

Need for Study of English in India:

The rapid growth of India's economy towards the end of the 20th century led to large-scale population migration between regions of the Indian subcontinent and the establishment of English as a common *lingua franca* between those speaking diverse mother tongues. With the exception of the small Anglo-Indian community, speakers of English in the Indian subcontinent started to learn it as a second language in school. Science and technical education is mostly undertaken in English and, as a result, most university graduates in these sectors are fairly proficient in English.

The demand for English emerges from many factors, as recognized by the position paper on the teaching of English produced by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT 2006) in connection with the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCERT 2005):

English in India today is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life ... The level of introduction of English has now become a matter of political response to people's aspirations, rendering almost irrelevant an academic debate on the merits of a very early introduction. (NCERT 2006:1)

The University Education Commission 1948 had indicated the practical and utilitarian aspect of English usage in the nation, asserting that –

If under sentimental urges we should give up English we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of our growing knowledge. Unable to have access to this knowledge our standards of scholarship would fast deteriorate and our participation in the world movements of thought would become negligible. Its effects would be disastrous in our practical life, for living nations must move with the times and must respond quickly to the challenge of the surroundings. English is the only means of preventing our isolation from the world, and we will act unwisely if we allow ourselves to be enveloped in the folds of a dark curtain of ignorance...so English should be taught as a second language at the secondary acquire a good working knowledge in English.

Much later in 1965, the H.N.Kunjru Commission Report echoes almost the same note. It asserts:

- i. The change from English to an Indian language as the medium of instruction at the state universities should not be hastened.
- ii. Even when a change in the medium of instruction is made, English should continue to be studied by all university students.

- iii. It would be necessary to have textbooks prepared in English on scientific objects. Education should take up this question for consideration.
- iv. In relation to the three-year degree course, which is now proposed to be introduced in our universities, the teaching of English be given special attention in the pre-university class.
- v. It is desirable to have the question of study in English and methods of teaching English at the state universities examined by an expert body and the recommendations of that body adopted by all the universities.
- vi. Where English is not the medium of instruction at any university, it is necessary to adopt special methods to secure an adequate knowledge of English as a second language.
- vii. Far greater attention should be given to linguistics in our universities and our teacher training colleges.
- viii. It is in our educational interest that English should be retained as a properly studied second language in our universities, even when an Indian language is used as the ordinary medium of teaching English.

Subsequent commissions have endorsed this policy at both the school and college levels. Several surveys, for example, Chaudhary (1981, 1985), Kachru (1983, 1986), Parashar (1979) and Sawhney (1980), have found that people prefer English for education. Nearly 99% of the respondents of the Ford Foundation study claimed that English was a necessary prerequisite for a good career.