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The English Language: Exploring its Educational, Economic, and Social Market Value in New Delhi

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**The English Language: Exploring its Educational, Economic, and Social
Market Value in New Delhi**

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Abstract

As English continues to solidify itself as the global language, the idea that proficiency in English is the key to upward mobility is spreading. This trend is especially present throughout India, yet the quality of English education continues to vary drastically. Unequal prospects from a young age greatly impact future opportunities and while many are using English to soar up, still a large percentage of Indians are being left behind. In many cases, English is still viewed as the language of the elite, but underprivileged groups are also using it to positively change their lives. By using semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, group discussions, and observations, this study researched the different educational, economic, and social opportunities available to those with English versus non-English proficiency skills by focusing on NGOs (non-governmental organizations) who teach employability, vocational, and English language skills to youth. Study findings reveal that English is becoming an extremely valuable asset as India continues to increase its participation in globalization. It affects prospects in various ways that constantly overlap with one another and while the language is becoming more common among all groups in India, the upper class still holds an advantage by having greater access to learning the language. It is hoped that through this study, the reader will gain a better grasp of the value and effects of the English language in India, as well as understand the need for changes in the system in order to move towards equity through the use of the language.

Introduction

Since gaining its independence in 1947, India has experienced exponential amounts of development growth and “now seems to be on an unstoppable trajectory of change”¹. With the increase in globalization, the world is becoming more interconnected and India is using this to shift from being a “developing country” to a “developed country” to eventually securing its position as a powerful global actor. India possesses many assets that put the country at an advantage to attaining this goal, such as its large population of youth and growing BPO (business process outsourcing) and IT (information technology) industries. The Indian economy has been growing over the years, with a GDP (gross domestic product) increase of 6.9% for the 2011 to 2012 fiscal year and estimates of another increase for 2012 to 2013².

¹ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 18

² Government of India. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. *Annual Report 2011-2012*. 2011. Print.

English as a Rising Global Language

With these advancements in growth, the development of the English language in India has been revolutionizing as well. English has become the global language, the lingua franca, the link language of the world and as it is increasing in international prominence and as more people use it for communication and interactions, its “value” appears to be shifting as well. According to Ethnologue, an encyclopedic reference that catalogues the world’s living languages, as of 2009 around 328 million people use English as a first language while it was estimated that 750 million people speak it as a foreign language³. David Crystal, a renowned linguist, states that a language becomes global due to the political power of the people who speak it⁴. “The English language has been in the right place at the right time” due to English-speaking countries such as Great Britain and the United States being leading colonial nations, highly influential in the industrial revolution, and obtaining economic power throughout the decades⁵. The continuation of highly powered English-speaking nations has further increased the usage of the English language. Many state that English is an important investment in order to “fully participate in 21st century civil society” and to not have the language in one’s country is be to “marginalized and excluded”⁶. English has played a major role in India in terms of its roots in the country and as a catalyst for the rise of the country’s international influence. Its presence has certainly increased over the years and as India continues to strive for furthering its development, the value of English becomes an extremely important factor to consider.

³ Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Web. 30 Nov 2012.

⁴ Crystal, David. “The Language that Took Over the World”. *The Guardian*. 22 February 97. Reprinted in *Spotlight* (Germany), 7, 1997, 12-16. Print.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 10

Multilingualism and the Introduction of English during British Colonialism

It is estimated that India is home to about 428 languages and over 3,000 dialects, creating a linguistically, ethnically, and culturally diverse nation spread across twenty-eight states⁷. The Constitution of India recognizes 22 Scheduled Languages in addition to 100 Non-Scheduled Languages and gives national status to Hindi and English⁸. English was brought over by the British East India Company in 1831, a company that pursued trade with India and the East Indies, and was further enhanced during the British Raj, or British colonialism, until 1947⁹. The British viewed the introduction of English as a way to teach “useful knowledge” while also incorporating “religious and moral improvement”¹⁰. In 1835, Thomas Macaulay, a law officer, wrote “Macaulay’s Minute on Education” in which he depreciated the value of Indian languages and stated that it is “no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England”¹¹. He believed that English was the language spoken by the ruling class and likely to become the medium of commerce throughout “the seas of the East” and therefore, English, rather than Arabic or Sanskrit, should be the medium of instruction in Indian schools from Class Six to Class Twelve¹². From this, the “Anglicist approach” to English language teaching emerged: English would be taught to the “Anglicized” elite who would pass down their knowledge of the language to the masses in order to create the most

⁷ Rao, S.Srinivasa. "India's Language Debates and Education of Linguistic Minorities." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 43.36 (2008): 63-69. Print. p. 64

⁸ Rao, S.Srinivasa. "India's Language Debates and Education of Linguistic Minorities." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 43.36 (2008): 63-69. Print. p. 64

⁹ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.180

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 180

¹¹ Bureau of Education. *Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839)*. Edited by H. Sharp. Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920. Reprint. Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965, 107-117. Print.

¹² Ibid.

efficient learning process and help to “civilize” India¹³. From this point on many viewed English as a language for development and prosperity.

English in the Indian Education System

Several believed that once the British left, so too would the English language. But instead, just the opposite seemed to occur. After the end of the British Raj in 1947, India strove to reinvent itself as a self-sufficient nation and to Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, this included teaching the English language, the “glue of India” which represented modernity and progress¹⁴. The Indian Education Commission of 1964 to 1966 stated that education was the most important feature for national and international development and because English would serve as a link language for higher academic work and communication, students were recommended to learn it¹⁵. In response to the Indian Education Commission recommendations, India’s Department of Education established the Three Language Formula in 1968. This provided a solution to enhance India’s ability to compete with the rest of the world, as Nehru would have wanted, dealt with the issue of multilingualism in India, and allowed each state to customize the system to its needs¹⁶. The system is used in elementary and secondary education levels, where schools are required to teach in 1) the regional standard or state language, 2) Hindi, or another modern Indian language if the regional standard is already Hindi, and 3) English¹⁷. Unfortunately the system has not achieved its desired success and experiences many problems due to a lack of monitoring and implementation.

