

Learning Levels in English of Indian Elementary Schools Students: A Conceptual Study



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Abstract

India is a Hindi language country and hence Indians do not have knowledge of English language. There is not denying the fact that Indians are not comfortable in learning English language. The learning of English in an Indian school is a complex process. The differential achievement of English learners is a serious concern for teachers in Indian school. Institutional and instructional contexts play a vital role in learning of English language. The pressure for English in primary schools has been part of the problem in the last decade. English, due to its 'lingua franca' status, is an inspirational language for the school of most Indians. Learning in the English language is seen as a ticket to economic prosperity and social status in India. Thus almost all private schools in India are English medium. Sometimes, due to political compulsions, the local language is the official language of the state as its primary language. English is offered as a second language from class five in many Indian schools. Thus, the learning level of English in Indian schools is very low. The new national education policy should have shown the courage to argue for education in English medium from primary school. This article provides knowledge about learning in English language. The aim of the present study is to describe the learning levels of English in Indian elementary schools students.

Keywords: Learning, Elementary, School, Students, English.

Introduction

Language planning for schooling in India can be seen more as a question of status planning rather than corpus or acquisition planning. In India, Language policy was emerged as a political consensus in the early years of Independence. There is also a depiction of democratic processes in the Asian context. There is not denying the fact that English is debatably the most important thing that the British left behind in India. English helped unite the Indian subcontinent by providing a common language for the region with many local languages and dialects. It provided a uniform tongue for administration and education. The Indian constitution and the Indian legal code are printed in English and the famous speech given by Pt. Nehru was in English after India became Independent. Listening in Indian school classrooms is an important language learning ability and yet the most overlooked ability. This is unnoticed as teachers learn it without any special training, learners naturally acquire this ability.

Many believe that the ability to speak and understand the English language makes a person qualified for many jobs that are not yet available to the local speaking people. Often government school students are undermined in competitive examinations as compared to English medium private school students due to lack of knowledge of English. Most of the books related to technology and science are available in English language only. Also, most subjects of elementary education are also taught in English language. In such a situation, students of Hindi or any other local language face difficulties in getting primary education. English being a global language enables students to compete globally. The concept of learning has been heavily influenced by psychological studies of the learning process and consequently has been interpreted much more widely than is customary in the popular use of the term. It involves learning skills or acquiring knowledge. Learning a language is not an intellectual activity for the child in the same way as learning English. Language is a familiar

feature of student daily lives. It is a human and social activity without which man cannot function in society. This is one of the basic needs. This is not something optional. We cannot avoid it. We consider it both simple and natural. It is an essential element in the culture of society. It is the flesh and blood of our culture.

English-medium schools have usually favoured more wealthy and middle-class Indian families, with language ability seen as a doorway to greater global opportunities for higher education and beyond. The challenges of introducing English medium classes in government schools are: accessibility of textbooks for various subjects, trained teachers, teacher trainers and a change in tests. Lower primary classes will have to focus on developing listening and speaking skills and upper primary should focus on reading and writing skills, thereby applying the concepts.

Learning Levels of English in Indian Elementary School Students

It is a fact that English in India is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and full participation in national and international life. A clear signal of this presence of English is that today in the initial phase of schooling, there is a demand by many for private English medium schools and early introduction of English in state schools. English was considered as a library language during the early years of India's Independence; In fact at one point there was a proposal that Hindi should be fully official language status and English should be abolished from public use. The National Language Policy for School Education, a three-language formula suggested by the National Education Commission on 1964–1966, was included in the National Education Policies of 1968 and 1986. The command for English emerges from several factors, such as the status paper on the teaching of English shaped by the National Council of Educational Research and Training in relation to the framework of the National Curriculum.

