

Short Communication

Multi-Language Education: An Exclusive Experience

Harshalata Burade¹, Sarita Deshpande²

¹Research Scholar & Senior Lecturer, DIET, Amravati

²Ex-Professor in Education, Fiji National University, Fiji Islands, now in India

Received Date: 07 June 2020

Revised Date: 17 July 2020

Accepted Date: 18 July 2020

Abstract - India is a nation of Multilingualism. Officially 415 languages with their dialects are spoken in different states, and each language has a number of dialects. As stated by Nicolaou et al. (2016), "Multilanguage approach will manifest its afforded ness and in daily encounters within educational sectors." Primary children from tribal areas find difficulty in academic achievement since the language of transfer of instruction-L2 is used by school teachers, which is Marathi in the state of Maharashtra, and language is spoken at home –L1, which is Korku in Amravati district of Maharashtra are different. The authors are of the opinion that making use of L1 while teaching would be effective in students' academic achievement and would also help raise the level of confidence in students as well as teachers. The authors wish to explore more in this direction by undertaking further deep research.

Keywords - Primary Education, Multi-language Education, Home language, standard language.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is accepted as a language of communication the world over. It is considered a global language. Yet it is learned as a second language (L2), First language or Mother tongue being the L1 language. Education disseminated in mother tongue is well comprehended and lasts long. In tribal areas, the scenario is quite different and worries some. Children at primary schools in tribal areas are weak in their mother tongue as well as English. In the 21st century ICT – related skills are supposed to be the essential skills for future survival. Their people, technocrats, are struggling to see how the best mother tongue could be used technologically to make learning interesting, effective, and joyful. The importance of education in the mother tongue is thus universally accepted. Researches have been done in various countries where English is not a mother tongue or L1. In India, being a multi-lingual nation having more than 35 official languages and each having a number of dialects being used by tribal people, such efforts have started but are at the primordial stage. The success rate in tribal areas is

meagre. To improve it, there is a need that education should be provided in the mother tongue while L2 and even L3 are being learned by tribal students. This is because the language spoken at homes and language used in schools to teach are not the same. Children become disadvantaged because of this disparity. Noam Chomsky believed that language is so complex, with an unlimited combination of sounds, words, and phrases, that environmental learning is not able to account for language acquisition alone. It would take a lifetime to teach someone all the rules of language, but even small children can understand them if incepted at a proper stage.

This ends up in poor language development as regards L1 and L2. The multi-Language approach is thus the key to success in Educating children belonging to tribal areas.

II. RATIONALE

Authors once involved in observing the teaching staff in tribal schools experienced that children are not able to use their mother tongue properly, neither they are able to learn Marathi or L2. It was felt by the authors that the children need to be given education in their mother tongue, at least for concept development; however, the teachers teaching them were not ready to use their students' L1 while explaining. This stimulated the authors to work in the direction of Multi-Language Education, hence this effort.

To understand the language problem broadly, it was decided to consider the working definitions of the terms that would be frequently used throughout this paper. They are as follows-

A. Primary Education: It is the first stage of formal education that follows pre-school education. Children learn various skills related to reading, writing, and mathematics. They also learn certain new concepts related to these skills.

B. Multi-Language Education: It is education that requires the study of supportive languages along with mother tongue. Children of minority languages suffer a lot in their primary



education since they are not used to the standard state language, and their teachers do not understand their home language or mother tongue, as it is different from the standard language they use while teaching.

C. Home Language: The language or a diverse dialect of it that is mostly spoken at home by the members of the child's family for daily interactions is the home language. It is also known as the family language.

D. Standard Language: It is the language that has been refined by undergoing through enough codification of grammar, and it is widely used officially as well as by the population for communication. In India, being a multi-linguistic country, every state has its own standard language.

III. WHAT WAS OBSERVED?

The teachers teaching to primary school students in tribal areas around the Amravati district of the state of Maharashtra were not able to make students understand basic concepts in Mathematics, Science, and even in L1 or L2. Many teachers stated that they do not know the mother tongue/language of their students. Some said that they know the mother tongue/language of their students but hesitate to use it, as they might commit mistakes in speaking. Another major difficulty narrated by teachers was that the students' mother tongue or home language does not have a script, thus making use of it in teaching difficult. No teacher was interested to see that they would be instrumental in their students' success academically by using the home language they know.

