

A Study on “English as second language acquisition in India”

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Abstract

English in India is a global language in a multilingual country. A variety and range of English-teaching situations prevail here owing to the twin factors of teacher proficiency in English and pupils' exposure to English outside school. The level of introduction of English is now a matter of political response to people's aspirations rather than an academic or feasibility issue, and people's choices about the level of its introduction in the curriculum will have to be respected. Literature can also be a spur to children's own creativity. After hearing a story, poem or song, children can be encouraged to write something of their own. They can also be encouraged to integrate various forms of creative expression.

Key Words: acquisition, language, learning, second language, skill, teacher proficiency

Introduction

The goals for a second-language curriculum are twofold: attainment of a basic proficiency, such as is acquired in natural language learning, and the development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition through (for example) literacy. This argues for an across-the-curriculum approach that breaks down the barriers between English and other subjects, and English and other Indian languages. At the initial stages, English may be one of the languages for learning activities that create the child's awareness of the world. At later stages all learning happens through language. Higher-order linguistic skills generalise across languages; reading, (for example) is a transferable skill. Improving it in one language improves it in others, while reading failure in one's own languages adversely affects second-language reading. English does not stand alone. The aim of English teaching is the creation of multilinguals who can enrich all our languages; this has been an abiding national vision.

English needs to find its place along with other Indian languages in different states, where children's other languages strengthen English teaching and learning; and in "English-medium" schools, where other Indian languages need to be valorised to reduce the perceived hegemony of English. The relative success of "English medium" schools shows that language is learnt when it is not being taught as language, through exposure in meaningful context. Thus English must be seen in relation to other subjects; a language across the curriculum is of particular relevance to primary education, and later all teaching is in a sense language teaching. This perspective will bridge the gap between "English as subject" and "English as medium". We should in this way move towards a common school system that does not make a distinction between “teaching a language” and “using a language as a medium of instruction”.

Approaches and methods need not be exclusive but may be mutually supportive within a broad cognitive philosophy (incorporating Vygotskian, Chomskyan, and Piagetian principles). Proficiency and professional awareness are equally to be promoted, the latter imparted, wherever necessary, through the teachers' own languages. All teachers who teach English should have basic proficiency in English. All teachers should have the skills to teach English in ways appropriate to their situation and levels based on some knowledge of how languages are learnt.

In the case of second and third, or classical or foreign languages, all the skills, including communicative competence, become important. Children appear to learn much better in holistic situations that make sense to them rather than in a linear and additive way that often has no meaning.

The salient features of GO MS 76 of 2008 (references to English):

It is also agreed widely that stronger abilities to understand and communicate in English language are undoubtedly affording better employment opportunities for the youth, with a progressively increasing share of employment being in the private sector that is organized on a national and even international scale. Considering all these factors, and considering the need to provide the option for education at high school level in Government sector schools with English as the medium to the rural poor SC, ST, and BC and other students, Government directed a thorough examination of the entire issue, and consultation with all the stake-holders on the subject.

