



## TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN HINDI AND URDU MEDIUM SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR

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### ABSTRACT:

The present paper is an attempt to explore the ground reality and the fact regarding teaching and learning English in Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary government schools of Bihar. Theories underpin that the rationale for English as a medium of instruction as a means of learning a second language while delivering content is largely based on assumptions that second language acquisition is similar to first language acquisition. The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the use of English language in English classes in senior secondary schools of Government of Bihar, exploring how English is taught as a subject in these schools and knowing the perception of stakeholders about using English as a medium of instruction to teach English at senior secondary level. The researcher visited 6 schools; 2 Urdu medium and remaining 4 Hindi medium in East Champaran district of Bihar. Observation and semi-structured interview were used as tools and techniques for data collection. For the first objective (Use of English in English classrooms) 12 classes; 2 classes in each school were observed and found that all teachers used 20 to 30 percent English as a medium of instruction in English classrooms. For second objective (perception of stakeholders about using English as a medium of instruction to teach English at the senior secondary level) semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 principals, 12 teachers, and 30 parents. Majority of them responded that English should be the medium of instruction but the majority of principals and English teachers all showed a positive attitude and supported that English should be the medium and it could be in practice as well as on the ground. At the end researcher recommended for various measures for various stakeholders as principals, teachers, and parents should come together and ensure it on the ground. Teachers are directly responsible to put it into practice using available resources and create such an environment.

**KEYWORDS** – English Language, Code-switching, Principal, Medium of Instruction, Usage of English, Perception.

### INTRODUCTION

In the state of Bihar, education of English with other school subjects has always been the top priority of the guardians and parents who want their children to be well-versed and well-conversant in this lingua-franca and global language. It is common that the students of Bihar are good at English grammar and to some extent English writing. However, when it comes to speaking out, they feel tongue tied and are not able to communicate properly in the absence of exposure to English communication. The simple reason for this is that more often classroom teaching-learning situation; emphasis is given on improving writing skills than speaking. Consequently, students of Bihar schools keep lagging behind in spite of having good knowledge of all grammatical and syntactical rules of English.



English flourished at educational institutions for the elite in the immediate post-independence period, this was followed by decades

during which it is generally agreed that English was seen as a low priority within the educational system, and during which the provision of English was a politically contentious issue and viewed negatively. Initiatives to promote English in the state in 1993, for example, were strongly resisted by some political groups locally. Over the last decade, increased priorities have been given to English. Before 2006 English had been taught only from standard 6 but it was introduced incrementally as a subject in standard 1 in all government schools. It is not, however, compulsory to pass the English examination at standard 10 while it is an optional paper in standard 12 board examinations. When English was introduced in 2006, the curriculum, syllabus, and related teaching and learning materials were developed or revised in line with National Curriculum Framework (2005), and later the Bihar Curriculum Framework (2008). National Curriculum Framework (2005) gave a higher priority to English. It states “The level of introduction of English is now a matter of political response to people’s aspirations rather than an academic or for that matter feasibility, and people’s choices about the level of its introduction in the curriculum will have to be respected, with the provision that we do not extend downwards the very system that has failed to deliver”. It also emphasizes that this introduction should be at the cost of other languages spoken in a specific location “English needs to find place along with other Indian languages in different states, where children’s other languages strengthen English teaching and learning”. The Bihar Curriculum Framework stresses the importance of English to access information and knowledge and to provide economic and social mobility “The very principal of equality entails that English should not remain associated only with the rich, elite or the upper middle class. Even a rural child of the underprivileged has an equal right to achieve a sufficiently good level of proficiency in it so that he should not suffer discrimination for lack of it”

### ENGLISH AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

The medium of instruction is the language used by the teacher to teach. Teaching any language, or educational content of any subject, through the target language (medium) increases the amount of exposure of learners they get to it, and the opportunities they have to communicate in that language, and therefore to develop their control on it. In the classroom, the question of medium as which medium of instruction to use, and its impact on learners and their learning is a complex one. Rather, it is useful to consider how the language used (medium) supports the aims and objectives of the class. For example, thinking that it may fit the aims and objectives to give all classroom instructions in English in a low level class, because this is useful exposure to new language and will be learnt, but explaining the methodology behind an activity to the same group or teaching any subject rather than English might be done in first language (L1).

