



ENGLISH

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CLASS VII

Introduction

English in India is no longer a language of the colonial masters. In some important domains of activity, it has become an integral part of the Indian multilingual repertoire. In a variety of ways it has enriched Indian languages, which in turn have made significant contributions to English in India and as it is used abroad. The attitudes of the contemporary Indians towards English are significantly more positive than what we for example find in the Constituent Assembly Debates of 1946-1949.

English plays an important role in the domains of education, administration, business and political relations, judiciary, industry, etc. and is therefore a passport to social mobility, higher education, and better job opportunities. In urban India, it is very common to see young people code-mixing and code-switching between English and Indian languages. It is indeed unfortunate that English has so far remained associated with the rich, elite or upper middle class. It should be the effort of the Indian educational system to reach English to every Indian child and to ensure that she/he gains a sufficiently high level of proficiency in it and not suffer discrimination for lack of it.

The teaching and learning of English today is characterised by the diversity of schools and linguistic environments, and by systemically pervasive classroom procedures of teaching a textbook for success in an examination. The emphasis should be on teaching language use in meaningful and often multilingual contexts. For the majority of our learners, what is needed is a basic or fundamental competence in the target language. We need to develop a focus in which the research on language learning is integrated with language teaching. From the research in language learning, we know that children have an innate faculty to construct grammatical systems on their own. What we need to do in the classrooms, and to the extent possible, outside them is to create socio-cultural contexts that would encourage children to participate actively in understanding and creating appropriate communicative practices. It is extremely important that textbook writers and teachers realize that children learn as much outside as in the classroom, particularly in the case of language since it is there all around them all the time. Playgrounds, street hangouts, recreation centres, picnics, adventure tours etc are all important sites of language learning from a socio-cultural perspective. If these considerations inform the new textbooks, they are bound to look different. It would be largely unnecessary and futile to teach isolated grammatical items to students. Grammars would emerge from an active engagement in communicative practices. Input rich methodologies (such as the whole language, the task-based and the comprehensible input approaches) aim at exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the learner.

Input-rich communicational environments are a prerequisite to language learning since languages are learnt implicitly by comprehending and communicating messages, either through listening or reading for meaning. A comprehensible input rich curriculum lays the foundation for spontaneous language growth, and different language skills develop simultaneously in communicative sociocultural contexts rather than in any linear order as reflected in the traditional LSRW approaches. The learner can receive meaningful language input that is appropriate to his/her age and knowledge of language or readiness for language skills, given the variety and range of English-learning situations in India.

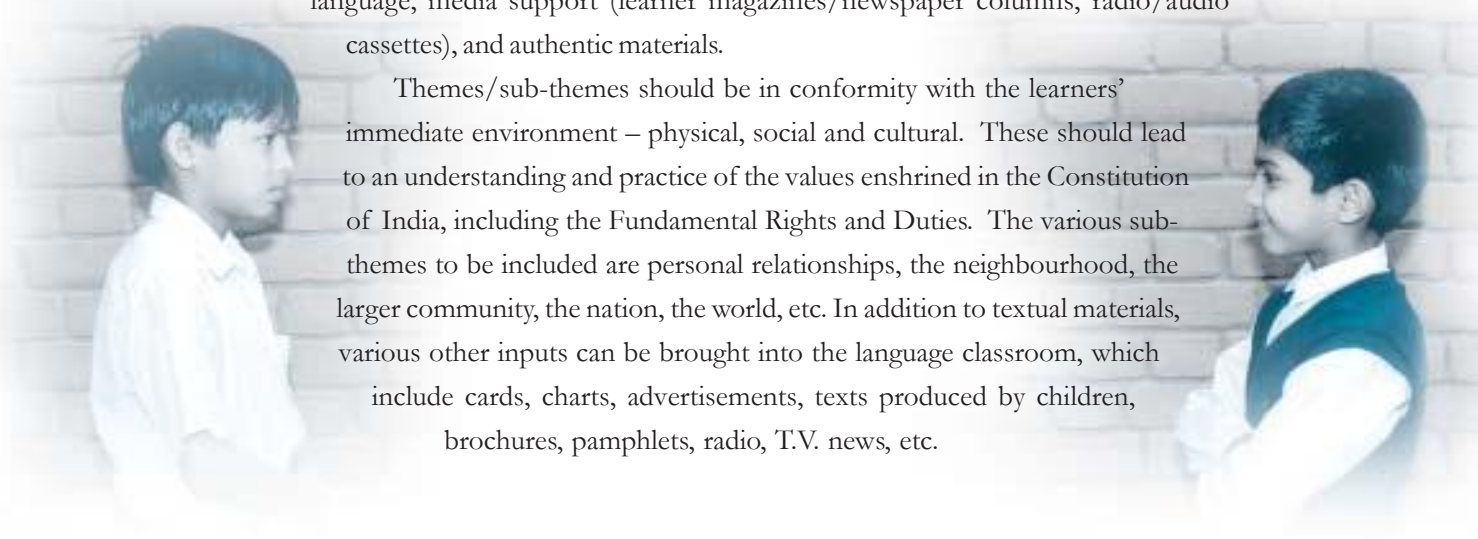
There is substantial evidence available now to show that Indian English as used by fluent educated Indian speakers does not differ in any significant way from standard varieties of English in UK or USA. There is no doubt that there are significant differences at the phonological and lexical levels. But that is also true of British and American English within those countries. Indian English can be considered a distinct variety with an identity and status of its own, and should serve as a model in teaching-learning situations.

