CHAPTER II

CHANGING PATTERN OF EDUCATION: STATUS OF ELT
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The English language teaching situation in India has been undergoing a significant change since the pronouncement of the Education Commission about the place of English in education. In the new pattern (10+2+3) that has now emerged, English is L3 for a fairly large number of students if not for all. Most States and Union Territories of India have adopted the new scheme of education. D. P. Yadav, the Deputy Minister for Education in the erstwhile Congress government told the Lok Sabha on August 16, 1976 that:

... nineteen States and Union Territories had already adopted the new scheme of education i.e.; ten + two + three, seven would adopt it within a couple of years, while five were still considering the matter.1

Until recently English was taught in India as a second language. Now it is in the process of acquiring the status of a compulsory 'third' language although it has not yet acquired that status uniformly everywhere. However, it cannot be denied that the ELT situation has changed. This new situation calls for a reconsideration of objectives, methods of teaching, preparation of materials and testing procedures. Yardi V. V. while discussing the theoretical aspects of learning English as a possible 'third' language

1. Times of India, Bombay, Tuesday, August 17, 1976.
gives the following justification for using the term 'third' in preference to the term 'foreign' language:

There need be no technical objection, then to the use of the term 'third' language which so aptly describes the EILT situation in India today. The justification for using the term 'third' in preference to 'foreign' language is that unlike German or Russian, it is a compulsory language under the new pattern of education. Although its use is being restricted, it continues to be used in several walks of life. The Indian creative spirit still finds expression in English. For these reasons and for several others, it may seem most apt to describe English in India as a third language.2

It would not be out of place here to discuss the implications of the terms 'second' language, 'third' language and 'foreign' language. The more precisely we define these terms, the better it would be for us in formulating our objectives in the teaching of English. The terms 'teaching English as a second language' (TESL) and 'teaching English as a foreign language' (TEFL) have been used interchangeably or almost so in the U.S.A. In the U.K. they do make a distinction between the two. The editor of the English Teaching Forum while commenting on one of the letters raising doubts on the various acronyms

like TESL, TEFL and TESOL comments:

TESL is generally referred to the teaching of English in a country in which English is an official language or the language of education, etc.--that is where it plays some broadly essential role within the country in which English has no official role or special status.³

In the U.S.A. sometimes the teachers tend to use the terms TESL and TEFL interchangeably mainly to avoid the longer and awkward phrase "the teaching of English as a second or foreign language", when they mean broader concepts. Moreover, in some American universities and colleges both categories of foreign students are admitted. It is largely because of this, that they now prefer to use TESOL (Teaching of English to any one for whom it is not a native language) which includes both TESL and TEFL. The American linguist Marchwardt A. H. explains:

By English as a foreign language they (British) mean English taught as a school subject or on an adult level solely for the purpose of giving the student a foreign language competence which he may use in one of the several ways--to read literature, to read technical works, to listen to radio, to understand dialogue in the movies, to use the language for communication possibly with transient English or American • • • •

When the term English as a second language is used, the reference is usually to a situation where English becomes a language of instruction in the schools, as in the Philippines, or a lingua franca between speakers of widely diverse languages as in India.4

The British Council's Annual Report for 1960-61

makes a similar point:

It has been customary to speak of teaching English as a foreign language, often merely to emphasise that the process is by no means the same as teaching it to those who already have it as their mother tongue. More recently the term English as a second language has been employed to describe English taught or learnt for practical and necessary uses of communication — whether to serve as the language of instruction in education, for specialized studies, or as a lingua franca among those to whom English is an equal tongue. The distinction is important: for example English in France or Germany is still largely learnt for reasons comparable to those for learning French or German in Britain — as a foreign language, as a humane discipline and as an introduction to foreign culture. In many countries, however, the place of English in Education may be more important, and indeed more fundamentally necessary, because it is either the medium of education itself or a necessary link with resources beyond the borders of the country where it is learnt.5


A second language and a foreign language do not serve the same purpose in the life of a country. The term second language indicates a higher status and a greater use than is implied by the term foreign language. Wilkins D. A. distinguishes these terms from the point of their use and status:

The scale and variety of use of the second language differs enormously. It can encompass part or all of government administration, politics, law, medicine, industry, internal trade, newspapers, general publishing and education. As a result it may become the medium of instruction at any level from the primary schools upwards.

And about the process of foreign language learning he observes:

Foreign language learning, therefore, is like second language learning in that the material and method is designed to give a practical command of the language. But whereas the second language learner needs the language for use within his own community, the foreign language learner needs it so that he can form contacts with community other than his own.

In India the social role of English is fast diminishing particularly in non-metropolitan cities

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7 Ibid; p.154
and regional languages are gradually taking over. English now plays a comparatively smaller part than what it did in the past. It is now felt that regional languages can cope with most aspects of education except those of technical and scientific subjects at the university level. Consequently there is a steady reduction in the use of English as a medium. Chib S. N., while discussing the role of and pleading for the cause of Hindi as a link language quotes the Ministry of Education as follows:

... according to the Education Ministry, 24 universities are using one or more regional languages as the medium of instruction.English is no longer used as a medium of instruction in a majority of schools. Most colleges and universities teaching Arts and Commerce subjects in non-metropolitan areas have changed over to regional languages. However, English continues to be the language of instruction in the faculties of Law, Medicine, Engineering, Technology and Agriculture. At the All-India Competitive examinations the essay paper can now be optionally answered in one of the fifteen Indian languages. On October 30, 1973 the Union Government accepted the recommendations of the Kothari Committee and decided to implement them by next year i.e., 1979.

