



## **English: Language of opportunity**

*English in Indian schools*

### **NARRATOR**

The English language also plays an important role in the education system in most Indian states. In Bangalore, private schools generally teach in English, while state schools are more likely to teach in the local language, an attempt by the state government to install Kannada as the medium of instruction in all schools failed.

### **TEACHER**

What is your observation, the set of natural numbers, set of whole number and the set of integer? How we are going to express the relationship of these three?

### **STUDENT**

$N$  is the subset of  $W$  and  $W$  is the subset of  $Z$ .

### **TEACHER**

Very good!

### **VATSALA**

School managements refuse to teach in Kannada because they said we have got English medium schools and we have admitted students because they want to learn English. We can't force them to learn Kannada. The government said well Kannada is the state language, they said 'we don't care'. They don't care if it's the state language, you can teach Kannada as just one of the languages.

### **NARRATOR**

Attitudes to the English language in India have changed over time. Whilst there was opposition to English in the nineteen eighties and nineties, now it is more commonly seen as a language of opportunity.

### **CHITRA**

I think there are very negative attitudes to English. I remember some movements moving English departments actually where there was an argument which was called nativism which was taking the rounds in the eighties and nineties. Where people thought that the best way to decolonise was to stay away from the English language and at that point English was

identified as a coloniser star. But the whole thing is so complicated when you actually try to analyse as to what really happened during that time because many of those people who were part of this decolonisation strategy, were also people who were bilingual intellectuals. So they had got the best of English and the local language at some point, during colonial times. So there was active resistance to it and many of the sections which were disadvantaged fought against the nativists and decided that they want the medium of instruction to be in English, in all colleges.

### **VATSALA**

My affiliation to English, as many people of my generation is a very close affiliation, and we like the language. I don't feel apologetic because I talk in English, as many Indians want to do now, they're all the people who came after Independence. They say look why are you talking an alien language, I tell them I don't think its alien at all.

### **SUBRAHMANYA**

Until about twenty five, thirty years ago people would have seen it as a, you know language more in a negative sense that it's a, you know yeah we are forced to learn the language because the British's were here. It was not said so but then you know there was that you know, with the British legacies of this country and the language is the most important legacy of the British's. But today, the last twenty years you know yeah you have a globalising in a situation on the economic front and you know people have realised that it's a huge advantage you know knowing English language because of the global language that's a you know a language of global communication and we have that language and you know that's why I think you know it's felt that in these changing circumstances we are sitting in an advantageous position because of our language skill. Yeah, so that way you know we are in this country the last ten, fifteen years, you know certain colonial legacies are being reinterpreted yeah, in a positive light.

### **CHITRA**

It was the peoples decision and the peoples, and I think the people have decided to stay with it. That's how it chose itself. Actually in a way you could even say that you know there is a, a rediscovery of English as the language which has to be necessarily pursued if you would, if you should have access to a better life.

### **VATSALA**

The English language is a gift in my opinion. It's not just a gift for me as an individual it's a gift of the country and so I always believe make yourself the gift that they left you. Don't worry that it belonged to them, it belongs to us now.