

BRIEF STUDY ON ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Mankind in the early ages observed other living creatures making noises to communicate their feelings. Gradually, human beings also acquired the skill of communicating a large number of things through what we now call language. Human beings alone have the complex skill of using language through speech and writing. We use our vocal organs to make different sounds, sound clusters, words, phrases and sentences. Language is the result of evolution and convention. No language was created in a day or by a single person. It is mutually created by a group of humans to communicate. Languages also change and die, grow and expand, unlike human institutions. Every language is a convention of a community that passes down from generation to generation.

Language plays an important role in human life. We try learning and using language as a mean of communication as well as a social symbol of humanity. By using the language, one can make statements, convey facts or information, explain or report something and maintain social relations.

English is considered to be an international link language. It is very popular and is widely used by most people in the world. English is available to us as a historical heritage of British Empire in addition to our own languages. We should make the best use of English to develop ourselves culturally, scientifically, technologically and materially so that we can compete with the rest of the world (Kumari, 2014).

MEANING, CHARACTERISTICS & FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

MEANING OF LANGUAGE

The word 'Language' is derived from the Latin word 'Lingue' which means 'produced with the tongue'. Hence language means a thing which is produced with the tongue. Let's see some of the definitions by linguistic.

Edward Sapir:

"Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols."

CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE

Language is an inseparable part of human society. Human civilization has been possible only through language (Naeem, 2010). Language is basically human. It is different from animal communication. Let's look at some of the characteristics of language;

a. Language is learnt

Language is not a born activity as crying and walking. It is not an automatic process. It has to be learnt. Any learner learns the language by imitation and practice.

b. Language is an acquired Behaviour

Language is acquired behaviour. If a baby or man is shifted to another community or cultural group, he will acquire the language spoken by that cultural community. For example; if an Indian family is settled in United States, the children of the family will acquire the English Language with an American accent.

c. Language is a System

Language is a system like a human body, just as body functions through different organs such as brain, heart, lungs. In the same way, language functions through sounds, words and structures.

d. Language is Vocal

The language is primarily observed speech. Speech is a fundamental thing is language learning, reading and writing are secondary. Through speech and modulation of speech, we get a clear picture of English inflexion.

e. Ever changing

No language on earth is static. Every language is undergoing changes in its grammar, vocabulary, structure and phonology with the course of time.

f. Language is for Communication

The main purpose of language is communication. Since it is so, a person's speech must be intelligible to others. For this, he must acquire the right pronunciation and intonation.

g. Language is Arbitrary

Language is arbitrary. There is no relationship between the words of a language and its meaning. The relationship between word and meaning is arbitrary. There is no reason why a language is called as 'Language' in English, 'Bhasha' in Hindi and 'Zaban' in Urdu.

h. Language is based on Cultural Experiences

Every language is the product of a particular society and culture. 'Good morning', 'Thank you', 'Sorry' and such kinds of words reveal the culture of English people. In each language, there are words that show the specific culture of that community, such as; 'Asslamu alaykum', 'Khuda Hafiz', 'Shaba khair', etc shows the culture of Urdu speaking people.

i. Language is made of Habits

A person can be said to have learnt a language when he can speak it without any conscious efforts. No language can be learnt without sufficient practice. A language is learnt by use and not by rules. Learning a language is a process of habit formation.

j. Language is Unique

Each language is unique. No two languages are alike. They cannot have the same set of Patterns of structures, sounds, grammatical rules or words. The sounds, structures, vocabularies of every language have their own specialty.

FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

M. A. K. Halliday (1975) explained seven basic functions of language in his book, 'Exploration in the functions of language'. These seven basic functions can be summarized as follows:

a. The Instrumental Function

The word 'instrumental' means serving as an instrument or means. The instrumental function refers to the use of language as an instrument to make the recipient do something. For ex: Requesting (Please, give me a glass of water. Will you do me a favour?)

Commanding (Open the door Throw away this garbage) etc.

