

# Alignment of Language and Content in Pedagogical Scenario of Language: A Humbug in Indian Education System

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**Abstract** - Pedagogical scenario of English in India is at crossroads when it comes to content and language. While we are trying to contextualize the material according to learners, we tend to forget that certain social customs and norms do not align with the language acquisition which one is trying to achieve. Selinker's (1972) theory of fossilization is true to the extent that it does hinder the progress and affects BICS and CALP among learners. Language is complex and dynamic, its learning and teaching however, depends on the person and the content. One realizes that language cannot be taught in vacuum and hence, culture, content, background knowledge all comes into play. A person is labeled as soon as he/she is born with caste, religion and creed. The content which our textbooks provide the learners with, does create a barrier of culture, religion and identity. The culture shock or the language shock is pretty common in situations like these. A place like India which drew its constitution from the colonizers, needs to address that today certain aspects require revision. Today we have children coming from remote areas who, do not see the Englishmen as 'bade sahab' but as a history of their nation and have every right to critically analyze the history itself. The course now has V. S. Naipaul, R. K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond who give a true picture of the society but so do we have the foreign short story writers or novelist where a child is stumbled upon the fact that Easters day is a festival celebrated as the rebirth of Jesus , since the child is totally unaccustomed to the Christian norms and festivities or even the fact that the celebration of Pongal and Onam in the south of India is also an alien concept for a northerner. Looking at all these aspects we will be analyzing situations like these in this paper, and one should, first pay attention to the content being opted for teaching since one can have a mellifluous learning only when the content is in alignment with the language and believing that one has to make a second language their own by drawing personal instances for better understanding and comprehension.

**Index Terms** - Alignment, Content, language, Revision, Theory of Fossilization

## INTRODUCTION

Gaining education is a way out to simplify life's complexities, but when the meaning and words do not match, the learning falls apart. Language learning is an art that is to be created from within. There are external and internal factors which bring out the learning. External factors being the environment, the natives with whom the person is surrounded with and even the nonnatives. The internal factors include how motivated the learner is and how curious to actually learn the language. The confidence and the purpose with which one learns, is directly proportional to the ease with which one is able to learn excluding the neurobiological factors.

The alignment is important when we want the learner and their needs to be on the same page. Language has numerous functions, the foremost being given the art of communicating. Halliday's function of language includes 7 functions mainly, out of which the 'instrumental and the 'heuristic' function is on a very personal level according to me. They not only make the needs meet but also satisfy one's curiosity which is over the roof when one starts to learn a language or even while acquiring a language. One can easily manifest their knowledge over reading of a book or watching a documentary, but what comes from the raw conversation with people is unparalleled and that learning never goes away. Every country wants to raise their net worth at a rapid pace but only few actually give thought that the road to success here is when our citizens are actually civilized and have the 'civic' sense. This reminds me of the poem 'Blood' by Kamala Das (1940s) which gives such relevant meaning today in all parts of the world. It has a

kaleidoscopic view of how worse things can be and the humanistic reactions to it. Coming on to the relationship that the content and language use share, we need to unwrap the layers that need to be discovered and the purpose of it.

#### THE PLAY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INDIA

Otto Jespersen once said “the language ranks highest which goes farthest in the art of accomplishing much with little means, or in other words, which is able to express the greatest amount of meaning with the simplest mechanism”.

To manage the equilibrium of language and the content embedded in it, one is required to pay attention to both: the denotative and the connotative meaning. Analyzing the situation of the learners from the start to the intermediate level, one can see that the major barrier is that of content. The highlighted argument here is that how can one achieve fluency in language without the knowledge of the language’s history itself, if one needs to be globally intelligible? Speaking of English language in this case, we have thousand examples of historical, social and economic nature.

Coming of English language in India, came with the British colonizing the country which changed the social hiatus of Indian education system which mainly consisted of ‘gurukuls’. English which was taught then in British India laid the foundation of its essence in the minds of people. Why is that we still get ashamed of our standard English pronunciation? It is because the prejudices that made us think like that. We need to re assess the situation in today’s time and revise the syllabus especially of languages, according to the learner’s needs. We need to make the language our own, since it is now not a foreign language for us Indians but a second language. All the stakeholders have to pitch in and take this personally.

Language is taught through literature and with that comes the native’s work and then the work of the non-native. To come with terms of native’s stories, it is important to not seclude our learners with the traditional setup but with a discovering attitude, of course with recent times and the coming of digital classrooms, one is able to access the world that is across several oceans, yet it seems so easy.