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One of the recommendations of the Committee was to allow candidates taking central civil services examinations to write their papers (other than English and language papers) in English or in any of the 15 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. A few industries have introduced regional languages in certain areas of their routine correspondence. One of the major national undertakings, the Indian Railways, have been increasingly using Hindi in place of English. At public meetings and at national-level conferences regional language and or Hindi is being used on a large scale. In several states the policy with regard to English has been changing too frequently. This has led The Study Group on Teaching of English (1971) to express its concern. The Study Group observes:

During the last five years the situation has changed at much greater speed than ever before. In several states, especially in the north, the most conspicuous feature of the changing policies in regard to English is their speed. We have examples of more than one state where, only a few years ago, English was taught as a compulsory language and, however low the competence attained, pass marks had to be secured in the English paper in order to get through the high school examination.

Today, largely because of the mounting concern caused by an alarmingly high percentage of failures in the subject at different end-of-the-year and school leaving examinations, the governments have decreed that success in English should no longer be considered essential for admission to the undergraduate courses at university ... In a few States English has been made an optional subject, and in some it is an optional paper and the marks secured in it do not in any way affect the examination result. In at least one State if a student chooses to take this paper, the fact is merely recorded on his result sheet.10

In Southern India, however, English remains a second language. Although it may have been styled as a 'second' language in Hindi-speaking areas its role in education and other walks of life has diminished to such an extent that it hardly deserves to be called a 'second' language. It is an Official Language of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. But this does not mean that the people of these territories have L1 competence. By and large, therefore, the use of English, is diminishing in most walks of life. The upshot of this discussion is that English is gradually losing its 'second' language status although it must be admitted that it has not yet completely and uniformly acquired the 'third' language

status. At the same time it must be noted that it has not sunk to the position of a 'foreign' language like French or Russian. According to Wilkin D. A., a foreign language learning situation is one in which: "... the target language is not the mother tongue of any group within the country where it has no internal communication function either." 11

Today, English is one of the compulsory languages in schools and colleges. It has still some internal communication function to perform. It is used in several walks of life. English is used at higher levels of administration and education. The Education Commission, however, envisages the study of English as a 'library language' in the near future. Once English takes the place of a 'library language' it would tend to acquire the status of a foreign language. Wilkins D. A., while commenting on the status of English in India observes:

India is a country in transition. English is losing its status as a second language and in some states has already become a foreign language . . . . Only in Southern India does English remain a second language, because it can serve as a more acceptable lingua franca than Hindi. 12

Wilkins fails to mention that in Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram English continues to be the official language.

technically speaking, and therefore its status is that of
spreading officially. It may not have that status
function-wise.

From what has been said above it seems quite clear
that English has neither the status of a 'second' language
nor that of a 'foreign' language. And it has yet to reach
the stage of a 'library' language. Under the new scheme
of education English for a fairly large majority of
students is a compulsory 'third' language (L3). If in spite
of this we continue to refer to English as a 'second'
language, it is because:

* * * Conventionally we speak only
of 'second' language learning. In
English the term bilingualism is
generally used even when the subject
discussed happens to be multilingualism.13

European authors prefer to use the term
bilingualism even when they refer to a multilingual
situation. This is because of the belief that "The
problems involved in bilingualism do not seem to be
essentially different when a third or a further language
is added."14 Mackey W. F states:

The concept of bilingualism has become
broader and broader since the beginning
of the century. It was long regarded as
the equal mastery of the two languages.

14. Ibid.
This broadening of bilingualism is due to the realization that the point at which a speaker of second language becomes bilingual is either arbitrary or impossible to determine. It seems obvious, therefore, that if we are to study the phenomenon of bilingualism we are forced to consider it as something entirely relative. We must moreover include the use not only of two languages, but of any number of languages. We shall therefore consider bilingualism as the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual.\textsuperscript{15}

Catford J. C. expresses a similar view when he says:

Most people — that is all except perhaps ambilinguals — have one L\textsubscript{1}, but they may have a number of L\textsubscript{2}s, each perhaps being reserved for one particular purpose, as for instance reading scientific papers enjoying a Mediterranean holiday, reading the scriptures.\textsuperscript{16}

On the contrary some authors use the term 'polyglottism' although usually their subjects are bilinguals.

The view that bilingualism does not seem to be essentially different when a third or a further language is added, does not seem to be pedagogically


very helpful. Learning L2 in a bilingual situation cannot be equated with learning L3 in a multilingual situation. A learner learning his L2 faces interference stemming from only one language i.e; L1 which can easily be contained but in learning L3 he has to struggle against double interference since the learner has already acquired two languages. And the interference could be of a different nature. As Yardi V. V puts it:

It is unpredictably 'mixed' and may show itself in unexpected contexts. There is no easy way to measure this interference, assuming, of course, that all potential forms of interference do materialize -- which actually may not be the case.17

It is, therefore, necessary that the policy makers, syllabus framers, administrators and classroom teachers are aware of the implications of and are sensitive to the changing situation. It is time we formulated our policy regarding English, keeping in view the needs of the community and the availability of resources.

