

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

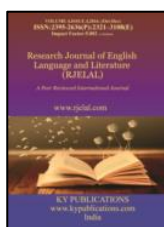
IMPACT OF ENGLISH MEDIUM EDUCATION ON ORAL FLUENCY:  
A STUDY ON B.A., B.ED. STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to study the actual impact of English medium education on learners' proficiency. After the year 2000, there is a great demand for English medium education rather than mother tongue or regional medium education in India. This paper sites the south Indian states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana peoples' demand for English medium Education. Though, English education has been there since Macaulay proposition of English education to Indian. In the subsequent years the importance of English has been growing because of globalization, computerization, etc. So, higher strata of Indian society voluntarily adopted private English medium education and the poor, backward and marginalized demanded for English medium schools which were run by the concerned governments. In order to see the assumed merit of English medium schools over regional medium schools this study collected the speech sample of B.A. B.Ed. students who were from both mother tongue medium and English medium backgrounds and it analyzed the results in terms of oral fluency which is an indicator of language proficiency.

Keywords: English medium education, fluency, Teaching English, English in India

INTRODUCTION

"English is changing its status in India from a bureaucratic and elite language, to one which plays an increasing role in the lives of all citizens." – David Graddol, 2010.

Though English language education is very age old one in India, in this decade there is a high demand for the opening of English medium education schools across the country especially in south states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Many activists working in the education sector, sociologists, politicians and other groups are frequently raise the issue of implementing uniform education and equally demanding for English medium education in government run schools across the county. There

were many debates on the suitability of medium of education across the country. On this issue many educationalists, politician, concerned groups took stand in favor of the English medium education and other took stand against the move. Most of the time the debates ended with heated arguments for and against English medium education on national and regional TV channels. Sometimes, it seemed that one group was correct against other group. The reality from the ground was that the bureaucrats, rich and middle class people sending their wards to the English medium education. Contrary to this the state recommending mother-tongue medium of education or regional official language medium to the poor, marginalized and backward section of the society who most of time depending on government

schools. It became a big issue to the ruling governments to implement only regional medium education. The medium of education is becoming one more layer to the society and people often felt it acted as a discriminating tool like English medium haves and have nots. In addition to this English is ascribed with adjectives like a 'library' language, a 'link' language, a language of 'enslavement', a language of 'liberation and liberalism', a language of 'modernity and development', a 'defence' against Hindi language, a 'transactional vehicular' language, a language of 'geographical mobility', a language of social mobility, a language which brings money, and the language of the 'new Brahmins' in public and private discourses as described by David, Godard. As a result the demand for English education and that too to in English medium education became the new cry from many section of the society in India. So, the governments also started setting up committees and commission in order to solve the issue. It seems that the governments also respected the demand of the people. And it will come up with best language education policies. However, pedagogically, there is no ready-made answer to the question that English medium students having edge over non-English medium students. In Andra Pradesh and Telangana majority of the schools established by the governments are Telugu medium education school where all the subjects of the curriculum has been taught in Telugu except language like English and Hindi. Sometime the explanation of the concepts in both English and Hindi are also in Telugu. This practice has been in role since the beginning of modern education in India. It may be attributed to National education policy 1986. This new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity," Prior to this the three language formula (1961) also enforced for the development and promotion of mother tongue, a language of national importance and modern international language. Until 1980s English was offered as one of the languages to be learnt in the curriculum. Gradually, we can see a conversion of private school to English medium and there is rapid mobilization of regional medium to English medium. Now, in this decade there is demand for the early start of acquaintance of English to the

learners that is through English medium of Education from the beginning of actual education process of child. With rising demand for English medium education government of Andra Pradesh took an initiative to start English medium schools since 2008. The government identified Municipal High Schools to run English medium education from class VI to higher levels under the name SUCCESS schools and government also issued a G.O.Ms.No.76 Edn (SE Trg) Department, Dated: 10-06-2008. The actual intention is to run English medium school in the due course of time.

