

Teaching English Language through Approaches and Methods

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Abstract

The Indian constituent provides facility to learn mother tongue and not much focused on English language. The national consensus is the development of studying three languages at secondary stage. The supervision was done by many commissions but linguist was not covered by any of them in the panels. Now a day there is a craze in the country for the education in English medium. To improve the teaching of English language different approaches and methods were used in my study amongst which bi lingual and multilingual were proved to be best than monolingual.

KEYWORDS: English language, Mono lingual, Multi lingual

Introduction

The Indian Constitution provides for mother-tongue education at the primary stage. This provision is honoured more in the breach than in observance. The Constitution is not a neutral document; it has a social purpose, one that is neglected in regard to mother-tongue primary education, illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, dropout and stagnation in education. The three-language formula at the secondary stage has emerged as the national consensus. But this formula is not being seriously implemented in the Hindi and Tamil regions. The Central Schools and the Navodaya Vidyalayas offer both Hindi and English as media of interaction, but there are no plans to follow this up at college level with provision for bilingual media which could ensure the emergence cadre of educated person's proficient both in Hindi and English.

Language teaching standards are divergent in different regions of the country. One thing common to all is the consistently low standard of achievement in languages as well as subjects. Instead of learning subjects through languages, subjects are used to learn languages. Therefore, students are poor both in subjects as well as language. Minimum competence in languages must be a precondition to the study of subjects which in turn enlarge the scale of language learning. Many commissions have examined language in education; none has included a linguist in its panels. Thus language has never received the treatment it deserves. Indian languages generally have neither been discussed in the Constituent Assembly nor in the Indian Parliament. What was 'discussed is whether English or Hindi should be the national official language, India is a country of minorities, Hindi being only the first among the minority languages. All states and union territories are within themselves as diverse as the union. A policy towards minorities is therefore a necessary condition of planning for language use. It is not the recognition of many languages that leads to fissiparous tendencies, but the non-recognition of languages rather which stirs identity assertion and leads to national disintegration.

English is one of the Indian languages, but the role it plays on the national educational scene is disastrous. There is a craze for English-medium education in the

country. The demand is to open pre- primary English classes. Early English education destroys the balance with environment, neutralizes the three-dimensionality of Indian kinship terms, curbs creativity and innovativeness and distorts identity. It must be remembered that English, as a supplement to mother-tongue education is strength; as substitute it is debilitation.

Language in Interaction and Communication

The study of language in social contexts such as schools, work situations or other institutional contexts provides the basis for understanding the nature and scope of social interaction and communication in human life. It shows how the participants enact their roles and manipulate language to express control, authority or other forms of role-relationships. It shows how language is co- ordinate with action and how it is used for different communicative purposes. Keeping in view the significance of language in interaction and communication, the Central Institute of Indian Languages has focused attention on some crucial contexts of language use.

Language in the Classroom: The study of language in the classroom is important for understanding how learning takes place through language interaction and how language interaction may be a significant factor in educational achievement. The institute has initiated work on the use of language in classrooms in some schools in Assam. Data have been collected and are being analysed.

Language in Industry: Communication plays a crucial role in the growth, maintenance and change of industrial organizations. The multilingual settings of industries in India provide a rich ground for multilingual interactions and use of different languages for different communicative purposes. Language-use data can be used for effective management as- it throws light on problems of communication, conflict between different categories of persons and work styles. This has been revealed by the two studies conducted by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in private and public industrial settings. The findings of the second study of language-use in public enterprises have been published by the institute.

Language in Market Transactions: The use of language in the market, for buying and selling purposes, is important for understanding the processes of bargaining and negotiation. It also shows how shopkeepers control different codes and how they code-switch in order to achieve the desired transaction. It is also important for understanding how buyers and sellers converge in the enactment of their roles for accomplishing transactions. The work on the market transactions initiated by the CIIL is in its final stages. Data have been collected and are being analysed.

