



## Advent of English Communication Skills in India and Its Impact on Employability

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### Abstract

The paper highlights the advent of the English language into the Indian sub-continent during various decades of the 20th century. The momentum of English usage has increased since the 1970s. The paper reiterates that many Commissions have advocated for Project- Method and Activity- Method to teach communication skills in English. It further reinforces that English is truly considered global and transcends the boundaries. Thereby, making the English learners not local citizens but global citizens. English is widely recognized as the world's lingua franca since it unites all peoples of the world linguistically and serves as the main medium of communication for trade, aviation, entertainment, and diplomacy as well as for scientific and technological activities. The incredible increase of graduates, post graduates and doctoral degree holders in various disciplines such as engineering, medicine, arts, science, humanities and management, has further brought forth challenges and competitions in the global market, and this has, however, posed a threat to the job seekers, who lack communicative competence in English. The majority of the top national and international businesses, organizations, and academic institutions communicate in English for a variety of reasons, and the majority of online resources are in English.

**Keywords:** English, communication, employability, global transcends, reiterates.

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## 1. Introduction

The prestigious status that English of all languages has been enjoying as a native language, second language and official language across the globe continues to remain static unrivalled and unparalleled. The world has shrunk into a global village where in a good command of English continues to be the predominant requirement for one's academic, personal and professional success. When India got freedom in 1947, the status of English was under debate all over the country.

Despite opposing British authority, Mahatma Gandhiji (1919–1922) valued learning various languages, particularly English, and declared, "I don't want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the various cultures to float around my home as freely as possible" (Gandhiji). To benefit India and the rest of the world, I strongly advocate for young individuals with a passion for literature to acquire an extensive knowledge of both English and other languages to the extent they choose.

## 2. English Education in India

The expansion of every sector in India was influenced by British colonial control. Education was one such industry that had a significant impact. As the rule set its roots in India, English so far, a foreign, language became the official language of the country and was used extensively in both literary and spoken contexts. During the 20th century, the growth of the Indian economy was very rapid which led to the migration of the population among different regions of the Indian sub-continent. There was a gap in communication between the migrants and the relatively small Anglo – Indian community because of language differences and the need for a common language. It was given importance by including it as a second language in school thus paving the way for learning English through the educational sector.

Education and literature were funded by the British parliament through the East India Company in India. In their learned native languages, Arabic and Sanskrit, respectively, they had maintained the traditional education of Muslims and Hindus. The necessity to construct an English-based western curriculum with English as the language of administration arose as a result of the widespread usage of English as a common language. In order to promote English, William Bentinck, 4th Duke of Portland, the British Government's Governor-General at the time, decided to reallocate finances to the East India Company in 1835. The Council of India Act of 1835, as it was known, dealt with English education. This law made English the new official language of administration for the higher courts, replacing Persian.

English, which was first the language of India's foreign rulers, eventually became one of the most commonly spoken languages in the nation. The number of persons who communicate in English outnumbers the number of native English speakers. India was one of the nations that was directly or indirectly impacted by the new language system in all disciplines, including education, administration, medical science, and the arts and literature. The educational system made learning English an essential and inescapable component.

Timothy J. Scrase (2004) states, "Since the days of the British Raj, English remained the language of domination, status, and privilege in India" (Scrase). I delivered the following remarks at a paper presentation at the 15th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Canberra on June 29 and July 2, 2004. The objective of the hegemonic colonial endeavor in India was to build and maintain a cadre of administrative officials, clerks, and civil servants to govern the vast and extensive subcontinent.

In addition to being the primary language in the countries Great Britain, the United States of America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland, where job possibilities are plentiful for aspiring students of various disciplines, English is the commonly used language of developed and developing countries. The emergence of English as a means of development and empowerment has promoted its status across the globe, thus having further made English universally unique. The tremendous growth in various disciplines of science, medicine, engineering, technology, humanities and management studies has its reach through English as an appropriate language for communication.

