



“Education in Mother Tongue: Importance and Benefits”

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Abstract

Use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction or as a language instruction is very important factor in primary education. Language instruction is a basic requirement for all types and levels of education. Education of a child begins through language and continues through language. To make learning effortless and natural, the child should be taught through the language in which they can form concepts, through which they can think creatively, and which helps them in socialization. Instruction in mother tongue helps in the search for self-affirmation, establishes group identity, meets the natural urge for cultural rootedness and helps to avoid fanaticism. It brings the child into harmonious relationships with the surrounding environment and maximizes the opportunities offered by the early learning experiences. So it can be said that, unlike all other subjects taught in schools which are concerned with that aspect only, mother tongue is concerned with almost every aspect and need of human life.

Key words: Mother Tongue, Language, Instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a powerful means of communication which has enabled us to be more developed in comparison to other creatures so far found in the world. It is the principal means used by human beings to communicate with one another. It is that divine gift for human being, ‘species specific to man’ that has enabled us to enjoy the pleasure available in the world. Our identity lies in the culture we follow. One of the most powerful forms of symbolization and central feature of all human culture is language. Moreover, it is a part of culture which is a system of symbolic verbal and sometimes written representation learned within a particular culture.

The importance of language in the development of education in any nation has long been stressed by linguists. The use of the appropriate language in teaching learners greatly contributes to academic performance and success in school. Language plays a vital role in the learning process of the elementary learners.

What is a ‘mother tongue’?

In India, there has been an ongoing effort to define the term ‘mother tongue’, especially since the first population census conducted in the 19th century. In the Census of India, the definition of ‘mother tongue’ has evolved from ‘language spoken by the individual from the cradle’ in



1881, to 'parent language' in 1901, to 'language ordinarily used' in 1921 (Pattanayak quoted in Ladousa 2010). In the 2011 Census, the word 'language' is used when there are more than 10,000 speakers. The NEP uses the terms 'mother tongue' and 'home language' (even 'local language' and 'regional language') interchangeably, without providing satisfactory definitions. This leads to the first question: is a child's 'mother tongue' the language they learn first, the language they know best, the language they use most, or the language of the state or nation they belong to (Ladousa 2010, 602).

While a national policy can guide or influence the functioning of the education system in all states, it is the state governments that take decisions on matters related to education. The Three-Language Formula (TLF), first presented in 1956, laid out that schools must teach a student's 'mother tongue' or regional language for ten years; an official language of the country (Hindi or English) for six years; and a third modern Indian or foreign language for three years. This had led to resistance towards the promotion of Hindi as India's 'national' language, especially in the southern states.

At the same time, the medium-of-instruction question has been under scrutiny for decades now, and had also culminated in the National Curriculum Framework (2005) by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) that proposed teaching in the 'mother tongue' until Class 5, almost as a precursor to the NEP. The new Policy encourages schools to continue teaching in the mother tongue, until Class 5 and even beyond that wherever possible. It also suggests the use of the student's 'home language' in informal classroom interactions by teachers, whether or not it is the official medium of instruction, to ensure that students from all linguistic backgrounds feel included in classroom discussions. They have also suggested establishing an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) in order to translate and produce high-quality learning materials in various Indian languages.

Importance of mother tongue as the medium of instruction:

Mother-tongue plays a tremendously useful role in the education of a child. It has a great importance in the teaching- learning process. Specifically, the importance of mother tongue is due to the following reasons:

- 1. Medium of Expression and Communication:** Mother tongue is the best medium for the expression of one's ideas and feelings. Thus, it is the most potent agent for mutual communication and exchange of ideas. Student and teachers can exchange their ideas effectively during classroom teaching.
- 2. Formation of a Social Group:** It is through language, and especially through the mother-tongue, that individuals form themselves into a social organisation. At each level of education,



language is the key which helps the students to connect with each other and they form a social groups or we can peer groups.

3. Easy to Learn: Of all the languages, the mother-tongue is most easy to learn. Full proficiency or mastery can be achieved in one's own mother tongue. Students achievement in their both theoretical and practical examinations is comparatively higher than those who opted English as medium of instruction.

4. Best Medium for Acquiring Knowledge: Thinking is an instrument of acquiring knowledge, and thinking is impossible without language. "And training in the use of mother-tongue-the tongue in which a child thinks and dreams-becomes the first essential of shoaling and the finest instrument of human culture." (P. B. Ballard.) It is therefore of the greatest importance for our pupils to acquire knowledge through mother-tongue.

5. It brings about Intellectual Development: Intellectual development is impossible without language. Reading, expressing oneself, acquisition of knowledge and reasoning are the instruments for bringing about intellectual development; and all of these are possible only through language, or the mother-tongue of the child.

6. Instrument of Creative Self-Expression: We may be able to communicate in any language, but creative self-expression is possible only in one's own mother tongue. This is clear from the fact that all great writers could produce great literature only in their own language. So students also express their creativity in mother tongue with more confidence.

7. Instrument of Emotional Development: Mother-tongue is the most important instrument for bringing about emotional development of the individual. The emotional effect of literature and poetry is something which is of vital importance in the development and refinement of emotions. Students who can control their emotions can deal real life problems more easily and can adjust with the changing environment.

