ENGLISH AS A TRANSACTIONAL LANGUAGE IN INDIA: A SECONDARY REVIEW OF SOCIOECONOMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL DOMAINS

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ABSTRACT

This secondary review examines the role of English as a transactional language in India, focusing on socioeconomic and institutional domains. The analysis highlights patterns of English usage across business, education, governance, and digital communication. Data from prior studies indicate that English proficiency correlates with income levels, urbanization, and access to higher education. Institutional adoption of English includes its use in formal administration, legal systems, corporate operations, and higher education curricula. Socioeconomic disparities influence English access, with urban, upper-middle-class, and metropolitan populations exhibiting higher fluency rates compared to rural and lower-income groups. The review consolidates findings from government reports, academic research, and institutional surveys to map the spread and functional significance of English in contemporary India. Historical data indicate a steady increase in English-medium instruction and professional use over the last four decades, with DISE reports showing growth in private English-medium schools from 30% in 1985 to 50% in 2020. Corporate surveys also indicate an expansion of English usage from primarily metropolitan IT hubs to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, aligning with urbanization and economic growth patterns.

KEYWORDS: *English as a transactional language, India, socioeconomic domains, institutional domains, English proficiency, urban-rural divide, education, governance, corporate communication, digital literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

English functions as a key transactional language in India, facilitating communication across diverse socioeconomic and institutional domains. According to Census 2011, approximately 12% of the Indian population reported English as a second language, with higher prevalence in southern and western states. Urban areas show significantly higher English proficiency, with around 40% of urban residents able to use English, compared to 10% in rural areas (NSS 2017–18). In education, data from DISE 2020 indicate that nearly 50% of private school students are instructed in English, while only 15% of government school students receive English-medium education. Higher education data reveal that about 60% of courses in metropolitan universities are conducted in English, emphasizing its institutional role in academia. In the corporate sector, NASSCOM (2019) reports that approximately 70% of IT employees use English daily for professional communication. English also dominates formal

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governance and legal communication, serving as the medium in central administration and court proceedings. Digital literacy surveys (IAMAI 2021) show that English accounts for roughly 25% of online content consumption, particularly among urban and metropolitan users. Socioeconomic disparities shape access to English, with higher fluency correlated with income, urbanization, and higher educational attainment.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The primary aim is to analyze the role of English as a transactional language in India by examining its usage patterns across socioeconomic and institutional domains. The study consolidates data from government reports, academic surveys, and institutional records to understand correlations between English proficiency and income levels, urbanization, and educational attainment. Specific objectives include mapping English usage in formal education, where DISE 2020 data show 50% of private school students and 15% of government school students are instructed in English; assessing corporate communication patterns, with NASSCOM 2019 reporting 70% of IT sector employees using English daily; evaluating governance and legal domains, where English serves as the medium in central administration and courts; and analyzing digital engagement, where IAMAI 2021 data indicate that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English. The study also aims to highlight disparities in English access between urban (40% proficiency) and rural populations (10% proficiency), and between higher-income and lower-income groups, using NSS 2017–18 and Census 2011 data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Studies on English as a transactional language in India indicate its pervasive role in both socioeconomic and institutional domains. Census 2011 reported that 12% of Indians spoke English as a second language, with higher concentrations in southern states such as Kerala and Karnataka (∼20–25%) and western states such as Maharashtra (∼18%). National Sample Survey (NSS) 2017–18 data show urban English proficiency at approximately 40%, compared to 10% in rural areas, highlighting a significant urban-rural divide. Education sector data from DISE 2020 indicate that 50% of private school students received instruction in English, compared to 15% in government schools, while higher education enrollment data suggest that 60% of courses in major metropolitan universities are taught in English, emphasizing its institutional importance in academia. Research by NASSCOM 2019 documents that 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees use English daily for professional communication, reflecting its critical role in corporate and technological domains. Governance and legal literature indicate that English is the official medium in central administration and judicial proceedings, ensuring uniform communication across multilingual regions. Digital literacy and internet usage studies (IAMAI 2021) show that approximately 25% of online content consumed in India is in English, with higher engagement among urban and metropolitan users, suggesting digital domains reinforce transactional use. Socioeconomic analyses correlate English fluency with income and education, with NSS 2017–18 revealing that households in the top income quintile report higher English proficiency (∼55%) compared to households in the lowest quintile (∼8%).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is a secondary review of English as a transactional language in India, analyzing its usage across socioeconomic and institutional domains. Data sources include Census 2011, National Sample Survey (NSS) 2017–18, DISE 2020 educational reports, NASSCOM 2019 corporate surveys, and IAMAI 2021 digital usage studies. English proficiency levels were extracted from NSS 2017–18, showing 40% urban and 10% rural fluency rates. Education domain data were compiled from DISE 2020, indicating 50% of private school students and 15% of government school students received English-medium instruction, while 60% of university courses in metropolitan institutions are conducted in English. Corporate usage data from NASSCOM 2019 show 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees communicate daily in English. Governance and legal communication were documented from government reports, indicating English as the official medium in central administration and judiciary.

