

## ELT IN INDIA: A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

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### ABSTRACT

This article describes English Language Teaching in India (ELT) from the period of British to the present. English is a widely spoken language in the world and before independence it was the main language for the British government for trade, commerce, administration and business.

This article gives an idea how English Language has evolved in India.

**KEYWORDS:** ELT, Independence

### INTRODUCTION

India is a multi-lingual country and has a number of languages and cultures different from place to place. Therefore, a vast country like India needs a common language to overcome the barriers of linguistic differences to unite people and at the same time serve as an effective medium of communication.

English is a world class language as F.G.French has said; "because of rapid spread of industrial development, science and technology, international trade and commerce and the close independence of nation, English has become world language (Pahuja, N.P.,1995).

Before Independence, English was the main language of business and administration, trade and commerce, elegance and diplomacy, fashion and instruction; in fact it was used for all purposes.

Lord Macaulay, in his famous "Minute" (Minutes of 2nd February, 1835) recommended the use of English for educating the Indian masses.

In 1854, Sir Charles Wood Despatch noted that English could be a suitable medium of education, and as such mandated that a sound knowledge of English was a prerequisite to seek admission into the university. But at the lower level, local languages continued to be the medium of instruction.

Two extreme views were advocated regarding the teaching of English in India. The first was to remove it completely and the second opinion objected to call English as a second language and wanted English as a medium of instruction even in schools.

Both the views were extreme in their arguments and therefore not suitable in the Indian scenario. A balance between the two had to be sought to do justice for to educational needs. The following reasons were offered in support of the continuance of English in India:

- Hindi had yet to attain the status of being a pan-Indian language.

- English is necessary to give a voice to the Indian culture and literature, to non-Indian cultures.
- To remove English would mean to cut off Indians from the new developments in technology and science and this would mean committing intellectual suicide.
- English is a window to the world and closing it means there will be no access to technology and scientific growth.

Mahatma Gandhi also advocated the development of Indian languages and was of the opinion that people should learn English to represent India abroad.

According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, English had become an integral part of our educational system and this cannot be changed. He said “English today has become one of the major languages of the world and Indians can neglect its study only at the risk of loss to themselves.”

C. Rajagopalachari was of the opinion that English was the gift of gods and we should not throw out English also with the English people.

The University Education Commission (1948-49) headed by Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, recommended that the English language should be studied, as it prevents isolation from the world and it also helps us reach wider across the world.

In the year 1950, the Indian Constitution allowed English to be the official language for 15 years and later and it was decided to accord English the status of Associate Official Language of India for an indefinite period by an Act of Parliament in 1963. Even today, English is the link language between the centre and the states.

The Mudaliar Commission (the Secondary Education Commission) 195253 felt that “no student should be handicapped by ignorance of the language which will ultimately determine the career that he chooses.”

Central Advisory Board of Education, 1956 (CABE) recommended the three language formula for school children which was approved by the Chief Ministers’ Conference in 1961. According to this, every child was required to study three languages – Mother Tongue, Hindi(national language) and English.

In the post-Independence Era, the value of English was not recognized at the lower levels and the demand for universal education resulted in an increase in the number of students from all walks of life entering educational institutions. In this connection, the recommendations given by the Indian Education Commission (Kothari Commission, 1964-66) marked an important event in the history of education in India.

Based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission the following Educational Institutions had been set up. The institutions that help in strengthening the National System of Education are All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE, set up in November 1945), University Grants Commission (UGC set up in 1956), Indian Medical Council (IMC set up in the year 1956), and Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR set up on 16 July 1929).

The National Policy on Education, NPE covers all aspects of education from elementary to university level and even adult education.

## ELT in Andhra Pradesh

The National Policy on Education called for focus on learning of regional language outlining the 'three language formula' to be implemented at the secondary education level – the instruction of English language, the official state language where the school is based and Hindi as the national language.

There are many English medium, Telugu medium and other regional medium language schools in the state. Telugu is the official state language and Hindi is taught as the first language. Telugu is taught as the second language in some state schools and English language is compulsory since it is an associate language. As far as Telugu medium and other regional medium schools are concerned, all instruction and subjects are taught in Telugu from class I to class v. In class VI, Hindi and English are introduced as new separate subjects. In English Medium schools, Hindi is taught from class I and Telugu is taught from class V.

