



## GLOBALISATION: RISE IN SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PUNJAB

PUNEET NARANG<sup>1</sup>, Dr. RENU SHARMA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, India.

E-mail: [narang.puneet3@gmail.com](mailto:narang.puneet3@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Desh Bhagat University,

Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, India.

E-mail: [renusharma6784@gmail.com](mailto:renusharma6784@gmail.com)



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### Abstract

The present study has investigated from English teachers' perspectives, the impact of globalisation on educational practices regarding English language teaching and learning at higher education institutions in the state of Punjab. In today's era of globalisation, in developing countries, English language is being perceived as language of opportunities having potential for providing access to global employment market. The extensive global prevalence of English has replicated itself in the form of shift in educational practices at higher education level. With the focus on enhancing English competence, English language has been offered as a subject in various undergraduate programs in the colleges. Qualitative data has been gathered by interviewing 50 English teachers taking various English courses of different undergraduate programs in the colleges of Punjab. An interview schedule has been prepared for this purpose. The researcher has content analysed the responses received from these teachers. The results indicate at the prominence being attained by English in higher education institutions due to trend of globalisation.

Keywords: Globalisation, English language, Qualitative, Undergraduate, Prominence

### INTRODUCTION

The economic globalisation of 1990s incredibly impacted the whole world and more specifically the developing economies, where a parallel phenomenon of rising prominence of English language in education was perceptible. The development of globalization was strongly integrated to the power and dominance of English language (Bottery 8). Chang has also specified the function of globalization "as a driving force to strengthen the position of English as a global language" (515).

In the present times, the growth of English has got greatly fast-tracked because of the arrival of science and technology, development of global infrastructure, spread and wider access to information technology (Krein and Plummer 448). English language learning has become an acceptable norm in almost all developing countries. In this regard, Tsui and Tollefson maintain that "globalization is effected by two inseparable mediation tools, technology and English; and to respond to the rapid changes brought about by globalization, all countries have been trying to

ensure that they are adequately equipped with these two skills" (1).

In India too, the globalisation has led to integration of English language to various levels of our education system. In this respect, NCERT Position Paper on Teaching of English (2006) states:

English is in India today a symbol of people's aspiration for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its colonial origins now forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independent India, tailored to high education (as a "library language," a "window on the world"), now felt to be insufficiently inclusive socially and linguistically, the current state of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena.(3)

Therefore, assimilation of English language to education policy in India is due to perceived belief that English is a resource which becomes instrumental in upward socio-economic mobility and empowerment. Due to high value attached to learning of English language, people strongly believe that quality education can only be attained through English medium (Vaish 201). As a result, English has established itself as a resource for academic and professional success.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In the context of above scenario, it is essential to survey the research literature to identify what kind of impact has been reported on the educational practices of developing nations due to global prevalence of English. The renowned linguist David Crystal has maintained that a language "achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country" (3).

The rise of English as a global language has significant implications for the education systems of various Asian and African countries. Referring to the status of English in South Asian countries, Elizabeth Erling has reported that, across the region, "English is seen as essential in accessing the best higher education opportunities, which then lead to the best

employment opportunities"(9). Emphasising the role of English in generating employability for high-end careers, Upadhaya and Sah have argued that, in general, access to the working literacy and communicative skills in English are often acknowledged as tools for socio-economic development in South Asia (111). In African context, Dietrick has put forth the rationale that the ascendancy of English in international business and communication is directly linked to social mobility. (138)

One of the predominant outcomes of global prevalence of English is the linkage of English proficiency to creation of access to employment opportunities. Kumar has stated that English is crucial for getting white collar jobs in global market. In the present era of late capitalism, education system cannot stay unaffected and so also the scenario of language learning. English language has become the most important medium of communication in business world and as a result licences to gain access to jobs (259).

To gain adequate proficiency in English, the researchers have reported the utility of English as medium of instruction. There is a general conviction that English language ability can be effectively attained if English becomes medium of instruction of all academic subjects. (Hamid et al. 4) When different courses are taught through English medium, competence in it is attained as a corollary (Alfehaid 115). Sah has argued that economic globalisation has conferred a central position to English. Educational practices are more responsive to socio-economic and socio-political dynamics of society leading to implementation of English as medium of instruction (743). Another indicator of enhanced role of English is in the form of introduction of English at the earlier stages of education in various developing countries. The rationale behind introducing English at an early stage of learning is that English competence is instrumental in opening up opportunities for social and economic progression (Sayer 38).

Referring to interdependence of globalisation and English language, Hamid and Nguyen have stated that English has attained the

status of Lingua Franca in Asian countries over the past few decades. English provides communicative medium to globalisation, the later makes the English language necessary to participate in networks, markets and resources (28).

In nut shell, higher English proficiency has been strongly correlated to opening up of lucrative job avenues and socio-economic mobility in today's era of globalisation. Besides, various researchers have also emphasized the role of English as a lingua franca at national and international level.

#### **PRESENT STUDY**

In the light of above findings, this study is focused at examining the present level of significance of English language at Higher Education Level, in the state of Punjab, in the broader context of globalisation. The aim has been to ascertain the place of English in various programmes and its academic and professional implication for the students.

