

**TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN REGIONAL HIGHER  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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**ABSTRACT**

In India, the medium of instruction in the vast majority of government rural and urban schools is the regional language. English is now introduced as a second language in most of these schools. However, even after many years of its compulsory study, vast numbers of students completing high school are unable to speak, read or write simple English. Consequently, for most of these students, access to higher education, employment, technical knowledge, and the world of computers and the Internet, will also be limited. The principal cause for the inadequate command of English of high school leavers is that their teachers themselves have a very limited knowledge of English. Consequently, little English is spoken or transacted in the classroom. Moreover neither their pre-service training, nor the limited opportunities for in-service training, has equipped teachers to teach English as a second language.

**Key words:** English, Higher Education Schools, Second Language, LSWR skills,

**1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

The Study on Teaching of English in Government Schools in India was commissioned by MHRD during 2009-10 to NCERT, an apex body for school education in the country. The study was conducted by a research team from NCERT, on the basis of the objectives of the study specified by the MHRD and the research design prepared by EdCil's Technical Support Group for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. English in India is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. The visible indicator of this

presence of English is that today its teaching being demanded by many to be taught at the very initial stage of schooling, the mushrooming of private English medium schools and the early introduction of English in State schools. The NCF- 2005 stresses the use of child's mother tongue as a medium of learning at the primary level. The English teaching profession has consistently recommended a relatively late introduction of English and this is reflected in spirit in policy documents. The level of introduction of English has now become a matter of State policy to respond to people's aspirations, making almost irrelevant an academic debate on the merits of a very early introduction.

## **2.0 ISSUES – ADDRESS**

Our goal is to empower socially and economically disadvantaged students studying in mainstream regional medium elementary schools, as well as post-secondary youth from similar background, with a basic proficiency in English. This requires addressing the following needs :

1. Giving opportunities for elementary school students to listen to spoken English, and to be able to respond in English, as well as acquire basic reading and writing skills.
2. Providing instructional and supplementary learning materials in English, which are relevant to the Indian context, and appropriate to the backgrounds and interests of mainstream elementary school students.
3. Significantly enhancing elementary school teachers' limited knowledge of the English language.
4. Providing these teachers with practical and effective methods of teaching English to students, whose background and exposure to English is very limited.
5. Developing English courses for post-secondary youth.

## **3.0 OBJECTIVES: THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY WERE:**

1. To ascertain the status of teaching English at the primary level across the states and UTs in India both as a subject and medium of instruction
2. To analyses in depth the curriculum, syllabi and textbooks of English in selected states.

3. To find out how English is taught in classes in which it is introduced for the first time by observing the classroom processes in the selected states.
4. To observe the training programmers (both pre-service and in-service) for teachers of English and to assess their competence in teaching English at the primary level.
5. To make suggestions for improvement in teaching of English on the basis of the findings of the study

#### 4.0 TEACHER TRAINING

1. The minimum qualifications of students for admission to professional training (B.Ed / D.Ed ) varied across the states/ UT .
2. There was greater emphasis on theory than practice in the pre-service training programs in sampled states.
3. Linkages between theory and practice were weak.
4. Actual hands-on experiences were not given during practice teaching in some of the training programs.

Visits to the different training institutions did not show good models of interaction or task-based approaches being adopted in training of student teachers. Most of the in-service training programs were not organized according to the needs of the teachers. Also, the resources were not utilized properly. The transactional approach adopted in majority of In-service Teacher Education programs remained confined to the lecture method with little scope and opportunity for trainees to actively participate in the training process.

Classroom Processes Observation of classroom processes in the selected States/UT brought to the light some salient points, which are summarized below:

1. In the states like Nagaland and Kashmir where the medium of instruction is English as per state policy, teachers were seen to resort to regional/ local languages to facilitate child's learning.
2. In all the states, as regards the skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW), it was seen that the teachers' effort to develop skills of listening and speaking was not there. Emphasis was more on developing reading and writing skills. Teachers felt that listening and speaking get covered in reading and writing.

