Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Over the years, with the advancement of globalisation, the world has realised the need of having a common language to carry its social and economic interactions. History suggests that half of the globe was once under the rule of British Imperialists. As consequences to it, some due to compulsion while others due to influence of British culture opted to learn English language. Countries like Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Austria, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Vietnam, Mozambique and Mauritius, which were once under the domination of non-English speaking countries, also have begun viewing English proficiency as an important factor in international success. Today English has been recognised by the United Nations as one of the most internationally-acclaimed official languages of the world. It would not be wrong to say that English language is now regarded as the lingua franca of the world.

1.2 Socio-historical Background of English in India

In India, English came with the coming of British rule in the early seventeenth century. In the beginning, English was taught to the local population by the Christian missionaries without any intention of forcing the language on the masses; rather, it was done to preach Christianity. Later in 1823 when East India Company started setting its hold over the trade and commerce of the country, English was seen as a gateway to their success in the mission. The British believed that by teaching their language to Indians they can induce their culture, outlook and principles among Indians. Macaulay’s “Minute on Indian Education” in 1835 clearly defines his objectives behind teaching of English language to Indians as he remarks that it was “to form a class who may be interpreters between us [British Government] and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.” (qtd. in Masson 6)

English was made the language of administration and law; hence, it soon began to be viewed as the language necessary for social and economic development. With the opening of universities in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (now Mumbai,
Kolkata and Chennai respectively), English was acknowledged as the language of government and press. In 1861, a motion was passed in the senate of the University of Calcutta that all the examinations would be conducted in English, making it necessary for schools to introduce English in their curriculum at much early stage.

The newly independent India witnessed common masses’ anger towards the language, and it was demanded to eradicate English language from the administration of India. This anger was the result of hatred of Indians towards the British who used the language as a tool for oppression. This brought forth the question of selecting a new official language. The Official Language Act in 1963 proposed Hindi as the national language of India. In response to it, the southern states of India, especially Tamil Nadu, showed their disagreement. Their argument was based on the fact that India is a country with the population of over one billion in which more than thousand languages are spoken, and hence it would be unfair to impose one national language as superior to all. Moreover, Hindi is widely-known language only in the northern part of India; whereas, in other parts of the country where different regional languages prosper, people lack such familiarity with Hindi. It was found that the common language which bridged the gap was English, uniting those who speak different languages. Hence, it was decided to have two official languages of the Union Government of the Republic of India—Hindi and English, along with twenty two other regional languages for official purposes.

Parallel to this mayhem, there were several decisions that were being made in different parts of India regarding the position of English language in Indian society. In 1948, the first commission of free India i.e. The Radhakrishnan Commission proposed that English should remain a subject to be studied in high schools and colleges. From the Madras English Language Teaching (MELT) campaign in 1952, where the structural syllabus was prepared by the Institute of Education, London for making the learning of English easier for children by providing them with the basic English structures; to the Bombay Project in 1977 and the Bangalore Project in 1974-84, where structural syllabus was overthrown to replace it with skill-based and task-based language teaching respectively; uncountable efforts were made to improve the standards of English language teaching in India. Arrangements were made to establish an institute solely for language teaching and learning, the first centre of
which was set in Allahabad in 1954. It was followed by the opening of Regional Institute of English in Bangalore in 1963.

To improve the standards of teaching English in India, various seminars and workshops were conducted in different parts of the country. These were designed to help teachers and syllabus designers in planning curriculum keeping in mind the needs of the Indian learners of English language. The Curriculum Development Centre was established in Hyderabad in 1987 to revise the English language teaching curriculum by shifting its focus from the ‘teaching’ to ‘learning.’ This curriculum had more credibility as it focussed on the social needs of the learners. A new skill-oriented methodology was used, and it was decided to follow different syllabi for learners of different competence. In 1990s, the British Council stepped forward and offered to train selected English teachers of class IX and X in revising the syllabi and to adopt interactive methodology under the CBSE Interact English project.

1.3 Present Status of English in India

As a fruit to all the contributions and efforts, English in the twenty first century holds an important place in the Indian sub-continent. In fact, the constitution of free India being written in English is symbolic of English being the most preferred language. With India expanding its root in the international market, English has become vital for official communication and formal agreements as major business deals are done in English. English language is seen to be widely used in information-technology industries, banking areas as well as production and marketing sector, making it the de facto standard.

Apart from the corporate world, it has become the need of the hour to have fluent speech in English to have decent jobs in universities and colleges. Government sectors such as Indian airlines, Indian railways, telephone services, Indian postal services as well as the armed forces are seen to be making use of English language along with a local language in their functioning. In other words, it can be said that individuals’ socio-economic status in Indian society has come in line with their fluency in English language.

