

**KUSHAN BHATTACHARYYA**

**Ph.D. RESEARCH SCHOLAR,**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, MEWAR UNIVERSITY**

**CHITTORGARH, RAJASTHAN, INDIA**

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN COLONIAL INDIA**

### **Abstract**

This Paper deals with a brief history of English language teaching (ELT) in India. English is a widely spoken language today. It has often been referred to as 'global language', the lingua franca of the modern era and currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. English in India is used not only for communicating with the outside world, but also for inter-state and intrastate communication. As we all know history consists in seeing the past through the eyes of the present so it is important to have a critical discussion with the contrast of ELT in past and present situation in India.

**Keywords- ELT in India, ELT in the colonial period, colonial period, and post-colonial period.**

### **Introduction**

British came to India around 1600 and language English was subsequently introduced to us. Historical records show that the missionaries took the first initiative to teach English in order to spread Christianity in India. Critics already remarked that the main objective of European traders coming to India was to find out Christians and Spices. With the early Christian missionary, schools of English language teaching in India started its journey. Later on with the help of charity schools in coordination with School and Colleges founded by British East India company English language teaching made further progress. The importance and relevance of ELT that started more than four hundred years is still pertinent as we came to own English as one of the official languages of the Independent India and the only lingua franca for interstate communication. The English language

teaching from British India to contemporary times while exploring the factors motivating changes in approaches and methods of teaching English in India from time to time.

### **Teaching English in Pre independent (colonial) India**

There is no doubt that Missionary were the pioneers of English education in India. The teaching of English language became imperative for Christian Missionaries. India by early European settlers' describes how the effect of a narrating parable, fable, and singing songs based on gospels made Indians attracted to the religion as well as the new language called English. The policy of missionary teaching continued till 1765 and in this context the names of early English teachers like Joshua Marshman, William ward, and their contribution is remarkable. Later on, we find the name of one prominent missionary, William Carry who was appointed as a teacher in Fort William College in 1801. W.H.Cerrey mentions that numerous educational institutions grow a large number of English teaching mushroom schools, especially in and around Calcutta. He also mentions twenty such schools in and around Calcutta. In the formative years of English language teaching in India teachers put a lot of efforts to the correct pronunciation with the difficult task of grammar teaching. Later on, we find Charles Lewis Vogel advertising of the 6th June 1803, Chinsura which invited 'female children from the age between 5 to 12 years (Perfect age to learn a new language)'. On 24th may 1804 New Calcutta Academy, announced training in English reading and writing from Cossitollah and Dhurmtollah academy (nowadays Kashitola and Dharamtalla or Esplanade). The Dhurmtollah academy of Mr. Drummond was the first to hold the annual examination in English. As the ruler of India, British took the responsibility of education for Indian people with the official announcement of charter act 1813. In order to run their colonial establishment, they needed to educate Indians who can work as Do-bhashis (Interpreter) between the British and their native subjects and as clerks, lower level officers in the colonial establishments. This act not only provided economic support for educational development in India but also gave missionaries permission to teach English to Indians.

Macaulay in 'Minutes' in 1835, very clearly argues for English as the medium of instruction at higher levels, instead of Indian or other oriental languages. The 'Minute' constitutes an example of the colonialist imperialist attitude of superiority. Working as the interpreter (do-bhashis) between the English rulers and the Indian masses helped native Indians to develop their speaking skill as well as to learn English in a more functional way as Macaulay said 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' (Macaulay, Lord. (1935). Speeches by Lord Macaulay with his Minute on Indian Education.Oxford: Oxford Volume V, Issue VI June 2017

University Press,page-130).One can notice some development after the Wood's Dispatch in 1854. It was clearly stated in Wood's Dispatch that English is one and only suitable medium of higher education. Wood's Dispatch laid the foundation of universities in India with a proper syllabus of English in higher education in India.

The teaching of grammar and pronunciation were the two vital areas that were taken care of early school education. Effect of bilingual teaching was there with the native teachers but most of the secondary courses followed the monolingual teaching method in British India. At the university level, English literature played a very important role in the development of English language learning and teaching. Bacons essays, Pope's translation of the 'Iliad', Addison's Spectators, Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and the deep thought of Shakespearean tragedy made Indians dive into the depth of English Literature. The style of learning The English language through English literature is one of most noticeable method observed in early ELT methods in India.

### **The English Language teaching in post-independence era**

Historical documents clarify the fact that the missionaries had been the first teachers of English language in India. They taught English to Indians so that they could be acquainted with their culture, language and most importantly their religion. Later on, native interest made British rulers teach English in India. But the term, ELT or English Language Teaching or Teaching English to the Speaker of Other Language (TESOL) is a very new and modern concept so far as the teaching of English as a discipline in India is concerned. Many teachers and researchers are working on how to teach English to Indians. However, when we look back into the British period we find a very different style and conception of teaching English in India. If one contrasts the English language teaching in British India and English Language Teaching after independence then very interesting things pertaining to the subject. For example, the positive point nowadays we have so many technologies like computer, projector, teacher resource books, teacher training etc. Apart from that English language teaching in British India was the really difficult job (Patri 18-20) says that at the early stage of English language learning people used only gestures to make natives understand.

Later on with the help of missionaries, English language teaching started in India, especially in Calcutta. Teachers mostly use repetition to make pupils understand special attention was given for student's pronunciation. Translation and repetition were one of the early ways of English language

teaching in India. We can also find big difference according to the number of schools, number of students, classroom management comparing to independent India. In the early British time, English language learning was mostly Home based schools by the missionaries. very few numbers of English schools in India in between 1800 to 1845 total 1099 vernacular schools, 67 boarding schools for boys, 285 days schools for girls, 86 boarding girls schools all over British India in 1851. Now if we compare the prospect of English language teaching in British period was better than now, as there were not many schools comparing nowadays, so not many students in the class, so fewer students more focus from the teachers and more learning. Comparing present situation we will find that most of the school and college classrooms are overcrowded. It's clear that more number of students in English class is one of the challenges for the teacher to give each and every student proper attention given the fact that individual attention is very much needed in language learning. She also explains the problem of learning three languages together. According to her three languages learning together is the complete waste of time. Native English teachers or we can say Teachers of British India teacher with confidence as he learns the language naturally while bilingual teacher teaches from their own experience of learning. Own experience of learning English we can understand the use of grammar translating method still a dominating method of learning The English language. Very less importance is given to pronunciation. With congested (most of the schools in India) classes' chances of using modern technology have not been seen. So may be ELT method progressed very far in the world but in India, the effect of an old method of (GTM) teaching English is still exists.

Independence causes a change in the status of English language in India but its place in Indian life and education remained unshaken. It is the symbol of urbanization, modernization, Internationalism and also elitism. With the announcement of government that it will continue to be the lingua franca as long as the non-Hindi people want it., it enjoys the status of an official associate language.

## **Conclusion**

India from her vast experience of English language teaching realizes that English is a skill subject rather than content based subject. NCERT in Its national curriculum in primary and secondary education: a framework (1985) emphasizes the need for developing the need for reading skill. As a skill subject it needs to develop the Listening speaking reading and writing (LSRW) skills. So the ultimate aim of English language teaching is to use the language in real situations. Teaching

of English should be done by using situation situations that prove the learners to use the language. Aspects of teaching about the language are not relevant. Teaching of formal grammar is teaching about the mechanics of the language. The four fold language skills (LSRW) can be developed only by using the language in meaningful situations. We have realized that real skills are necessary for any language learning. Gathering knowledge or information is of no relevance to the practical use of the language.

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