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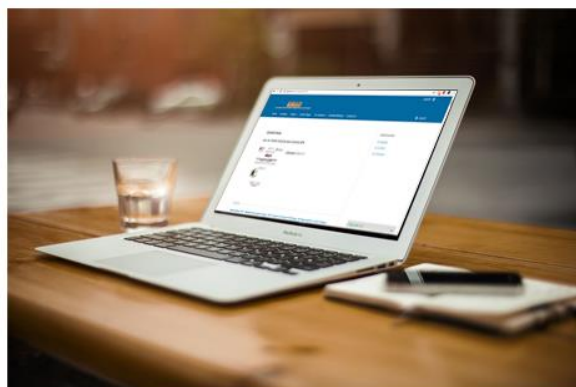


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**Exposure of English Language in English and Non-English Medium Schools/Colleges: A  
Comparative Study**

**Abstract**

Numerous studies have been conducted in India and abroad on the impact of medium of instruction (MI) on academic achievement as well as learning English as a second language. But the researches reveal divided opinions on the issue. Apart from medium, there are other factors that play significant role in the teaching-learning process of English language. This research attempts to compare entire teaching-learning scenario in English Medium (EM) and Non-English medium (NEM) secondary schools and junior colleges in India from grade 8 to grade 12. The study is based on four variants—teaching process, medium of instruction (MOI), teachers' attitude and exposure to English language in school/college campus. The present paper deals with the findings vis-à-vis the fourth variant i.e. exposure to English language. To realize these objectives, a normative survey study was conducted with randomly selected fifty-six teachers, comprising 24 EM and 32 NEM school teachers. The instrument used for the study was a self-designed questionnaire face-validated by two experts having considerable experience in empirical research. The findings of the study reveal that there is extensive use of English language as a medium of instruction. In EM schools/colleges, it is widely used for intra-communication between fellow teachers, between students and their peers as well as during

communication with teachers. Whereas in NEM schools, the congenial atmosphere imperative to language acquisition, is not much created owing to less exposure which subsequently impacts learner's mastery of English language. Hence, exposure to English and use of English in schools becomes one of the deciding factors for different level of proficiency in EM and NEM schools and colleges.

**Keywords:** English Language Teaching, English Medium Schools, Non-English Medium Schools, Use of English

### **Introduction**

Acquisition of proficiency in English language has always been a herculean task for the learners who come from non-English medium institutions, pursuing their degree programs in rural India. The students who enroll for first year of graduation in any discipline consist of two types of learners – one who come from Mother tongue (MT) medium schools and colleges and the other who come from English medium background. The former are very poor and incompetent in English language. The latter that undergo their schooling in English medium based institutions are comparatively far better than the learners of MT medium students. Former's performance in all four pedagogical skills of language seems better than the latter's. Both set of learners study English as compulsory subject for near about twelve years right from primary level up to grade twelve. The teachers of MT medium institutions are equally eligible and perhaps better trained rather than those of English medium (EM) ones.

Despite this fact, competence of EM learners in English language is better. This difference of standard of performance carry forward during their graduation and at the end of graduation, EM learners come out as better speakers and communicators. The performance of EM students in different skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, comprehension, analysis and interpretation is more satisfactory than their counterparts.

In this scenario, it has become obligatory to understand why and how this difference in standard of EM and MT medium learners of English occurs. Apart from the difference in their MI, there can be other variables. The present study attempts to study and compare the attitude of EM and NEM school teacher's attitude towards learners, importance of English language in general and towards English language Teaching.

## Review of literature

Medium of instruction (MI) plays a significant role in the acquisition of any language. A bulk of studies on impact of MI on academic achievement has been undertaken in India. Most of these studies can be broadly divided in following two categories.

i. Studies on impact of mother tongue (MT) as MI on selected variables

i. Studies on impact of English as a MI on selected variables

D.P.Pattanayak observes in his Trend Report on Research in Language Education that most of the studies were conducted in the 1970s (Kamakshi, 1965; Dave and Anand, 1971; Dave and Dave, 1971; Jayaram and Misra, 1980; Srivastava and Khatoon, 1980). The results of these studies are of three types, namely,

a) Students in English-medium achieve significantly more than students in MT (Mother Tongue) medium (Kamakshi, 1965; Srivastava and Khatoon, 1980).

