



Representation Of Communicative Competence In English Language Textbooks In India And Oman: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This research endeavors to scrutinize the depiction of communicative competence within English language textbooks utilized in the educational spheres of India and Oman. Adopting a comparative analytical approach, the study delves into the integration and implications of communicative competence in English Language Teaching (ELT) across these two diverse geopolitical landscapes. Communicative competence, a pivotal concept within ELT, plays a critical role in enhancing learners' abilities to function adeptly across a multitude of sociolinguistic environments. This investigation seeks to elucidate how textbooks from India and Oman navigate the intricate interplay of communicative competence within their unique sociocultural milieus, thereby contributing to an understanding of its application and relevance in enhancing language proficiency in non-native English-speaking settings.

Keywords: Communicative Competence, English, Textbooks, India, Oman

Introduction

The concept of communicative competence, which is an essential element in the process of acquiring language, extends beyond the basic adherence to grammatical rules. The concept involves the capacity to successfully communicate among diverse sociocultural environments. The examination of the content of language textbooks offers valuable insights on the pedagogical paths of English Language Teaching (ELT) in various countries, since these textbooks play a crucial role in developing learners' abilities.

India, with its diverse array of languages and cultures, is a captivating context for the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The linguistic landscape of this subject is complex and varied, influenced by both past and current interactions with the English language. As a result, effective instructional approaches must be tailored to the broad range of learners involved (Krishnaswamy & Sriraman, 1994). Simultaneously, the nation of Oman, located on the Arabian Peninsula, is forging its own path in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The use of communicative language education approaches by the country indicates its commitment to cultivating individuals who possess advanced communication skills on a worldwide scale (Al Mamari et al., 2018). However, this expedition is not without obstacles. The study

conducted by Al-Issa (2006) highlights a significant disparity in the communicative abilities of Omani students. This discrepancy is partly attributed to the inherent constraints of the existing national textbooks. The thesis presented is supported by the research conducted by Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012), who extensively examine the perceived disparity between theoretical paradigms in English Language Teaching (ELT) and their practical implementation in Omani educational settings.

Within this particular framework, the subsequent comparative study sets out on a quest: to meticulously examine English language textbooks originating from India and Oman, with the objective of revealing the fundamental nature of communicative competence that they convey. This research aims to gain insights into how these countries, characterised by their unique socio-cultural structures, navigate the intricate landscape of English communication skills and intercultural competence.

Review of Literature

With a particular concentration on the English language, the Sultanate of Oman has made great progress in modernising its educational system in recent years, aiming to equip students with global communicative competence. The use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the main educational strategy has been a pillar of this effort (Al Mamari, Al-Mekhlaf, & Al-Barwani, 2018). These writers investigated the correspondence between CLT principles and how they are evaluated in Oman's English language exams. While CLT has been officially accepted, they noted that there is still disagreement on how much of it is tested communicatively.

Students in higher education should prioritise their communicative competence, according to R Al-Mahrooqi and V Tuzlukova (2014). The research conducted a critical analysis of in-house textbooks and observed that there might be a mismatch between the curriculum's intended learning outcomes and the abilities that employers value most in the Arabian Gulf.

According to A. Al-Issa (2006), a historical examination of the language difficulties Omani learners encounter illuminates persistent challenges with communicative competence. The national textbook and other curriculum elements, according to the author, are among the elements that have contributed to the students' poor communicative skills, which have their origins in the nation's educational past.

Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) looked at this problem of discrepancy between theoretical acceptance and actual execution as well. They spoke on the changes made to English language instruction in Oman, emphasising the discrepancy between theory and reality. Their research highlighted the difficulties in assigning textbook writing to British teacher trainers for certain grades and using local knowledge for others.

Al-Khamisi and Sinha's (2022) more modern viewpoint critically assessed CLT approaches in the Omani EFL environment. Their research demonstrated that while communicative competence is clearly required, there has to be further investigation into how textbooks, particularly those for grades 11 and 12, really represent this need.

RH Al Azri (2022), who examined the communicative alignment of the Omani EFL reading curriculum, offered another crucial perspective. The analysis of the roles of the teacher and the learner was the main topic, with an emphasis on the significance of these roles in accomplishing communicative goals.

The story of English Language Teaching (ELT) instructors in Oman provides more insight than textbooks alone. Al-Issa (2019) shared tales from ELT instructors, many of whom struggled to develop genuine communicative competence outside of the confines of textbook training.

