



**NOIDA  
INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY**



Volume 8 (XII), 2021

ISSN: 2394-0298

## **NIU International Journal of Human Rights**

A UGC CARE Listed Journal



**NOIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**  
[www.niu.edu.in](http://www.niu.edu.in)

## EVOLVING A SUITABLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY FOR INDIA

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India could have suffered from British rule but, the English Language made Indians to learn and use it may more advantageous for various purposes. Right from Macaulay's Education Policy to till the day, many commissions and policies emphasized about the usage of English Language. Day by day, the importance of English Language and the usage of it is increasing rapidly in the country. Before the Independence period, only the rich and elite classes for their purposes used it. At the time of India's independence in 1947, English was the only functional lingua franca in the country. Later, it functioned for some time as foreign language, Library language and Associate Official Language as per the functioning of policies and commissions in India. After 1990s, the pluralistic nature of the country and its multi-linguistic setting, and the globalization around the world used it as second language or second Lingua Franca of the nation. The social media, Internet, higher education, bureaucracy and many more other are run after it. There have come many English Medium Schools, convents and other institutions which are using it. But, still it is not reaching the majority of the people of India. The use of English has become more but useful; but, there is no suitable policy in making education system which is foundation of all the other in making it learn and use it in country's development. The Government, Political Leaders, Policy Makers, Bureaucrats and the educated citizens of India should think about a suitable English Language Policy, which should make every citizen of the country learn it easily and use it for various purposes of country's development, without diminishing the value of the mother tongue or regional languages.

**Keywords:** Evolving, Lingua Franca, multi-linguistic, English language policy, global language

**Introduction:** As the English Language has got the name as global language due to the globalization around the world and to come into use worldwide since 1990s. India is a multi-linguistic country with its different languages, there is no particular language to interact with others. English helped India in this regard. In particular, it is very essential for a multilingual setting of the country and development of the country to learn this global language. It is amazing that the English language today is global one and has an enormous impact on thousands of other languages of the world. It is more so because it is the language that binds our heterogeneous world. It has become indispensable for all the countries to teach and learn English. It is the lingua franca gained the name because of its functioning effects in the fields of international business, media, research, education and the communication through it. English is no more stigmatized as a colonial language in India. It is instead considered as a global language thereby becoming the language of economic empowerment, modernization and emancipation.

**The advent of English in India:** It was known fact that India was under the rule of British. English language public instruction began in India in the 1830s during the rule of the East India Company. In 1835, English replaced Persian as the Official language of the company. Lord Macaulay's Minutes played a major role in introducing English language and western concepts to the education in India. The first language education policy for the promotion of English language was introduced on February 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1835.

**Role of English during the freedom movement:** During years from 1858-1947, under the rule of British, English language storming increased throughout India. This was driven in part by the gradually increasing hiring of Indians into the civil services. Great freedom fighters like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subash Chandra Bose and many others used it for their communication in bringing freedom to the nation from British. Swami Vivekananda, in the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago, represented Hinduism to the world conveying his thoughts using English. Most of the Indian writers known to the world by writing in English or translated their writings into English. Newspapers and Press started printing in English. At the time of India's independence in 1947, English was the only functional lingua franca of the country.

**Growth of English Language after Independence- The Policies and Commissions:** In 1950 the Indian constitution was established. Gandhi emphasized on Hindustani, and wanted it to be the official language of India. Later the concept of Hindustani was given up by the rulers. In 1956, Indian states were established on the basis of majority regional languages and states were allowed to make their own official language for state affairs. In 1963, Three-language formula was introduced in the nation, students started learning their mother tongue / Regional language, Hindi and English. This policy was proposed in 1956 by the Central Advisory Board on Education and was adopted at the Chief Minister's Conference in 1961. In 1965, Hindi was made as the official language of the nation and English was given the status of Associate official language. Whereas, Tamil Nadu opposed this three-language policy and followed only two languages as Tamil everybody should learn it and next English. The Education Commission 1964-66 has identified English as 'library language' and felt that it would continue essentially in higher education. Further, the National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education (NCERT, 1989) recommended a free alteration of English either as a second language or as a third language.

**The Impact of English on India:** In Indian multilingual setting, there is a transparency and fluidity of boundaries between the languages (Khubchandani 1997). New Indian languages arise because of the close contact between the existing languages, and this happens especially for the need of communication purposes. The position of English in India is not just empowering but also extremely involving in India. 'English' serves as a language of wider communication among the people (Kachru 1986). It provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness in India.