The Teaching of English before the Emergence of the New Pattern:

English was introduced in India with the idea of creating an English-speaking elite which served the needs of the Raj. The British government soon found favourable

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circumstances and willing people. English gradually acquired the status of a lingua franca. It became the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. The missionaries, who were the pioneers in establishing educational institutions, presumably taught English much in the same way as a British teacher would teach the native speakers of the language. We do not have any authentic records of the methods of teaching English in those days but the goal set before the students learning English gives us an inkling of the methods employed in the teaching of English.

... the goal set before students of English before independence was that of mastering the language for the purposes of knowing English literature, life and thought, of developing a refined sensibility and expression.\textsuperscript{18}

English began to be taught as a first language and continued to be taught "as if it was the mother tongue of the candidates."\textsuperscript{19} Samuel Mathai writing on the position of English in India gives us an idea of the method of teaching English used before and after the first world War. He writes:


English was taught in schools by drilling students in English grammar. After the war the old practice of drilling students in grammar was more or less abandoned and English was taught in schools through the so called direct method.20

There was no significant change in the approach until recently. Bruton J. B. in one of his articles on language teaching wrote:

One of the great difficulties in India is that before independence the methods used for teaching English were by and large the same as those used in England for teaching English children, with the unfortunate consequence that a body of belief and practice was built up that are entirely inappropriate to the present situation.21

Consequently the methods and materials suited to the native speakers of the language were used for teaching English in India. It was hardly ever realised that for an Indian child growing in an Indian cultural environment such an approach was far from satisfactory. This state


of affairs continued until 1958 when the Central Institute of English came to be established at Hyderabad. It stands to the credit of the Central Institute of English (and Foreign Languages) that it realized for the first time the importance of the change in the status of English in India. English began to be considered as a 'second' language. This gave a new orientation to the teaching of English in this country. The need for a suitable methodology and materials for teaching English as a second language began to be felt. The emphasis shifted from literature to language.

Inspite of the fact that English came to be recognised as a 'second' language and that emphasis in the teaching of English shifted from literature to language, the teachers of English in India hardly seemed prepared for such a change. As late as the year 1961, Mr. Bruton felt:

In my experience in India the greatest difficulty lies in convincing the teachers of this necessity for the control—of the fact that English is a foreign language. 22

Mr. Bruton was not the only person who lamented this deplorable situation. Randolph Quirk who visited India in 1963 expressed a similar view:

22. Ibid.
One cannot deplore too strongly this almost universal pattern of ill selected literature for students whose immediate need is for solid linguistic practice and a training in the practical use of mid 20th Century English. One cannot repeat too often that it is no service to English literature or to the lecturers who love it, to have such material made the farcical basis of a course to students whose only hope is the cynical bypassing of the educational process by means of 'bazar guides' and whose incipient interest in the culture conveyed by English is effectively killed.23

A survey of the reading habits of school teachers in England made by Arnold and Richards has revealed that 70 percent of them do not turn to literature for recreation or appreciation. They rate this point very low on a 15 point scale.24 However in India we continued to use Victorian English and cherished the hope of developing a refined sensibility, love for English life and literature. In the sphere of ELT, the old methods of teaching continued. Though the standards of attainment deteriorated day by day, our syllabi, methods of teaching and testing remained static. Until 1971 the situation remained static.


almost the same. The Study Group (1971) observed:

A number of Committees and Study Groups have in recent times given anxious thought to the place of English in our system of education. The teaching of this language at various stages, its role in school and at the university, its share in the time tables, and its contribution to the teaching of other subjects are part of problem which has become increasingly important as well as controversial with the passage of time.25

The Education Commission (1964-66) envisaged the study of English as a 'library' language. A library language tends to acquire the status of a 'foreign' language. Such an implication is present in the following paragraph of the Education Commission's report:

'It is true that English will be the most important library language to be studied at this stage (VIII to X). We however, think that it is also necessary to encourage the study of other important library languages like Russian, German, French, Spanish or Japanese. Facilities for their study should be provided in a few selected schools in each state and it should be open to the students to study them, either in addition to, or in lieu of English or Hindi.'26

This virtually implies that English may have the same status as other foreign languages.

It is against such a background that we have to formulate our objectives and adopt a methodology that may help us to achieve the goal. But unfortunately no serious thought has been given to this problem. The conference on Methodology of teaching Indian Languages as Second Languages in Secondary Schools discussed the meanings of the terms 'link' language and 'library' language and 'second' language but strangely enough could not offer any positive guidance by way of methods to teach a link language or library language. They observed:

The Conference discussed the meanings of the terms 'link language', 'library language' and 'second language'. The Conference took the view that the term 'link language' and 'library language' are only indicative of the role and purpose for which a language is used. They do not necessarily imply any methodological differences from those of teaching a second language.

The Conference clarified that the numbering of languages as 'second' and 'third' does not necessarily imply any differences in terms of importance of methodology to be employed in teaching them. These numerical objectives are used solely for convenience of reference.27

Now that the Education Commission (1964-66) has neatly underlined the philosophy of teaching English in

India under the phrase English as a 'library' language there should be no controversy about the ultimate place of English in this country. Sooner or later English would acquire the status of a 'library' language for a vast majority of our students. The direction in which we have to move is now clear. Only the pace of movement has to be determined. As it is English seems to hold an uneasy position between L2 and L3 today. Eventually it may become a 'library' language for a large majority of our students, although some may choose to study its different aspects of language and literature. It need not become a 'library' language for one and all.

