



LINGUISTIC DILEMMA AMONGST THE COLLEGE STUDENTS OF THE RURAL AREAS OF INDIA

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to study 'Linguistic Dilemma' in college students of rural areas through psycho-linguistic perspective. The focus of this paper is on the various challenges faced by students at psychological level. Though English has become very popular in rural areas during the second decade of the 21st century, this is a big challenge for students with the rural background to accept and create comfort level psychologically. This is a common perception in the field of language science that most of the language acquiring portion of the mind is occupied by native language. This current paper proposes to further explore this general perception and tries to critically discuss different challenges in this context. This paper is also focus on how different native languages and dialects are the factors that have contributed to create a linguistic dilemma amongst college students of rural areas. In this paper, conflict of language at psychological level is being proposed to study which would help in finding out various level of language conflicts in the mind of rural students. The focus is also given to the possible ways through which we can come out of such dilemmas.

Key words: linguistic dilemma, native language, language acquisition, rural college students.

Introduction

Language remains an integral aspect of human race that shapes the manner in which an individual perceives, interprets and responds to the world. Language has been influencing authoritative position of the people and community in which different language policies are being implemented to maintain commonality of communication. That is why choice of language is very much political and administrative decision. Language is a tool that concerns every group of the societies from general public to administrative part of a state. The challenges associated with imposed language and

psychological footprints of using native language have been creating various conflicts throughout history that results in the form of linguistic dilemma. Language is a complex phenomenon. 'How you use it is shaped by who you are, where you are, where you have been, and to whom you are speaking. Your background will affect your vocabulary and pronunciation, and register will change depending on the setting and to whom you are speaking' (O'Grady, Archibald, & Katamba, 2011, p. 513). And we can consider this statement in the context of linguistic dilemma being created in Indian context.

After independence from the British in 1947, leaders of that time acknowledged the need to unite different regions having different languages and dialects of India with a common language Hindi. But it was an arduous task at that time to satisfy the linguistic identity of different regions. At the same time English, in spite of its administrative domination in the nation, was not to be accepted very easily. According to Ralph Fasold, 'the former colonial language (English) is an absolutely atrocious choice as a national language' (1988, p. 182). So the Three Language Formula (TFL) had emerged as a political consensus in academics. We should not forget that still it was not a complete solution; in fact it was only a situational strategy to come out of conflicts in newly independent India. In result, The All India Council for Education recommended the adoption of the Three Language Formula in Sept. 1956 (Mallikarjun, 2002).

Linguistic Identity amongst the Students

Native language is connected with the feelings of identity, belongingness, and expressiveness. It is a complex issue to analyze in specific manner as it varies according to individual traits of a person. Van Els has noted that 'the diversity of culture is practically always immediately related to the diversity of languages' (2006, p. 220). Language selection is marked as group identification. An identity of students in rural setup today is specifically different. It is reflected in growing use of English as a common language. Despite being filled with a strong desire to speak good English, most students are plunged in a certain complexity followed by certain dilemma. Relating self-proficiency to a person with better proficiency and accuracy in speaking English gives rise to an inferiority complex. Renowned philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein says, "The limit of my language means the limits of my world." This philosophy is very much justified to mention here in the light of real psychological status of the rural background students.

Status of English Language in Rural Areas:

Language is very important factor to transform education as well as society. A supreme aim of English language programs in India is that to

develop ability amongst the people to communicate and interpret a message in written and spoken form. We cannot ignore the fact that we have not yet established a standard of education in the colleges of rural India. We must remember students are human resources through which we can have a developed economy. And, to achieve this, we are not supposed to ignore the real status of education in rural areas as more than the half of the students has been getting their education from rural area. 'Throughout India, there is a belief among almost all castes and classes in both rural and urban areas in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but a simple of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression' (Graddol, 2000). There is no doubt about the ability of language acquisition in the students belonging to rural areas. If we compare both, rural and urban students, they face the same level of nationwide competition. But we should also consider the variation in the English syllabus from secondary to the university level and at the same time different states follow different methodology for the English language teaching that makes difference in learning output. The acceptance of English as a language at psychological level amongst the students studying in the colleges and universities situated in the cities and state capitals is more specific in comparison to the colleges and universities situated in the rural areas. The reason is that most of the English language teachers in rural areas are still using translation methods. It is widely discussed concept that the first language is a natural process and second language acquisition non-natural. Most of the students who are not exposed with the group of second language speakers and having lack of vocabulary use their mother tongue for learning the second language. Therefore, we cannot totally ignore the role of native language in second language learning. Imitation and reinforcement play an inevitable role in English language learning. But in this process, students mix the vocabulary, tone, and syntax of both the language and a kind of linguistic dilemma get established. Students try to translate second language contents and translate it into their mother tongue for its meaning. But sometime it is very difficult to find exact emotion lies in the original

language in which content is written. For example, a student sometimes may not find an appropriate contextual meaning of English words in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati and so on. And if they are not able to find desired contextual meaning, they may face certain confusing between the interpreted meaning and exact meaning of the words, phrases and sentences.