#### LANGUAGE ISSUES OVER THE YEARS AND THEORIES TO SUPPORT THE APPROACH

Language when taught to a L2 learner, we need to assess both: situation and the setting in which the learning takes place, it is contrary to the assumption that one can easily give a chunk of text to a learner and by mere memorization one will know how to speak the language. Of course, there are evidences that learners actually use the translation method and try to understand and at first learn how to speak the language, which is totally understandable since all the methods that the pioneers like Bloomfield, Halliday, Widdowson and Chomsky have given are not in vain. Yes, there are additions made in the theory but here the question arises that can we really discard the language theories entirely? The answer is no for the L2 learner, it is not practical, since when we learn English as a second learner, one will take consideration of their mother tongue influence. G. B. Shaw rightly pointed out the hilarity in the spelling that English uses in the use of ‘gh’ for example: laugh and bough. So as a learner and with little experience of teaching as well, one realizes that it not at all possible to assume that the learner’s mind is tabula rasa, as stated by Chomsky in communicative language theory. The learner has progressions of previous learning and especially of mother tongue. Contrastive Analysis given by Robert Lado in 1950s plays a huge role in sketching out the similarities and differences of the L1 and L2 which may have its perks and loss.

Moreover, the Indian education is designed on a very military like setup, like a model is put up to follow and we have to just replace the blanks. Language surely has syntagmatic relationship, but we tend to forget that there is a paradigmatic relation too, where not always anything can be replaced easily according to the rules set by the grammarians as well. Professor D.P. Pattanayak in his article ‘Multilingual and Multicultural India’ writes, “Multilingual education is such a curricular method and approach that builds bridges among languages”. (Pattanayak)

#### CLIL- ONE APPROACH GIVING DIFFERENT ANSWERS: APPLICATION OF CLIL IN INDIA

There are various strategies to overcome the differences and highlight the stones laid to help get through the phase of learning. “In the absence of

anything like a model, progress will have to come through a bottom-up process” as stated by Jacob Tharu in his article ‘Responding to Student Diversity through the Curriculum: A Possible Lead Role for ELT’. (Tharu)

A nation like India tends to give complexities when it comes to teaching since there are not only different cultures here but are very rigid in their notions as well. The divisions made geographically do not only speak different languages and have different customs but some are ignorant to the cultures in their neighboring state so much so that it reflects in their education. The art of bringing content and language together cannot be in a culture less environment. Content includes literature which is another step forward to the material used in teaching language. Language pedagogy in India needs some key stages to promote learning.

These stages are:

- To familiarize the learner with the language background
- To highlight any common ground of the target language with the mother tongue
- To rise above from the prejudices set in the mind and try to acculturate with the target language
- Follow the LSRW ranking skills in learning
- Provide the material designed by the locals in the target language so as to make them feel at ease
- Follow accuracy and fluency both in learning

The issues that are surfaced while learning the language are:

- People look for familiarity first, which is mishandled by poor selection and gradation of material
- We indulge in writing first academically rather than paying attention on the speaking skill
- Cultural difference in the language gives learner inhibitions resulting in intolerant behavior
- Lack of trained language teachers which results in lack of motivation among learners
- Ideology of certain rigid people and so called protectors of their culture think learning the global language will make them morally poor and force to leave their mother tongue

The language that we have learnt across generations, is through the word that is passed down. Written form comes later and so we had inscriptions made like in the

Egyptian civilization. The culture and traditions have been passed through our elders through dialogue and pictorial forms. Speaking of this, it reminds me of the emojis that the Gen X uses, it has taken us back to the stone age where the written script was more in pictorial form. These language rights of even the minorities can be preserved in a sanctimonious way.

#### CURRICULUM FIX FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Articles 13 and 14 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples give indigenous and minority peoples the right to develop their own curriculum, based on their individual languages, histories, philosophies, oral and written traditions. This means a decentralized curriculum that can be developed from the bottom up by local communities. (Hough)

The bringing of our context into the text is the need of the hour. When we talk of CLIL in India, it not only refers to take content into account but also the language. The content and language both are integrated or infused so as to produce such an approach that it will enhance the learning. Speaking of spreading language learning even in the remote areas of nation depends on how much can we give the learner their oriented content. To develop that we need resources like the native’s motivation and good translators so as to encourage the acquisition of the learner.

With reference to the texts prescribed in our education system, we see that unlike the Hindi language texts, which are so culturally similar to the natives of India, we see that English texts are full of global appeal first and later of the national interest. Texts like of history are in alignment if careful selection and gradation, since it talks of the Indian nationalism and the fight of independence first and then later on brings in the French and Russian Revolution followed by the World War phase which further explains to the learner the order of events. But in particular of English language texts, we at first introduce to the traditions and customs of for example, Christmas or Easter or Halloween when in fact we need to first introduce the learner to the customs of their own culture and festivals so that they can relate to it. Khushwant Singh’s “The Portrait of a Lady” is a perfect example for that as it acculturates an Indian learner to a normal routine in their life. Moreover, the writing can be more enjoyed

when the learner is asked to write on their own culture and traditions and slowly moves towards the other cultures in order to instill the multicultural aspect in the learning as well.

