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## The Value Of First Language Acquisition And The Influence Of English On Education

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### ABSTRACT

There is a long-standing debate about learning through the mother tongue or the English language. A person who is proficient in any language can learn anything perfectly. Language scholars and educationists are in support of mother tongue education. Society and social construction are based on the first language. Children learn the mother tongue easily by themselves and do not need special training; they deduce rules from themselves while learning. They start to think in their mother tongue and learn anything else through this. Thus mother tongue plays an important role in determining the ability in academic learning and intellectual learning. Mother tongue education is possible in a unilingual country like China but not possible in a multilingual country like India. The universal language that English is the second national language as well as the Education medium in India. Students should feel the importance of both the mother tongue as well as English to learn together from their initial stage of education.

**KEYWORDS:** Mother tongue, Second language, Education medium, Unilingual, Multilingual

### INTRODUCTION

There is a long-standing debate about whether it is better to learn in the mother tongue or through the English language. To approach this problem scientifically, it is better to distinguish between English medium education and mother tongue education. It can also help to scientifically approach emotional concepts, and it cannot fail to take into account the importance of English beyond being a foreign language and likewise the importance of the mother tongue. In the Indian community, there is support in intellectual circles such as language scholars, social activists, educationists, and progressives in support of mother tongue education, but it must also be admitted that the majority of the general public prefers English-medium education. From the very beginning of schooling, UNESCO has been at the forefront of promoting multilingual education based on the mother tongue. Studies indicate that studying in the mother tongue enhances academic achievement

and learning outcomes while also playing a significant role in inclusive education and high-quality learning.<sup>1</sup> This is essential to prevent knowledge gaps and accelerate learning and understanding.

## **LANGUAGE IN LEARNING**

A person who is not proficient in any language cannot learn anything perfectly. Even a profound book cannot be read and understood. Mastery of the language read or basic knowledge of the material read, without either of these two, even a newspaper cannot be fully understood. Fluency in any language is essential to learning. Utilizing a language that the students are familiar with enhances and improves the learning process. The interactive, participatory, or learner-centred aspect of the classroom is strongly correlated with the language of teaching.<sup>2</sup> The ability to quickly design learning schemes, access resources and existing knowledge, and develop a desire to learn new material are all benefits of employing a language of teaching that the learner is comfortable with. When a student uses a language they are not proficient in, it impedes their progress and makes them spend needless time learning the fundamentals of the new language.

## **IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE**

Language and society are dialectically related. In every community, language plays a crucial role in social interaction. Society and social construction are based on the first language, i.e., the mother tongue. Becoming fluent in mother tongue is natural and easy. 'Apart from being a tool for human beings to exchange ideas, language has other roles in human life' says eminent linguist Noam Chomsky. He says that language is a natural ability of the human species, that the brain has a special structure for it, and that all human languages have a universal grammar. Chomsky also says, 'Children learn the mother tongue easily by themselves and do not need special training; they deduce rules from themselves while learning. As the first language to be absorbed by the natural appetite for thought and as a prerequisite for the development of knowledge, the rules of deduction follow naturally.'<sup>3</sup> This is why Chomsky often uses the term acquisition instead of learning when referring to children learning their mother tongue. So, the mother tongue cannot be merely a language or a tool for exchanging ideas. It is, almost, the basic intellectual capacity of a human being. He starts to think in his mother tongue and learns anything else through this. Thus, the mother tongue plays an important role in determining the ability to learn academically and intellectually. In any society, neglecting its social (mother) language can destroy the depth of that society. It can weaken the working proletariat, which participates in production. It can make the masses of society ignorant, dull the spirit of struggle, and lead to exploitation.

## **EDUCATION THROUGH THE SECOND LANGUAGE**

Since children think in their mother tongue, they naturally understand everything through their mother tongue. When taught in a foreign language in school, their thinking is disturbed. This is the deadly violence we inflict on children's thinking. The 'culture' of foreign language teaching, which is constantly imposed by force, gradually decreases the children's abilities and skills. Eventually, they stop learning and start training to copy what is in the books and score marks in exams for job seeking. This culture crushes and destroys self-respect, self-thinking, and creativity before graduation.

English has only really taken on the status of a second language among Indians. In addition to the large number of English-taught private schools, government schools in states like Tamil Nadu are converting to an English-only curriculum due to parental pressure and concern over student enrollment. Currently, students are expected to study English as a second language in addition to reading and writing it, which slows down their rate of learning. The emphasis on English at the expense of regional languages and cultures can lead to a loss of cultural identity for students. Learners' productivity and results have declined as a result of their incapacity to learn in English, not as a language but as a medium of instruction. Given that English has

become both the hope and the nightmare for millions of people, English-medium education is a great tragedy in the Indian educational system today.<sup>4</sup>

## ENGLISH PSYCHOLOGY OF INDIAN SOCIETY

In the community, a graduate who has studied and obtained a doctorate but does not know how to speak English has to sit in a queue with a certificate in his armpit, and he will never be seen as educated by this society. On the whole, there is a widespread attitude in our society that English is the language spoken by educated people and a must-have for graduates. At the same time, the honour of a Tamil who was born in Tamil Nadu and graduated in Tamil Nadu is that 'Tamil does not come to write that much'.<sup>3</sup> This ugly psychology does not stop with the English craze. It has taught us to despise the mother tongue and believe it to be inferior and nonstandard.