This thorough analysis highlights a crucial conclusion: while the Omani educational framework makes it apparent that the goal of promoting communicative competence via CLT is to do so, there are several

obstacles in the road, ranging from teaching approaches and paradigms of evaluation to textbook content. For CLT to be successful in the Omani setting, it is still essential to close the gap between intention and execution.

The relevance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in language instruction is highlighted by the modern global context. How should English textbooks address this competence, particularly in varied contexts like India, as English becomes a lingua franca, is a concern that emerges. This analysis examines a number of research studies in an attempt to define how Indian English textbooks portray and include the Indian Community.

To ascertain how much they promoted intercultural awareness, Maghsoudi (2020) analysed the English high school textbooks from Iran and India. The research emphasised how important educational assignments are in fostering intercultural awareness. Even if the brief omitted the particular results pertaining to India, this paper establishes the groundwork for comprehending the comparative aspects of ICC representation.

2019 saw Nisargandha delving more into the topic of cultural representation in language textbooks. The research sought to understand how culture is portrayed while reiterating the critical role that communicative competence plays. This study has significant importance in shedding light on the intricate and multifaceted cultural elements included into Indian English textbooks, given the primary focus on India.

The depiction of cultural elements in English textbooks and their effects on language acquisition were the focus of Ariawan's (2020) investigation. The fact that India is one of the countries that is most often mentioned suggests the importance and possible complexities of Indian culture in narratives about language acquisition throughout the world.

Recontextualizing communicative competence, Leung (2005) argues that it is more than simply a textbook depiction in settings such as India. It suggests that English textbooks written for students in India may include distinct aspects of communicative competence shaped by socio-cultural contexts.

Baxodirovna (2022) emphasised how important it is for English textbooks to have a variety of cultural elements. The mention of Telangana, a state in India, in relation to English language instruction highlights the demands and difficulties unique to the area in integrating ICC.

Berns (2013) used a sociocultural lens to examine communicative competence. The term "Indian English" denotes the distinctive communicative competencies associated with the context of India, setting it apart from other varieties of English.

It is also significant because Ray (2020) focused on using real resources to help students enhance their communicative competence. There is a connection between the focus on portraying the "real thing" and the cultural quirks of English used in places like India.

Patil (2021) discussed how Indian languages, especially Indian English, have a dual cultural character. It illuminates the depth of cultural representation and its significance to ICC in Indian English writing.

Finally, by highlighting the dynamic interaction between culture, language, and pedagogical practises, Alptekin (2002) and Byram (2020) provide broad frameworks of ICC in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Indian English textbooks' portrayal of the ICC is a multifaceted mosaic of local, national, and international strands. While some researches provide specific insights into the Indian environment, others offer a more general framework that may be used in a variety of contexts. Rich cultural integration is clearly there, but

further in-depth investigation is necessary to fully understand the scope, effectiveness, and depth of this representation.

Table 1 Comparison of communicative competence in English Language textbooks in India and Oman

Feature/Aspect	India	Oman
Cultural Representation		
Depth of Intercultural Integration	High, with regional nuances	Moderate, with influences from GCC
Primary Cultures Represented	Indian cultures, Western, Asian	Omani culture, Western, Arab
Local vs Global Balance	Balanced with a tilt to local	Balanced with a tilt to local
Language Variation		
Types of English	Indian English, Standard English	Omani English, Standard English
Local Linguistic Nuances	Yes, influenced by regional languages	Yes, influenced by Arabic
Methodology & Approach		
Focus on Authentic Materials	Growing emphasis	Moderate emphasis
Inclusion of Real-life Situations	Increasingly common	Common
Pedagogical Concerns		
Integration of Socio-cultural Realities	Integrated with national narratives	Integrated with national & Arab narratives
Emphasis on Intercultural Communicative Competence	High, especially in recent years	Growing awareness and emphasis
External Influences		
Influence of Global ELT Trends	Significant	Significant with Arab context
Adaptation to Local Needs	High	High

Major Findings

In recent years, the portrayal of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in high school English textbooks has gained substantial attention. India's textbooks emphasise regional nuances and demonstrate a high degree of cultural fusion. Despite a little bias in favour of local aspects, Indian textbooks often portray local and global cultures in a balanced manner, reflecting the great variety of the country.

The way the English language is presented in Indian textbooks is noteworthy since Indian English is one of the languages that is taught alongside standard English. As a reflection of the impact of India's many regional languages, these textbooks also include subtleties of the local language. This regional flair teaches Indian students about the diversity of English and its many forms throughout the world in addition to contextualising what they are studying.