What is to be taught and how?

The goals of a language curriculum are twofold: attainment of a basic proficiency, and the development of language as an instrument for basic interpersonal communication and later for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition. One hopes that by the time a student finishes her school, she would become an autonomous learner. This argues for a language-across-the-curriculum approach that breaks down barriers between English and other languages and subject areas. At the initial stages, English may be one of the languages for learning activities designed to enhance children's awareness of their immediate surroundings. It is at this stage that the use of the languages of children may turn out to be most productive for teaching English. It is important to note that children effortlessly learn several languages if adequate comprehensible input is available in anxiety free situations. It is also important to note that simultaneous exposure to several languages does not as many people tend to believe, 'confuse' children. These facts would constitute significant guidelines for teaching strategies in the classroom.

Input-rich communicational environments are essential for language learning. Inputs include textbooks, learner-chosen texts, class libraries, parallel books and materials in more than one language, media support (learner magazines/newspaper columns, radio/audio cassettes), and authentic materials.

Themes/sub-themes should be in conformity with the learners' immediate environment – physical, social and cultural. These should lead to an understanding and practice of the values enshrined in the Constitution of India, including the Fundamental Rights and Duties. The various sub-themes to be included are personal relationships, the neighbourhood, the larger community, the nation, the world, etc. In addition to textual materials, various other inputs can be brought into the language classroom, which include cards, charts, advertisements, texts produced by children, brochures, pamphlets, radio, T.V. news, etc.



In the case of textbooks, it is imperative that layout and illustrations etc. are treated as integral to the text rather than as mere cosmetic add-ons.

Language and knowledge

Language learning is essentially a matter of acquiring the important skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in an integrated manner, and harnessing these skills to the performance of formal as well as informal communication tasks. We would expect that by the end of Class 12, every child would have acquired the whole range of skills and abilities subsumed under the continuum ranging from the Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) to Cognitively Advanced Language Proficiency (CALP).

Language is not only a means of communication, it is also a medium through which most of our knowledge is acquired. It is a system that, to a great extent, structures the reality around us. Language acquisition involves processes of scientific enquiry such as observation of data, classification and categorization, hypothesis formation and its verification. It should be possible to use the languages available in the classroom not only for the enhancement of above cognitive abilities but also for increasing language proficiency and sensitivity. Such exercises prove particularly useful in the conscious use of language rules in formed situations.

Social harmony in a country as diverse as India is only possible through mutual respect for each other's language and culture. Such respect can only be built on knowledge. At all levels, the materials need to be sensitive to perspectives of equity (gender and societal), dignity of manual work, and peace and harmony (between humans, and between humans and nature). A substantial part of our existing knowledge carries a distinct gender bias. If we wish that our dream of a democratic society should become a reality, we must make every effort to eliminate gendered construction of knowledge.

