

Existence Of Multilingualism In Elementary Classes In The Light of NEP-2020

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Abstract

The study was conducted to find out the existence of multilingual ambience in elementary classrooms. Data were collected from 75 (Govt. aided/Sponsored) schools of the entire district. Descriptive survey method was followed to know the status of multilingual ambiances of different languages in elementary classrooms. For this questionnaire both for students and language teachers was developed. Most of the classes exhibited bilingualism as the norm. Maximum language classes allowed dominant native languages (Primarily Bengali, secondarily Hindi) in the business of curriculum transaction of different languages. But the students having other linguistic background except English remained in the periphery in English classes. The marginalized languages also remained absent from the business of curriculum transaction in case of classes of native languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Nepali etc.. Evaluation of languages was found mainly text book centric. Summative evaluation procedure brought anxiety among the students. Evaluation did not measure multilingual competency. All these perceptions brought low understanding mainly in English and other languages in Elementary level.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Elementary Education.

Introduction

Language is the medium through which communication happens at different levels. Language is related to the identity of a particular culture. Hence language is an important part of culture. India is a country where many cultures are nurturing and simultaneously cultural assimilation is happening to a large extent. In this respect, many languages and culture lost their original identity. This leads to loss of language and culture from language scenario. But cultures add blossoms in the society. Multi cultures and multi languages are the resources for the country. This aspect really makes India incredible. So preservation of languages becomes vital. Language will get preserved if mother tongue is used in the time of curriculum transaction. Mother tongue is the language with which child feels accepted in classrooms.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out multilingual ambience in language classrooms.
2. To find out the evaluation procedure of languages.
3. To find out role of languages in other curricular activities.

Theoretical background Language teaching in India remains a big issue in India. India has nurtured multiple language families since ancient times. 15th census of India(2011)- manifested the popular nature of Hindi as it found large existence in certain parts of India(Northern & Western). According to 2011 census, "57.1% of Indian population know Hindi, in which 43.63 % of Indian people have declared Hindi as their native language or mother tongue. Bhili /Bhilodi was the most spoken unscheduled language with 10.4 million speakers. 96.71% of India population speaks one of 22 scheduled languages as their mother tongue in 2011 Census". This noted Census provides further that a significant numbers of bilingual or trilingual speakers exist in India.

NEP 2020 and Languages

NEP 2020 focuses on instruction part of the language. This NEP declares, "Medium of instruction wherever possible must be covered by home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language till Grade 5 and it an extend to Grades 8 and beyond".