¹³ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.180

¹⁴ Luce, Edward. *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India*. New York: Doubleday, 2007. Print. p. 31

¹⁵ Mallikarjun, B. “Language Policy for Education in Indian States: Karnataka”. *Language in India: Strength Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow*. 2002. Web. 27 September 2012.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Chand, Vineeta. "Elite Positionings Towards Hindi: Language Policies, Political Stances and Language Competence in India 1." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 15.1 (2011). Print. p. 12

As English speaking nations have continued and even increased their influence throughout the world, the idea that English should be learned has spread, especially in India. It is the only language that is taught in all states as a first, second, or third language¹⁸ and while the estimates of English speakers in the country vary from 50 million to 333 million or even more due to the broad definition of “using” the language, the numbers are unquestionably rising¹⁹. It has become the language of many professional industries including business, education, government, law, mass media, science, technology, and trade²⁰. Communicating in English is a requirement in many of these sectors mainly due to the effects of globalization and therefore professional colleges and job markets tend to favor English-speakers and students from English-speaking schools²¹. Schools are increasing the priority of learning English in class and students and parents have created a demand for English-medium schools, English language institutes, and overall, a significantly large English market in India. As Kudchedkar states, “the popular taste as far as it can be judged, had declared favour of English”²². At the domestic level English has become a language to bridge communication between Indians who do not speak the same language. As a hugely multilingual nation, the country needs one common language and though Hindi as a national language is in some ways fulfilling this goal, English is rising up to the occasion as well.

English: a separator between the rich and poor?

However, to some the language is magnifying the inequalities between the rich and the poor²³. Researchers have stated that since Indian independence, English has become “the

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 12

¹⁹ Graddol, David. *British Council, English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. p. 66

²⁰ Kudchedkar, Shirin. *Readings in English Language Teaching in India*. Chennai, India: Orient Longman, 2002. Print. p. 40

²¹ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.190

²² Ibid. p. 44

²³ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 25

single most important predictor of socio-economic mobility” because the opportunities available for those who can use English appear to be much greater than those who cannot²⁴. The underprivileged are often those attending the poorly performing schools while the wealthy are able to attend the good private schools. They grow up, gain employment in low paying jobs, and remain economically challenged while raising their own families. Their children must then attend poorly performing schools, just like their parents, which starts the cycle all over again. The imbalanced opportunities that children receive during their schooling lead to even greater gaps between the educated and uneducated as well as the wealthy and poor. Unequal access to English is a significant problem that needs to be addressed in order to end this cycle. Although some have gained the ability to adequately learn English and escape the cycle, these success stories are limited and occurring at a slow rate.

Background Information on ETASHA Society and ANK India

This project focuses on how underprivileged youths are increasingly learning English in order to open up more opportunities for themselves. Even as India expands its economy and worldwide influence, the underprivileged are the ones that are continuously getting left behind. NGOs such as ETASHA Society and ANK India are working to change this, so that underprivileged youth are able to have the same opportunities as everyone else. Both ETASHA Society and ANK India target economically challenged areas of New Delhi where the students often come from poor families who remain in poverty because of the lack of access to learn skills that lead to well paid jobs²⁵. A majority of the primary sources from

²⁴ Mohanty, Ajit K. “Multilingualism of the Unequals and Predicaments of Education in India: Mother Tongue or Other Tongue?” *Imagining Multilingual Schools: Languages in Education and Globalization*. Ed. Garcia, Ofelia, Tove Suknabb-Kangas, and Maria E. Torres-Guzman. Celvedon, Tonawanda, Ontario: Multilingual Matters LTD, 2006. 262-279. Print. p.264

²⁵ *ETASHA Society: An NGO Training Youth for Employability*. Design ‘n’ Care: Cyberxel, 2012. Web. 15 Nov 2012.; *ANK India*. n.p., 2012. Web. 15 Nov 2012.

this project were acquired from these organizations through talking with staff, students, and a few alumni as well as observations of class sessions.

Many of the students are government school drop-outs or desire to simultaneously work and attend school. The students who were interviewed or participated in group discussions fell into the 17-27 age range²⁶. Students who wish to be placed with a job after completion of the program must be at least 18 years of age. Of the students who were interviewed or involved in group discussions, most had family incomes of around 10,000 Rs, about 182 dollars, per month which is around 2,750 Rs, or 50 dollars, over Delhi's individual monthly minimum wage rate²⁷. Their parents' education levels varied for while the majority of the students' fathers completed anywhere from Class Nine to Twelve, their mothers' educations were more scattered and ranged from no schooling to up until Class Twelve²⁸.

ETASHA Society and ANK India offer classes such as vocational and employability training for monthly fees between 250 and 300 Rs and place their students with jobs after completion of certain courses. Both organizations feel that education is a hugely positive investment and therefore if students pay then they are more likely to be fully committed to the program and gain the most out of their experiences as possible. English classes are important aspects of all of these programs, for the language is needed in order to work in entry level jobs in the formal sector.

Interacting with these NGOs provided extremely useful information for the purposes of this project. These findings will be further discussed throughout the paper.

Objectives and Methods

The objectives of this project were to discover how English has affected and is affecting the lives of Indians, particularly youth from disadvantaged and underprivileged

²⁶ All ETASHA Society and ANK India student/trainee interviews, New Delhi, 15-22 Nov 2012.

²⁷ All ETASHA Society and ANK India student/trainee interviews, New Delhi, 15-22 Nov 2012; Government of NCT of Delhi. Labour Department. *Minimum Rates of Wage*. Ministry of Labour. New Delhi: 2012. Print

²⁸ All ETASHA Society and ANK India student/trainee interviews, New Delhi, 15-22 Nov 2012.

areas of society and how they are using English as a means of doing so. Another objective was to assess the market value of English education, employability, and social aspects to gain a better understanding of the significance of the English language.

Methods for this project included personal observations, individual interviews, group interviews, and a group discussion. Each interview and discussion started with a short verbal questionnaire to obtain background information on the participants. A total of twenty-two interviews and one group discussion were conducted throughout the Independent Study Project process. For eight of the interviews, staff members from the organizations were used for translation clarification purposes due to the interviewees' preference for responding to some of the questions in Hindi rather than in English. New Delhi in particular was selected as the location of study as it is the capital of India, a hotspot for diverse opportunities and options, and a city of aspiration for many Indians.

Some of the questions that have been answered throughout this Independent Study Project are as follows: How and when is English being used? What is it that makes the English language so sought out after? What are the educational, social, and economic opportunities available to English-speakers versus non-English speakers? What are people's thoughts about the language and its spread across the country? How are underprivileged youth using English to create better opportunities for themselves? How is it affecting people's lives?

Educational Opportunities

Abhishek Kishore, founding member of ANK India states that, "education is the one thing that actually makes a difference. Education is the only difference between what we call the underprivileged and the people who have privilege²⁹." If one receives good primary

²⁹ Kishore, A., Founding Member, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Kaushambi Center, 12 Nov 2012.

education, then one is more likely to receive good secondary education, higher education, and then further opportunities such as employability. If one does not have these educational opportunities, then just the opposite effect occurs. Unfortunately, the underprivileged groups often find themselves in the latter situation. They attend the more poorly run government schools where they often receive less than adequate educational experiences. This also means that their level of English knowledge is more likely to be lower than those who have attended better schools.

