



CHAPTER -I

INTRODUCTION

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1.0 Introduction

Language as a vehicle of communication is the very crucial to the whole process of education, since it is through language that everything is taught and learnt in a majority of teaching–learning situations, including the classroom. Though, there are certain non-verbal means and methods through which learning can take place, they are rarely used and it is mostly through language that education is imparted in school.

Language is the vehicle of thought. Primarily it is oral or spoken and then it comes to writing. English is now the richest language in the world with its million vocabularies and there is no country, which is not teaching language to its youngsters, as it is felt in dispensable to its rational and international transactions.

English as a language has been in India for more than a century. But even now, very few can speak English. But despite English not being spoken by many people, it has become a major link language at national and international levels and is a commonly used language in offices, business, industry, preparation of professionals like Doctors and Engineers and in research particularly in the fields of science and technology; and so, teaching of English in schools has acquired importance in the education system of our country.

English is becoming more and more important. It is widely spoken all around the world. Knowing English and mastering it, is very important on the part of the learners for their prospective career. They should have communicative competence to master the subject knowledge and skills better. Most of the scholarly papers or journals in the world are written in English. Most of the professors in several universities deliver their lectures in English. Hence, the students should at least master the Basic English language skills to deal with the countless English lectures, projects and papers. Language is often described as a ‘skill’ rather than a subject. It is not a content-subject like Science, Social studies, Commerce etc. that aim at imparting information and knowledge. People acquire knowledge by learning or reading

content-subjects. The language as skill is more a matter of 'doing' than of 'knowing'. A skill may be called the ability to do something well. Swimming, singing, painting, playing, driving, dancing etc. are skills, which people perform after acquiring them. Knowing about these things is an intellectual exercise and using or doing them is a skill.

English is regarded as a world language. These days English is taught in India as a Second language as well as foreign language. English is an easy language to learn. The place of English in present day curriculum clearly indicates the lack of uniform policy. In teaching English to our students our aim should be to enable them to use English with ease and comfort. They should be able to speak and write English effectively and develop an ability to understand the basic pattern of the culture of English speaking people. English provided a medium for understanding technology and scientific development.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The importance of English could be well understood taking into consideration three vital points of its significance, namely, English as an international language, as a link language and as a library language.

1.3 ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

English is regarded as a world language. It is first language of U.S, U.K, and is spoken and read by millions of Europeans, Indian and Chinese as a second language. It is one of the six official languages of UNO. It is a language of cultural give and take. It opens a worldwide opportunity for employment. In globalized world, English being truly global language acts as a link between the people of the globe.

1.4 ENGLISH AS A LINK LANGUAGE

English is serving as link language at two important levels. First, English is responsible for our contact with the outside world. We owe a great debt to the English language for contact with Western thought and culture. Second English serves as a link language between one state and another.

1.5 ENGLISH AS A LIBRARY LANGUAGE

English is a storehouse of knowledge. There is hardly anything important in the world that has not been translated into English. Good Reference books are found in English. Kothari commission(1966) mentioned “in fact English as an important “library language” would play a vital role in higher education. No student should be considered as qualified for a degree, unless he has acquired a reasonable proficiency in English. English is likely to have an important place in foreseeable future. The increasing awareness of the importance of English compels us to learn and widen our intellectual awareness. Due to these reasons, everyone at elementary school demand English. There is popular demand of English by people to make it a compulsory subject in elementary level.

1.6 ENGLISH IN THE WORLD CONTEXT

English is said to be the world’s most important language having communicative and educative values. It is the mother tongue of more than 320 million people and another 200 million use it as their second language (Baruah,1991, P. 4). English language is used all over the world not out of any imposition but because of the realization that it has certain advantages. A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world’s knowledge is enshrined in English. Moreover, English is a progressive language. It has its past, present and future. It is a dynamic language that nearly half of the world speaks and understands it. It is a flexible language because its history is a chronicle of the tremendous changes in culture and language. English is a complete language because it has evolved out of a social background and expresses cultural experience. Over and above English is universally renowned for its power of expression and its rich literature.

