1. Review of Literature

India has near about 1.2 million schools. Lakhs of students are studying in these schools. All of them do not have the luxury of studying in an English medium school. Though they have to study one subject in English, it is observed that they have to struggle in it. Therefore it is very important for us to understand the problems faced by vernacular medium students.

But before we go further, it is important to understand the different definition given on some important linguistic terms.

What is Linguistics and Language?

1. “Linguistic is the scientific study of language” (Lyons, John, 2001)
2. “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates.” (Bloch and Trager, 1945:5)
3. “Languages do not only vary between countries, however. They also vary within the countries. Schools in large cities are often attended by children who speak many different languages. And not only are many different languages spoken within primarily English-speaking countries like Britain and the US: there is also a great deal of variation within English itself.” (Thomas, Linda and Wareing, Shân 2000)
4. “Language as a form of communication (in the widest sense) is entirely arbitrary in its relation to what is communicated. Before the establishment of conventions, any word could mean anything” (Chao, Yuen Ren 1980)
5. “The Study of language in the twentieth century has tended to concentrate on spoken language. Written language was thought by some to be spoken language put into written” (Brookes, Arthur and Grundy, Peter, 1998)
6. “In the simplest definition, language contact is use of more than one language in the same place at the same time.” (Thomason, Sarah Grey 2001)
7. “According to the latest count by ethnologies, close to 7000 Languages exist in the world (the exact number in the 2005 edition is 6,912 languages). The area with the fewest languages is Europe (only 239 languages) and the area with the most languages is Asia (2,269).” (Grosjean, Francois, 2010)
8. “Babies learn the first rudiments of social interaction a long time before they can actually utter anything that sounds like language.” (Harding-Esch, Edith and Riley, Philip, 2003)

9. “A child learning a Language is learning about the world, about how it is organized and how it works. This is very different, if only in degree, from the adult learning a second language, who tends to work the other way round. He brings his world with him and uses the language to try to express it.” (Harding-Esch, Edith and Riley, Philip, 2003)

10. “Certain dialects or groups of dialect have greater prestige than others, and it is these which we usually refer to as ‘Language’. But this prestige has nothing to do with the intrinsic qualities of the dialects in the question. They are not more beautiful, more logical or older than the other dialects.” (Harding-Esch, Edith and Riley, Philip, 2003)

What is second Language Acquisition?

1. “The systematic study of how people acquire a second language (often referred to as L2) is fairly recent phenomenon, belonging to the second half of the twentieth century. Its emergence at this time is perhaps no accident. This has been the time of the ‘global village’ and the ‘World Wide Web’.” (Ellis, Rod, 2003)

2. “L2 acquisition”, then, can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom, and “Second Language Acquisition” (SLA)- as a study of this.” (Ellis, Rod, 2003)

3. “A second language is typically an officially or societally dominant language needed for education, employment, and other basic purposes. It is often acquired by minority group members or immigrants who speak another language natively. In this more restricted sense, the term is contrasted with other term in this list.” (Saville-Troike, Muriel, 2006)

4. “Within the behaviorist theory, all learning – including language learning- is seen as the acquisition of a new behavior.” (VanPatten, bill and Williams, “Jessica, 2007)

5. Finally, Deuchar and Quay(2000) define bilingual Acquisition as,” the acquisition of two languages in childhood”, although they point to the difficulties involved in this definitions, given the many situations that can be in place.