It serves the function of 'I want' the satisfaction of material needs.

b. The Regulatory Function

'To regulate' means to control or to direct by a rule, method or principle. The regulatory function of language refers to the use of language to regulate the behaviour of others. Instruction or teaching can be regarded as a type of communicative behaviour intended to cause the addressee to do something. It also includes advising and suggesting. For ex:

1. You should take some rest. (Advising)
2. You must not take things that don't belong to you. (Control through warning)
3. If you steal again, I will smack you. (Control through threat)
4. You will make Mummy very unhappy if you steal again. (Control through emotional appeal)
5. Parking is not allowed. (Control through rule)

c. The Interaction Function

'To interact' means to 'to act one upon other or to talk with each other.' The interactional function of language refers to the use of language in the interaction between 'self and others. It is a 'me and you' function. It is the contact-oriented function. It includes greetings (Good Morning, Happy Diwali, Happy Eid, Congratulation), sympathy (I share your sorrow, keep patience, Allah will help you), gratitude (Thanks a lot, thank you for your guidance, we are grateful for your contribution), compliments (Your dress is very good. How beautiful she is!), hostility (Go to hell, Get out of here), etc.

d. The Personal Function

The word 'personal' means private or of a particular person. The personal function of Language refers to the use of language to express personal feelings and meanings. It aims at a direct expression of the speaker's attitude towards what he is speaking about. For ex: A poem, a speech, expression of love and sorrow, etc. Thus, this function refers to the use of language either to express the speaker's feeling or to evoke feelings on the part of the auditor.

e. The Heuristic Function

Things itself. The heuristic function of language refers to language as a means of investigating reality, a way of learning about things that are using language to learn and to discover. It is the use of language for inquiry or questioning.

f. The Imaginative Function

'To imagine' means to form a picture of something in the mind, think of the probability of things. The imaginative function of language refers to language used to create a world of the imagination. It is the use of language for its own sake to give pleasure imaginatively and aesthetically. For example:

*“If I was an apple and grew on a tree
I think I’d drop down on a nice boy like me;
I wouldn’t stay there, giving nobody joy,
I’d fall down at once and say, eat me, my boy!”*
- Anonymous

g. The Representational Function

'To represent' means to depict, to show, to describe or to present in words. The representational function of language refers to language used to communicate information. It is the use of language to convey a message which has specific reference to the processes, persons, objects, qualities, states and relations of the real world around us. For ex: books, newspapers, magazines, novels, use of language in mass media, etc.

PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Children can learn any language as easily as walking, running, playing, etc. People generally assume that those who study in English medium schools are good at English and those who study in government schools are poor in English. Language learning has little to do with the medium of school. It rather depends on teachers' application of principles of language learning. Let us see what the principles of language learning.

a. Habit Formation

Language learning is a habit formation process. It is a process during which various language habits are formed. Therefore, listening, speaking, reading and writing habits are to be formed consciously and unconsciously.

b. Practice and Drill

Language learning is a habit-forming process. For this purpose, sufficient practice and drill is needed.

c. Oral Approach

A child learns to speak his mother tongue before reading or writing it. This principle should be adopted in learning and teaching a second or a foreign language.

d. Natural Order of Learning

Listening-Speaking-Reading-Writing (LSRW) is the natural order of learning a language. In this order, a child learns his or her mother tongue without any formal instruction. So, this natural order of learning should be considered while teaching English.

e. Multi-Skill Approach

All the four language skills are to be given their due importance when learning or teaching them. No skill should be overemphasized or neglected.

f. Selection and Gradation

One should proceed from simple to difficult in language learning; therefore, vocabulary and structures of language should be selected and graded as per their frequency, teach ability and difficulty level.

g. Situational Approach

The English language should be taught in situations which is the natural way in which a child learns his mother tongue.

