

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 1 January 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Introduction

At the time when entire world is debating globalization as a crucial phenomenon transforming the lives of the people in one way or the other, English language has entered into a new set of contestations like— challenging the claim of British English as the standard English with the emergence of World Englishes, emphasis on neutral accent instead of received pronunciation, innovative methods and approaches of English Language Teaching, different new set of purposes for learning English, English shedding off its colonial connotations, and English as a vehicle of growth, prosperity and upward mobility. Keeping in view the importance of English in emerging global context, almost entire world seems to have reached to a consensus regarding considering it as the global lingua franca. The number of English users across the world is increasing day by day.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

567

The English language has become a part of the IT revolution. English, a language that came from nowhere, is set to conquer the world... today, it is used, spoken or written in some form or the other, by perhaps 1.5 billion people around the world; of the English users, three hundred and fifty million use it as the mother tongue, and the rest as a foreign or second language... it is estimated that there are even more users of English than of the Chinese language, a language spoken in eight different varieties but written in the same way by 1.1 billion people. (Krishnaswamy, 150)

Background

Debating the future of global English in the age of vibrant media, press, advertising, broadcasting, cinema, international tourism, communications and cyber space, David Crystal considers English as the language most widely taught as a foreign language—in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil (Crystal, 5). English now is the preferred language for global communication and has become the dominant language of internet communication, international trade, commerce, outsourcing, hotel and tourism and what not. “From a symbol of colonialism and imperialism, the English language has become a neutral tool of communication in the new millennium—a global goldmine” (Krishnaswamy, v). David Graddol, in his *TheFuture of English* rightly described English as ‘a leading edge phenomenon’ in the age of shifting social values, transforming international economy, diverse demography, excessive role of technology, blurring of boundaries and global culture. He observed that the English language would play an ever more important role in world communications, international business, and social and cultural affairs. But at the same time he apprehended that the native-speaking countries might not be the beneficiaries of change (Graddol 2000, 55). In his another book *English Next India*, he sees the propositions in favour of India while discussing the transition we are experiencing in different spheres, including demographic, economic, social, and educational systems. As for the English transition, he asserts: “The official position of English in India remains that of a transitional necessity. But this agenda has been overtaken by events. Economic growth means that more jobs require English; the expansion of education means that

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

568

English is needed by more people for study; and for a growing, globalised, urban middle class English is playing a greater role in both their work and personal lives.” (Graddol 2010, 64)

In the present context, Indians are speaking English more than any other language, with the sole exception of Hindi. At the same time, English speakers in India outnumber those in all of Western Europe, not counting the United Kingdom. Indian English-speakers are more than twice the UK's population. In Indian context, entire history of English Language has acquired an altogether new dimension. Besides the constitutional provision of English as an Associate Official Language (for an indefinite period of time), it has been accepted as the passport to worldly success in the present age. Those aspiring to soar high in their chosen careers can hardly afford to ignore the importance of this language.

The entire post-independence anti-English campaign under the slogan “Angrezi Hatao” has become a thing of past as even the most nationalist parties have redefined their approach in defense of English. This language, according to Braj B. Kachru, is the best suited to multi-lingual and multi-ethnic India:

... has acquired neutrality in a linguistic context ... whereas native codes are functionally marked in terms of caste, religion, region, and so forth, English has no such ‘markers’ at least in the non-native context. It was originally the foreign (alien) ruler’s language, but that drawback is often overshadowed by what it can do for its users... English is being used to neutralize identities one is reluctant to express by the use of native languages or dialects (in India). (Kachru, 8)

Those who were earlier arguing that English was the root cause of all the woes of India have now embraced the language as a vehicle of growth.

English for communication is the mantra everywhere. Outsourcing centres, call centres, medical transcription centres, bookkeeping for various multinational companies in different parts of the world, software development, etc.—thousands and thousands of jobs

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

are created all over India... in a city like Bangalore alone, it is said there are about 75,000 persons employed in call centres... outsourcing, it is said, is going to create millions of jobs in the near future for English-knowing educated Indians. (Krishnaswamy, 159)

The entire world seems to eye us with envy for our being one of the most robust economies with a sound demographic dividend (with 65% of its population aged under 35) while the erstwhile superpowers are facing the crisis of large scale sovereign debt. IT revolution and globalization and subsequent consumerism have changed the entire socio-economic scenario in India further resulting into the cyber cities, mall and BPO culture, multi-specialty hospital, tremendous rise of real estate, services sector, mobile technology, retail marketing and hence multitude of career opportunities in different fields.

The demographic dividend may be capitalized better only with the development of skills among the youth (including the life skills). On the National Skill Development Mission, it said that much more is required both in terms of achievements and speed to reap the benefits of demographic dividend properly. [National Skill Development Council, Ministry of Labour Government of India](#) aims at achieving rapid and inclusive growth through: a) Enhancing individuals' employability (wage/ self employment) and ability to adapt to changing technologies and labour market demands. b) Improving productivity and living standards of the people. c) Strengthening competitiveness of the country. d) Attracting investment in skill development. The Hindu reports:

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), set up in July 2008, has been mandated to achieve the target of creation of skilled workforce of 150 million people by 2022. By the end of December 2010, 28 states and union territories had set up Skill Development Mission. India has the advantage of demographic dividend, with over 50 per cent of its population below 25 years of age, whereas many advanced economies, including Japan, are facing the problem of an ageing workforce. ([The Hindu, Feb. 25, 2011](#))

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

570

To harness the benefits of tremendous inflow of FDI, rise in the number of BPOs, tourism industry, service sector, acquisition of foreign MNCs by Indian corporate houses and social sector reforms by the government, Indian youth needs to keep pace with the time. To have fair advantage of the changing scenario, our approach to English language learning needs to be given a fresh thought. For example, to have the advantage of emerging career avenues and employment opportunities in various fields, the English-knowing youth well-versed in other professional skills is required.

