

MODULE 1- FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LANGUAGE TRANSACTIONS
UNIT 1: BASICS OF ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

a) Meaning of academic disciplines, Relationship between academic disciplines and English

Meaning of Discipline

- The term 'discipline' originates from the Latin words *discipulus*, which means pupil, and *disciplina*, which means teaching. The term discipline is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "a branch of learning or knowledge".
- Definitions in different dictionaries give a whole range of quite different meanings of the term from training to submission to an authority to the control and self-control of behaviour. As a verb, it means training someone to follow a rigorous set of instructions, but also punishing and enforcing obedience. In this study, the term discipline has been used in academic sense to refer a particular area of knowledge or study, especially a subject studied at a college or university.

Meaning of Academic Discipline

- An academic discipline refers to a form of specific, rigorous scientific training that an individual is exposed to.
- An academic discipline as a branch of knowledge incorporates expertise, people, projects, communities, challenges, studies, inquiry, and research areas that are strongly associated with a given academic discipline. For example, the branches of science are commonly referred to as the scientific disciplines, e.g. physics, mathematics, computer science.
- Academic discipline is a field or branch of learning affiliated with an academic department, formulated for the advancement of research and scholarship.
- Academic discipline is formulated for the professional training.
- Academic discipline or 'field of study' is a branch of knowledge that is taught and researched as part of higher education. Eg: Anthropology, space science, psychology, sociology, archeology, education, etc.

Characteristics of academic disciplines

1. Academic Disciplines have a particular object of research, though the object of research may be shared with another discipline.
2. Academic Disciplines have a body of accumulated specialist knowledge referring to their object of research, which is specific to them and not generally shared with another discipline.
3. Academic Disciplines have theories and concepts that can organize the accumulated specialist knowledge effectively.
4. Academic Disciplines use specific terminologies or a specific technical language adjusted to their research object.

5. Academic Disciplines have developed specific research methods according to their specific research requirements.
6. Academic Disciplines must have some institutional manifestation in the form of subjects taught at respective academic departments connected to it.

Relationship between academic disciplines and English

Discipline and language are co-related to each other. What subject observes about the social being, the language does the same kind of work in this way. Language is the source to provide all examples, events, facts of the society. The information about the historical events can be obtained through the medium of language. Even the study about the discipline can be possible through the proper medium of language.

1. Language is the pre-requisite for all kinds of knowledge. Through it collection and study is done of all kinds of content matter.
2. It is the component to provide knowledge with help of cumulative records of facts and events.
3. The students can be prepared for learning in discipline if they have proper knowledge of the language.
4. Language is the best medium of communication. Without it the knowledge cannot be obtained in systematic way.

b) Classification of academic disciplines: Becher - Biglan typology (pure-hard, pure - soft, applied - hard, applied - soft types)

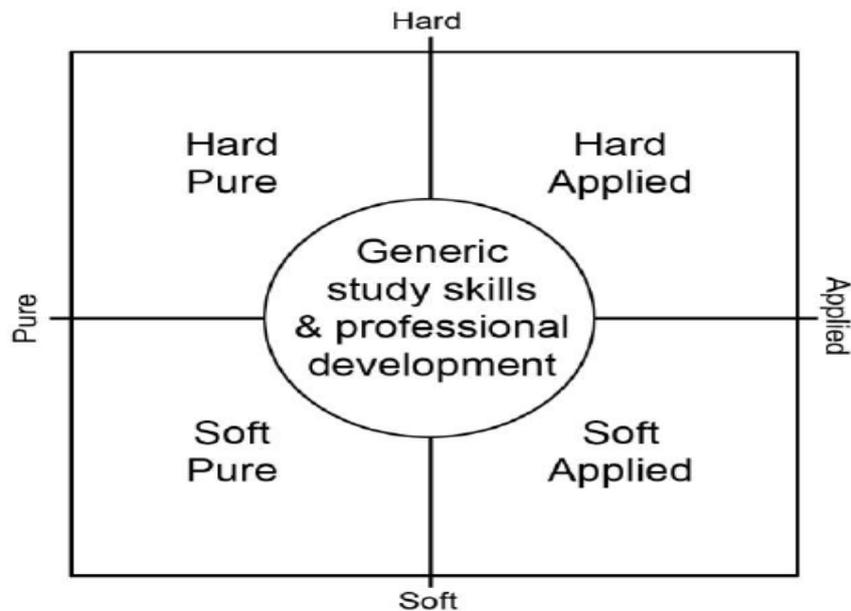
Introduction

Anthony Biglan (1973) based on empirical research drew distinction between discipline based on three dimensions.

- First he found difference in the degree to which one paradigm exists in a discipline (hard-soft). For discipline with one important paradigm there is more consensus about method of study and content (E.g: physics) than in discipline without a single paradigm (E.g: humanities).
- Secondly Biglan distinguished discipline based on their degree of concern with application (pure - applied). Disciplines like education and engineering is more concerned with application to practice.
- Finally a distinction was drawn between disciplines concerning biological or social areas and those that are concerned with inanimate objects (life- non life).