Emergence of the New Pattern of Education: Need for Revision of Objectives of ELT

The status that English holds today in India has already been discussed in the fore-going pages. At present English occupies a place somewhere between L2 and L3 for a large majority of our students. Even in the States where English is L2 the competence of learners, skillwise is virtually the same as that of the learners for whom English is L3. In some of the Hindi-speaking states for instance the learner's competence is poorer than that of his counterpart in non-Hindi speaking states. For convenience of discussion therefore we may assign it a place and
designate it as \( L_3 \). The other two languages in most of the states are the mother tongue \( (L_1) \) and Hindi \( (L_2) \). Where Hindi is not the mother tongue, under the new scheme of Education, English has acquired the status of a third language. In Andhra Pradesh, Gujrat, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra and Punjab\(^{23}\) where Hindi or the regional language is \( L_2 \) this sequence of three languages seems to work well. Where Hindi is \( L_1 \) English happens to be \( L_2 \). In these states although English may be \( L_2 \), formally speaking, it does not have the status of a second language in the sense in which it has a 'second' language status in countries like Kenya or Philippines. The sequence \( L_1, L_2 \) and \( L_3 \) perhaps indicates both dominance of the language in a speech community and the chronology of learning it. Chronology and dominance, however, are not necessarily related.

Any approach to the teaching of a language whether second or third must take into account the needs of the learner and the circumstances in which the language is taught. Since needs and circumstances differ not only from country to country but also from time to time and in India from state to state – education being a state subject – the objectives of teaching English must reflect this change. Wilga M. Rivers comments:

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\text{With the passing of time, new situations arise for a nation and its people and}
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these establish priorities of objectives for the foreign language teacher, who must be continually aware of such changes if his teaching is to be appropriate to the generation of students before him. 29

Objectives which are not related to our immediate needs may fail to create the necessary motivation for learning the language. The objectives of teaching a subject do not have any inherent worth of their own so as to make their pursuit worthwhile for their own sake. Objectives lead to specific activities that are to be pursued for enabling the learners to obtain the desired outcome which would equip them for certain specific purposes in life. Well-defined objectives are also necessary for pedagogical purposes. Unless the objectives are defined clearly the teaching/learning process cannot become meaningful and effective. Again in the absence of proper objectives, proper methods and approach cannot be adopted. Testing and evaluation would be meaningless in the absence of precise objectives. Objectives, methods, materials and evaluation are interdependent. We cannot think of one without the other.

Against this background, when we study the EFL situation in India, we find that the teaching of English has suffered because we have failed to define our objectives clearly, particularly at the college and

post-graduate levels. At the school level, up to SSC, the objectives are stated clearly in terms of linguistic structures and vocabulary items though these seem to be rather ambitious in the present context. At the college and post-graduate level it is difficult to discover what the objectives of teaching are. J. G. Bruton observes:

But the real problem and difficulty lie in the fact that from syllabuses and examinations it is usually impossible to discover what the objectives of teaching are. Here again there is a marked difference to be found between school and university practice and belief. Most school syllabuses contain some sort of statement of what the objectives are supposed to be, but at the latter stage, no such statement is usual. although it would be possible to deduce from examinations that the objective is to teach the subject matter of a certain text and a few irrelevant trick with the language. 30

The syllabus at the SSC level is rather ambitious judged in the context of the pupils’ achievement. An SSC student until very recently was expected to master about 250 structures and 2000 vocabulary items by the end of the course. The fact is that the average SSC student

hardly can make use of 100 structures and 1000 vocabulary items effectively. A study of the recognition vocabulary of PUC students in Bihar by K. P. Thakur and D. P. Thakur reveals:

... that the initial recognition vocabulary of a PUC student on an average, was only 1393 words.... 60% of the students who took the vocabulary test had the recognition knowledge of only 942 words out of the total of 4619 words. ... Only 10% of the students had the recognition knowledge of 3000 words.31

The Higher Secondary School syllabus too gives a traditional list of language items to be mastered by students. It also makes several vague statements about objectives. For example, the general objectives stated in the Higher Secondary syllabus of the Maharashtra Board of Secondary Education are as follows:

The general objectives of both higher and lower level courses in English will be to help the students to improve their proficiency in the skills of comprehension (listening and reading) and expression and to bring it to a level considerably higher than that attained at the end of the secondary course. (Standard X).32

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The objectives envisaged in the above quotation regarding the proficiency in listening and reading comprehension seem to be imprecise. It is difficult to know as to what level of language proficiency, in terms of comprehension and communication ability they are expected to achieve. Nor it is clear in what situation they will be making use of English. Unless a syllabus takes these problems into consideration, it will be striking in the dark. Prof. V. V. John in one of his articles in the Times of India makes a similar point. He suggests:

The new ten-plus-two pattern should help us to be more clear-headed than hitherto about the objectives of language learning as of other studies. The new pattern presumes that not everyone who finishes the higher secondary stage will proceed to the university. The wise course to adopt at the plus-two stage would be to avoid rigid 'streaming' and to help students to make their own choices by indicating the skills and proficiencies that would be needed for different careers and for further courses of study whether academic or professional. In the guidance so provided the language requirement could also be indicated; those requirements should determine that language studies should be pursued in school and up to whatever levels of proficiency.

