INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

English is the 'Lingua Franca' of the world. With the IT Revolution and most of the software and operating systems being in English, a new utility for written and oral communication in English language has emerged. English is said to be the world's most important language having communicative and educative value. It is used all over the world not out of any imposition but because of the realization that it has certain advantages. A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world's knowledge is enshrined in English. It is a progressive language. It is dynamic and flexible. The English language is spoken or read by the
largest number of people in the world for historical, political and economic reasons. [Dr. K. T. Bhatia] Over and above this, English is universally renowned for its power of expression and rich in literature.

This emergence of English as the language of communication globally has brought into focus the issues around teaching this language in schools in parts of the world where it is not spoken as a native language. The gap still remains between the haves and have-nots, developed and developing, urban and the rural areas. Much is required to be done by the linguists, the polyglots, the scholars and the teachers to bridge the gap between the English literate and the English illiterate population of the world. We have to go into the intricacies of the English language and simplify the methodology of learning.

Language is a door through which a child contemplates the past, grasps the present and enters into the future. The world-widespread of British empire established English as the main source of information, knowledge and communication. In most of the African and Asian countries, English has become the national language. The English language is spoken or read by the largest number of people in the world for the extraordinary receptive and adaptable heterogeneousness, the simplicity and inflexion and the relatively fixed word order. [Wren C.L.] These qualities of English have helped English to develop as an international language. The role that language plays in the mental, emotional and social development of a person can never be sufficiently emphasized. It is through language that a person perceives not only his past, present and future, but also his own relationship with self and his environment. Hence, the study of English language should be, and is very important aspect of any educational programme.

English symbolizes in Indian minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. [Supriya Bhandari] In India, the study of English language acquires a different dimension altogether, due to diverse cultures and communities that constitute the nation. English is one of the languages in three language formula adopted by the government of the country and English was accepted as the practical solution to the multiplicity of languages in the country. The role of English in the present day life of any Indian, and the educational set up of the country can only be determined after one has reviewed the role that English played in India in the past.
The beginning of English in India is generally associated with Macaulay’s Minutes of 1835. The British opened up to Indians the doors of outside world through English language. Of course British rulers had their own purpose- to train Indians through English language, for initiating them in the services in their bureaucratic administration. However, this was a welcome initiative for Indians, as they were also involved in the flux of reformation.

Present day importance of English language in India

English as a library language acquaints Indians with global phenomenon within a short span of time across the world. It has become so popular that approximately 70% of official work is carried out in this language. It is used in seminars, meetings, discussions and negotiations to create international intellectual society. Education through English medium and knowledge of this language is very important in today’s world. Unfortunately, the approach adopted by Indian society towards learning of English has been mostly negative. There are obviously, certain reasonsto neglect it deliberately; however the fact lies in its importance in day to day life. Though it is neglected as a foreign language, we cannot deny its pivotal role in modern globalizing era. We cannot stand off without the knowledge of this language in this competitive globe. More practically, one cannot earn his bread and butter, unless he knows it.

Present Situation- Demographics

English language has overwhelmed the whole Indian society. Prominently, it has reached the urban society. But slum and rural India is deprived of it. Even after, around 175 years of its glorious history of learning English, India has remained at the back foot in popularizing this language and understanding its importance.

This situation is caused by several factors:

Indian Education System
Education system treats English as step mother. English is no longer a compulsory subject at the school and college level in many states of India. It is no longer the medium of instruction at the university level as well. Its study has become ‘optional’ in several parts of the country. In most of the universities English is taught only for one or two years of the degree programme. A few universities do not consider marks of English in students’ overall ranking. English is treated as a ‘half subject’ compared to other subjects. These facts give us a feeling that there has been decline in the status of English in India. Even in competitive examinations like Public service examinations, English is given less importance.

**Student interest**

Most of the state governments have introduced English from the primary level, yet some of the universities have made it a compulsory subject; students are unable to pick up this language. They cannot speak or write English even after graduation. The blame goes to teaching methods adopted by the teachers and also the negative attitude of students. Nevertheless, teaching English to students is difficult task particularly to those who are not interested in the academic curriculum, or not really aspiring to achieve competence in professional career.

**Media & Society**

National networks rarely use English except for the news programme, on a regular basis. Zee TV is more popular than BBC or Discovery channel and viewers prefer the Bollywood movies and soap operas in Hindi or regional languages. Hence we see that the need for English is changing too, and it can be clearly seen that English is becoming less and less popular. However, this is happening only, in some fractions of society.

