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## **GRT** ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN KASHMIR: A PARADIGMATIC APPROACH AND ITS USE KEEPING IN VIEW THE SOCIETY, DIALECTS, AND VARIED TASTES

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**Abstract:**-English is a global language, which has connected us with the outer circle. To learn and teach English, one need to develop skill and that skill has to be identified, learnt and taught. One has to have a comprehensive view of teaching, both pedagogic and andragogic. A teacher concerned with teaching of English language, especially dealing with the Kashmiri society, should infuse within himself/herself the soft and hard skills. The contact of English with Kashmir is of recent birth with the advent of Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century. My study of research aims to explore the shift in learning/teaching of English in Kashmir and the best viable approach of teaching of English language in the Kashmir valley, keeping in view the varied tastes, mindset, and dialects.

**Keywords:**English language, approach, missionaries, skills, pedagogy.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Language is a fine medium that allows interaction between generations; a way of communicating one's experiences, fears, ideas and concept, emotions and attitudes, thereby distinguishing a human from rest of the living world. Language is a way to civilization and today it is an important tool of globalization. English language with its culture and thoughts, ethnicity and sociability has become universal. It is rightly a lingua franca. India as a country of diverse needs and unique society is also in league with speaking of English language. The foremost criterion of learning of English is to meet the various challenges of globalization and reach global standards. This is the prime reason Indian Education Commission (64-66) recommended that no student should be awarded a university degree unless he/she has acquired some proficiency in English language. English is widely learnt and used as Second Language in India. It has become a very imperative part of Indian national and socio-cultural reality. Kashmir, being a multifaceted state with diverse dialects and tastes has too imbibed English language as a component of its socio-cultural identity. Although Kashmiri is the mother tongue or the native language of Kashmir, Urdu has taken an important place as the regional language and English has become an all-inclusive language. English is everywhere; in the administrative and bureaucratic contexts; in social setups; press and media and personal communicative milieu. There is a constant social pressure to learn and use English and thereby, education structure in Kashmir has undergone a radical change to teach English at different stages with an approach that best suits the Kashmir scenario.

### **ENGLISH IN KASHMIR: AN OVERVIEW**

The language contact between English and Kashmir is of recent birth. English came to Kashmir valley with the Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century. The vale has been an unstable hot spot historically, politically and linguistically. The valley had been subjected to the foreign rule till about the mid of the twentieth century and that has also shaped the entire linguistic, social and political habits of Kashmiri people as they have had the hybridizations with the arrival of people from different regions having miscellaneous religions, cultures and languages and these encounters have influenced and made way into the linguistic contexts from time to time. We know whether it is Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam, the Kashmiri culture and language has been affected in one way or the other. The varied regional and social dialects too shape the learning and teaching of English in Kashmir.

As far as English is concerned with the Kashmir valley the history of English is linked with the history of Christian missionary work in the second half of nineteenth century. Christian missionaries succeeded in changing the educational system by introducing English language here. The locally run pathshalas and maktabs by the Hindus and Muslims respectively

imparted only the education of religious scriptures as well as the languages of these scriptures. Khan states the educational system in Kashmir in the following words:

“Modern education does not seem to have existed until the advent of Christian missionaries in Kashmir when a changed outlook gradually came into being. The makhtabs of Srinagar and of other parts of the valley were generally affiliated to the mosques, where the boys were taught to read Arabic so that they might be able to read the Quran. Likewise, the Kashmiri pandits had their schools called pathshalas where Sanskrit was taught to enable them to read the sacred books.” (Khan 1999: 160-61)

It did take some time to accept English language by locals because of a foreign language it was affiliated with. The language was looked down upon because associating with it was equaled to conversion to Christianity. The Christian missionary schools in Kashmir like the Tyndale Biscoe School, Mallinson Girls School, Presentation Convent, and Burnhall School have to be rightly applauded for the work they have been doing, in making English language as a part of education system. In 1976 with the implementation of recommendations of National Policy on Education (1968), the government of Jammu and Kashmir adopted teaching of English at the secondary level though as a separate subject. It was again in 1976, with the recommendations of Kashmir University Committee; English language found its way into colleges where it enabled students to English as a library language and for communicating with other students. Today it has developed into a full-fledged subject area that is being taught at college level as well as university level. Functional English has been designed as a subject that caters to the growth and development of English vocabulary, semantics, and pronunciation and it has added to the speaking of English fluently and accurately. At university level, a course entirely has been equipped to provide for learning and teaching of English language. Linguistics and Teaching of English language have been accordingly designed so that students can understand the basics as well as the advanced methods that can help a learner to comprehend learn and teach the foreign language.

In the last two decades, from being the language of the Christian mission which was confined to the educational institutions, both government and private, English language has grown at an extraordinary pace. English, which was initially referred as “the devil's language,” has taken a dominant and the most preferred language in the present day Kashmir. The growth of print media, both dailies and weeklies has also increased and this has added to the overall scenario of English speaking Kashmiris. As a result of this leap, that has taken the English language to the commoners, it is no more confined to the educated elite class. English language has grown so much that it has become a code-mixed variety with great majority of people. It has become a priority as far as learning and teaching of Foreign/Second language is concerned. It is no longer cramped and restricted to the private, elite institutions but has become a medium of instruction of government institutions.

#### Students' Attitude to English in Kashmir

The use of English among students of Kashmir is extensive. It has become a key-ingredient in employability today. It has become a “survival- skill” in the twenty-first century. The students here understand that the efficiency in English language will enable them to set up intellectual, economic, commercial, cultural, and political relations with rest of the world and this global language will permit them to acquire knowledge in legal, technical, and scientific education and research in all almost all branches of learning.