Language in Health Communication: The study of language in medical encounters and of medical discourse is a promising area of research which has a strong tradition in Europe and the USA but which has not been seriously taken up in the Indian situation. To fill this gap, the CIIL has initiated work in this direction. The data have been collected and are being analysed. The findings of the work on this issue will be available shortly.

Language in the Court-room: The significance of the use of language in the court-room is quite obvious for understanding the legal process and the nature and scope of legal language. Considering its significance, exploratory work has been done in this direction.

Language Debates in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies: The study of language used in language debates in Parliament and legislative assemblies serves a dual purpose. It shows how language can be used in argumentation in arriving at a mutually agreeable statement, and, secondly, it shows how language issues are debated, leading to policy formulation or statements. A further distinction can be made on these aspects with reference to language-use in Parliament on the one hand, and legislative assemblies on the other. This would show how far Parliament and legislative assemblies converge on language issues.

Language Education-A Trend Report

Language in Education: While the study of language in the classroom provides a micro-perspective, the study of language in the educational process as a whole offers a macro-perspective. This poses several issues pertaining to the number of languages used in education, the use of languages as media of instruction or their teaching as subjects. In this respect, the CIIL has initiated projects in three directions. First, the question whether learning of more languages is a load has been thoroughly examined from the perspectives of parents, students and teachers. The findings have been published, and they show that language learning is not a load. They, however, point out the importance of teaching of language in schools. Second, the issue of media of instruction and their impact on educational achievement has been extensively examined. The findings are in the final stages of publication. Finally, the CIIL has developed a transfer model of bilingual education to meet the diverse demands of language use and cope with the use of minority languages and switching the medium from one language to another. The bilingual transfer model of education is currently being experimented on in Rajasthan, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Karnataka. It is expected to be initiated in some other situations also.

Languages as a Medium of Instructions

English continues to be a favourite subject of research among language teachers. English as medium and subject at different levels of education, development of curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods, contrastive studies, teacher competence and measurement of student achievement are some of the areas researched by scholars. Study of skills such as reading, comprehension, speaking and writing and an investigation into the role of English in higher education and professional education are some of the further areas of research. A. K. Srivastava et al. (1986) have worked on the comparative aspect of mother-tongue and English as medium on subjects of study and attainment of students' longitudinally. Their conclusions state the different factors responsible for better achievement, one of them being the English medium. In various studies they have found mother-tongue students reaching the level of English-medium students. But the methods, materials and media used for the English-medium students give them an edge over mother-tongue students. The ethos of English and the instrumental motivation provided by it leads to the selection of cognitively better students for English medium and better achievement by them. By studying three groups of Malayalam children studying through Tamil and Tamil children studying through Tamil and Malayalam and Tamil children studying through English, they have conclusively shown that Malayalam children studying through Tamil are the weakest. Tamil and Malayalam children, those who are first generation learners, are no better even in English medium. Therefore, change of medium by itself

is no guarantee of improve emend. English which provides better job opportunities and creates a psychological setting for 'development' for 'modernization' is responsible for better achievement. The effect of medium on different academic subjects is not uniform. English as a subject is improved by the English medium. The mother-tongue also improves as a result of better methods and materials in English. In science subjects and in creativity the mother-tongue medium has an edge over the English medium. In social sciences there is no difference between English and the mother-tongue medium.

English, and Diagnostic Study of Reading Comprehension

There is no uniformity of procedures and therefore little comparability of results. What is general to all research is the fact that students are branded as better and poorer, efficient and deficient, rather than teachers, teaching materials or teaching methods being held responsible for students' ability or inability to read. The second common feature of all these research projects is the construction of tests for testing reading comprehension. Nature and incidence, of reading disability among schoolchildren, development of strategies for improvement of reading skills at middle school level, a study of reading comprehension in English of students of English medium secondary schools, developing critical reading abilities in higher secondary students in English, and diagnostic study of reading comprehension of undergraduate students: are some samples of studies made. Reading is neither a curricular subject nor a classroom activity at any stage of education. Therefore, there is no wonder in the finding that the upper SES group or urban children who have better family input in education perform better in reading.

