

Analyzing the Status of English Language Teaching in Madrasas for Local and Global Employment: Some Evidences from Murshidabad District of West Bengal

*Umme Salma¹, Raashid Nehal²

¹Ph.D. Scholar (ELT), Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University (A.M.U), Aligarh, U.P. India

²Professor, Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University (A.M.U), Aligarh, U.P. India

Corresponding Author: *Umme Salma

ABSTRACT: Curriculum in madrasas needs a lot of urgent attention and calls for a serious rethinking because this curriculum 'is not friendly to the job market in the contemporary world'. Although other modern subjects like, Sciences, Mathematics, Social studies, Logic (Mantik) are taught in these traditional institutions, English has not received great emphasis till now and not flourishing in madrasas. So, the centrality of English language in madrasas needs a great focus because 'we are fast moving into a world in which not to have English is to be marginalised and excluded'; and also to connect with the modern world whether it is for higher education or job opportunity English should be known to all. As the importance of English language for madrasa students in modern teaching method cannot be undermined, after classroom observation and analysing the textbook of class X of some selected madrasas of Murshidabad district of West Bengal, this paper tries to find out the issues regarding learning and teaching English language. It also gives some recommendation for improving the status of English syllabus to revive the future of madrasa students and make them employable locally and globally through English language.

Keywords: Madrasa, English language teaching, Contemporary world, Employment.

Date of Submission: 13-09-2017

Date of acceptance: 25-09-2017

I. INTRODUCTION

"It is a fact that Indian madrasas have produced a number of world famous Islamic scholars, but lakhs of Muslim educated from these madrasas are deprived of the job opportunities because of the ignorance of career-oriented education" (Upadhyay, 2003: 5). Although Madrasa Modernization Programme has come and various government policies try to make over the shortcomings of the curriculum but the syllabus is still following the same traditional method and approach. Most of the madrasas are following Mullah Nizamuddin's prepared curriculum, named, Dars-e-Nizami although they are belonging from different types of schools of Islam like, Ahl-e-Hadith, Salafiyya, Ahle-sunnat (Jhingran, 2010). From the very first there are some common subjects that are used to be taught like, translation of Glorious Quran, Tafseer, Tajweed (Art of Quranic pronunciation), Qirat (art of recitation of the Quran), Hadith, Philosophy, Arithmetic etc. (Qasmi, 2005a). The Quran and the traditions of Prophet (pbuh) are the crux of madrasa curriculum.

Besides, having its own existing curriculum system, by the influence of state school boards and Madrasa Modernization Programme some Madrasa Boards had come in some states like, Uttar Pradesh Madrasa Shiksha Parishad, Bihar Madrasa Board, West Bengal Board of Madrasa Education, Orissa Madrasa Board etc. These Boards have some secular subjects, but they are following the same traditional teaching method (Siddiqui, 2004). The Madrasa Education system in West Bengal was grown up and flourished with the foundation of the Calcutta Madrasa in 1780 by the British East India Company. At present, there are 614 recognised Madrasas in this state. Among these recognised madrasas, in Murshidabad district there are 55 high madrasas, 16 senior madrasas and 39 higher secondary madrasas existing. In these recognised madrasas both religious and secular subjects are taught at tenth level and in language group they have Arabic, Bengali and English subjects (<http://www.wbbme.org/> & <http://www.wbbme.org/recognisedMadrasahs.aspx>). "In 1870, English and Bengali were introduced as compulsory subjects, but later on the protest of the students English was made as an optional subject" (Ahmad, 1985: 69).