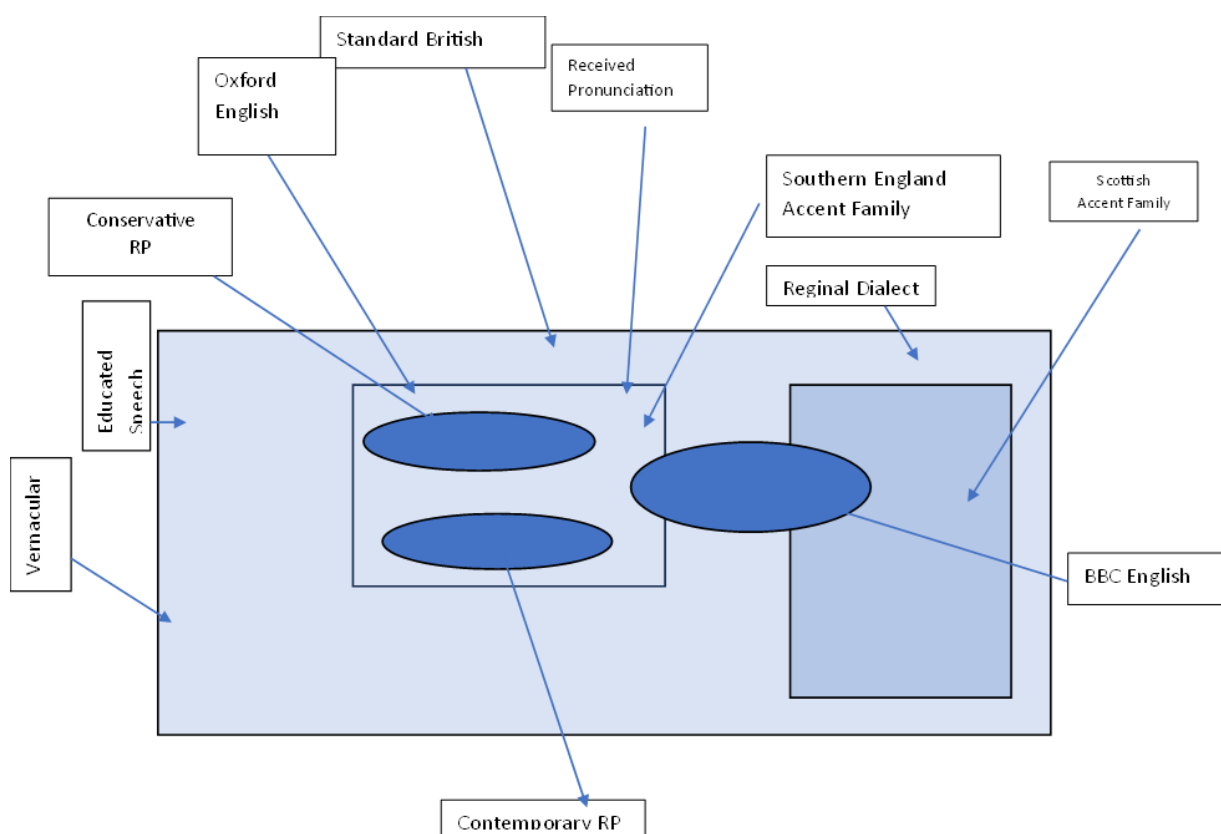
English is widely recognized as the world's lingua franca since it unites all peoples of the world linguistically and serves as the main medium of communication for trade, aviation, entertainment, and diplomacy as well as for scientific and technological activities. The incredible increase of graduates, post graduates and doctoral

degree holders in various disciplines such as engineering, medicine, arts, science, humanities and management, has further brought forth challenges and competitions in the global market, and this has, however, posed a threat to the job seekers, who lack communicative competence in English. The majority of the top national and international businesses, organizations, and academic institutions communicate in English for a variety of reasons, and the majority of online resources are in English.

The expansion of English was accelerated when William Caxton installed a printing press in London in 1477. It took vocabulary from various languages, particularly Latin and Greek. A further factor in the standardizing of English was the publication of the King James Version of the Bible in 1611. As a result, English achieved a distinct standard and prestige that was shared by all languages. English gained global recognition after Johnson released his lexicon in 1755 and the American Declaration of Independence was ratified in 1776.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) adopted Received Pronunciation (RP) in the early 20th century. It is often known as BBC English, Oxford English, and the King's or Queen's English. RP was first introduced in the main public schools of the nation throughout the 19th century.

**Table 1: Standard British English**



Even though the growth of English across the globe is astonishingly incredible and tremendous with all its rich vocabulary, linguistic culture and wealthy literature, it has never posed any threat to other languages. As a matter of fact, in many countries, English is taught through other languages or rather other languages through English. Thus, English acts as a bridge not only among people but also among languages. Aspiring students, who wish to go abroad for higher studies, project-related works and various other academic purposes, learn widely used languages like Spanish, French and German through English. Thus English, across the globe, serves as a link language.

The ability to communicate in English has become necessary in a rapidly rising nation like India, a place of great linguistic and cultural variety. The English left us in 1947 when India gained independence, but the English stayed. English was kept after India gained its independence and is now taught as a second language in schools and higher education institutions. English helps learners access all the information that they need in any branch of study. Besides its importance in our formal education, good knowledge of English is recognized as a mark of education in our society. The mushrooming growth of coaching centers in English itself bears

testimony to the status that English has in India.