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

Proficiency and fluency in English is highly demanded by the people of India. In order to meet it, people considered both English medium and regional education system. Both system run differently to get the desired results i.e. For the better acquisition of English language in general and English fluency in particular. Contrary to this many of the government run school are teaching English as a subject or a language the rest of the education is given in mother tongue. In the current decade common people are demanding government run English medium schools instead of regional medium schools. Here the assumption is that the English medium schools outperform the regional medium schools. Therefore, everybody wants English medium education. Therefore this study wants to enquire the assumed benefit of English medium schools over L1 or regional medium schools.

**Null Hypothesis:** Oral fluency of the English medium learners is not better than regional medium learners' oral fluency.

#### **Objective of the study**

To find out the impact of English medium education on oral fluency of learners in India

#### **The study**

Fluency is an un-doubted requirement among English learners in India, as they have been using English as a second language and language of inter-state and inter-national communication. The learners or user of language need to use English as natural as they can in different situations and lack of fluency

certainly mount to lack of proficiency in the language. It is a primary character of proficiency of language. In such context this study would like to see the reality at gross root level with an empirical study. To answer the question posed in the study that the English medium students having edge over the non-English medium, this study considered to study fluency and share its finding in relation to the topic. This study investigates the assumed advantage of English medium students by looking at evidence from oral fluency measures. Students studied in all the regional medium is considered as non-English medium where the instruction is mostly in their mother tongue and Teaching English is a language subject. This study will explore the acquisition of fluency between English medium studied students vs. non-English medium students. As governments are initiating English medium education but opinions differ greatly when it comes to the effectiveness of English medium.

**Oral Fluency:** According to online Cambridge dictionary fluency is the “the ability to speak or write a language easily, well, and quickly.” In addition this definition, British Council states that “Fluency in a language means speaking easily, reasonably quickly and without having to stop and pause a lot.” It is an indicator of proficiency in language and a characteristic of good communication through which speaker’s message passes smoothly, even though the speaker makes mistakes grammatically. It helps speakers to deliver their message or ideas as naturally as possible. One more important definition of fluency was developed by Brumfit in 1984 for the goals of English language teaching. According to him fluency is a “natural language use” and he defines the main aim of fluency activity in the classroom as to ‘develop a pattern of language interaction within the classroom’ which is as close as possible to that used by competent performers in the mother tongue in normal life. According to him normal process of listening, speaking, reading and writing should reflect natural flow of it. He suggests for creating natural language use in the classroom include expression of them in their concerned activities. Oral fluency is one of the most important characteristics of proficiency in a second language. The term fluency has a range of meanings, the most common of which is related to

high proficiency, that is, an excellent rasp of the vocabulary and grammar of a language. Operation definition of fluency can be drawn from the above definition as it is the capacity to be able to speak in English and with ease. It is also associated with normal flow and without repetitions, pauses, too much self-correction, without strain, gap fillers, inappropriate slowness or undue hesitation, dragging of the words or expression, unnecessary coughing, through clearing, any deviation from actual speaking.

### **The Study: Participants**

The sample of this study was taken from the second semester students of B.A. B.Ed. programme from Central University of south Bihar. Central University of South Bihar is located near Gaya in the state of Bihar, India. They were all teacher aspirants from the country appeared in CUCET and took admission in this University. The strength of the class is 30 excluding other language option students. The compositions of the students in the class were from and in and around state of Bihar. Most of their mother tongue is Hindi and some of them were bilingual who know some other languages like Urdu, Bengali and Odia. Many of them were from the state of Bihar and after qualifying in their plus two they were eligible to take admission in the university. The composition of the study is having males and females of 18 to 21 years of age range. The data of their education background certainly show that there are three categories of the students. Namely the first category of students those who studied only in English medium from private and government school and the second category was those students who studied from Hindi and other regional medium schools and the last category is students who changed from mother tongue medium to English medium in the due course of time. So, the sample class composition exactly met with the required target group composition. Though there were many other variables in the class this study is interested only in English medium studied students and their counter parts who studied in the regional or mother tongue medium i.e. Hindi. All the participants’ data was recorded especially who studied in which medium of education.

