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## MULTILINGUAL TEACHING TO BE ADOPTED IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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### ABSTRACT



A multilingual society such as India needs to implement a viable bilingual/multilingual programme in the early years of schooling. This paper addresses the fact that the mother tongue and the English language should not be taught as distinct subjects, but need to be integrated into the daily life and work of young students in the classroom. In the NEP 2020 there was a pressing debate over the need for children to have their mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools. In most of the Indian states, the inability to learn in English especially as a medium of instruction has seriously led to a deterioration in the students' productivity. There is a tremendous aspiration for students admitted in professional courses and who have had their medium of instruction in their mother tongue in states like Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Orisa, Bihar and most of the Northern Belt to learn and communicate in English. According to a majority of students in these states inadequacy of speaking and learning in English leads to heavy loss of educational, economic and job opportunities.

Young children from economically weak backgrounds cannot join schools, where children communicate in English and feel extremely deprived and nervous when they commence their higher education in professional colleges. It is a well-known fact that the education system of India is unfair-with English for the elite and mother tongue for children from the socio-economically weaker sections. For a child to face global-challenges he/she needs to be instructed in English as far as the core subjects like physics, chemistry, mathematics etc. are concerned. In order to uphold our cultural values the mother tongue and the regional language need to be taught as separate subjects.

**.Keywords:** *Mother tongue, Communication, English, Curriculum and Instruction**Author(s) retain the copyright of this article*

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## INTRODUCTION

A teacher's sustained effort to teach his/her students a new concept and subject becomes incomplete when what is taught by the teacher in the class is not understood by the students. In most of the instances it is the language that acts as a barrier to communication. The NEP suggests the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools till the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. But then how does the child begin to understand his/her subjects after that when the medium of instruction shifts from mother tongue to English. This paper discusses how children acquire and learn languages and how the mother tongue, the regional language and English can be used as successful tools to improve classroom interaction and the communicative skills and cultural ethos of students.

How is it that a child acquires two or three languages at the same time and learns to communicate fluently in all these languages? If the parents speak to the child in the mother tongue, (say Telugu) the neighbor and his playmates speak to him/her in the regional language (say Bengali) and his teacher classmates and parents (occasionally) speak to him/her in English it is observed that the child would start speaking all the three languages fluently. Noam Chomsky gives a scientific explanation on how this miracle of language acquisition takes place.

## LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Professor Noam Chomsky's work caused a significant upheaval in the discipline of linguistics and revolutionized the scientific study of language. Noam Chomsky an American linguistic and Cognitive scientist and Professor at the Massachusetts Institute

of Technology (MIT) became a significant leader in linguistics through his works "Syntactic Structures" playing a crucial role in reshaping the study of language.

Chomsky's theory of language acquisition advocates language acquisition as a biologically determined process that has evolved to contain linguistic signals. Chomsky concluded that acquisition requires an inborn faculty in children, a concept known as the "language acquisition device". In other words, humans are born with an innate language 'device' that enables them to learn any human language.

Chomsky defined 'Universal Grammar' as a system of categories, mechanisms and constraints shared by all human languages and considered to be innate.

The model of language acquisition proposed by Chomsky makes it clear why young children who are exposed to hearing the English language make mistakes like 'I sawed' instead of 'I saw' 'She sanged' instead of 'She sang' 'childs' instead of 'children' 'sheeps' instead of 'sheep' etc. The language acquisition device (LAD) of the child helps him or her learn general grammar rules like using the suffix d or ed to form the past tense of verbs or using suffixes s or es to form the plural form of nouns. When the child is constantly, exposed to the same language he or she gradually learns exceptions to the grammar rules. The child gets to know that all verbs do not form their past tense by adding d or ed and all nouns do not form their plural by adding s or es.



Chomsky argued that if children learn two or three languages from birth, they are more likely to be fluent in all three the languages.

We cannot deny the significance of the English language at the global level. English is the language of science, aviation, computers, diplomacy; English is the language of the global media. Many books, journals, magazines etc. are written only in English. Now how will a professional student make use of all these facilities if he is not proficient in English? What we try to point out here is that English must be taught from the primary school level itself. It is crucial that children from the age of 4 or 5 should listen and make an attempt to speak in English. This does not mean that the mother tongue and the regional language are ignored. Going by Chomsky's conceptualization of the "Language acquisition device" a very young child has the innate capacity to easily learn two or more languages.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL LANGUAGES AND SANSKRIT

The more languages a person is proficient in the more equipped he or she is in facing global challenges. Education is incomplete if a student has not imbibed moral, ethical and cultural values. Learning regional languages like Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam, Bojhpuri, Kashmiri, Gujarathi etc. helps him in comprehending the cultural ethos of a particular state within the age of 4 to 5 or even before because every state in India has its unique cultural and religious tradition and knowing the language of the region helps a child to clearly imbibe these cultural and religious values and principles.