But what role does English language education play in India? During the British Raj, English-medium education was restricted to the Indian upper class, a group considered to be more intelligent and “better” than the “rest” in many aspects³⁰. The British and other English-speaking countries have dominated the global scene for centuries and therefore English has become associated with influence and power. Since 1857, universities have required some levels of English proficiency and today, the top Indian universities and higher education institutions conduct a majority of their classes in English³¹. Therefore, in order to receive admission into the top universities, prospective students must complete tests and carry out interviews in English³². Secondary schools conduct national examinations during Class Twelve to evaluate students’ general knowledge that are then submitted in university applications. There are a variety of exams affiliated with different school boards, but more schools have started to use the Indian School Certificate (ISC) designed by the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE)³³. This is because the tests are conducted in English and are considered to be prestigious by universities. Once enrolled in a

³⁰ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.180

³¹ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.182

³² Simran and Dipti, PR executives, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

³³ *Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations*. n.p., 2012. Web. 29 Oct 2012.

university, many students take English communication classes to gain an upper hand in being employed after graduation³⁴.

Access to Information

In some cases, the information one needs is only accessible in English. As an ANK India student put it, “For our knowledge, we need to learn English³⁵.” Being able to access a variety of information allows one to broaden “their basic psyche, basic capacity to learn” and one will be able to be better “updated” about the world³⁶. Many of the interviewees stated that in order to do so requires some knowledge of English. The number of Indian students going abroad for their university studies is increasing because they believe that their own national universities cannot provide them with enough resources for the caliber of education that they desire. 45% of students who study internationally attend schools in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, all of which are English-speaking countries³⁷. In addition, accessing information through the internet has become an extremely popular method of choice and at the beginning of the 21st century, 90% of the information on the internet was in English³⁸. Though this number has decreased over the years, English still dominates the internet. Researching and studying broader perspectives of the world creates feelings of being well-formed and this in itself opens up a whole new set of opportunities, adding to the appeal of learning English³⁹.

³⁴ Kudchedkar, Shirin. *Readings in English Language Teaching in India*. Chennai, India: Orient Longman, 2002. Print. p. 49

³⁵ Vijay and Amit, students, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

³⁶ Indrani, HR recruiter, Enhancee Training and Staffing Solutions, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

³⁷ Focho, Gladys Ngwi. “Student perceptions of English as developmental tool in Cameroon”. *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language*. Ed, Hywel Coleman. London: British Council, 2011. p. 2-25. Print. p. 3

³⁸ Ibid. p. 3

³⁹ Ibid. p. 7

The Dilemma between Public versus Private

English is now a basic requirement in many higher educational fields, creating pressure for many to start learning the language from a young age. But there have been many problems with the English language learning process. One of the main issues is the divide between private and public, and English-medium and “vernacular-medium” schools⁴⁰. The Kothari Commission stated in 1966 that:

“There is this segregation in education itself — the minority of private fee-charging, better schools meeting the need of the upper classes and the vast bulk of free, publicly maintained, but poor schools being utilised by the rest. What is worse, this segregation is increasing and tending to widen the gulf between the classes and the masses.”⁴¹

As stated before, private schools are reputed as better performing than public government schools, and many conduct their curriculum in the English-medium. This gives English-medium students an edge over others when it comes to higher education options. Statistics for the number of children attending English-medium schools are unclear and not widely available, though some estimate that five to ten percent of Indian children attending school do so^{42 43}. Many are turning to private English language teaching institutions in order to acquire the desired level of English knowledge. These institutions offer opportunities for young people to “develop new skills, become better qualified, introduce international dimensions to learning or profession, and develop better understanding of other cultures”⁴⁴. Institutions recognize that “Fluency in English is essential for professional and personal

⁴⁰ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 72

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 72

⁴² Graddol, David. *British Council, English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. p. 86

⁴³ Mukherji, Anahita. “2 crore Indian children study in English-medium schools.” *Times of India*. 2 Mar 2012. Web. 18 Oct 2012.

⁴⁴ *British Council*. British Council. 2012. Web. 06 Nov 2012.

growth as well as success in all sectors” and see the language as a way to cross communication barriers⁴⁵. The number of these institutions has exponentially grown over the past years. As of 2006, there were over 300,000 spoken English and communication skills classes offered in New Delhi alone and estimates are that the English language learning market in India is worth about three hundred crore, or about three billion dollars, a number which is increasing every year⁴⁶.

Unfortunately, the worst performing government schools are usually located in the lower socioeconomic areas where underprivileged children reside, leaving them with the option of attending poorly operated schools, private schools, or no school at all⁴⁷. Fees for private schools can be extremely expensive and require sacrifices from families or ultimately limit them the ability to send their children to these types of schools. Yet, one study indicates that families typically spend 7.5% of their income on education and about 40% of Indian students use the private education sector, either through attending private schools or using private tutors. Families invest in these services because professional colleges and job markets tend to favor students from English-speaking schools due to the assumption that those students have not only received better proficiency in English, but an overall better education⁴⁸. Parents believe that these types of institutions will put their children on the right paths to reach their aspirations⁴⁹.

The students of ANK India and ETASHA Society could not afford to attend private schools and English language institutions and therefore go to the NGOs as a way to expand their educational knowledge. Depending on their age and level of education completed, they

⁴⁵ *British Academy for English Language (BAFEL)*. mark-design.net. Web. 06 Nov 2012.

⁴⁶ Duttagupta, Ishani. “Teaching English is a Rs 300cr biz”. *The Economic Times*. 21 May 2006. Print.

⁴⁷ Vivek, Facilitator and Manager of Career Development Centre, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

⁴⁸ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.190

⁴⁹ “A Billion Brains: A better education system calls for more than just money.” *India: Aim Higher*. Spec. issue of *The Economist*. 29 Sep 2012. n. pag. Web. 11 Oct 2012.

are able to participate in a variety of programs. The two NGOs focus on employability and vocational skills training. Students learn about topics including behavior etiquette in professional settings, basic Microsoft Office, and computer and internet usage⁵⁰. The NGOs specified that they focus on speaking rather than writing and reading in English because of the higher practicality and benefits of speaking a language and the fact that spoken English is often the main weaknesses of the students. Therefore, classes are conducted in English with very limited Hindi for clarification purposes in order for students to pick up on the language more quickly and to encourage practice in speaking⁵¹.

The employability and vocational programs are comprised of many facets but always include a spoken English class. In the English classes, sessions can include practicing pronunciation, greetings, and basic grammar such as possessions, tenses, and adjectives⁵². The teachers were extremely interactive in class and students participated in role plays, coming up with sentences, class discussions, and other group activities. In all of the observed classes, the teachers seemed to motivate students to help one another and learn from their mistakes. Multiple students stated that their favorite aspect of the programs were the teachers because they were very helpful and encouraging. The students at ETASHA Society and ANK India seemed to enjoy and productively learn from their programs, something that many other underprivileged youth are unable to experience.

