schools, rural background, so called English Medium Schools face problems in understanding lecture in English.
3. Such students are weak in structure formation. Many of them cannot write even a single correct sentence, e.g. *Viewing the view outside the window was very good.* (Explaining the situation when the narrator, in 'Eyes Are Not Here' by Ruskin Bond, pretends to look outside the window of the train).
4. Their vocabulary and spellings are very poor. E.g. Menes (means).
5. Students from English Medium background, who attain fluency in speech, tend to make mistakes in writing. They write as they speak and overlook punctuation. They habitually write sms language in notebooks and later in answer-sheets as well.

### Factors contributing to the learning of English

1. Motivation – at the professional level, it is instrumental, i.e.
  - i) To earn a living.
  - ii) For social standing.
  - iii) To extend their awareness.
2. The extent of availability of the language around learners –
  - i) Children of English speaking parents learn English faster.
  - ii) Students of English Medium Schools have greater excess to English in comparison to those of Hindi Medium schools.
  - iii) Children of urban areas have better exposure to English due to television and other media.

### Factors responsible for the lack of Effective Language Learning

- State Government policy to teach English from Class I to Class VIII.
- Lack of standard model in the form of teachers to be imitated by learners.
- Emphasis on completing the syllabus by the teacher and the learner both.
- Teaching/learning of English as a subject, not as a language.

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- Availability of text books/guide books with Hindi version/translation. Preparing for examination through these books prevents individual thought building and the students later on, find it difficult to explain the underlying meaning of the text.
- Probability to pass the examination of any subject including English in spite of writing wrong/unintelligible English at UG/PG level.
- Classes remain to be teacher-centered instead of being learner-centered which has become a prime need for effective language teaching.
- Large number of students in a class affects the quality of teaching in an activity based class.
- Communicative method of teaching English is not being adopted by and large.
- Teachers remain away from classes due to their duties outside the school or due to personal reasons [2].

### **Measures to Be Taken for Better Language Output**

- English should reach learners from economically disadvantaged families right from the primary level, as they form a large group.
- In school, teacher-student absenteeism needs to be minimized to ascertain more hours of interaction. Teachers at the primary, pre-primary and upper primary level need to be trained and treated as specialized teachers as they are dealing with innocent children who need training for life. Therefore, they should be exempted from duties other than teaching. Their focus should remain the ultimate development of children.
- Teaching of Technical Communication to business executives should equip them with sound knowledge of language to be put in practice.
- Teaching of Phonetics should be introduced in junior classes and teachers to teach them should be well equipped to teach this technical subject.
- Methods, materials and approach to English Language Teaching as well as to the teaching of Technical Communication should be well defined and teachers should be trained to learn and put these into practice in classrooms.
- ELT should be closely related to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to stimulate learners' interest in language learning. We have already noted above that their motivation is instrumental so, the curriculum should be so designed as to meet the requirements of learners. It will enhance their interest in language learning, thereby, bringing proficiency in language.
- At present, the syllabus for Technical Communication is more theoretical than practical. It should cover the practical aspect of language use.

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