Aspiration in the Youth for English

We should also focus on school education to understand the demand and need of English in contemporary India. In 2005, NCERT released the Position Paper on the Teaching of English related to the National Curriculum Framework- 2005 as:

“English in India today is a symbol of people’s aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life... The level of introduction of English has now become a matter of political response to peoples’ aspirations, rendering almost irrelevant academic debate on the merits of a very early introduction.”

From the above statement it can be understood that the aspiration about the proficiency of English has been increasing extensively. And this aspiration takes a proper shape in colleges and universities. Because after college/university, the students enter in a new competitive professional world in order to execute their career goals. It is believed that nowadays English is a valuable asset to face the world and get success in professional career. So most of the students take it as prestigious issue, and they relate it with their career expectations. And it is very difficult for those students who are having degrees from rural colleges and universities to face the corporate world confidently. Even they can write very good English but they face problems when they interact and are supposed to communicate in English. It happens because they are not being taught through proper methodology. And their native tone or more precisely mother tongue influence creates a kind of inferiority complex at mental level.

Remedies to Minimize Linguistic Dilemma

It would be very much hypothetical to say that we can completely remove linguistic dilemma from the students psyche. But it is the high time to think and discuss how to minimize it to maximum level. Language should not be only the matter of communication but it is the matter of expression with exact feelings and emotions. In order to achieve such level of learning, we should focus on some following points and further implement it at ground in our colleges and universities situated in rural areas.

Curriculum Reform: a curriculum reform must be brought into consideration at policy level and it should be beyond any academic exams and syllabus. We must separate ELT from literature at school level to enhance the language learning ability. It should be beyond any academics or marks based assessment. We can only use test to assess language learning development and status of language proficiency, so we can work on learners according to their need. Through this way, learner would not feel English language as a burden. When these learners come at university level, they would be already mentally prepared for psychological adaptation, not only for communicating in English but also identifying themselves with self expressionism. As John L. Clark remarks: ‘given the diverse and conflicting values that exist within any large social group, and given a democratic concern for the valuing of such diversity, it would seem necessary for any contemporary curriculum to attempt to embody what are agreed to be common aspirations, and yet leave space for individual interpretation within and beyond these, to accord with the individual characteristics of each teaching and learning context’ (1987, p.45). The framework of curriculum for ELT should be one at national level. Because English is second language for every people in India though they belong to north India or south India.

Setting up Language labs at ‘Panchayat’ Level: if we want to minimize linguistic dilemma, we should have language lab at *Panchayat* level in rural areas that should be kept open for 12-14 hours so that people of all age groups can visit just as library visit. It will encourage community education and at the same time it would create a linguistic awareness about

second language. It can be beneficial for improving community literacy rate too. The sole purpose behind this suggestion is that language learning is not an academic subject but it is an integral part of daily life process. It should not be limited in school and colleges.

Training and Diagnosis: government should involve non-government organizations, private partners, industry trainers through corporate social responsibility. In this way, the Govt. can minimize economic expenditure. And it will help to connect rural India with urban India through language training programs. It can provide solution of unskilled human resources. Continuous training and diagnosis can help in improving the status of English in rural areas and fill the gap between learning output of urban vs. rural.

Focus on Local Literature: the literary contents in English should be thematically based on local literature and identity. Through this way, they can identify, relate and grasp the cultural meaning of the content. It will give psychological satisfaction and a sense of belongingness with the second language. The difference between native and second language will get minimized.

The above suggested points can be used to minimize linguistic dilemma by keeping in mind that it is very difficult to overcome from it completely. We should keep in mind that native language is in our blood vessels that can never be stopped but if we vaccinate second language in proper manner, definitely it would get mixed with psychological layer of the body and natural expressions would come out through written and spoken words, phrases and sentences with desired emotions. Because language without emotion and expression remains incomplete.

Conclusion

In summing up we can say that we should address linguistic dilemma with specific approach. We should not only think about English language teaching but also how to make English to be accepted at psychological level. English in India might have been considered as a foreign language, but it has occupied language space in academics

almost completely, especially in higher education, so now it is useless to discuss it as right or wrong. Now this is the time to welcome it and make it adapted in proper manner, so that learning output of the students would not get hindered due to language barriers. Today, there is no space left for the anti-English spirit in our country, so we should now put our focus on how to develop a spirit of love for English as a second language, or more precisely, as a language of academics. In the 21st century India, it is very important for us to increase our learning output at school and college level, and without academic language proficiency, we cannot achieve this target. Until and unless we do not provide our students specific atmosphere in which they can develop a certain consciousness for second language, it is very difficult to break the language dilemma from which most of the students are suffering.

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