IV. WHAT WENT WRONG?

Teachers teaching in primary schools in tribal areas were found to be very lethargic and having no concern with their student's success in education or effectiveness in their teaching. Most of them were complaining about the inability of students to use L1 and L2. For these students, L1 was their own mother tongue or language of heritage being spoken at their homes-viz. Korku. Marathi being the language of the state, was L2, and English was L3 for them. L1 and L2 do not have many similarities. Moreover, L1 does not have its own script, also making it difficult for teachers to explain academic concepts. This eventually led to poor or low academic scores generally and in language development specifically.

V. WHAT WENT WELL?

When suggested, some teachers knowing how to speak the tribal language or home language of their students were asked to use it while explaining some mathematical concepts. Later these students' comprehension was checked and was found to be better than their counterparts where teachers did not use their tribal language, but only Marathi- a state language.

This sparked the idea that the use of tribal language would better help the students in academic success.

VI. WHAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER?

The authors are of the opinion that the teachers teaching in primary schools of tribal areas should be trained through the development of modules using translation method such that the concepts to be learned under various subjects are first translated into their L1-home language that is Korku language, and then the comprehension is checked. A similar approach has to be used while teaching other subjects such as Environmental Science or L2 and L3. This will scaffold students to better understand first the concepts in each subject area and then would enable the students to understand well the concepts to be used in each subject. This will initiate a good communication between students and teachers and will also initiate quantum of work in terms of developing modules and then using them while teaching; however, it would be a time-taking effort initially but would surely lead to students' academic success and would eventually help save time to be utilized in explanation, in future.

VII. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Making use of Korku - students' home language in developing modules will demand more time. Thus time would be the biggest challenge initially; however, looking at the academic success rate of the students in the future, it would be inevitable if students' academic success is the main focus. The modules prepared once would be reusable in the future also, thus saving future preparation time.

Also, while preparing modules in L1-that is, Korku, parents' greater involvement would be required. Many of the parents may even deny helping with the use of language, as it is their language of heritage, and they might not want to share it with anybody. The parents would have to be convinced that the language would have to be used for the benefit of their children only. Right now, it is a bigger challenge.

Teachers teaching in tribal primary schools will have to be convinced equally to make use of Korku, develop units in Korku, and then teach since it would help improve their class results. Eventually, the school's success depends upon the school's academic results. Improved results of the students will also help improve their self-esteem and raise their level of confidence as also it would help raise teachers' confidence level and make teaching joyful and contented. After all, teachers matter more, if not most, in the students' achievement.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In this world, very few students should be considered monolinguals purely as they are actually exposed to one or more additional languages apart from their L1, even before their formal instruction in school starts.

Education for all is the idea that allows people to lead a happier, healthier, and more productive life with school participation. However, most of the education systems are designed such that they seem to be for dominant groups. This causes serious harm to children from non-dominant groups, as their home language, experiences and values are not used as learning resources. Instruction in language that children do not understand prevents them from even sound-symbols-meaning connections that are essential for literacy and learning. This further affects by devaluing their identities. Such systems fail to attract children or push children out of schools, as teaching and or testing is done in a dominant language. Families of such non-dominant groups either sacrifice the already scarce resources or reject schools as socially irrelevant or pedagogically ineffective, or they fail to convince themselves or their children, especially girls, that classroom boredom is preferable to work at home. L1-based

multi-lingual education will address the needs of all learners by using their as well as their teachers' best language for the teaching-learning process. It will also facilitate the acquisition of the dominant language (L2 or even L3) for future participation in societies. It will also attract learners towards school and encourage their families to get involved. Such bilingual learners are likely to develop critical thinking skills and self-confidence required for better-informed, healthier and happier life.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anna Nicolaou,* Antigoni Parmaxi, Salomi Papadima-Sophocleous, and Dimitrios Boglou Cyprus University of Technology, London Review of Education 14(2)(2016).DOI: 10.18546/LRE.14.2.12
- [2] Ball, Jessica, University Of Victoria, Enhancing Learning Of Children From Diverse Language Backgrounds: Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Or Multi-lingual Education In The Early Years, Analytical Review Commissioned By The UNESCO Education Sector(2011).
- [3] Elizabeth Earling, Lina Adinolfi and others, Report on Multi-lingual classrooms: Opportunities and challenges for English medium Instructions in low and middle-income contexts published by British Council, Helen (2017).
- [4] Maharashtra government document about existing languages https://www.google.com/search?q=noam+chomsky&rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN891IN891&oq=noam+chomsky&aqs=chrome