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the textbook and syllabus of English of class X in selected madrasas of Murshidabad district to find the need of the learners.
2. To find out how English is taught in classes and point out the issues regarding learning and teaching English.
3. To make suggestions for improving the status of English teaching in madrasas for local and global employment.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

By the end of eighteenth century when Mughal Empire was crumbling, the power of East India Company appeared and ruled over India. As an effect the whole scenario of economical, political and societal had changed very soon. In 1837 Persian was replaced by English language as official correspondence. Spreading of Christianity weakens the identity of Islam. Consequently for participating in the freedom fight of 1857 some Ulemas were hanged and English education seemed a threat to the madrasas and they began to believe that English education would damage the fundamentalism of Islam and it could mislead future generation (Qasmi, 2005a; Qasmi, 2005b; Sikand, 2005 & Zaman, 2001). As it becomes necessary to know English for government jobs Muslims felt they were going backward than others and introduction of English in madrasa curriculum became urgent need to encourage and strengthen the whole community with other secular subjects (Khan *et. al*, 2003). Although Sciences, Mathematics, Social studies, Logic (Mantik) are taught in these institutions, English has not received great emphasis till now. English language is not flourishing properly in madrasas. Nearly in all madrasas English is an optional subject. And if it is treated as compulsory subject in some board recognised madrasas, the level of teaching and learning English is so poor and so outmoded. (Kaur, 1990 & Fahimuddin, 2004).

Therefore, the centrality of English language in madrasas needs a great focus because madrasas are considered as marginalized and excluded because of lack of English language. As Graddol says, "we are fast moving into a world in which not to have English is to be marginalized and excluded" (Graddol, 2010 cited in Ghodke, 2015: 98).

IV. METHODOLOGY

1. Textbook analysis
2. Classroom observation.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Textbook analysis helps to find out which items of English language has been taught to the learners, whether the textbook is fulfilling the four basic skills of English language or not. Classroom observation of class X of some selected madrasas of Murshidabad district where English is taught, has been done to fulfill another objective of this study.

A. Findings of Textbook Analysis

The textbook for class tenth comprises with eight lessons consisting of prose and poems through which it is aimed that language skills of the learners are to be developed. All the prose and poems have comprehension exercises. Apart from comprehension exercises textbook is carrying language skills and functions which are as follows:-

Lesson 1 *Father's Help*: It is a prose and having some exercises at the end of the lesson which aim to strengthen the ability to use articles, prepositions and tenses properly, developing the skill to write letters to newspaper editors on various issues of public concerns.

Lesson 2 *Fable*: The poem, Fable, and its exercises at last aim to helping the learners to be able to transform sentences from one to another, use appropriate phrasal verbs in sentences and to write a paragraph based on given points and informal letters.

Lesson 3 *The Passing Away of Bapu*: The exercises of this prose aim to developing the ability to join and split the sentences, being able to write a process using flow-chart and also to write a biography based on given points.

Lesson 4 *My Own True Family*: The exercises of this poem reinforcing the ability to transform sentences and change the narration from direct to indirect speech and also developing skill to write notices.

Lesson 5 *Our Runaway Kite*: The grammar and writing exercises of this prose developing the ability to frame questions and also developing the skill to write a story based on given points and to write dialogues.

Lesson 6 *Sea Fever*: The exercises of this poem reinforcing the ability to transform sentences, to write a newspaper report and to summarise a given passage.

Lesson 7 *The Cat*: The exercises of grammar and writing of this prose focus again on reinforcing the ability to join and split sentences and also to write notices.

Lesson 8 *The Snail*: This last lesson of the textbook is a poem in which exercises focus on to develop the ability to frame questions and to write editorial letters.

It has been seen that this textbook, named *Bliss* for class tenth for madrasa students in Murshidabad district contains four prose and four poems. At the end of every lesson it is found that there are comprehension test with some questions which are based on the particular lesson and also consisting of exercises on grammar and writing skills. So, basically the textbook focuses on two basic skills i.e. Reading and Writing and also on grammar. And it does not deal with Listening and Speaking skills. Although in guidelines of the textbook it has been clearly written that the four skills of English language and expected competences are reflected in the syllabus but in actual, textbook content focuses only on reading and writing.

