



Influence of Environment on Learning English Language in HEIs In India

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Abstract— *The study explores how different aspects of a student's environment shape their ability to learn English language in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Haryana. A survey of 445 undergraduates provided insights into four key areas: physical environment, socio-cultural attitudes, family influence, and teacher support. The results exhibit that well ventilated and lit classrooms and libraries stocked with relevant books encourage learning, while language labs and peer conversations in English remain a matter of concern. Social acceptance of English and family encouragement, such as sending children to English-medium schools, play a strong role in motivating learners. Teachers too make a noteworthy difference by creating supportive and engaging classrooms. Interestingly, female students reported greater family and cultural support than their male counterparts. Overall, the study highlights that language learning thrives when all these elements work together to create a positive ecosystem for English education.*

Keywords— English, Family, HEIs, Learning Environment, Physical environment, Teacher's Support, Socio-cultural Environment

I. INTRODUCTION

Environment is the aggregate of surroundings and conditions in which we survive and thrive. It includes some total of external factors that directly or indirectly influence our living. Learning environment refers to the factors that affect learning outcomes of the students at various levels. Learning English language is not merely confined to developing skills related to reading, writing, speaking and listening, in fact it goes beyond this and emphasises on building cross-cultural communication competencies among individuals.

English as language should not be visualised as an opponent of native Indian languages but should be seen as common means of communication across boundaries of states and nation. In addition to being used in Anglophone nations, English is also shared by other non-native speaker populations (Lamb, 2004). Learning a language gets affected by numerous environmental factors. The four pillars of language learning environment are physical environment, socio-cultural environment, family

environment and teacher's support that significantly influence English language learning abilities of the students.

The physical learning environment includes variables like ventilation, seating arrangement, lighting and audio-visual aids present in the classroom which considerably influence comfort, focus and motivation among students. Moreover, novel and appealing tasks within well equipped physical spaces enhance motivation (Zohoorian, 2015). Socio-cultural influences determine the acceptability of a language as a medium of communication. It also influences the language stereotypes creating biases among the language users and affecting their receptivity to a particular language. Additionally, learning processes, personalities, and personal traits are all influenced by culture (Choomthong & Chaichompoo, 2015). Even the social class influences the language choices. According to socio-cultural variables, students actively contribute to the development of learning processes (Ozfidan et al., 2014).

Literature has confirmed that family attitudes and practices mould learning behaviour (Imsa-Ard, 2020). Family is considered as the first school of a child where he/she gets the first hand exposure to language skills. Family builds linguistic foundation of a child which subsequently gets affected by other environmental factors. Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) underline that reading habits and support of parents promotes English language literacy at an early stage. The attitude and receptivity of family members to a language greatly determine a learner's motivation to grasp the subject matter. For children to learn English, the family must create a safe, quiet, and happy environment in which they can study (Agarwal and Thakur, 2014). Encouraging parental support also enhances motivation and confidence among learners (Wilder, 2014). Parental involvement positively impacts student academic outcomes (Graves & Wright 2011). Finally, the support provided by the language teacher is of utmost importance. How comfortable and participative a student is in the language class, shapes the learning outcomes. The objective of the research work is to investigate the effect of learners'

environment on learning English language in Higher Education Institutions in India with special reference to Haryana.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The current research uses data collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were got filled from the students enrolled in degree colleges at undergraduate level in Haryana. The instrument included statements pertaining to learners' learning environment that includes prominently the physical environment, socio-cultural environment, family environment and teacher's support. The students were asked to mark their choices on five point Likert scale on which the choices vary from strongly disagree coded as one to strongly agree that is coded as 5. The interpretation of mean from a 5-point summated agreement scale is as follows: Strongly Agree = 5 – 4.51, Agree = 4.5 – 3.51, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3.5 – 2.51, Disagree = 2.5 – 1.51, Strongly Disagree = 1.5 – 1.

