

Mother Tongue Yields Better Educational Outcomes in Higher Education

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Article Received: 15/4/2022,

Article Accepted: 27/05/2022,

Published online: 31/05/2022,

DOI: 10.47311/IJOES.2022.4.5.19

Abstract

As we move towards a society where the interaction is mainly in English we move away from our mother language. The first language a baby learns from birth is called the mother language, and therefore plays a crucial role in our lives for various regions. Studies have shown that cognitive development and intellectual development are comparatively faster in those who are fluent in their mother tongue. The educational success of a student who is taught in their mother language is higher than someone who is taught in a language other than their mother tongue. Languages are the primary means of keeping our culture alive. Often, the direct translation of one language into another cannot convey the essence as in the source language therefore, the best way to know a culture thoroughly is to understand the language. The mother tongue helps us stay connected to traditional, cultural values and our roots. When a person knows his or her mother language well, it is easier for them to learn a new language. If a child reads in his or her mother tongue from an early age they will have more substantial reading and writing skills in other languages. We all know that mother language is best if we want to understand the complicated concepts, explain difficult ideas or want to express true feelings. A lot of nations, mainly the nations which were colonised, in Asia and Africa, continue to use the language of colonial powers, even after independence. This is happening because colonial powers introduced their own language as language of instructions, especially for higher education. At primary level the language of masses, the mother tongue is used but at higher levels the medium of instructions is changed to a foreign language. Similar is happening in India and students who come from schools using mother tongue, like Odia, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali etc. are placed at a disadvantageous position while pursuing higher studies. We in India are using English as medium at higher education, more so in specialised fields like medicine, science, literature, technology, law. This is being done on the pretext that we do not have books in Indian languages available in these fields. Now even issues of availability of good journals, especially international journals, are also raised.

Keywords: Mother language, Controversial issues, Educational, Colonial

Introduction:

The use of mother tongue in higher education has always been a controversial issue. The teachers throughout the world seem to be in the state of dilemma either to use it or avoid it for effective teaching. This is the reason the teachers are confused about what to adopt in their real practice of teaching. The native language of the student is used in the classroom in order to enhance the security of the student, to provide the bridge from the familiar to unfamiliar and to make the meaning of the target language word clear. It is widely acknowledged that the role of mother tongue in foreign language learning is a negative one. Many studies, from even conducted by UNESCO have revealed that teaching using the mother tongue is the early grade enhances children's ability to learn better compared to the use of a second or foreign language. The same is true for the later stages in life because the concept and intricacies can be best explained and understood in mother tongue only. Despite knowing the benefits and usefulness of mother tongue as medium of instructions we are not able to move ahead and adopt it at university levels. We have to change the mind set about the superiority of English and educationalist need to work on creating environment conducive for mother tongue, otherwise we may face a situation of "Linguistic Imperialism" and "Cultural Colonialism".

The Consequences:

The consequences of promoting English at the cost of Indian languages are as under:-

We are going to lose our advantage of being multilingual, having more than hundred mother tongue and twenty two major languages as recognised in the constitution of India this had been always the strength of India. But, now, we have been given to understand we can compete and excel in life only if we study English from class one not the mother tongue. In the long run, Indian languages will lose its relevant even at primary levels; and hegemony of English will lead to linguistic imperialism.

Role of mother tongue in child development:-

It's well known that a strong mother tongue foundation equips children with the skills they need to learn additional languages, along them to transfer their understanding of the structure of languages to several new languages. The intuitive understanding of grammar that develop in children learn their first language can easily be passed on the other languages. With multilingualism becoming an increasingly sought-after attribute within the work place, this advantages cannot be overstated; globalisation and increased cooperation between nations mean that in many organisations, it has become a requirement to have language skills in addition to being a specialist within a particular field. Mother tongue plays a huge role in the development of personal, social and cultural identity. Children with a strong foundation in their first language often display a deeper understanding of themselves and their place within society, along with increased sense of wellbeing and confidence.