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Method	Interaction is the main focus which leads to participatory conversation in and outside of the classrooms. It also highlights early reading and writing at later age in the mother tongue. The Policy also puts emphasis on the development of skills of languages both for home language and also for other languages.
Three language formula	This three language formula was devised to address language diversity of India. This formula till today remains valid in the context of India. Three language formula will exist in new dimension i.e. nothing but in the form of flexibility. Flexibility on the part of the state, regions and last but not least on the part students is given to choose their languages. It is further stated in the following words, "Imposition of language is discouraged. Out of three languages, two must be native to India. Students can change one or more languages in Grade 6 or 7 after showing basic proficiency in three languages". But language education in India is to be reviewed as suggested by NEP-2020 putting flexibility in the centre of language learning.
Preparation of bilingual textbooks &TLM	Textbooks in their own language make lesson not only useful but also effective. Quality textbook enhances the language in which it is written. It sometimes also depends on the high quality translation. TLM in home language of the students specially meant for science and mathematics accelerate learning .
Great focus on preservation of language for nurturing multilingualism	This policy focuses on the preservation of the marginalized cultures and languages. Preservation of language puts emphasis on multilingualism. Results of many researches have come showing that children pick up languages extremely quickly at the early age and multilingualism has great impact on cognitive development. Hence preservation of languages and culture has positive impact on multilingualism.
Focus on "EkBharat Shreshtha Bharat"	NEP-2020 beautifully focuses on the common traits of the major Indian languages. This project will be an umbrella which captures grammar, phonetics, common structure and common sources of major Indian languages. This project by capturing noted things tries to identify unity among many major languages in India. Children will also learn about tribal languages of India and try to understand tribal languages with the help of their geographical location.
NCF- 2005 and language teaching and learning	National Curriculum Framework{2005} framed many principles regarding language and its contribution in education. Language which a child adopts from his/her neighbourhood since the time of birth plays vital role in the construction of knowledge. Languages of the students are so important because languages bear identities of the students. Language is the skeleton of any culture. Hence denial of language of any student in the classroom is the denial of the existence and identity of the student. Under such circumstances, NCF-2005 propagated multilingualism in respect of language teaching and learning. It further stated that language teaching and learning had to come out from the prerogative classroom. This indicated a language approach across the curriculum. NCF 2005 in this way provided many linguistic principles for multilingual approach. These principles can make a better place for learning for the marginalized language background students. These principles on the other hand need to be changed as per conditions of the classrooms.
Elementary Education	Elementary Education prepares the ground and on the basis of that strength in education in subsequent stages depends. Therefore knowledge construction in lower classes is treated as important matter. Classes V-VIII last phase of Elementary Education, hence disregard of any learning material brings failure in higher classes. Elementary Education on the other hand, depends largely on the languages which students brought into the classes. If in built language capacity of the students gets neglected then this foundation in education will be infirm.

Practical example of a district of West Bengal in the light of NEP 2020

Alipurduar 20th district of West Bengal is enriched with many cultures and languages. It is abode of Koch, Mech, Tharu, Santal, Munda, Oraon, Garo, Khasi, Rajbanshi, Dhimal, Rava, Toto, Dukpa etc. The district has hilly areas as well as plains. Tribal population is the major part of the whole population of the district. They have their own culture and language. Following languages were turned out in Census 2011 of the district -

Sl.No:	Name of the language	Percentage (population)
1.	Bengali	56.51%
2.	Hindi	5.38%
3.	Nepali	9.8%
4.	Rava	0.62%
5.	Mundari	0.8%
6.	Sadri	18.03%
7.	Oraon	3.18%
8.	Santali	1.38%
9.	Others	4.16%

Census of India- 2011

But only four languages are used in curriculum transactions and these are – Bengali, Hindi, Nepali and English. A lot of tribal languages remain out of context in respect of teaching - learning process. Not only languages but also cultures do not get entry in to the classrooms in the construction of knowledge. In this respect NEP 2020 will become truly effective if it preserves home language and its culture.

Rationale of the study

Keeping in mind the diversity of India, students need to learn languages except his/her mother tongue. Here lies the importance of multilingualism- which allows different languages in the classrooms and which assimilates students in the classrooms. Children never feel separated in the multilingual classrooms. Constitution of India through different Articles provided scope for mother tongue centric learning for Elementary Education. In this connection it is to observe how native languages with which students come in to the English classrooms are maintaining in the light of multilingualism.

Population

Population includes followings:

1. All the elementary schools {Govt. aided and sponsored} under West Bengal Board Elementary Secondary Education in Alipurduar district.
2. All the teachers of language section of Elementary Education.
All the students of Elementary Education

Sample of the Study

The sample includes only 75 five elementary schools consisting of classes V-VIII covering both rural and urban areas. These schools are selected randomly. The details of the sample are as follows:

No of Schools selected	No. of language teachers	No of students
75{Classes V-VIII}	Three language teachers are selected randomly from each school. Hence total 225 language teachers are selected randomly as sample of the study.	Five students from each schools are selected randomly for the study. Hence total 375 students are selected randomly as sample of the study.