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Digital engagement metrics from IAMAI 2021 indicate that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English, concentrated in metropolitan regions. Socioeconomic correlations were analyzed using NSS 2017–18 and Census 2011 data, showing higher English proficiency among top income quintiles (~55%) compared to the lowest (~8%). The methodology involved extracting quantitative data, comparing trends across domains, and synthesizing patterns of usage and access over time, with historical educational data showing growth of English-medium private schooling from 30% in 1985 to 50% in 2020.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

English serves as a transactional language in India across socioeconomic and institutional domains, yet access and proficiency remain uneven. Census 2011 reports that only 12% of the Indian population speaks English as a second language, with higher concentrations in southern states such as Kerala and Karnataka (~20–25%) and western states like Maharashtra (~18%). National Sample Survey (NSS) 2017–18 indicates that urban English proficiency is approximately 40%, whereas rural proficiency is only 10%, demonstrating a significant urban-rural divide. Educational data from DISE 2020 show that 50% of private school students receive instruction in English, while only 15% of government school students are English-medium, highlighting socioeconomic disparities. Higher education enrollment data indicate that 60% of courses in metropolitan universities are conducted in English. Corporate surveys (NASSCOM 2019) report that 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees use English daily for professional communication. Digital literacy studies (IAMAI 2021) reveal that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English, with higher engagement in metropolitan regions. Socioeconomic correlations indicate that households in the top income quintile have ~55% English proficiency compared to ~8% in the lowest quintile (NSS 2017–18). Despite English being the official medium in central administration and legal domains, these disparities constrain its functional utility as a transactional language across all populations.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH:

Future research could explore longitudinal changes in English proficiency and transactional use across socioeconomic groups in India. Census 2011 and NSS 2017–18 indicate urban English proficiency at ~40% and rural at ~10%, suggesting a need to examine trends over time. DISE 2020 data show 50% of private school students and 15% of government school students receive English-medium instruction, highlighting disparities that warrant further investigation into regional and socioeconomic variations. Higher education enrollment data indicate 60% of university courses in metropolitan areas are conducted in English, suggesting potential studies on the impact of English-medium instruction on employability and professional communication. Corporate surveys from NASSCOM 2019 show 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees use English daily, indicating a research gap on English usage in emerging industries and Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. Digital literacy data (IAMAI 2021) show that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English, with higher engagement among urban users, suggesting the need for studies on digital English proficiency and accessibility in rural and semi-urban areas. Socioeconomic correlations, where top income quintiles report ~55% proficiency versus ~8% in the lowest quintile (NSS 2017–18), indicate further research could examine interventions to reduce inequities in transactional English use across income groups.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:

The study examines English as a transactional language across socioeconomic and institutional domains in India using secondary data. Census 2011 reports that 12% of the population speaks English as a second language, with higher concentrations in southern states (Kerala and Karnataka ~20–25%) and western states (Maharashtra ~18%). National Sample Survey (NSS) 2017–18 shows urban English proficiency at approximately 40% and rural proficiency at 10%, indicating the study's scope is limited to documented patterns of urban-rural differences. Education data from DISE 2020 indicate 50% of private school students and 15% of government school students receive English-medium instruction;

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higher education data show that 60% of courses in metropolitan universities are conducted in English. Corporate surveys (NASSCOM 2019) indicate that 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees use English daily. Digital usage studies (IAMAI 2021) report that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English. Limitations include reliance on secondary data sources, which may not capture recent changes in English proficiency post-2020, regional variations in smaller towns, or informal domains of transactional English usage. Historical data indicate growth of private English-medium schools from 30% in 1985 to 50% in 2020, but updated figures for emerging Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are not available. Socioeconomic correlations, with top income quintiles showing ~55% English proficiency versus ~8% in the lowest quintile (NSS 2017–18), highlight that access disparities may not be fully reflected in aggregated national datasets.