In spite of all major technological breakthroughs, we know that the textbook will continue to be the major source of knowledge for the ordinary child. It is therefore important to produce textbooks that are contextually rich and provide incentives to the innate curiosity and creativity of learners. The process of material preparation should include close collaboration with teachers and children and with various agencies that have rich experience in producing textbooks and related materials. Every possible effort should be made to reflect the potential of using multilingualism as a teaching strategy in the classroom. It is of course neither possible nor desirable to have examples from all the 22 languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. What is required is just a few examples that would illustrate that language data can be elicited from children and that they can actively participate in its classification, categorization and analysis to arrive at linguistically significant generalizations. It should also be necessary to develop feedback mechanisms, which will help us improve the materials on a regular basis. A teacher's handbook spelling out methods and techniques, and notes for the teachers in the textbook itself, could prove to be of great practical value.

Skills to be fostered

The development of linguistic proficiency in the learner is needed for the spontaneous and appropriate use of language in different situations.

- The learner should acquire the ability to listen and understand, and should be able to employ non-verbal clues to make connections and draw inferences.
- The learner should develop the habit of reading for information and pleasure; draw inferences and relate texts to previous knowledge; read critically and develop the confidence to ask and answer questions.
- The learner should be able to employ her communicative skills, with a range of styles, and engage in a discussion in an analytical and creative manner.
- The learner should be able to identify a topic, organise and structure thoughts and write with a sense of purpose and an awareness of audience.
- The learner should be able to understand and use a variety of registers associated with domains such as music, sports, films, gardening, construction work, etc.
- The learner should be able to use a dictionary and other materials available in the library and elsewhere, access and collect information through making and taking down notes, etc.
- The learner should be able to use language creatively and imaginatively in text transaction and performance of activities.
- The learner should be able to develop sensitivity towards their culture and heritage, aspects of contemporary life and languages in and around the classroom.
- The learner should be able to refine their literary sensibility and enrich their aesthetic life through different literary genres.
- The learner should be able to appreciate similarities and differences across languages in a multilingual classroom and society.
- It is important for the learner to notice that different languages and language varieties are associated with different domains and communicative encounters.
- The learner should become sensitive to the inherent variability that characterises language and notice that languages keep changing all the time. It is possible for a student to notice the differences between her own speech and the speech of her, say, grandparents.

Attitudes to be nurtured

Attitudes and motivation of learners and teachers play an important role in all learning, including language learning. When the teacher is positively inclined towards pupils of diverse linguistic, ethnic and socio-cultural backgrounds, pupils will also tend to get positively motivated and involved in the teaching-learning processes. It is extremely important that teachers begin to appreciate the fact that all languages represented in their multilingual classrooms are equally scientific and should receive equal respect from the teacher and the taught. The teacher should also begin to use the multilingual classroom as a resource. Languages flourish in each other's company. They die when they are isolated as 'pure objects'. Languages which have become powerful in the modern world have gone through a process of constant borrowing at all levels from other languages and they have still not closed their doors. The day they do so, they will start their journey on the path of destruction. The teacher's positive attitude will go a long way in lowering the anxiety levels of learners, while raising their awareness levels of self-respect, self-discipline, respect and care for others, interdependence and cooperation.

Content

The ten core components identified in the National Policy of Education must be suitably integrated in school curriculum. These components, which will cut across all subject areas, should be reinforced in the whole range of inputs (print and non-print, formal and informal) for teaching/learning at various stages of school education.

Since all contemporary concerns and issues cannot be included in the curriculum as separate subjects of study, some emerging concerns like environmental issues, conservation of resources, population concerns, disaster management, forestry, animals and plants, human rights, safety norms and sustainable development should be suitably incorporated in the course content. Course materials should also draw upon the following concerns in an integrated manner:

1. Self, Family, Home, Friends and Pets
2. Neighbourhood and Community at large
3. The Nation – diversity (socio-cultural, religious and ethnic, as well as linguistic), heritage (myths/legends/folktales)
4. The World – India's neighbours and other countries (their cultures, literature and customs)
5. Adventure and Imagination
6. Sports
7. Issues relating to Adolescence
8. Science and Technology
9. Peace and Harmony
10. Travel and Tourism
11. Mass Media
12. Art and Culture
13. Health and Reproductive health



The thematic package given above is suggestive and at each stage should be in line with learners' cognitive level, interest and experience. In every textbook, there should be some lessons, which are translations from other languages.

