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**Uncovering the Realities of English Language Teaching in Rural Schools of
Rewari District of Haryana, India**

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Abstract

The scenario of English language is different in every state of India and when the challenge comes to the door of Haryana, we tend to see an unclear view. Language teaching is a common phenomenon across the globe. English Language, a powerful medium of communication, all over the world is in the school curriculum everywhere. In this paper, a small effort has been made to uncover the realities of the English language teaching at the primary level in Rewari district of Haryana. The motivation for the research comes from the students of rural India, who are deprived of their basic education. Ten schools, which include five government schools and five private schools, have been selected and compared. Questionnaire, structured interview and observation method have been used for data collection from sixty-eight students of rural background. Findings of the present research show that the present status of English language teaching in Rewari district at primary level demands a drastic reconsideration of its three fundamental M's: man, method and material. It is high time that some positive steps should be taken in each direction in this regard.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Rural India, Schools, Questionnaire,

Introduction

For Indians, the English language is not new because of its association with colonial rule. However, today from an 'alien language', a 'politically superimposed language' (Kachru, 1983 p.17) or a language which was implemented to colonize the mind and cultures of Indian (Nandy, 1983) or to create mimic men (Bhabha, 1994), it has got the status of associate official language along with Hindi in Indian Constitution. So, whatever the earlier perspective was, today more and more Indians want to learn this language not because of the imposition

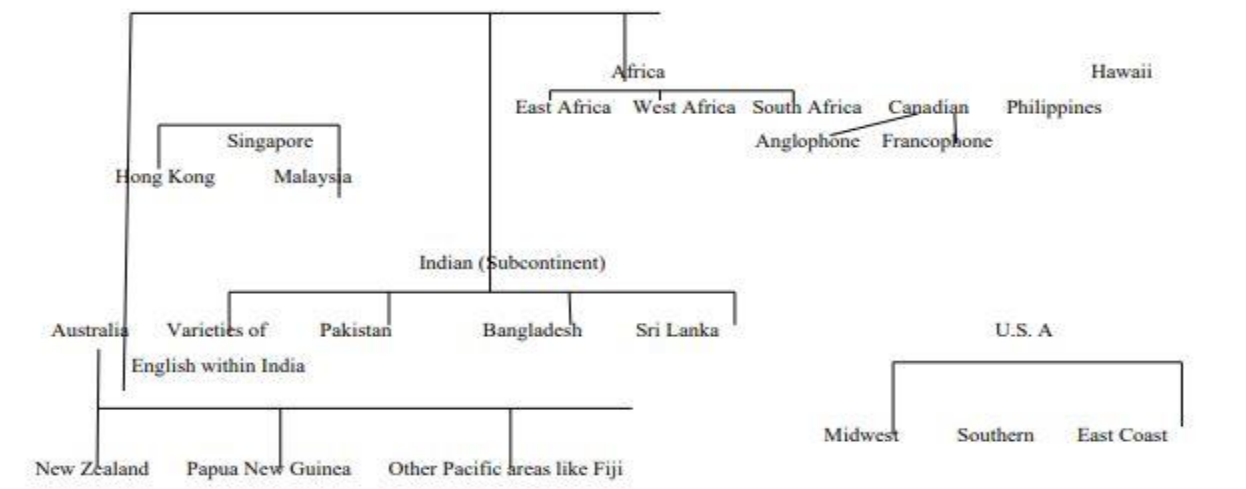
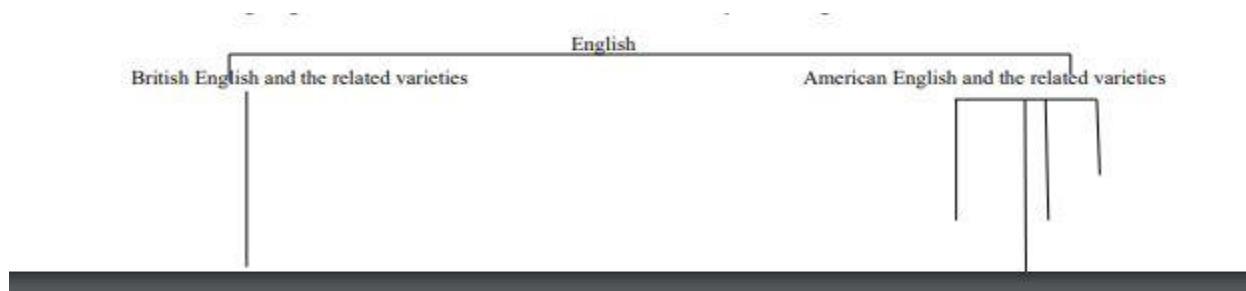
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but because of the realization that this is a key to open immense future possibilities.

