

Role of Motivation in the Learning of English Among the Kashmiri Populace

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ABSTRACT

English language has achieved the status of being the world's lingua franca beyond any doubt; along with this status, it has become one of the symbols of our time, together with globalization, networking, economic interaction and the internet. English has become an international phenomenon. Therefore, the attraction to learn English has become irresistible. Most people feel that acquiring English is no longer a 'choice' but a necessity they cannot live without, Kashmiris being no exception. Acquiring English in the post globalised times has become far more imperative than ever and Kashmiris are taking on the challenge head-on. This paper makes an in depth analysis as to the role motivation plays in acquiring English in the Kashmiri setting.

Keywords: *Motivation, Globalisation, Second Language Acquisition*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. English in India post Globalisation

English has evolved as a global language and has achieved a position which is unparalleled. (i.e.,[1]) point that all developments in favour of English have taken place after the World Wars in a very short span of time, "it is almost as if God said, "Let there be language", and there was English."(pp5). Being the language of the coloniser, English started its life in India as not just a foreign language but as a much hated language. However, today the attitude of Indians towards the English language appears to have been shaped by the reality prevailing in the post-colonial setting. The colonial jargon of 'authority', 'self' or the 'other' has now been replaced by a different glossary in tune with English as a universally accepted global lingua franca. Earlier claim on the ownership of the English language has been revived with the emergence of many varieties of English. According to Crystal, "English is now so widely established that it can no longer be thought of as 'owned' by any single nation" (i.e.,[2])

The success story of India in this age of globalization is attributable to the mushroom growth of BPOs, tourism industry, liberalization of the Indian economy and above all to the sheer number of the youth population. Nonetheless, the growth and development index benefits only those whose communicative skills are in accordance with the requirement of the global commercial trends. According to Gradol, (i.e.,[3]) "one of the most notable features of globalisation has been the outsourcing of services to countries with cheap labour costs. Global English has helped to accelerate this phenomenon and give India a competitive edge."

According to Agnihotri and Khana, (i.e.,[4]). "It is also seen as a means for enhancing social mobility and individual personality"

With 626 districts (<http://india.gov.in/knowindia/districts.php>) India presents a kaleidoscope linguistic variety. Three centuries of British rule have left English very much with us and there is nothing unnatural in cashing on this natural accident of history. English provides an All India Link. Kachru justifies the popularity of English in multi-lingual and multi-ethnic India in the words, “....it has acquired neutrality in a linguistic context... whereas native codes are functionally marked in terms of caste, religion, region and so forth, English has no such ‘markers’ at least in the non-native context.” (i.e.,[5]) . This is a major reason for the popularity of English in India.

1.2. English in Kashmir Post Globalisation

In the last two decades like elsewhere, Kashmir too has been impacted by the forces of globalization, causing tremendous changes to take place. In Kashmir globalization is seen to be synonymous with English and the knowledge of the language is believed to be the key to success and a necessity if one has to partake the goodies of modern day technology. The global utility of English is alluring to Kashmiris they feel naturally drawn towards a language with such a high level of communicative potential. Till recently the utility of Kashmiri, though at a lower pedestal in the language hierarchy, has always survived despite the lack of royal/official patronage (i.e.,[6]) however, with the advent of globalization Kashmiri seems to be losing its domains, yielding them without protest to English, quite in consonance with what Van. D (i.e.,[7]) expressed in an editorial entitled ‘The imperialism of English’, which he wrote for the journal ‘Discourse and English’. He notes that English increasingly intrudes on territory occupied earlier by other languages.

The last two decades have seen a meteoric rise in the prestige of English in Kashmir and it has emerged as a strong competitor for not only the mother tongue but for the second language-Urdu as well. Though Urdu still continues to be the most commonly used language after Kashmiri in the verbal repertoire of an educated Kashmiri, it has lost much of its lustre as English is fast replacing it as a link language. Till recently Urdu was used by Kashmiri’s as a link language to communicate with the people of the country, specifically , in North India, but things are fast changing with the Kashmiri youth switching over to English for purposes of interaction with their fellow countrymen.