Problems within English Education

Numerous government schools, on the other hand, face issues that seriously hinder their students' education. As stated earlier, the Three Language Formula was partially created to help balance out the conflicts between deciding which languages to use in government schools. Ideally, students learn their regional language, Hindi or another

⁵⁰ Personal Observation, Etasha Career Development Center 2 and ANK Malviya Nagar Center. 14-16 Nov 2012

⁵¹ Personal Observation, Etasha Career Development Center 2 and ANK Malviya Nagar Center. 14-16 Nov 2012

⁵² Personal Observation, Etasha Career Development Center 2. 14-15 Nov 2012

language if the regional language is already Hindi, and English. But due to defects in implementation and monitoring of the system, priorities seem to be given to some languages over the others, creating an unequal distribution in language learning⁵³. For example, the Three Language Formula states that government school students should be taught English beginning in Class Five but many have changed their policies and are now introducing English during Class One so that children can become exposed to the language at an earlier age⁵⁴. Many linguists believe in the “critical period” theory, a time period which enables “children within its confines to enjoy a painless and successful journey to mastering” a language⁵⁵. Children are easily able to “absorb” numerous amounts of information, especially sounds and vocabulary but after the critical period passes, usually around the time of puberty, it becomes much more difficult to organize a new language in one’s brain⁵⁶.

Therefore, one would think that learning English in Class One rather than Class Five would be a positive advantage for students. Several of the interviewees stated that students should be encouraged to learn and use English from a young age in order to be better prepared for future situations that require English speaking. But Indrani, a Human Resources recruiter, states that the current methodology of teaching English is too focused on children learning grammar rules when they are too young to truly grasp the concepts⁵⁷. Without understanding the basic foundations, they must go back and relearn what they are already supposed to know, creating major setbacks and frustration. Multiple interviewees agreed that students are learning too much by pure memorization and that there is a need to interact in the

⁵³ Chand, Vineeta. "Elite Positionings Towards Hindi: Language Policies, Political Stances and Language Competence in India 1." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 15.1 (2011). Print.

⁵⁴ Graddol, David. *British Council, English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. p. 86

⁵⁵ Bialystok, Ellen. *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print. p. 72

⁵⁶ Bialystok, Ellen. *Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print. p. 85

⁵⁷ Indrani, HR recruiter, Enhancee Training and Staffing Solutions, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

language and create a more “conducive environment to learn English”⁵⁸. In addition, several of the respondents declared that one of the main problems they experience is that although they can understand English, speaking is a difficult challenge because it was never an emphasis in their government schools. Safia Khan, a teacher at ANK India, points out that the way you learn your first language is through speaking, observing, and everyday interactions⁵⁹. So why does the current system believe that the most effective way to teach English to students is through regurgitating grammar rules?

Government school children also face problems such as a lack of resources, teacher absenteeism, and the fact that teachers are not adequately trained to teach English. Like the underprivileged youth attending the schools, many of the teachers themselves are first generation learners as well⁶⁰. This deficit in satisfactorily English learning creates even more setbacks once students reach higher secondary school. Safia states that students are unable to pass the Class Twelve national tests such as the ISC because while their knowledge of the test content may be high, the tests are conducted in English and their English knowledge is low⁶¹. Mohanty states that 50% of failures in high school examinations in India are due to poor scores in English⁶². This then limits their chances of attending higher educational institutes and gaining good employability opportunities.

An interesting statement that a few of the NGO staff members made was that like all languages, “the very nature of English is so evolutionary” and therefore the English that the students learn in school may be more difficult to practically apply⁶³. For example, SMS

⁵⁸ Kishore, A., Founding Member, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Kaushambi Center, 12 Nov 2012.

⁵⁹ Khan, S., Teacher, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

⁶⁰ Kishore, A., Founding Member, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Kaushambi Center, 12 Nov 2012.

⁶¹ Khan, S., Teacher, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

⁶² Mohanty, Ajit K. “Multilingualism of the Unequals and Predicaments of Education in India: Mother Tongue or Other Tongue?” *Imagining Multilingual Schools: Languages in Education and Globalization*. Ed. Garcia, Ofelia, Tove Suknabb-Kangas, and Maria E. Torres-Guzman. Celvedon, Tonawanda, Ontario: Multilingual Matters LTD, 2006. 262-279. Print. p. 264

⁶³ Christopher, Facilitator, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 14 Nov 2012. .

chatting on mobile phones has helped a lot with interacting in English because youth are learning and teaching one another through their messages. This type of communication through technology is changing the English language and allowing students to use it on a daily basis, but it is still not enough to teach someone an adequate and quality amount.

Perceptions

In India, English was “implanted in colonial times, and argued over ever since”⁶⁴. Students gave different reasons for learning English: for national and international communication, to use computers, to get better jobs, “because English is a funny language”⁶⁵. People expressed that if one has learned English one is perceived to be “highly educated”, “studious”, “well behaved”, just to name a few. Whether or not it is actually true about a person, this “erroneous perception” of English speakers has emerged because there is a tendency for those who use English to be at a higher level⁶⁶. If two people are discussing the same topics but one communicates in English, people are more likely to listen and learn from the English speaker because “if a person speaks Hindi, no one pays attention”⁶⁷. This is why many of the interviewees believe that learning in English is becoming compulsory in India in order to proficiently communicate. “It’s not your choice, but you need to learn English⁶⁸.” If you wish to be successful, to be noticed, one has “to accept the truth that knowing the English language gives [one] the extra edge over the others”⁶⁹.

While these perceptions can be viewed as negative and wrong, they have increased the want for English-medium education, and in general, a rise in the pursuit for higher

⁶⁴ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print.

⁶⁵ Mohammed, Ekta, Kushbu, Pooja, Santosh, Alka, students, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012. Sumit, Trainee, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 14 Nov 2012. Group Discussion Trainees, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

⁶⁶ McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

⁶⁷ Anonymous, preschool teacher, Kidzee Preschool, personal interview, Jaipur, 15 Oct 2012.

⁶⁸ Simran and Dipti, PR executives, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

⁶⁹ Parul, Facilitator, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

education as well, which is a great positive for Indian society⁷⁰. Many of the ANK India and ETASHA Society students complete their programs and go on to attend higher education studies afterwards. They realize the potential and benefits that they can gain from their education and acquire degrees in areas ranging from Bachelor of Arts to Bachelor of Tourism Studies⁷¹.

