
LANGUAGE ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE GLOBALIZATION: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Language is more than just a means of communication. It influences our culture and even our thought processes. It is now clear that the terminology used by a culture primarily reflects that culture's interests and concerns. The cultural environment that people grow up in can have surprising effects on how they interpret the world around them. But globalization provided a new dimension where people have started talking about the concepts and ideas which were never there in their vocabulary. It gives us an interesting insight into a combined field of linguistics and anthropology.

Key words: culture, language, multilingualism, translation, teaching-learning of English in India.

Introduction: India, after globalization, had gone through a multidimensional shift which includes many socio cultural changes and challenges. English studies in India are one such dimension which is ever changing. Many scholars, teachers, researchers and many policy makers have tried many ideologies and teaching-learning methods in last sixty years, especially after the Independence. "English Studies have a tendency apparently to come into crisis once in every generation. In India, however, this crisis seems to be permanent, whether acknowledged or not."

In Indian academics, the concept of English Language Teaching is very clearly divided in two parts: The language teaching and the literature teaching. Somehow, the literature studies in India has never been considered as an integral part of the language learning process but at the same time the language competency tests are more or less relying on literature to provide that 'edge' to language acquisition

In the Indian context the aim of the translation is not just to provide the semantic equivalence between the source and the target language. It is mainly used to generalize and to fit the work into the macrocosm of the generalized 'educated elite sensibilities'. This paper is an attempt to explain certain nuances of this concept with detailed examples.

But it is observed that the process of translation is very dynamic and one can never differentiate between the correct, one and the incorrect one as no variety of language is inherently better than any other. It purely functions according to the needs of those who use them. This paper aims at discussing some important issues related to multilingualism in India with reference to acquiring English as a second language.

Multilingualism is a normal human condition but individuals usually do not achieve great proficiency in more than two or three languages. The influence and importance of any foreign language has made people

either interpret or translate it. The term 'translation' is 'the neutral term used for all tasks where the meaning of expression in one language is turned into the meaning of another, whether the medium is spoken, written or signed.'

The literature studies in India were a deliberate and strategic practice followed by the politics and ideology of Lord Macaulay under the British Raj. Over the period of time it has gained popularity as many Indian writers started writing in English. But the approach towards the teaching-learning process of English literature has always been taken on the experimental basis.

A typical framework of the Undergraduate Literature Courses in India has always focused on the texts from various genres and a combination of British-Indian-American English literature. Some of the popularly accepted objectives of this course are to enhance student's literary competence, to familiarize them with the various trends in and the concept of literary criticism, to improve their linguistic competence and to train students to study socio-cultural characteristics of the period or the age in which the work has been created.

The way of literature teaching in India has not changed in last fifty years with reference to either the syllabi or the methodology. In the other fields the powerful impact of globalization is clearly visible; English literature has always been a strict follower of the traditional methods. Here are some observations which will substantiate these arguments.

- The high school level English is clearly divided into language and literature: the language contains the grammar studies followed by the comprehension practices which help students to score high in the examination as this being considered as an objective testing. The literature studies typically contains works like one Shakespeare, one Milton, one Herbert and one T.S.Eliot which is perceived to be 'tough' to understand and comprehend as well as difficult to

score in examination as it is considered a 'subjective' testing and vary from teacher to teacher .

- The undergraduate course which provides option to choose English literature as a major or a minor paper almost invariably starts with the introduction of literature by teaching them some poems, some short stories and some basics of genres like 'tragedy' or 'comedy'.
- The undergraduate student of literature gets to learn almost all the 'classics' in his three years of studies which partially restricts his views and opinions about the openness of the subject which finally prevents him to acknowledge and accept any other equally good piece of writing as a literary piece as he waits for someone to give the critical analysis and call it 'literature'. In this process he loses the touch with the contemporary writing and finally remains permanently stuck between the 'greatness' of the 'classics' and the 'popularity' of the 'contemporary'.
- Indian society is multilingual and hierarchic society with colonial history and facing many other problems. As any classroom is a microcosm of the same, the teaching of English literature in such a context obviously cannot be innocent and unproblematic. The worst scenario is to translate the literary text out of its original context and to put it into a new totally different reference.
- Literature teaching has a special challenge for the teacher in an Indian Classroom where he has to continuously balance between language skills and literary analysis. Literary texts from culturally different locations, namely, British, American or other regions, offer special challenges while equipping the students with language sense and literary appreciation skills. The learner background at all stages of education in heterogeneous groups is an omnipresent scenario.
- Most of the literature learning takes place by just translation method where sometimes the essence of the literary text is completely lost as the teacher and the student both are unable to get the similarities between the British-American socio cultural context with his own background at home front.
- The introduction of a very important aspect of 'Resistance Literature' like Women's literature, Dalit literature, Black literature, Literature of Ethnic Communities is not yet fully explored and wherever it is introduced, it is on a very superficial level and has a heavy socio-political influence on it.

