

PROSPECT OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA AS CURRICULUM IN NON-NATIVE CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

In the context of India in general, and places where English language functions as a second language in particular, the prevalent idea that our students have to support their language learning capability through the native accent (pronunciation) structures is a myth. The paper takes up the following hypotheses:

1. *Listening to BBC English or Standard English need not be the criteria for good English.*
2. *Speaking and appropriating the native speech is cumbersome, neo-colonial in approach.*

The study takes the objective of developing a learner friendly curriculum that is modeled on the basis of materials from the electronic, and other mass media in non-native contexts. It was proposed that reading all kinds of material instead of the defined, the canonized and formal text books is the pragmatic study in this direction and while writing, the learners could experiment with all kinds of Englishes around without appearing ridiculous.

Keywords: Electronic Media, Advertisement, Formal Classroom Contexts, Non-native Contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching practice and methods vary from one generation to another. The hard objective and purely academic methodology of the past generation has become totally obsolete taken into consideration the modern day use of English in non-native contexts. Both at the school and college level, learners have been widely influenced by various factors happening all around them relating to their exposure to English language. Electronic media is one such very important medium. The extent of influence that the student is exposed to is considered by television and other such media since young learners are easily influenced by them. At the present time, even remote villages have a television set. The village Panchayats are provided with such gadgets, and network through which a very passive and effective learning have been taking place. School and college students happen to constitute the biggest percentage of its viewership. Games, advertisements, cartoon, and entertainment channels appeal to them the most. The commercial advertisements have a great role in shaping the perception of the youngsters in lifestyle, choice, fashion, and use of language. In a fairly commercial and globalised world

order, such an exposure to the new products, the use of a very trendy vocabulary and structures appear to be selling well in the context of English as a second language. Students take the electronic medium as fun and the formal classroom curricula as a burden. So, if they are exposed to various such use of the English language through the electronic media, they may absorb the data as well as its intended purpose easily. This would pave way in entertaining, and educating them by a method that is more pragmatic today. This paper takes into account certain data collected from electronic media in India, and claims to utilize them as model material in curriculum renewal of English.

Enriching the Mass Appeal

In a globalised India, English studies require more careful attention. The drive for regional languages, and a step motherly attitude towards English in recent times has been disheartening and acted in the worst possible extent against socio-economic development. Like many other languages, English also represents a substantial section of our society. It is by making English elitist, cozy, and confined to only a textbook approach that our attitude has been shaped. It needs to be busted, making room for the

popular appeal that goes behind its use. English has consolidated itself as an effective language of our country at all levels. It is a valuable asset left with us to our advantage influencing, and getting influenced by our socio-cultural context. In learning and teaching English in India (2006), Ravi Sheorey says:

'In today's independent India, the continued use of English, and the preference for the democratic form of government have now become part of the national consciousness. In the case of English, developments in science and technology, communications, global trade and more recently, the Internet has only reinforced its importance'.

The type of English used in print and electronic media reflects the influence of Indian culture, and other Indian languages. Thus English in India has deviated from its standard form and has shaped itself in Indian context. A.R. Parhi in *Indian English through Newspapers* (2008) writes:

'In order to make English plain, we have to associate it with the local, regional, national ethos, and tongue, our language, our culture. The content of the newspaper can be an alternative text for the language learners. In other words, the text can be built taking the words, structures that appear in the newspaper as we have seen in our examples. The students can easily take up the nuances governing the new entries and their associated meaning'.

In a multilingual country like India, a single language cannot serve the various commercial, official and socio-cultural purposes. Therefore, English language with an Indian flavor appears suitable in the various communicative/ pedagogical purposes. The language experts are of the view that monolingual solutions are not effective in multilingual and multicultural countries. The process of Indianization of English has been an apt field of study in order to investigate the way in which our multilingual contexts have got reflected in our use of a language that did not originate here. It is the print and electronic media where such English'es flourish.