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All this is evidence enough to show that even today we have not become aware of the changing situation and consequently have not realized the importance of precision in defining our objectives. This is all the more so at the graduation and post-graduation levels. Here we continue to stick to old methods and cherish objectives which were dear to the older generation.

A survey into the motivations of acquiring L2 conducted by Yasmim M. Lukmani revealed that:

* * * the Marathi-speaking students were instrumentally motivated to learn L2 and that instrumental motivation* scores correlated with English proficiency scores. In other words the higher their motivation to use English as a means of career advancement the better the English scores.34

The individual’s rating of the reasons for learning English indicated the following order of priorities:

(i) getting a good job; (ii) coping with university classes; (iii) travelling abroad; (iv) acquiring new ideas and broadening one’s outlook; (v) becoming more modern;

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* Instrumental motivation means the study of language with a view to using it for career advancement and for utilitarian purpose.

(vi) reading advanced technical literature;
(vii) getting access to international books, journals, etc. (viii) acquaintance with
people in touch with the latest trends in
thought and behaviour in the West;
(ix) becoming friendly with English
speaking Indians and (x) thinking and
behaving like English speaking Indians. 35

Another study into the investigation of students studying
Foreign languages conducted by Bhatnagar Y. C. arrives at
a similar conclusion: It concludes:

... it is in the provincial or regional
universities, that the students are
guided mainly by instrumental motivations
since they would like to break away from
their rural associations and to have a
better social mobility. 36

Joshua Fishman while discussing the implications of
Bilingualism for language teaching and language learning
puts forth a similar point of view. He opines that pupils
learn languages other than the mother tongue for two
reasons viz; (i) utilitarian (ii) integrative
(e.g; cross-cultural sympathies and appreciations, a
liking for other cultures and peoples) and suggests:

Those students propelled by integrative
motives will be most successful in
learning by the direct method. They
will learn a great deal from out of

35. Ibid; p. 274.

36. Bhatnagar, Y. C; A Study into the Motivations of
the Students Studying Foreign Languages (15) and
some projections, Department of Foreign Languages,
Marathwada University, Aurangabad, p. 36.
school experience (such as trips and visits and motion pictures). Those whose motivation is instrumental will tend to profit more from classroom instruction. They will do particularly well in connection with formal conjugation, translation and other materials emphasized by the older instructional methods. 37

The studies mentioned above point to an important consideration which must be kept in mind while formulating the objectives of ELF in India. Foreign language learners are instrumentally motivated and, therefore, their needs are of a practical and a functional nature. A heavily literature-oriented syllabus cannot serve this purpose. This is not to belittle the cultural value of learning a foreign language. Those who are 'propelled by integrative motives' can do so but certainly a large majority of learners would prefer to learn a foreign language for functional and practical purposes. And it would be unfair to impose a heavily literature-oriented syllabus on such students. Until recently English in India was taught for ill-defined or undefined cultural ends. Such an approach may be appropriate in L1 situation but it has little justification in an L2 or L3 situation. Yet this was

what was done and still continues to be done in the name of Teaching English. The result is a steady deterioration in standards of teaching and learning English.

More than a decade ago, Prof. V. K. Gokak suggested the following five reasons for the study of English in India:

(1) as a "language of all important trade and industry" as a "language of administration at higher levels", "as the language of competitive examinations";

(2) "For getting access to modern scientific and technological knowledge";

(3) "So long as creative thought in every department of knowledge is not as active in this country as in the West, it would be rash to cut ourselves off from a language which keeps us in continuous contact with the latest thought in Europe in every field of life and culture";

(4) For "discussing English at a later stage"; and

(5) "to interpret India’s thought and culture abroad."38

Some of these arguments hold good even today though much water has flown down the Ganga. Where as in trade and industry, inter-state and international contacts are involved English continues and will continue to be employed.

But where regional contacts are involved it is but proper that the regional language must be used. This practice is gaining ground. The House of the Kirloskars, for instance, has started using regional language for some of its routine correspondence particularly where the use of regional language seems feasible. Today English is no more the only language of examination at the I.A.S. A majority of the regional universities have switched over to regional languages as media of instruction.

Prof. Gokak's argument for studying English for getting access to modern scientific and technical knowledge appears to be sound as English has become the language of scholarship. Randolph Quirk observes:

A Norwegian or Finnish scientist who a century ago might have published his work in French, and three century ago in Latin, will often today seek to achieve the maximum circulation of his ideas by publishing it in English. Swedish scientists in the distinguished and Venerable university of Uppsala may be heard discussing atomic physics among themselves—in English, since English is the language associated with scholarship.39

Recently the Maharashtra government decided that from class eight onwards Science and Mathematics should be taught exclusively in English. The Indian Medical Council does not allow students who have not taken higher level

English at the plus-two stage to the M.B.B.S. course. English still continues to be the medium in Law, Medicine, Engineering and Agriculture. Many still believe that science and technology cannot be taught through the regional languages or Hindi. But there are people who question the validity of the above argument. V. V. John believes:

... there is nothing easier to transplant from one language into another, than technology. No verbal subtleties or fine shades of meaning are involved. ... Pure technical terminology can be borrowed or transplanted without much difficulty. ... The non-technical language of the higher learning would present the most serious difficulties. 