Although many of the interviewees agreed that there are many positives to learning English, there is some worry about the fate of the estimated 428 other languages and over 3,000 dialects in the Indian education system. They have accepted that English is a global language that will continue to grow and evolve, but feel that it is equally important to keep traditional Indian languages and values⁷². Some view the “encroachment of English as something that is detrimental to Indian languages”⁷³ and blame globalization for threatening the survival of the minority languages⁷⁴. Multilingualism has changed in India, for students no longer want to learn other Indian languages, but international ones such as German, French, and Spanish instead⁷⁵. The older generations worry about the future of Indian languages as English continues to grow stronger and wonder how much Western influences will take hold in the country.

This is why there have been so many debates over the use of English as the medium of instruction in schools and not just in second language classes. In July 2009, the Supreme Court in New Delhi overruled a case in which the Karnataka government was forcing private

⁷⁰ National Knowledge Commission. *Recommendations on School Education*. Government of India. New Delhi: 2007. Print. p. 48

⁷¹ Himani, Trainee Alumnus, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 22 Nov 2012. Vijay, Trainee Alumnus, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 22 Nov 2012.

⁷² Christopher, Facilitator, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 14 Nov 2012.

⁷³ McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

⁷⁴ Rao, S.Srinivasa. "India's Language Debates and Education of Linguistic Minorities." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 43.36 (2008): 63-69. Print. p. 66

⁷⁵ Vivek, Facilitator and Manager of Career Development Centre, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

English-medium schools to change to Kannada-medium schools. The court stated that “it is very easy to say that children should be taught in mother tongues, but the question is how to survive in this world⁷⁶.” English is needed for India to continue to progress and therefore, the court ruled that parents would have the right to choose the medium of instruction at their children’s schools. But “the reality is that the employers, the students want English”⁷⁷. As long as people desire to learn English, it will continue to be used in schools, the workplace, and social environments.

Economic Opportunities

Indians have used English as a way to further the Indian economy and to show its capabilities to the rest of the world, for example, by establishing its reputation and influence in the technology and management sectors⁷⁸. India’s economy has grown exponentially over the years, but in order for this to continue, the country needs more skilled workers. Currently, large majorities of the population belong to the unorganized, or informal, sector of employment. The definition of this sector is often debatable and broad but most often includes the following divisions of labor: self-employment, agriculture, household enterprises, low levels of organization, and work not governed by any legal framework⁷⁹. People belonging to this sector tend to be low wage workers who are not highly educated and do not have the luxury of having job security, minimum wage benefits, or labor rights. The percentage of employers that fall into the informal category vary, but are surprisingly high

⁷⁶ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 72

⁷⁷ McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

⁷⁸ Kudchedkar, Shirin. *Readings in English Language Teaching in India*. Chennai, India: Orient Longman, 2002. Print. p. 48

⁷⁹ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 34

and range from around 84%⁸⁰ to 93%⁸¹. Many of the students who participate in ANK India and ETASHA Society programs come from families who work in the informal sector, but organized, or formal, sector jobs are what many of the youth strive to acquire. One must have completed up to Class Ten or Twelve and have basic knowledge of English in order to be hired for entry level jobs. These days, basic skills in Microsoft Office are also becoming a requirement for various occupations as well⁸².

English and Job Opportunities

Kudchedkar states that “today, it is difficult to think of success in any career in India without adequate proficiency in English,”⁸³ for the professional sector is one in which English thrives. When talking with co-workers, people tend to speak a mix of Hindi, English and any other languages that they know but when it comes to communicating in situations such as with clients through emails and letters, conversations are conducted in English⁸⁴.

Sanjay Tiwari, the son of an illiterate security guard, credits English for allowing him to “escape” the informal sector and make a reasonable living as a marketing executive, a job he was able to acquire “only because I can speak English⁸⁵”. On the other hand, Dilip, an office assistant at a public relations firm, believes that if he had been able to study more English in school he might have pursued higher education and been able to work at a higher paying job⁸⁶.

English is a key component that recruiters look for in candidates and as a student stated “when we communicate well in English, they will definitely give us a job”⁸⁷. Recruiters

⁸⁰ “Report on the Committee on Unorganised Sector Statistics” National Statistical Commission. Government of India, Feb 2012. PDF. p. 29

⁸¹ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 34

⁸² Kishore, A., Founding member, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Kaushambi Center, 12 Nov 2012.

⁸³ Kudchedkar, Shirin. *Readings in English Language Teaching in India*. Chennai, India: Orient Longman, 2002. Print. p. 45

⁸⁴ Anonymous, corporate recruiter, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited, personal interview, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited Office, 27 Nov 2012.

⁸⁵ Joseph, Manu. “India faces a linguistic truth: English spoken here.” *The New York Times*. 16 Feb 2011. Web. 26 Nov 2012.

⁸⁶ Dilip, office assistant, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

⁸⁷ Vijay and Amit, students, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

measure candidates' levels of English during interviews and assess it with the profile requirements for the job. For most entry level jobs, a basic grasp of the language is needed so that, for example, in a food sector job, employees can greet customers, count the change, and understand what the customer has ordered⁸⁸.

A person who can read and write English is expected to earn 29% more than someone who cannot⁸⁹. In addition, if someone can read, write, and speak English, his/her income is expected to be between 22% and 68% more than someone who cannot⁹⁰. The percentage of English-speaking employee candidates has exponentially grown over the recent years, raising the competition for the limited number of job slots. But two HR recruiters point out that candidates must have a fine balance between skill sets and English proficiency and therefore, it must not be forgotten that knowledge of English is not enough to solidify a job position⁹¹. In addition, every job requires a different level of English proficiency. For an employee in the BPO sector, for example, "English becomes a livelihood" but for others, additional skill sets may be deemed as more important⁹².

However, these minimal requirements are what prevent a large percentage of the population from qualifying for these occupations in the first place. Some statistics show that employability opportunities have fallen into a slump, but Ian McBride, a communications, content design, fundraising, and facilitating staff member of ETASHA Society, states that it is an ironic situation because there are jobs and there are people, but the jobs are not getting

⁸⁸ Anonymous, corporate recruiter, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited, personal interview, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited Office, 27 Nov 2012.

⁸⁹ Bhandari, Laveesh, and Mridusmita Bordoloi. "Income Differentials and Returns to Education." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 41.36 (2006): 3893-3900. Print. p.3895 and English Language Premium: Evidence from a policy experiment in India: Chakraborty, Tanika and Bakshi, Shilpi Kapur p. 1

⁹⁰ Bhandari, Laveesh, and Mridusmita Bordoloi. "Income Differentials and Returns to Education." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 41.36 (2006): 3893-3900. Print. p.3895

⁹¹ Anonymous, corporate recruiter, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited, personal interview, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited Office, 27 Nov 2012. Indrani, HR recruiter, Enhancee Training and Staffing Solutions, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

⁹² Anonymous, corporate recruiter, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited, personal interview, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited Office, 27 Nov 2012.

filled due to candidates' lack of employability skills⁹³. According to India's Minister of Human Resource Development, "This is a recipe for disaster. You have a huge national pool of unskilled youngsters who have no avenues for gainful employment"⁹⁴. This is why there has been a surge for English language education. People realize that English is a key ingredient for increasing one's chances of employability, causing parents with low English skills to encourage their children to learn English so that they can have better opportunities than their parents have⁹⁵. English and employability go hand in hand because if one does not speak English one will "be sidelined and won't be able to compete. It affects [one's] growth"⁹⁶.