1.7 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

Though it is said now that Macaulay’s minutes (1835) paved the way for the development of English in India by making its study compulsory the elite section of the Indians too contributed towards forming a ‘favorable’ atmosphere for English education. The introduction of English created an atmosphere of political consciousness and an awareness of our own rights and privileges. Only because of this unifying factor, the wave of independence spread from North to South and from East to West. Gradually English occupied the top most position. However meanwhile people also began to think that English was a foreign plant

transplanted in the Indian soil and was doing immense harm to the growth of our nation. As a result, in 1904 a government resolution suggested that the medium of instruction in the middle classes should be the mother tongue and English should not be taught before the age of thirteen. However, the children had the provision to pick up a working vocabulary of English to be able to follow their lessons in higher classes. Nevertheless, the Calcutta University Commission (1917) supported 'Bilingualism'. Thus, English continued to dominate the curriculum of Indian Schools, Colleges and Universities.

1.8 PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

However, a high percentage of school - leavers leave the precincts of the school as ignorant of English usage as they were when they entered the school first. Many years of learning, English leads most of our school goers nowhere. Teaching of English in our schools is in a chaotic state today. Pupils are taught English for about six periods per week for six years. But it has been estimated that they hardly know few words by the time they join a University. This means that they have hardly been able to learn English words at the rate of one word per period. They do not know how to use the commonest structures of English. The mistake is in our Educational system itself. A teacher's target is to "prepare" his students for the examination and not to make his pupils competent in the use of the language they are learning (Bala Subramanian, 1985, P. 56).

In reality, neither the student nor the teacher is anxious to learn or to teach English. Therefore, the student is nervous only about his success in the examination and the teacher's sole problem is to see that the pass percentage does not go down. We hunt for shadows rather than substance. We care more for diplomas than for knowledge. It is not learning that we want, but the prize that learning brings - wealth, prestige, status, and so on. It is not knowledge that we ask for but short - cuts to knowledge, so that we can outwit the examiner (Mehta, 1981, P.18).

Pupils are assessed in all the states in India by means of a single examination conducted towards the end of the year. In this system, pupils usually work hard for a few days just before the examination and get through the examination. But, such last-minute preparation does not help in the case of language. Language needs constant practice over an extended period and this can be ensured only if examinations are held at frequent intervals. The present

system of relying solely on an all - important annual examination therefore does not serve the purpose (Baruah, 1991, P. 14).

Moreover, the question papers are set in such a way where all the questions can be answered with the help of bazaar cribs. For such an examination, students require no thinking, no originality, no imagination and no skill, though the vital aspect of language learning is integrated skill. Hence, an average teacher tends to teach nothing more than what the examiner is likely to require.

1.9 STANDARD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Factors of a heterogeneous nature varying from place to place and situation to situation do exist and create difficulties. Unmanageable numbers, poor classroom conditions, poor motivation, lack of support from home and society, pressures of unwieldy syllabus in other subjects, too many languages to be studied at the same time, unhealthy attitudes of the authorities in many cases - all these are factors that often interfere with the teaching of English (Mohammed, The Hindu, 1995). Because of these factors, the standard of English Language Teaching is said to be going down day by day. Besides, there are certain teacher-oriented factors that cause havoc to English Language Teaching. The teachers teaching English to secondary students are not so competent in teaching the language. Oral competence of teachers teaching English is very poor; reading competence is found to be poor and writing competence seems to be somewhat poor (Franklin, 1997, P. 246). Teachers are not clear about the aim of teaching English. They divide the timetable into reading, writing, composition, translation and grammar and are satisfied so long as the students are kept busy and they don't get any trouble from the higher authorities. It drives home the fact that in general, students are not found to be competent in English because of lack of skill-oriented teaching. Even after studying the language for nine years, they are not able to speak or write on their own. Therefore, an empirical study of the language skills developed in students is found to be essential.

1.10 RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH

India has one of the largest primary education networks in the world. Educational facilities have witnessed spectacular growth, with rapid increase in the number of schools and

enrolment in these schools. In India, development of primary education has been given greater priority and more funds in recent years as it lays the foundation for individual and national development.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001 is Government of India's flagship programme for providing free and compulsory education to children of 6–14 years age. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including language skills. One of the goals is to “focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life skills to be imparted to children for being successful.” Teaching and learning of English is to be given due attention in the programme of improving quality of education.

The National Knowledge Commission (2007) felt that the time has come to teach English as a language in school. Early action in this sphere, would help us build an inclusive society and transform India once again into a ‘knowledge society’ which it was a few decades ago. This feature of India had disappeared in the last few decades. It has recommended that English teaching should start from class I so that after 12 years of schooling the learners will have access to higher education and equal access to employment opportunities. This commission has also laid emphasis on the significance of language as not only a medium of instruction or a means of communication but also as a determinant of success towards greener pastures. It was stressed that an understanding or the command over the English language is the most important determinant of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities.