8. Instrument of Growth of the Students: The teaching of the mother tongue is important because on it depends the growth of our students. Growth in their intellectual life ; growth in knowledge ; growth in ability to express themselves; growth in creative and productive ability- all stem from the mother-tongue.

9. Source of Original Ideas: Original ideas are the product of one's own mother tongue. On account of the facility of thought and expression, new and original ideas take birth and get shape only in one's own mother tongue. Thus, mother tongue has tremendous importance in student's education and in the curriculum.



Benefits of Learning in Mother Tongue:

Here are some pointers stating the benefits of learning in mother tongue:

1. Intellectual Development

Some studies have proven that students tend to develop their intellect faster if they are fluent in their mother tongue as compared to those who are not. It has also been found that teaching and learning in their mother tongue have led to greater achievements in education for those who study from a difficult medium. The analytical, logical, reasonable processing of a person has shown greater development with the help of learning in a mother tongue.

2. Personal Development

Personal development or identity appears out of one's understanding of oneself, their society and whatever surrounds them. Listening, learning and speaking their language from the beginning leads a person to comprehend its views, feelings or emotions which later in life builds a strong foundation with family, peers, & one's identity helping them to master any skill using their mother tongue. This latently makes a student feel more acceptable to themselves and their achievements in a natural way.

3. Cultural Development

Language or mother tongue plays a key role in keeping the cultural development alive and going. The use of a different language might slowly hinder the zest of one's culture. Research shows that the use of the mother tongue promotes cultural development making one feel a lot more connected to the cultural part of our society. The mother tongue can emit instant association with the roots and history. This is quite a crucial point to notice and work upon to benefit the ongoing and the coming generations where this indispensable development seems to be eroding rapidly.

4. Commercial benefits

Nowadays, where we see a lot of young minds with amazing business plans. So if a student in later parts of his/ her life wishes to try their hands on business be it small-scale or large-scale they need to have a strong foundation and fluency in their mother tongue so as to reach and communicate to each and every person interested in their business. Owning a business locally or widely generates a need to process the language articulately. And this firm grip of a language



comes from practicing and learning in the same language from the very start. Our system tends to ignore this fact but is kind of important when thinking thoroughly and keeping in mind the benefits it creates for a student.

5. Communication Skills

During childhood, when children spend time with their parents, they learn communication skills, which become crucial in school for them to be able to participate in lessons, competitions, etc. When parents communicate to their children it steadily develops their concepts and terminologies of the language. Thus when it comes to education, children really enjoy being taught in the same language, it makes it more fun leading to greater educational records and achievements.

6. Ease in making Study Material

Compiling textbooks in different languages can be intimidating as it requires a lot of time, care, proofreading, etc but when it comes to creating one in the native language it is quite an easy task as there are a number of experts readily available and takes less time too.

7. Ease for the teachers

Also a benefit for the teachers teaching the primary class students as it becomes quite easy to instruct, teach and communicate with the children who are still learning and honing their language skills. It makes it simple for the teachers to express themselves in a way they pass their knowledge explicitly and effortlessly.

8. Strong Family bonds

As in India, where most of the parents and grandparents do not understand a different language quite that well except their mother tongue. So if a child is taught in its mother tongue the family can really engage in the studies, cutting the linguistic barriers. When a child learns with its family members it somewhere elicits strong family bonds making learning in mother tongue crucial.



9. Strong Foundation for Learning skills

If one has a stronghold of his/ her mother tongue then it is convenient for that to learn literally any skill. The boon of learning anything in one's native language is unmatched. The knowledge is easily transferable when it's projected in a mother tongue. It also equips a person to master those skills in less time and even more efficiently. Specifically if one wishes to learn new languages.

Many linguists reveal that a good grip over their native language helped them comprehend and dissolve different languages at an early age. So, if children are trained using it, they will be capable of learning plenty of languages at an early stage of life which is sure to add a feather in their cap.

10. Confidence and Awareness of oneself

The knowledge of the native language not only brings confidence but also a sense of awareness in an individual. No matter what you aspire to be, people with a good grip on the mother tongue always have an upper hand among others. Thus, facilitating great confidence in understanding and communicating different sectors also adopting skills required in a sector quickly and effectively.

11. The Pride

Learning in your mother tongue in itself is a matter of pride. Mother tongue has a huge impact on shaping cultural development and defining a person's individual identity. So, one must take pride in crafting their cultural, personal, societal identity with the help of their native language.

Conclusion

Many youngsters from corner to corner in the booming world are learning in the schools and teaching them in their mother tongue is crucial for their harmonious development. Mother tongue is important because of several reasons. Mother tongue is vital in shaping the intellect and feelings of a person. Learning to speak in the native language is very important for a child's thorough development. Being swift with the mother tongue helps the child in a number of ways. It resonates with his culture, guarantees good comprehensive development, and holds up for



the learning of other languages. A child first grasps what surrounds them through the language they listen to their family conversing in from before they are born.

Whereas there are cheering signs that the policy pendulum has started to swing towards a larger understanding of the benefits of mother-tongue learning, there is still a long way to go. Policies and programmes are being developed to take hold of mother tongue in the early stages of learning, but there still prevails a need to present better policies, make sure better preparation for the teaching of second languages and make it a point that huge amounts of resources are set aside. All we hope to do is to encourage the education givers to take in account the need to introduce **mother tongue** as a medium of learning in the beginning stages of schooling.

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