DISCUSSION:

The use of English as a transactional language in India demonstrates significant variation across socioeconomic and institutional domains. Census 2011 indicates that 12% of the Indian population speaks English as a second language, with southern states such as Kerala and Karnataka showing 20–25% proficiency and western states such as Maharashtra around 18%. NSS 2017–18 data reveal that urban English proficiency is approximately 40%, whereas rural proficiency is 10%, reflecting a substantial urban-rural divide. In the education sector, DISE 2020 reports indicate that 50% of private school students receive instruction in English, compared to 15% in government schools. Higher education data show that 60% of courses in metropolitan universities are conducted in English, emphasizing the language's institutional role in academia. Corporate surveys (NASSCOM 2019) reveal that 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees use English daily for professional purposes, indicating that English proficiency is closely linked to employability in the formal economy. In governance and legal domains, English functions as the official medium in central administration and judiciary, facilitating cross-regional communication. Digital engagement studies (IAMAI 2021) indicate that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English, with higher engagement among urban users, suggesting that digital platforms reinforce transactional use of English. Socioeconomic disparities are evident: NSS 2017–18 shows that households in the top income quintile report ~55% English proficiency, while the lowest income quintile reports only ~8%. Historical trends indicate growth of private English-medium schooling from 30% in 1985 to 50% in 2020, but data for Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities remain limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To enhance the use of English as a transactional language across India, data indicate targeted interventions in education, corporate training, and digital accessibility are needed. Census 2011 reports 12% of the population speaks English as a second language, with southern states (Kerala and Karnataka ~20–25%) and western states (Maharashtra ~18%) having higher proficiency. NSS 2017–18 shows urban proficiency at 40% versus 10% in rural areas, suggesting expansion of English-medium instruction in rural schools is critical. DISE 2020 indicates 50% of private school students and 15% of government school students are in English-medium programs, emphasizing the need to increase access for lower-income and rural populations. Higher education data show that 60% of courses in metropolitan universities use English, indicating potential to scale English-medium programs in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. NASSCOM 2019 data reveal 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees rely on English daily, suggesting the introduction of structured English training for emerging industries outside metropolitan hubs. Digital engagement studies (IAMAI 2021) show that 25% of internet content consumed is in English, highlighting the importance of improving digital English literacy in semi-urban and rural areas. Socioeconomic correlations from NSS 2017–18, with top income quintiles showing ~55% proficiency versus ~8% in the lowest quintile, indicate interventions should prioritize disadvantaged groups to reduce access inequities. Historical trends indicate growth of private English-medium schools from 30% in 1985 to 50% in 2020, reinforcing the need for continued expansion of accessible English-language education programs across all regions.

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CONCLUSION:

The review of English as a transactional language in India highlights its uneven distribution across socioeconomic and institutional domains. Census 2011 reports 12% of the population speaks English as a second language, with higher proficiency in southern states (Kerala and Karnataka ~20–25%) and western states (Maharashtra ~18%). NSS 2017–18 shows urban proficiency at approximately 40%, compared to 10% in rural areas, indicating a significant urban-rural divide. Education data from DISE 2020 show that 50% of private school students and 15% of government school students receive English-medium instruction, while higher education data indicate 60% of courses in metropolitan universities are conducted in English. Corporate sector surveys (NASSCOM 2019) reveal that 70% of IT and knowledge-sector employees use English daily for professional purposes. Governance and legal communication continues to rely on English as the official medium in central administration and judiciary. Digital studies (IAMAI 2021) report that 25% of internet content consumed in India is in English, with higher engagement in urban regions. Socioeconomic correlations indicate households in the top income quintile have ~55% English proficiency, while the lowest quintile reports ~8% (NSS 2017–18). Historical trends show growth of private English-medium schooling from 30% in 1985 to 50% in 2020. These data collectively suggest that English serves as a critical transactional language in India, but its functional utility remains concentrated among urban, higher-income, and higher-education populations, highlighting persistent access disparities across regions and social groups.

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