

Research Paper

Social Status of English Language in India

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ABSTRACT

*This paper throws light on the social status of English language in India. Even after the independence the importance of English language is tremendously increasing. In this era of Information and Technology English is playing a major and vital role in our daily life. It is an international language in the sense it helps in interlinking the people in the other countries of the world. English language has made the world 'global village' by giving it a global language for communication. It is the first language for so many well educated Indians.*

It can also be said that it is a linguistic bridge between the major countries of the world and India. English is said to be the world's most important language having communicative and educative value. Now a day's English is used as a working language in the Parliament, Assemblies, Supreme Court, Banks, Industries and everywhere. English has been playing an important role in our educational system as well as national life. Now a day's speaking in English, is a social status too. India is one of the few English language markets in the world which is growing ----- Nearly about 300 million people in India know English language.

“English is the language on which,  
the sun does not set,  
Whose users never sleep”

----- Randop Quirk and H. G.

Widdowson.

English held the topmost position in India during British rule. Even after the independence its importance still continues to be more or less the same. Due to globalization, one has to know English language for International trade. Undoubtedly, English is one of the significant languages in terms of speakers. English is considered as the world's Lingua-franca or vehicular language. It has become a world language, spoken by atleast750 million people. It is now a days the dominant official language in over 60 countries on the earth.

English language is spoken by more than 380 million people in England, The United States of America and the former British Colonies. It is said that English is recurrently associated with practical and powerful pursuits. If 'Eco-technical superiority is considered, the relative status of English came into discussion. English enjoys the status of one of the official languages.

English as a Global Language

English has become an international commodity, like oil and microchip! Without petrol (i.e. gas) and computers, the world will come to a halt; the English language has made the world a 'global village' by giving it a global language for

communication. If we look at the media, we find that 60% of the world's newspaper, 60% of world's scientific and technological periodicals and more than 60% of world's radio station uses English as a medium of communication. English is an International language and has reached each and every corner of the world. It is an international language in the sense that it helps in interlinking the people in the other countries of the world. U.N.O. has given English the status of being an official language. Pt. Nehru assured the Southern states that English would continue to be the associate official language until such times the non-Hindi states to agree to accept Hindi as only the official language of the country. In this connection Nehru had said, “If you push out English, does Hindi fully take its place?”This question clarified his views that “English is the window on the modern world“

In the modern world, IT has already had a significant impact on the lives of ordinary Indians, with an increase in Internet users and social Networking sites. The use of computer and internet has become indispensable. We get latest and current information on internet. We can perform our domestic things and activities on line. Even job opportunities can be searched on websites. For all such things the knowledge of English is must.

English has been the official language in our country for more than 200 years. Our laws, legal proceedings in the courts still continue to be dominated by English. It is now recognized as associate official language as per the Official Language Act of 1967. English is a language in which the latest scientific and technological knowledge and information are readily available. It primarily serves as a “Library Language”. As an associate official language of the country and as an international link language, it has an important function to perform in our education system. English is said to be the world most important language having communicative and social control. In has become as a part and parcel of our life and also world's language. Above all, English language has made the world 'global village' by giving it global language for communication.

Salman Rushdie, the renowned novelist, says that

“The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English. Some time ago and it grows from many roots”. We can also say that no community on this earth can claim sole ownership over the English language, which is genuinely global. The use and utility is not confined to any country or state, but everywhere on this earth. It is seen everywhere that English has become a necessary tool for mobility, and social and economic success in the present day world. It is not only creating political and social consciousness among the people in the world but also imparting academic knowledge to the young. The stream of knowledge still flows in all directions through English. English still is and definitely will be the most dominating and the link language of the country. As Marnie Holborrow says, “The language of capitalism at the turn of twenty-first century is English”.

In India, English was supposed to serve the transitional purposes till 1965 only, but it continues to be used officially with Hindi and other fourteenth national languages. The invention of Internet has also proved a blessing in disguise for the development of English. Now a day's English is used as a working language in the Parliament, Assemblies, Supreme Court, Banks, Industries, Establishments and Public Sector everywhere and all that. Speaking in English, now a days, is a social status too. English is the common language for communication in India. Most of the books for higher studies are published in English. For example-books on Medicine, Surgery, Electronics, Higher Physical Sciences, Technology, Business Administration, Communication and Research. About the social status of this language, C. Rajgopalchari remarked that “The English language is the Goddess of Saraswati's gift of India”. It is the vital need of the time for Indian students to learn this language.

