

Attitude towards English

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Abstract

The attitude towards English has been receiving a tremendous flux from its initiation by the British to the present dynamic digital age. Though, the British introduced English language for their selfish purpose to serve in administrative arena, its impact has been so intense that it has become a language of the world. This paper outshines and enshrines different key factors that transform the attitude of stakeholders towards learning English.

English language has become inevitable to acquire jobs in all disciplines in this technological era to eke out livelihood comfortably. Especially, the dawn of Science and Technology and Multi-national Marketing have fortified its sway in India beyond its boundaries. Further, the concept of globalization has enlarged its scope to ensure employment, to promote business and to have rapport with other countries. As well, it has amplified the attitude of aspirants in honing their language skills. As a result, manifold language imparting agencies such as spoken English institutes and many training centers have been vividly sparked off day by day. Even the academicians have been improvising the syllabi conveniently for the students to sharpen their language skills. Above all, the language has taken deep roots in such a way that even to think off its origin appears very difficult to make out for an educated person. Consequent upon, every Tom, Dick and Harry have been cultivating the habit of communicating in broken English to demonstrate their professional capabilities. In a way, English language seems to be considered a second language rather a foreign language as it has been put to optimum use in all spheres of life.

Key Words: Attitude, English Language, Globalization, Science and Technology, Multinational Marketing, transform, stakeholders, training agencies, employment and second language

Attitude means way of looking at things as one feels. It is applicable in different ways. From the dictionary central website the origin and history of the word 'attitude' reveals "it is the same word as aptitude. Both come ultimately from late Latin *aptitūdō*. In Old French this became *aptitude*, which English acquired in the 15th century, but in Italian it became *attitudine*, which meant 'disposition' or 'posture'. This was transmitted via French *attitude* to English, where at first it was used as technical term in art criticism, meaning the 'disposition of a figure in a painting'. The metaphorical sense 'mental position with regard to something' developed in the early 19th century."

Attitude may be either positive or negative. However, inevitably every being is bestowed with this trait. Hohenthal observes, "Attitudes are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction, the status and importance of a language in society and within an individual derives largely from adopted or learnt attitudes. An attitude is individual but it has origins in collective behaviour." (Hohenthal, 6) The attitude towards English in India has taken flux since its entry into our country with the advent of the British. This paper looks at various factors that are responsible for metamorphosizing the attitude of the people towards English and its odyssey in India.

The British stepped into India under the pretext of business but they could not twirl the minds of Indians, as they were traditionally and culturally obsessed in every aspect. It became inescapable for them to propagate their language for their selfishness to get command over the administration. So, the British parliament made its efforts to introduce the language anyhow to change the attitude of Indians. In the process, William Bentick and Lord Macaulay initiated the language as an imperative for Indians to learn the language. In due course, the language had a unifying effect and kindled courage and enthusiasm in Indians to fight against the British. It also served as a blessing in disguise to ventilate the feelings to the British in their own language. In one way, it enabled certain sections of the people to reach high positions though not top positions in the administration. But, the leaders of the pre-independent era in India like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, and others endeavoured to elevate India to sublime heights, backed English language and claimed it to be the basic key towards triumph. Raja Rammohan Roy and Rajunath Hari Navalkar instead of giving instructions in Sanskrit or Arabic preferred to give instructions in English to the bureaucrats of the East India Company to influence them. They thought that English would open the way for people to find out about scientific developments of the West. Knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic or of Indian vernaculars would not contribute to this goal. (Kachru 1983: 67-68).

In course of time, the language spread all over India and occupy conspicuous status. M.K. Gandhi, S. Radhakrishnan, C. Rajagopala Chari, Silver tongued orator Srinivasachari, eminent lawyers, Civil Servants and a host of other thundered the British with their erudition.

Of course, they were not against the language but they were against the British colonialism. Anyhow, the British had sowed the seeds of English and left India making indelible impression on us to go with the language. As a result, Indians got used to English with much felicity.

Howsoever, the transition that took place was not without problems. There was a large-scale boycott of English medium schools and colleges in 1930s. After attaining Independence, Indians confronted with conflict whether to continue English in India or not. South Indians vigorously supported its navigation as a source of communication but most of the north Indians firmly protested its existence since Hindi dominated in their states. Umpteen movements had been carried out to enervate the impact of the language. According to Kachru, "The end of the British Raj in the subcontinent was supposed to initiate the slow but sure demise of the English language in South Asia." (Kachru, 1994:542) Ironically, people evinced much interest after being enthralled by its beauty and fascination. R.K. Narayan one of the most famous writers had chosen to write in English language because he himself said, "it is the only language I am really familiar with. It is the only language which is transparent and takes on the hues of the country or region where the story set." (www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/indianenglish.html)

