

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

There is a rapidly growing demand for a higher education in the world today. The traditional markets of the Nations now stretch across the whole world, the telephonic mode of communication is now outdated and has been replaced by worldwide online communication system. The one language that is the focus of debate in recent years is English, which has established a strong position in the world. All the research papers and scientific research are made in English language. Also learning computer science can be possible only with the help of English language. It is the most common foreign language. At the university level, students in many countries study almost all their subjects in English. India is a country with diverse regions and diverse languages. Over 30 languages are spoken by more than a million native speakers. Colonialism has left India with the legacy of English, which is certainly a boon to the country. Historically, since its introduction to India, English has played an important role in media and education. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of English language in Indian higher education.

Keywords: communication, globalization, India, students.

Education plays very important role in our lives. Everyone has been being educated since the day they were born. There is a rapidly growing demand for a higher education in the world today. The primary source of our communication is language. Language separates us from animals and makes us human. In this world many languages are spoken. Different countries have different national languages in addition to a variety of local languages. Some languages are spoken by millions of people, others by only a few thousand. Globalization is an ever expanding process that seems to transform the whole world. The traditional markets of the Nations now stretch across the whole world, the telephonic mode of communication is now outdated and has been replaced by worldwide online communication system. Moreover people have shifted their attention from the regional and local level to the international level.

Globalization is inextricably linked to the question of language. The one language that is the focus of debate in recent years is English, which has established a strong position in the world. One cannot even imagine global education without English. If you want to learn economy, politics and geography of other countries then English is the only language that can help you. All the research papers and scientific research are made in English language. Also learning computer science can be possible only with the help of English language.

As Kelman (1971) said, Language is a uniquely powerful instrument in unifying a population.... However, some of the very features of language that give it this power under some circumstances, may, under other circumstances, become major sources of disintegration and internal conflict within a national system.... While the development of a national language may be highly conducive to the creation and strengthening of national identity, the deliberate use of the language for purposes of national identity may – at least in a multi-ethnic state – have more disruptive than unifying consequences.

English, originally the language of England, has become the primary and secondary language of many countries like The United States, Canada, Australia and India. It is the most common foreign language. It is often called the 'queen of languages'. Shri C. Rajagopalachari once wrote "English language is the greatest gift of Goddess Saraswati to India". The use of this language has made the social and economic exchange between the people of different countries practically possible. In today's global world, the importance of English can't be ignored. With the advancement of technology, English has been playing a major role in many areas such as medicine, engineering, business and education. In many countries, children are taught and encouraged to learn English as a second language. Even in countries such as Netherlands or Sweden, where it is not an official language, many syllabi in science and engineering are written in English. At the university level, students in many countries study almost all their subjects in English (Thrope, 2016).

India is a country with diverse regions and diverse languages. Over 30 languages are spoken by more than a million native speakers. Colonialism has left India with the legacy of English, which is certainly a boon to the country. "English could be rightly termed as the Lingua Franca of India. It is one common language that is used by people from diverse backgrounds in India as an acceptable vehicular language with high levels of adoption over decades. Historically, since its introduction to India, English has played an important role in media and education" (Thrope, 2016). In the Indian education system, English has become the chief language today. Stress has been laid on using English as the medium of instruction as most sectors require a good knowledge of English. Moreover, the information in the field of science, technology, medicine, business, commerce, nuclear technology etc is available only in English for a person who knows English and Indian languages. Mahatma Gandhi had once

remarked, "English is a language of international commerce, it is the language of diplomacy and it contains many a rich literary treasure; it gives an introduction to western thought and culture". The Radhakrishna University Education Commission recommended that, "English is a language which is rich in literature – humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever-growing knowledge".

English plays a significant role in how universities respond to the increasingly global context in which they operate. There are only few universities and colleges in the world where English is not the language for scientific research. As more universities use English as a medium of instruction, the need for structural changes, different methodologies and a fundamental change in mind set is becoming more urgent. In universities and colleges, English is the only language used for scientific research and study. Only a person who is a master of English can open the door of science completely. We all know that all the books of science are written in English language. Also it is very difficult for anyone to be able for higher education like post graduation and PhD without English language. The popularity of English can be seen in the growing number of people taking the *TOEFL*® and *TOEIC*® tests, the most widely used and accepted English exams in the world.

These days the most common depression is of no job. In all the government as well as private firms, it is mandatory that candidate should have the knowledge of English language. In all the government exams, a separate English language section is given that is compulsory to clear. Also in all the MNC's, English is the primary language. They focus more on the English speaking and understanding skills of the candidates. If you want to get a job while studying in the college then English language knowledge is must. Moreover, the knowledge hub of career and education i.e. internet is of help only to a person who knows English (Naved, 2016).

More and more countries are introducing English-language instruction earlier in school. Japanese students begin learning English in the fifth grade and receive more intensive instruction in junior high and high school. In India, the prevalent competitive examination scenario is also influenced by the importance of English. Most of the Olympiad exams held at the primary and secondary level in schools are in English medium only. Further, the admission tests and most competitive exams have a complete section on English language, which are designed to test the candidate's correct use of the language. The result of these tests shows that Indians have attained a great proficiency in English, which is happening across a large part of India. In the process many Indian words have officially been added to the English dictionaries over the years. Thus we can say that it has become a mandatory sort of thing to stay connected with the outside world. It has been realized that in order to grasp education at higher levels, children should learn English as early as possible. The importance of this language, both at national and international level, has forced the Government of

India, along with the State Governments, to introduce English at the grass root level. Almost all the prestigious schools and colleges in India use English as their medium of instruction. Recently, the State Governments have established Model Schools for this purpose.

The strong beliefs about the power of English make it all the more important for policy makers and project implementers to communicate clear messages about the value of basic education – and that skills in English are only likely to be of value if a strong educational base is in place. English language education, if part of skills development, should build on first language literacy and numeracy, and support also the development of generic employability skills

Viewed freely, the English language is the accretion and growth of every dialect, race, and range of time, and is both the free and compacted composition of all. Walt Whitman

In the words of F.G. French, it is only through this language that we have “distilled essence of modern knowledge in all the fields of human activity. Anyone who can read English can keep in touch with the world without leaving his own house”. Foreseeing the importance of English language in higher education and in nation-building, Jawaharlal Nehru had once remarked, “we know it a good deal and we have people who can teach it”. Thus, to become an unbeatable force in the competitive world his sayings hold strong and true even today.

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