‘Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief among almost all castes and classes in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English.’ It is considered as a ‘pathway out of poverty and oppression’ (Meganathan, 2012 p.3). According to yet to be released countrywide enrolment data by National University of Education, Planning and Administration (NUEPA) ‘for fourth year in a row English is the second largest medium of instruction ahead of both Bengali and Marathi (Jain, 2012 p.1). Data on school enrolment for 2010-2011 show that for the first-time number of children enrolled in English medium schools from classes I to III has crossed two crore mark- a 27% rise since 2003-2004’ (Mukherjee, 2012 p.1). We can say “English has become to the modern world what Latin was to the ancients, dominating the planet as medium of exchange in science, technology, commerce, tourism, diplomacy and pop culture” (Krishnaswamy and Burde, 1998 p.6)

Another kind of analysis is given by Braj Kachru, an Indian American linguist teaching in the USA. He classifies the varieties of English in terms of three circles. The ‘inner circle’ refers to the traditional bases of English where it is used as L1. The ‘outer circle’ shows the earlier phases of the spread of English (maybe due to the establishment of colonies, trade etc.) where the language is an important ‘*second language*’ (L2 or SL). The ‘expanding circle’ involves those countries and areas where English is recognized as an important international language and is taught and learnt as a *foreign language* (FL). The fact that English has become a global phenomenon has resulted in a family of its own with all kinds of varieties (or English, as some people call them) within the family; this is unavoidable, considering the use of English all over the world. The following figure shows the international family of English and its members.

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The international family of English (Krishnaswamy & Krishnaswamy, 2006 p.152)

English language has been accepted by the educationally, economically and socially progressive class of the Indian society during the post-independence period. With the passage of time the status of this language changed from the foreign language to second language. In present time, English serves two purposes: firstly, it provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness of the country, causing people who speak different languages to become united and secondly, it serves as a language of wider communication, including a large variety of different people covering a vast area.

For improving its status, from time to time, government of India has set up numerous Commissions and Committees which have given their recommendations and suggestions on

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teaching of English language. The *Official Language Commission* under B. G. Kher “recommended seven years of English teaching in school” (Kher, 1957). The report of the *Education Commission (1964-1966)* “recommended teaching of English after the primary level”. “The Conference on Teaching of English in primary schools suggested changes in the thinking about the proper age and level for teaching of English in schools” (Gokak, 1963). The *Kunzru Committee (1959)* “recommended English as a second language”. “The *Central Advisory Board for Education* proposed the three- language formula, which was approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers held in 1961 and was accepted as a part of educational policy – Initially, English was said to taught at the upper primary level but later on the English was demanded by the parents so, the policy was modified for the primary level” (NCERT, 2012).

The visible indicator of this presence of English is mushrooming of private English medium schools. The pressure of admission in various states in the schools where English is taught from class I or is a medium of instruction from class I itself, shows that English language has acquired an important and an inclusive place in the Indian psyche. Many parents in India want their children to study in English medium School which is increasing its demand. This has made many states to accede to the demand of early introduction of English in state schools as well” (NCERT, 2012).

Be a washer man, vegetable seller or a maid servant everyone wants to learn this language, as it can help them to climb the social ladder. It has become an aspirational language and there is no doubt about it. But when we closely scrutinize its status in our country, we find a different picture. ‘English is for some Indians a first language of public (academic, societal, creative...) discourse. For many it is a second language, and for many others a foreign language. The school contexts in which English is taught mirrors this contextual diversity.’ In cities it is a second language but ‘there seems to be a great distinction between the city children and also the rural children getting acquainted with English language’ (Raosaheb, 2015 p.329). In our villages, it is still a foreign language. Villages have suffered long from neglect by our education system. Our focus should be making English as a second language even for villages in India. ‘The majority of Indian students, particularly from rural pockets, especially in the states of Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Haryana consider this seven-letter

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word as a magical and mystical word. A feeling of uneasiness sets in, the moment they hear something in english' (Roy).

