Chapter - I

Introduction
## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Although speech is used for communication, it is not the only means available to people. Writing, drawing, signs, gestures etc., serve as means. An individual’s selection of the mode depends on the context, his needs and the message he wishes to transmit. Human language uses vocal sounds and is based on man’s ability to speak.

1.2. MAN AND THE LANGUAGE

Man has rightly been called “a talking animal”. Man is gifted with the quality of speech, which differentiates him from other living beings. Language consists of words, idioms and syntax. Through language human beings think, feel, judge, and express. In producing this speech man will utter some sounds. These sounds are conventionalised and recognised as common usage and provide the social aspect of a language. In short, language is speech.

Language and life are inter-related. The scope of language is widened with the widening scope of human activity. Today there is no activity, which does not find its expression in terms of language. No subject can be pursued, be it arts or science without using and understanding language. Human activity linked to language goes on widening in the manner of concentric circles.

Generally speaking 'Language is a socially shared code, or conventional system, that represents ideas through the use of arbitrary symbols and rules that govern combinations of these symbols (Bernstein and Tiegerman, 1989, P. 4). Therefore it may be seen that language is a code whereby ideas about the world are represented through a conventional system of arbitrary signals for communication (Bloom and Lahey, 1978).

1.3. CHILD AND THE LANGUAGE

Human speech is very much complicated. It cannot be explained from any single source. 'The first sound a child makes on coming into the world is one of discomfort, it is a cry, a reflex action and the child does not expect a response (Hindustan Times, 1964). The child’s first cry is an evidence that he is alive. Whether it is despair, gloomy seriousness, or youthful hilarity, that gives rise to the origin of speech, it is an expression
of primeval feelings and emotions. As the child grows and his parents answer his cries, he soon learns to attach meanings to them. As such, in due course, the language becomes a tool in his hands.

Halliday (1975) identifies the following functions of language:

**Instrumental function:**

Language permits the child to satisfy his needs and to express his wishes. This is the “I want” function.

**Regulatory function:**

Through language the child is able to control the behaviour of others; this is the “do that” function.

**Interpersonal function:**

Language can be used for interacting with others in the child’s social world; this is the “me and you” function.

**Personal function:**

A child expresses his unique views, feelings, and attitudes through language; through language the child establishes his personal identity.

**Heuristic function:**

After the child begins to distinguish himself from his environment, he uses language to explore and understand his environment. This is the questioning, or “tell me why”, function.

**Imaginative function:**

Language permits the child to escape from reality into a universe of his own making. This is the “let’s pretend”, or poetic function of language.

**Informative function:**

Children can communicate new information through language; this is the “I’ve got something to tell you”, function.

As the above list suggests, language serves a wide range of purposes for the developing child.
1.4. NEED FOR LEARNING DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

There are at least 5,000 living languages in the world; about 140 of them are spoken by a million or more people. But, it is quite natural that one feels his mother tongue the most important one. Anyhow, for wider communicative and educative purposes one needs to learn another language. There are situations where a variety of languages may exist, each with its substantial literary tradition. One can find this situation predominant in India, Pakistan and Ceylon. Moreover Language is the index of the stage of development of a society. The rise of the power of the industrialised nations of the west was inextricably linked to a developed language whether it was English, or French, German or Russian (Sharma, 1993, P. vi).

Over a billion people in the world speak more than one language fluently. A survey of the top U.S. corporation executives with responsibilities in export development and overseas manufacturing revealed that less than half of those who were born in the United States spoke a language other than English (Craighead, 1980). In contrast, 80 per cent of the foreign-born executives spoke a language in addition to English, and 59 per cent spoke three or more language.

Neurolinguistic researches suggest that people who know more than one language make use of more of the brain than monolinguals do (Albert and Obler, 1978). The part of the brain that is used in second language functioning remains underdeveloped in monolingual brains. Albert and Obler (1978) reviewed a series of post-mortem studies on polyglot brains - brains of people who spoke from three to twenty six languages and found that certain parts of these brains were especially well developed and marked furrowed. Psycho-linguistic studies indicate that people who control more than one language are verbally more skillful than monolinguals, and they mature earlier with respect to linguistic abstraction skills (Heidi Dulay et al., 1982, P. 10).

Leera and Laporta (1971) and Palmer (1972) report, that bilinguals have better auditory memory than monolinguals. Slobin (1968) found that bilinguals are better at intuiting meaning from unknown words. Therefore learning a language or languages other than the mother tongue is found to be advantageous.

It may be inferred therefore that the aim of learning another language is to achieve the same linguistic competence that the native speaker of the language possess. To learn another language is not merely to learn a new set of sounds or marks on paper.
for saying something; it is to learn that it is possible to think in a slightly different way from that to which one has become used, to understand that there is more than one way of organizing our experience and that the world is rather greater place than one once thought (Scott F.S. and others, 1973, P. 3).

1.5 ENGLISH IN THE WORLD CONTEXT

English is said to be the world's most important language having communicative and educative values. It is the mother tongue of more than 320 million people and another 200 million use it as their second language (Baruah, 1991, P. 4). English language is used all over the world not out of any imposition but because of the realisation that it has certain advantages. A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world's knowledge is enshrined in English.

Moreover English is a progressive language. It has its past, present and future. It is a dynamic language that nearly half of the world speaks and understands it. It is a flexible language because its history is a chronicle of the tremendous changes in culture and language. English is a complete language because it has evolved out of a social background and expresses cultural experience. Over and above English is universally renowned for its power of expression and its rich literature.