Even if it is presumed that science and technology can be taught through regional languages the Indian scholars would still require to publish their work in English to reach a wider public and to know what is happening in their field in advanced countries of the world. Today English has become an important world language. The world-wide usefulness of English as a professional lingua franca has increased strikingly over the last twenty years. In the Middle East, Africa and Indonesia it has swept into secondary and higher education at the expense of French, Italian and Dutch. English is now "the principal means of spreading ideas and values, the main language of salesmanship for Japan and

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Germany and the prime language of debate in the United States. . . . Sixty percent of radio programmes and most television material is in English. A flood of newspapers, magazines and comics in English covers the book-stalls of the world’s airports. 'Time' and 'The Times' reach the ends of the earth. More educational material is available in English than in any other language.\(^{41}\)

In the USSR also English is being used increasingly. Lewis E. Glyn who visited the USSR in 1962 reports: "Moscow alone has 500 kindergartens where English is taught to something like 20,000 children of five years and above.\(^{42}\) In 1961 the Union Republic Council of Ministers were instructed to open at least 700 General Education schools where several subjects would be taught in foreign language (foreign language medium schools). Lewis E. Glyn was greatly impressed by the competence displayed by those who had learnt English, and envisages: "a time in the near future when the majority of the non-native Russian speakers will be Russian - English Bilinguals.\(^{43}\)


\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 15.
He further suggests:

... the existence of such a complicated pattern of bilingualism within the system of education has facilitated recent advances in teaching foreign languages. Some of these advances will in turn serve to make the teaching of a foreign language more and more like the teaching of a second language in a bilingual situation.\(^4\)

Even China has made great strides in learning English. There was a time when English had taken second place to Russian but now "Once again it became the first language with Spanish, French and German in strong competition..."\(^5\) Fox Butterfield recently reported in the New York Times as follows:

The drive to learn English is part of China's ambitious effort to modernise itself by the turn of the century and overcome a decade in which its education, science and technology were retarded by the chaos of Cultural Revolution. China now desperately needs as many scientists, economists and engineers as it can produce who are familiar with Western technology and ideas.\(^6\)

Prof. Gokak's third argument is probably the soundest argument for studying English. The popularity and usefulness

\(^{4}\) Ibid.


\(^{6}\) Times of India, Wednesday, October 13, 1978, p. 3.
of English all over the world cannot be ignored. We can not shut ourselves up in isolation. We must provide for the study of a well-developed foreign language in our education system and there can not be a better choice than that of English. English should be taught as a functional language and not for any loosely defined or undefined cultural purpose. It should serve our immediate practical needs. The Education Commission (1964-66) emphasises the study of English for practical purposes. They suggest:

Special emphasis needs to be laid on the study of English and other international languages. World knowledge is growing at a tremendous pace, specially in science and technology. India must not only keep up this growth but should also make her own significant contribution to it. For this purpose study of English deserves to be specially strengthened.47

In support of his argument Prof. Gokak suggests developing the skill of translation. He believes "Translation alone can enrich the literature in our languages in everyway."48 This has a point. Today we need expert translators who can siphon off literature of knowledge into Indian languages.

All this suggests that we ought to redefine the objectives of teaching English at all the stages of education in the light of the present-day needs and realities. We should also decide what our pedagogical strategies ought to be.

Objectives of Teaching English as L3:

Need for Reading Comprehension skill:

The discussion above points to the conclusion that today we need English for different and restricted purposes. We also require various types of courses to meet our needs. National interest may require some students to develop all the four skills, a few to cultivate literary excellence, and the vast majority to develop reading comprehension skill. We may need to have a number of courses so that they suit the ability of the learner and his educational needs.

Prof. V. V. Yardi suggests:

We may visualise a teaching situation where 'English for comprehension' would be our priority No.1, followed by optional courses in 'Written English', 'Spoken English' etc. Special courses may be designed for those who want them.49

Today, for a fairly large majority of students English is a compulsory third language (L3). In this situation

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49. Yardi, V. V., Teaching English in India Today, (Aurangabadi Farimal Prakashan, 1977), p. 31
we need English "to teach the student to read the foreign language with comprehension so that he may keep abreast of modern writing, research and information." This is one of the six objectives of ELT which Vilga Rivers mentions and which suits the country most in the present situation. It is reading which is needed today. K. R. Narayanaswamy while discussing the implications of English as a 'library' language puts forth a similar point of view:

Possibly there are only two ways of learning a second language. One is to live in the country where the language is spoken and the other is to read books written in that language. To almost all Indian students, the second is the only way open; to them, as perhaps to most overseas learners, reading is besides a matter of sheer expediency.

Other skills viz; listening comprehension, speaking and writing should certainly be incorporated in our syllabi but we should decide what weightage each one should be given and at what stage we should teach them. It is a matter of priorities and shift in emphasis. Emphasis on one or the other is neither wrong nor misconceived. On the contrary


it is legitimate, if it is based on sound pedagogical considerations, that is, considerations of the specific needs of learners learning the language in certain well defined teaching situations.

An examination of the practices of foreign language teachers and theories suggested by several experts suggest two major approaches to foreign language learning. These are: (i) 'audio-lingual habit theory' and (ii) Cognitive Code-learning theory'. The audiolingual habit theory of learning is based on the following principles:

1) Speech is primary and writing is secondary. Therefore, auditory discrimination responses and speech responses must be learnt first.

2) Habits must be so conditioned that they can be called forth without conscious effort.

3) The automation of habits can be achieved by practice i.e.; by repetition.