II.ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN THE KASHMIRI CONTEXT

SLA (second language acquisition) “refers both to the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children, and to the process of learning that language” (i.e.,[8]). Some of this knowledge comes from belonging and growing up in a family or a society which is bilingual. In an increasingly interdependent world bilingualism instead of monolingualism is the norm. SLA research has gained more importance in this mutually dependent world. Although the presence of bilingualism in Kashmir has been traced to as early as the ninth century A.D. and the presence of a dominant language in contact with Kashmiri has been a rule rather than exception yet never has a foreign language affected the fate of Kashmiri to an extent where ‘not knowing Kashmiri may be considered fashionable but knowing English... a sign of being backward (i.e.,[6]).

SLA is an increasingly interdisciplinary field. The last decades have seen increasing importance being placed on research in second language and learning. This is hardly surprising considering that more than half of the world's population knows more than one language (i.e.,[9]). "Any experience that touches so many people is worthy of serious study, especially when success or failure can so fundamentally affect life chances" (i.e.,[10]). For the first time in 1950s, when scientific research was conducted into the role of learner factors in L2 (second language) learning it became evident that a host of learner characteristics play an important role in language acquisition. As per Cohen and Dörnyei: When students embark on the study of an L2, they are not merely 'empty vessels' that will need to be filled by the wise words of the teacher; instead they carry a considerable 'personal baggage' to the language course that will have a significant bearing on how learning proceeds (i.e.,[11]). Research has to a large extent identified the vital components of this baggage that learners carry. Chief among them are: age and gender, personality, self-esteem, inhibition and risk taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion/introversion, attitudes and motivation

III.MOTIVATION

Recognition of motivation as the key learner variable in SLA inspired the initiation of L2 motivation research at the end of the 1950s in Canada by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert. Till date it is one of the best known studies of motivation. "Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action" (i.e.,[12]).

The influential 'theory of attitudes and motivation' posited by Gardner and Lambert, (i.e.,[13]) proved instrumental in formulating such a theory of attitudes and motivation which was to have deep repercussions on future research in SLA. The famous distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation put forth by Gardner and Lambert became a matter which was much debated in the linguistic circles. Instrumental motivation refers to reasons for learning an L2 that "reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement" (i.e.,[14]). Integrative motivation refers to reasons for L2 learning that emphasize identification with an L2 community. Gardner and Lambert conducted a series of studies in different social, cultural and geographical settings and contexts and stated that integrative motivation seemed to be superior to instrumental motivation in SLA. Later research (Clement, (i.e.,[15]) refuted the basic hypothesis and ascribed a powerful function to instrumental motivation. In research conducted by Lukmani, (i.e.,[16]) in India and by Feenstra and Santos (i.e.,[17]) in the Philippines, instrumental motivation emerged as the best indicator for proficiency in English. This led Gardner and Lambert (i.e.,[18]) to modify their early claim, 'It seems that in settings where there is urgency about mastering a second language as in the Philippines and in North America for members of linguistic minority groups- the instrumental approach to language study is extremely effective.'

1.3. Motivational Orientation among Kashmiris Learning English

English in Kashmir is adulated for it is seen as a tool of empowerment. Everybody has a reason or is finding a reason to learn it; the scene in the rest of the country, being no different, only serves to strengthen the belief of an average Kashmiri that the first requirement in the job market is fluency in English and any weakness in this area proves to be a grave handicap.

With the advent of the internet and the associated store house of knowledge that lies within reach, the use of computers has become imperative. Access to the internet is possible through computers, which can be operated only if one possesses at least a working knowledge of English. Kak (i.e.,[6]) rightly observes that “...no Kashmiri speaker has any delusions that an operating system, will be made in Kashmiri” he further adds that “...even if it is done, the average native speaker, with an utter lack of Kashmiri reading and writing ability...will find it to be of little use”.

