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\*Diwakar Prahaladaiah,

Research Scholar,

Christ University,

Bengaluru, India

diwakar.p@res.christuniversity.in

\*\*Dr. Kennedy Andrew Thomas,

Professor, School of Education and Director,

Centre for Education beyond Curriculum (CEDBEC),

Christ University, Bengaluru, India.

kennedy.andew@christuniversity.in

Multilingualism in English Language Teaching: Perceptions of Students and Teachers of  
Bengaluru on Regional Languages in ELT

Abstract: Multilingualism intensifies the process of ELT and facilitates students to adapt themselves to a foreign language effectively. Multilingual approach in ELT equips a teacher with various techniques to teach English. In a country like India, a vivid vernacular identity has co-existed alongside with human civilization. Hence, to learn and to teach L2 like English it becomes essential to contain the local language fluency and intertwine textual channels like literature, culture, art, customs and traditions. The vernacular-other languages divide impacts on Indian education by disadvantaging ITM languages communities. This research paper is based on grounded theory with the process of discussion and gathering theory. The researcher begins

with a collection of proposition referring to a particular experience or locale of teachers and students referred to theory. The set of questionnaire and semi-structured interview was prepared for students and teachers of four colleges across the city of both urban Bengaluru and rural Bengaluru. The findings revealed the general understanding on the difficulties of direct teaching methodology in English in contrary to Multilingualism/Bilingualism in English classroom.

Key Words: Multilingualism, English, Language Teaching (ELT), Indigenous Tribal Minority (ITM), L2

#### Background:

India has been a melting pot of various languages and in cultures, and the wake of globalization; both teaching and learning English as a language is challenging in the multilingual context and has brought along many complications for the socio-linguists. India has been a mixture of different dialects and in societies, and the wake of globalization; both educating and learning English as a dialect is trying in the multilingual setting and has brought along numerous difficulties for the socio-language specialists. On the off chance that, dialect is considered as in essential marker of character, what is the national, regional or ethnic identity of people living in the multilingual settings? What are the after effects of adaptability and development in the relationship for multilingualism? What assorted informational impacts are results of multilingualism? In this one of a kind condition, vernacular is the transporter of ethnic identity and culture. This makes multi culturalism even inside the classroom.

Multilingual social orders are by and large described by progressive power relations among dialects and their speakers. A few dialects enable their speakers giving them favored access to assets while others add to underestimation and drawback for the network of their employments. In the majority of the multilingual social orders, just a couple are dialects of energy and benefit; the rest are minimized and debilitated in the progression control relationship among dialects. With English as the prevailing dialect in post-frontier India, as in South Asia and different parts of the world, the etymological progression has pursued significant power holes in the general public which can be viewed as a twofold gap amongst English and real dialects and between real dialects and the indigenous dialects.

While English has dominated the major languages of national and regional communication in South Asia, the influence of these languages themselves have remained limited to their dominance over ITM Languages. They have failed to counter the growing dominance of English partly because of conflicting interests and identities. For example, Hindi has not been able rise to the status of a national link language in India because of resistance from other language communities. Thus while the major languages in India have been dominated over ITM languages of their respective regions, pushing them out of significant domains of use and marginalised them, they themselves have remained in positions of lesser power and privilege compared to English. In the process, there is a divide between English and a major major/dominant language, which Ramanathan (2005) calls the English-Vernacular divide. The other linguistic divide is between the dominant national languages and ITM languages and it is characterised as the Vernacular Other divide (Mohanty).

The Population Bureau ([www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org)) has also estimated that the world's populous countries in 2050 India, China, the USA, Indonesia, Pakistan. The world's estimated total population is 9.4

billion. The number of living languages will be 2,875 by 2050 according to latest edition of the Ethnologue. The world's most populous countries in 2009 and in 2050, and the number of languages (2009) in countries to be the most populous in 2050.

Country	Population (millions) 2009	Population(millions) 2050	Number of languages 2009
1. India	1,331	1,748	438
2. China	1,171	1,437	292
3. United States	307	439	176
4. Indonesia	243	343	719
5. Pakistan	191	335	72
6. Nigeria	181	285	514
7. Bangladesh	162	222	42
8. Brazil	153	215	236
9. Congo. Dem. Rep.	142	189	215
10. Philippines	128	171	171

\*Compiled on the basis of Haub and Kent (2009) and Lewis (2009)

The dominant role of English and popular aspirations to acquire the language cannot be ignored and, at the same time, language policy and practice in education must accommodate the nationalistic and regional identities emotionally associated with mother tongues.