1. Accordingly, stake-holders' workshops were conducted at regional centers throughout the state, with participation from the parents, individual teachers, teachers' association representatives, educationists, retired and serving officers of the education department. Consultation workshops were also conducted with the representatives of teachers associations and with Teacher-MLCs in the state, and their opinions on the matter taken.
2. After a careful examination of the entire issue, and taking into account the opinions expressed in the stakeholders' workshops and the past experience of Government sector high schools (including Government schools, Zilla Parishad schools, Municipal schools, and residential schools) in introducing and conducting the instruction in English Medium; and considering the overall necessity of providing equitable opportunities to children of rural poor, SC, ST, and other Backward Classes families in the rural areas, as well as the children of families of urban poor, to obtain education at High school level in English medium for better educational and employment opportunities in the future, Government is of the considered opinion that there is a definite injustice that has been done to the children of these disadvantaged families belonging to the rural small and marginal farmers, agricultural labour, SC/ST/BC families, and the urban poor and slum-dwellers, in their being unable to access High School education in English medium since such facility was mostly available only in the private sector.
3. Accordingly, with a view to make available the option of English medium education to the children of rural small and marginal farmers, agricultural labour, SC/ST/BC families, and the urban poor and slum-dwellers in an equitable manner together with the others, Government hereby approve the introduction of English Medium instruction in a parallel section (i.e., ensuring that instruction continues in Telugu or other mother-tongue medium in at least one other section in the same school) in 6500 identified Government sector (Zilla Parishad, Government and Municipal) High Schools in the state, distributed equitably throughout the state.
4. Further, with a view to enable the students from rural poor families (particularly the Girl students) to continue their education in English medium till they reach seventeen years of age and complete their 'Plus-Two' level of education at the High School itself, Government hereby approve the introduction of syllabus affiliated to the central Board of Secondary Education in all the English Medium sections in the identified 6500 High Schools, with a view to introduce Classes XI and XII (plus-two level) in these 6500 High Schools. Orders regarding the introduction of Classes XI and XII will be issued separately, adequately before the 2008-09 batch of VI class students come to the XI class level.
5. Government also direct that all the above 6500 High Schools identified and selected for introduction of English Medium shall be included for fullfledged strengthening under the proposed project "SUCCESS" (Strengthening &
6. Universalization of Quality and Access to Secondary Schools). Common Cadre of Teachers: For the introduction of English Medium in the identified 6500 High Schools in the state, and to carry out the teaching for these sections, it is felt that it would be highly desirable to have interchangeability of teachers between the two media for better management of teacher-resources in a given school, in times of temporary absence, leave, etc. by any of the teachers. Government accordingly direct that all the subject School Assistant cadre teachers (Mathematics, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Studies) be entrusted with the task of teaching both the English and Telugu media in the schools and that there shall be a single cadre of teachers only (subject-wise), for both English and Telugu Media, for all the Government and Zilla Parishad High Schools in each district, and for each Municipal town, respectively.

7. English Training: In order to equip and enable the subject teachers to handle classes in English medium, Government direct that all the subject teachers be given adequate training in English so as to improve their command over the language, and improve their capabilities to teach in English medium. The trainings shall be arranged for an adequate duration so as to give full confidence to the teachers on their abilities to understand, speak and teach in English. The English Training shall be conducted, taking the technical expertise and assistance from the English & Foreign Languages University Hyderabad, and the Regional Institute of English, Bangalore.
8. Development and Training of a District Level Resource Persons Group: Government also order that as a long-term measure, 40 to 45 good English School Assistant Teachers (or Secondary Grade Teachers who have the requisite qualifications in English as a subject) shall be selected and sent for long-term training to EFLU Hyderabad, RIE Bangalore and other similar reputed institutions, so as to prepare them to be resource-persons at the district level to conduct regular training programs for other teachers.
9. Setting up English Language Laboratories & Supply of Dictionaries to High Schools: Government also order that steps shall be initiated to set up an English Language Laboratory in each of the 6500 High Schools where English medium is introduced with audio-equipment to enable the students to have interactive sessions through listening and answering simple English conversations. Government also direct that each of these schools shall be supplied with at least 6 English to Telugu and 6 Telugu to English dictionaries for use by the students and the teachers.
10. Strengthening of District Centers for English (DCEs) and English Language Training Centers (ELTCs) in the Districts: Government also direct that efforts shall be initiated to strengthen the existing DCEs and ELTCs in all the districts with additional training and hostel facilities, so as to facilitate the maximum utilization of these facilities to provide training to the High School Teachers in improving their English language abilities.
11. The Director of School Education shall take immediate action to implement the above and specifically in respect of the following:
 - i. Commence parallel English Medium sections in VI class in the High Schools as per the District-wise list enclosed;
 - ii. Take necessary action to shift the Upper Primary Sections of the identified Upper Primary schools, to the identified High Schools in which English Medium as a parallel section (in Class VI), and Computer Education are being introduced, as per the District-wise lists enclosed;
 - iii. Ensure that all such Upper Primary Schools continue to function as Primary schools with Classes I to V; and that there is no closure of even a single school;
 - iv. After taking into account the number of posts (School Assistants, SGTs, and Language Pandits) that will be shifted (with the teachers, or vacant) from the Upper Primary sections of Upper Primary schools to the identified 6500 High Schools in which English Medium is being introduced as a parallel section; and further, after taking into account the number of students section wise in each of these 6500 High Schools, and calculating the need for additional sections as per norms, and calculating the need of additional sanction of posts of School Assistants /Language Pandits, etc. in these 6500 schools as per the requirement of additional sections, initiate proposals to the Government for sanction of new posts for these 6500 High Schools;
 - v. Draw-up a continuous schedule of training to improve English language skills to the subject School Assistants in all the Government sector High Schools in the state; Efforts may be made to conduct the training once in a month without the schools' academic work suffering (preferably on Second Saturday and Sunday) in a location suitable to most teachers;
 - vi. Initiate steps to identify, develop and send for special training, of district level resource persons group of 40 to 45 English School Assistants (or SGTs with requisite qualifications) per district;
 - vii. Initiate steps to set up English language laboratories and supply dictionaries to all the 6500 Government sector High Schools in the state in which English Medium is being introduced as a parallel section;
 - viii. Initiate proposals for strengthening District Centers for English (DCEs) and English Language Training Centers (ELTCs) in all the districts, and set up three new DCEs in such districts where there is no DCE or ELTC.