R.K. Agnihotri and A.L. Khanna in 'Problematizing English in India' (1997) have viewed monolingual idea of language as defective. They have advocated the use of the multilingual context for language use and remark that,

'speech community' is problematic. Their argument has emphasized on the issues of multilingualism and stylistic diversity:

'Issues of multilingualism, dialectal and stylistic diversity, and a shared set of socio-cultural and linguistic norms become central to the task of defining a speech community'.

Apart from functioning as a means of communication, language also plays the role of an identity marker. Agnihotri and Khanna consider the role of language as an identity marker to be more powerful. The English language holds a significant place in the socio-cultural life of India. Indian English has evolved into a distinct variety as a result of researches carried out by linguists over the years. English has gained the status of a powerful language in the length and breadth of India. Rather than following the standard form of its native speakers, we need to mould this language into a respectable mixture form, asserting our power and status in the world. Different linguists are of the view that deviation of a language is more convenient in a multilingual society. To cope with different contexts, hybridization of language would be a better option. Deviated form of a language is no more considered inferior. It rather contributes for the development of the language. As language has been promoted as a commodity, the market is exposed to all types of English'es. The print and electronic media make ample use of this kind of English. As a result of its extensive use, it is gaining popularity and acceptability. This type of English is presented in an appealing way to attract people with commercial intentions as well as linguistic change.

The teaching of literature in English language classrooms today seems to be insufficient in fulfilling the target since the tools, i.e. material on the basis of the parts of speech, literary terms, grammatical devices are filtered for teaching language use in the same class evoking a sense of redundant exercise and stale, spent out skill. Then how would one arouse a curiosity in the learner in both the literary piece and its hidden language practice?. With such motives, the communicative teaching came into effect. This method aimed to enrich the knowledge of a learner about a language through drills of it in specific contexts. In

'Learning and Teaching English in India' (2006), Ravi Sheorey has pointed out some of the defects in Indian language classrooms:

'The typical method of teaching consists of teacher's reading of the text in small portions, explaining its meaning, and the allusions and figures of speech in simplified English and/or the regional language, and an occasional discussion of grammar points, with a question or two thrown in. The teaching is rarely student-centered, and most students have neither the chance, nor the motivation to actively participate. English is as an academic subject and not as a medium or mode of active, constructive communication or intellectualization'.

English Language's outreach to the mass via Ads

The text of Advertisement is a technique manifest in language; that of de-familiarization referred to by Viktor Shklovsky. This Russian formalist critic in his essay, 'Art as Technique' cites instances of literary writing using de-familiarization as a method to sharpen our perception of the everyday, habitual objects. In fact this is not something absolutely new. Wordsworth and Coleridge in their critical essays developed this technique of de-familiarization too by the modifying colors of imagination (Wordsworth, 1800). The use of language in advertisements and promotional campaigns apply the same in order to put the object in its abstract form than as an object in itself. In this context we may cite Shklovsky here:

'After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it. Hence we cannot see anything significant about it. Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways'.

For example, the Slice juice advertisement in its three versions tries to de-familiarize the object, i.e. mango juice and makes an attempt to make us perceive it as a regal, sensuous, and erotic experience. So many factors are involved in such a text which, in order to move us by our instinct, takes a route of infinite discourses that refers to a woman's fantasy of:

- a) Sensuality
- b) Aesthetic appreciation of all such symbols of love

- c) Vision of approximating the historical, royal (queen), and so on.

The paper cites here the innumerable examples with analyses ascertaining the above assertion:

a) While going on a train journey, a common man unaware of the intricacies of the English language often uses it, and gets exposed to it. The vendor shouts 'Time pass', the people around go on gossiping, 'crossing', 'halting', 'A.C. Coach', 'signal', 'RAC', 'waiting list', 'engine failure', and scores of related terms.

b) The advertising world presents a wide range of products through which the mass is exposed to the language used in various ways. Everywhere one finds hoardings, banners, clippings that speak of the trendy world of English'es. Through that, the common men with a little knowledge of the basics of the language learn the stylistics of usage, poetic, and imperative models of the language.