English is essential for business since it is the language of science, technology, computers, trade, air travel, shipping, and the media. It serves as the medium for communication and bargaining on a global scale. Among the UNO's official languages, English enjoys a special place in the organization. The window to the world is English. English-language publications cover the most recent developments in science and technology. English is the language that can and should never be overlooked in a challenging and competitive world. Therefore, having a strong command of the English language is essential for anyone with aspirations and objectives. Anyone who wants to investigate options and opportunities around the world needs to be proficient in English.

India lacked a unified language for millennia. This might be attributed to the historical reality that India was a composite of several tiny kingdoms, each with their own dynasties and vernacular languages, spanning over many centuries. During the advent of British authority in India, a diverse language environment emerged. The use of a foreign language for conducting affairs related to independence and the functioning of the State was a source of national pride's inherent distress. A shared language is crucial for fostering national unity and cohesion. Kamala Nanda asserts that Mahatma Gandhi said that English can never function as our national language or medium of teaching. Transgressing its location should be prohibited. Simultaneously, Mahatma Gandhi was cognizant of India's need to engage on a global scale. He expressed: English is a universal language, and I am determined to retain my proficiency in it, as well as encourage other Indians to do the same.

Gandhiji stressed the significance of English in the nation's economic and social framework, acknowledging its supremacy as a language for worldwide communication. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee has provided a more profound analysis on the matter: Currently, if we were to formally acknowledge and maintain English in its current position, it would not have any detrimental effects on our mental or spiritual well-being. After about two centuries, this language has essentially transformed into an Indian language, losing its foreign connotation and adopting a neutral status. The vocabulary of this language surpasses that of any other language.

The majority of scientific and technical innovations and findings were only accessible in the English language. The need of English education was evident, and the majority of intellectuals in the nation expressed their support for its continuance without hesitation. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee provides further information as follows: The acceptance of English was a voluntary choice, unlike the imposition of Hindi on non-Hindi regions. English is the only functional tie or link in the Sahitya Academy, our national institution dedicated to the development and coordination of Indian literature in many languages. English has provided access to the rich literary heritage of ancient Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Sikhism, Ghalib, and Urdu poets, as well as the works of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, and Puran Singh, not just to India but also to the rest of the globe. All sections of the Indian intelligentsia recognized the importance of having a common language that might bind the country together at the time of Independence. As early as 1905, Bal Gangadhar Tilak said as quoted by A.K. Mehrotra: A common language for everyone is the most effective tool you can use to unite a country.

Nehru provided the following explanation during the discussion of the Official Language Bill, as cited by A.K. Mehrotra: Our people had been "administered a shock" by the British invasion, but the shock had a benefit. Our languages' interaction with English changed them from being "static," much like how our lives had done, to being "more dynamic." As it has in the past, English would continue to "serve as a vitalizer to our languages".

Successive linguistic and literary developments have shown Nehru's comment to be prophetic. The 1960s language debate was a topic that was mostly forgotten. As then, English has slowly made its way again across the northern States, but as state governments have shied away from it, private initiative has mostly been used to satisfy the public's demand for English as a medium of instruction. A.R. Mehrotra provides an accurate depiction of the prevailing situation at that time: English-medium preschools, such as Little Angels, Jesus-Mary, and Tiny Tots (the latter being mentioned in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, 1993), may be found in various regions of Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar. It is reasonable to assume that the children who have joined in such programs are learning English using techniques that are somewhat comparable. The South, however, acquired only a limited amount of Hindi via the medium of Bollywood movies and television programs.

Without a protest from any region of the nation, English had almost replaced Hindi as the common language  
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of the Indian Union by the 1970s. The period after India's independence, lasting until the early 1970s, may be considered the most significant in the history of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India after gaining freedom. They have seen the development of new educational programs and learning materials, the organization of extensive training programs for teachers, and the building of English Language Institutions in multiple states to fulfill the responsibilities of teaching, material production, and research. The 1970s presented a fresh obstacle to the approaches used in English Language Training (ELT).

While there have been significant studies and publications in the area of English Language Teaching, it is important to acknowledge that the demands for English have been undergoing substantial changes due to the imminent process of globalization. This necessitated a reevaluation of English education in India. Especially a groundbreaking and rapid expansion of business and technology following the 1960s, particularly with the introduction of computer-enabled technologies and the internet, the standing of English India as a whole has significantly changed. The following quote from Krishna swamy sheds light on how important English is becoming as technology usage rises. Krishna swamy claims as a result that although it happened quite swiftly within a short period, it did happen. Like gasoline and the microchip, English is now a global commodity. The English language has transformed the globe into a "global village," providing it with a universal language for communication.

