CHAPTER 1

ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

"Language is intimately tied to man's feeling and activity. It is bound up with nationality, religion and the feelings of self. It is used for work, worship and play by everyone, he be beggar or banker, savage or civilized". (Lado 1986 : 11)

Languages are important in the life of any nation. The members of a social group need language to communicate with each other and for all social purposes, for public administration, for commerce and industry, for education and so on.

Ours is a country with Multilingual, Multicultural, pluralistic milieu. An individual can function best through the language which he acquires natively, i.e., the mother tongue. The social aspirations can best be fulfilled when they are allowed to function through the mother tongue. Therefore it is natural to think of mother tongue for the purpose of education. But the necessity to have a common language for interaction has lead to the learning of English.
Though a foreign language, English occupies a unique position in Indian educational system. Even after independence, it continues to be a major language having a prestigious position in our society. This chapter attempts to focus attention on the role of English language and the changing needs of English Language Teaching and Learning in India.

1.1 STATUS OF ENGLISH IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Introduction of English language in India includes three phases. The first phase is the missionary phase, which includes the efforts of the Christian missionaries who came to Indian subcontinent to proselytize. In the second phase, the Indians themselves demanded instruction in English studies. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) made efforts to persuade the officials of East India company for Western scientific education in part replacement of Sanskrit and Arabic. The third most important phase is that of bilingualism (B.Kachru 1983:7) which started with the implementation of educational policies for instruction in English based on Lord Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education (1835)".
In the early 20th century, English was formally established as the official and academic language of India. English became the prestige language, completely replacing Persian and the other Indian languages.

"By 1928 English has been accepted as the language of the elite, of the administration, and of the pan Indian press. In addition, another phenomenon with a far reaching consequences was that of developing Indian literature in English".

(Kachru 1983 : 69)

1.2 STATUS OF ENGLISH IN POST INDEPENDENCE ERA

The constitution of India which was adopted in 1950 had envisaged Hindi as the only official language of the Union of India. However, English has been allowed to continue for 15 years from the date of adoption of the constitution and then to be replaced by Hindi. It is impossible to think that we can educate millions in a totally foreign tongue. To quote Pandit Nehru,

"English will inevitably remain an important language because of our past association and because of its present importance in the world".

(T.K. DUTT 1967 : 7)
1.3 STUDIES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE SITUATION AND STATUS

To assess the overall language question of India, the Government has taken various steps like appointing study committees and commissions. The official language commission was appointed in June 1955 under the chairmanship of B.G. Khertomake to make recommendations about the progressive use of Hindi for all official purposes.

In the report of University Education Commission headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, it was stated that English should be studied in schools and universities so as to keep ourselves in touch with the stream of ever growing knowledge.

"Kunzru Committee of 1957 supported a general proposal to consolidate English, for the foreseeable future, as a major university and pre-university subject. This committee proposed two major changes in approaches to English:

1) linking of the study of English literature to the study of Indian literature and

2) major expansion at all appropriate levels of linguistics".

(Durant, Focus: Jan 1987)
In 1960 the Banerjee Committee emphasized the usefulness of English as an instrument in scientific learning. The Kothari Commission of 1964 asserted that "As English will, for a long time to come, continue to be needed as a Library language in the fields of higher education, a strong foundation in the language will have to be laid at the school stage (p. 197).

The know-how required for the development of technology and industries in our country, can be best achieved from the books published in English on these subjects. So long as we don't develop such skill and prepare books in our national language or regional languages, we are obliged to continue the study of English language.

The 'Three language formula' has been proposed as a solution to India's language problem. It involves three languages, namely, Hindi, English as a link language and one regional language.

"English should be one of the three compulsory languages for students at the secondary stage, the other two being Hindi and the mother tongue or the regional language. This three language formula should form the basis of a National Policy and all state
Governments should be invited to fall in line with it as early as possible".

(Central Advisory Board : 1957)

"Whatever the controversies and attitudes towards the future of English in India, one thing is certain: The diffusion of bilingualism in English, creative use of English in the country and its use as a pan Indian Language has continued during the post Independence era".

