

Contribution to the Society

English though a foreign language, has always occupied a unique position in the educational system in India. Despite the fact that it received a great setback after Independence, it continues to be a major language having a prestigious position in our society.

After independence, it received a hostile treatment not only at the hands of our political leaders but also some eminent scholars. But a fear was voiced at that time “English acted as the major window for the Indians to the outside world, its closure would spell peril for our future”. And the same situation continues even today. In the vogue of Globalization, world has become a global village. English has been accepted all over the world as *lingua franca*.

The responses of the teachers’ are emphasize that English is the language of opportunity; it is a gateway to bright future. So they praise the Maharashtra government’s step to introduce English in all the non-English medium primary schools in Maharashtra. They add that no one else is better acquainted with the earlier students’ problems regarding English than them. They are hopeful that this early introduction will prove a boon for rural students who earlier lagged behind in the competition. Earlier introduction means students’ age is less so obviously their grasping power is high; they are learning English along with their mother tongue without any confusion, under stress free environment which ultimately results in a learner having better competency in English as compared to the students who were introduced to English in 5th std. According to these teachers responses there is notable improvements in the vocabulary of these early learners, their reading skill is improved but to a limited extent, what is most important is the fear of communicating in English is totally absent, there is no remarkable development in writing skill and grammar.

The responses of the parents make it clear the kind of support, both academic and financial, the students get at home. Also the parents’ awareness about the present day need of English, English for computer literacy, English for progress etc.

The parents interviewed are aware of the Maharashtra government’s policy to introduce English from 1st std. in all the non-English medium schools in Maharashtra, they are in favor of this

decision. They are rather proud that their wards are learning English and sure that it will lead them towards the path of progress. All the parents interviewed said that they consult the teachers about their children's progress. But the teachers complained that most of the parents are illiterate and never consult the teachers, do not attend parents meetings. There is discrepancy between the parents and teachers responses.

The classroom is the only place where most students have an exposure to the language. All parents want their children to have some knowledge of English. Parents are happy that their children are learning English with confidence which was lacking in earlier children who learnt English from fifth standard. They asserted that their wards murmur the poems at home also. They are very inquisitive; always ask for English words for different objects. Literate parents solve their queries themselves or by asking some other person. Only 13% of the parents interviewed purchased new books for them. 11% of the parents interviewed send their children to private tuition classes. Instead of all the above responses, 32% parents are not yet sure that their ward will stand or can face the competition in the outside world.

The present study will help the researchers and teachers of English to formulate new methodology to teach English language in the primary school classes. It will also enable the teachers to make a policy regarding the process of teaching, learning and evaluation with reference to primary school.

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