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PREVIEW

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**Evolution and decline of the use of English in Indian higher
education**

Gupta, Prem Vati, Ph.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1987

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PREVIEW

EVOLUTION AND DECLINE OF THE USE OF ENGLISH
IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

by
Prem Vati Gupta

A DISSERTATION
Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Psychological
and Cultural Studies in Education

Under the Supervision of Professor Erwin H. Goldenstein

Lincoln, Nebraska
August, 1987

TITLE

Evolution and Decline of the Use of English in Indian Higher

Education

BY

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EVOLUTION AND DECLINE OF THE USE OF ENGLISH IN
INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Prem Vati Gupta, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1987

Adviser: Erwin H. Goldenstein

The purpose of this study was to analyze the introduction of English as the medium of instruction and its subsequent change to a position of an important secondary language after the achievement of Indian independence.

The study was conducted by examining historical sources dealing with the use of language changes after 1947, analyzing syllabi for General English and English Literature course in Savitri College after 1947, and soliciting from Indian scholars their perceptions of recent changes in language policies and procedures. The use of Savitri College as a case study for the post-independence period seems warranted as it is affiliated with the University of Rajasthan and thus provides a basis for generalization to higher education in that State. Because of variations among states no claim is made for generalizing recent changes to all of Indian higher education.

The study demonstrates the importance of language, grammar and literature, from ancient times to the present. Sanskrit was the usual medium of instruction in Indian higher education until approximately 1000 A.D. when, under Muslim rule, it was superseded by Arabic and Persian. Whatever the classical medium of instruction, however, there was a neglect of vernacular languages

that produced a cultural and linguistic chasm between scholars and the mass of Indian people. When the British imposed a new system of education in India after 1835, their aim was to produce a cadre of civil servants who would be Indian by birth but British by training. English then replaced the earlier classical languages, but the gap between scholars and the masses continued.

This was the situation inherited by an independent Indian government in 1947. The new Constitution required the use of Hindi as the national language but recognized other language claims as well. A three language formula was instituted to require instruction in Hindi, English, and a regional vernacular. This brought about changes in the General English course which is now required for only one year in the baccalaureate program and which used a structural approach that appeared to diminish the importance of grammar and translation until 1971 when it gave way to a functional approach based on the study of language through literature. The optional English Literature course meanwhile has experienced only minor changes, and English continues to be used as the medium of instruction for many courses in science and professional studies.

Respectfully dedicated

to the memory of:

Muktha Bhatji

1925-1981

and to the memory of

my parents:

Ramswarup Goel

1888-1976

and

C. Devi

1891-1936

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A dissertation, although it features the name of one person, is accomplished through the energy, encouragement, and insight of many people.

Completion of this study would not have been possible without the assistance of my adviser, Dr. Erwin H. Goldenstein. The many hours we spent in discussion and consultation have made a tremendous impact on this study, as well as on my approach to research in general.

The help of members of my doctoral supervisory committee has been invaluable. I am especially indebted to Professors Wesley C. Meierhenry and Willis D. Moreland for their careful reading of the manuscript in rough form and for their many valuable suggestions. I am also very grateful to Professors Sing-nan Fen and Edward J. Nemeth for their help and encouragement.

I acknowledge with gratitude the help of Mrs. Sudha Srivastava, principal of Savitri College; and friends Dr. Deepa Martins, Mr. Om Prakash Sharma, Mr. Chandra Sen Rathore and other Indian colleagues who graciously provided information essential to the completion of this study.

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P.V.G

PREVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

This study proposed the analyze the introduction of the English language as the medium of instruction in Indian higher education and its subsequent change to a position of an important secondary language after the achievement of Indian independence in 1947. The study will propose the thesis that English followed the pattern of the classical languages that preceded it in serving the upper strata of Indian society and inhibiting the education of and communication with lower strata until the recent achievement of Indian independence. Further, it will suggest that since that time the Government of India has striven to design an approach to teaching languages, including English, that will serve the nation as a whole and address the needs of all strata of society. In achieving the purpose for which the study was designed, it seemed appropriate to examine the character of higher education in India in ancient and medieval times with special reference to language study as a part of that education. This was deemed necessary to better understand the use of English after its introduction in the early nineteenth century. The use of the English language as a medium of instruction in college and university was more intensely studied for the period from about 1835 until 1947. General scholarship, but essentially secondary sources, provided the background needed to examine the place of language study in higher education, both prior to and after the Anglicization of that education after the early nineteenth century. Savitri College of

Ajmer in the State of Rajasthan served as a case study for a close analysis of the place of English in higher education after 1947.