Advantages of mother tongue in higher education:

There are many benefits to a child learning in their mother tongue language in the classroom.

- Mother tongue makes it easier for children to pick up and learn other languages. Mother tongue develops a child's personal, social and cultural identity.
- Using mother tongue helps a child develop their critical thinking and literary skills.
- Research shows that children learning in mother tongue adopt a better understanding of the curriculum.
- Skills learnt in mother tongue do not have to be re-taught when the child transfer to a second language.
- Children learning in mother tongue enjoy education more and learn faster due to feeling comfortable in their environment.
- Self-esteem is higher for children learning in mother tongue.
- Parent children interaction increases as the parent can assist with homework.
- Studies shows that children that capitalise on learning through multilingualism enjoy a higher socioeconomic status earn higher earnings.

The student who studies in schools using mother tongue at primary level will have to shift to English for higher study. They are placed at a disadvantage position because they cannot achieve that level of proficiency in English as a student who have studied in English public school which have been using English for nursery-KG classes. This deprive the talented and bright student who are from rural background, poor, dalit, who are not able to afford English medium schools

The Importance of Mother Language in Higher Education

Teaching mother language will help in building an equitable education system. Indian language have never got the importance they deserve in the higher education system. The ministry of Education will work to develop an equitable system based on the principles of fairness and inclusion. Teaching and learning have largely been in a foreign language. But a change is in the offing, with the advent of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently tweeted: "Taking inspiration from the National Education Policy, it will now be tried to teach all technical courses including medical, Engineering in mother tongue"

It is time we focused on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instructions in higher education. The discussion on the use of mother tongue in education goes back to the time of Lord Macaulay. This debate continued in post-independent India with the release of the Radhakrishnan committee report of 1948-49, known as the Report of the University Education Commission .It recommended that English be replaced by an Indian Language as the medium of instructions for higher education as early as practicable. This was followed by the Official Language Commission, Emotional Integration Committee, NEP 1968 (1986/1992) and NEP 2020. Each report also pronounced that Indian language are a sine qua non for educational and cultural development since they strengthened equity in education.

Benefits of Mother Tongue in Higher Education

The current NEP recommends that higher education institution should use the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, and/or offer bilingual programmes. This will help provide quality teaching to more students and thus increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) higher education.

It will also promote the strength, usage and vibrancy of all Indian languages. This way, private institute too will be motivated to use Indian languages as medium of instructions and/or offer bilingual programme. This will ensure that there is no difference between government and private institutions. The teachers training programme, the four-year Bachelor of Education dual degree will also be bilingual. This will facilitate the training of cadres of teachers across subject. Science and math teachers will also adopt the bilingual approach to teaching.

To translate recommendations into action, high quality learning and print material in Indian languages, including text books, work books, videos, plays, poems, novels and magazines will be developed. This will be done by creating quality programme in translation and interpretation. To this end, an Indian Institution of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will be established. This will employ numerous in Indian languages, subject expert as well as experts in translation and interpretation. Technology will be used to aid in these translation and interpretation efforts. Teaching in the mother tongue will help in building an equitable education system. The ministry of education will work to develop an equitable system based on the principle of fairness and inclusion. For the system to be fair, we should ensure that the personal and social circumstances of students should in no way be obstacle to realising their full academic potential at the same time to ensure inclusion through the use of mother tongue, we should set up a basic minimum standard of education which eliminates all disparity.

Conclusion

While it is necessary to strengthen Indian languages as medium of instruction while enhancing the principle of equity in education to improve educational standards it is equally imperative for students to have a good command over the English language since they are global natives in twenty first century. But this cannot be at the cost of Indian language as a medium of instruction. Indian languages must be supplemented by English. It is heartening to note that in institutes such as Indian Institute of Technology, Khadagpur and Roorkee and Varanasi Hindu University, among others, have come forward to promote the use of Indian languages. These initiatives will prepare students to live in local, national and global society utilising a harmonious blend of Indian languages and English as recommended by NEP.

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