A list of some common ads below would explain the way one could teach language skills as well as the persuasive use of language in English:

- (i) Thums up – Taste the Thunder (alliteration)
- (ii) Eat Cricket, Sleep cricket, Drink Pepsi (metaphor)
- (iii) Raymonds – The complete Man (Idea of personality)
- (iv) Brings home the Leader (Videocon ad, metaphor)
- (v) Neighbor's envy, Owner's Pride (Onida ad, antithesis)
- (vi) Suzuki – The 'No Problem' bike (persuasive, literary language)
- (vii) Matiz car – The big small Car (Oxymoron)
- (viii) Wills – Made for each other (Poetic, Proverbial)
- (ix) Hero Honda – Fill it, shut it, and forget it. (witty and creative use of language)
- (x) Good Day (a Biscuit brand that so unassumingly teaches a greeting)
- (xi) Acquire Josh status, Drive a Ford ikon (code switch and vernacular idea of enthusiasm)

c) The above things, and many such clips are also frequently reaching the mass' eyes through multimedia, print media, and so on. Apart from that, the electronic media through its different programs, acquaint the viewer

of structures that are common like 'good night', 'good day', 'Thank you', 'Pardon me', etc. which give a sense about functional English and English patterns of politeness, address etc.

d) In places where English studies are not discouraged, especially in some of the North Eastern States, the use of English has been an easy going way of life. The common illiterate business man, milk man, barber and laborer may shock us with an apt use of the language pattern who are also well aware of the basic usage of the language in the social functional context.

Approach to Practice English Nationwide

In other words, English studies have been assimilated in the cultural ethos of the place concerned giving it an identity with validity. In order to make English familiar and easy, this approach has to be taken seriously.

a) English in globalised India cannot afford to remain elitist and strictly academic. It is very much an available, familiar medium for us; with all local coinage, new words borrowed from specific cultures and social ceremonies to make it appear user friendly. Even they have a market value like commodities; saleable and catchy for popularity.

b) In ethnically rich societies of India, the varieties of English used in different parts can be seriously thought of rather than imposing a strict British or American stamp over it. A language has to be firmly attached to a culture within which it operates to develop comprehensively, and English can achieve a status of mass friendly language in this respect. The chief reason behind it is the approach towards the language. It is a rich heritage, not alien and foreign. This has to be the motto behind the very effort of English teaching in India.

c) The English that we meet around us, through the advertisements, street banners, and so on have to be a major content of the teaching curriculum. At the primary stage, the basics of a language can be taught. Later on, such words and structures which a person is frequently watching, listening or using need to be the data for analysis. Many such usages like the English poetic usage, rhyme, rhetorical and figurative use, commands, imperative/polite approach, address etc. can very easily be taught to young learners without any rigorous practice of the stereotype

rules of the language. There has been a perceivable benefit towards language study by the rapid growth of information technology. So, in order to make the teaching of a subject communicative, career oriented, effective, a package has to be prepared on all the items of the language teaching apparatus.

Instances of some Advertisements correlating with the present society

The discourse of the ad-world is a reflection of the socio-cultural process. The ad-world has realized the need of the fusion of different regional, and cultural associations to reach the consumers of different fields and areas. So it is trying to produce the films of different products in a more appealing way by blending new colors from different regions and cultures with a coherent story. Such tendency of blending a familiar concept with a foreign language draws more attention. Instead of imposing the burden of learning a foreign language, we should seek ways to native the language by employing different strategies. The English'es in electronic media can be used as a source to implement this process. The text of advertisement is a portrayal of the real world. It is an imitation of the reality in a rhetorical mode. Apart from manipulating the language, the electronic media employs different literary experiments to create a rhetorical force. Generally, these literary practices are not recognized by the viewers as we are confronted with such usages every now and then. The study of such literary practices from different contexts will be fruitful, and innovative in the literature classrooms. Following are a few examples:

1. YepMe store

We get the picture of a girl not trendily dressed, coming to meet her boss. So she doesn't get proper response. In the next moment, she is smartened by the dresses from YepMe store and she captures the attention of the boss. It indirectly shows that the administrator can be moved by the outward appearance. It may convey a wrong meaning as a stereotype that men are influenced by certain traits. Same is true for the other sex also.

