

Medium of Instructions: Introspection

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ABSTRACT

India is one of the rapidly developing countries in the world. The society is also wonderfully accepting new challenges and ethos of the new world. Some of our traditions are being wiped out and neo-culture is emerging. Education, too, is also under great influence and one can find some established traditions in classroom teaching. One may call them unnecessary but there are no answers to the excuses the parents have.

The medium of instructions is one of the core issues in contemporary society because we find the people away from mother tongue (first language). There is no doubt in saying that the child should be sent to the school where linguistic environment should not be different from native or intimate environment. It is the requirement for the holistic development of the child. The parents and teachers should have better understanding of development of very young individuals.

The primary aim of this paper is to discuss some of the facts like, acquisition of first language (mother tongue), growth and development during first five years, primary linguistic environment and a role of language in holistic development of an individual. The paper is written with a view to promote healthy and fruitful discussion about medium of instructions.

Keywords: *Medium of Instructions, Acquisition of Language or Language Acquisition, Linguistic Development, Primary Environment, First Language, Second Language, Language*

Introduction :

The language has made human beings different from other creatures and human beings have established supremacy over the entire animal kingdom. The language is the source from where the world of knowledge has emerged. The language cannot be separated from the life and it is one of the acquired behaviours. Nowadays, we find people talking about global development and global needs. We must understand that there is only global need and

that has emerged from trade and industry. In search of wealth and prosperity a very small group has set the trend towards consumerism.

Even in education, the trend is seen invariably. It may be north or south, east or west, the parents want to send their children to English medium institutions from the day one of schooling. Everywhere institutions, catering so called need of society, have been established and they call themselves institutions with difference. The parents are attracted and

having little understanding of what kind of initial schooling should be followed and we find in our societies a very unusual trend of sending their children to schools where medium of instructions is English. Let us try to understand the significance of learning in the school where medium of instructions is the language of respective region.

Medium of Instructions :

Let us try to understand the medium of instructions. Instructions is nowadays very common word used for teaching; the teaching is the process carried out for learning among learners. It is very common process and one can find them easily in classroom teaching. It is the language through which teacher interacts in the classroom. When teacher makes use of native language, it is known to be vernacular medium school or institution. It is better to call the school in which first language is medium of instructions, i.e. Gujarati medium schools, Marathi medium schools, Hindi medium schools, etc. But there are specific schools where English is the medium of instructions, it is better to call the school in which second/foreign language is medium of instructions.

So in our country, the schools are divided among two broad categories, they are schools where first language is medium of instructions and schools where second/foreign language is medium instructions. In this paper, the issue of in which medium of instructions child should learn is discussed at large. There is no issue

whether English is second/foreign language and it is the medium of instructions in our country. But we need to understand how the language is being processed in early age, i.e. 0-5 years and 5-11 years.

First Language (Mother tongue) :

Do we really understand the meaning of first language? It is very difficult to answer but one can say our ideas are blurred. The first language is known as language of subconscious because it is acquired naturally from primary environment. Let us understand the term primary environment; it is the intimate environment in which child is groomed. No child is born with language, but it has an innate ability of receiving sounds from its intimate environment. There are numbers of different sounds produced or reproduced around it but it is not responding to them until it is connected with certain notion. All these sounds don't resemble any sense to them because all these sounds are arbitrary and yet infant has to get them registered. Initially, infant pays attention towards any audible sound and responds to it. Gradually, it concentrates to specific sounds and catches them to be registered. This process is known as registering sounds to brain, later in a particular chunk, it relates to any specific object or human being and it starts to respond specifically to such units. This is how the child starts to acquire phonemes of specific language and to arrange them in specific order so that it brings identity and it carries meaning.

The first language is the language that is acquired naturally. The child is not to employ any conscious efforts for learning the language. It acquires its phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics naturally. The initial process of acquiring the language is little slow and gradually it picks up the pace. It is believed that the child gets conditioned with the language when it attains the age around two. It feels comfortable communicating in very intimate environment, it means in family. The child masters the speech when it attains the age around four to five. It means the acquisition of language takes almost 4 to 5 years and child masters producing sounds so arranged that brings meaning to them. Later the child masters reading and writing.

Now it is clear that the first language is the language that is acquired naturally and effortlessly. It means the innate ability of learning the language is being used. As it is acquired from very intimate environment and that is from the mother of the child, so it is better be known as mother tongue. The language that is how acquired becomes the language to be operated within even for internal communication of an individual. So, this particular language becomes the language of individual's primary language. In other words, this particular language is primary linguistic behaviour of an individual. All-natural responses of an individual are being operated in the mother tongue and so it is its first language. This is very natural phenomena

and everyone having capabilities of receiving sounds acquire first language. Any normal human being, including mentally and physically challenged can make use of first language. So first language learning solely depends on environment and the child picks up the language which it finds in its intimate environment.

Second/Foreign Language :

The concept of second language is in the country like India because we live in multicultural and multilingual society. So, there is heterogeneity in our country. The second language doesn't exist in unilingual society. Let us understand the term second language. The second language is the language of secondary environment. It means the child finds another language in its primary environment different from intimate environment. One can take example of metropolitan cities in our country. Mumbai is the place where Gujarati child acquires Marathi language simultaneously along with Gujarati. Even in Vadodara, Maharashtrian people use both the languages; Gujarati and Marathi so excellently that one cannot find difference whether Marathi is first language or Gujarati is. But such things happen in very limited area where both the languages are prominently used in intimate and/or primary environment. One of the reasons of acquiring both the languages easily is these languages have common root and structurally they are not different.

