



## DECOLONISATION OF ENGLISH CONTENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A.RAVINDRA

Lecturer in English, A.M.A.L. College, Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh



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### ABSTRACT

Decolonisation of the English content in Higher Education means emancipation of colonised countries like India from slavish psychology and mindset that has manufactured on these people's curriculum due to long term rule of the colonial powers. The decolonisation of Education means that a nation must become independent with regards to the acquisition of knowledge skills, values, beliefs and habits. Even after Independence, our country has used the colonial content and methodology for teaching English Language Imposition of archaic and homogeneous methods and materials in a divers country like India proved to be a major problem in the way of learning English. Most of the Indian students look upon English with fear. There is even a hint of anger and resentment against English. The need to decolonize ELT in India by contextualising teaching methods and materials with respect to Indian social, cultural setting and classroom situation has been strongly felt. The present paper highlights the need to review English content and materials in Order-to decolonize English curriculum and language teaching to improve communication skills of the students to go ahead in the age of globalisation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The final objective of decolonisation of ELT is to fulfil the needs of English Education of all the sections of the society, irrespective of their diversities. We have to produce Indians skilled not only in English but also possessing the traditional Indian spirit, Morales, opinion and intellect.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Contextualisation, Localisation, ELT, ICT

Decolonization is a characteristic feature of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In countries outside Europe, decolonization was born with national historical consciousness. (Duara 2004:1) Jawaharlal Nehru (1946) in his book *The Discovery of India* has propagated his idea about changes necessary for the growth of the nation being free from all sorts of dependence on the foreign colonial faces. For this purpose he stresses the importance not only on the political freedom but also the creation of opportunities for economic, educational and cultural growth of all sections of the nation / State.

It is clear that decolonizing education in general and English language in particular, means decolonizing the age old colonial stereo typed methods and materials. It refers to contextualization

of content development and their use according to the needs of the Indian students. It is a protest against colonial mindset which considers Western Civilisation as a symbol of modernization (Gundur 2009: 36) Decolonization for us means independent mind set and revival of native culture.

English learning does not mean only refinement of taste. In this globalised world English (Crystal 2005) has no longer remained a colonial language but a language which various countries and people are using for communicative and commercial purpose. Learning of English acquired significance for Indians because it is a means of achieving higher mode of living. Hence using old methods of leaning and teaching does not serve our purpose. Therefore need to decolonize English

content and teaching to improve communication skills of the students has been very urgently felt.

#### **Need for contextualisation of English content in India**

In the present world, English content do not merely mean the study of the texts written by European and American authors. Many writers from Asian and African countries enriched English literature through their writings. We have to contextualise the material, meaningful to the students mother tongue friendly and pedagogically more viable. Text books should be prepared in a such a way that they become interesting irrespective of vast cultural and linguistic diversities prevalent in our country. Indian students should not feel English as an alien imposition on them. So local, cultural, occupational and experimental knowledge be used for class room teaching. Texts by Indian English writers from different Indian regions can be used as learner friendly material in English studies as it reflects Indian ethos and experience.

#### **Nativization and Localisation of the content used in English studies and Language Teaching**

Prescribing common English curriculum for Indian students is a major fallacy. Native texts dealing with the cultural values and experimental backgrounds of the students must be prescribed. Content including the local, native, cultural, experimental and personal interest of the students is easily comprehensible, intelligent and readable.

#### **Innovative and Creative use of Materials**

Decolonizing English studies require innovative and creative use of materials to suit the needs of the native students. Decolonising means rejection of old imported stereo typed material used irrespective of the diversity in the Indian class room. Task – based situation oriented, communication – centred and culturally sensitive materials may be used as per the demands of the learning purposes. This is supported by the following statement made by Deep (2009:6)

“Our students come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. To meet this challenge, we need to revise our course. Content to incorporate our native cultural legacy or I should say we need a socio – cultural view of teaching and learning. It will not only help to solve the problem of identity crisis to certain extent, but it will also facilitate the process of learning ESL in a congenial environment.

#### **Use of Translations of Regional and Local Texts for Deconolonising English content**

In order to decolonize English content in India, it has become necessary to bridge the gap between English and home language. The common curriculum failed to relate the home and local experience of the students to the content used in teaching English in their class rooms. Rich folk literature of the rural and tribal communities is available in books, magazines and news papers. Sahitya Academi’s journal ‘Indian Literature’ regularly publishes translations of poem, plays and stories of various regional writers in English. Use of the English translations of the popular regional and local texts will extent the culture and experience of the students to the English class rooms and will create congenial learning environment.

#### **Humanizing and Individualizing English Content**

It can be said that decolonisation means deconstructing and discarding all the grand narratives written in the name of nation, class, society and gender etc. Since grand narratives are general, they are anti – individual. Therefore we have to individualise and humanize English content. Language learning requires individual participation of the learners in the learning process. So respectively autonomy of the learners becomes very important.

#### **Conclusion**

The movement of decolonisation as a whole is an attempt to come out of colonial ruler’s expectation relating to English teaching in India as evidenced in Macaulay’s (1834) statement. According to Macaulay, the purpose of English teaching in India was to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions that we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in task, in opinion, in morals and in intellect’.

Our aim through decolonization of English studies is to cater to the needs of all sets of the society irrespective of their castes, creed, religions etc. Thus by capitalizing on the available native resources and using them innovatively and creatively, a teacher can create native teaching – leaning situation and can bring greater results by decolonizing and Indianizing ESL, teaching – learning.

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