2. Tanishq

In this ad, initially we see a bride who is also the mother of a child getting ready for her marriage. Here we find the

instances of the material aspects of life, love, affection where the child is gracefully accepted by the groom as his daughter. The concept of remarriage of a widow or a divorced woman is a taboo in many places of India. This ad defies the idea of stereotypical brides, and promotes the concept of remarriage. It again follows a story telling method. It can be used as study material of certain leading theoretical trends.

3. Cadbury Dairy Milk

This ad narrates a scene of how a boy approaches a girl for a conversation. We see a girl eating chocolate in the bus-stop. The boy suddenly comes and asks for a share of the chocolate. Finally the girl is convinced with the boy's explanation, and gives him a bite. The ad shows a decent way to enter into a conversation. It almost develops the script of a love story.

4. Blenders Pride

In this ad, we see a model with certain suggestive and provocative actions in course of her walk through a city street. She walks in the streets of London, and distributes all her belongings to the passers-by who are mostly from the opposite sex. She appears to be seductive by personifying, and fetishizing the idea that the passers-by are influenced by her and she is a subject of gaze. It can be taken up as material for gender studies.

5. Coca-Cola

A girl missed her bus for college. Suddenly a rickshaw puller (who is also her admirer) offers her lift in a very attractive, and tricky way. The rickshaw puller overtakes the bus, and drops the girl at the college on time. It has maintained a sequential narrative of a love story.

6. Imperial Blue

Here we see a man entering inside the lift without waiting for anyone to get inside it, as he was getting late for his office. But suddenly, he changes his destination as he sees a beautiful lady. The ad gives us a stereotypical idea that men are fascinated by beautiful women, and can behave so.

7. Vodafone

We find the picture of a single woman, desolate, and in a state of shock at first, then growing up into an independent

woman, and finally finding a space through shopping, outing and having fun through the 24x7 network of the cell phone service. It has a clear reference to the idea and prevalence of the independent, assertive single woman concept today with a partial reference to the advertisement of the telephone network.

8. Clinic Plus

In this ad, we see a mother taking the side of her daughter convincing all the family members for her rights equal to her son. It seems to be a plot, narrating a story of a girl who lives in a patriarchal society. It is no less a text for gender studies.

9. Sprite

We get the picture of a student who enters into a competition with his classmates in order to please his music teacher. Finally, he manages to spend time with the teacher even despite his poor performance by impressing her because of the supposed smart behavior ignited by Sprite. It narrates a story in a chronological, and concise form. It can be used as an example of the play of irony in visual text.

Ad Captions as influencing factors for ELT preparation

In the ELT curriculum, a learner can freely collect any number of usages of English he/she finds out around him/her as a part of field study, analyze the data on the respective headings like poetic, metaphoric, ambiguity, spelling variation etc., and utilize according to his/ her convenience. In this, the teacher's role would also be limited and marginal in providing a creative impetus to the young learners. In this paper, a few advertisement captions were taken from newspapers, magazines, T.V. channels etc. to study the influence of print and electronic media in popularizing Indian English, and opening fresh avenues in theory of language learning and material preparation. A few examples and analyses of such data are given below:

1. Find your 'we' time

(Advertisement of 'TVS Wego' on T.V. Channels)

Here 'we' is grammatically incorrect but appealing (A deviant use but catchy in nature).

2. Khushiyaan lutao, crazy kheloa

(Advertisement of 'Coca-Cola' cold drinks on T.V. Channels).

A mixture of Hindi and English. The purpose is to attract the majority who would easily connect to Hindi language.

3. Very very hot. Very very sexy

(Advertisement of 'Set Wet' deodorant on T.V. channels).

It has made the product eye catching.