(Kachru 1983 : 93)

1.4 STATUS OF ENGLISH IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

"The Commercial Weightage, the technical importance and the cultural content of English both in original and in translation from other tongues explain the worldwide acceptance of the language as the medium of intellectual exchange".

(F.G.French 1948 : 2)

The current status of English, has turned a significant percentage of the worlds population into part-time users or learners of English. The wide spread need for learning puts a
considerable pressure on the educational resources involving curriculum development, methodology of teaching and evaluation procedures. The uses and the functions of English around the world can be discussed in the following way.

1.4.1 English as Lingua Franca

Of all the languages of the world, English deserves to be regarded as a world language. It is the common means of communication both nationally and internationally. It is the language of international politics, trade, commerce and industry. The present world of science and technology needs the knowledge of English.

"No language, ancient or modern, can be compared with English in the number of geographical distribution of the homes, shops, factories, and offices in which the language is spoken, written and read".

(F.G.French 1948 : 1)
1.4.2 English as Link Language

It is the only language which is understood by the educated people all over the country. English is needed not for operational purposes but also for identifying oneself with those who use the language in India and abroad. According to Dr. S. RadhaKrishnan Commission on Education "English is the only means of preventing our isolation from the world and we will act unwisely, if we allow ourselves to be enveloped in the folds of a dark curtain of ignorance".

1.4.3 English in Education

In spite of the stated goals of the official language policy (replace English by Hindi), English continues to enjoy a pride of place in our educational setup. It continues to be a school subject throughout the country with certain differences in the number of years English is taught at school.

"The teaching of English holds an important position in university teaching programmes in national institutions, administration, social circles, creative writing, the mass media, both print and electronic, and publication of books. It has
acquired a complementary function in the Indian society along with other indigenous languages”.

(Parasher 1980)

Expressing the view regarding the teaching of English, former Education Minister, Maulana Azad said

"In addition, English has today become one of the major languages of the world, and Indians can neglect its study at the risk of loss to themselves. I am convinced that in the future as well the standard of teaching English should be maintained at as high a level as possible".

(Sachdeva 1973 : 3)

It seems that the position of English in near future also will not change and it will be used continuously for specific functions even after the regional languages take over as official languages and media of instruction.

1.4.4 English Language in Written Communication

English can be considered the key to the store house of knowledge. Books on all branches of knowledge are available in
English, besides most of technical Journals, newspapers, periodicals are published in English.

"A great deal of the worlds scientific, commercial, economic and technological knowledge is written and published in English though the writers may be Chinese, Swedish or Italians. Publication in English ensures the widest readership of new findings and ideas".

(Richards, 1985 : 3)

1.4.5 Indian English and Creative writings

The increasing use of English for creative expression and the adoption of it by writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Raja Rao and others has given rise to the notion of Indian English. Kachru, who has made a study of Indian English, in his paper "Indian English A study in Contextualization" says

"In the spoken medium, Indian English by now established itself as an Indian variety of English. Indian English has ramifications in Indian culture, and is used in India towards maintaining appropriate
Indian patterns of life, culture and education. This in short we might call the Indian English, in the same way as we speak of the Englishness of British English".

The Indian writers in English expressed their national identity and Indian consciousness effectively through their writings because of their innate originality and felicity of the English language.

"Their English is neither the King's English nor the Queen's English, but is indeed a transcreation of the native speech of the characters who inhabit their fictive world and breathe life into it."

(Sahane 1982 : 75)

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA

Any language teaching situation should contain three important considerations.

1. Objectives of teaching the subject.

2. Appropriate methods and materials to achieve these objectives.
3. Periodic testing to ascertain whether these objectives have actually been achieved.

As Dr. Walker Hill put it, "in a sound system of University Education the objectives, the learning experiences provided in the college and the process of evaluation are closely related; they are interdependent".

(Improvement of Examinations 1972 : 1)

One of the serious shortcomings of the ELT situation in India is the lack of definite statement of objectives of teaching English.

"But the real problem and difficulty lies in the fact that from syllabuses and examinations it is usually impossible to discover what the objectives of teaching English are. Here again ... and belief. Most school syllabuses contain ... but at the later 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 tricks with the language".