ETASHA Society and ANK India Employability and Vocational Training Programs

This is why NGOs such as ETASHA Society and ANK India are becoming all the more useful to India's younger generation. By assisting students in vocational and employability training, more people will become a part of the workforce and able to earn for themselves and their families. Vijay, a current ANK India student stated that "We need to secure our future for our job and it is very important for a job" to know English⁹⁷. Students in these programs learn about skills and attributes that are needed to be a successful worker, such as conversation etiquette, time management, presentable attire, hierarchies and group atmosphere and actively practice what they have learned⁹⁸. For example, the Customer Service and Work Culture classes at ETASHA Society conduct role plays to practice how to

⁹³ McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

⁹⁴ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 35.

⁹⁵ Faust, David, and Richa Nagar. "Politics of Development in Postcolonial India: English-Medium Education and Social Fracturing." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 36.30 (2001): 2878-2883. Print. p. 2880

⁹⁶ Khan, S., Teacher, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

⁹⁷ Vijay, Trainee Alumnus, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 22 Nov 2012.

⁹⁸ Personal Observation, Etasha Career Development Center 2 and ANK Malviya Nagar Center. 14-16 Nov 2012

talk in English to customers over the phone while at ANK India students learn to use Microsoft PowerPoint and how to present their work.

With these acquired skills, students are placed into jobs in areas such as the food, retail, and BPO sectors, all which require some form of English knowledge. These students also aspire to hold careers in call centers, customer service care, malls, banks, computer operations, tour and travel firms, and own their personal companies. They see the English that they have learned as one of the main tools that will lead to their success. Ajay Roy, Gaurav Singh, and Heena Khan, former ETASHA Society students, raved about how the program has changed their lives and how they were all placed with jobs after the completion of the program⁹⁹. For Heena, the program was especially helpful because she is currently the only member in her family that is producing income and has already doubled her monthly salary from 6,000Rs to 12,000Rs¹⁰⁰. These students feel that their behaviors have changed for the better, they can confidently hold conversations in English at work, and they are “able to face the world now” with pride¹⁰¹.

Social Opportunities

The purpose of a language is first and foremost to use in communication with others. “English is just a language, is what we have to remember. At the end of the day, language is just the medium¹⁰².” But the sociolinguistics of English in India is extremely complex and carries a lot more weight than as “just” a language. The social perceptions and opportunities

⁹⁹ Ajay Roy, alumini of Etasha, talking about Etasha. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 6 Dec 2009. Web; Gaurav Singh, alumini of Etasha, talking about Etasha. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 6 Dec 2009. Web; Putting Young People into Work. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 20 Oct 2012. Web.

¹⁰⁰ Putting Young People into Work. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 20 Oct 2012. Web.

¹⁰¹ Ajay Roy, alumini of Etasha, talking about Etasha. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 6 Dec 2009. Web; Gaurav Singh, alumini of Etasha, talking about Etasha. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 6 Dec 2009. Web; Putting Young People into Work. Etasha Asha. YouTube, 20 Oct 2012. Web.

¹⁰² Anonymous, corporate recruiter, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited, personal interview, Jubilant FoodWorks Limited Office, 27 Nov 2012.

that were brought up in interviews and discussions were some of the most striking and greatly affected and overlapped with educational and economic opportunities.

Perceptions

There is prestige connected with English, for English speakers are put on pedestals¹⁰³. Many of the interviewees responded that English speakers are associated with some of the following adjectives: smart, well-behaved, educated, good, and distinguished. The British restricted the English language to the Indian upper class and even today, many believe that English is the “language of the elite”¹⁰⁴. English is connected with modernity, progress, and rationality, while Indian languages are seen as traditional and instruments to fulfill emotional needs¹⁰⁵. This is why English has become such a language of aspiration and there continues to be an increase in its demand especially from the bottom sectors of society. They have seen how English knowledge can create opportunities and lead to upward social mobility. If someone has the ability to speak English, people will respect them.

On the other hand, people feel that poor knowledge of English creates negative personal effects. People feel uncomfortable when they sense that their English language skills are not up to par. During class observations, students tended to switch to Hindi when they felt unsure of or flustered about how to respond in English¹⁰⁶. Some seemed embarrassed that they could not fully dictate their thoughts into English and had resorted to Hindi instead. A couple of respondents admitted that they had felt discriminated against in certain circumstances because of their limitations in the English language and that “sometimes it affects me very negatively because I have faced so many obstacles because of

¹⁰³ Parul, Facilitator, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.180

¹⁰⁵ Tollefson, James W, and Amy Tsui. *Medium of Instruction Policies: Which Agenda? Whose Agenda?* Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Publishers, 2004. Print. p.190

¹⁰⁶ Personal Observation, Etasha Career Development Center 2. 15 Nov 2012

my English, in my job, in my education but now I'm trying to you know...I'm trying to improve my English¹⁰⁷.”

Global and Domestic Opportunities

Through English, India has been able to gain international access to information and establish international connections. To be able to communicate in English is to be able to connect to the masses¹⁰⁸. But the inability to communicate creates a loss of opportunities. Not only do you lose opportunities abroad, but the ability to produce domestic relationships as well. Indrani stated that during her university years she was unable to become as good a friend with certain groups of people because of her lack of ability to effectively communicate in English with them, the only language they had in common¹⁰⁹. How can one build a connection with someone, whether it is in a social or professional setting, when one cannot communicate with him/her? For example, levels of English knowledge are being considered in marriage prospects, with better prospects being given to those who can proficiently speak the language. This creates obstacles to one's progress and opportunities and additionally, can hurt one's self-esteem.

Language of the Elite vs. Commoners

Unfortunately, some Indians focus so much on the improvement of their English that they “neglect their own language because they feel that it is inferior in some kind¹¹⁰.” In addition, some use their English skills to show off, because they believe that it makes them come across as educated and prestigious. In this way, English unfortunately still has a “snobbery” value attached to it. But to others, English is shifting from a language of the elite to the language of commoners. More and more people from all sectors of society are using the language, and therefore English is losing its “elitist” status. For example, various

¹⁰⁷ Simran and Dipti, PR executives, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Bauri, P., PR executive, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Indrani, HR recruiter, Enhancee Training and Staffing Solutions, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

¹¹⁰ Bhutani, V., PR executive, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012

advertisements and signs are printed in English, people say “hello” when answering the phone and use the phrase “oh my God” on a regular basis. “Hinglish” is also becoming increasingly common and people converse in a combination of Hindi and English interchangeably. A greater percentage of Indians wish to learn English and are finding methods of doing so.