Curricular Package

It is recommended that the package for each class except for the primary stage (Classes I -V) will consist of a textbook, a workbook, and a supplementary reader. The textbook should contain not more than 10 comprehensive units (lessons, exercises and activities) and five/six poems of varying lengths depending on the class. The workbook will have the same number of corresponding worksheets as the number of the comprehensive units of the textbook. The supplementary reader will have about eight pieces meant essentially for self-study promoting reading for information and pleasure.

The recommended weightage in terms of marks is 40% for the textbook, 40% for language work including oral testing and 20% for the supplementary reader.

The curricular package for classes XI-XII (Elective Course) will consist of: Class XI – 1. An Anthology of Poems, 2. A Short Novel, 3. A Book of Essays, and 4. A Book of Grammar and Phonology, (Part-I); Class XII - 1. An Anthology of Short Stories, 2. A Short Novel (Indian Writing in English), 3. A Selection of One-Act Plays, and 4. A Book of Grammar and Phonology, (Part-II).

Time Available

There are about 180 working days available for teaching/learning amounting to one period per day allotted to the teaching of English. The actual number of periods available, however, may be about 150. The size of the curricular package should be such as can be conveniently covered in the given time.

Evaluation

Evaluation in language should be periodic, preferably at regular intervals of 4 to 6 weeks of actual instruction. Evaluation should be both oral and written. Periodic tests should carry a weightage of fifty per cent – twenty-five per cent each to oral and written. The marks should be taken into account in the final grade.

Results of test and examinations should be treated basically as feedback to teachers. They should guide them in programming their teaching and in organizing remedial work. Evaluation should be linked to assessment of general proficiency rather than to specific achievements.

CLASSES VII

Background

Activities and materials that promote language growth in the early years have been described in some detail in the preceding section. Work at the upper primary level providing a basis for action and interventions in schools is described below. In general, vocabulary development through reading extensively with comprehension and interest and writing activities of a higher order than hitherto developed are the main goals of teaching/learning at this stage.

Objectives

The general objectives at this stage are:

- to negotiate their own learning goals and evaluate their own progress, edit, revise, review their own work
- to understand, enjoy and appreciate a wide range of texts representing different cultures, ways of living
- to be able to articulate individual/personal responses effectively
- to use language and vocabulary appropriately in different contexts and social encounters
- to be able to organise and structure thoughts in writing/speech
- to develop production skills (fluency and accuracy in speaking and writing)
- to use dictionary suitable to their needs
- to understand and enjoy jokes, skits, children's films, anecdotes and riddles

At the end of this stage learners will be able to do the following:

- understand the central idea and locate details in the text (prescribed and non-prescribed)
- use his/her critical/thinking faculty to read between the lines and go beyond the text
- narrate simple experiences, describe objects and people, report events to peers
- speak accurately with appropriate pauses and clear word/sentence stress to be intelligible in familiar social contexts
- write simple messages, invitations, short paragraphs, letters (formal and informal) applications, simple narrative and descriptive pieces, etc.
- use his/ her proficiency in English to explore and study other areas of knowledge through print and non-print media
- to undertake small projects on a regular basis

Language Items

At the upper primary level, knowledge of grammar remains a process of discovery combined with a conscious effort to explicitly understand and name grammatical items. However, these should not be taken out of contexts to be treated as discrete teaching items.

In addition to consolidating the items learnt earlier, the following will be introduced and recycled through the upper primary stage.

- determiners
- linking words
- adverbs (place and types)
- tense forms
- clauses
- passivisation
- adjectives (comparative and superlative forms)
- modal auxiliaries
- word order in sentence types
- reported speech



Methods and Techniques

Classroom interaction would be such as to promote optimal learner participation leading to an urge to use language both in speech and writing. The selection of actual classroom procedures is left to the discretion of the teacher. However, the following are recommended:

- Role play
- Dramatisation
- Reading aloud
- Recitation of rhymes, poems and making observations on a given topic/theme
- Telling and retelling stories, anecdotes, and jokes
- Discussion, debate
- Simple projects
- Interpreting pictures, sketches, cartoons
- Activities, tasks, and language games
- Pair work, group work, and short assignments both individual and group
- Exploring the electronic media