English is always seen as the language of upper class in Haryana. There are 22 districts in Haryana and the researcher has chosen Rewari district. In Rewari district we see a different scenario of English as even today, when someone speaks English that person is considered 'angrej'.) The researcher has read and heard about the "yojanas", and the steps taken by the government for the improvement of ELT. But the question is this happening? Apparently, the researcher wants to pull the sheet and showcase the clear picture of the schools in the rural area. The present research aims to find out the reality of English language teaching at the primary level. The need for such a study was felt because of paucity of such kind of studies in the context of Haryana. The main objectives of the research are:

To find out the condition of English language teaching at the primary level in Rewari district of Haryana

To find out the difference in the condition of English language teaching at the primary level in rural government and private schools of this district

Method of the Present Research

In the present research, 68 students from second, third; fourth and fifth standards were selected as subjects from the ten schools of Rewari district. Convenient sampling was done for the schools. Government Primary Schools, Rajkiya Vidhyalaya (Kalaka, Majra Gurdas, Hansaka, Madhaiya, Bamber) and five Private Schools (Virat International School, Kapdivas, Model Public School, Kapdivas S.T. Convent School Konsiwas, Shri Krishna School, Hansaka, Bal Vikas Vidyalaya, Majra Gurdas) were taken for the data collection. Data from these schools were collected through questionnaire, observation and interview method.

After selecting ten different Schools, which include five Government Schools and five Private schools and 68 students for data collection a questionnaire was administered with the following objectives:

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- To know the language competence of the subjects
- To analyze their writing skills
- To examine the understanding of the basic sentences

A sample of questionnaire is given in the appendix

After collecting the data with the help of these methods, it was analyzed to get the clear picture of ELT in Rewari district.

Analysis and discussion

Several errors of spelling and writing those spellings were noticed. Most of the students at government schools and some of the students of private schools were not able to spell the simple words like Hemlata, Devi, Kumar, Tennis, Favorite, Read, Standard, Badminton, Anjali, Fourth, Red, Kavita, Cricket, Hockey etc. They spelt it as:

Hemlate, Davi, Kumer, Tannis, Favratat, Real , Standered , Badminuntn, ANjly, Fort,

Rad Kvita, Hakey, Kerkit

We know that English language is the language of infinite difficulty in the matter of spellings. Every word according to Vallins (1954: 304) is a law unto itself. The English spelling is not always a correct guide to the sounds the letters stand for; some of the letters in English alphabet are superfluous.

Spelling has been quite a problem to Indian learner of English and significantly the problem has manifested itself in all its diversities in this study. The difficulty of English spellings baffles and overburdens our students who are, as is evident from the present study, poor spellers.

The study reveals that vowels form the major source of difficulty. More than half of the total numbers of errors was connected to the vowel graphemes. Generally, Indians do not place

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accent correctly on the vowels and accent is the distinctive character of a vowel. It seems to be easy guess that students transfer their incorrect speech habits to writing- a fact which accounts for so many error of spelling directly connected with vowel sounds for example, 'Rad', 'Tannis', 'Hakey', 'Kerkit', 'Kumer', 'Davi', 'Hemlate'. Reasons for these spelling mistakes could be many. It could be because of the ignorance on the part of learners or improper or deficient drilling of spellings in the classroom, because of inaccurate placement of accent on vowels, inference of the mother tongue, erroneous pronunciation of learners etc.

Besides this, the students of government and private schools have not been able to follow the rules of spelling writing. Some of them have written some common words as follows:

AAshish, ANjLY, Priya Sharma, palak, Manshi saini, Suman saini, Mehndri devi, Arun nara Jatt, kajal yadav, puja Davi, Tammana yadav, Sushila devi, Pinki doyi, Priyanka giri, siMran, KanchAh, mukesh, GoRi

In this way the researcher observed the incorrect word formation which shows the carefree behavior of the student and the teacher, as the basic drilling is missing. The difference in the capital and small letter is not clear to the students as they create errors by mixing capital and small letters like GoRi, KanchAh, siMran etc. This can be improved by doing the thorough analysis of these errors as they can provide a clear idea of transitional competence of the learners (Corder 1971) and can help teachers in categorizing and improving these errors. The students could be asked to correct wrong spellings. This can be improved by developing the right kind of

attitude. These attitudes can be stimulated by showing the students that the writing skill is the skill that they are most likely to need now and in the future.

Observation of class III, VI, V in Virat International School was highly productive and provided few insights about ELT. Students at the School actively participated in the conversation and were eager to learn new things. Teachers used probing method to teach and were working hard to improve their speaking skill. Understanding of the students was not much clear, but then they were trying to speak and write what they understood. Teachers

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helped them to correct, and to adopt a new form of learning. Mugging of the things was less practiced as teachers appeared to support the demonstrative method. The relation of teacher-student was friendly. Teachers were bilingual as the students find difficulty in understanding English.