One of the more prominent responses was the correlation between English and “confidence”, an interesting association. The world needs a common language to communicate and through the English language, “only then will the world listen to us”¹¹¹. For the students of ANK India and Etasha Society, this process first begins by gaining confidence in themselves and respect from others. They strive have the confidence “to facilitate another person in English”. Various respondents stated that gaining a better grasp of English has raised their confidence level and intrapersonal skills. Vijay proudly said that before “I knew some some English, but I can talk in English now” and “so now I am happy and feel more confidence¹¹²”. One interviewee articulated that “It’s not like I can’t speak English...I can speak”, but felt that her confidence isn’t as high as others who can speak more English than she can¹¹³. Multiple students stated with pride that they feel more confident about themselves now that they can converse in basic English, especially with foreigners.

Some of the respondents who are well versed in English felt that they have been given more opportunities than those with lesser skills in English. According to Vivek, a manager and facilitator with Etasha, “I have a special and distinguished position in my peer group because I come from Bihar, right? Even now, if I can recall, I don’t have any childhood

¹¹¹ Khan, S., Teacher, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

¹¹² Vijay, Trainee Alumnus, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 22 Nov 2012.

¹¹³ Simran and Dipti, PR executives, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

friends that are able to talk to me fluently they way I can...This definitely separates me¹¹⁴”.

Safia Khan took her knowledge of English for granted and now sees the need for spreading the English language, otherwise people will “be far from success”¹¹⁵. Indrani can conduct business and feel respected in a very professional setting because of English and its ties to the professional sector and states that English has been a key ingredient in creating positive changes in her life¹¹⁶.

It seems slightly distressing that many Indians believe that they must learn English in order to feel like an adequate human being. This is why some research condones the English language as hegemonic due to its affiliations with the British Raj and Western globalization and that it increases social fractures by further widening the social, economic, and political inequities¹¹⁷. Language is a power tool and the fact that the English language has spread so widely is an example of how English-speaking countries have used English as a way to further advance their influence in society. But whether one is fond of the spread of English or not, there is no denying that it has gained momentum in India and shows no signs of stopping. English is spreading almost everywhere, so there is an increased need to use it¹¹⁸.

When asked if he were happy about the increase of English around the world, one interviewee replied, “Happy? I am just happy that I know English because I can interact! If the Spanish would have conquered...I would have learned Spanish¹¹⁹.”

¹¹⁴ Vivek, Facilitator and Manager of Career Development Centre, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

¹¹⁵ Khan, S., Teacher, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

¹¹⁶ Indrani, HR recruiter, Enhancee Training and Staffing Solutions, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

¹¹⁷ Faust, David, and Richa Nagar. "Politics of Development in Postcolonial India: English-Medium Education and Social Fracturing." *Economic and Political Weekly*. 36.30 (2001): 2878-2883. Print. p.2878

¹¹⁸ Ekta and Kushbu, students, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

¹¹⁹ Bauri, P., PR executive, GreyCell PR, personal interview, GreyCell PR Office, 09 Nov 2012.

Findings and Discussions

After researching and completing this Independent Study Project, it became evident that the English language holds much more influence and importance in Indian society than was previously expected, especially in terms of social situations and opportunities. In many ways, the language has become a part of the country's identity and whether or not people are content with this evolution, it is extremely difficult to avoid encounters with the language. As a result, English greatly affects educational, economic, and social opportunities, all important drivers for the increased use of English in the first place. These factors overlap, creating a ripple effect and an even larger space for the value of English to spread. English is trickling down to more primary and secondary schools as students desire to learn the language for university admissions and during their pursuits for higher education. This correlates with India's growing international involvement at the professional level, making some knowledge of the English language compulsory for most occupations in the formal sector, whether it be as a waiter at a fast food joint or a CEO of a company. People still believe that the ability to communicate in English associates one as having higher social status and prospects, though the perception is slowly lessening as a variety of socioeconomic groups are learning and using English in their daily lives. The failure of government schools to provide their students with quality English education causes those from underprivileged backgrounds to seek out organizations such as ANK India and ETASHA Society so that they can equip themselves with the right tools to gain employability skills. Emphasis on the importance of English in India still maintains its momentum and appears that it will not slow down until people are satisfied with their knowledge of the language.

This project focused on the educational, economic, and social prospects and perceptions related to the English language in India but throughout this month long study, additional information was discovered as well. The following two sections, titled "Social

Confidence” and “English as a Native Language in India”, though not directly related to the project were nevertheless extremely interesting to learn about and are therefore, discussed below.

Social Confidence

Social confidence is one of the skills that ETASHA Society and ANK India try to instill in their students. It often seems that the possession of social confidence is taken for granted and therefore overlooked, but when it comes to teaching employability and life skills it is an important aspect to teach. Without social confidence, one can miss so many different opportunities because it plays into so much of one’s daily interactions¹²⁰. Ian McBride stated that many of the students who come into the ETASHA Society programs will end up working in places “that they’ve excluded themselves from before” such as department stores and shopping malls¹²¹. Students have often never visited these places due to the social environments surrounding them or because they had been previously denied entrance because of their appearances. Therefore, ETASHA Society takes students on group field trips to places that they may be hired for jobs after completion of the program.

These are very important excursions because many of the ETASHA Society students have never set foot in a mall before, never gone through mall security or ridden an escalator and for some, it is a terrifying experience. How can someone expect a person to be sent to and pass an interview if he/she cannot even ride the escalator to the office? The group excursions are tremendously important in teaching the students about their possible work environments and how to interact in them, whether it is looking at the hierarchies of a workplace, the importance of being on time, or how to ride an escalator¹²². Students need to gain enough social confidence to feel that they have the right to be there because once they

¹²⁰ Kishore, A., Founding Member, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Kaushambi Center, 12 Nov 2012.

¹²¹ McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

¹²² Ibid.

do, “those doors that are keeping them away from interacting are open. It brings out their personality.”¹²³

English as a Native Language in India

It has been almost two hundred years since English was introduced to India. The language has been adapted and changed to create India’s own version of the language. English has become a part of the Indian culture and some argue that it is no longer a foreign language to the country¹²⁴. In fact, it has become the native language for a small percentage of today’s younger generation. Meenakshi Nayar, President of ETASHA Society, discussed that she grew up speaking Hindi but spoke English in school, university, and formal settings. She said that “at work, initially, I almost stuttered and stammered if I were to speak in Hindi” and that “for a long time now, I think and speak in English”¹²⁵. She and her husband speak mostly in English to their daughter and though they made sure that she learned Hindi as well, they are still often surprised at how fluent in Hindi she has become. “If people speak English at home with their families” it should be considered as a native language¹²⁶.