SCHOOL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT G.O.MS.No. 53 Dated: 14-08-2015.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH ABSTRACT

School Education Department – Conversion of Success Schools into full – fledged English Medium Schools from 6th to 10th classes from the Academic Year 2015-16 –Orders Issued.

- 1) Earlier, during the year 2008 in the combined State of Andhra Pradesh, after widespread consultations with various stake-holders, 6,500 Government / Zilla Parishad / Municipal High Schools were identified for introduction of English Medium under the SUCCESS (Strengthening and Universalization quality and access to Secondary Schools) Programme. Out of these 6500 success schools, at present 3428 schools are functioning in the State of AP.
- 2) Government had issued instructions for introduction of English Medium Sections in a parallel section in 6500 identified Govt Sector (ZP /Govt / Municipal High Schools in the State) and also to prepare schedule for training of teachers to improve English Language skills and strengthening the District centers for English in all Districts.
- 3) From the analysis of the 2014-15 DISE data and from the preliminary rationalization exercise undertaken during July, 2014, the following are found:
- 4) Out of the 4,976 High Schools (Government / Zilla Parishad / Municipal),3,428 are the designated SUCCESS Schools with parallel English Medium.Total enrollment in both Telugu and English Medium in the SUCCESS Schools is 13,39,180 Out of the total enrollment, enrollment in English Medium sections is 4,20,066 (31.36 %) 1647 SUCCESS Schools have more than 100 students enrolled in English Medium sections. 1781 SUCCESS Schools have less than 100 students enrolled in English Medium Sections.
- 5) It is a fact that 31.36% students enrolled in SUCCESS schools are pursuing English Medium. The rising enrollment in English Medium in unaided private schools clearly indicates the trend that there is tremendous aspiration among rural communities for English Medium education for their wards.
- 6) In the above context, the Commissioner of School Education, AP, Hyderabad has requested the Govt for permission to convert all the 3428 High Schools functioning as Success Schools as full-fledged English Medium Schools from 6th to 10th Classes from the Academic year 2015-16.

Teacher related:

- a. DEO's shall be instructed to identify teachers who are eager and enthusiastic to teach in English Medium schools and who already trained in English. Such Teachers shall be posted in the proposed full-fledged English Medium Schools.
- b. All required handholding be provided to Teachers to update their skills and competencies to teach in English, by way of refresher training in English and English Teaching. This shall be done through partnerships with UNICEF, British Council, English & Foreign Language University (EFLU), Regional Institute of English (RIE), Mysore. To make them ready and prepared for the next academic year, the training shall be imparted during Summer Holidays by giving eligible compensation for the same. This should enable them to teach in English with ease from 2015-16.
- c. In all future DSCs, English Medium shall be made mandatory at least 3 levels for Teacher recruitment.
- d. All efforts shall be made to strengthen DIETs to meet the English training needs of the Teachers in the District.
- e. While giving posting orders to teachers in exclusive English Medium Schools, Telugu Medium teachers with English Medium background i.e, in Degree & P.G. levels & willing to teach in English shall be given preference.