Reading skill: Students are asked to read the particular lesson, comprehend it and answer some basic questions like, true/false, complete the incomplete sentence, cause and effect, MCQs. The questions are following both the strategy of reading skill i.e. skimming and scanning which helps them to develop their reading ability.

Writing skill: Writing skill of every lesson carries newspaper report, notice, biography, story writing, paragraph, dialogue, letter (formal and informal). To develop writing skill there are a number of items to practice; but how far they have been taught in appropriate way or how far do they learn is described in detail in classroom observation section.

Grammar: Grammar is structure of any language. This textbook contains several number of grammar items like, article, preposition, tense, phrasal verb, joining and split sentences, voice and narration change, transformation of sentences etc. Basic information of grammar is there through which they can develop their knowledge of grammar but what do they actually learn and what approach (inductive or deductive) the teachers adopt for teaching grammar is discussed below.

B. Classroom Observation

After observing a number of classes few things can be highlighted regarding teaching and learning English language. For example, medium of instruction or teaching –learning method, learning approach, basic language skills, approach to learning grammar, way to do writing tasks etc.

It is observed in every class that medium of instruction is their mother tongue (Bengali) and the method of teaching-learning is Grammar Translation Method of teaching which they are following. Through this method the English teachers use to translate the textbook content into mother tongue i.e. Bengali.

The main aim of learning and teaching English is its actual implication in real situation. But as it is observed several times that they are following wrong approach rather than communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. ‘CLT focuses on learner’s communicative competence in social context and the interpretation and functions of language in different situations’ (Savignon, 2003 cited in Rasheed, 2012).

Only reading and writing skills get focused in textbook and it does not have any single activity on listening and speaking skills. Although it has been mentioned in syllabus and teachers are guided to fulfill all these competencies but in classroom conversational skill does not exist. Even classroom is mainly teacher oriented, students only seem as listeners.

In addition, a detailed discussion of grammar of English language is elaborated in every lesson but their way to learn grammatical rules or structures is deductive approach rather than inductive. As in deductive approach they try to memorize the rules of grammar at first and then apply it. Not only the rules and structures of grammar but they also memorize all the writing activities and the writing pattern also. Basically, rote-learning exists in these madrasas.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It is found that the Expert Committee for secondary education of West Bengal has prescribed a textbook named, *Bliss*, for tenth class in madrasas. This book aims to inculcate in learners love for the richness and variety of English language and literature. Moreover, it aims to expose learners’ thoughts and at the end of the each lesson sufficient exercises have been provided to measure and reinforce language skills and practice test are designed to encourage students’ participation. The committee aims to focus on child-centric, activity-based approach and has taken some effort to develop conversational skills. But, all these aims are prevailing only in written form and their implication is far-fetched. Learning process is only teacher-centred. In conversational skills only they are doing writing; moreover their way to develop writing skill is not appropriate. The learners try to memorize all the content which is in textbook and told by their teachers. Neither they have any activity in textbook on speaking skill nor do they practice in the classroom. Therefore, to conclude it can be suggested that English education system of madrasas “needs to re-imagine because rote learning is less important in a world of always-on internet and education needs to target the international Baccalaureate curriculum learner profile: curious, confident, risk taker, team player, communicator, reflective etc.” (The Times of India, 14 Dec. 2016). The expert committee should take some steps to redesign the textbook with more

skilful, effective and qualitative lessons which would cover all the skills of language. Not only this but committee should also conduct some training programme on effective teaching so that teachers would apply those in their classroom to motivate learners, engage them in interesting activities, make the classroom environment learner-centred, help them to develop their skills, fulfill the aims behind learning English language and make them employable locally and globally.