(b) Students in MT-medium schools score significantly more than students in English-medium schools (Dave and Anand, 1971).

(c) There is no significant difference in achievement between MT and other tongue medium students (Dave and Dave, 1971; Jayaram and Misra, 1980)

But there is no uniformity in the results of these studies. Rather these studies reveal contradictory results as follows. A. K. Srivastava et al. (1986) have worked on the comparative aspect of mother-tongue and English as medium on subjects of study and attainment of students' longitudinally. Their conclusions state that different factors responsible for better achievement, one of them being the English medium. In various studies they have found mother-tongue students reaching the level of English-medium students. But the methods, materials and media used for the English-medium students give them an edge over mother-tongue students. Mwinsheikhe (2001), Baptist (2004) and found low academic performance of students with English as language of instruction in comparison to MT as MI. Yohannes (2009) conducted a study in Ethiopia on the implications of using mother tongues verses English as LOI lang. of instr. On the academic achievement in English, Sciences and Mathematics in upper primary

school students (grades 7 and 8). The findings from Yohannes study reveal that the use of mother tongues as LOI in mathematics and sciences enables students to perform well. The pedagogical implication of use of mother tongue has resulted in better performance in science and mathematics in comparison to English as LOI in the English achievement there was no significant difference seen. Thus researches on effect of English as MI on overall academic achievement provide mixed and divided results proving English and MT as MI beneficial in achieving certain abilities.

The researches on effect of English and MT on learning English as a foreign language show similar and contradictory results.

Arguments against teachers using student's MT are mainly pedagogically based (Timor, 2012). While using MT in foreign language classes like English, 'translation provides an easy avenue to enhance linguistic awareness' (Cook, 2001). Turnbull (2001) in his response to (Cook, 2001) mentions that students do not benefit when teachers over-rely on using their students' MT, particularly when the EFL teacher is the sole linguistic model and main source of foreign language (FL) input. So Turnbull (2001, page 536) advises the "judicious and principled use" of MT. Because, 'teachers who overuse their students' MT deprive these learners of an important language process in which students try to make sense of what is being said in class' (Ellis, 1994). Apart from these arguments against the use of MT as MI, researchers have opinions supporting the issue too.

Studies of transfer between the MT and the FL indicate a linguistic interdependence ( Jessner & Cenoz, 2000) with regard to multiple subsystems (phonological, syntactic, semantic, and textual) within the MT and FL systems (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). Hauptman, Mansur, and TAL (2008) used a trilingual model for literacy skills among Bedouins in Israel whose MT is Arabic and found that "created a support systems for Arabic the mother tongue, though English [FL] and Hebrew [MT2]." Cook (2002) supports the use of MT with psycho-linguistic argument by saying that teacher use of the MT cannot present a threat to FL acquisition because learners already have a language basis from their MT. Because of this basis, learners are more socially developed and have more short-term memory capacity and more maturity when they become acquainted with the FL. Elsa Auerbach (1993) gives a sociopolitical rationale for the use of the L1 in ESL classrooms and concludes that starting with L1 provides a sense of security and

validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. Schweers (1999) suggests through his study that bringing MT [Spanish] into the English classes makes learning English appears to be less of a threat to the vernacular.

### **Method of Study**

In order to carry out the research and realize the aforesaid objectives, Normative Survey was employed in the present study. Normative survey also termed as descriptive survey studies, describes what exists at present. They are concerned with existing condition or relations, prevailing practices, beliefs and attitudes etc. (Pushapanathan, 2010).

### **Profile of the Sample**

Since the objective of the study was to compare and analyze ELT in English Medium (EM) and Non-English Medium (NEM) schools and colleges at high school and junior college level, the subjects of the study were English teachers teaching to classes from grade 8 to grade 12. There are 70 teachers working in 32 EM and NEM schools and colleges in the target area out of which randomly selected 56 teachers i.e. 24 from EM and 32 from NEM schools formed the sample for the present study.