(Bruton 1961 : 20)
A clear statement of objectives is essential. Teaching and testing become arbitrary and wayward if there are no objectives to guide. The teaching situation as far as English is concerned is fairly stable for several decades. The syllabi, teaching methods and testing procedures had remained fairly stable, though the standards of attainment in English are deteriorating.

"In the sphere of ELT we continue to stick to old methods and cherish objectives which were dear to our teachers. Reform in teaching English ought to begin by stating the objectives in no uncertain terms. Objectives which are unrelated to our immediate need may fail to create the necessary motivation for learning the language."

(V.V. Yardi 1994 : 29)

To reformulate our objectives in the Indian context today we have to take into consideration the motivation of the learner, the availability of resources for teaching English and the national needs that English may have to serve. For majority of students English is a highly useful language to be taught for practical purposes. To quote Prof. V K Gokak,
"English will continue to be the language of all important trade and industry in the country for many years to come. It will take many years before it ceases to be the language of administration at higher levels".

So it is necessary that we need to design our syllabi basing on the skills needed in an L2 situation. Understanding of the four basic skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW), is needed and it is to be incorporated in our syllabi.

Wilga Rivers lists six classes of objectives which have dominated the teaching of a foreign language at different times. These are:

1. To develop the student's intellectual powers through foreign language study.

2. To increase the student's personal culture through the study of the great literature and philosophy to which it is the key.

3. To increase the student's understanding as to how language functions and to bring him through the study of a foreign language, to greater awareness of the functioning of his own language.
4. To teach the student to read the foreign language with comprehension so that he may keep abreast of modern writing, research and information.

5. To bring the student to a greater understanding of people across national barriers, by giving him sympathetic insight into the ways of life and ways of thinking of the people who speak the language he is learning.

6. To provide the student with the skills which will enable him to communicate orally and to some degree in writing with the speakers of another language and with people of other nationalities who have also learned this language.

Keeping in view some of the reasons for the current position of English as the world's most important language, it is necessary to consider how this need is acknowledged as an educational reality.

1.6 SCOPE OF PRESENT STUDY

This study aims at comparing the present English language teaching programme and principles at PU and Inter levels of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh states with reference to the
materials, methods and modes of evaluation. Merits and demerits of both the systems are studied and recommendations for further improvement of the courses are suggested. This study is of great pedagogical significance in view of the fact that these two states exemplify varying degrees of bilingualism, viz, Telugu, English / Kannada, English.

This research work is carried out keeping in view the following objectives:

1. To investigate the role played by the instructional material in language learning and their success.

2. To investigate various evaluation procedures adopted for testing (listening, speaking), reading and writing skills and their reliability.

3. To investigate the degree to which the tests relate to course content and programme objectives.

4. To compare the effectiveness of different teaching methods.

5. To compare the English Language Teaching in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
6. To make recommendations for further improving the present state of affairs.

Data Sources

The following material is used as the source of data for this study.

1. Detailed and non-detailed text books of first and second year PUC and Intermediate.

2. Statistics pertaining to the students performance at the public examination.

3. Statistics pertaining to the teachers responses to the questionnaire.

4. Statistics pertaining to the students responses to the questionnaire.

5. Survey of English Language Teaching at Intermediate level in colleges under Sri Krishnadevaraya University jurisdiction.

In addition Journals and conference proceedings on ELT are also used as secondary material during this research work.
1.7 Design and Outline of Thesis

The present research work is presented in 7 chapters and 7 appendixes. Chapter 2 focuses attention on English Language Teaching/ Learning situation in the two states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Chapter 3 makes a comparative study of ELT Methods and Approaches in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Chapter 4 presents interpretation of the responses obtained from the teachers and students to the questionnaire administered to them. Chapter 5 comprises the analysis of English Language text books of Andhra Pradesh Inter and Karnataka PU with reference to literary content, language content and phonetics. Chapter 6 deals with the comparative study of the evaluation procedures of Andhra Pradesh/Karnataka at Inter/PU Levels. Chapter 7 deals with suggestions and recommendations.