Text Books, Teacher Handbooks & Training

- a. Students enrolling in VI or moving to Class VII and Class VIII will be provided English Medium Text Books only. A revised indent shall be sent to Text Book Press keeping the revised need for English Language Text Books. The Director, Text Book Press shall be instructed to print and supply sufficient number of English Medium Books before the commencement of the academic year.

- b. Supplementary Teachers' Hand Book / Module shall be developed and printed in English covering all the subjects on priority by SCERT and Text Book Press. These shall be supplied to all the teachers teaching in English Medium with teachers Handbooks and Workbooks in bilingual.
- c. Fifteen Days of Training in English Teaching to teachers posted in exclusive English Medium schools shall be done in different spells throughout the year.
- d. Support of NGOs and professional organizations shall be put in place for these English Medium Schools for improving English teaching skills of the teachers.
- e. All the required posts for English Medium for VI, VII, VIII Classes in the said schools shall be filled up. Where vacancies persist, Academic Instructors educated and trained in English Medium teaching shall be hired.

Implementation in Andhra Pradesh:

English always enjoyed a special status in Andhra Pradesh. English is taught as third language in all the non-English medium schools from 1961 ie almost all the Govt schools until 2009 when Govt proposed English medium schools called success schools in Govt sector too. The syllabus in these schools is the state syllabus. The Govt has appointed English assistants and trained some English teachers in EFLU University to improve the standard of English in Govt schools too.

Implementation in west Godavari district:

1. As per the recommendations of the GO special teachers for English (B.Ed Assistants in English) in success schools are appointed by DSC (District Selection Committee) unlike earlier.
2. The west Godavari dist. under the RMSA(Rastriya(Rajiv) Mashyamika Siksha Abhyan) scheme arranges trainings to all the teachers regularly at least once in a year.
3. There are 5 divisions in west Godavari district and two English teachers are selected from each division who are sent for special training in English teaching once in a year to IFLU(Indian and Foreign Languages University,Hyd) and RIE, Gnan Bharthi Campus(Regional Institute of English, Bangalore).
 - a. From our division namely Eluru division Mr. K. Wilson (ZP H School Pedapadu) and Mr.D.D. Srinivas Rao (Eluru Municipal high School),
 - b. From Tadepalli gudem division Mr Somayya (ZP H School Puulla)and Mrs Madhavi Latha (Govt girls High school Tadepalli gudem)
 - c. From chinttalpudi division
 - d. From Jangareddygudem division
 - e. From Narasapuram division
4. As per the recommendations there should be a language lab in each District Head Quarters. But so far there is no such lab developed in the district for training to English language teachers.
5. There are no special teachers for the English medium schools (success schools). The same teachers who teach the other subjects in telugu medium only are deputed to teach in English medium schools. These subject teachers teach all the subjects in Telugu Medium only which has no difference from the other Telugu medium schools.
6. The trained teachers are appointed as MRPs(Mandal Resource Persons) and these will in turn impart trainings to the other English teachers in their division after their training in IFLU or RIE.

Importance of English Language:

The constitution and references to English language:

Official languages of the Union:

The Indian constitution, in 1950, declared Hindi in Devanagari script to be the official language of the union. Unless Parliament decided otherwise, the use of English for official purposes was to cease 15 years after the constitution came into effect, i.e., on 26 January 1965. The prospect of the changeover, however, led to much alarm in the non- Hindi-speaking areas of India, especially Dravidian-speaking states whose languages were not related to Hindi at all. As a result, Parliament enacted the Official Languages Act, 1963, which provided for the continued use of English for official purposes along with Hindi, even after 1965.