Table 1: Details of Data Collection

Survey Instrument	No. of Questionnaires Circulated	Response Received	Found Usable	Response rate
Questionnaire	500	468	445	89%

Source: Author's compilation

The sampling area included three districts included in Hisar administrative division of Haryana, namely, Jind, Hisar and Bhiwani. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed to college students. The responses which were incomplete or straight were removed. So, finally 445 responses (Table 1) were found to be complete in all respect leading to a satisfactory response rate of 89 percent. There were 233 female respondents and 212 male respondents. Statistical methods, namely, mean, standard deviation, one-sample t-test and independent sample t-test were used to analyse the data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' learning eco-system considerably influences their propensity to learn English language. It not only builds their attitude towards the language but also affects their motivation to learn the language. Healthy and encouraging environment often promotes better learning, skill development and develops positive attitude. On the other hand, unhealthy, negative and obstructive environment leads to disappointment and frustration. The prime environmental elements included in the study are

physical environment, socio-cultural environment, family environment and teacher's support.

3.1 Physical Environment

Physical environment includes college and classroom and is represented by six statements. The students unanimously agree that language lab in the colleges are less effective in making them learn English with a mean score of 2.12 (Table 2) which is significantly lower than the neutral score 3. Though there is significant difference in response of female and male students with respect to language labs but both the mean scores are below 2.5 indicating that they all disagree with the statement. Students strongly agree that their libraries have adequate number of books to learn English (mean= 3.83). There is a neutral score (mean=2.96) for students' opinion regarding the provision of audio-visual aids that assist in learning language. The students strongly agree (mean=3.71) that the recommended textbooks are useful in preparation for English exam and agree that the classrooms are properly ventilated and have adequate lighting. This shows that the class room physical environment and well equipped libraries are an asset to HEIs in Haryana. The students' informal communication is not in English

with mean = 2.30 which is significantly lower than the neutral value of 3. Further, analysing across gender, it may be inferred that both male and female students think alike

about the effect of physical environment on their learning of English language except in case of language labs as indicated by independent sample t-test results.

Table 2: Influence of Physical Environment on Learning English

Statement	Mean	SD	t-Value (one-sample)	p-Value	Gender Mean (F)	Gender Mean (M)	t-Value (independent sample)	p-Value
My institution has a language lab that helps in learning English.	2.12	1.115	-16.710	0.000	1.979	2.269	-2.764	0.006
My institution has adequate books in the library to aid English learning.	3.83	0.911	19.256	0.000	3.820	3.844	-0.284	0.776
My classroom has sufficient audio-visual aids that assist in learning language.	2.96	1.239	-0.765	0.444	3.009	2.896	0.951	0.342
The recommended textbooks are useful in preparation for English exam.	3.71	0.930	16.116	0.000	3.691	3.731	-0.455	0.650
The classrooms are properly ventilated and have adequate lighting.	3.66	1.143	12.196	0.000	3.601	3.726	-1.158	0.247
My classmates prefer talking in English during informal conversations.	2.39	1.232	-10.507	0.000	2.442	2.325	0.997	0.319

3.2 Socio-cultural Environment

Social and cultural norms significantly shape ones personality, behaviour and attitude. Numerous researchers have investigated the extent and direction in which socio-cultural factors restrain or motivate acquisition of English. Socio-cultural environment has been primarily mapped with the help of four statements presented in Table 3. All the mean values are towards agreement ($3.5 \leq \text{mean} \leq 4.5$) except for the second statement in the table. Students collectively agree that speaking in English helps one to earn respect in the society. The mean value is 3.71 which is statistically significant. Students are neutral to the status of

English language as a lingua-franca as evident from mean score 3.23. Indian culture allows students to use English as a medium of communication (mean=3.77). Further, the respondents agree that, in a country like India where people use diverse languages and belong to different cultures, English serves as a common medium of conversations and exchange of ideas. A detailed segmented analysis of responses across gender brings forth that female respondents have higher degree of agreement in comparison to male counterparts with respect to statement 3 and 4 (Table 3) as evident from significant t-values.