### **Area and Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in the school/ colleges located in Rajura tehsil -a part of Chandrapur, District in Maharashtra, India. Rajura town is located at [19°47'N 79°22'E](#)<sup>19.78°N 79.37°E<sup>[1]</sup></sup> in Maharashtra, the second most populous and the third largest in area of India's 28 states. Rajura lies on the banks of the [Wardha River](#) and falls within the coal belt of Central India.

### **Limitations to the Study**

This study has some limitations. Firstly, the present study limits itself to small geographical area (i.e. Rajura tehsil in Chandrapur district). Hence, the sample of the study was small comprising 56 teachers. Secondly, the study included only teachers as the target population; it did not incorporate the students learning in English and Non-English medium schools/colleges. The students of school/colleges studying in grade 8 to grade 12 could also have been included to

achieve more comprehensive results. Thirdly, only instrument used for data collection was a self designed questionnaire. But still, every care has been taken to make the entire study genuine and the data has been analyzed and interpreted carefully.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used for data collection was a self designed questionnaire consisting close ended questions. The instrument was face validated by two experts having considerable experience in empirical research in English language. The instrument was validated in terms of relevance to the topic, clarity of language, adequacy of items and ambiguity of statements. The experts after examining the instrument suggested some requisite changes and corrections which were effected in the final draft of the instrument.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The principal investigator physically visited the all the secondary schools/colleges from grade eight to grade twelve in the target area and with prior permission of the concerned headmaster/principal administered the questionnaire to the respondents. Along with the questionnaire, a general appeal letter was also given to provide information about the study and general instructions regarding filling of the questionnaire. It was clearly informed to them that the questionnaires are not meant for sending to any government or semi-government organization and only statistical information will be used in the final report. They were appealed to give honest and candid information and it was stated to them that only their factual and candid responses can bring valid conclusions. The respondents were not allowed to write their names anywhere in the questionnaire so as to receive honest, frank and fearless responses. The questionnaires were retrieved on the spot after completion. This study was purposed to collect descriptive information on various variables, non-parametric statistical techniques such as percentage, frequencies of numbers converted into percentage have been used to analyze the data. The data has been presented in tabular and graphic forms.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Use of English Language in Schools/Colleges**

Table 1- Language mostly used by teachers with students outside the classroom in school/college campus

Respondent	Only English	Only mother tongue	Both
EMS=24	83.33% (20)	00%	16.66% (04)
NEMS=32	18.75% (06)	43.75% (14)	37.5% (12)

The table 1 shows that 83.33% EMS teachers use ‘only English’ while speaking with their students outside the classroom in school campus, which is very high against the NEMS teachers i.e.18.75%. No teacher communicates with students by using only mother tongue in EMS. Very few teachers i.e. 16.66% only, use both languages –English as well as mother tongue. The status of NEMS is different from the EMS. In NEMS, the majority of teachers use only mother tongue with students. Some teachers use both languages but least number of teachers use ‘only English’. It is concluded that majority of EMS teachers use only English while speaking with students outside the classroom in school campus; whereas NEMS teachers use mother tongue.

Table 2- Language used by students with teachers outside the classroom in school/college campus

Respondent	Only English	Only mother tongue	Both
EMS=24	70.83% (17)	00%	29.16% (07)
NEMS=32	15.62% (5)	53.12% (17)	31.25% (10)

For communication with the teachers outside the classroom, the majority of EMS students i.e.70.83% use only English but this is not the case with NEMS students because most of them (53.12%) depend on mother tongue (MT). Very few NEMS students (15.62% only) communicate by using only English and nearly one third of them use a blend of English as well as MT. The students who use both languages might be doing code switching and code mixing when they are unable to continue their conversation in English. (Discussion- a considerable number of teachers report that their students use both languages. Here the expression ‘both languages’ can have two denotations. First, they may mean that some students use English and the others use MT. The second implication is that the students start with one language perhaps



English and then switch over to MT especially due to inability to complete the sentence in English.)