3. The teachers in all the states/UT have fallen into what is called “The Textbook Trap”, instead of treating the textbook as a tool, the teachers and students were entirely dependent on the books, they adhere only to the written word and printed instructions. The teachers do not move beyond the textbooks.
4. After going through primary classrooms in 8 states/UT, four practices were mainly observed through which a teacher develops reading skill amongst the students. These were: silent reading, choral reading, pair reading, and reading aloud. Amongst these practices, reading aloud was preferred by nearly 80% of teachers whereas choral reading was being practiced in about 10% of the cases and silent reading and pair reading in about 5% of cases each.
5. Teaching of writing skills was far from adequate in most of the states. Students in Maharashtra, Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh just copy the text written by teachers on the blackboard. In Chandigarh and Tamil Nadu teachers gave some visual inputs before assigning writing tasks.
6. In all the states it was observed that poems were being taught line by line or word by word and not for appreciating the content.
7. Almost all the teachers taught grammar by making students memorize the rules and work on exercises. None of the teachers said that contextualizing grammar teaching was the best method. Participation of students in the learning process was less in all the states.
8. Most of the teachers gave and checked homework.
9. Technique in language teaching was not employed in an effective manner. In most of the classroom observations it was seen that the main focus in the class was on questions and answers. Mostly the teacher asked the questions, students were not motivated to ask question, this deprives the students of practice for communication, command and confidence. Across all the states, just 5 to 10% of students asked questions

## **5.0 ‘ENHANCE YOUR ENGLISH’ – A COURSE FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILLS OF TEACHERS**

The CLR course "Enhance Your English" has been developed keeping in mind that teachers in these schools often have an extensive passive knowledge of English, but find it difficult to transact English lessons effectively because they do not speak the language with confidence, being neither native English speakers, nor having much opportunity to use English in their daily lives. Specifically, this course has been designed to help teachers to:

1. Improve their listening and speaking skills in English in both familiar and unfamiliar situations.
2. Increase their reading comprehension and basic writing skills.
3. Enhance their confidence to speak in English, both within and outside the classroom.

### **5.1 Expected Attainment Levels**

The expected attainment levels roughly correspond to the Cambridge Level 1 and Council of Europe Level A 2. This means that at the end of the course, young learners should be able to do the following:

1. **Read and understand** simple texts like street signs, public notices, forms, brochures, instructions, etc. He or she will be able to understand personal messages like notes or post cards, and understand the gist of new paper or magazine articles.
2. **Listen and understand** basic information in announcements at railway stations, airports and other public places, on the telephone, and on the radio and television, and understand instructions given by teachers, bank officials, supervisors at work, etc.
3. **Speak** to convey information and conduct a conversation, and ask questions to obtain information, in an informal situation or familiar work context, though there may be grammatical mistakes.
4. **Write** simple personal letters, notes and messages, though there may be grammatical Mistakes, and fill in information in forms.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

English today is almost a compulsory second language. Once deprived sections of the society now perceive the language as an instrument for progress. Most schools in the country do not have the facilities and proficient teachers needed to cater to the demand. As mentioned above, meaningful language education requires teachers who are skilled and knowledgeable as well as contextualized materials (print and others). But an enabling English language environment in the school also needs to be ensured. The most important of these three prerequisites is the English teacher, but the English language proficiency of English language teachers in quite a number of schools is questionable. Consequently, teacher education is one major area which needs drastic changes if quality teachers are to become available. It is better to have English taught as a subject rather than impose a bad English medium education. Equipping English language education with the essentials in the native medium schools would benefit learning in general and language learning in particular. But converting schools to become English medium without proper support would be detrimental and counterproductive. Schools can be developed as multimedia schools where both the content subjects and the language are taught and learnt well in a complementary and supplementary manner. A 'language across the curriculum' perspective and a strategy of multilingualism (NCERT 2005) would be of benefit on many counts. The centrality of language in learning needs to be recognized. English, then, can play a vital role as a language of mutual benefit – benefiting Indian languages as well as itself – and so enriching education as a whole.

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