Table 3: Influence of Socio-cultural Environment on Learning English

Statement	Mean	SD	t-Value	p-Value	Gender Mean (F)	Gender Mean (M)	t-Value	p-Value
One who speaks English commands respect in the society.	3.71	0.953	15.712	0.000	3.644	3.783	-1.569	0.117
Speaking in English is acceptable to everyone around me.	3.23	1.109	4.317	0.000	3.322	3.123	1.898	0.058
My culture allows me to speak in English.	3.77	0.917	17.684	0.000	3.983	3.533	5.223	0.000
English as a common medium of communication unites people of a multilingual country like India.	4.10	0.916	25.361	0.000	4.206	3.986	2.548	0.011

3.3 Family Environment

Family is the basic unit of the society and the role of parents in learning process of a child is considerable. Parents support their children economically and emotionally. The present study has four statements describing family's role in learning English language. Students agree that their parents appreciate them when they speak English (mean=4.21). Parents take it as a matter of pride that their child is fluent in English thus creating a positive environment for learners of the language. This feeling is much stronger in girls in comparison to boys as the mean score for girls is 4.38 which is significantly higher than mean score of boys which is 4.01. Parents and other family members are not habitual of talking in English at home. This gets reflected in significantly low

mean score of 2.73. Male students disagreement regarding use of English in family conversation is much higher than female students whose attitude tends more towards neutral score of three. Majority students said that their families sent them to English medium school. This exhibits positive attitude of the family towards English. Female students strongly opine that their families send them to English medium school as reflected by the mean score 4.51. Parents are ready to spare extra money to make their children fluent in English language (mean score= 4.29). this implies they feel that English communication skills would make their children not only employable but also would make them well-groomed to face future challenges of life.

Table 4: Influence of Family Environment on Learning English

Statement	Mean	SD	t-Value	p-Value	Gender Mean (F)	Gender Mean (M)	t-Value	p-Value
My family appreciates me when I speak in English.	4.21	0.887	28.713	0.000	4.386	4.009	4.578	0.000
My family converses with me in English.	2.73	1.068	-5.415	0.000	3.000	2.425	5.888	0.000
My family sent me to English medium school.	4.44	0.963	31.602	0.000	4.515	4.363	1.664	0.097
My family is ready to spend extra money, so that I may improve my English.	4.29	0.827	32.906	0.000	4.288	4.292	-0.062	0.950

3.4 Teacher's Support

Teacher support has a notably affirmative effect on English language learning as it enhances a student's desire to learn, engagement in the classroom and improves academic scorecard. Students who get teacher support tend to extensively engage in classroom activities. It fosters a safe and inclusive classroom experience. Teacher's support is represented by four statement given in Table 5. Mean

values for all the statements is above 3.5, implying thereby that the students feel that adequate teacher's support in and outside the classroom enhances their motivation to learn English language. Students agree that they enjoy their English classes (mean=3.52). This might be attributed to the fact that usually the classes are participative and cater to varied learning abilities and styles of the native students of Haryana.

Table 5: Influence of Teacher's Support on Learning English

Statement	Mean	SD	t-Value	p-Value	Gender Mean (F)	Gender Mean (M)	t-Value	p-Value
I enjoy my English class.	3.52	1.062	10.308	0.000	3.476	3.566	-0.889	0.375
English teacher's teaching style encourages me to learn and speak English.	3.56	1.055	11.102	0.000	3.519	3.594	-0.749	0.454
Teacher creates supportive environment to learn English.	3.68	0.959	15.027	0.000	3.691	3.675	0.181	0.857
Teacher gives adequate information, guidance and counseling to learn English.	3.67	1.051	13.441	0.000	3.618	3.726	-1.087	0.278

Further, both male and female students agree that teacher's teaching style builds a positive environment and encourages students to speak in English (mean=3.56). Teachers may create supportive environment by encouraging classroom discussions and query handling in English. They may ask students do role plays and give presentations in English. Students are satisfied the extent of information, guidance and counselling given by teachers as evident from significant mean value(mean=3.68) of the variable. The study found no gender based differences in the opinion of students regarding teacher's support.

IV. CONCLUSION

Learning language skills is an ever evolving process which gets influenced by numerous environmental factors. The primary factors influencing learning of English language by college students are physical environment, socio-cultural environment, family environment and teacher's support. All these factors positively contribute to the language learning process. Female students perceive stronger socio-cultural support and more positive family environment. Language labs and audio-visual aids need to be strengthened to aid learning in the colleges. Interpersonal informal communication among peers and family is not in English which strongly influences English language proficiency. In nut shell, an all-inclusive approach that encompasses interplay of all the four environmental elements is indispensable for creating an optimal environment for learning English language.

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