

Role of English Language under British Colonial and Imperial System in India

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Abstract: *This paper unwinds the ascendancy of English language in India which was under the direct impact of British Empire. Since time immemorial India has been one of the most promising countries in the world but unfortunately it was colonized by and large by the British Empire. Its marks can be seen so far, specifically of the language imperialism. English was promoted for the purpose of trade and business earlier, then it turned out to be the superior language of India. In due course of time it became the way to break free from social class system and was mostly learnt by the aristocrats. This paper justifies the questions: Should English language be admired or deplored? How Indian people had responded to English language? What endeavours were made by British Missionaries to include English language in Indian schools, colleges and universities? In order to come across the extensive effects of English during colonialism and imperialism a differentiation needs to be made between the direct and indirect influences and implementation of English language. The study also presents the attributes of language imperialism following the same paradigm as industrialist economic dominion.*

Keywords: British, British India, Imperialism, Colonialism, English language

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades it was thought that Britishers had upper hand in industry. This startling conviction allowed this island nation (Indian) to have an inequitable amount of strength at their power. Initially Britain did not practise its dominance to subjugate the world but it exercised its economic and political power in the whole world. Encouraging capitalism, introducing finely fitted out institutions, making the rule of law mandatory, and ploughing in the spheres of communication. Britain worked on many colonies and made them sophisticated according to the way the world was advancing. The augmentation of British Empire at the culmination of 15th century had been an exceptional record in history.

In the beginning of the 20th century, several territories of Asia and Africa were colonies of British Empire. The involvement of the British on the Indian subcontinent began in the early 17th century through the productive business and trade of the East India Company. The British Empire is supposed to have lasted in Indian subcontinent almost 200 years.

While ruling India, the Britishers planned to westernize India entirely through trade and industry and administrative restructuring. The British people wished to ameliorate the poor conditions of Indians and they took it as a liability to reform them. English people introduced projects to improve India in the fields of economy and communication. The British governance also tried to improve the moral conditions by way of providing education to them in the well-developed institutions. It was generally highlighted that the Britishers want "Indian in blood and colour but English in taste and opinion."

It cannot be denied that British people committed atrocities on Indians but on the other hand they revolutionized the lives of Indian people. Nobody can refute the facts of Indians' advancement in the fields of politics and economy.

Some of the interests of British people for which they came to India need to be emphasized and how later on they changed into linguistic hegemony or language imperialism:

Advent of the East India Company:

The main purpose of the Britishers for which they came to India, was to do trade. They were not supposed to invade and rule India. Initially they were looking for precious spices from East India. Two stages can be taken into consideration of Britain's involvement in India, firstly they were doing trade in the half of the nation and secondly they were invading the rich parts of India. They exercised political power on them. By the time British people ruled over each and every part of India and proved their supremacy over them by exercising military power. India became the centre point for the trading. The Britishers had acquired much from East India Company; about 22 to 31 ships were sent annually and were worth up to £2 million. The company was growing rapidly. There were demands of the cotton cloths in great quantities at a global stage.

Nation's Political affairs:

The East India Company's business was built on Indian economy and resources. Raw materials like sugar, the indigo dye, opium and many other were produced and offered for export by Indian people. Indian business got recognition on a continuous and profitable parameter in the half of the century. Due to the growth of the company several conflicts took place in the states. French and Britain become arch enemies and competitors by the 1740s.

Country and its new Domain:

The conflicts which arose between the British and the French subsided with the domination of the British in 1763 in the most considerable areas of India. It was Robert Clive who led the British missionaries. The East India Company's governor was soon made the governor of the province. Then the British Empire ruled India. Armies were trained and prepared to safeguard the company's interests and to counter internal forces and rebellions which were imposing

threats on British Empire. The company's workforce were made essential part of the administration of the new British regimes.

Structuring of the Company:

In the beginning much of the administrative work was done by Indian people. Government was in the habit of announcing and imposing the taxes. Cultivators acting as mediators were supposed to give one third of the production of land to the state. British judges were manipulating all the affairs of the courts which were based on Hindu and Muslim laws. They were not exercising their laws on Indians. By the time the opinions were changing and India was facing deep rooted sufferings, miseries and progress stagnation. That progress stagnation could be improved and enhanced by the foreign policies. A number of suggestions were made for the betterment and progression of Indian states. The lack of knowledge, superstitions and fallacies prevalent at that time were considered to be removed and the responsibility was given to the missionaries to do their best in that direction. Both the national government and the directors of the company managed that any further territorial spreading must be restrained. With the culmination of the century a sequence of irregular wars started which took English authority over the next fifty years. Persian language also had its place in the Indian government and education system. Persian language played the role of one of the Lingua Franca of Indian state. Lingua franca was one of the significant tools for "Anglicizing the country". India's education system was restructured by implementing the British rules and methods of teaching were also modified. The English subject was incorporated to the Indian higher secondary schools, colleges and universities.

One of the purposes of implementing English in the Indian education system was to provide better education to the aristocratic class. The explicit motive of this system was to help British people in trade and business. The Roman Domain subsided with the immense exercise through out Europe. Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English had abiding dominance on other lands and some of the dialects of other invading nations perished because they could not survive before the British power.