Medium of instruction	No of students	Class	Age	Males	Females	English Teaching began in class	Age at which English introduced	Current medium of instruction
Mother tongue	20	B.A. B.Ed	18-21	11	9	1	5	English
English	10	B.A. B.Ed	18-21	5	5	1	4-5	English

Table 1 showing participants of the class

### Research methodology

In order to study fluency, a small scale study was conducted to assess or identify the individual level of proficiency with the help of oral presentations. Presentation techniques and all the students of the class from both the stream i.e. from Hindi medium background students and English medium background students were given thematic pictures in a series to narrative the story from the given pictures clues. The given pictures were wordless and graphical picture (attached in appendix). The idea was that let the students choose their own words and sentences. In another round all the students were informed to choose a topic for presentation for 5 to 7 minutes and were informed the scoring pattern. The students' presentations were conducted in two weeks and all the presentations were recorded with the help of mobile. The total recording length of presentation was 10 hours and it was analyzed and evaluated on the parameters of fluency by the research scholar.

### Procedure

All the participants of the study were given two activities one is thematic picture description activity and other one is a topic of their choice and the research also help to choose the topics from language and literature. For each student 5-7 minutes of time is given to make their presentations. Based on the presentation of all the subjects (30) were awarded scores manually by researcher. The score sheet mainly consists of two kinds of scores one is positive score for positive points and negative score

for negative points for fluency. Likewise it consisted 1 point for speaking with ease; 1 point for correct English, 1 point for continuous flow. It also consisted negative points to award negative score of 1 point for gap filler, 1 point for stops, 1 point for unwanted quarries and dragging words/elongation of words( improper pronunciation),gap filler- like ok, you know, umm, ohh, aahh, etc., repetition of words, sudden stops, too fast/hurry pauses, etc.

Results: After careful evaluation of presentations of learners, it clearly reveal that there is a significant difference between the English medium learners oral fluency and Non-English medium learners fluency. English medium learns were shown their oral presentations more natural and continuous and with less pauses. Whereas regional medium learns were seen with many markers of non-fluent speeches. Though , some regional medium learners perform better than English medium learns, the overall performance English medium learns was much better in term of oral fluency. So, the null hypothesis was rejected after observing a significant different between both the groups. The obtained results could be more exposures to English environment, and lack of fear even when the students were making errors in sentence they spoke naturally without any hesitation. The students from English medium backgrounds certainly performed with high speech rate with better articulation, they did not take many gaps and pauses in their presentation. They also properly made use of their time



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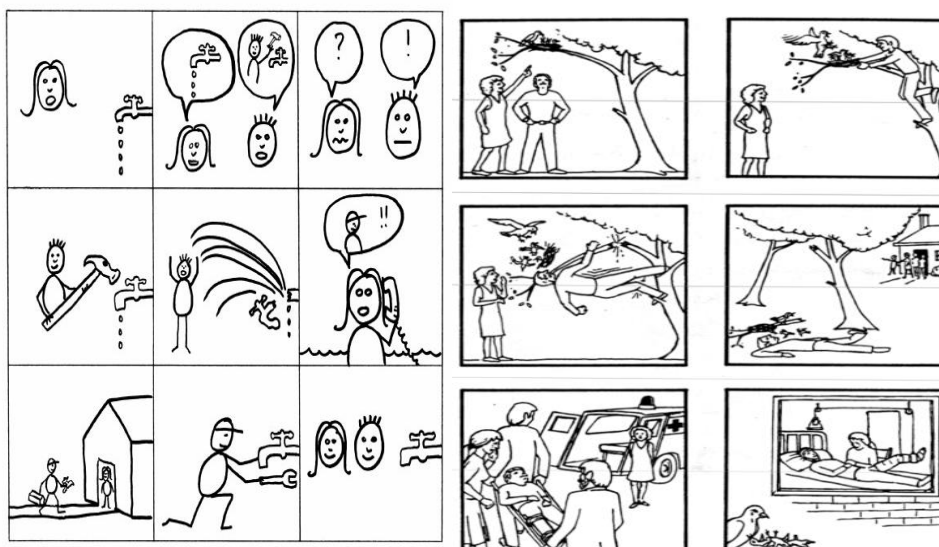
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Appendix: Sample of thematic pictures



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