NATURE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English is a varied language that has absorbed vocabulary from many languages of the world. English is the most dynamic language of the world. Let us discuss the nature of English language

a. Receptive

Receptiveness is regarded as an extraordinary nature of English language. It has maintained its open-door policy. It has adopted and accepted thousands of words from European, Asian, African, Indian, Japanese, Chinese and other languages. We can see a great impact on classical languages like Latin, Greek, Arabic, French and Sanskrit on English. English has the richest vocabulary due to its receptiveness (Kumari, 2014).

b. Heterogeneous

As English contains vocabulary from many languages, it has become heterogeneous in nature. In the process of adopting words from other languages, in some cases the original words as it is without change in meaning, but in some other cases, the spelling, pronunciation and meaning of original words from other languages was changed for instance; the French word, 'tour' and the Latin word, 'turris' become 'Tower' in English (Kumari, 2014).

c. Systematic

The system of English language functions through sounds, words and structures. The system of sound is known as phonology. The system of words is called as morphology whereas the system of structures is named as syntax. All these three systems are integrated with one another making an organic whole which is called as the English language.

d. Unique

English is unique in its nature. English is not 100% French, not German or Arabic, not Latin or Greek. English is English. English differs from other languages in its sounds, words, structures and functioning. Though English has adopted vocabulary from other languages, it has shaped them remarkably as if these words are its own.

f. Creative

English is a highly creative language, that's why it has the richest literature in the world. A writer or speaker can write or speak something he has never written or said before. English literature has a wide variety of prose and poetry, fiction and non-fictional writing, such as; novels, short stories, travelogues, fairy tales, science fiction, drama, songs, etc. Because of the creative power of English, English literature is very easy to listen and read.

g. Productive

English is also highly productive. One can make thousands and lakhs of sentences with its words. There is no need to learn by rote English sentences. We can produce sentences without effort. People speak and write in different ways and styles best still, the words and sentence structures are same. The world is rapidly producing knowledge with the help of English that is doubling every 13 months.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA

It is very necessary for a teacher to know the aims and objectives of teaching English. The teacher must know what changes can be brought about in his learner's knowledge and skills at the end of the course,

term, semester, month, weeks and each particular lesson. If you observe the actual practice of teaching English in India, unfortunately, you may realize that teachers teach English either to cover the prescribed course or to make the learners pass the exam. But these are not the aims and objectives of teaching English. Let us try to understand the differences between aims and objectives (Kumari, 2014).

Aims	Objectives
Aims are what you want to achieve	objectives are what you will do to achieve them
Aim is setting a determined course in order to achieve a set target	an objective is a more specific target in order to achieve the goal
Aim is usually a long-term process	an objective is for short term
An aim can be slightly vague	an objective is always specific

SKILLS OF LANGUAGE

i. Listening

It enables the learners to:

- a. listens to English sounds properly;
- b. listens to words with meaning expressed by others;
- c. gives the response to the talk of the teacher;
- d. recognizes and tell the meaning of the words and sentences expressed by the teacher;
- e. reproduces whatever he has listened from the teacher; and
- f. organizes the ideas listened to.

ii. Speaking

It enables the learners to:

- a. use proper pronunciation in speaking English.
- b. use corrects stress and intonation in speaking English.
- c. speaks grammatically correct.
- d. tells the answers to the questions asked by the teacher.
- e. take part in debate and conversation.
- f. use appropriate vocabulary while speaking English.
- g. speaks English fluently.

iii. Reading

It enables the learners to:

- a. read English letters, words and sentences correctly and properly.
- b. tells the meaning of the words and sentences provided in the written form.
- c. read English with proper stress, intonation, pronunciation.
- d. read lessons loudly and silently.
- e. read English with proper pauses.

iv. Writing

It enables the learners to:

- a. writes English letters, words and sentences correctly.
- b. use capital and small letters at the proper places.
- c. use proper punctuation marks.
- d. writes answers correctly.
- e. writes a composition on a simple topic.
- f. expresses the thoughts and ideas in a written form.
- g. writes grammatically correct.
- h. writes English with proper speed.

OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Objectives of teaching English at different levels of education, primary and secondary levels are as under;

a. Primary Level

At the primary level learner should:

1. Understand English when spoken;
2. Acquire the reading ability and read the material that is appropriate for his level;
3. Acquire a vocabulary enough to help him in the use of the language that he makes;
4. Make simple statements through English;
5. Speak with a pronunciation that is acceptable;
6. Respond to short conversational questions and to ask questions himself;
7. Write English legibly and coherently using proper punctuation and spelling; and
8. Use English when he has to respond to calls, requests, greetings, etc. when he has to do the same to others.

b. Secondary Level

At the secondary level the learner should:

1. Speak English fluently and accurately;
2. Speak freely. They should think in English and speak it with ease and frequently;
3. Express their ideas in English in the classroom at school, at home and in society;
4. Respond and react to situations actively and not remain only a passive listener;
5. Acquire the ability to understand the native speakers and also be able to respond to them;
6. Compose freely and independently in speech and writing;
7. read books, newspapers and periodicals with understanding;
8. Develop sufficient command over vocabulary that should include frequent and choicest English phrases and idioms; and
9. Use reference material like encyclopaedia, dictionaries, reference books, etc.

STATUS OF ENGLISH IN THE GLOBAL AND INDIAN CONTEXT - SCOPE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English is an international language. English has been playing an important role in our educational system as well as in our national life. English was supreme in the pre-independent India, because of British rule over India. English still occupies an important place and position in courts, trade, commerce, industry, educational system and national life of India. Let us see the scope of English through the following points;

a. An Official Language

English was the official language of administration during the British period. After the independence of India, English has been declared as the Associate Official Language of the Union of India for an indefinite period by an Act of Parliament in 1963. As such it dominates the administrative business at the centre as well as in the states. All the administrative work is done in English throughout the country.

b. Language of Court

English still continues to be the language of the courts. So far there is no other suitable language for legal business. Cases are presented and judgments are given in English in Supreme, High and District courts of India.

c. Language of International Trade and Industry

English dominates the fields of trade and industry in the country. Because all the work in these fields is carried on in English, such as; maintenance of accounts, audit and correspondence.

d. A Link Language

English is a national link language of India as well as an international link language of the world. It is the only language which is understood in all states of India and all countries of the world. We can establish social, economic, cultural and political relations with other countries and other states of India only through English.

e. A Library Language

English is the key to the storehouse of knowledge. Most of this knowledge is not yet available in Indian languages. It is in this context that the role of English as a library language becomes important in India.

f. Importance in Education

English plays an important role in the field of education. It is taught as a compulsory subject in most of the states in the country. It is the medium of instruction in technical, medical, law, science, commerce and other institutions. A large number of English medium schools of SSC, CBSE, ICSE patterns are providing education through English as a medium of instruction.

g. Window to the Modern World

Pandit Nehru had rightly said, "English is our major window on the modern world." English is a window through which we can see the scientific, technological, agricultural and commercial developments taking place in the world. English is the only language through which we have distilled the essence of modern knowledge in all fields of human activity.

h. Importance in Social Life

English plays an important role in the social life of the country. The highly educated and sophisticated sections of our society find it more convenient to talk in English. Invitation cards are mostly printed in English. People generally put their signatures in English. People use thousands of English words in their day-to-day language. Bills in almost all the shops are given in English.

i. Lingua Franca of India and World

Lingua Franca means the language of communication used by people belonging to different languages. English is the Lingua Franca of not only India but throughout the world.

j. Language of Western Science and Arts

English was the key which opened the gates of western sciences and arts to Indians. By learning English, they not only got a peep into the western sciences and arts but some of them also acquired mastery over them. For ex: scientists like Raman, philosophers like Radhakrishnan, poet like Tagore, etc.

k. Language of Science and Technology

English is the language of science and information & communication technology on which the management and administration of the entire world is dependent. Without English, we cannot learn modern science and information and communication technology.

Article 343: Associative Official language of the Union

1. The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.
2. Not with standing anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement: Provided that the President may, during the said period, by order authorise the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union.

Article 350A: Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage

It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

Article 351: Directive for development of the Hindi language

It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

All of the above articles or their sub-clauses clearly show that the country has given due Importance to English, Hindi and all other regional languages concerning their international, national and regional importance respectively.

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