Teacher Competence

Most researchers speak of a lowering of standards, but have provided no specific parameters to measure it. In many studies it is assumed that rural children are socially disadvantaged and therefore unreachable. Studies show that the majority of teachers are not professionally equipped to teach English, and although in some cases textbooks are written following the latest fashion, lack of teacher training leaves a gap between teacher competence and curricular demands. Teachers are not even trained to teach the mother-tongue, nor are they trained to link the home language with the school language. Modern testing techniques are conspicuous by their absence. Contemporary debates regarding testing do not find place in the teacher training curriculum. Whether it is the Khasi Hills or Bihar or Tamil Nadu, teacher preparation is poor and there is a lot of confusion about methods and objectives.

Critical Evaluation of Textbooks

Critical evaluation of textbooks does not take linguistic factors into account. Therefore, less pictures and less illustrations, less humorous material and difficult language are some of the conclusions emphasized by researchers. Similarly, vocabulary studies speak of frequency, weight and relative difficulty value rather than of linguistic parameters. Analysis of textbooks brings out the fact that most school grammars are written using Sanskrit or English models and do not reflect the grammars of the languages concerned. Some other studies make subjective assessments of books. Some studies justify the Urdu curriculum in Maharashtra,

others point out levels of difficulties in studying Arabic, and some others establish hierarchies in language acquisition. A study enumerates the objects in acquisition of language in the first three years. Another enumerates the growth of vocabulary.

Methods and Approaches of Teaching English

Studies which compare the traditional method with structural method or which design specific multimedia strategies tend to justify the assumption that the structural method or multimedia strategy is better. Most studies point out that college curriculum is literature oriented. Some deny the existence of an ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum and prescribe a utilitarian curricular paradigm of their own. Some have prepared special language programmes and shown how various instruments prepared and adapted by them justify the programme. Research in Indian languages is poor in methodology. As linguists are seldom associated with research work done in education faculties the content as well as method are weak. More work is done in Hindi than in other Indian languages. Most of the work deals with critical study of textbooks in different standards, standardization of reading achievement tests, teaching of poetry, orthography, and spelling, vocabulary study. In the study of text-books, length of lessons, paucity of illustrations and exercises, lack of vocational literature, and weight age given to prose pieces are the kinds of aspects on which conclusions are reached. In the studies about poetry, conclusions peripheral to the understanding of style, diction, and poetic qualities are reached. Even in the study of orthography and spelling rules as regards phonemic graphemes fit, rules of pronunciation and reading are not discussed. Reading achievement differences between boys and girls, rural and urban, are highlighted and the validation of tests becomes a major concern. Studies of the Three-Language Formula bring out trivial information. Preference of parents for English medium, code mixing between Marathi, Hindi and English, Hindi states not implementing the Three.

Teaching English Language Education-A Trend Report

Language Formula, southern states neglecting Hindi, north eastern states preferring English, are some of the often repeated conclusions reached by researchers. That the Three-Language Formula developed as a consensus is integration rather than instrumental that it represents the minimum rather than maximum number of languages to be learnt is some of the things which should have been brought out by the researchers. In other Indian languages, research follows the same track as in Hindi. Vocabulary study, reading readiness, reading rate, readability levels of different styles of writing, study of textbooks, lexical, morphemic and content analysis, critical study of curriculum, teaching of one language to speakers of another; study of differences among students of two different kinds of schools, are some of the areas researched. The researchers are qualitatively uneven.