1.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Though it is said now that Macaulay's minutes (1935) paved the way for the development of English in India by making its study compulsory, in reality, the elite section of the Indians too contributed towards forming a 'favourable' atmosphere for English education. The introduction of English created an atmosphere of political consciousness and an awareness of our own rights and privileges. Only because of this unifying factor the wave of independence spread from North to South and from East to West. Gradually English occupied the top most position.

However meanwhile people also began to think that English was a foreign plant transplanted in the Indian soil and was doing immense harm to the growth of our nation. As a result in 1904 a government resolution suggested that the medium of instruction in the middle classes should be the mother tongue and English should not be taught before the age of thirteen. However, the children had the provision to pick up a working vocabulary of English to be able to follow their lessons in higher classes. Nevertheless
the Calcutta University Commission (1917) supported 'Bilingualism'. Thus English continued to dominate the curriculum of Indian Schools, Colleges and Universities.

1.6.1. Post Independence Period

Gandhiji was of the opinion that English education had emasculated the English educated Indians and had put a severe strain upon the Indian students and had made them imitators. After Independence the place of English in India became a problem. The constitution of India adopted in 1950 accepted to have English as the official language for a period of 15 years. Later, it was realized that Hindi could not replace English as the South-Indians agitated against the issue of making Hindi as the official language. Due to this in 1963 the Parliament passed a bill declaring English as the Associate Official Language of India for an indefinite period.

1.6.2. Present Status of English in India

There are arguments for and against the teaching of English in India. Our present problem may be summed up as follows: having got rid of the English of whom we had little use, we have not been equally successful in driving out their language, because as things stand, we can neither really live with it nor, indeed do without it. National self-respect demands that we dethrone it from its eminent place in our country but its extraordinary utility has made it so indispensable to us, that we are prevented from banishing it (Sharma, 1993, P. 2).

One can feel the same trend in the report of the Kothari Commission which states that English is quite essential to keep pace with advances in science and technology. The former Chairman of the UGC, Dr. Satish Chandra, after careful study of the problems facing the constitutional provisions relating to official language, recommended that a certain standard was required of officers entering the higher services, in English.

Regional languages are used more in the field of administration in various states but this does not help these languages to attain the status of English in the academic field.

All men both high and low regard English as a means of getting academic advancement and social elevation. To maintain or to promote social status and family prestige, parents are crazy to admit their wards in English medium schools. Not withstanding the pronouncement of politicians that no more English medium school will be permitted, the demand continues unabated. Higher fees are no deterrent; parents are
willing to make enormous sacrifices to ensure upward mobility for their children. Success in the job market or even marriage market has come to be equated with fluency in English (Prabhala, The Hindu, 1994).

1.7. PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

However a high percentage of school-leavers leave the precincts of the school as ignorant of English usage as they were when they entered the school first. Many years of learning English leads most of our school goers nowhere. Teaching of English in our schools is in a chaotic state today. Pupils are taught English for about six periods per week for six years. But it has been estimated that they hardly know few words by the time they join a University. This means that they have hardly been able to learn English words at the rate of one word per period. They do not know how to use the commonest structures of English. The mistake is in our Educational system itself. A teacher’s target is to “prepare” his students for the examination and not to make his pupils competent in the use of the language they are learning (Bala Subramanian, 1985, P. 56).

In reality neither the student nor the teacher is anxious to learn or to teach English. So the student is nervous only about his success in the examination and the teacher’s sole problem is to see that the pass percentage does not go down. We hunt for shadows rather than substance. We care more for diplomas than for knowledge. It is not learning that we want, but the prize that learning brings - wealth, prestige, status, and so on. It is not knowledge that we ask for but short-cuts to knowledge, so that we can outwit the examiner (Mehta, 1981, P.18).

Pupils are assessed in all the states in India by means of a single examination conducted towards the end of the year. In this system pupils usually work hard for a few days just before the examination and get through the examination. But, such last minute preparation does not help in the case of language. Language needs constant practice over an extended period and this can be ensured only if examinations are held at frequent intervals. The present system of relying solely on an all-important annual examination therefore does not serve the purpose (Baruah, 1991, P. 14). Moreover the question papers are set in such a way where all the questions can be answered with the help of bazaar cribs. For such an examination, students require no thinking, no originality, no imagination and no skill, though the vital aspect of language learning is integrated skill.
Hence an average teacher tends to teach nothing more than what the examiner is likely to require.

1.8. STANDARD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Factors of a heterogeneous nature varying from place to place and situation to situation do exist and create difficulties. Unmanageable numbers, poor classroom conditions, poor motivation, lack of support from home and society, pressures of unwieldy syllabus in other subjects, too many languages to be studied at the same time, unhealthy attitudes of the authorities in many cases - all these are factors that often interfere with the teaching of English (Mohammed, The Hindu, 1995).

Because of these factors the standard of English Language Teaching is said to be going down day by day. Besides, there are certain teacher oriented factors that cause havoc to English Language Teaching. The teachers teaching English to secondary students are not so competent in teaching the language. Oral competence of teachers teaching English is very poor; reading competence is found to be poor and writing competence seems to be some what poor (Franklin, 1997, P. 246). Teachers are not clear about the aim of teaching English. They divide the timetable into reading, writing, composition, translation and grammar and are satisfied so long as the students are kept busy and they don’t get any trouble from the higher authorities.

It drives home the fact that in general, students are not found to be competent in English because of lack of skill-oriented teaching. Even after studying the language for nine years they are not able to speak or write on their own. Therefore an empirical study of the language skills developed in students is found to be essential.
1.9. REFERENCES


2. Hindustan Times (daily), 1964, July 12.


