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The Role of Multilingualism in Higher Education: A Critical Study

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, the efficiency of multiple languages has become a vital part of higher education. Instead of focusing only on one language, universities are beginning to treat linguistic diversity as a valuable tool. This shift helps students to develop better thinking skills, encourages them to respect other cultures, and makes higher education more accessible for everyone. Multilingualism in higher education help us to protect local and indigenous languages which are often overlooked in academic settings.

The students who have command in multiple languages can solve their problems smoothly and prominently. Moreover, the students can use their native languages alongside the main languages of instruction; they may understand complex topics more deeply and feel a stronger sense of belonging. Simple steps, such as using multilingual signs or providing bilingual study materials, have been shown to help students in effective learning.

Of course, there are still challenges, such as a lack of funding, a need for better teacher training, development of reading materials in different languages and so on. However, those colleges and universities which are already offering workshops and inclusive lesson plans have proved that we can overcome such challenges. Ultimately, teaching and learning in many languages into the classroom makes learning more easy and appropriate. It prepares us to work and live in a diverse world, ensuring that education is a bridge to a more inclusive and innovative future. This paper explores the advantage, challenges and future of Multilingualism in Higher Education.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Education Policy, Higher Education, Equity, Pedagogy.

Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020 has brought a transformative change in our education system. The policy focuses on the use of mother tongue as well as regional languages as a medium of class room instruction. But the majority students have affirmative attitude towards multilingualism in education. We know that bilingual and multilingual students depict elevated metalinguistic awareness comparatively monolingual fellow. So in the context of higher education, multilingual instruction in the class room has been introduced to generate more comprehensive and effective learning atmosphere. The multilingual education develops a sense of cultural pride and identity. Multilingualism played a vital role in our country due to its diversity for unity. The NEP: 2020 focuses on utilising multilingualism in education, significance of using the mother tongue as a medium of classroom instruction. The students perceive the college environment as supportive for multilingual learners.

Use of English Language in the Present Scenario

Now, the students are acknowledging the benefits of bilingual instruction but emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance that prioritizes proficiency in English. English language is considering as a global Language in higher education and professional settings. English is a Lingua

Franca which is used by court, communities and communication in every walks of life. Most of the universities of the world use English as a core subject and making it vital for understanding lectures and text books. English skills are highly valued by employers in the world. English is helpful for our personal growth, social connections, educational opportunities as well as cultural enrichment. English helps students and teachers both to join research that crosses borders, helps people move universities in other countries. It serves us learn to read, write, think and act wisely.

Translanguaging and Digital Learning

The future of Higher Education is lies in strategic flexibility and adaptation of "Translanguagin" as core pedagogy. Translanguaging is the practice where students and teachers use their full linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging in digital learning leverages student's full linguistic repertoires, using various languages to enhance understanding. The approach moves beyond monolingual teaching, creating inclusive spaces where multilingual learners use all their skills to engage with complex content. Multimodality combines resources with visual, auditory and digital elements for richer communication and learning. Digital learning encourages critical thinking by comparing and connecting ideas across languages. Students use different languages and visuals in

online videos to explain any concept. They also create digital project that blend languages and media to express cultural experiences.

David Crystal says-

“Speaking two or more languages is the natural way of life for three quarters of human race. This principle..... has been obscured in parts of Europe as a consequence of colonial history. We ultimately need to reassert it... for in the modern world, multilingualism is not a strength but a handicap”

Language as a Highway for the Culture:

Language is the primary vehicle for communication, expression of emotions and the construction of social identity. It facilitates the transmission of culture and shapes our thought. Language is the medium of social interaction for organizing our daily life.

Languages are not ornaments,
languages are organs,
channeling spirit from the heart.

Language is highway to a culture,
language requires a vessel, not translator.
Soon ear buds will feature instant translation,
which will render cross-cultural conversation seamless,
but at the same time, lifeless, hollow and cold.

Until we develop the brain technology
to communicate meaning telepathically
without talking, no amount of translation
can carry the warmth, nuances and
sentiment of a lived language.

As added perk, speaking more than one language
delays age-related cognitive decline.
Therefore no matter how you look at it,
one broken second language is far more
valuable than all the mass-produced subtitles.”

- *Language is Highway to A Culture*
(Diary of A Polyglot Neuroscientist, S.2392)
Abhijit Naskar, Kral Fakir

Different Modes of Institution

The need of teachers to adapt their teaching strategies and varying levels of languages proficiency to meet their diverse linguistic needs. In a multilingual classroom, students from different languages sit together, but they not always be to communicate with each other effectively. This possesses a challenge for teachers who cannot instruct students who do not understand the language being used. For the effective class, special teacher training is essential. Training should be provided to the teachers that help them to adopt joyful and engaging methods of teaching languages with an approach that emphasizes on opportunities for early conversations, readings and writing in local tongues.

Conclusion

Language has been a priority in India’s educational system since independence in our country. Efforts to balance scientific and economic progress with cultural diversity and

language preservation led to the establishment of commissions such as the Secondary Education Commission (1952) and the University Education Commission (1948-1949), Radhakrishnan Commission). In this context, three language formulas in 1968 and its revitalization in the NEP 2020 are significant as they are based on the vision of integrating education into the cultural contexts of students, making learning more relevant and accessible. The phenomenon of prioritizing the English language over the native tongue within monolingual households is an important window to understand how especially socio-economic motivations influence the choice of language. The sociolinguistic landscape with in the region reflects the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural and societal factors that contribute to the dominance of Hindi over the regional languages. The linguistic landscape of India is extremely complex. NEP 2020 has laid a solid foundation by emphasizing the use of regional languages as a primary medium of education in early education. The promotion of multilingual education framework is essential as helpful for our overall development and progress. Multilingualism is the very fabric of a globalized intellectual life.

“Language exerts hidden power, like the moon on the tides.”
– Rita May Brown

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