Though the number of native English speakers is uncertain, the current percentage is fairly low but on the rise. Eventually, English may achieve a new status in India, not just as a national language of the country, but one in which people claim it as a native language itself. This percentage will most likely increase and it will be an interesting trend to follow with each new generation to come.

¹²³ Christopher, Facilitator, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 14 Nov 2012. .

¹²⁴ Vivek, Facilitator and Manager of Career Development Centre, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 15 Nov 2012.

¹²⁵ Nayar, M. Park of McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

¹²⁶ McBride, I., Partnerships, communications, donations, press, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Career Development Institute, 14 Nov 2012.

Challenges

This project provided the opportunity to conduct research on one's own and to learn about all the aspects involved in field research. Luckily, for the most part people were very accommodating and tried to help in whatever ways they could and in this sense, conducting research went fairly smoothly. But the most challenging part of completing the ISP project was setting up interviews. Creating a rapport in a short time span and then having to schedule interviews with various people took more time than expected. Flexibility became a very important trait in order to collaborate with various interview subjects. Some interviews were easily completed but others were not confirmed or had to be cancelled at the last minute and could not be rescheduled. This led to a slight loss in the variety of interviews and information that was originally desired. For example, it would have been useful to interview ANK India and ETASHA Society student alumni who are currently working but due to busy work schedules, those interviews were not successfully coordinated. Contacts with language institutes were unsuccessful as well, either due to a lack of responses or because the institute would not give out information for data privacy reasons.

Conclusion and Way Forward

“Language is just a tool that is used to communicate between people, and it shouldn't be a hazard [barrier]¹²⁷.” Unfortunately, language is a much more complex concept than this statement makes it out to be. Language is power, a voice, an identity, and it affects the way of life for everyone. The English language has played a role in shaping the Indian society of today and continues to grow in its influence. Even two hundred years after the British introduced the language to India, it has not become a universal language within the country. Its presence in India still creates many debates, from those who believe that English is India's

¹²⁷ Kishore, A., Founding Member, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Kaushambi Center, 12 Nov 2012.

solution to development to those who believe that it is destroying Indian culture. But the fact of the matter is, as Graddol, writes that “English will be used by more people, for more purposes than ever before”¹²⁸. The younger generation wants the language and is striving to learn it and will keep demanding it until they are satisfied. Particularly in underprivileged communities, English opens doors that were previously closed. But the main obstacle is the quality of the current English education system. With such a demand to learn the language, creating more curriculums for English language learning has become a main priority but proper teacher training and quality learning has not. India is such a diverse country, but with the increased emphasis on one specific language, the meaning of multilingualism is shifting, something that should still be taken into much consideration.

The language is definitely spreading and expanding beyond the privileged sector of society, but the rate of improvement is slow and it will take many more years before English truly shifts from the language of the elite to the language of the commoners. ANK India and ETASHA Society are just a few of the many NGOs in India who are successfully implementing English language education, specifically for the underprivileged, those in the most need of the language as its value continues to rise. Most often they are ones who have been denied the right to quality education, let alone English language education. Therefore, the call for equal access to first-rate English education is not enough. Problems with the underprivileged learning and being able to use English will not be solved if India’s education system as a whole does not improve.

What is the future value of the English language? If it continues on its current trend, then the language will become even more of a necessity for people all over India. It seems that without English, it is becoming more difficult to “survive” in the global context of society. Relying on NGOs is not enough and though organizations such as ANK India and

¹²⁸ Graddol, David. *English Next India: The Future of English in India*. England: The English Company, 2010. Print. p. 14

ETASHA Society appear to be doing well, others are not as successful. NGOs working in education and with youth can play a major role in filling the gaps in school curriculum and demands, but many exploit their workers and strive for quantity rather than quality work. Therefore, government schools must also change and improve their infrastructures so that students will “not face the problems they are facing right now”¹²⁹. NGOs and the government must “create a chain that helps to pull the students out of that problem of not knowing English”¹³⁰.

English’s market value is rising worldwide, and until it stops providing a competitive advantage to those who use it, its value will persevere. The underprivileged youth have just as much right to learn English and are proving that its current value is providing them with new and better opportunities. With their English skills in tow, they are going back to school, pursuing higher education, gaining good employability opportunities, and increasing their confidence and well-being. The students of ETASHA Society sing motivational songs at the end of every class and one of the songs contains the following verse:

“We shall overcome.

We shall overcome.

We shall overcome some day. Oh! Oh! Oh!

Deep in my heart I do believe,

We shall overcome some day.”¹³¹

English is giving these students the confidence and opportunities that they might have otherwise never had. English is much more than simply a language for communication; it is a tool for mobility. If underprivileged youth can use the language for further personal

¹²⁹ Khan, S., Teacher, ANK India, personal interview, ANK Malviya Nagar Center, 16 Nov 2012.

¹³⁰ Christopher, Facilitator, ETASHA Society, personal interview, ETASHA Society Career Development Centre 2-Tigri, 14 Nov 2012. . .

¹³¹ Personal Observation, Etasha Career Development Center 2. 14-15 Nov 2012

development, then there is hope that India can use English to its advantage, overcome its struggles, and finally achieve its dream of becoming a “developed” power.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study provides a brief overview of the market value of English in India in terms of circumstances in which it is used, why it is used, how underprivileged youth are using English to create better opportunities for themselves, and the educational, economic, and social opportunities associated with English.

But there are further options for expanding on the topic of English and its value and influence in India. This study focuses on the use of English in New Delhi, a Hindi-speaking region, but additional studies could look at other areas of India, specifically South India and other non-Hindi speaking areas where people must grapple with the decisions to learn English in addition to Hindi. One of the main problems with studying the concept of English in India is the lack of measuring English proficiency. Although it is understood that in general, people can understand the language more than read, write, and converse in it, proficiency information might be useful for development and approaches to English language education and to gain a better understanding of the percentage of English speakers in India. A study looking more deeply at the relationship between English and other Indian languages or a comparative study on the extent to which other developing nations, such as China, are using the English language could be conducted as well. While there is some information on the correlation between English and economic and educational opportunities, there appears to be limited research about the social aspects related to the language. Lastly, as mentioned earlier, for a small percentage of the younger Indian generation, English is their native language. An interesting study could arise by looking at this group of people and how the English language is changing the multilingual context of India.

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