#### The Use of the Mother Tongue and English Language Teaching

Experts tend to disagree on the use of the mother tongue (L1) while teaching English as a second language (L2). Different viewpoints on the subject often create more heat than light and confuse the classroom teacher about using the mother tongue in the process of teaching English. The supporters of the Direct Method of teaching English do not subscribe to the view. On the other hand while there are experts who support the use of Translation Method, a cross section among ELT experts supports a judicious use of the mother tongue.

We have been associated with English for over two centuries, and people in this country learnt English to a very high degree of proficiency and people like Pandith Nehru are considered great writers in English. John Gunther, once the editor of The London Times wrote, “Pandith Nehru writes a kind of English which only a handful of Englishmen can hope write”. Many of our distinguished writers in Indian languages were professors of English.

Today English has become a ‘Language on Demand’ in India. As a result of the phenomenal growth of science and technology, computer software in every field of human endeavour, millions of young men and women learn English to a certain degree of proficiency. It has become something more than a second language because of the immense opportunities it provides in academic administrative and social spheres. For teaching English on a mass scale, we need a large army of teachers to teach effectively this all important language of communication in this country. There is a need to modify our, teaching methodology and use the mother tongue

where it helps. In the light of the enormity of the problem and the standard of attainment in English by our teachers, we have no option except to reconcile to the use of L1, in teaching English. It is a known fact that despite expert opinion, L1 is used freely and extensively by teachers and students even in the English medium schools. Most students and teachers use L1 to formulate concepts and then translate the same into English. In the process they make a number of mistakes in usage and grammar of English. Teacher use L1-

- To give meaning of words, phrases and idioms.
- To convey the ideas of passages/lessons in textbooks.
- Sentences and features of English grammar are explained in L1.

Arguments for the use of L1 while teaching English:

- Meaning can be easily conveyed through L1.
- Teachers have the unfounded fear that Learners cannot understand English even when it is taught using the Communications Approach.
- Teachers feel at home with L1 in the English class.
- As a result of the bad methods and techniques employed by the teachers, students do not understand English and demand translation.
- The use of L1 helps in finishing portions early.

Arguments against the use of L1

- As we know, a language is cultures specific. A word in one language may not always mean the same as a word in another language. There is no one-to-one correspondence

between an English word and word in another language as far as their meaning is concerned. Even synonyms in English do not mean exactly the same thing. Their usage differs, e.g. pretty, cute, beautiful, and handsome. Indian words such as dharma, punya and many others have no equivalents in English. Certain English sentences Like

‘I have had lunch,’ cannot be translated.

Again a sentence in the second conditional (improbable condition) has no corresponding expression in our languages.

- Structural words, articles, prepositions and auxiliary verbs do not exist in our languages. They cannot be taught by the Translation method.
- The main objective of teaching English is to make the learners use English competently. Themes are only means to teaching language and wholesale translation takes a lot of time and practice is not given its due importance to listening and practice in speaking.
- Thinking in L1 and speaking in English will hinder fluency and spontaneity of speech.
- The use of L1 while teaching English will have an adverse effect in learning some of the English sounds. [ɜ:] is reduced to [dɜ], and the diphthongs such as [oi], [ie] and [ue] pose problems. There is a tendency among both teachers and learners to approximate English sounds to the nearest sounds in L1 and this may distort meaning.
- Another drawback is seen when learners resort to spelling pronunciation. In Indian language one letter stands for one sound, whereas in English one letter may represent many sounds. Silent letters pose the greatest problem.
- Wrong accent and intonation heard when Indians speak English is largely influenced by the excessive use of the mother tongue.