It is estimated that around eighty percent of the electronically stored information is in English and of the estimated 2.1 billion people who use the net, twenty seven percent 25 Dec.2011 (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/internet) communicate in English. This has provided Kashmiri's all the more reason to learn the language in which technological advancements of the twenty first century lie embedded. Though times are changing and other languages are making their presence felt on the World Wide Web, yet the fact remains that English still plays a dominant role in the field of information technology. Equally true is, that the other dominant languages of the internet like Chinese and Spanish are unintelligible to Kashmiris and far less accessible in comparison to English.

Since the end of World War II there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of scientific papers written in English, paralleled by a decrease in the use of other languages. The hegemony of English in the scientific world is an undisputable fact. Kashmiri's have witnessed two decades of turmoil and unrest. Kashmiri doctors' have been kept busy all along attending to trauma. There has been consequently a tremendous increase in the demand for scientific literature on trauma cases which is available only in English. Bedard, Grief and Buckley (i.e.,[19]) analysed 13,865 journal articles on trauma published between 1987 and 2001 and indexed in the database of PILOTS (An electronic index to the Traumatic Stress Literature). Their study revealed that 94 percent of trauma literature was published in English. This corroborates the fact that an average Kashmiri has to know English in order to have access to any source of knowledge. It builds a mindset where people who have aspirations have no other option but to use this language, this realization appears to have influenced the socio-psychological attitudes of Kashmiri's. Kak analyses the phenomenon thus:

This is because of the realization among all generations that learning English is a prerequisite to ‘the good things in life’, and English fluency provides the children prestige within and outside their peer group. Duration of use of English has also been observed to be gradually increasing, not only in the formal contexts but in the informal contexts as well...Attitudes and views of Kashmiri's have also been observed to show a change...with English speakers being stereotyped highest especially in the attributes ‘Intelligent, Ambitious, Practical and Modern’...indicating what English and its speakers symbolize for the Kashmiri native speaker (i.e.,[6])

Kak makes a very pertinent observation that a very important attitude of Kashmiri native speakers comes to the fore when they express their views regarding their preference in relation to the medium of instruction. He finds that although English is a unanimous choice among the youth, it is not much different in the older age group where more than 60 percent indicate a preference for English. This is a clear reflection of the high prestige which Kashmiri's accord to the English language.

People related to the tourist industry have all through felt the need to communicate in English and there have always been tourist guides, houseboat owners, *ponywalla's* and *shikarawala's* who could manage a fair smattering of English even though they had never attended school. Much has changed since then and Kashmiris

today want to learn English in formal settings so that they are well equipped to explore all opportunities that have been thrown open to them with the advent of globalization.

Since English is the medium of higher education in Kashmir, proficiency in it is a pre-requisite before the passport to prestigious institutions can be stamped with the desired Visa. Students are thus always on the lookout for improving their English and easily fall prey to the lure of numerous 'language' institutes which claim to improve English speaking skills in a fixed period of time. English is seen to be directly related to the job market in Kashmir, especially when government jobs are become scarce and private sector is employing only those who are, not only academically sound but are, proficient in the use of English.

Kak and Ara point out to this pertinent emerging trend which acts as a strong motivation. According to Cook (i.e.,[20]), "Both integrative and instrumental motivations lead to success, but lack of either causes problems." In a study taken up by Kak and Ara (i.e.,[21]), informants from Kashmir were observed to be both integratively and instrumentally motivated towards learning English. However, they found that instrumental motivation was rated higher as it helped Kashmiris to converse with a wider range of people and help them in accomplishing their studies etc. Kak and Ara put it down to the fact that the participants were "future oriented and always ready to accept challenges". Ara (i.e.,[22]), during her research on motivation among Kashmiris learning English, found a strong instrumental desire among the participants to learn it "for attaining instrumental goals like furthering a career, reading technical material, translation and so forth (172). For Ara, in Kashmir the two motivations seem to co-exist. Ara's study, reveals that positive motivation leads to higher proficiency levels, and where there is a vital need to master a second language instrumental motivation proves to be more effective.

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