The subject under study is complex due to a number of factors. India has on a number of occasions been the victim of foreign conquests. These conquests have had a strong impact on language and customs. Further, India is a very large country, and during much of its history transportation and communication from one part of the country to another was very difficult due to both the country's geography and an absence of modern technology until the current century. Consequently, invasions and geographic isolation helped produce a nation that today has about 180 languages, including 16 major ones and approximately 800 dialects. The existence of a caste system throughout much of its history has also tended to complicate the study and to render impossible easy generalizations about the use of language.

The study, however, will argue that some common patterns of language employment may be detected from ancient times to the present and that these patterns take the form of a classical language used by scholars and privileged classes in Indian society but denied to the masses. The consequence of such denial was that education was limited to the privileged classes since only they had access to the medium of instruction used in the higher forms of education. In developing this case, it is unfortunate that the writer had little or no access to primary documents except for the later chapters of the study. For the earlier chapters it was

necessary to depend almost exclusively on historical and educational literature available in this country. Ample use was made of interlibrary loan services, and occasionally the writer was able to secure some scholarly works from Indian sources. For the later chapters, however, syllabi and correspondence secured especially from colleagues from Savitri College were much more readily available. As a faculty member in the department of English for approximately 30 years herself, the writer has substantial first-hand knowledge of the use of English in higher education in India since 1947. She did, however, verify her own recollections and impressions by means of a short questionnaire sent to 16 faculty colleagues, administrators, and government officials. Almost without exception, the questionnaire returns and syllabi supported the writer's analyses.

Sources helpful to the writer in analyzing the development of higher education in ancient and medieval India included such standard works as Altekar's Education in Ancient India (1957), Basham's The Wonder that Was India (1967), Chandras' Four Thousand Years of Indian Education (1977), Dongerkery's University Education in India (1967), Mookerji's Ancient Indian Education (1969), and Pannikar's A Survey of Indian History (1963). Most helpful in providing analyses of British influence in India were Azariah's Lord Bentinck and Indian Education (1978), David's Cultural History of India (1973), Edwards' British History of India (1967), Gokhle's Bharatversha (1982), Hartog's Some Aspects

of Indian Education (1939), Keay's Indian Education in Ancient India and Later Times (1918), Kulkarni's British Dominion in India and After (1964), Lethbridge's Higher Education in India (1882), Mayhew's The Education of India (1928), Moore's Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy (1966), O'Malley's Modern India and the West (1941), Paranjpe's Source Book of Modern Indian Education (1938), Ray's Education in Medieval India (1984), Thomas' The History and Prospects of British Education in India (1891), and Washaw and Bremwill's India Emerges (1976). Many works proved helpful in providing information and analysis of the language issue as it has related to higher education in India. Among these work's should be listed Baldevraj's National Communication and Language Policy in India (1969), Basu's Essays in the History of Indian Education (1983), Crane's Language and Society in Modern India (1969), Gautam's Crisis in the Temples of Learning (1972), James' Education and Statesmanship in India (1917), Kriplani's History of Modern Indian Literatures (1968), Nurullah and Naik's A History of Education in India (1951), and Sadiq's A History of Urdu Literature (1984). Other books that dealt authoritatively with language and education in India included Chatterjie's English Education in India (1976); Desai's Future of the English Language Problem (1968); Dakin, Tiffin, and Widdowson's Language in Education (1968); Gokak's English in India; Gopal's Linguistic Affairs of India; and Wadia's The Future of English in India. Two publications of the University Grants Committee, Medium of

Instruction (1961) and Report of the English Review Committee (1965) also proved very helpful to the writer's study.