Tools and techniques used	<p>In order to achieve the objective of the present study, some data gathering tools and techniques are to be used on the basis of the type and need of the research. Since, this is a descriptive survey type research, the investigator selected a questionnaire suitable for the study as it requires some factual information from at large number of teachers and students as respondents within a short span of time.</p> <p>Tools and techniques are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questionnaire for language teachers. 2. Questionnaire for the students. <p>The questionnaire has following parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background information. 2. Transactional strategies <p>The investigator has developed questionnaire keeping in mind principles of construction of the questionnaire.</p>
Data Collection	<p>The data were collected individually from the teachers and the students. They were requested to give their opinion and also not to leave any option blank.</p>
Method of the study	<p>The present study is a Descriptive Survey type research. This study is devised to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of phenomena and whenever possible draw valid general conclusion from the facts discovered.</p> <p>The present study is a survey type research designed to find out the presence of naïve languages and multilingualism in the Elementary classes.</p>
Analysis and Interpretation of data	<p>The analysis has been accomplished on the basis of the objectives of the study as well as the theme related to method and techniques. It is deals with quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data. Interpretation of data is carried out by taking into account frequency and percentages of the collected data</p>
Results & Findings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language classes remained stick to a bilingual approach. This is the barrier for the students with marginalized languages. Marginalized native languages such as Rava, Mundari, Sadri, Oraon, and Santhali remained elusive from the business of classrooms. 2. Students with these marginalised languages felt neglected. 3. Allowance of all the languages of the students needs to be maintained in the classrooms. 4. Contextualization, especially in case of teaching English language is needed earnestly in English classrooms. 5. Students found bearing tensions regarding evaluation of languages as they developed low understanding in English. This tension will decrease only when proper balance between Internal Formative and Summative Evaluation is maintained. 6. Multilingual competency was to assess as evaluation only measured competency based on text books. 7. In case of evaluation, mainly writing and speaking got due weightage but rest of the skills need to be evaluated simultaneously. 8. All these brought high rate of failure in English language. Though Nepali & Hindi languages had a little rate of failure. Hence evaluation in case language has to be accomplished keeping in mind multilingual aspect. 9. Other curricular activities mainly evolved around dominant native languages. Other curricular activities have to find its room with marginalized languages of the classrooms

Conclusion

Mother tongue is the best medium in which a student expresses his/her expression in the best way. It connects one with its culture in many forms-art, film, dance, etc. Therefore, denial of language is also denial of culture which leads drop out of the children from the education scenario. In this connection special focus would be given preservation of those languages which are in endangered list so that these languages and related culture can survive. Focus should also be given on the languages which have only oral forms otherwise the languages will be lost in near future. Existence of home language is needed for the students in the elementary phase of learning. Elementary Education is to be given utmost priority as all the children construct knowledge from the very beginning of their learning with the help of language whether it is language education or some other subjects.

Educational Implications

Multilingualism exists in DNA of India. Multilingualism is a way of life for India. Many cultures coexist simultaneously in India. Informal socialization place an important role in Education. In this context language teaching has to obey societal aspect as till today mainly English and other languages bring anxiety in the classrooms. The educational implications of the study are as follows:

1. English is to be evolved with other languages of the classrooms.
2. Flexibility of languages in language classes is extremely needed.
3. A good balance between informal evaluation and summative evaluation is suggested for evaluation of languages applicable both for English and other languages in classrooms.
4. Proficiency based evaluation is recommended for evaluation in languages.
5. Language teaching and learning are to be accompanied by meaningful context, meaning making activities and more and more with languages of the students so that they become part and parcel of the classrooms.
6. Integration of skills of any language is recommended for language teaching and learning for making classrooms a better place for learning.
7. Language across curriculum cuts boundary of language teaching and learning. This is supposed to happen in and outside of the classroom.
8. Language is the medium and this medium is significantly responsible for the learning of the students. Even children with special needs also have their own language. In the period of Inclusive education, In the period of Inclusive Education, languages of the students need to be addressed in a proper way.

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