An English medium and modern system of education uses English as its basic and primary medium of instruction. Nowadays, most of the schools, colleges, universities and institutes of education are mainly in English medium. Countries like UK, USA, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand etc. use English as primary medium of instruction because, the knowledge of English is required in many fields of life, and occupations. Many states and countries in the world have made the teaching of English mandatory at least a basic and primary level as just an effort to increase the competitiveness of their economies. The system of English medium education has been started from its homeland in England and the lowlands of Scotland. The medium of instruction, in India in the majority of rural and urban schools of all states/provinces and union territories, is the language of that particular region. English has been introduced as second or third language at the primary level in almost all these schools. Even after many years of compulsory study, a number of high school students are unable to speak, read or write simple English phrases and sentences. For these types of students, access to higher education, employment, technical knowledge, the world of computers and the internet will also be limited. This is the situation and reality of government schools and government-aided schools rather most of the private schools introduced English as L1 and as medium of instruction as well from lower primary to senior secondary level.

### NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Learning English language has been an integral part of life in today's world because more than 80% of the information stored in computer is in English language and because it is the main language in the internet world. More than half the world's beneficial scientific and educational journals and magazines are in English language. It has got the main way to get around, the main way to get things done, the way you make friends in the world, the way you do business with foreign countries and at last but not the least, you get information. It's not a language for getting only business and trade done but it's one of the richest languages of the words with many varieties and meets the needs of the modern world as well. There are other languages which do better with much functionality, but English language has outstanding and extraordinary flexibility and great richness of vocabulary which makes this language hard to learn but very satisfying when people can begin to use it. Communication is the essence of human kind and in our present society it is mostly done in English. So, we need the ability to communicate precisely in English and in a way that reflects well on our ability. Along with the implementation of educational policies that call for English as medium of instruction for teaching English, there is a belief that language learning also takes place during content delivery in a L2 as L1. Researches in the field of language learning and teaching support this idea that L2 is learned most effectively when used to convey content that is relevant and interesting to the learner.

In the state of Bihar, education of English language with other school subject always found the top priority of the parents and guardians who wish their children to be well-versed and well-conversant in this lingua-franca and global language. Over the last decade, increased priorities have been given to English. Before 2006 English had been taught only from standard 6 but it was introduced incrementally as a subject in standard 1 in all government schools. It is not, however, compulsory to pass the English examination at standard 10 while it is an optional paper in standard 12 board examinations. When English was introduced in 2006, the curriculum, syllabus, and related teaching and learning materials were developed or revised in line with National Curriculum Framework (2005), and later the Bihar Curriculum Framework (2008). National Curriculum Framework (2005) gave a higher priority to English. Theories underpin that English as medium of instruction is a means of learning second language. The rationale for English as medium of instruction in schools is often instrumental and based on theories of language acquisition which support a naturalistic process of language learning similar to first language acquisition where learning takes place without any effort and automatically. Assumptions that English as medium of instruction will increase language ability are commonly used to justify the large investment in human capital and material resources required for English-medium instruction in countries where the first language is not English, because a lot of empirical evidences exist regarding the effects of English-medium instruction on language development.

The aforementioned theories, assumptions and statements gave birth of the present study. English language has become important and essential at present scenario. It is assumed that second language acquisition is similar to first language acquisition and English as medium will increase language ability. The situation of education and educational institutions in rural areas of India especially Bihar is not hidden from anyone. This motivated and drew the attention of researcher towards this study. The aims to study the medium of English teaching in Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary schools of government of Bihar and perceptions of principals, teachers and parents about using English as medium for teaching English language in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> class.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This present study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do the teachers use English to teach English as a subject inside the classrooms in senior secondary Urdu and Hindi medium schools of government of Bihar?
2. What are the perceptions of stakeholders as principals, teachers and parents about using English as medium of teaching in the English classrooms?

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To study the usage of English in teaching English language in Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary schools of government of Bihar.
2. To determine the perceptions of principals, teachers, and parents about usage of English as medium of teaching in the English classrooms of Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary schools of government of Bihar.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the use of the English language in English classes in senior secondary schools of Government of Bihar, exploring how English is taught as a subject in these schools and knowing the perception of stakeholders about using English as a medium of instruction to teach English at senior secondary level.

## POPULATION

The population of the present study comprises all principals, teachers and parents of Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary schools of government of Bihar.

## SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

- Selection of Schools: 4 Hindi medium schools and 2 Urdu medium schools falling in East Champaran district, were selected using convenient technique
- Selection of Principals: 1 principal from each school and total 6 principals were selected using purposive sampling technique
- Selection of Teachers: 2 teachers from each school and total 12 teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique
- Selection of Parents: 5 parents from each school and total 30 parents were selected using purposive sampling technique

## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR DATA COLLECTION

In order to achieve the said objectives the following tools and techniques were used:

- **Classroom Observations:** 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> English classrooms in five schools were observed to find out how and in which medium English is taught in senior secondary schools of government of Bihar.
- **Semi-structured Interview Schedules:** Semi-structured interview schedules were prepared and interviews were conducted with principals and teachers to study their perceptions about the medium and usage of English while teaching English in English language at senior secondary level.
- **Semi-structured Interview Schedule:** interview was conducted with parents whose children are enrolled in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> class in the visited schools to study their perceptions about the medium and usage of English while teaching English in English language at senior secondary level.

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

### Findings of Classroom Observation:

Researcher observed 2 classes of both 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in each of the schools he visited. Findings of observation are being discussed in details below:

### Usage of English in the Classroom

This section discusses findings regarding teacher and student talk in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> English classrooms observed (one in each of the schools visited) in this study. In particular, it explores the frequency of English language usage in English classrooms and the quality of this usage.

The study found that in the English classroom, English was hardly used by teachers and students. The percentage of English language used by teachers in English classrooms observed varied from 20 percent to 30 percent. The usage was mostly restricted to reading aloud from the textbook or when the teacher was asking close-ended questions for which answers were short and explanations were not necessary. Teachers also resorted to the native language instead of English in the English classroom in order to explain grammatical concepts to students. This resulted in a high level of code switching.

### Code-switching

Teachers switched to the mother tongue when building the vocabulary of students. In the excerpt below, the teacher explains the meaning of the word “ancient” in the English classroom in Hindi.

Teachers switched to the mother tongue (Hindi) in the English classroom in order to explain to students what topic they would be covering in class. Teachers also switched from English to a local language while giving instructions and explaining group activities to students, indicating that students understood better in a language other than English.

### Textbook Reading

Most of the English classrooms were devoted to reading aloud of the text by teachers and students. It was also observed that reading aloud was considered to be the only method employed by teachers to ensure comprehension of the text by the students. However, reading aloud is not necessarily a strong indicator of comprehension. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) considered reading aloud to be an inefficient way to use class time. They found it to be “a way of training and checking rhythm and pronunciation”. Reading comprehension is ensured through silent reading. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) advised the teachers: “Use the textbook to concentrate on conscious language development, but let your pupils read books for understanding and for pleasure.”

### Use Of Translation Method

Using a language other than English to teach English in the classroom is problematic as there is no one to one correspondence. Most teachers taught English through translating the text into the mother tongue. Grammatical rules and difficult vocabulary were often explained in the mother tongue.

### Subject-Based Versus Skill-Based Approach To English

Classroom observations revealed that teachers had adopted a subject-based approach for teaching English language rather than a skill-based approach. A lot of people believe that teaching English grammar through translation method, explaining its difficult words and sentences in the mother tongue of the learners and writing definitions of new words in their mother tongue are the sign of language inadequacy of both the teachers and students. Moreover, it may be considered as a reflection of inability of the teacher to teach language through a skill-based approach where various skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are used in a cohesive manner to increase language skills. The emphasis seems to be on reading and writing, which indicates the use of the grammar translation method for teaching English. According to Yule (1996), the grammar translation method involves learning of grammar rules and this “leaves students quite ignorant of how language is used”. Krashen (1981) further argued that the grammar translation method provides little opportunity for language acquisition. According to Krashen (1981), language acquisition does not require extensive use of grammar rules and it does not occur overnight. Real language acquisition develops slowly.

### Teachers Lack The Competency And Training To Teach English

Teachers are found not competent enough to teach in English medium, because of the fact that they lack in the competency of speaking. Teachers themselves are not capable to speak and communicate correctly in English. This is undeniable facts that they are not well-trained as a part of in-service training. They told that they have never got subject-specific training in recent few years.

### Findings Of Semi-Structured Interview Schedules:

In order to gain insight into the perception of the key stakeholders about teaching English language through English medium, 6 principals, 12 teachers and 30 parents were selected as sample and were interviewed in this study.

#### Perceptions of Principals

Of the 6 principals were interviewed, 5 principals recommended that English should be the medium of instruction in English classrooms, one principal from these schools recommended instruction in the mother tongue along with English is suitable. Almost all of them felt the need of introducing English as medium in English classrooms but three of them complained that teachers are not committed and prepared. Moreover teachers are not capable and trained enough to deal as well. Students too are weak in the language and unable to grasp and understand if they are given instructions in English. Significantly, most of the sampled principals remained quiet when it came to seeking solution. They instead laid blame on the lower class teachers. Principals also highlighted issues such as lack of innovative practices and strategies to teach English, high rate of student absenteeism (50 percent absenteeism on average in all classrooms observed), lack of parents' interest in the child's education, all of which hamper effective teaching and learning of English in schools.