These observations are not only crucial to understand the whole process of language learning in India but it

also provides an important insight for the healthy and all inclusive practices to be followed in today's modern post globalized Indian class room.

Prof. Widdowson in his well-known essay, 'The Teaching, Learning and Study of Literature' has distinguished between the study and the learning of literature. The study is action, which leads to knowledge and extends awareness, and learning is knowledge that leads to action and develops proficiency. For Widdowson, learning literature means acquiring the ability of 'creative reading'.

In India, the 'creative reading' can be understood as the 're-contextualizing the text' as per Indian culture, literary tradition and aesthetics. Teaching in itself is an act of translation. Teaching of Western literature in non-Western cultures involves translation of not just the words on page but also the entire sensitivity and the sensibility. To understand this mass basis of culture, the focus should be more on the popular common literary structures which is a part of age old but culturally rich heritage and is an integral part of our upbringing as an Indian in India. A country with more than twenty-five 'major' languages whose history go back to almost thousand years and having tens of millions speakers confer a distinct identities to the world 'classics' when put into the indigenous context. When considered from this perspective the activity of teaching of English literature is at once tangled in the linguistic and social politics of the society.

The Indian UG ESL classroom with a literature-based, and literature-biased, syllabus at both compulsory and Honors/major teaching courses is a complex structure. The typical teacher centered class faces a lot of other difficulties. To understand this difficulty experienced by the learner(s), it is necessary to ask (a)if English language -as language warranted to be taught -is difficult,(b)if literature given in English language - for course contents at given stages -is difficult, or (c) if teaching of literature in English in Indian UG classes makes understanding of things literary/aesthetic-artistic -difficult. It is necessary to find out if the answer to each of the above questions individually or together does not contain the key to do away with the difficulty of the classroom English literature teaching at UG level. In all the cases, the perceptive compulsion for him being to make students learn English as a language which they could very effectively use in all practical situations of life and to make them appreciate literature on offer as really related to practical situations that life faces. Apart from this, there are many challenges which are the clear side products of the current globalization:

A complete lack of the socio cultural background needed to appreciate and to understand the 'classic' literature as most of them are from non-Christian

background.

The heavy penetration of modern technology in the student and teacher's lives like computer and internet which restricts their openness of the literary appreciation, as many ready-made reviews are easily available online.

Today's easy access to global TV channels has provided a wide platform for many international shows and programs, many of which are based on the 'classic' literature. Its viewing gives a specific but very limited understanding of the actual literary work.

Many popular literatures like pop songs, detective stories, thriller novels, romances, self-help books, children fantasy genre, science fiction, travel books, life-style literature, religious discourses etc. have influenced today's literature heavily which finally makes it difficult for him to fully comprehend the aesthetics of 'classics' with reference to the current trends.

Global spread of new technologies has given tremendous boost to the visual media but literature study has failed to catch up with this comfort and familiarity of the students. It is still highly depending on its verbal-oriented nature. The importance of film studies in literature is very relevant in this context. Their familiarity with film, tele-scripts, documentaries, film songs, advertisements and pop music albums would help them to comprehend literature studies easily.

The shift in language acquisition which has resulted from the awareness of many 'Englishes' like that of the British, American, Australian and Canadian has created a big pool of students using a combination of these in their regular usage. Literature studies have not yet fully explored this new and very dynamic aspect of language-literature. The linguistic competency and the correct information and knowledge in the linguistic aspects like phonology, morphology and stylistics is highly desirable in present situation.

Teaching methodologies need to develop complex conceptual tools in dealing with literary texts. There has to be a difference in teaching a Romantic poem or a Victorian novel to the current complex Diaspora novel or an experimental drama. The global ideologies. Politics, policies and cross culture interpretations must be an integral part of modern literature studies in India today.

Conclusion: Language draws its basic support form literature and literature is a vehicle for any language spread. The present Indian scenario of literature studies after globalization is facing many challenges and has become very dynamic as well as complex. The need of the period is to explore the new ways to incorporate the new demands and to make it a complete global experience.

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