## ENGLISH WORKSHOPS AND DIRECTING MEDIA

There is a debate that the educational institutions and media of our country's broker capitalists are working day and night to produce the English-speaking miracle tools' needed by the multinational industries and to create a Westernized society to consume Western goods. The media has come down, training people twenty-four hours for it and they instill the English craze in all. Television programs broadcast for 'Tamils' throughout Tamil Nadu are made to be in 'English' as much as possible. The small and big screen artists occupying the television screen all the time, their English voices, and the sarcastically uttered prose Tamil send the audience to English schools with a knife to their neck. Thus, Western and English fads are constantly and violently imposed on society by the capitalist media.<sup>3</sup> This debate may seem true on the surface, but it is gibberish. The media alone cannot be blamed for trying to spread its branches in all the languages, and that is not wrong. Since English is the universal language of the world, its influence will be felt in other languages. The whole world is going in the way of 'one country, one language'.

## POWER OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

At a glance, the need for English in the computer age/globalization environment and concepts such as English as the world language, common language, scientific language, etc., may seem to have instilled a mindset in favor of English-medium education in society. But a few are saying that society as a whole, to wash its hands of its mother tongue and study in a foreign language, is a psychological crisis that society has faced. These are the lamentations of those who know no other language than their mother tongue. We are living in a time of greater globalization; this has always been the case, but in the last several years, technical and technological developments have created even more connections that have bound the world together. The phrase "shrinking world," also known as "time-space compression," implies that the world is getting smaller at an accelerated speed due to globalization and that we are now more interconnected than ever with individuals on the other side of the globe.<sup>4</sup> The advancement of transport and communication technology is one factor contributing to the impression that our planet is getting smaller. One language, English, is predominantly used for global communication, and English has become a universal language.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN LEARNING

English is the higher education medium in India. English was the official language of 58 sovereign nations and 28 non-sovereign organizations as of 2020. English is used as an education medium in these nations, including India. English is the second national language in India and a common medium of communication between people in different states of India. A student can stay up-to-date with global events by using English. English is the language of global media, technology, business, and the internet. In higher education, English serves as a uniting global language that is crucial for comprehending the cultures and beliefs of others. All

important books for education are in English. Countries like Germany, France, China, Japan, and Russia have unilingual people, and even higher courses can be taught in their mother language. But India is the only country in the world that teaches basic education in a foreign language to nationalities with good languages as their mother tongue. No other country has this plight, and this is because of the multilingual people in India. The language that everyone has to know to communicate and stay competitive is English.

## REGIONAL LANGUAGES ARE STILL ALIVE IN INDIA

Many regional languages are still alive in India because of the language-wise division of states after independence. As Indians, we are all divided by languages. Apart from official languages as per law, the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists 22 languages that have been called scheduled languages and given recognition, reputation, and legitimate encouragement. As long as these laws exist, languages remain immortal. If the states were not divided based on language, we would all be speaking only Hindi at this time. If such a situation occurs, Hindi will be the language of instruction in India, and it no longer stands a chance. English is the second national language as well as the education medium in India. Therefore, from now on, English should be learned and mastered along with the mother tongue.

## DISCUSSION

A recent study says Tamil Nadu students are underprivileged. PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) is that study. It conducts, assesses, and reports on literacy, mathematics, and science for international students. Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu from India participated in the selection of 74 economies (states). In the literacy test, Tamil Nadu is ranked 72nd, and Himachal Pradesh is ranked 73rd. Literacy is defined by PISA as 'being able to understand and express what has been read'. Based on this, the majority of Indian students are illiterate. The reason for this is that the first language of the students was different from the language of the educational medium. Shanghai (China) ranks first in all categories of literacy.<sup>5</sup> How did China, who learned all the advanced courses like engineering and medicine in her mother tongue, get the first position in the examination conducted in English? That is the greatness of mother tongue education. An important thing in this discussion is only one language exists in China, and many languages are present in India. In a multilingual country like India, it is not feasible to teach all the education in the respective language. Linguists, psychologists, and educationists virtually universally agree that a child's mother tongue, or native language, is the sole language that should be used for learning. This is not possible in a multilingual country like India. All important books are in English, and translation into various Indian languages requires a lot of new words that may become funny and cannot be shared with foreigners.

The children learn the second language only in schools, not in society. Whether in or out of school, learning a foreign language does not occur in its truest sense. So the in-depth acquisition and convenience will be missing when the child starts to learn a second language. To overcome these hurdles, give equal importance to the mother tongue and second language. So we have to accept English and give it equal importance as the first language. But never abandon the mother tongue. It has taught us to despise the mother tongue and believe it to be inferior and substandard. This is because Tamils find it difficult to learn English, and it is not coming very easily for them. The mother tongue should be respected and should not be ridiculed by comparing it with English. In any society, neglecting its social (mother) language can destroy the depth of that society. It can weaken the working proletariat, which participates in production. It can make the masses of society ignorant, dull the spirit of struggle, and lead to exploitation. An obsolete language cannot be brought back; you can kill it, but you cannot revive it. It is very difficult.

We need to love and learn our mother tongue as well as English. Schools should create an environment for students to learn English better. Students should feel that both their mother tongue and the English language



are important for their lives. Learning English is not that difficult these days. Many electronic devices (gadgets), such as mobile phones, electronic dictionaries that are always at hand, internet access, simplified facilities to contact teachers, opportunities to watch multilingual movies and news, etc., can facilitate foreign language learning.

## CONCLUSION

Indians are all divided by languages, and mother tongue education is not possible in a multilingual country like India. But at the same time, the mother tongue is critical and should be preserved. The mother tongue should be respected and should not be ridiculed by comparing it with English. Apart from the mother tongue, one should acquire mastery in the second language as a medium of education, which is English. Students should feel that both their mother tongue and English are important. It is best to start learning both languages together with equal importance. Be proficient in both your mother tongue and English to learn things perfectly.

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