REFERENCES

- [1]. R. Upadhyay, Madrasa Education in India- Is it to sustain medieval attitude among Muslims? South Asia Analysis Group Follow. P. 4-5. 2003. <http://southasiaanalysis.org/paper730>.
- [2]. S. Jhingran, Madrasa Education in Modern India A Study Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2010.
- [3]. M. S. Qasmi, Madrasa Education Framework Markazul Ma'arif Education and Research Centre (MMERC), Mumbai, P. 01, 2005a.
- [4]. M. A. Siddiqui, Empowerment of Muslims through Education Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, 2004. <http://www.wbbme.org/> & <http://www.wbbme.org/recognisedMadrasahs.aspx>
- [5]. M. A. Ahmad, Traditional Education among Muslims (A Study of Some Aspects in Modern India) B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1985.
- [6]. M. K. Qasmi, Madrasa Education: Its Strength and Weakness Markazul Ma'arif Education and Research Centre (MMERC), Mumbai, 2005b.
- [7]. Y. Sikand, Bations of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India Penguin Books, India, 2005.
- [8]. M. S. Zaman, Problems of Minorities' Education in India Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, India, 2001.
- [9]. A. Khan, M. Saquib, and Z. H. Anjum, *To Kill the Mockingbird: Madrasah System in India: Past, Present and Future*, MIMEO, 2003. (www.indiachinacentre.org/bazaar/pdfs/madrasahs.pdf),
- [10]. K. Kaur, *Madrasa Education in India: A Study of its Past and Present* Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, 1990.
- [11]. Fahimuddin, *Modernization of Muslim Education in India* Adhyayan publishers & Distributors, Delhi, 2004.
- [12]. D. Graddol, *English next India: The future of English in India* India: British Council, 2010 cited in M. D. Ghodke, The Current State of ELT in Rural Areas: Rethinking the Possibilities. *The Journal of English Language Teaching (India) ELTAI* 57. 3. P. 98, 2015.
- [13]. S. J. Savignon, Teaching English as communication: A global perspective, *World Englishes*, 22 (1), pp. 55-66, 2003. Cited in M. M. H. Rasheed, Learning English Language in Bangladesh: CLT and Beyond, *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, 6:2, 2012.
- [14]. The Times of India, New Delhi/Agra, Wednesday, December 14, P. 16, 2016.

Web-Links:

- [15]. <http://www.wbbme.org/> & <http://www.wbbme.org/recognisedMadrasahs.aspx>

Annexure:

[1] *Bliss*. Second language. Class X. Published by Prof. Nabanita Chatterjee, Secretary, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, 77/2, Park Street, Kolkata- 700016. Printed at West Bengal Text Book Corporation Limited (Government of West Bengal Enterprise) Kolkata-700056

[2] Outline for Observation Checklist:

This outline helps to watch classes as well as both to guide and make a record for target class under observation. Keeping this observation sheet with a record of the work could be helpful to give a feel for the class and in writing observation report.

- i. Class:
- ii. Number of Students:
- iii. General attitude towards learning English (bored, motivated etc.)
- iv. Student needs (more structured practice, listening work, grammar e.g. tense work, specific lesson practice, speaking & reading exercises etc)-
- v. Student's difficulties (pronunciation of certain sounds, specific grammar points, listening/speaking/reading texts)-
- vi. How the teacher gives proper attention to learner's response and how s/he appreciates correct answers and adapt strategies-
- vii. Classroom management techniques:
 - a. Teacher with whole class.....
 - b. Pair work.....
 - c. Group work.....

- d. Choral repetition.....
- e. Individual work.....
- viii. Medium of instruction:
- ix. Use of mother tongue-
 - a. When?
 - b. What for?
- x. Focus on basic language skills:
 - a. Listening
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Reading
 - d. Writing
- xi. Approach to learning grammar:
- xii. How do they complete any writing task:
- xiii. Any other Comment/Observations:

IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

*Umme Salma. "Analyzing the Status of English Language Teaching in Madrasas for Local and Global Employment: Some Evidences from Murshidabad District of West Bengal." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) , vol. 22, no. 09, 2017, pp. 58–62.