English is used extensively in print media like news articles and advertisements to reach to the common masses. Besides, the parliamentary sessions
English has become the language of developments. The latest research and development in the field of science, technology, economy and medicine are made available to the young India through the medium of textbooks which are written in English. It has become unavoidable for the youth to have a command over English language to comprehend the books and journals which give them access to the latest advances in their respective fields of study.

Masterpieces in literature from all around the world have today become accessible to all literature-lovers to read, comprehend and appreciate. This has become possible through their translations made available into the language which is most read and comprehended by all—English. English language is utilized in the exchange of schools of thought and diverse cultures of the world with India and vice-versa.

Besides these formal setups, English has found its place in the routine conversations of Indians, especially the youth. As English has become the language of education today, the youth of India is relatively more inclined towards it. Among young learners, knowledge of English language has become the vital need to browse over internet, update a Facebook status, comment on a friend’s update, talk to the customer care executives, enquire about the latest mobile recharge plans and fill forms to open a bank account or reserve a seat in the train. To add to it, majority of the actors in Indian film industries as well as Indian cricketers and footballers prefer to give their interviews in English language. Seeking inspirations from them, the youngsters of India today use English language or keep switching to English slangs while conversing in a social setting. Therefore, code switching and code mixing have occupied a prominent place in Indian milieu.

Therefore, it is evident that English has become a vital tool for the survival in this fast-growing world. The same has been substantiated by Chaudhary:

It may not be out of place to say that English is no longer just our window on the world, or the link language, or any other tool of restricted use as it was in
the past. It has now become the language of our daily life, and there is hardly any domain where English is not used. (52)

1.4 Problems with ELT in India

Despite English language acquiring such an important place in our society, there are certain challenges that come across the learner while learning English language, especially English as a second or foreign language. The biggest obstacle in learning English as a second language is the ‘status’ attached with the language. English is mostly seen to be used by the rich and educated class of society. Due to the place that English as a language has acquired for itself in the Indian society, it has begun to be looked upon as a language of the elite or more of a sacred language. This connotation prevents the learners of the language from using English in their communication with the fear of making mistakes.

There are, however, other psychological factors also behind this problem. The fear from committing error is one of the biggest reasons behind people’s inhibition in using the language at all. The apprehension of being laughed at if made a mistake decreases the confidence among the learners to use the language in front of others. Therefore, most of the people, in spite of correct knowledge of grammar and structures of language, fail to acquire fluency in using English language because they keep their knowledge to themselves and do not exchange it with others. In other cases, this lack of confidence comes due to lack of active English vocabulary. Due to the insufficiency of words to express themselves clearly, learners, especially adult learners, find it frustrating and stressful to communicate in English language, and hence they avoid using it in order to avoid their embarrassment.

It is observed that among Indian learners of English language, lack of exposure to the English language becomes one of the prime factors behind the delay in language acquisition. Language is not a memory; rather, it is a skill that is acquired with practice. The more the language is used, the more the skills are polished. However, in a country like India, where thousands of other languages exist as mother tongues spoken by a billion, English merely ends up being a classroom language. Even in classrooms, technical subjects such as science and mathematics are explained in the regional language of the place in order to ensure the maximum cognition by the
learners. The chapters of these subjects are in English and students do read and reproduce their answers in English in exams though, but spoken and listening skills are left untouched in such classrooms. Hence, English period becomes the only period in which a child listens to and is expected to reply in English language. To worsen the case, in some schools even the English lessons are explained in mother tongues of the learners. This bilingualism in classroom hampers the efficacy of language acquisition.

Also, our educational system is responsible at large when it comes to the issues in the acquisition of language. These days the lessons are taught at schools and colleges, not to teach the skill rather to score marks. The selective-study methodology has disabled the learners’ autonomy and their minds have been conditioned for rote-learning. Testing is another form of teaching. In examinations, their learning ability is tested in place of their analytical and creative skills. Language, being a performing-skill, can never be enhanced under such a pattern. There are innumerable situations in life that are faced by an individual where he is expected to use language. Providing learners with templates and forcing them to mug that up is not the solution to the task of teaching language.

In schools, children face a lack of motivation behind learning English language. Some are too young to understand the need of learning the language to be able to express globally. Others feel dispassionate towards the learning of the English language when they fail to recognise the need of learning a language which may not be used in their life. Such problem arises in the rural areas of the country where children are born and brought up in a society which is completely cut from the changing and developing scene of urban life.