Definition of bilingualism over the years….
1. “Bilingualism [is] native like control of two languages… of course, one cannot define a degree of perfection at which a good foreign speaker becomes a bilingual: the distinction is relative” (L. Boomfield, 1933)
2. “Bilingualism is understood…to begin at the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language.” (E. Haugen, 1953)
3. “The phenomenon of bilingualism (is) something entirely relative… We shall therefore consider bilingualism as the alternate use of two or more language by the same individual.” (W. F. Mackey, 1962)
4. “The bilingual or wholistic view of bilingualism proposes that the bilingual is an integrated whole which cannot easily be decomposed into two separate parts. The bilingual is NOT the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific linguistic configuration.” (F. Grosjean, 1992)
5. “Bilingualism refers to the phenomenon of competence and communication in two languages….. A bilingual society is one in which two languages are used for communication. In bilingual society, it is possible to have a large number of monolinguals….. provided there are enough bilinguals to perform the functions requiring bilingual competence in that society. There is, therefore, a distinction between individual bilingualism and societal bilingualism. (A. Lam, 2001 “Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition” (Patten, Bill Van and Benati, Alessandro G., 2010)
6. “bilingualism are those who use two or more language (or dialects) in their everyday life” (Grosjean, Francois, 2010)
7. “The 1950 Constitution of independent India lays down special provision for Tribal areas, “considering the specific needs of protection and development, and for special care of the education and the economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and all forms of Schedule Tribe” (Article 46) Khubchandani, Lachman M.(1983)
8. Teaching academic ESL writing: practical techniques in vocabulary and grammarBy Eli Hinkel( Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, inc. NJ, 2004) “In the past two decades, a number of publications have emerged to point out that, despite having studied English as well as academic writing in English in their native and English – speaking countries, non-native speaking students experience a great deal of difficulties in their studies at the college and university level in English- speaking countries.(Hinkel, 2002a; Johns, 1997; Johnson, 1989a; Jordan, 1997; Leki and Carson, 1997; Prior, 1998; Santos, 1988)
9. Hyland, Ken (2002a) summed up the entire issue with the applicability and usefulness of peer response in L2 writing classes: “The benefits of peer response have been hard to confirm empirically, however, particularly in ESL classrooms, and many studies have reported that students themselves doubt its value, overwhelmingly preferring teachers feedback.”

10. “A Marathi-Hindi-English trilingual writes: ‘When I first went to school, I did not know English, but I started English as a subject in secondary school, and then English was the medium of instruction at college.’” (Grosjean, Francois, 2010)

11. “Another important factor that characterizes bilinguals concerns the functions of their languages: which languages (and language skills) they use, in what context, for what purpose, and to what extent. We know, for example, that with many bilinguals only one language is used for certain specific domains (such as at work, for religious practices), whereas others may cross domains (as when several languages are used with friends.)” (Grosjean, Francois, 2010)

12. “Bilingualism usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life often require different languages.” (Grosjean, Francois, 2010)

13. “Unlike the prevalent attitudes previously maintained by individuals with different linguistic histories, bilingual groups are now demanding more understanding from our society.” (Javier, Rafael Art, 2007)

14. Bilingualism, according to Baker(2001), is the ability to use more than one language

15. “Traditionally, bilingual language use has been studied from the perspective of the language itself, and not of its speakers, leading scholars to characterize bilingual speech as reflecting language contact.” (Garcia, Ofelia, 2009)

Second language acquisition is one field where lots of research is taking place. English has emerged as a major language which is bringing the world closer. In many instructional methods an assumption is made that focusing on linguistic form will aid the acquisition of grammatical language. But the learner when he is putting the acquired language in writing there is conflict between his native language and the acquired language.
As said by Stephen Krashen, “Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language, natural communication- in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.”

Successful academic writing involves, among other things, the ability to integrate information from previous researchers in relevant areas of study. So even though students are aware of the things, they are unable to put it in words. As Menon and Patel state, “Some English tenses cannot be translated into the simple tenses of the Indian languages; for the perfect and indefinite present.” (Sharma, 2006)

This is actually the problem faced by the vernacular medium student. Though they may understand the question, they are unable to answer it, as they can’t find the words to translate in English.

It is the human tendency to think in a language which is very familiar to us. Usually our thinking language is our mother tongue or native language. Whenever anyone is learning a second language, he tends to translate the words from his mother tongue to the language he is learning. But the grammar structures, of English and Indian languages, are not similar. So, naturally, vernacular medium student tend to make mistake while translating. This same mistake is carried forward when these students are writing their English paper. As Shanti Sarup defines, “This method (translating) fails to capture the delicate shades of meaning, local colour and secondary meaning. The subtle differences in the meanings of the words: happiness, joy, gladness, rapture, trance, ecstasy etc., are not made clear in the mother-tongue.” (Sharma, 2006)

Obviously, grammar, aural comprehension, reading, and even oral production are to varying degrees involved in writing. Certainly we cannot teach a writing course which never touches these areas. But at the same time teaching a writing course which covers only these areas is redundant. But that is what is happening when we are teaching English to vernacular medium students. This leads to vernacular medium students showing poor performance when writing English paper.