“.....English has become so much a part of our national habit.....English cannot continue to occupy the place of state language as in the past” (Education Commission 1948). English should be retained as a properly studied second language in our Indian Universities-Kunzru Committee (1955). National Integration Council (1962) observed that-'Employment prospectus of students educated through English medium are better'. English continues to be the status symbol of society. In higher education English is playing a vital role and viewed as India's window to ' the world's technical and scientific information and knowledge. As English is the mother-tongue of most of the common wealth countries, a large number of original books are written in English language. Most of the prestigious books written by ancient Greek and Roman philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Karl Marx are written in English. They have spread their ideas in English. Hence English language is having a social status. It is true that the higher we move in education and the more we aspire for professional excellence, the only medium left at the top of English. English has opened many avenues and opportunities to the Indian youth to make their career.

Impact of Globalization on English

If we see the picture of English in India, we come to know that it is not the language of any region or group. Many languages like Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam and so on are spoken in India. English in India has acquired the status of the most perfect language, though it is used by intelligentsia. It is a cosmopolitan language. This language has reached each and every corner of the world even in India also. Hence due to the impact of globalization, English in India is now the language of trade,

business, commerce, education, science, technology, justice, law, industry, mass media and all that. We see that nearly about200 milion Indians speak in English. Many T.V. channels are in English language. For example- programs like Cartoon Network, National Geography, Discovery, Espn, Star Cricket and so on. Many educational and entertainment programs are in English languages. In other words in can be said that educational programmes have high percentage in English. Even though our mother-tongue is Marathi, but the children imitate and listen English words on various channels on T.V. By and large they try to learn it. Due to globalization and rapid change, English is enjoying powerful, dominating and unbeatable and the status of respect in India. As a result of the broad social and historical circumstances, English in India occupies a prominent role.

Some Points Regarding the Status of English in India

- 1) Indian considered English as a second language as well as foreign language
- 2) It is taught along with other languages.
- 3) In India, English language is learnt, it is not acquired.
- 4) It is learnt by speakers of other languages.
- 5) To give impetus to English language, many private convents and English schools runs English spoken classes so as to elevate their status.

Many English schools and convents conduct many programs like seminars, workshops, symposium, lectures, dramas in English language. Thus we can say that English has become an indispensable part of our daily life. In other words, this language has a special significance as well. The growth of English will be conspicuous in its use throughout the world as a second language; English will also be widespread in areas where English is not used as a first language. It served and has been serving the people of the India for decades as a thoroughly serviceable language, as an all Indian medium and as an international link. Indian English is mainly used by Indians whose native language it is not. It is a minority language, but yet a language of national affairs and its status is often called into a question by, as Bailey puts it, “not only by foreigners with their ideas of proper English, but also by Indians who remain ambivalent about its distinctive features and uncertain about its future”.

One of the major reasons for learning English is the 'instrumental function' that “it is also seen as a means for enhancing social mobility and individual personality. A total time of 12 hours 20 minutes is devoted to news in the Home Services out of which 2 hours 25 minutes are taken by 21 news broadcasts in English. India is the only non-English country where English is mostly spoken in metropolitan cities. Elite people use English as their mother-tongue. Here I would like to mention some of the states like Mizoram, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya have adopted English as the official language. Sahitya Academy of India recognizes English as one of the Indian languages

Conclusion:

As we know that we are living in the world of globalization. English language is an international language. It is a common language and is spoken in many countries. It is a link language in the sense that it helps in interlinking the people in the other countries of the world. English is the first and foremost criteria whether you are applying for a job or you are seeking admission in a reputed and prestigious college/university/institution/multinational company. English has been the official language in our country more

than 200 years. As an associate language of the country and as an international link language, it has an important function to perform in our education system. Indian considered English as a second language as well as foreign language. It is taught along with other languages. This language is learnt, not acquired. It is learnt by speakers of other languages. To give impetus to English language, many private convents and English schools runs English spoken classes. It is the most significant language for obtaining information. Now a days, speaking in English, is a social status too. Educational programmes have high percentage in English. English brightens the students prospectus of getting prestigious jobs.

**References: -**

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