In late 1964, an attempt was made to expressly provide for an end to the use of English, but it was met with protests from states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal, Karnataka, Pondicherry and Andhra Pradesh. Some of these protests also turned violent. As a result, the proposal was dropped, and the Act itself was amended in 1967 to provide that the use of English would not be ended until a resolution to that effect was passed by the legislature of every state that had not adopted Hindi as its official language, and by each house of the Indian Parliament.

The current position is thus that the Union government continues to use English in addition to Hindi for its official purposes as a "subsidiary official language, but is also required to prepare and execute a programme to progressively increase its use of Hindi. The exact extent to which, and the areas in which, the Union government uses Hindi and English, respectively, is determined by the provisions of the Constitution, the Official Languages Act, 1963, the Official Languages Rules, 1976, and statutory instruments made by the Department of Official Language under these laws.

Parliamentary proceedings and laws

The Indian constitution draws a distinction between the language to be used in Parliamentary proceedings, and the language in which laws are to be made. Parliamentary business, according to the Constitution, may be conducted in either Hindi or English. The use of English in parliamentary proceedings was to be phased out at the end of fifteen years unless Parliament chose to extend its use, which Parliament did through the Official Languages Act, 1963. In addition, the constitution permits a person who is unable to express himself in either Hindi or English to, with the permission of the Speaker of the relevant House, address the House in his mother tongue. In contrast, the constitution requires the authoritative text of all laws, including Parliamentary enactments and statutory instruments, to be in English, until Parliament decides otherwise.

Judiciary: The constitution provides that all proceedings in the Supreme Court of India, the country's highest court and the High Courts, shall be in English.

Administration: The Official Language Act provides that the Union government shall use both Hindi and English in most administrative documents that are intended for the public. The Official Languages Rules, in contrast, provide for a higher degree of use of Hindi in communications between offices of the central government (other than offices in Tamil Nadu, to which the rules do not apply). Communications between different departments within the central government may be in either Hindi or English, although a translation into the other language must be provided if required. Communications within offices of the same department, however, must be in Hindi if the offices are in Hindi-speaking states, and in either Hindi or English otherwise with Hindi being used in proportion to the percentage of staff in the receiving office who have a working knowledge of Hindi. Notes and memos in files may be in either Hindi or English, with the Government having a duty to provide a translation into the other language if required.

Implementation: Indian states with Hindi, English and regional language as official state languages. The Indian constitution does not specify the official languages to be used by the states for the conduct of their official functions, and leaves each state free to, through its legislature; adopt Hindi or any language used in its territory as its official language or languages.

Legislature and administration: The constitutional provisions in relation to use of the official language in legislation at the State level largely mirror those relating to the official language at the central level, with minor variations. State legislatures may conduct their business in their official language, Hindi or English, and members who cannot use any of these have the same rights to their mother tongue with the Speaker's permission. The authoritative text of all laws must be in English. The state has the right to regulate the use of its official language in public administration, and in general, neither the constitution nor any central enactment imposes any restriction on this right.

State judiciary: The Official Languages Act gives the Governor a similar power, subject to similar conditions, in relation to the language in which the High Court's judgments will be delivered. Even though English language is not included in the Eighth Schedule (as it is a foreign language), it is one of the official languages of Union of India.

Conclusion

A variety of materials should be available to provide an input-rich curriculum, which focuses on meaning. Language evaluation need not be tied to "achievement " with respect to particular syllabi, but must be reoriented to the measurement of language proficiency. Evaluation is to be made an enabling factor for learning rather than an impediment. Ongoing assessment could document a learner's progress through the portfolio mode. National benchmarks for language proficiency need to be evolved preliminary to designing a set of optional English language tests that will balance curricular freedom with standardisation of evaluation that certification requires, and serve to counter the current problem of English being a principal reason for failure at the Class X level. A student may be allowed to "pass without English" if an alternative route for English certification can be provided outside the regular school curriculum.

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