At the Intermediate level, all the branches of Science, Commerce and Arts follow the same course books for general English, in addition to studying a language, which can be of their choice such as Arabic, French, Sanskrit, Urdu, Telugu, etc.

At the undergraduate degree level, students have general English as a compulsory subject and the course book is common to all the branches in addition to one optional language of their choice, for the first two years at this level of education.

The education structure for Andhra Pradesh is referred to as ten + two + three pattern. After observing the teaching of English language at different levels - from schooling to undergraduate level - we will now look at technical education and the philosophical orientation of this technical education.

## Goals of Higher Education

The University Education Commission of 1948-1949 (popularly known as Radhakrishnan Commission) and the Education Commission of 1964-66 (popularly known as Kothari Commission) laid down the basic framework and goals for the National Policy on higher education in the country.

The goals and objectives of higher education as stated in challenges to education (1972) are:

- A radical transformation of the education systems so as to achieve its fundamental objectives of cultivating new knowledge and promoting a scientific and rational outlook and temper.
- To train competent men and women with a commitment to basic human values, social purposes and natural development.
- To strive to enrich the life of the community around through the diffusion on culture and through the solution of the problem by the application of science, technology and learning (challenges to education 1972). For this we need to plan for a system of technical education that is capable of meeting the challenges of new human, social and technical situation.

## History of Technical Education in India

Technical education is designed for the supply of trained manpower for industrial and economic development through judicious application of Science and Technology. The English traders established a survey school at Madras to train people, as it was important to know the topography and resources of the place they were ruling through physical survey. This school started with Certificate Programmes but then progressed to Diplomas, and then to Bachelors' Degree by the second half of the nineteenth century. The Post-Graduate courses emerged in the twentieth century.

The first Engineering college was established in Roorkee followed by Howrah, Pune and Chennai (in the year 1884). The year 1944 saw the foundation of planned development of technical education and training and scientific research as part of which the following steps were taken: • Appointment of a committee to suggest development of higher technical education • Fellowship for training of science and technology abroad For coordinated development of technical education and training on a national basis, the AICTE formed in November 1945.

The Kothari Commission made the following recommendation for the proper administration of technical education: "To ensure the pursuit of the highest standards at the first degree and post-graduate levels, and to provide an adequate machinery with the national and professional concern with the future development at these levels, we have recommended the setting up of a UGC-type organization, industry and concerned Ministries. This body should have a full-time chairman, and funds should be allotted to it on a block basis."

In view of the above, AICTE became a statutory body through an Act of Parliament 52, in 1987.

The Education Commission (1964-66) recommended the 10+2+3 year pattern and at the post-degree level, a Master's leading to Masters in Technology (M.Tech) and a Post-Graduate Diploma course for industrial requirement. Independent India had hundred industrial training institutes, fifty three polytechnics and thirty eight engineering colleges.

In 1960, some entrepreneurs in Karnataka started Polytechnic and other colleges that were self-financing institutions and this trend spread to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The four states saw mushrooming of Polytechnic, Engineering colleges as well as Management, Medical and Pharmacy colleges on self-financing basis.

The early 90s saw a boom in Andhra Pradesh in the growth of software industry. The establishment of Information Technology (IT) companies in Hyderabad led to a steep demand for studying Engineering courses. By the late 90s however, there was a decline, with difficult and rough times, uncertainty of jobs and fewer placements which disheartened undergraduates. After 2003, opportunities started slowly going up again with the changing job market and stiff competition.

Engineers require strong and effective speaking, listening and writing skills and reading skills which play an important role and become an integral part at the workplace.

Globalization and Industrialization require more effective communication skills which constitute. Engineers and this has put a greater demand on the engineers – they need good academic skills like preparing and presenting reports, understanding latest devices in technology, etc and at the same time linguistic skills involving working with individuals or with groups, communicating with clients, negotiating and decision making.

## CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, English has been considered as a major foreign language in India since independence. As the world is getting globalized, there has also been a sense of English as a global language, not just a language of the USA or the UK. Although English was considered as a major foreign language in India, Indians in different contexts are more likely to have witnessed, or experienced benefits of having more competence than before. These changes in the functions and benefits have brought about change in the status of English from that of a foreign language to a global Language.

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