This theory has given rise to the importance of oral work and speech practice. According to the 'cognitive code-learning theory', learning a language is the process of acquiring different aspects of the language vis: phonological, grammatical and lexical patterns of a language largely through study and analysis of these patterns. This theory attaches greater importance to the understanding of the structure of the foreign language
than to the learner's facility in using that structure. It is believed that if a student has proper degree of cognitive control over the structures of the language, he will develop facility in using the language in meaningful situation. Thus the cognitive code-learning theory may be thought of as a modified grammar-translation theory. The former believes in developing speaking skill while the latter advocates the development of passive skills.

A. C. George Scherer, a foreign language professor, and Michael Wertheimer, a psychologist, (University of Colorado) conducted an experiment to find the effectiveness of methods based on the two theories mentioned above. Their study does not show any significant difference in the efficiency of the audiolingual method and the traditional grammar-translation method. According to John B. Carroll, the failure to predict a dramatic superiority of the audio-lingual habit theory was due to the following reasons:

First it is impossible to control the techniques that the student himself will adopt to acquire a given skill, particularly over a long course of study for example even though the audiolingual method was presumably "monolingual" (i.e. conducted almost exclusively in German, the target language), many students undoubtedly adopted the strategy of translating the German material into English at any opportunity. Likewise, some students under the bilingual grammar-translation method would have found ways of indulging in audio-lingual practice . . . .
Second, it is doubtful that the theoretical bases for the teaching methods in the experiment were sufficiently well formed to make for high contrast. Further there was no precise formulation of the relevant theories. Schever and Wertheimer were merely concerned with the general comparison of two widely used methods of teaching as they understood them— but it should be noted that testing of theory was not their primary objective. 52

This raises the question: Should the approach to foreign language learning be always oral or should the emphasis be on reading? Catford J. C. examines these questions and suggests:

It seems obvious that this must depend on circumstances, on the aims of a particular course. Yet there is disagreement about this, and there is powerful body of opinion in favour of an initial oral approach in all circumstances. But the validity of this has been questioned by my colleague Dennis Ward, Head of Russian Department of the University of Hinsburg, has organized a highly successful course in Russian for scientists which keeps the oral aspects of the language down to an absolute minimum. 53

Against this background let us examine the situation in India today. The Education Commission (1964–66) has assigned English, the place of 'library' language. It has emphasised the need for a working knowledge of English.


53. Catford, J. C., op. cit, p. 166.
In most regional universities English is no longer the medium of instruction in Humanities and Social Sciences. For the majority of our students doing such courses English may not serve as a 'link' language for long.

Narayanaswamy K. R. discusses at length the implications of the term 'library' language and suggests:

"... the study of English as a "library language", will in my view, have to begin from the first year of English learning and it will be reading oriented. It will assume that reading can be developed through reading alone, and that it can surge way ahead of the productive skills."

Narayanaswamy vehemently advocates the need for reading ability in developing countries like India. He says:

In a developing country like India which has yet to achieve a technological breakthrough, the printed page is the only means of communication. It reaches millions untouched by electronics. To us reading is a prime necessity; in fact education—and all higher education is little more than purposive reading—is our only hope of ever being able to ensure a better and fuller life for our countrymen. To neglect reading is to neglect education, and we neglect both at our peril."

55. Ibid., p. 3.
Over fifty years ago Michael West suggested a similar approach. He believed that in a country like India reading was the most important of the four skills. He thought that reading should precede the learning of active speech owing to its surrender value and because reading skill is the easiest of the four skills.56

The implications of the discussion would be that we divide the language into its components and isolate them for the purpose of teaching. Is such an approach possible and desirable? According to David Abercrombie:

These are four distinct and separable activities (they may be learnt independently); not every human being is capable of all of them; certain types of injury to the brain can cause complete loss of one without seriously damaging the others, though they are so closely interwoven for the normal individual that he finds it difficult to think or talk about any one of them without invoking the rest.57

he also believes: "It is possible to read, or to understand speech without learning to write or to speak; but not vice versa."58 On the contrary, Yardi V. V. while accepting the


58. Ibid.
above proposition observes:

One can not step into a class and start teaching reading comprehension without speaking about. Little children learn to speak a foreign language quickly and forget quickly while adults have considerable difficulty in learning to imitate the sounds of a foreign language. 59

Vildomac Veroboja disapproves of Michael West's preference for reading over other skills. He comments:

This is a great error, utterly disregarding the experience of any able teacher of modern languages in any good modern European school. It may be psychologically an admissible method with highly educated adults, but certainly not with an average child who should if possible hear the foreign words, use them in conversation, see them and write them in one and the same lesson. If the child is very young the reading and writing bonds should be postponed. 60

Prof. P. Gurrey expresses a similar point of view when he says:

It is indeed easier for those of us who read a foreign language than to speak it, but children, and most adults too should begin to learn to speak a new language before they try to read it. 61

60. Vildomac Veroboja, op. cit., p. 47.
M. S. Patel writing on teaching English in India does not wish to do any regular reading and writing during the first few weeks.\(^{62}\) Michael West also felt ultimately that a brief oral beginning should precede a reading course if the learners were very young.\(^{63}\)

The emphasis on reading comprehension is not something very novel. Even before the second world war the 'Reading Method' was popular. The oral use of language with its emphasis on some standard correct pronunciation was not considered feasible. The 'Reading Method' was devised for schools whose only objective was a reading knowledge of the language. The text was divided into several sections, each section preceded by the list of words which were to be taught through context, translation or pictures. After a certain vocabulary level was achieved by the student then supplementary readers in the form of simplified stories or novels were introduced. This helped the students to consolidate and enrich their vocabulary.