A questionnaire was prepared and distributed among students and teachers that examined major areas of:

- Importance of English for academic and professional purposes.
- Fluency in English, whether or not an advantage.
- Relative approach that meets the challenges of Kashmiri society.
- Which special skill to be improved.
- Importance of self-accessed materials.
- Which language skill to be prioritized
- Skill areas where students need improvement.

Importance of English in Kashmir	
Very Important	80.16%
Moderately Important	16.11%
Minimally important	3.73%

**Table 1: Importance of English in Kashmir**

The study found that 90% students considered English 'very important' for the purposes of study and 84% found

proficiency in English the most essential criteria.

The students were asked to rate their preference for the best practicable approach for Kashmiri linguistic context keeping in view their different dialects and tastes on a three-point scale; High, Moderate and Low.

Approach	Percentage	Level of Demand
1.Communicative language Teaching	64.7	High
2. Eclectic Method	24.3	Moderate
3. Situational Language Teaching	11	Low
4. Grammar Translation Method	0	Low

**Table 2: Students' rating determining the demand for the best approach in Kashmir.**

Levels at which English to be introduced	
First Year and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	28.23%
Third Year	5.16%
Different types of courses at different year	66.61%

**Table 3: The percentage of stages at which English can be introduced.**

Importance of Self- Access Material	
Yes	No
85.95%	14.05%

**Table 4: Whether or not self-access materials in English are important.**

Priority of Language Skills	
<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Students</u>
Reading	Speaking
Listening	Writing
Speaking	Reading
Writing	Listening

**Table 5: Priority of language skills by teachers and students**

Skill areas where students wants to improve English			
Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
25%	75%	50%	50%

**Table 6: Percentage of students and language skills where improvement is needed.**

The primary aim of teaching/ learning English in Kashmir concentrates on the fundamental skills of language ability of students i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is of paramount importance that the teacher should know what his/her task is and what he/she has to achieve by teaching English.

#### **Viable Approach suiting the Kashmiri linguistic context**

There can be no perfect approach that can be simulated to the Kashmiri classrooms. In the lower primary classes to middle classes, we can conclude that Grammar Translation Method has not lost its sheen and credibility here in Kashmir. It can be said that children of smaller classes cannot be made so proficient in English as they are more inclined towards their mother tongue, which they have acquired, and it forms the basic yet latent part of their mindset. They can better affiliate with a language when the vocabulary it contains can be associated with their native tongue. It is easy for them to pick language and memorize the rules of grammar. As this method studies language “through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language.” We know for that matter of fact that the students' proficiency in English is not so much, so objectives of teaching English is practical with the Grammar Translation Method and emphasis is on the activities to read and understand the target language (English) through texts, books and other teaching materials in English.

We must understand that socio-psychological problems influence the teaching of English. In learning English as second language, motivation is the crucial force that can determine whether one learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it and how long he preserves “the primary motive to learn a language is that it provides a means of communication.”

The approach, which takes up a holistic view regarding teaching or learning of English language in Kashmir when it comes to higher classes, extending to college and university level can be well associated with the Communicative Language Teaching. “Communicative Language Teaching does not look at language as set of linguistic items for the learner to store them in his memory. Rather, it aims to develop communicative competence in the learners so that they become effective communicators in the target language. The focus is now on meaning and functions rather than on the form of language.” Language is acquired rather than learnt consciously. CLT is a “whole-person learning.” It involves:

Interaction between the learner and users of language  
Collaborative creation of meaning  
Creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language  
Learning through attending to feedback that learners get when they use the language  
Paying attention to the language one hears that is the input and trying to incorporate new forms into one's developing communicative competence  
Trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things.

(Rogers 2006: 5)

It is an essential approach that implies new roles in classroom for both teachers and learners. Students participate in activities that are cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning. They take on greater degree of responsibility for their own learning and teacher assume the role of facilitator and monitor. They just facilitate English language learning and students assume the responsibility of producing error-free speech. The learner in CLT is not passive recipient of knowledge from the knowledgeable.

Kashmir speech has become embedded with English vocabulary items where Kashmir language borrows lexical items in English. The use of English vocabulary items is more common in educated people and youth of the valley and they use them in formal as well as in informal social contexts. Thus, English language is almost an all pervading influence, the manifestation which has been seen in different aspects of life in Kashmir and CLT is the best approach which can aid in a teaching programme with respect to Kashmir scenario including the syllabus design.

#### **CONCLUSION**

English language has taken a new fashion with Kashmiri people in almost all sections and age groups. People especially youths in Kashmir use English language for upward social mobility and economic success.

“More and more people use the majority language in domains where they formerly spoke the mother tongue. They adopt the majority language as their regular vehicle of communication, often mainly because they expect that speaking that language gives better chances for upward social mobility and economic success.” (Appel and Muysken 1983: 32)

There is a shift in approach regarding teaching/learning of English that stresses more on communicative competence rather than grammatical competence; facilitating the social use of language. With the course of time, there is wide shift from “form” to “meaning.” English has emerged as the dominant language in most of the important domains of Kashmiri society. It has achieved more social and economic significance. It has taken over as a language of communication in many functional domains replacing Urdu. The best conclusion we can have is that although eclectic approach is feasible in Kashmiri institutional environment yet Communicative Language Teaching is the most effective alternative to teach/ learn English among Kashmir's sociolinguistic context and in a way, CLT is eclectic in nature.

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