**Teacher Quality**

To a great extent success of a teacher depends on how well he understands the needs of students. If he considers our learner’s needs, he can also help to motivate the learners. There is a dearth of competent and devoted English teachers who enjoy teaching and learning English. Prof. V. K. Gokak has rightly said,” the Foundational years for the teaching of English in schools are in the
hands of teachers who neither know enough English nor are familiar with the latest and far reaching development in the pedagogy of English" [Bhatia K.K.]

English language as a “window to the world” is necessary for higher studies, opening up areas of knowledge to the growing student. If we look at English as more than a library language, we will see that English is essential for learning instructions, writing letters of applications, academic reports, taking notes during lectures, phone conversations, in social contexts, instructions for doing something and so on and speaking in English is important when we talk to foreigners or to other Indians from different states and so on. It is not just for reading that English is needed. International media networks demand the use of one well known language which is English, which some parents do not understand. Hence they never inspire their children to speak, read and write in English. Knowledge of English not only empowers a person but it is also a status symbol.

Parents

Educated parents admit their children in English medium schools as they know the value of the language, which will enable their children to take higher education and foresee excellent career and decent life. But illiterate or semi-literate parents admit their children in vernacular medium schools as they think it is economical and easy to learn as medium of instruction is in mother tongue, so their children will get higher grades easily.

Need for research

Out of two approaches to learning language, English medium students acquaint very happily to the behaviorist approach, as they are exposed to English from pre-primary level and all subjects are taught in English. Whereas, special deliberate efforts are needed by vernacular medium students which requires the mentalist approach because vernacular medium students are exposed to English language only in the English period and all other subjects are taught in vernacular. Vernacular medium students in slum areas mostly belong either to lower middle class or lower socio-economic class. Vernacular students usually show much negativity in learning or understanding this language. They never take it seriously out of its fear or it seems beyond their mental reach.
Problems are severe particularly in slum area schools, where some schools do not have library facility. If it is available, there is lack of readable or interest oriented books. Teachers are occasionally efficient in but don’t impart their knowledge amongst students. Teaching methods and techniques are not appropriately implemented.

Teachers also have a very apathetic attitude while teaching this language. Teachers need to get the clarity that they should not teach English as a subject only to be taught but rather as a language to be imparted. In such a situation, teachers cannot teach effectively. Students don’t listen to teachers, teachers can’t control them and the saga goes on. Once the atmosphere becomes negative in this way, it continues further and neither student learns nor teacher teaches whole heartedly. Everybody aims at just marks or results. Students pass from one class to another without knowing the language. Even they get through at graduation or post-graduation level; they cannot write or speak English correctly.

The educational board has adopted schemes at regular intervals but no implementation is made. The students of vernacular medium, not habituated to lectures in English language, expect translation of each word and sentence in their mother tongue. This mindset is formed right from primary level. The teacher has to succumb and follow translation method which most suits the students. Ultimately both are the losers; students never get rid of the fear of English and do not show interest in learning it.

This is how the students of vernacular always lag behind and never improve and speak English fluently. They remain away from the opportunities to develop professionally and become international citizens. The prime objective in teaching English language is to develop communicative approach. In the class, when teacher starts teaching there remains no scope of interaction or discussion. Even Discussion method never works in teaching, as students never reciprocate. Lecture method, though not fruitful, is accepted as the most suitable method. It does not evoke students in learning English Language. Elocution competition, storytelling, class assembly, seminar, and debate are the best methods of learning but never adopted by teachers. Students hesitate to participate, and if participate, they do it parrot like. They do not put their head and heart. Students are too shy to speak due to fear and lack of confidence. This attitude
leads them to become non communicative and discourages language learning and the problem remains.

*Statement of the problem*

It is necessary to study the difficulties faced by the English teachers in Vernacular Medium Schools. Keeping in view this need, I have taken up the study for my research on ‘*Problems of teaching English to Vernacular Medium students of slum area of developing countries with special reference to Mumbai*’.

*Need and importance of the study*

It is difficult to obliterate the influence of mother – tongue. English teaching too is influenced by mother tongue in India. The students in slum areas are deprived of better life. The basic skills of English listening, reading, writing and speaking should be well developed in school days. Good knowledge of English will help them to change their life in future by obtaining good education and good jobs. If good education is provided to slum students, especially of English as it is a global language, we can help to minimize the dropouts and improve their standard of living.