There are also certain unavoidable reasons behind problems of second language learning in India. India is a country of joint families where all members of the family, especially women, are responsible for all household works. Under such situations, family obligations lead to the lack of time for language learning. Also India is a country where English has the status of second or official language. It is hence indicative that before an individual begins learning English he has already acquired the rules, structure and stylistics of another language that plays the role of his mother tongue. Hence the existing knowledge of mother tongue interferes in the acquisition of a new language.
1.5 Factors Affecting English Language Teaching

Having recognised that in spite of the colossal value of English language in our country, users of the language face multiplicity of obstacles in language learning, the major concerns of an educator is to sharply identify the factors which affect second language learning and acquisition. Principally, the factors that affect learning are divided into two broad categories—internal factors and external factors.

1.5.1 Internal Factors

Internal factors are different for every individual learner. These are the factors that determine the level of an individual learner based on his age, motivation, gender, cognitive ability, previous language background, hemispheric specialization and use of learning strategies. Studies have shown that an individual’s independent characteristics carry an explanation of his learning habits.

1.5.1.1 Age

Age, however, as a deciding factor for second language acquisition is a controversial variable. On one hand the critical period hypothesis claims that there is a period in humans’ life when they can best acquire a language. This period falls in the early years of a human life and ends at the puberty. However, the critical period hypothesis advocates this theory as far as first language acquisition is concerned. The same cannot be said for the second language acquisition as there is a huge difference in the two.

1.5.1.2 Motivation

Motivation is one of the most important internal factors in language acquisition. Cheng and Dornyei in their article “The Use of Motivational Strategies in Language Instruction: The Case of EFL Teaching in Taiwan” written in 2007 acknowledge that:

Motivation serves as the initial engine to generate learning and later functions as an ongoing driving force that helps to sustain the long and usually laborious journey of acquiring a foreign language . . . without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really
useful language proficiency, whereas most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2, regardless of their language aptitude or any undesirable learning conditions. (153)

1.5.1.3 Gender

Gender, according to many scholars, plays a vital role in language acquisition to an enormous extent. At this point of discussion, it is important to note that the term gender does not imply the biological classification as female or male; rather, it refers to identification as feminine or masculine in social outlook. Studies suggest that females are more efficient in their use of language learning strategies; hence they are better language users in comparison to majority of the males. Rod Ellis in 1994 in *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* shares the idea that women are more accepting towards new linguistic forms and carry a more positive attitude towards learning as compared to the men.

1.5.1.4 Cognitive Ability

Cognitive ability or intelligence is an imperative variable in learning language or any other skill. It refers to the mental level of individuals with which they are born with. As far as language learning is concerned, linguists believe that every individual is born with an innate-language-learning ability. While some people grasp the language effortlessly in no time, others struggle to comprehend the structures of the language.

1.5.1.5 Previous Language Knowledge

Mother tongue or the language previously attained by an individual plays a crucial role in determining the success of second language acquisition process. If learners’ mother tongue (L1) or any other language previously acquired by the learner (L2) belong to the same linguistics and historical background as that of his target language (TL), then due to the similarities in grammatical and syntactical structures, it becomes easier to acquire TL. For example if a person has Italian as his L1, then for him learning Spanish will be easier as compared to Chinese because Italian and Spanish belong to same Indo-European Romanicas language family.
1.5.1.6 Hemispheric Dominance

Hemispheric dominance of the brain deals with different people’s preference to different modes of cognition. These preferences are linked to the dominant activities of left or right cerebral hemisphere of the brain. The hemispheric dominance of the brain defines the characteristics of an individual including reasoning, creativity, subjectivity or objectivity. Over the years, studies have been conducted to map out the association between the hemispheric dominance and language learning or acquisition competence. Krashen, Seliger and Hartnett, in their research article “Two Studies in Second Language Learning” written in 1974, suggested the concept that the left hemisphere of the brain is responsible with mathematical and logical operations of the mind. Hence, the left hemispheric dominant learners acquire language well when taught deductively. The right hemisphere of the brain, on the other hand, is equipped well for stimulus that evokes visual, auditory or tactile senses. It is evident hence that learners with right hemispheric dominance achieve success in language learning when taught with an inductive methodology.

1.5.1.7 Learning Strategies

Learning strategies as defined by Scarcella & Oxford, in 1992, are “specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task, used by students to enhance their own learning” (63). Use of right learning strategy for second language learning or acquisition is one of the most important internal factors responsible for effective learning. It cannot be denied that using a second language is using vocabulary, structures and phrases of a new language, which at one point in the initial stage needs to be learnt. Hence selection of appropriate strategies that suit the cognitive process and hemispheric dominance of the learners results into effective learning or acquisition.