The agreement can be done among the major stake holders of the curriculum which consist of not only the policy makers but also the parents, teachers, learners, educationists, historians as well as linguists. Linguists can decipher which area to explore first in order for easy acquisition of language. The Indian education system think to educate in a very mechanical way by simply giving a chunk of text to the learner and apply grammar translation method and direct method yet tend to forget the essence of the strategies of teaching and learning both. The rote learning although gives success on a short-term basis but is totally baseless for long run. The learning that is truly adapted stays with us longer and is imbibed by the learner.

#### TESTING AND ANALYSIS

Taking a group of learners of college level, I analyzed that the learners are the kind of learners who are either bothered by the number of marks they are going to get or just emulate the kind of speech to have better fake accent. The motivation to learn a language is somewhere lost. The group of Urdu speakers when were taught the importance of narrative writing in English, I deliberately chose a text of an Urdu poet's life which made them engrossed in the text. I kept it simple by having the 5W's in the essay, yet I saw that the learners wanted the explanation in their mother tongue that is because they cannot associate the words with their language and that is where the mother tongue interference comes. Selinker's (1972) inter-language fossilization indeed has a role which leads to a halt in the learning process since the notions followed in the L1 leads to the errors in L2 and makes the language fossilized. It has to be handled in a smart way and not nagged or debarred from the situation. The setting that is provided to the learners determines the conditioning that is done. Hough discusses few of the approaches which reflect the communities' traditions and values: (Hough)

- Generosity/ Sharing;
- Caring for each other
- Collectivism (as opposed to individualism)
- Cooperation (as opposed to competition)

- Relatedness to one another
- Relatedness to nature/spirituality
- Individuality (respect for difference/tolerance)
- Matrilineal bonds (gender equity);
- Respect for elders/wisdom;
- Intergenerational learning;
- Patience;
- The use of time and space as a function of the above

The different sets of teaching materials that are provided even to the teacher are not sufficient. Merely the notes or the basic outline will not suffice. The teaching material that is developed should be on a basis that is crucial for the understanding of both the teacher and the learner. It can not only involve text but also some extensive material like real life materials like brochures, pamphlets, digital use of learning etc. The learner should give attention to the material so as to gain knowledge so impactful that it will stay longer. Teachers being properly trained also make a plus point. Many times we see that the teachers are not of caliber to be taking a huge responsibility of shaping a child's future. Henceforth, it is essential for us to pay attention to the proper training of teachers, also the correct use of text and favorable funding so as to promote efficient learning. CLIL might take a while to be adjusted as it may take time as well as energy and resources. It is very essential that it should be taken of primary importance.

The college students with whom I interacted, were although motivated but to bring content along with language is not a cup of tea in every situation. It is a skill that needs to be learnt and applied. Urdu and geography learners although got a narrative essay on Ghalib and a poem on Geography respectively. This shows that content definitely plays an important role but we see that to maintain the equilibrium of content and language, here we tend to be a bit loose in language since many questions rise like the structure of Urdu language and English; how different it is or how similar it is. We need to learn the art of assimilating the differences and give them the language to be acquired. The target language being English here, we observe that the global aspect does not fully work in favor. The creativity of this global language perplexes the learners at first. The grammar although can come later but certain utterances do need rote learning. Accuracy can follow fluency in CLIL

but it is recommended that they both be taken hand in hand. The variety of cultural norms that India follows, is hard to keep track of. We need to amalgamate them and see the beauty in diversity. The power-hungry politicians need not pitch man versus man or make a mountain of a mole. The harmony and peace makes the learning easy going and not give negative vibes out of it.

Indian system does not provide a clear picture of what the education wants to achieve for the learners. The mere copying of a UK based model of English cannot work in a diverse nation like India. It is a multicultural setup which does not support a linear model of education since it cannot apply to a single community. The learning should be multicultural in nature along with having its perks not only in comprehending but also communicating. The solution to this problem is as discussed by Hough in his article, in addition to this, we can be more liberal in thought and right from the kindergarten age make it normal for the young learners to be able to see a multicultural background in their class with the condition that the multiculturalism of their own nation first, and then move towards the historical background of the colonizers or the rest of the World history.