English was widely regarded as a medium of opportunities in India during the post-independence era up to the 1970s and early 1980s, even at the individual level. Any person looking to enhance their socioeconomic standing would find "the ability in English" to be a priceless advantage. During the mid-1970s, English Language Teaching (ELT) gained significance due to the substantial volume of information that needed to be comprehended across several fields, including science, social sciences, medicine, technology, business, and humanities. Education policymakers at both the Central and State levels, as well as the general public, have realized that without sufficient skill in reading English, understanding it would be impossible. Kripa K. Gautam, a highly respected expert in English Language Teaching (ELT), makes the following observation:

Since its inception as a historical-political "accident," the use of English within India appears to have evolved into an economic and intellectual "reality."

The language of communication in politics, business, and culture was still English. Through it, India had a significant impact on the world stage. In 1967 and 1971, two Study Groups were formed with the purpose of improving the study of the English language and creating its educational plans.

### 3. Two study Groups:

**Table 2: The first Study Group (1967)**

The first Study Group (1967) proposed the following modifications to the mandatory English course, as stated by Kripa K. Gautam:
a. changing it from "a liberal art literature course" to "a course in language skills";
b. placing a "special focus on the development of language proficiency instead of a study of literature as such".
c. Including "introductory" and "advanced" courses in the English degree program's requirements. At more advanced proficiency levels, there should be a greater focus on developing oral and written English skills. At lower proficiency levels, education should prioritize the acquisition of specific skills, particularly reading comprehension.

**Table: 3: The second Study Group (1971)**

The second Study Group (1971) focused on the assessment and analysis of the ELT landscape, including both its shortcomings and achievements.
Kripa K. Gautam succinctly summarized the group suggestions as follows:
The panel believed that Men, Materials, and Methods are the three fundamental components primarily accountable for the success or failure of a teaching program, and 'each of these factors needs meticulous attention and meticulous preparation, and each of them now requires change in our nation.'



The Ministry of Education, Government of India, established the aforementioned two Study Groups on Teaching English. The Study Groups received recommendations that explicitly emphasized the significance of communication skills. Kripa K. Gautam consistently emphasizes the particular area of focus:

In February and March 1977, the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad organized two conferences: the ELT conference and the U.G.C. financed National workshop on syllabus Reform. Each of them underscored the need of fostering and strengthening English communication abilities at the collegiate level.

By the 1990s, English had gained significant influence in India and had become a crucial language for the current generation of young people and university graduates.

The prevalence of the English language as a global language may also be ascribed to economic factors. Following the dissolution of the British Empire following the Second World War, the United States of America emerged as a prominent center of economic activity, driven by its advancements in manufacturing, banking, commerce, research, and technology.

This development has a cascading impact on the role of the English language. There was a sudden surge of individuals who were driven to acquire English language skills for the sake of personal progress rather than only for enjoyment or recognition. This is because English has emerged as the universal language of businesses and technology as well as the key to global currency. It produced an entire generation of language learners who knew precisely why they were acquiring a language, including business people who were interested in marketing their goods, mechanics who needed to read instructions, doctors who required to stay updated on medical advances, and a wide range of students who referred to reading materials and journals that were only available in English. All of these people, as well as numerous others, such as officials, diplomats, members of the crucial higher judiciary, and teachers, need the ability to speak English, and they also have a thorough understanding of why they need it. However, in contrast to previous times, even rural regions are now being impacted by the widespread use of English. This is not just due to the effect of films, television, and the Internet, but mostly because English is considered the language of advancement in life.

Currently, English is the most sought-after means of communication due to its highest "economic worth." The commercial worth of English extends beyond employment to include its readership among the Indian population. Kushwant Singh, a renowned Indo-English author and journalist, cites an article from the English monthly Outlook:

Before a single word of the anticipated work has been written, some of the top publishing houses are now paying prospective authors enormous advance royalties that can reach Indian Rupees five million. They are greater than the advance royalties provided to authors in the United States, Great Britain, or any other European nation. Additionally, they are only available for writing in English and not in Hindi, our national language, or other regional languages. (Singh)

Penguin, Viking, Harper Collins, Rupa, and Roli, highly regarded publishers in India, are making bold endeavors to entice English authors by providing generous compensation for their creative creations. Put simply, these publishers have a clear understanding of the number of English language readers in India. Kushwant Singh further asserts:

English is the dominant language in India. More than two-thirds of the kiosks at the book expo were occupied by English speakers, the second and third places went to Hindi and Urdu. There was barely any sign of other languages.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Undoubtedly, English will persist as a means of communication. In the realm of commerce, where economic factors and job prospects hold sway, the prominence and widespread use of a language are determined by the forces of supply and demand. A language achieves true global status when it surpasses geographical, cultural, and economic barriers, facilitating seamless communication between inhabitants of various nations. English has undeniably shown its status as a "Global Language" without any doubt. According to David Crystal, a

language develops a distinctive position that is respected in every nation before becoming global.

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