1.5.2 External Factors

The internal factors mentioned above, though helpful in supporting the language learning process, are so distinctive for each learner that it rests little in the hands of the educators to employ these in their teaching programme. A self-aware
learner can make effective use of these internal factors to facilitate his language learning. However, for an average learner it is unfeasible to access his own needs. Such learners require aid from outside in the form of good teacher, clear and concise instructions, appropriate curriculum, effective syllabi and access to native speakers. They become the external factors that are responsible for effective learning.

1.5.2.1 Curriculum

Curriculum, as identified by David Nunan in 1988 in his book *Syllabus Design* refers to the aspects of “planning, implementing, evaluating and managing” an educational program (158). A successful curriculum provides teachers and learners with a well defined map and leads to a positive achievement in the learning process. It outlines the results, standards and competencies that a learner is expected to achieve at the end of a programme before advancing to the next level of learning. Teachers play a key role in developing, implementing, assessing and modifying the curriculum.

1.5.2.2 Syllabus

Syllabus, in the words of Kearsley and Lynch, is “the single most important instrument of structure in a course . . . which outlines the goals and objectives of a course, prerequisites, the grading/evaluation scheme, materials to be used (textbooks, software), topics to be covered, a schedule, and a bibliography” (191). Syllabi are carefully graded which set the true learning into motion. As opposed to curriculum, which defines the course, syllabus holds description for a particular subject. A well defined syllabus works as an important factor in organising the teaching methods and approaches to the learning. It provides the details of time required to contribute to the study and the topics to be covered in the defined period of time, along with sketching down the important bibliography that can in turn provide direction to the learning.

1.5.2.3 Teacher

Teacher acts as the corridor to the learning process. Teachers apprehend the needs and potentials of the learners in their classrooms and undergo a continuous modification in teaching plans and try new methods based on the requirements of their learners. While some teachers opt for a traditional method of imparting knowledge to their learners, some teachers follow the progressive ideologies and take up the roles of being the facilitators and guides in the learning process. The traditional
teaching demands good grades, and stimulates the spirit of competition; whereas, progressive teaching methodology aims at encouraging the spirit of participation and does not promote the unruly competitiveness. Although both styles of teaching have their own pros and cons, good teachers establish a balance between the two schools of thought and keep monitoring their strategies to suit the needs of the learners.

1.5.2.4 Teacher Instructions

Classroom instructions, given by the teacher, form another key factor that aid in the learning externally. The manner in which a teacher gives instructions during a task to the learners can lead to success or failure of learning, depending upon the clarity of instructions. Unclear instructions can demoralize the learners while some learners may even lose their confidence in the task accomplishment. It is important for a teacher to be precise and clear to be able to initiate a successful learning. A good instruction informs the learners of what is expected of them in the task, what material would be required while performing the task and what prerequisite information is necessary for the learners before entering in the task.

1.5.2.5 Access to the Native Speakers

Access to native speakers of a language is one external factor that works as magic for the learners of that language. The L2 native speakers work as informal linguistic guides for the learners and can keep a regular check on their progress and offer useful feedback as well. Interaction with a native speaker in and outside the classroom can lead to exposure to the various structures and phrases of the language resulting into speedy acquisition of the language.

1.5.2.6 Other Factors

Apart from these factors outlined by the scholars, there are other factors also that contribute to the learning productively. These include the classrooms factors such as educational facilities like benches, fans and electricity in the classroom; teaching equipments like smart boards, maps and other aids; and instructional materials. While all the other factors are majorly supplementary which act as a catalyst in the learning process, instructional materials are the primary resources of a fruitful and directional learning. Moreover, a skilfully designed instructional material, to a significant extent,
is capable of overcoming the shortcomings of other internal as well as external factors.

1.6 Conclusion

The humankind acknowledges the contribution of English language in making the world a global village. In order to ensure that India does not lag behind in a fast-paced developing era, it has become mandatory to ensure the successful acquisition of the language of the world—English. This research aims in contributing its bit in making the process of English language learning and acquisition simpler and effective. The current research proposes to revolutionise the English language teaching material by exploiting the self learning material (SLM) in the mainstream language teaching. Before investigating the principles of self learning study materials, it is essential to have an understanding of the term ‘material’ in the field of language teaching. The upcoming chapter attempts to explore what are instructional materials, the rationale behind the need of instructional materials in the learning process, various types of instructional materials and their importance in the classroom, and the role relationship between the teacher-learner and instructional materials in a classroom, with reference to language learning and acquisition.
Works Cited