#### IMPLICATION OF CLIL

Sara Dallinger(2015) reports in her journal that CLIL has positive effects on English receptive skills. She analyzed and compared students on the basis of:

1. Gender
2. Mother tongue competence
3. Cognitive abilities
4. Socioeconomic status

CLIL has shown fruitful results, over the years, overseas, but applying it in India is a bit troublesome. The way to discover its application is through the teaching experience I had in which the students belonged to different culture and caste. Integrating the language, we have the non-language issues as well. It included peer pressure, bullying, prejudice, inhibition etc. India although believes in equality on paper but barely practices in person. CLIL not only binds through the language that is being learnt but also, in practical aspect. The gender issue is to be dealt with very intricately. Indian system has mostly followed a patriarchal setup but that is not the issue, the issue is to the extent the subjugation is done in the name of this

setup. To compare the sincerity in learning we see that the girls are more serious towards it than the boys. Next, the mother tongue competence is a big matter of discussion. One should come terms with the fact that the mother tongue is a crucial part of the language buds of one's productive skills. One cannot and should not ignore the mother tongue since that is the main source of communication and from that other languages are viewed.

Education plays an important role in setting up a mindset. There is a set responsibility on our country's leaders as well, to do a careful selection of what will be the input given from the teacher's part. Talking in terms of Bloom's taxonomy as well, we see that in ascending order we have remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and in turn creating. Hence, keeping in mind, we see that the policies set up by the governing bodies to incorporate feelings of citizenship, unity and harmony among people also have an indirect impact on languages. Linguicism refers to the language discrimination. Moreover, it is a way to establish superiority of one language at the expense of other. In order to overthrow the influence of the English language in India due to British colonialism, certain working bodies tried some ways to embed the importance of Hindi language that could unify people. But we need to understand the status that English has as a language is that of a lingua franca.

Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. (Rajabi and Ketabi)

Also, the implication of BICS and CALP is important to understand that the language learning is not only at the basis of communication which is conveyed through Basic Interpersonal Communication Skill but also it is needed for cognition, which is further explained through Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, both the features given by Jim Cummins. According to Allen (1985) "in the earlier part of this century second language learning took place in order for learners to gain access to the great literary masterpieces of civilization". It is important to expose learners to the culture and traditions of the target language. In the sixties, another educational purpose for second language learning had emerged - "cross

cultural communication and understanding” (Nostrand in Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

We need to decipher the root to one’s learning can be done by not cutting the roots but to join the dots and make a constellation of traditions and culture. It is extremely important to make the learner aware of the target language’s customs and culture by first translating the learner’s culture into the target language and then consequently talk about the target language’s culture and content. Once the transition happens properly, only then the learner will be able to correspond to these cultural differences. It is the very duty of all these stake holders especially the policy makers and the education department to understand how to deal linguisticism at first or we may call it glottophagy, and then jump in to be the agent of synthesize. Indian education setup very ignorantly excuses themselves at times to play their role in this by stating that one should focus on the national language more. But we need to understand that India is a diverse nation with 1000 language and 1600 dialects, and it is nearly foolishness to coerce the learners to first learn the national language and then the global language. We need a lot of support from the places of one’s habitat right beginning from our homes and schools. MLE (Multilingual Education) is tailored for each situation based on known MLE principles. It is chosen by choice and not imposed, it is monitored by education and based on the national curriculum. It is to give learner access to the dominant language and culture by building on their own. There is a need of top down and bottom-up harmony in the approach. We see that the policies laid by the education ministry are not very favorable. They simply advise to preserve the language, but it is important to condemn practices like colonizing of consciousness as well through: Glorification, Stigmatization and Rationalization. By glorification, it is very evident that the majority or dominant language is glorified at the expense of other language. For example, the Hindi language made as compulsory. It is a kind of violation of language rights which is in turn violation of human rights in India as well. We need to give the due importance to languages like Urdu, Arabic and English of course. With due course of time, the learning is stagnant and hence making it a stigma that the learner now is proficient enough which is not true. The stigma around the language which is imposed is like a cobweb. If a learner is learning English, for instance, then we see

that the thinking will still be in his/her L1. But what we want is that to make it rational, one need to understand the theory of praxis which leads to transformation of structures accordingly, as well which can help in mellifluous learning of language.

India has been battling language issues since the making of its constitution. The solution to this is not by nationalizing one language over the expense of other languages. One needs to understand that a diverse nation like India cannot handle sensitive issues like these by juxtaposing such policies. The policy makers need to apply the immersion program for the acquisition and learning of English in India by not presenting it as a threat to other languages. By integrating content for the language use and its usage, we can draw inferences from group work, workshops, more communicative projects, and actual experiments of making people sit together from different cultural backgrounds and make them try to adapt the other culture so as to understand that one needs to stop undermining the difficulties one faces while learning English from a particular background. The three-language formulated in 1968 by the Ministry of Education in India believed in giving security to the other minority languages. It talks about the learning of Hindi since it is the national language, English, for it is a global language and a regional language of the state. The recent New Education Policy 2019 created quite a stir especially in Tamil Nadu since it mentioned that Hindi should be mandatorily taught in the non-Hindi states which then resulted in not specifying Hindi especially. All these policies to dictate terms and conditions in education is futile since the learning of language should not be viewed as a lucrative business of any kind but a productive skill.

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