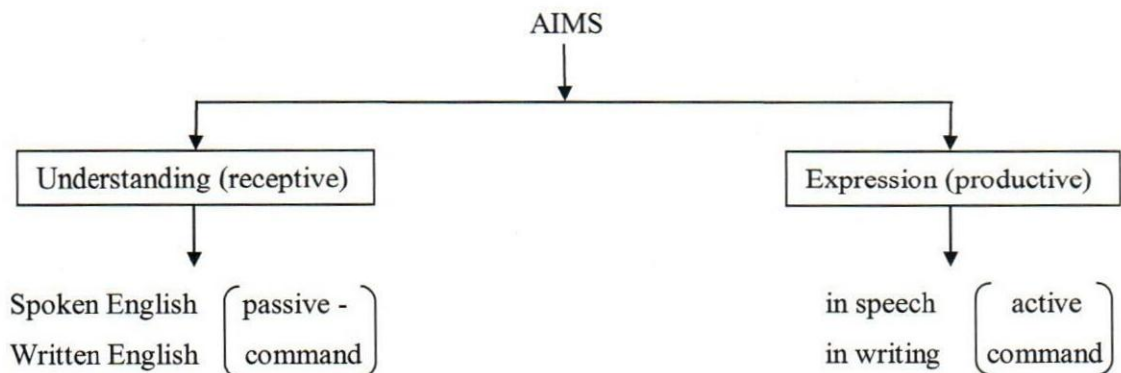
The Right to Education Act, 2009 marks a historical moment for elementary education in India. It is meant to ensure that every child has the right to guaranteed quality elementary education. This would also include learning of multiple languages in which English occupies an important place along with the mother tongue. The RTE act has made special provision for disadvantaged groups, such as child laborers, migrant children, children with special needs, or those who are disadvantaged due to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or other such factors. The target of educating all children at least up to primary level by 2015 is one of the Millennium Development Goals. It will be in the fitness of things if all the children who complete primary education also have a minimum level of proficiency in English.

1.11 AIMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

From the foregone discussion, it becomes clear that English is an all-important language and the ability to use this language has become a necessity to an educated person (RIE Monograph, 1980, P.1). The study of a language has four aspects. They are Semantic, Phonetic, Graphic and the Phonetic-Cum-Graphic aspects. Semantic aspect deals with 'Comprehension'. It is the understanding of the meaning. The Phonetic aspect deals with the spelling and pronunciation of words. The Graphic aspect is the written form of a language. The Phonetic-Cum-Graphic aspect is the Reading of the language. All these aspects of the language work in co-ordination with each other. Thus, there are four general aims in teaching English. They are-

- To enable the pupil to understand English when spoken
- To enable them to speak English
- To enable them to read English
- To enable them to write English

These aims correspond to the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are passive or receptive skills and speaking and writing are active or productive skills. The following chart shows the aims of teaching English clearly-



1.12 OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH

Besides the general aims of teaching English, the teacher should have definite, clear-cut aims in teaching each lesson. They should be clear, precise and expressive.

Primary Level Objectives

At the end of standard VII/VIII, a pupil should be able to:

- a. Understand statements, questions, short talks and passages read out to him on a subject within his experience (within the scope of the syllabus), when read at careful conversational speed.
- b. Ask and answer questions in speech relating to his experience and to what he has read (within the range of the syllabus).
- c. Read with fluency (both oral and silent reading) and understand simple passages within the vocabulary and structural range of the syllabus.
- d. Express himself clearly in writing with reasonable accuracy, within the linguistic range of the syllabus, on subjects within his experience.

Full mastery of a language requires receptive ability as well as productive ability. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are related to and supplement one another. The psychology of language learning also tells us that the four basic language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing, reinforce each other, and even for the development of a single skill, some amount of emphasis on the other skills will be found beneficial (Baruah, 1991, P. 9).

1.13 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: NCF 2005

The NCF 2005 lays stress on the use of child's mother tongue as a medium of learning at the primary level. It has stated that it should be the effort of the Indian educational system to teach English to every Indian child and to ensure that she/he gains a sufficiently high level of proficiency in it and not suffer discrimination for lack of it.

1.14 LANGUAGE SKILLS

Learning a language comprises of four skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). The former two skills are known as oracy and the latter two are known as literacy; both oracy and literacy form linguacy.