Becher (1989) modified Biglan's typology based on first two dimensions, which resulted in four types of disciplines: Hard -pure, Hard-Applied, Soft-Pure, and Soft-Applied.

- **Pure Disciplines**
 - Concentrate on fundamental research
 - Systematic observation of phenomena
 - Solely for the purpose of discovering unknown facts which may develop into theories
 - Result in new knowledge
 - Eg. Pure Mathematics, pure chemistry.
- **Applied Disciplines**
 - Relate existing knowledge to real world situations
 - Application of theory to real life
 - Aim at problem solving
 - Eg Education, applied psychology, Engineering (application of Science and Mathematics)
- **Hard disciplines**
 - Tend to use quantitative data
 - Tend to be predictive and use experimental methods
 - Concern for career development and cognitive goals (such as the learning of facts and concepts).
 - Eg Science, Mathematics, engineering.
- **Soft Disciplines**
 - Rely on qualitative data
 - Generally do not use experimental methods and hence do not make predictions
 - Concern for general education development, character development, critical thinking and 'scholarly' activities (such as the reading of research articles).
 - Eg: History, Sociology, Law, Language



1. Hard-Pure disciplines

- Quantitative data
- Concerned with universal phenomena
- Nature of knowledge is cumulative
- Knowledge growth can be compared to crystal growth (building on what exists)
- As new knowledge is found, old knowledge gets enhanced
- Relationship between knowledge and knowledge seeker is unbiased and objective
- Knowledge is verified by fixed criteria
- High degree of consensus between two knowledge seekers
- Academic communities in hard-pure disciplines are well organized, their work is quite competitive and publication rates are high.

2. Hard- Applied disciplines

- Purposive work involving application of theory
- Emphasis is on creating techniques and products
- Practical in nature, try to solve problems
- Use heuristic approach
- Criteria to judge the products of these disciplines are functional
- The ethos in such disciplines is entrepreneurial & dominated by professional values.
- Patents are submitted for publication.

3. Soft -Pure disciplines

- Stress on understanding and interpretation of phenomena
- Knowledge is reiterative (there can be repetition of results) concerned with particular happenings rather than general occurrences
- Qualitative data. Hence high subjectivity while interpreting
- Personal relationship between knowledge & knowledge seeker
- No definite views on verification of data

- Less structured academic communities
- Publications rate is lower

4. Soft Applied disciplines

- Emphasize processes and protocols
- Functional and utilitarian in nature
- Help to enhance professional practice
- Dominated by 'intellectual fashions'
- Use both qualitative and quantitative data
- Case studies are important means to build knowledge



In a nutshell: -

Disciplinary grouping	Examples of disciplines	Nature of knowledge	Nature of disciplinary culture
Hard-pure	E.g. physics	Cumulative, atomistic (crystalline/tree-like), concerned with universals, quantities, simplification, resulting in discovery/ explanation	Competitive, gregarious, politically well organised, high publication rate, task-oriented
Soft-pure	Humanities (history) and pure social sciences (e.g. anthropology)	Reiterative, holistic (organic/ river-like), concerned with particulars, qualities, complication, resulting in understanding/interpretation	Individualistic, pluralistic, loosely structured, low publication rate, person-oriented
Hard-applied	Technologies (e.g. mechanical engineering)	Purposive, pragmatic (know-how via hard knowledge), concerned with mastery of physical environment, resulting in products/techniques	Entrepreneurial, cosmopolitan, dominated by professional values, patents substitutable for publications, role-oriented
Soft-applied	E.g. education	Functional, utilitarian (know-how via soft knowledge), concerned with enhancement of (semi-)professional practice, resulting in protocols/procedures	Outward-looking, uncertain in status, dominated by intellectual fashions, publication rates reduced by consultancies, power-oriented

c) Place of English in the present school curriculum

Background of English Language in India:

English came to India with British people. England ruled over India for about two hundred years. Lord Macaulay established the new education system in India with the view to prepare people who by cast, creed and colour were Indians but by Language, thinking, manners were like British people. British government wanted to rule over India for a long period, so they needed officers and workers in different areas like Railway, Courts, police, military, education, science and Technology etc. These English speaking Indian people worked according to British policies. English education was imparted in schools, colleges, universities, professional courses etc. Thus English became the medium of instruction and education in all stages.