4. Kiss me. Close your eyes. I can lead your lips on your fingertips and happiness in your eyes.

(Advertisement of 'Cadbury Dairy Milk' chocolate on TV channels).

Two lovers are shown eating chocolates. The chocolate is personified and appears poetic.

5. X-FACTOR. India at its hottest, wettest, windiest, oldest, coldest...

(Cover title of 'The Week', 19 Aug, 2012).

Here 'X' means extreme. It is a form of deviation, but novel in its use.

6. Because noise should be seen. Not heard.

(Advertisement of 'Fenesta Windows' in 'The Week', Nov 25, 2012).

It appears to be the setting of a poem or fictional writing. Generally seeing is not associated with noise. It is used with the purpose of promoting the product by presenting it in a unique manner.

7. Hi, Come to my Home. I am a Red Crab waiting to receive you at Talasari Beach, Odisha, India.

(Advertisement of 'Odisha Tourism' in 'The Week', Nov 18, 2012).

Here a red crab is shown inviting the tourists in an attractive way.

8. Men will be men

(Advertisement of 'Imperial Blue' whisky on T.V. channels).

It is a sexually charged statement trying to sell hard drinks with a macho image.

9. Rivers of sins

(Title of an article in 'The Week', Aug 19, 2012).

It is an ironical statement. Ganga is a sacred river where people take dip with a motto to wash away the sins, and by doing that pollute the same river.

10. Say yes to less.

(Advertisement of 'Panasonic' electronic goods in T.V. channels).

Here 'yes' and 'less' alliterate and the ironical use attracts the learner to the deeper meaning that less refers to less consumption of electricity.

11. Make the world a stylish place

(Advertisement of 'Blenders Pride' whisky on T.V. channels)

It stands for style, gives a new meaning to style. It motivates the learners indirectly.

12. Your perfect match. Your i- Pad, tablet PC and Smart Phone just got Bigger, Better and Smarter.

(Advertisement of 'Seagate' in 'India Today', Dec 26, 2011).

Here phones and PCs are compared to a lover. 'Bigger, better and smarter' makes it trendy.

13. Push karo khush raho

(Advertisement of 'Good Knight' on T.V. channels).

It is an example of code switching.

14. How do I step into my Boss's shoes? Wear socks preferably warm and certainly clean. Do the man thing.

(Advertisement of 'VAT 69' whisky in 'Outlook', Feb 13, 2012)

It gives a masculine effect as if whisky is something macho.

15. Awesome Threesome

(Cover page, 'Outlook', Feb 13, 2012).

It is an example of alliteration.

16. Gaze. Amaze

Discover the ways of the wild this festive season. Your way.

Advertisement of 'Taj Lodge' in 'The Week', Nov 18,

2012)

It gives a rhyme effect.

17. Shake 'em up with scootygirl

(Advertisement of 'Scooty Pep+' on T.V. channels).

Scootygirl is an example of code switching.

The following data collected from an issue of a newspaper affiliate to a highly poetic mode. They are persuasive in nature:

1. Chronicler of love and loss

(Title of an article in 'The Hindu', May 6, 2012).

2. In the wild woods (title of an article in 'The Hindu', May 6, 2012).

3. I guess I was born under a lucky star

(Title of an article in 'The Hindu', May 6, 2012).

4. In the line of faith

(Title of an article in 'The Hindu', May 6, 2012).

Conclusion

Our brief analysis and data above is a pointer towards curricular innovation and experimentation. We propose and argue for emphasis on authentic texts as well as press for policy decisions against a tabooed and museumised concept of 'Standard English'. There is a move in such material which paves way for developing a mass theory in language learning. It could help the students meet their

functional needs in multiple contexts simultaneously learning the tricks of persuasive use of language in literature. Through this kind of English, the print and electronic media contribute immensely for making Indian English gain a status of its own. More and more such data may be incorporated in formal classroom contexts for our benefit.

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Magazines/Newspapers/TV

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Cable TV operated ad- films

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