In class III, the teacher started with the hobbies of the students and then with the lesson. Total strength of the class was about 30-36 students. The teacher explained the meaning of few words, but she didn't use words in sentences to help the learner infer the meaning. It was also noticed that teacher's use of English words was confined to the textbook only. They did not use folk tales, stories and legends to ensure the participation of the students and make the language more effective. Teacher was bilingual as students faced some difficulties in English and were more comfortable in Hindi. The researcher also observed that teacher helped the students to write the meaning in Hindi in their textbooks.



There was no reading in the class; students were listening to the teacher carefully and in between she asked the students to concentrate and questioned them about the lesson. Students were active and conversed with the researcher in English. She also introduced new words and explained their meaning.

While visiting the schools, the researcher observed few things about the school. School is not

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just a building but a combination of teachers, students and several other things. To learn and teach we need certain environment and facilities and that were completely missing. To breathe, we need fresh air so, in the same way to learn things we need proper infrastructure. In the Schools, students were sitting on the mats and there was no furniture. In rural government schools' buildings were poorly maintained. Small classrooms without proper ventilation, inadequate sanitation and drinking water facilities, no playground facilities are some other observations. In some schools due to shortage of rooms classes were held in open space. Most of the schools had poor library facility. There were only few books, and they were kept in almirahs.



This in lieu with the Pathak (1999) observation when he says, “Large classes, insufficient infrastructural facilities and inefficient and/or inadequate teachers” (Pathak, 1999 p.14) are the

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problematic factors for English language teaching .

No attention was paid towards the development of listening and speaking skills. Development of reading skills was synonymous with reading aloud by one student or choral reading or group reading (NCERT, 2012). Teacher even did not correct students, when they mispronounced certain words. 'Reading' or silent reading was not observed in class III. 'Pleasure reading' was not recommended in the classes also. Students of the II class were more active, as the teacher was hard working. She evaluated all the students on daily basis and helped them to know the things which they haven't understood. She was the only teacher who maintained the decorum of speaking English with the students and encouraged the students to speak in English. This supports Gardner and Lambert's (1972) study that "the value of positive attitudes to and right kind of motivation in language learning can hardly be overestimated" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972 p.3).

In this school, the teachers were loud and clear to the students but students understanding did not match with the teachers. The teachers went with their own pace without giving much preference to the understanding of the students. IV and V classes were observed; the students were active and were good at LSRW skills. But their command on the speech was inadequate in comparison to their writing skills. But even no attempt was made to develop writing skills of the learners. Students just copied the text written by teachers on the blackboard. Students were not motivated to write at all. In almost all the school's grammar was taught by making the students memorize the rules and solving exercises. None of the teacher said that contextualizing grammar teaching is important. The teacher was also less aware about the fact that her students were reading incorrectly.

The schools do not provide any workshops, or any in service teacher training programme which can help them to enhance their skills.

While observing one of the schools, an informal interview was conducted with one of the non teaching staff. She says, "she is working hard every day so that her children can go to private school". The most important thing which was observed was that the teachers continue to teach

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with their traditional method. The use of technology and new method is needed for the overall development of the students. But the use of technology was almost missing from these classes, as the students did not have the facility of the computer lab. In few private schools this facility was available. During the observation it was seen that the teacher followed the question-answer method in the classrooms. Teachers were putting up all the questions and the students were not motivated to ask the questions. This deprives the students of practice for communication.

Rarely, discussion method is used in the classes; the teacher teaches with his/her own priority without keeping students in mind, in this way student's lack interest in the class and even learn only 20% of the total course. A strong concern for the students should be in the mind while teaching. As being a teacher, the sole concern should be whatever is taught in the class should be understood by the students. Teacher's priority should be their students. Visit to III and V standard was fruitful as the students knew many things and had a good understanding of LSRW skills.

One of the schools under the surveillance of the researcher helped to know about the students and the teachers. III, IV and V standards were observed. The school had all the facilities required for the teaching learning process. This school was helping the students in growing and blooming on their own pace. Teachers used probing method to teach which aroused the interest of students. The method of teaching was also different as they had periodic workshops and symposium which help them to enhance their skills.

A structured interview was recorded with few teachers of government and private schools. The purpose of the interview was to find out the competence of these schoolteachers and to know about their methodology of classroom teaching. Some of the excerpts of the recorded interview are given in the appendix.