According to N. Krishnaswamy, in the globalised socio-economic and cultural context,

English teaching in India is becoming a big business. Every street corner has institutes for spoken English and grammar; many call centres are appointing English trainers to train people in the appropriate use of English, style polishing, accent sensitising, accent neutralising, English fluency, and cross-cultural communication... people who are good at spoken and written English are absorbed in the media and journalism. (Krishnaswamy, 160)

Change of Syllabi and Teaching and Learning Methods

At the same time, the traditional syllabi and methods of teaching English need to be given a fresh look by incorporating more of the communicative component and less of the literature. Now, the focus needs to be shifted from traditional practices in English studies (when British literature was given more prominence) to the pragmatic approach to English language teaching. The education system needs to be overhauled in such a way that our schools, colleges and universities don't produce aimless degree-holders but the ones poised to excel the world with clarity of vision, career and needs of the job market.

With the growing middle class, increasing urbanization, shift to a services economy, widening access to higher education (from 12% participation rate to 30% in a decade), increased vocational training, improved communications/mobility, more children attending private schools,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

English taught in government schools from Class 1 and English-medium streams opening in government schools, English language seems to have a very-very fertile soil to grow. But ironically, in spite of dozens of commissions and committees recommending suitable transformation in English Education in India, present scenario is not much encouraging. Our vibrant democracy emphasizing upon the principles like inclusive and sustainable development is still fraught with poor quality English language teaching in the educational institutions (especially those run by the government). Present day English language scenario in India fails to cope up with the socio-economic and cultural transformations we are witnessing at the global level as there are numerous challenges marring the productivity of English Language Teaching in India.

Continuing Apathy towards Learning and Teaching English in Schools

In spite of all claims of India having a bright future with skilled English-knowing youth in the next decade, general apathy towards English in schools, colleges and most of the universities is a matter of serious concern. Paradoxically, in the states like Haryana where English is introduced as a Compulsory subject, the introduction generates a general feeling among the majority of students that they will compulsorily fail. It is due to the lack of proper orientation and professional attitude among the teachers and students. These public-funded institutions seem to have failed the aspirations of the present generation of learners. In most of the states, the qualification of an English teacher is B.A. and B.Ed., with no specialization or rigorous pre-service or pre-induction training in the subject of English. Similarly, for the appointment of a teacher in college or university, NET or Ph.D. remains a compulsory requirement where there is hardly any focus on language or communicative proficiency (as prescribed text-books on poetry, prose and grammar don't address the emergent requirement), further leading to widening gap between the needs of the job market and education provided to the students. Obviously, such teachers might not have updated themselves regarding latest approaches/methods to ELT.

No Impact of Research in Teaching Strategies upon the Teachers, et al.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

The researches in the field of English Language Teaching don't percolate down to Indian English classrooms where teacher still holds the authority without creating any possibility for interactive approach and individual attention. The schools and colleges located in the rural areas are still practicing the outdated approaches to ELT including over reliance on Bilingual Method and Grammar-Translation Method where the job of the English teacher ends with summarizing the prose, poetry or fiction preferably in the first language of that region.

In the given circumstances, if there is any skill imparted to the students, it is reading or writing (that also doesn't include any element of creativity) rather than developing all four communicative skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). The apathy of the system doesn't stop here as the curriculum of the English classes in most of the institutes is still content based with only partial focus on skills.

No Significant Remedial Measures Initiated

There is hardly any remedial measure initiated by the administrators to bridge the gap between aspirations and achievements of ELT. Most of the state governments fail to motivate the teachers to go for language courses like PGCTE or PGDTE from English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) or Regional Institutes of English (RIEs). So, introducing the smart classrooms with electronic devices like computers, LCD or Language Labs and essential skill-based CD-ROMs and study material without having smart teachers may not deliver the desired results. In addition to that, non-academic duties given to the faculty mar the performance of the teacher. Faulty Evaluation system encourages memorization and not development of skills

Conclusion

Though colonial tag is not attached much to the English language, the general misconceptions about the language and ideological constraints still discourage the learner in the absence of proper career guidance and vision. Role of mother tongue in learning the second language is undoubtedly crucial but excessive interference of L1 sometimes leads to generalization and subsequent fossilization. Lastly, the need of the hour is to sense the changing socio-economic

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India

context where English is acknowledged as the global lingua franca, and then to revisit the ELT strategies keeping in view the uniform structure, equity of access to quality language teaching environment and development of required skills among the students by instilling positive reinforcement. The changing global scenario and the rising needs of English language teaching demand that the traditional variants of general ELT should be further oriented towards English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

References

Crystal, David. (2003) *English as a Global Language*. CUP, Cambridge.

Graddol, David. (2000) *The Future of English?*. British Council.

Graddol, David. (2010) *English Next India*. British Council.

Kachru, Braj B. (1990) *The Alchemy of English: the Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-native Englishes*. University of Illinois Press.

Krishnaswamy, N. and Lalitha Krishnaswamy. (2006) *The Story of English in India*. Foundation, Delhi.

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Central University of Haryana
Narnaul, Pin code: 123001
District: Mohindergarh
Haryana
India
sanjivkumarcuh@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 1 January 2012

Sanjiv Kumar, Ph.D.

Emerging Global Scenario and English Language Teaching in India