There is little difference in second or foreign language, foreign language means no common root and structurally both languages are different. In Kerala and Goa, we may find this distinction because the native language of Keralites is Malayalam and in some of the parts English is so prominent that they can pick it up simultaneously along with their native language; and in case of Goa Konkani people acquire English language. In some of the parts of seven sister states, one can find these phenomena easily. In whatsoever conditions foreign language can be the language of primary environment and it has strong impact on society.

Languages used in Gujarat :

Looking at the distinction between first language and/or second/foreign language one can decide the medium of instructions. In some of the societies, there exists secondary environment where there is little use of second or foreign language. The people may use other language for specific purpose only, it may not be language found having strong impact in the society. In Gujarat, it is very difficult to find very strong secondary linguistic environment except in some of the cities and again in very limited area. The very strong Gujarati dialectical impact is observed in different regions of Gujarat. English is hardly used in society whereas Hindi is being observed emerging trend in all over Gujarat as Hindi movies and Hindi channels are the most popular in Gujarat. The case may be different

in different states but here in Gujarat we have Gujarati a first language and Hindi and/or English second/foreign language. There are some of the parts where Marathi, Urdu, Hindi, Marwadi, etc. are observed first language but Gujarati is also observed as the language of primary environment. But in Gujarat, it is certain that English is not a language of primary and/or intimate environment of the child while grooming. This affects learning in secondary environment; let us see how it happens.

Learning in Secondary Linguistic Environment.

The schooling starts after attaining age of 5 years but there is another trend of pre-schooling in our society and it starts at age around 2 years. As we have seen the language is being mastered during first five years of the child along with development of brain and prematurely the child is sent to school having secondary linguistic environment. The registry gets disturbed and the child faces the problems in duality of sounds being registered. There are very limited numbers of sounds do match in reproduction of them in both languages, Gujarati and English. It starts with numbers of sounds, though numbers of phonemes in both languages are close; there are 44 sounds in English and 48 sounds in Gujarati. But real problem is their articulations and great difference in numbers of consonantal and vowel sounds, in Gujarati usually there are 36 consonantal sounds and 12 vowel sounds

whereas in English there are 24 consonantal sounds and 20 vowel sounds. Let us understand that the infant that started registering phones in Gujarati and before registering them and before acquiring basic oral linguistic skills, it is thrown to non-intimate environment. The registry that has already begun has been disturbed severely.

The children who are acquiring languages from dual environment, i.e. primary and secondary, have great impact on its holistic development. The child cannot concentrate on both the languages as it has not attained the age from where it can start learning the second/foreign language in secondary environment. As we know, if child picks up multiple languages from the primary environment both the languages become equally prominent, but one is from primary and another is from secondary environment and that makes no sense.

Another core problem is learning because learning is the ability of learners and it can be attained after the age of 11 years. The child acquires all such skills required for learning during first 5 to 6 years of schooling. It is very difficult learning a second / foreign language of secondary environment because it is learning not acquiring.

The language is not the subject like social science and science; it is the primary life skill and is to be nurtured not to be taught among learners. It is the association and use through which one can attain oral linguistic abilities

before going to school. In other words, primary linguistic ability cannot be attained with the help of books; they are nurtured in very intimate and/or primary environment. Let it be understood how these skills can be nurtured in secondary environment where teachers are also from the same, it means the primary environment. Indirectly the teaching and learning may be in the primary environment itself. It is regardless to say in first language only, it is almost impossible in second language. In Gujarat, in the schools where second/foreign language is medium instructions almost the teachers having different tongue, non-native users of Gujarati, are appointed. So, learners have multiple impacts on their linguistic development, they learner neither of languages, Gujarati, English and/or the first language of teacher.

Scientifically, the language learning requires partition in the brain. If language is learnt with the help of first language cannot help them developing some of the mental abilities like thinking, assimilating, problem solving, etc. The mental process carried out other than first language becomes little hazy and learners must spend more time than usual in processing them. Thinking afresh, loud thinking, creativity, spontaneity in response depends on how language is processing information and the first language has the fastest pace for processing them.

The dreams are dreams, and one can dream in the language of subconscious. Even though

learners are learning in other medium, their language of subconscious is their first language and that language helps them building their attitude and aptitude. The submission is in acquiring information in another language which may kill the interest of learning. The reason of curtailing the process of acquiring information or data in the target language is compilation and translation. It is evident from our own experiences that the users of second/foreign language depend on how fast their brain translate the input in their own languages. It means the users do spend more energy in compiling the message received. That leads to halting the conversation and after some time one may stop responding in the second/foreign language. The learners do have this problem of compiling and translating the oral messages. It has been evident from the current practice of the schools that they have been using the primary language swiftly for better understanding.

In the schools of Gujarat there is little more adverse situation do exist. There are three notions in the classroom; one is the primary environment of learners, second is primary environment of teachers other than primary environment of stake holders and third is medium of instructions. These three environments do kill the interest of learning of the learners. The language that learners know doesn't match with the language which teacher uses and both have been using respective languages in evidently foreign environment.

In other words, the medium instructions should be the primary environment of both, teachers and learners, for better and effective classroom teaching.

Summing up :

This paper is drawn out of experiences; hence it needs to be sound base for forthcoming empirical researches. There is emergent need of thinking afresh which may lead us to empirical researches. Only permutations and combinations may derive inappropriate findings, but we need to have to think in such directions where philosophies have answers. The empirical researches may need longer span of time where researchers have to integrate observations with prevailing theoretical concerns of the system. But later it may bring fundamentally viable solutions. One of them is medium of instructions which have three basic disciplines to integrate; they are Psychology, Sociology and Linguistics. Let us have one more branch to added with is Pedagogy, it is certain that amalgamation of these four branches will show us the real and acceptable concerns of Medium of Instructions.