Reading has been studied from pre-primary to the collegiate levels in different language areas. At the pre-primary stage children from urban, upper SES groups and children with parental education show better reading readiness. Reading improvement programmes for classes V and VI are validated as they show positive improvement, in speed and performance in reading. Reading improvement programmes are said to have improved comprehension and IQ is said to have something to do with reading. Some studies show no difference between urban and rural children. It is not clear

whether at the higher classes this difference is neutralized. It is interesting to note that one study shows that sex and IQ affected reading Mathematics and SES and IQ affected reading science and sex, SES, and IQ affect reading history. The interaction effects of SES, sex and IQ have no relevance for the rate of reading in Gujarati and English. There has been no effort at explaining this difference. It is also not explained why, in some cases, urban, rural, and high and low SES, high and low IQ differences are significant while in some cases they are not. It is not explained why a narrative style is better comprehended than an expository style. The interesting point that emerges from a study is that writing is not for creative expression and is meant only for correction of errors. As far as spoken language is concerned, a study points out that 'caste is a potent factor influencing the spoken language. Brahmin children were in the top and scheduled caste children at the bottom'. While this study finds it difficult to rank other castes, another study shows that 'the speech of children belonging to Namboodiri community was considerably differentiated from other caste groups'.

Teaching by Bilingual Method

At the outset it needs to be mentioned that there is a paucity of research on bilingual education in India. The few studies that have been conducted were concerned with the effect of medium of instruction (MI) on a host of variables like academic achievement, intelligence, cognitive abilities, creativity and personality. The effect of MI is not uniform for all curricular subjects. While non-cognate media do significantly better than the other two groups on second language (English) and mathematics, the same-group (Tamil) do significantly well on science and tests of creativity. The cognate group have scored the lowest on all the subjects. There is no significant difference between the three groups on achievement in social science.

Conclusion

When MI is different from MT, than MI is beneficial only when it is English and not a cognate language. Similarly, in a study on comparison of thinking styles among Hindi- medium students in Bhopal and English-medium students in Australia, it is reported that, although there are no overall differences between the two groups, they nevertheless develop different thinking styles, termed as 'preferential thinking styles'. Therefore, there is a shift in the focus of research from the effect of MI to conditions and nature of dependent variables which predisposes MI to have a particular kind of effect on it. The relationship, instead of being linear, is circular, exerting mutual influence. Corresponding to this shift in focus, the definition of Indian bilingual education has also undergone a change. Bilingual education is currently being defined as the continued use of MT and the use of L2 as medium of instruction. Such a definition clearly spells out the pivotal status of MT in education. In fact, this definition goes a step forward and stresses on early introduction of L2 and L3. Interestingly, research on 'bilingual education throughout the world is converging on the point of using MT as MI at least in imparting initial instruction. The immersion programme conducted in Canada clearly states that 'immersion' should not to be viewed as a methodology of supporting L2 instruction to vernacular-language groups. Rather they claim that immersion is a methodology of language teaching where emphasis is placed on comprehension rather than production and on content instead of

form; and attribute the success of second language instruction to the fact that MT is supported both in and out of the home.

The disorders of language consequent to cerebral involvement in adults-the aphasias: Physiology, the science of disorders of language subsequent to cerebral involvement in adults has emerged as an interdisciplinary field of research in the West over the last hundred years. However, very little has been done in these areas within this country. With the emergence of multilingualism and illiteracy as important relevant factors, studies of the aphasias in countries such as ours have gained added potential and are now being initiated at several centres. The results are promising. In this connection, 'A Comparative Study of the Schizophrenic and Aphasic Language' by Pratibha Karanth (1980) maybe referred to. Disorders of reading subsequent to cerebral involvement in adults-the alexia's: The lower incidence and absence of certain sub- types of alexia in Indian languages as compared to the West and the contributions of script-specific factors to the same have led to research on the role of script-specific factors in reading. The issue of bi and multi-lingual's vis-a-vis language disorders: The higher incidence, of crossed aphasia-aphasia due to non-dominant right hemisphere lesions in bi- and multi-lingual's has led to a hypothesis of differential language representation in the brain of bi- and multi-linguals as compared to monolinguals. The verification of this hypothesis has emerged as an important research issue over the last decade. Illiteracy-the processing of language in illiterates and the disorders of language in illiterates: The lower incidence of aphasia subsequent to dominant left hemisphere lesion in illiterates has led to theorization about the possible differential representation of language in the brain of illiterates and several recent research studies in India have addressed this issue and the processing of language in illiterates.

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