At first, English was confined as a library language and the people who could afford to study in English medium schools showed enthusiasm to learn the language to expose their dignity and aristocracy. In course of time, on a snail pace the language crept into our culture and little by little created an everlasting mark by generating much interest even in the public to grapple the language, as it appeared alluring. But, the real impact of English was felt with the technological advances and the need to acquire English language skills became mandatory to face the challenges of the present day world. It was evident in all spheres. Annika Hohenthal opined that English became "the language of the legal system, higher education, pan-regional administrative network, science and technology, trade and commerce - either because the indigenous languages were not equipped for these roles and English provided for a convenient vocabulary, or because the use of English was considered prestigious and powerful. English became gradually a major tool for acquiring knowledge in the sciences and the humanities." (Hohenthal, 2003) Hence, a unique change appeared in the attitude of all sections of the public such as parents, students, employers etc.

Now, the attitude of the people towards the language has become so significant that one cannot be without its tremendous influence. It has taken roots in the country. It has almost grown into a tree, flowered, blossomed and now we are reaping the fruits of it. India has witnessed a drastic change in the attitude of English with the sudden upsurge of multinational marketing, business services and software industries as our country has entered the hub of business world and has turned out to be an overseas market for the rest of the world. Therefore, people have felt indispensable to learn English as a root to job opportunities. The

attitude of the parents has been rising positively towards learning the language as a compelling necessity. Hence, they get convinced to admit their children in English Medium schools and colleges. They are prevailing upon their children to embrace English language for their future career. This has triggered the emergence of a multitude of English Medium Corporate Schools and Colleges, Spoken English Institutes, Coaching Centers to train the youth in acquiring jobs not only in India but also abroad.

The onset of science and technology has sparked off a violent shift towards the language. Subsequently, the corporate culture has tiptoed beyond its identity. Its impact on parents is so intense that they have been toying with the idea of encouraging their children to seek for lucrative jobs. Simultaneously, the children too succumb to their elders wishes to secure jobs in different areas. Hence, they prefer English as a means of communication to have cakewalk in their chosen professions.

The concept of globalization is yet another factor to amplify the attitude towards the language. Currently, for everyone, it is a need to have access to commute from one country to another country on job or business purpose. Further, it has received much impetus to have clarity of communication in dealing with others. Even Asian countries such as Japan, China, Korea and others have cultivated to equip themselves with the language to augment their merchandise all over the world. Especially, in star hotels, transport, media and other business fields pidgin language has turn into very popular and every Tom Dick and Harry have directed their communication apart from their spoken local language.

Christine Kenneally says, "Today there are about 6,000 languages in the world, and half of the world's population speaks only 10 of them. English is the single most dominant of these 10. British colonialism initiated the spread of English across the globe; it has been spoken nearly everywhere and has become even more prevalent since World War II, with the global reach of American power." (Christine Kenneally, *The First Word*. Viking, 2007)

This can also be visualized in non-English speaking European countries as well as Asian countries such as China and Japan who are promoting the language on war footing. That is how the language has made a niche in Asian countries. We read in newspapers that even the auto drivers, waiters in hotels, in business centers using the language extensively to communicate with the tourists. As Vaish opines, "English is an empowering vocational skill in a globalizing economy" (Vaish, 1)

The effect of multimedia has forced a change in the attitude of youth in learning English. This makes rural children, who have found bit inconvenient to learn the language, to start changing the very attitude towards stimulating their latent talents in learning the language as a must. Whereas the urban children have focused much on honing their skills to stand in the society as decent beings as well as to seek for bright future.

Hence, to cope with the present day situation manifold English training institutes have been stemming as mushrooms. They have a lion share for the onward journey in learning

English in India. Even at Under Graduate level, the syllabi have been designed in such a way to develop communication skills to encounter the present day competitions in securing jobs. Particularly, the students have been provided many opportunities to acquaint with the language through Communicative Language Teaching.

Academicians of different echelons have improvised the syllabi in such a way that every child is prone to sharpen his/her skills in communication. In higher education, English language labs have been established to enable the students to get familiarity with the language and for optimum use. Besides, Jawahar Knowledge Centers have been rendering services to heighten the attitude of getting proficiency over the language for employment purpose. So to say, the attitude towards English has almost enticed the world as though it is an obligatory source to eke out livelihood.

Finally, the attitude towards English is growing so impressively day-by-day. Its journey in India is so amazing and fantastic. In the words of Shakespeare, we can understand that "Age cannot wither nor customs stale her infinite variety." Thus, English has come as guest and stayed for communication not only in India but also in the rest of the world. Truly, in almost every sphere of life, it has been deemed as a second language but not a foreign language.

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