

Understanding of the Importance of Mother Tongue Learning

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ABSTRACT

Mother tongue is valuable due to several reasons. Mother tongue is vital in framing the thinking and emotions of people. Learning to speak in the mother tongue is very necessary for a child's comprehensive development. Being fluent in the mother tongue, which is also known as the native language, benefits the child in numerous ways. It associates him to his culture, ensures enhanced cognitive development, and supports in the learning of other languages. A child first comprehends what is around them through the language they hear their mother communicating in from before they are born and thought their lives. Many children across the developing world are learning very little in school, a reality that can be linked to teaching that is in a language they do not fully understand. It is a practice that leads to limited or non-existent learning and acquisition of knowledge and skills, alienating experiences, and high drop-out and repetition rates. To improve the quality of education, language policies need to take account of mother-tongue learning. Models of education which ignore the mother tongue in the early years can be unproductive, ineffective and have a negative effect on children's learning. Mother-tongue education at least in early years can enable teachers to teach, and learners to learn more effectively.

KEYWORDS: mother tongue, communication, different language, linguistic gap

INTRODUCTION

A language shows a vital part in the life of a human being. The language facilitates a comprehension of surrounding, learning of concepts and achieving of several skills. A child who ably learns their mother tongue, amass extensive language skills that help them to express themselves and developing their thinking capacity. Additionally, this language cultivates confidence and a sense of self-worth to a child in learning other things.

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart."

-Nelson Mandela-

Mother tongue is the first language one learns as a baby, the language one grows up knowing, which is also known as the native language. A child first comprehends what is around them through the language they hear their mother communicating in from before they are born and thought their lives. Mother tongue is appreciated due to numerous reasons. Mother tongue is central in framing the thinking and emotions of individuals. Learning in school highlights with the use of mother tongue. Mother tongue is an influential tool in advancing the learning in people.

The importance of mother tongue is studied because when children develop their mother tongue, they are simultaneously fostering a whole host of other essential skills, such as critical thinking and literacy skills.

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REASONS OF IMPORTANT TO MOTHER TONGUE

➤ Intellectual Development

Studies have shown that cognitive development as well as intellectual improvement is relatively faster in those who are fluent in their mother tongue. It has also been noted that if a student is educated in his/her mother tongue, the proportion of his or her educational achievement is greater than someone who is taught in a different medium other than their mother tongue.

➤ Develops a personal and cultural identity

Mother language develops a personal and cultural identity. Personal identity emerges out of a person's understanding of themselves, their surroundings and their history. An individual hears their native language first when in the womb, and it subconsciously begins determining their views and emotions. Thus, it develops the foundation of instance connection with family, society, culture, and identity. Its strong foundation makes a strong accepting of oneself through an understanding of social origin and character in the most basic and natural manner. Additionally, by upholding of the different language spoken in society, cultural identity arises that flows unquestionably in other phases of an individual's life.

➤ Better connection with culture

Languages are the greatest significant way of keeping our culture alive. Repeatedly the direct translation of one language to additional might not carry the same essence as it is in the source language. Thus, the best way to thoroughly recognize about a culture is to know the language. Mother tongue benefits us stay associated to our culture and our roots.

➤ **Develops a strong foundation for learning additional languages**

If one has a strong understanding of their mother tongue, it is easier for him or her to master a new language. When a child reads out in their mother tongue since childhood, he or she would have stronger literacy skills in additional languages. Mother tongue advances a strong basis for learning additional tongues. Children are capable of learning numerous languages while young.

Hence, having a strong basis in their mother's language equips them the skills to learn extra languages. Children achieve this by transferring the different structure of language to other languages. Grammar that advances when a child learns their native language is easily transferable, whereby a child can easily guess the meaning or read between the meanings of words in different languages.

➤ **Commercial benefits**

As the businesses go the native way, the significance of mother tongues has exponentially increased. Thus, in such a scenario, having a firm understanding of your mother tongue where you know how to read and write is enormously helpful if you are concerned in becoming an entrepreneur. The opportunities associated to monetizing with the benefit of one's mother tongues are vast in today's market scenario.

➤ **Develop and understand communication skills**

In child hood, when children spend their time with parents, they improve communication skills, skills that become paramount in school locations, for them to participate in class. Also, when parents tell stories and deliberate matters with their children, it grows their terminology and concepts. Thus, when learning is conducted, the children effortlessly follow and understand, resulting in educational success.

➤ **Creates job opportunities**

The mother tongue makes job opportunities. Increased immigration and population advance of international students who speak additional languages other than English characterize the society. Thus, to facilitate effective communication and understanding of each other, different sectors of the economy, such as schools, health and in businesses, necessitates the need for an understanding of different languages. Consequently, the necessity for persons competent in different languages arises in the job market. Understanding and fluency in several native dialects hence give individuals an upper hand in becoming language specialist, thus, gainfully employed.

➤ **Elicits the development of strong family bonds**

Mother tongue elicits the growth of strong family bonds. In numerous households, mostly those of immigrants, some family members such as grandparents and parents do not understand English universally utility in different countries. Thus, when a child grows up with particular emphasis on speaking in a Language other than their mother tongue, results in linguistic gap with some family members, consequence in an emotional disconnect with other family members.

➤ **Stimulates their confidence but also creates awareness of their individual**

The knowledge of the native language is a fundamental aspect of a person's life. It only stimulates their confidence

but also creates awareness of their individual and cultural identity. Facilitates learning and adoption of other languages, creates job opportunities and keeps families tightly joined.