**OBJECTIVE OF STUDY:** To evaluate the present level of significance of English language at undergraduate level in higher education in the state of Punjab.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

For the conduct of this study, the English teachers taking up different courses at UG level were interviewed to seek their perspectives on rising importance of English in higher education. An interview schedule was prepared for this purpose.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The complete analysis and discussion of responses have been presented below.

##### **Increased Significance of English Language Teaching in Higher Education Institutions**

The English teachers are the major stakeholders in the whole process of teaching-learning of English. It is worthwhile to seek their point of views regarding the perception that the importance of English language teaching has increased in higher education institutions. Almost all the teachers have replied affirmatively in this regard on varied grounds. According to them, English language teaching has gained momentum in recent

years due to multiple reasons. There is an increased awareness among masses of the global importance of English language. English has unquestionably seen unprecedented scale of rise. The higher education institutions have the vision that they have to produce graduates to be absorbed in global market and without the knowledge of English 'the things will not work' for the students. In view of these teachers, English has become the 'default medium of instruction' in various disciplines in higher education. In almost every stream, English language teaching has been introduced as a compulsory subject due to its increased significance. Besides, English is the language of communication in the corporate world which has given English a place of importance in higher education. The research in every subject area is available in English only. Spread of information technology in various sectors of the society has led to enhanced importance of English. English has also become language of social repute. The students want to be fluent in English to 'sound updated and modern' as English has become an indicator of modernisation.

However, only a few of the responding teachers have expressed the view that as such no remarkable change has occurred in terms of curriculum. The only change seems to be in teachers who, now a days, are employing new methodology of teaching in classrooms.

##### **Increased Significance of English Language due to Internationalisation of Education**

The goal of internationalisation of education is to raise the quality of higher education as per the global standards for ensuring skill and ability enhancement of students and enabling them to work in globally competitive economy. In response to the query whether internationalisation of education has led to increased significance of English now a days, most of the teachers have strongly supported this statement. Only a very small number of the respondents have expressed their lack of certainty regarding presence of any such linkage. However, no teacher expressed disagreement in this regard.

**Gaining English Proficiency as a Worthy Learning Goal for Higher Education**

The teachers have been asked whether it is worthwhile to aim at developing students' English proficiency in higher educational institutions. In this regard, majority of the English teachers have responded affirmatively while citing varied reasons. The rationale presented by them includes combating demands of international business and jobs, fulfilment of students' professional needs, generate their global acceptability, ensuring their survival in the globalised world, enabling them to avail job opportunities in foreign lands and lastly to develop communication skills and confidence among students in the usage of English language.

Only a few respondents have negated its need as, according to them, English language is just a medium to communicate and help us to 'convey whatever we want to'. In their view, as teachers, our goal should be to produce students who 'understand their responsibility as the citizens of this beautiful planet'.

**Duration of English Being Offered as a Subject in Various Programs**

In order to ascertain that to what extent, English language has been embedded in curriculum of various streams, it has been inquired that for how many semesters English is being offered as a subject in their respective programs. Majority of the teachers have reported that English is being offered as a subject in all semesters in their respective programmes. However, a considerable number of teachers have reported that it has been offered in two semesters. A few respondents have said that it is offered for one semester in their courses. None has reported that it has not at all been offered. Overall, it can be concluded that English has been offered in almost all disciplines for varied durations.

**Special Steps by Institutions to Improve Students' English Language Proficiency**

It has been asked from the teachers that, apart from teaching English as a subject, what kind of special steps their institutions are taking to improve English language proficiency of students. In response to this question, a substantial number of

respondents have elaborated upon the kind of activities being organised in their respective institutions. These include holding special classes after regular teaching hours, conducting special communication skills workshops, seminars and webinars, handwriting competitions and group discussion. Various competitions such as power point presentations, poetic recitation, essay writing, plays, poetry and debates have also been organised for students. Apart from these, the students are encouraged to listen and watch English channels and read English newspapers. Motivational speeches are delivered among students for improvement in their communication skills.

Further, some of the teachers have reported that the special steps have been taken in multiple directions. Apart from setting up language lab to hone communication skills, spoken English classes and English remedial classes have also been arranged. In certain institutions, seminars on the basics of English language are also arranged. However, only a few teachers have said that no special steps are taken.

Overall, it has come to the light that various higher education institutions have been focussing on development of English language proficiency among students by arranging special classes, co-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities.

**Conclusion**

The teaching of English language has become an essential part of various undergraduate programs at higher education level as it is perceived to be indispensable to teach English language to students. The teachers taking up undergraduate English courses in various streams have acknowledged the global significance of English. The growth of English as the only acceptable language of employment as well as the default medium to access the modern knowledge is viewed as the predominant reason for enhanced role of English in higher educational institutions. English has also been performing the role of lingua franca in higher education institutions where students have cross cultural affinities. English language competence leads to personality grooming and development of self confidence among students. Moreover, the

trend of internationalisation of education has further enhanced the role of English in higher education. Various higher education institutions have been putting considerable efforts to develop English competence of students.

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