The 'Reading Method' does not imply an absolute exclusion of spoken language. Michael West does not see any great objection to beginning the course in this way.

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\(^{63}\) Vildomme Verboj, op. cit., p. 47.
Commenting on the actual procedure of the 'Direct Method' stalwart, he says:

He starts in the lowest class with conversation—lessons of the type 'Stand up', 'Sit down', 'Open the door', 'Shut the window'. When that begins to pall, he begins to discuss the furniture of the room—'It is a pen', 'It is a pencil', 'It is a desk', and so on. Personally, I do not see any great objection to beginning the course in this way. Anyhow it only lasts for six months or so, if as long. 64

It may be pertinent here to quote a suggestion made by J. B. Carroll. He suggests a 'marriage' of the audio-lingual and cognitive code-learning theories:

We must desert the extremes of automatic audio-lingualism and grammar translation and try to construct a language teaching method which embodies desirable features of the principles of both kinds of learning theories. 65

The Study Group (1971) does not seem to raise any objection to such an approach. On the contrary they suggest:

For the first three years oral work should receive full attention both for its own sake and for the support it gives to reading and

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writing in the early stages. Although oral preparation may be necessary in later years also teachers should give progressively more attention to the improvement of reading so that students are capable of independent reading by the end of the higher secondary course.

There need be no objection to building up a special course in English emphasising reading in the present ELT context. But it will have to start with a general English course. A brief oral beginning will help the students to feel that learning a language has something to do with speaking. This will increase their interest in and enthusiasm for foreign language learning. Besides, listening and speaking are basic to some of the most interesting and exciting activities in the language classroom. While a brief oral phase may have to precede a reading course it is doubtful whether it would be necessary to give training in correct pronunciation. Correct pronunciation according to Michael West is at least 'four times' more difficult than reading. Learning correct pronunciation is a hard task and may take a long time. Good pronunciation and sophisticated speech habits are desirable but not essential in a silent reading course. However, teaching speech to young children may be pedagogically a sound idea. It would help them in developing other skills.

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English as L3 would seem to imply relatively less emphasis on speaking and writing and greater emphasis on reading with comprehension. When English becomes a 'library language,' the major emphasis will be on reading comprehension with just marginal emphasis on speaking.

Stressing the study of English for purposes of comprehension in the P.U.C. class, Prof. V. K. Gokak, recommends the study of one non-detailed text in the form of a book of one-act plays or short stories or short unabridged novel, with simplified or abridged novels provided for supplementary reading.67 Narayanaswamy K. R. considers the above suggestion of Prof. Gokak as inadequate to meet the needs of the situation. In the light of his findings based on research he concludes that 'the average PUC student has not learnt to read like the adult,' 'his vocabulary is pitifully inadequate and he has not the basic reading skills.' He, therefore, recommends:

A series of very carefully graded readers, followed by two simplified novels, followed by an equal number of unsimplified and unabridged books, these forming part of the regular English course at the PUC level.68

It is doubtful if the teachers can take up all these in the present set of examination - oriented courses. If we

accept this proposition then we may have to change the teaching methods.

The difficulty with regard to 'library' language is that it has not yet been tried systematically anywhere. Its methodology has not been evolved. However, the syllabus suggested for a course in English as a 'library' language by the Study Group (1971)\(^6^9\) appears to be suitable and there is no reason why this should not be given a fair trial.

At present there does not seem to be a single method which can help us to achieve the objectives of teaching English as L3. The answer may be in experiments with new methods and techniques. There is no point now in blindly following the 'Structural Approach'. Dr. S. V. Shastri who investigated into the efficacy of the 'Structural Approach' does not find it to be 'the' method for India. He feels that "We have yet to develop a comprehensive method."\(^7^0\)

It may be desirable to examine the relevance of Dodson's Bilingual Method which ought to receive much greater attention than what it does now. The Michael West Method with some modification might suit our requirements. For an

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effective use of English as a 'link' with the wider world our students should be able to use it in the library. This means that they should learn to read meaningfully all that appears in their field of study. Effective methods of teaching should be adopted so that we help the students in developing their reading efficiency.

The design of materials should take into consideration the experiments and investigations conducted into the various aspects of teaching English by institutions like the CIEFL and by individual teachers like Thakur and Thakur (referred to earlier) and D. S. Desai.71

In designing the materials for reading comprehension greater attention may have to be paid to the grading of vocabulary. This is not to suggest that meaning is a matter of dictionary entries only. Relatively speaking vocabulary counts for more on such a course than structures. The grading of vocabulary could be steep since mastery of active vocabulary is not expected. The student's passive vocabulary will have to be large.

Compared with the design of text-books, the preparation of testing materials continues to be a sadly neglected field. We do not possess enough number of

objectively scored tests, that is, objectively validated for any of the skills that we teach or we want to test in school or at the university. The preparation of such tests for testing various aspects of reading skills and different types of reading materials need to be given priority. Today, very little, or no weightage is given to reading comprehension in Board or university examinations, except incidentally. This situation must change and adequate weightage should be given to this indispensable skill.