There has been an evolution in the instructional method in these textbooks. The use of real-world scenarios and authentic resources to promote authentic communication abilities is becoming more and more important. This change reflects a broader trend in English Language Teaching (ELT), where the emphasis is now more on comprehensive communicative competence rather than just language proficiency. Moreover, these textbooks emphasise the significance of comprehending one's cultural identity while engaging in a global setting by fusing socio-cultural realities with national narratives.

The textbooks' major impact from worldwide ELT trends is evident, but they also take into account local demands. This is another noteworthy discovery. This flexibility guarantees that students have the language proficiency needed in a global setting as well as the cultural sensitivity and understanding that are essential in a varied and linked world.

To include a more thorough approach to communicative competence, English language textbooks have undergone major adjustments in the context of Oman. Oman has made a deliberate attempt to close the gap between conventional language instruction and contemporary communicative approaches in its textbooks. In order to ensure that students comprehend both their own cultural surroundings and the global arena, there is a distinct focus on blending local Omani cultural components with worldwide ideas.

The meticulous integration of Omani customs with a global perspective is a defining characteristic of Omani textbooks. These textbooks capture the rich fabric of Omani culture via a variety of literary genres, including folktales, stories, and poetry. This helps students appreciate their own cultural history while also fostering intercultural understanding.

Additionally, Omani textbooks have advanced in include useful, real-world examples that encourage genuine dialogue. In addition to teaching the language, these situations aim to illustrate commonplace Omani environments, customs, and behaviours. By using these components, educators may create a learner-centered atmosphere in which students can connect with the material and participate in purposeful communicative activities.

The promotion of English as a crucial instrument for global communication is another noteworthy aspect. Because of its advantageous location and extensive international contacts, particularly in commerce, Oman understands the value of English as a universal language. In order for pupils to take part in international conversations with confidence, the textbooks strive to provide them the language and communicative skills they require.

A notable obstacle that the textbooks seem to tackle is striking a balance between teaching conventional English and the subtleties of Omani English, which reflects the country's own linguistic character. This guarantees that students not only grasp and appreciate the unique flavour of English as spoken in Oman, but also demonstrate proficiency in globally recognised forms of the language.

India's English language textbooks now have a more communicative, inclusive, and intercultural approach. This change reflects the rising understanding of the value of ICC in the globalised world of today and the need of preparing students for cross-cultural communication. Oman's English language textbooks use a dual approach that emphasises both national and international viewpoints. The goal of the Omani educational system is to provide students with the skills necessary to communicate effectively in both domestic and global contexts by using a balanced approach.

Conclusion

In light of the changing nature of international communication, the assessment of communicative competence in English language textbooks is essential. There are clear differences as well as commonalities between the educational systems of Oman and India, which provide important insights into the pedagogical goals and cultural ideologies of both countries.

India's English language textbooks provide a thorough understanding of communicative competence by showcasing a rich combination of global storylines and the country's distinct cultural fabric. In addition to linguistic correctness, the materials provide a strong emphasis on social dynamics and cultural settings, enabling learners to use English effectively in a variety of scenarios. The textbooks cater to a broad audience, including individuals who are learning English as a second or foreign language as well as local speakers due to India's historical involvement with the language as a colonial legacy and associate official language. Content that is both linguistically and culturally rich is the outcome of this.

Oman has a distinct connection with the English language because of its fast industrialization and distinctive Arabian history. The majority of people see English as a foreign language that is necessary for commerce and communication on a global scale. As a result, Omani textbooks often include a strong emphasis on useful communication techniques, enabling students to function well in global settings. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable effort to include intercultural components, making sure that students recognise and value diversity across the world. It is clear what the aim is: to create people who are not just fluent in English but also aware of the wider world.

Even though India and Oman come from very different historical and culture backgrounds, they both understand how important English is in the linked world of today. Their common goal is to develop students who are proficient in communicating in English and who are aware of the diversity of cultures throughout the globe, even if their approaches to teaching may differ depending on historical and local circumstances.

In conclusion, the way that communicative competence is portrayed in English textbooks from Oman and India is a reflection of a larger worldwide trend in education. Beyond just a language, English is becoming more and more recognised as a platform for intercultural communication and comprehension. Both countries, in their own unique ways, want to use English education to mould a generation of linguistically and culturally literate individuals who can interact with confidence and empathy in an increasingly globalised world.

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