Teaching multilingual versus monolingual classes:

The researchers have established the way the various languages in the multilingual classrooms. The local vernacular of the classroom, the educator assumes a critical part in the classroom communication. Educator's convictions and states of mind towards the local dialects of understudies additionally decide the degree of their connections. There might be quiet clash between understudies of various dialects. Additionally, even in a similar classroom the understudies may utilize distinctive assortments of a similar dialect when they talk within the sight of nonattendance of their instructors. At the point when kids are instructed only in a non-primary language dialect they are averted access to training in view of the phonetic, academic, and mental obstructions made. "Therefore these selective non-primary language programs abuse the human appropriate to training as communicated in the United Nations tradition on the privileges of the tyke, among other human rights infringement." Mishra, 2009

Multilingual societies are generally classified by hierarchical authority, relationships among languages and their speakers. Few languages authorize their speakers giving them privileged way in to recourses. Multilingualism in paper alludes to the state in which in excess of two dialect are utilized as a part of a similar classroom for a similar reason. It has been one of the attributes of the cutting edge human progress. In any case, it is as yet a matter of verbal confrontation exactly how much capability is required to get authority over dialects. Numerous etymologists characterize multilingualism as dominance over various dialects.

### Objectives:

- To recognize the challenges of multilingual classroom in Bangalore Rural Schools.
- To elucidate that the teachers are prepared for multilingual English language classroom.
- To examine the learners reaction to multi language i.e. L1 and L2 in the process of teaching and learning.
- To suggest some pedagogical implications for Mono-Lingual and Multi-Lingual class.

### The Methodology:

The researcher began the study by observing talks, speeches, opinion, and presentations made by the students and teachers. The set of questionnaire was prepared for the students and teachers of four colleges across the city of both urban Bengaluru and rural Bengaluru. The findings revealed the general understanding on the difficulties of direct teaching methodology in English and Multilingualism/Bilingualism in English classroom. Based on the interactions with them a group discussion was held with various activities like role-playing, brain storming sessions, rapid-fire round of questions and final conclusion. Notes were made observing the class-room discussions of the language teachers in my own college. To strengthen the analysis and the conclusion made, the data has been analysed qualitatively.

### Discussions and Findings:

The researcher found that the students find it difficult in comprehending the teaching in case of mono-lingual teacher. For instance an English teacher who is not acquainted with multiple languages but his/her mother tongue, finds it difficult to connect with the students and vice-

versa. Any new language is considered to be an extension of socio-cultural essence and a multilingual teacher is considered to be well-equipped with the various techniques to teach English, catering to a larger group with diverse backgrounds.

Similarly many of the learners replied that they were keen with teachers who can reciprocate with students in their mother tongues, moreover it was also found while interacting with the students that they teachers with knowledge of vernacular languages. It was also found that students felt learning very much homely and they belonged, for instance an English teacher teaching an Essay on a classical dance form of “Bharathnatyam” should know the terms like, ‘Arangetram’, ‘Guru Vandanam’, ‘Anjali’, ‘Padabhivandanam’ ‘Samskrutha’ as Sanskrit and also able to translate the same to the students of various backgrounds without losing out on the essence of such terms and yet retain the rhythm of “Indianism” as a teacher and also an a facilitator that, only a multilingual and multicultural teacher can do. Indeed an English teacher lives in many worlds!

Indianism: Typical Indian words that have to be pronounced accordingly and English translations to the same would be an injustice.

#### Conclusion:

The orientation towards multilingual teaching methods is urgent for the present time to satisfy the student’s needs and to trigger the rapid growth of multilingualism in 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Facilitating the students to adapt and assimilate the various socio-lingual pellets is again a responsibility of English language trainers, since learning English language is a process of flowing river. Various multilingual deposits should get accumulated into this river, enriching

the quality and increase the utility value over a period of time. Literary luminaries like Dr. Girish Karnad, Mr. Raja Rao, Mr. R. K. Narayan, Sri. Rabindranath Tagore, Ms. Arundhati Roy, Ms. Shashi Deshpande, Mr. Thyagaraja Paramasivam Kailasam and our host of other personalities with unmatched literary quality, have all been multi linguist and perhaps, this very quality enables them to appreciate the nuances of diverse cultural backgrounds and translate same into their literary texts so convincingly!

Indeed a multilingual ELT specialist should essentially his/her students and expose them to diverse cultures through regional and foreign language films, diverse food culture, various art forms, traditions and cultures across the globe and truly, an ELT specialist acts like a facilitator to the students enabling them to stand firmly on the 'spring-board' of multilingualism and take a successful plunge into the ocean of English language confidently.

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