Language played a very vital role in every state because it is the only source of communication among people. English played a great role in the fields of education and business because of the English colonies in many states. The English had colonized many countries during that time. India was one of them and it had included English in its education systems. Now English is treated as a second language in India. The main impact of English is because of its position of being a global language. In Indian states, English language is learned because of its international importance and because of a way to escape from social class system. Another point may be that English is considered as a high - status language, whosoever speaks English language is considered as a well educated person compared to those who don't have the understanding of English. Those who had the knowledge of English language, were given good jobs with sumptuous salaries. This was also a reason for learning English language in India. English was also considered as the 'language of upper class.' The one significant aspect

which hails English as the most dominant language is because of the rule of British Empire in past decades and at present it's America which has been playing its role since late 19th century. The English language was imposed on the Indian provinces only for getting help from Indians in commerce and trade. British rulers decided to incorporate English as one of the important languages to the Indian education system, administration and policies. India's other major languages were totally put aside. Initially, English language was one of the imposed languages on colonies by the Britishers but in due course of time, it became the need of the people. Such type of practices were made in order to acculturate Indian people and to bring improvements in the state. The main purpose was to make Indian people improved and civilized as the English people were. They wanted Indians to be like British people in terms of taste and opinion. To serve this purpose English language was a great tool. The British desired to make Indians compliant slaves of their English masters. The English people made two types of rules, for two types of class systems, one for educated aristocratic class and other rule for illiterate commoners. The British missionaries were assigned to teach Indian people in every possible and best way. The colonized territories of British Empire were overseen by the missionaries in terms of education. The World Bank also played a great role and as the foremost source of funding to get higher studies. It was also funding the states which had become free from colonial system.

English: its imperialistic approaches and attitudes:

The British adopted two kinds of approaches in making English as a powerful language in India. First, everyone was made obliged to learn English language because it was one of the official languages of Indian state. Second it was made their own choice of learning English, as it was believed that learning English language could escape Indians from class systems. It was only English language which was given more importance in institutions and offices. The colonizers immensely tried to impose non native language on the colonies, so it could be one of the reasons for the supremacy of English. Indian languages and dialects were put on the peripheries. People were eager to learn English because they desired to be like elite groups. Other reason might be that people were learning English to avail better jobs and better chances for higher studies. That time, people who had better knowledge and understanding of English were considered as sophisticated.

In the ultra modern world of technology English has got recognition as one of the international languages. English language has produced so much literature and works of ancient Greeks and other languages have been translated in English language. Internationally English is regarded as one of the powerful languages of education, trade and commerce. The global trade marketeers, suppliers, dealers and businessmen are dealing in this language, because of its status and use as a Lingua Franca. America's role and impact cannot be refuted in the globalization of English language.

When Britain was powerful it greatly impacted the world with its politics, economy and language. The present status of America in the world in terms of power, politics and

economy cannot be denied. America is also using English language as a powerful tool to connect and do trade with the rest of the nations. We can see the presence of English all over the world, from commerce and business to social media platforms from internet to e - mailing and many more. It places English language as the language of all. It has occupied the place as the second language in many countries.

2. Conclusion

The world is accepting the English language as one of the lingua franca around the globe. It has become a vital channel for communication among different countries. The impacts of English language can be seen in India even today. Britishers came to India hoping to do trade and business. Initially they did not see India as a place to settle down. After seeing the considerable possibilities of trade and commerce, they decided to settle down in India. Then they ruled India for a very long time, nearly 200 years. So their political and lingual imprints can be found in India even today. Linguistic hegemony or language imperialism soon started influencing India and Indian people after East India Company came into existence. In the beginning English language was taught by British missionaries to Indians for the purpose of trade and business. It can be understood as "language imperialism". English was incorporated to Indian colleges and universities. It was learned by Indians as a way to get out of class system. People wanted to learn English to get better jobs and better opportunities to study abroad. Whether it was an imposition or a free choice, the remarkable footprints of English can be perceived in India even today. English was supposed to be the language of the nobility so everyone wanted to be addressed as a noble person. The English considered themselves to be very enlightened, intelligent and generous to civilize, improve and reform Indians. During the reign of Great Britain, India went through drastic developments such as construction of roads, buildings, colleges, universities, railways, ports and others. The British made positive impacts on India; its trade, commerce and education developed globally. Now India also has professionals who teach English at schools, colleges and universities. Indian foreign ministers and diplomats use English as a means of communication to deal with international matters. The English developed good sense of economy, politics, modern technologies, education and transportation in the world. They looted India immensely at the same time they developed India in every sphere. It cannot be refuted that India suffered a lot during British rule. The Britishers tried to destroy previous Indian industries, heritage, culture and they looted precious things from India. The Britishers are no more ruling India. India is free now and putting itself as one of the most competing and powerful countries in the world. India is using English language as a powerful weapon to its fullest in the field of rapid progression. The atrocities which Britain inflicted on the world cannot be forgotten but at the same time the relevancy of their language in the technologically advanced world too cannot be neglected.

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