An explanation is in order to defend the use of Savitri College as a case study for the purpose of analyzing the changes in English in higher education since 1947. Reference has already been made to the writer's experience in the English department of that college for approximately 30 years. More importantly, however, it should be noted that there is a high degree of standardization among Indian colleges and universities. Within a given Indian state this standardization is even more marked. The University of Rajasthan is known as a teaching and affiliating university. This type of university may provide instruction through the services of its own faculty or through constituent colleges recognized by the university. Savitri college is affiliated to the University of Rajasthan and therefore falls under its jurisdiction. For practical purposes this means that programs of higher education are in most respects determined by the affiliating university. Colleges affiliated with the University of Rajasthan must abide by conditions laid down by the University in such matters as finance, staffing, equipment, libraries, laboratories, programs, buildings, and hostels. In addition, Boards of Studies prepare courses of study, recommend textbooks, and suggest persons to serve as examiners in the various disciplines taught by the University and its affiliating colleges. Further, since college and university students are

required to pass external examinations, the curriculum from college to college must be virtually identical within a discipline of students from all colleges are to have equal opportunity to pass the examinations. For these reasons, Savitri College can serve as a legitimate case study for higher education in Rajasthan. The writer, however, is cautious not to claim too broad a generalization to other Indian states.

Data regarding Savitri College were secured through correspondence between the writer and her colleagues at the College. Through the good offices of her colleagues she was supplied with syllabi for different periods following the achievement of Indian independence. This permitted analyses of shifts that took place in the use of English in the College between 1947 and 1985. Copies of historical documents relating to the observance of anniversaries, dedications, and similar occasions were also sent to the writer. Finally, the writer received ten questionnaire responses from academicians and administrators regarding their impressions about the change in the use of English in colleges and universities after 1947.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are supplied for terms that occur frequently in this study but that have a particular meaning in the context of higher education in India.

- Centre:** Federal government of the Union of India with its seat in the capital at New Delhi.
- Europeans:** The official term used in India to refer to all "white" people, regardless of their country of origin.
- English Education:** Formal and informal education provided through the medium of the English language in India.
- Macaulay's Minute:** The position paper presented by Thomas Babington Macauley to the British Government and the British East India Company in 1835 to make the English language the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education in India.
- Madrasa:** A religious college dedicated to the teaching of Islamic studies.
- Medium of Instruction:** The language used to provide instruction in the curricula of schools and colleges.
- Mother Tongue:** One's native language of language acquired naturally in infancy and childhood.
- Regional Language:** Language of the people of a particular region of India, for example, Marathi of Maharashtra, Western India.

Sanskrit: An ancient Indian language regarded as the classical language of India and the sacred language of Hinduism.

Union: A term used to refer to the Union government of India, synonymous with central government or federal government of India.

Urdu: A language that has elements of the Hindi, Persian, and Arabic languages, uses the Arabic alphabet, and is spoken in northern India.

Vedas: Ancient Hindu scriptures that form the basis of Brahmanism.

Vernaculars: Languages peculiar to or native to particularly regions of India; synonymous with regional languages.

Organization of the Study

The study has been organized as follows. Chapter I provides a brief historical background of the origin of higher education in India and its subsequent development into the eighteenth century. Chapter II discusses the impact of British domination of the country from the eighteenth century to the time of independence in 1947. Chapter III analyzes the British system of higher education as it existed from 1835 to 1947. Chapter IV treats the constitutional directives and official language policies that came

into existence after India achieved its independence from the British. It also describes the organization and administration of Indian universities and outlines changes in the medium of instruction during this period. Chapter V is devoted to the specific analysis of the General English course in Indian colleges and universities. It treats the change in this course from a required three year program for the baccalaureate degree to a one year offering in the first year of the baccalaureate program. Chapter VI is devoted to the evolution of the optional English Literature course since 1947. Chapter VII, the last chapter, summarizes the study, draws some conclusions, and makes some modest recommendations regarding the present and future use of the English language in Indian higher education.

Chapter I

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Education in modern India can be much better understood if one has a knowledge of the evolution of the Indian system of education from very early times. This chapter, therefore, will provide some background as to how higher education in India evolved from the seventh century B.C. to the eighteenth century A.D.

Ancient Universities

The origins of higher education in this vast country can be traced back to at least the seventh century B.C. when a few universities such as Taxila, Nalanda, and Vikramasila became renowned seats of scholarship and teaching. From these ancient times, scholarship has been highly regarded in India. Thomas (1891) takes note of this when he writes:

There is no country where the love of learning had so early an origin or has exercise so lasting and powerful an influence. From the simple poets of the Vedic age to the Indian philosophers of the present day there has been an uninterrupted succession of teachers and scholars.

(p. 1)

The history of Indian universities then dates back to the day of antiquity. Little has been discovered about the educational conditions of the country prior to the Aryan invasions of about 1500 B.C. According to some scholars, the Dravidians were the indigenous inhabitants of India, and after coming into conflict