On the whole, English is sufficiently used for communication by EMS students; whereas in NEMS, the students use either MT or they prefer code switching. The majority of learners in NEMS use MT with teachers because most of teachers use MT while speaking with the learners as shown in Table 1. (Discussion- the more the use of English by the teacher, the more are the chances of students picking up the language. In most of the English medium schools, it is compulsory for students to use only English in school campus. Since they do not have any other alternative, they use English and this compulsion enables them to learn speaking English, better and faster.

Table 3 –Language used by English teachers with fellow teachers

Respondent	Only English	Only mother tongue	Both
EMS=24	54.16% (13)	16.66%(04)	37.5% (07)
NEMS=32	21.87% (7)	62.5% (20)	15.62% (05)

It is clear from the table that in EMS, the majority of the teachers use English while speaking with their fellow teachers. But in NEMS, mother tongue seems the most used language for communication. Only few NEMS teachers use English and the rest prefer both languages English and MT for communication. The percentage of EMS teachers using English with colleagues as shown in this table is still lower than the teachers using English with the students as shown in table 1.

Table 4- Language used by students with their peers/mates in school

Respondent	Only English	Only mother tongue	Both
EMS=24	62.5% (15)	16.66% (04)	20.83% (05)
NEMS=32	15.62% (05)	65.62% (21)	18.75% (06)

In EMS, the majority of the students talk with their peers in English but in NEMS it is again the MT which is mostly used by students. Some students in EMS as well as NEMS, use both

languages because, some students are not much proficient in English. They wish to speak but due to lack of proper vocabulary, they switch from English to MT or even vice versa. The surprising thing is that although MT isn't used by students in EMS when they talk with their teachers (see Table2), it (MT) is used by students when they talk with their peers/mates. The reason may be that the students do not observe any formality, rules when they talk with their classmates. The students are generally in a very relaxed mood when they talk with their peers and hence they do not keep any barrier of language. Secondly, everybody is more comfortable with MT rather than any other language.

Table 5- Use of English by other subject teachers for communication

Respondent	Only English	Only mother tongue	Both
EMS=24	37.5% (09)	37.5% (09)	16.66% (04)
NEMS=32	6.25% (02)	62.5% (20)	31.5% (10)

In EMS, the majority of other subject teachers use English as well as mother tongue equally well for communication. In NEMS, the majority of teachers use mother tongue for talking with each other. Very few of them use English.

Table 6- Do the students get sufficient exposure to English in the school?

Respondent	Yes	No	Can't Say
EMS=24	83.33% (20)	8.33% (02)	8.33% (02)
NEMS=32	46.87% (15)	40.62% (13)	12.5% (04)

The majority of EMS teachers believe that their learners get sufficient exposure to English. In NEMS, although majority of teachers (46.87%) are in favor but 40.62% teachers disagree. It is clear that in NEMS the students do not get sufficient exposure which is also seen in all the previous five tables.

## Conclusion

In EMS, the majority of teachers use English while talking with their students (see table 1), the majority of students use English while responding/talking with their teachers (see table 2) and the majority of teachers use English while speaking with their fellow teachers as shown in table 3. The majority of students use English for talking with their peers (see table 4). To conclude, English is widely used by teachers as well as students .Whereas in NEMS; it is the mother tongue which is mostly used for communication. In EMS, the students get sufficient exposure to English whereas in NEMS, the students lack it. Thus in EMS, English becomes a major language used for conversation.

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### **Bio-note about Author**

The author has been working as an assistant professor in English in Shree Shivaji College, Rajura since 2000. He has 17 years of experience of teaching at graduation and post graduation programs. He recently completed a U.G.C. sponsored minor research project on *A Comparative Study of English Language Teaching in English and Marathi Medium Schools/Colleges from Grade 8 to 12*. He has published 18 research papers in various reputed national, international journals and conference proceedings and attended 41 conferences and seminars. At present, he is pursuing doctoral research on *Portrayal of the Marginalized Castes and Classes in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand*.