➤ **The Pride**

Knowing your mother tongue well is a matter of pride. It boosts one's confidence and creates awareness in the individual's mind while also helping them connect with their cultural identity in a better manner. Mother tongue has a huge positive influence in defining the personality of an individual; however, the medium of education which is usually English also encourages parents to speak to their children in their second language. Thus, this leads to confusion in the minds of the children and hence, they face difficulties in mastering both first and second language.

CHALLENGES OF MOTHER TONGUE LEARNING

➤ **The dominance of non-mother tongue education**

In many developing countries, a significant proportion of children enter school not speaking the language of the classroom. Many education systems favour using national or 'global' languages instead of Mother-tongue teaching. Education is often carried out in the old colonial language, or an international language, such as English.

This is based on the belief that certain internationally 'important' languages give children a competitive advantage in later life. UNESCO notes: "*Africa is the only continent where the majority of children start school using a foreign language*". Education is almost universally offered in the old colonial languages – French, English or Portuguese – which most young people do not speak at home.

For instance, in Zambia, where English was the educational language (among non-English speakers),

It was found that at the end of primary schooling children were unable to read fluently or write clearly. Many failed examinations because they could not read and understand the instructions. Reading skills were poor, even among secondary school children. Literacy skills in tertiary education were unsatisfactory: students failed to read and grasp information due to lack of reading skills and poor writing skills.

➤ **Lack of mother-tongue learning underscores pre-existing inequalities**

There is a strong equity dimension in the failure to provide mother-tongue education. The language children are taught in often reflects broader societal inequalities or asymmetries in power.

For instance, marginalized tribal groups struggle to have their identity and languages fully recognized, respected or understood within wider society. The failure to provide mother-tongue teaching is a form of discrimination that perpetuates these inequalities. Children from poorer rural areas or from ethnic and linguistic minorities are less likely to receive a quality education, and more likely to become non literate adults.

Many children in minority language communities, especially those living in remote areas, face significant challenges in accessing a good quality education. When pre-existing

pockets of marginalization, poverty, or poor teaching quality intersect with schooling in an unknown language, children may never make it to school, or if they do, will find little meaning in the classroom to keep them there.

Minority groups continue to make up a large proportion of those left out of classrooms. Ensuring more inclusive education policies which guarantee all children's right to education, will involve providing education to minority groups in their own language.

HOW TO IMPROVE TO MOTHER TONGUE LEARNING

➤ **Begin literacy teaching in mother tongue**

A curriculum, rooted in the child's known language, culture and environment, with appropriate and locally-developed reading and curriculum materials, is crucial for early learning success. Using the home language in the early stages of schooling in multilingual contexts supports child-centric policies. It starts with what is familiar and builds in new knowledge. It creates a smooth transition between home and school; it stimulates interest and ensures greater participation and engagement. This prepares children for the acquisition of literacy and encourages fluency and confidence in both the mother tongue and, later, in other languages, where this is necessary.

➤ **Ensure availability of mother-tongue materials**

Children need to be engaged in and excited about reading and learning and this can only be done if the materials are ones which they will understand and enjoy. In most developing countries, the only reading material children see are school textbooks, which are often in very short supply. Other materials to support learning are hardly ever available. Without access to good materials, children struggle to become literate and learn. In most low- and middle-income countries, the majority of primary schools have no library, and books are luxuries which families cannot afford. For children from minority language communities, the situation is even more dismal. Textbooks are rarely available in local languages.

➤ **Provide early childhood education in mother tongue**

Literacy development starts early in life, and the home environment is an important factor in children's learning achievement. It helps build the knowledge and skills children need for learning to read. Where parents and the community are supporting literacy development, results show a marked improvement. The earlier children are exposed to stories the better their reading is: reading for only 15 minutes a day can expose children to one million written words in a year, thereby helping them to develop a rich vocabulary. Children with access to materials at home are more likely to develop fluency in reading.

➤ **Support effective teaching methods**

Successful teaching of early literacy skills is dependent not only on the provision of suitable materials, but also on the way these skills are introduced and taught. Rote learning and memorization, with a textbook focus, will likely result in a child's reading fluency and comprehension remaining limited. Teachers need to use engaging instructional strategies, where children are active in the learning process. Such strategies only become feasible when children understand the language of instruction and can therefore be interactively engaged.

➤ **Train and deploy mother tongue teachers**

Mother-tongue education requires teachers whom share the language and culture of the children. It also requires that teachers are trained in the same language they are to teach in. Some teachers may not be truly proficient in the language of instruction, and may struggle with teaching in a 'dominant' language they are not fluent in themselves or they may come from a minority language group and have been excluded from the learning process due to a lack of training materials in their language. Sometimes a lack of understanding can cascade down the generations where a teacher, who never fully understood their own teacher, is attempting to teach a child who barely understands the language.

CONCLUSIONS

Many children from corner to corner the developing world are learning very little in school, a truth that can be connected to teaching that is in a linguistic they do not completely understand. It is a practice that leads to inadequate or non-existent learning and acquisition of knowledge and skills, alienating experiences, and high drop-out and repetition rates. To develop the quality of education, language policies need to take account of mother-tongue learning. Models of education which ignore the mother tongue in the early years can be unproductive, ineffective and have a negative effect on children's learning. Mother-tongue teaching at least in early years can enable teachers to teach, and learners to learn further effectively. For too long, mother-tongue education has been mostly unnoticed by policy makers. While there are encouraging signs that the policy pendulum is beginning to swing towards a greater understanding of the importance of mother-tongue learning, there is still a long way to go. More governments are developing policies and programmes that take account of mother tongue in the early stages of learning, but there is still a need to express better policies, make sure better preparation for the introduction of second languages and ensure adequate resources are set aside. The Global Campaign for Education believes that evidence proposes that there is assured areas which should be prioritized in policy development, to confirm more responsive and well nuanced policy development in the field of mother tongue learning.

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