In the global context, English has provided a competitive advantage to countries where it is being taught as second language. India not only has the English advantage but also is a partner in global English. It is because of the English language advantage that has been successful workers who could take up jobs across the world. Very pertinently, David Graddol observes: "India has been triumphantly playing the English card in establishing its global leadership of outsourcing and BPO" (2006:20). The advantages of being able to speak more than two languages are not just of a practical nature and are not to be understated. Knowing about the cultures associated with different languages can help to overcome intercultural differences in communication. It is very common for bilinguals and multilinguals to switch between the languages.

NCERT's current curriculum frameworks encourage the idea of multilingual education in India. It mentions, "The aim of English teaching is the creation of multilinguals who can enrich all our languages; this has been an abiding nation vision."

**The reasons behind the poor standard of English in India:**

- **Lack of clear-cut policy:** One of the main reasons for the poor standard of English is the lack of clear-cut-policy. There have been frequent changes in the policy of the government towards the teaching and learning of English.

- **Lack of exposure to the language:** Most of the Indian students are exposed to their mother tongues. They do not get adequate opportunities either to listen to or speak in English. They listen to English only in the 'English' class. The teaching of the other subjects is mostly in their regional languages as the medium of instruction is in their vernacular languages. It is only in the cities and urban areas that we find English medium schools. Because of the poor social and economic backgrounds, they neither get enough exposure to English outside the classroom nor enough opportunities to improve themselves in speaking it. This naturally reduces their use of English and results in a poor competence in the language.
- **Non availability of suitable teaching – learning materials:** There are many kinds of syllabus patterns. There is no clarity about teaching-learning materials for the students. There is no single-syllabus pattern around the country.
- **Lack of capable teachers of English:** There are less number of efficient, trained/ experienced teachers to deal with English classroom. There is no proper training system/ orientation to teachers through training programmes / Workshops / Seminars etc.
- **Language examination system:** Only two skills of the language like reading and writing skills will be evaluated through examination system. The actual reading practice, reading skills and reading comprehension are not taught properly. The very important of all the skills i.e. listening is much neglected. It is the base for all the other skills. Speech skills are totally neglected.

#### Suggestions to implement the right English Language policy in India:

Graddol argues that, "...the argument about the language of education is also an argument about national identity, as much as developing the intellectual skills of children" (2006:116). In India, there is no confusion about the status of English language vis-à-vis national identity. English is no more considered as a language of hegemony, instead it is considered as one of the Indian languages. But what is problematic in the Indian context is the right pedagogy that could address to multiculturalism and diverse student groups with different learning abilities and aspirations.

Expansion of access to education in India, and the resultant increase of students in schools, is greatly impacting English language teaching in India. Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation program, an assessment model that is sweeping the country, includes features that entail teaching speaking and listening skills. However, the demand for a refocusing of skills is not supported by changes in curriculum, pedagogy or teacher education. In society where English proficiency guarantees economic and social upward mobility, much greater investment in research that informs policy and practise is necessary but does not seem to be forthcoming. A policy for its place at school necessarily needs to temper academic wisdom and ground reality with this imperative of parental aspiration.

The students should be taught right kindergarten to have more familiarity with the English language with other local languages. As the much information will be available should be used as the medium to gain information from the English sources like books, media, newspapers and others. In other words, language learning is a process of knowledge building in the learner, not a product for knowledge transfer from the teacher.

English is needed for operational purposes but also for identifying ourselves with those who use the language in India and abroad. The aim of teaching English to Indian students is to enable them to use English with ease and comfort, that is, to use it both instrumentally and integratively.

Though English is taught as a compulsory subject, only the pass marks is taken into consideration. As the percentage of low achievers has been ever increasing, the Government has decided not to consider marks in English as essential for admission to into a university course.

The early years of schooling aim to develop proficiency in ordinary English as a base for later academic or professional language use. It should be done or learnt and certified before x standard by that without any hurdle can clear other subjects in SSC.

Multilingualism in India is not just a number of languages. It's a way of life, a life in which languages complement each other. Languages are porous; they move into each other. As a result you need multiple languages. Therefore, education should become multilingual in India. Develop mother tongue competence and then develop English at a later point in time to have better English and faster learning of English.

A multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nation needs to evolve education and language policies in such a way that all the segments that constitute that nation develop a sense of participation in the progress of governance and national-building.

The educationists and politicians differ on the role and status of English in India. If it is to keep good standards in English, it is high time that the Government takes a strong decision to formulate and implement appropriate policies and promote students' learning of English.

**Conclusion:** India is a country of continental diversity, especially in its linguistic landscape which, in the seventh decade of the Independence, retains and continues to assimilate English into itself. Initially thought as the language of the intelligentsia English today is the language of opportunity. The three-language formula has provided India with an educational solution to language diversity. However, it needs changes if levels of English proficiency are to be raised without lowering skills in other languages.

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