#### Perceptions of Teachers

Out of the 12 teachers interviewed, all believed that English should be the medium of instruction. Proponents of English as the medium of instruction felt that English is the language of progress and development despite recognizing that students may learn better in the mother tongue. Here if one says something in Hindi, it is not given any importance. They said "If you say the same thing in English, it is given importance, it is better if it is in English." "They will learn better in their mother tongue, yes, but it is necessary to learn in English because that is a global language, it's an excellent idea to implement English as the medium of instruction but it should be from primary grades."

Furthermore, they felt that adopting English as the medium of instruction in schools would help students in colleges where the medium of instruction is English. Teachers felt that students from Hindi and Urdu medium backgrounds suffer academically because of their lack of proficiency in the language later on. But teachers voiced the same concerns as principals did with respect to the lack of training and lack of ability amongst students in learning.

#### Perceptions of Parents

Out of the 30 parents interviewed in this study, all 30 parents strongly recommended adopting English as the medium of instruction. Parents cited better job opportunities, improved chances of doing well in college and the prestige and power associated with English as reasons why English should be implemented as the medium of instruction. Parents noted that English is taught in private schools in English medium. One parent interviewed noted that English is what the "children of the rich" learn and is not an option that is available to children from poor backgrounds.

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

English should be the medium of instruction in English Classroom. This, not only parents wish but majority of principals and English teachers also do that English should be the medium of instruction. All of them showed positive attitude and supported that English should be the medium and it could be in practice as well as on the ground. Because policies are there in its support that English should be the medium of instruction to teach English and in English classrooms. However, the sad part of the story is that is not in practiced in the field.



**For principals:** English should be the primary medium of instruction in English classrooms. Principals, administration and management as well as policy makers should ensure that English should be used as medium of instruction at least into English classrooms and for its teaching. English teachers should be provided supportive training, conducive environment and aiding resources. Qualified and competent enough English teachers should be appointed. Following points need to be taken into account for creating enabling conditions in order that English as the medium of instruction should finally be in place:

- a) Efforts should be made to strengthen the whole system of school education
- b) Better trained teachers are employed to teach all subjects
- c) Teachers with fluent and accurate English language skills are employed in schools
- d) Schools are equipped with better structural and linguistic resources
- e) Libraries should be well-resourced with books and interactive language learning materials
- f) English should be taught as a subject with a focus on communication from first grade

Findings from parents' interviews reveal a strong desire amongst them for their children to learn English. Some teachers also highlight the benefits associated with learning English. In order to develop language fluency among school students, the government may have to fulfill some vital and necessary preconditions regarding the provision of adequate language learning resources, well trained teachers with adequate knowledge of the required skills and a stimulating learning environment. In the earlier grades, English needs to be competently taught as a subject or a skill so that it can be employed as a medium of instruction at more advanced levels of schooling.

**For teachers:** English teachers should create conducive environment and try to use available resources at optimum level rather blaming government, management and administration to use English as primary medium of instruction. It is therefore teachers' moral duty and responsibility to consider the aspirations of parents and students as well. Teachers are the ones who can only do it in limited available resources. They should show their commitment and dedication toward English and consider it their own valuable duty.

**For Parents:** Parents are expected to raise their voice for this concern and do support to the management, administration and teachers whenever required. They are supposed to attend Parents Teacher Meetings (PTMs) and visit schools time and again. Their voices could bring this policy and matter into practice and on the ground as well. They could prepare as well as encourage their children to concentrate on English as a subject as well as the medium.

### DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has certain constraints and limitations. Some are given below:

**Delimitation of aspect:** The study is confined to the teaching of English language in Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary schools of government of Bihar. The study has been delimited to the usage of English in teaching English language and to determine the perceptions of principals, teachers, and parents about usage of English as medium of teaching in the English classrooms of Hindi and Urdu medium senior secondary schools of government of Bihar.

**Delimitation of Sample:** The study has certain limitations of samples as well. Only 4 Hindi medium schools and 2 Urdu medium schools falling in East Champaran district of Bihar were selected using convenient technique. And 1 principal from each school and total 6 principals, 2 teachers from each school and total 12 teachers and 5 parents from each school and total 30 parents were selected using purposive sampling technique were selected as sample for the study.

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