Martin Luther King once said "To other countries, I may go as a tourist, but to India, I come as a pilgrim". Indians cultural diversity and tolerance is an inspiration for the world. It is an example of peaceful co-existence and harmonious living. Foreign travelers like Huien Tsang and Al-Biruni learnt languages like Pali, Sanskrit and Urdu to understand and write about the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of our country. Even science and mathematics were well developed in India in the ancient times. Aryabatta, Baskaracharya, Boudhayan were some famous Indian Mathematicians Kanad, Varahamihira and Nagarjuna were some well known scientists. Medical science was also quite advanced. Astronomical predictions were made applying mathematical knowledge. Aryabatta propounded the heliocentric theory which stated that the Earth is round, rotates on its own axis and revolves around the sun. There were surgeons like Sushruta, metallurgists and Alchemists.

All these accomplishments were documented in scriptures written in Sanskrit. What this paper hints at is that if an Indian child has to be genuinely oriented towards his or her heritage and culture he or she should also be taught Sanskrit.

Children should be taught Panini's linguistics and Sanskrit grammar from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> standard. At least 3 periods in a week should be allotted in the school curriculum to teach children the Sanskrit language and its grammar. This would ignite the scientific temper in a child from a very young age.

The mother tongue which is usually the regional language should also be taught twice or thrice a week. This would make the child familiar



with the unique cultural heritage of his or her locality and state.

It is a known fact that we cannot serve people better unless we 'think globally and act locally'. Take marketing for example customers relate more to brands that speak their language, their dialects and associate with their local anecdotes and folklore, whether it is a high-end product or a seemingly negligible service. The same is applicable to education as well. Besides Sanskrit, India recognizes 21 official languages and an even bigger spectrum of dialects. Languages should not be a barrier; rather, it must become an enabler so that education will be accessible and also comprehensible to children living in any part of the country.

### THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Getting back to our earlier discussion on the role played by the English language in a students' life a 2016 survey carried on by a Delhi – based employment Solutions Company found that barely 7% of engineering graduates were fit for core engineering jobs. Poor English was one of the main reasons. If a student is looking forward to work abroad or in any of the reputed MNCs then it is crucial that he/she learns English.

To trace the history of English language in India it was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the East India Company introduced the language in India. This trading company gradually got themselves involved in local politics and expanded their trade. The British turned to high-class Indians to work for them. The British wanted to create a class of Indians who could think and work like the British. This is when they

recognized the importance of English language in India for the purpose of education. To achieve this goal they established several educational institutes based on the British model giving lot of importance to the English language. By 1857 English became the first language in Indian education. Many of the Indian leaders of that period supported English language and considered it to be the key to success. English has such a powerful impact on Indians that it remained the main language of official discourse even after independence. And now English has become an integral part of our education system from literature to science and technology, arts, official documentation etc. While the British motive for introducing English to Indians was unfair, it ultimately turned out to be advantageous for Indians.

With English as a common language of communication, India has been uplifted internationally setting benchmarks in various fields. English is the only language favoured by different industries by different industries like the legal and banking systems, defence, trade and commerce etc. It is still the medium of instruction in all post-graduate and professional institutions.

### CONCLUSION

This being the scenario in our country, it is not justified to introduce English in grade 5 or grade 8 as the medium of instruction. As suggested earlier school children must be taught from class 1 itself to speak and read English. English should be the medium of instruction from the primary school level. Sanskrit and the regional language should be taught as separate subjects allotting at least three periods a week for these languages. This system would make



any Indian child (be it urban or rural) to become competent locally as well as globally. Added to this teachers must be trained meticulously to teach all these languages to the children. There is a massive dearth of teachers who can communicate well in English. They should be given intense training which the government should undertake on a war footing. Institutes should be established to train teachers in English, Sanskrit and the regional languages. Only then can we genuinely hope that our students would get academically competent with moral, cultural and ethical values.

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