Among these four skills, listening and reading are used as the channel of receiving information. Thus, these two skills are called receptive skills.

The remaining two skills speaking and writing are used as the channel of sending information. Thus, these two skills are called productive skills.

A. LISTENING SKILL

Listening is a prerequisite to other skills of language. It is a process of making meaning out of spoken language. Listening skill is also called 'Receptive skill', because when listening, the person is at the receiving end of the communication channel. Though it is a receptive skill, it requires a lot of practice for its improvement. Many think that it is not an important one and specific training is not given for improving it. The fact is that listening is a significant skill and must be learnt and taught carefully. It is not only a cognitive understanding but it includes the analytical ability to find the main theme, style, etc. There is a need for an active involvement of the learner for the effective performance of listening. Jane Willis writes, "Listening is receptive rather than productive, but it is an equally important skill. Students need to learn how to listen and to get the chance to listen to different types of English, so they will be able to listen with understanding to spoken English outside the classroom".

Listening involves the formation of proper auditory images of phonemic components such as the use of vowel and consonant sounds, stress, accent, pitch, pause, juncture, intonation and the rhythm of language in isolation and in combination and the reception, identification, perception and their discrimination from the mother tongue equivalents and acquisition and development of communicative competence at the receptive level.

B. SPEAKING SKILL

Speaking skill is a more complex skill than listening. It is an act of creativity. In addition to knowing the language, the speaker must think of an idea he/she wishes to express, either initiating the monologue or conversation or responding to previous speaker. The skill of speaking is 'active' in nature, productive and creative too. It is a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his/her meaning. It is only through speaking that we get many things done for us. Speaking skill is the most significant skill, as the language is

considered primarily a spoken language. As language is primarily a means of expression, it is necessary to develop the speaking skill among the learners effectively. The mastery of speaking skill enhances one's confidence and fluency. We can't live without speaking in real life situations. The truth is that listening and speaking are interdependent.

C. READING SKILL

Reading is nothing but an understanding of written symbols, which consists of recognition and comprehension skills. While reading, a reader interacts with a text. The reading activity updates one's knowledge and it is an important tool for academic success. Reading is a very complex but significant skill. Reading is the decoding of the graphic representation of a language. It comprises three stages known as recognition, structuring and interpreting stage. Reading is basically comprehension, interpreting or making sense of a given text etc. In the first stage, the learner recognizes a spoken word in a written form. The skill of Reading is often regarded as passive in nature and receptive, too. It is also regarded as 'Graphic Motor Skill', as it involves visual and psychomotor organs.

D. WRITING SKILL

Writing is the process of conveying one's thought through written symbols. It is a difficult process. The skill of Writing is productive and active in nature. It also involves the visual and the psychomotor organs and is often called Graphic- motor skill. All these four skills of language are the bases for communication. Hence, they form the base for the language proficiency-the ability to use the knowledge in different tasks.

1.15 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

LANGUAGE- The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

SKILL- An ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skill).

DEVELOPMENT- The process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced.

1.16 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

From the above discussion, it can be understood that all the four skills of English language should be given top most preference while teaching English as a second language. Learners in the Indian classroom lack linguistics skill and Acquisition of English i.e. Listening, Speaking, reading and writing.

Textbook plays an important role in the efforts to raise the learners' achievement and thus contribute towards quality of education. Opportunities of learning a language, activities for language promotion exposure for development of basic skills are main objectives of textbook development board. The present study is an attempt to assess the objectives according to the LSRW as prescribed in the book since 2007 being developed or not till the present-day usage. Through this present study researcher focuses to study the development of basic skills of English language among 8th standard students. Suggestions advanced for their improvement this will go a long way in improving the quality aspects of the English and will keep the reader in touch with the latest developments and trends that are going on.

1.17 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the listening skill of 8th class students studying in state government schools.
- To study the speaking skill of 8th class students studying in state government schools.
- To study the reading skill of 8th class students studying in state government schools.
- To study the writing skill of 8th class students studying in state government schools.

1.18 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is subjected to the following limitations-

- The study was confined to students of six government schools of Bhopal.
- The study was conducted only on 120 students of 8th class.
- Textbook of English published by the M. P. textbook corporation alone has been selected for assessment.

1.19 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the investigator has discussed about the problem, its theoretical background, and the need of the study and the operational definitions of the terms. The objectives of the study have been formulated and presented. The delimitations of the study have also been mentioned.