From the reading of the excerpts, it becomes clear that most of them are trained, but they need to be trained in development of skill rather than content. The reason for unplanned, ineffective and inadequate teaching could be innumerable but a few are enumerated below.

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Conclusion

The difference in the capital and small letter was not clear to the students as they created errors by mixing capital and small letters like GoRi, KanchAh, siMran etc. In the Schools, students were sitting on the mats and there was no furniture. In rural government schools' buildings were poorly maintained. Small classrooms without proper ventilation, inadequate sanitation and drinking water facilities, and unavailability of playground facilities were also noticed. In some schools due to shortage of rooms classes were held in open space. Most of the schools had poor library facility. There were only few books, and they were kept in almirahs. No attention was paid towards the development of listening and speaking skills. Development of reading skills was synonymous with reading aloud by one student or choral reading or group reading. Teacher even did not correct students, when they, themselves mispronounced certain words. 'Reading' or silent reading was not observed in classes. 'Besides this, the teachers entrusted with the teaching of English were untrained and unqualified and lacked required competence in English language. It was also found that the training provided to them was purely theoretical and bookish. The present status of English language teaching in Rewari district at primary level demands a drastic reconsideration of its three fundamental M's, man, method and material. It is high time that some positive steps should be taken in each direction in this regard.

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Appendix

Sample of Questionnaire

What is your name?

In which standard you study?

Which is your favorite color?

Do you like to play?

What is your mother's name?

Excerpt 1

I joined course of speaking English in Gurgoan it was three months but I do two months. After that I come there because there is my father-law and in Gurgoan my real parents. I speak in English but sometimes I forgot words and sometimes I have problem with grammar.

Q1 From how long have you been teaching in this school?

Ans This school I am teaching before four to five months approx.

Q2 Have you done B.Ed?

Ans Yes, my B.Ed II year exam is completed, but the result is not declared. Q3 How

about your teaching? Do you teach English in English or English, Hindi mixed? Ans

Sometimes I converse in Hindi and sometimes in English.

Q4 Do you give them anything to write?

Ans In class work I do word meaning, then they write at home the word meaning in their notebook.

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Q5 Do they speak English?

Ans They can't understand, so I repeat in Hindi, sometimes I use

English. Q6 Do they read properly?

Ans Yes, they read, but mostly their pronunciation is incorrect, so I correct pronunciation. Excerpt 2

Q1 From how long have you been teaching here?

Ans Previous eight months.

Q2 Have you done B.Ed?

Ans No, I have done J.B.T.

Q3 Do you teach English in English or English-Hindi mixed?

Ans Yes, bilingual.

Q4 Is English easily comprehensible?

Ans We have every type of students, few can cover in one go and few need to be repeated some are average, some are medium. Some students give answers fast and few takes time to answer. We provide extra time to slow learner. More of individual focus is given to below average students.

Q5 How about their writing skills? Do you give anything to write?

Ans Yes, In week two times.

Excerpt 3

Q1 Form how long have you been teaching here?

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Ans 5 years

Q2 Do you teach English in English or English-Hindi mixed?

Ans Bilingual

Q3 Do you think English is easily comprehensible for the students?

Ans No, because their parents doesn't cooperate, poor family, labour work. They carry their keys with them, as their parents go for work and hence they play or do anything so, the very hard work is done by teacher itself. No role of parents the whole and soul work is of teacher to make them learn things.

Q4 Do they read properly or do they hesitate?

Ans 50% properly, but few hesitate.

Q5 Do they get English Environment?

Ans Yes we give full English Environment. We explain each and everything in their mother tongue and in English too so, that the meaning should be clear.

Q6 Do they overlap their mother-tongue with English?

Ans No they don't.

Q7 Do you help them to increase their conversational skills?

Ans Yes, but small sentences, like; what's your name? , In which school do you read? , because we need to start from the root level, like from the zero level. If we give them learning work, then we have to make them learn, because they don't ever bother about any work as they come with the same bag, they used to take it home from school.

Excerpt 4

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Q1 How long have you been teaching?

Ans One year in this school, but in this field it's been 6 years.

Q2 Have you done B.Ed?

Ans Yes.

Q3 How about teaching, I mean how do you find teaching?

Ans I am teaching willingly.

Q4 How do you find English Language, Is it easily comprehensible?

Ans Easily comprehensible for me but it's difficult for the students.

Q5 While teaching do you use only English or sometimes you use Hindi also?

Ans Only Hindi, English is not at all possible for them.

Q6 Do they hesitate while reading?

Ans No, actually they don't know reading. I go according to the students like first the weak students, then the average and at the above average.