Curiously, many states in India have attempted to make English the medium of instruction for all schools in an effort to accept the demands of the

poor; however, there is a shortage of teachers who can also speak English. The vast majority is able to communicate in their mother tongues. Governments have ignored the evidence, making policy changes in favor of English-medium schools. For the influential middle class, it is assured that poor children are uplifted through English-medium government schools. Even some Dalit intellectuals who speak for the weakest grip claim that it is the English-medium schools that will liberate them, and those who disagree are hell-bent on maintaining the status quo. Many urban schools encourage parents to explain in English even at home. An unintended consequence of this practice is that children have a negative characteristic towards their native languages. On the other hand, government-run public schools are entirely focused on native languages. English is offered as a second language from grade 5, thus presenting an obvious competitive disadvantage for students in public schools.

The National Curriculum Framework of 2005 emphasizes the use of the child's mother tongue as a medium of learning at the primary level. The English teaching profession has consistently recommended relatively late introduction to English and this is reflected in the spirit in the policy documents. The introduction level of English has now become the subject of state policy to react to people's aspirations, making academic debate almost irrelevant. Recently, the Government of Andhra Pradesh introduced Government English as a medium in schools from class I-VI. This has inspired us to pursue economic and inspirational goals as a medium of education to re-pursue the ideas around mother tongue education, vernacular languages and English. The states of the North East region present English, Hindi, Sanskrit and Bengali along with some tribal languages of that region. Some states in the North East teach English as the first language. In fact, Punjab presents Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu as the first language and English as a mandatory second tongue. In the meantime, Orissa offers Oriya and English as primary and second languages

correspondingly at primary level, while Oriya, Hindi, Sanskrit or any other with English as second language and third language as upper primary phase. The Class I has been introduced as a subject in many states. In some states, it is offered at the Class III or Class V level. Today the teaching of English is characterized by the diversity of schools, classroom procedures and the education of textbooks with intend of passing the exam. English is the medium of instruction in some states selected for this study - Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Government Model School, Chandigarh and some schools in Maharashtra. The demand for English medium schools is indicative of language exposure in meaningful contexts. However, in these schools, other Indian languages are also used by accepting the multilingual approach. English should be looked at in relation to other subjects and the course approach should be followed. This perspective will bridge the gap between English as a subject and the medium of instruction. Recently, most states have introduced English at the primary level, some even in the class I. English has been introduced as a subject in Class I in 27 states. English has been introduced in the third grade in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. In states like Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, English is offered as oral skills in classes I and II and written skills from class III. Although technological development has served as a medium for communication, we cannot deny the role played by language. In India, primary schools provide education from class 1 to class 8. Children in these classes are typically between 6 and 14 years of age. This is the next stage after kindergarten. After primary education the next stage is middle school (class 6th to 8th). Most schools in North India teach English, Hindi, Mathematics, Environmental Science and General Knowledge to children from class I to III. However, some schools may implement this concept in Class 3 itself. Some schools may introduce a third language in class 5th or even in 3rd grade. In some places, primary education is labeled as class 3rd to 5th grade education and second grade as pre-primary

education. This is because many new concepts are introduced in this class. The NCERT provides assistance and technical assistance to many schools in India and oversees many aspects of enforcement of education policies. English was taught as a first language on the ICSE and CBSE boards while in the state board, English was taught as a secondary language at the secondary level.

Conclusion

Along with the Internet, English is best suited to fill jobs, start-ups, global education, prosperity and regional and global divisions. The most revolutionary idea for the progress and prosperity of India in the 21st century will be to take English medium education in all government schools. Our nationalist, regressive mother tongue continues to present India's poor, backward country. Many urban Indian schools encourage parents to explain in English even at home. An unintended consequence of this practice is that children have a negative characteristic towards their native languages. On the other hand, government-run public schools are purely focused on native languages. English is offered as a second language from class five, thus presenting an obvious competitive disadvantage for students in Indian public schools. Most government schools in India are non-English medium. Most state boards of education offer the English medium option, but are used only by a few performing institutions or private schools affiliated with the state board. India will stop offering primary schools for the first time since Independence, where the main language for teaching is English, the government announced, part of the first major overhaul of the national education policy in the country for 34 years. However, English will be the medium of instruction in private schools, while a continuation in the government's language policy from UPA to NDA is this: Mandi-Bazaar schools, where the common people study, teach their students only in Hindi or other regional languages needed.

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