Importance of English:

In those days Education was limited to a small circle of upper and middle-class people who leapt and rose to power and position due to the benefits of the English education. Knowledge of English language was regarded as the token of superiority, modernity, civilized and prestige. Education in English medium proved to be a blessing for India and Indian people in many ways. Due to knowledge of English language people can read many great books written by great thinkers of the world. They were influenced by the dignified and elevated thoughts of these great writers. People knew about the movements and activities took place in the various corners of the world to get liberty. It ultimately led to the stirring of national spirit in the educated people and those people inspired and motivated the common people. English education proved to be very helpful in national integration, binding the whole country- from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Gujarat to Assam in one string. After the rule of great emperors like Akbar and Ashoka India again integrated and emerged as one country in real sense due to English education.

The freedom fighter leaders were able to make correspondence with all the people of India through English language. Gandhi ji, Nehru ji, Vallabh Bhai Patel and other national leaders had good knowledge of English. Actually in other words we can say that good knowledge of English made them National leaders. We can say that English language had made India united and integrated. Due to national unity and integrity the great imperial power of England was forced to leave India giving liberty to India and Indian people. We can also say that we used the great weapon of England herself (English Language) to drive British Government out of India.

English in International Relationship:

Today no country can retain existence without the cooperation of other countries. Today the leaders of different countries meet and exchange their thoughts on various Platforms like UN, SAARC. The representatives of different countries communicate in English on these platforms. India cannot be isolated from the rest of the world if she want to develop herself as a great power of the world. English is one and only one medium of the communication on international level.

Medium for Higher Education:

In higher education especially in the fields of Science, Engineering, Research, Medical, Management, Artificial Satellite or space research etc. no other language is so developed as to become a suitable alternative for English. We cannot deny that in these fields there is only rule of English alone. India is now at the third rank in the field of artificial satellite launching after America and Russia due to the knowledge of our scientists who are no doubt well versed in English.

General people's Attitude:

Throughout India in all states people have great craze for English education for their children. They want to give admission to their children in good English medium schools. Because they know that in this age of information technology one cannot think of making progress without the knowledge of English. There is a wonderful awakening in our society towards the learning of English. Our government has also awakened to realize the importance of English in education curriculum. English has been introduced in syllabi right from the primary education. English medium schools are thriving even in rural and backward parts of the country.

Library Importance:

The Kothari Commission suggested that English be studied as a library language with the aim of getting the knowledge of science and technology, commerce and trade by reading standard books in English. The Commission said that no student be deemed qualified for a Master's Degree unless he has acquired a reasonable proficiency in English or in some other library language. In view of the fact that the medium of instruction even at the Post Graduate stage is the regional language in many Universities (only the Professional courses are taught through English medium), the Commission's recommendation would imply that teachers at Post Graduate level should be essentially bilingual, that is they should be able to teach in the regional language as well as English. English is a key to the store house of the knowledge. The books on all branches of knowledge are written into English language. The importance of English as a library language nicely described by the Radha- Krishnan commission in the following words: English however must continue to be studied. It is a language which is rich in literature, humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental we give up English, we could cut ourselves from the living stream of ever-growing knowledge. The use of English as a library language also implies that among the language skills of speaking, reading and writing, the reading skill is the most important and it should be developed in the students to a high degree so that they will be able to read all reference material, general and technical, which is in the English, make notes and use it for their purposes. Students develop the ability to read fast and with understanding. The skill of getting the summary of books and periodicals in English quickly and properly is the most useful in modern life. This is the essence of using as a library language. Even with the growth of Indian languages English continues to be the link language between the States and the Centre and also between the multilingual Indian communities, apart from its being a valuable link with the world organizations and with the growing knowledge in science and technology and trade. English is a window on the world, opening up a vast vista of knowledge and scholarship, literature and art.

National Importance:

The English language is the window which opens up the vast prospect of human achievement. The more effective grasp of English in all its diversities of speech, vocabulary, structure and meaning, the more will be benefit personally and contribute to the growth of our country as a modern nation of the 21st century. The chairman of the University Education Commission Dr. Radhakrishnan's (1948) words on the importance of English to India needs repetition: It (English) is a language, which is rich in literature - humanistic, scientific and technical. If, under sentimental urges we give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever-growing knowledge. In India, English is the link language, serving to connect people of various regions and diverse backgrounds. English is the lingua franca of the people from the South, North, East and West of India. English is the official language, being the language used for communication among the Central and State Governments. English has also its national importance because it is used as interstate communication language and in centre also. In India it is used as link language so that people could express their ideas easily. It is useful for both official and private communication between many parts of the country and thus it serves as a link language in the nation itself.

The place and position of English can be summarized as under:

- English is not being taught as a compulsory subject at lower primary level. It is taught only in some private school.
- English is taught as a compulsory subject at upper primary level in class V, VI and VII. But there are no enough qualified teachers of English.
- It is being taught as a compulsory subject at secondary level in class VIII, IX and X. It is not compulsory at H.5.C. Examination.
- In higher secondary level, it is being taught as compulsory subject in class- XI.
- It is also being taught as compulsory subject at college level. Students passed H.S.C. Exam without English are allowed offering English at college level in some universities and they have to study English compulsory.