Need to Comprise Digital Journalism in English Language Teaching in Rural Learners' Classroom

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This paper aims to focus on real situation of rural learners' language class room and the significance of comprising digital journalism in English language teaching . It presents overview of language policy followed in India. The paper highlights what are the needs to comprise resources of digital journalism in English language teaching. Further grammar exercise and the class room activities are emphasized. Finally it provides recommendation to create digital language learning class room using digital recourses with the view to fulfill rural learners' needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching faces frequent changes with new methodologies. The recent development in English language teaching with modern technical devices stimulates all category of students. Especially technology resources of digital journalism place vital role in motivation of students. Computer, mobile phone, internet access unlocked the communication to share ideas. Smart class room and ICT learning make students to learn on a global scale. Hence rural learners still find it difficult to enhance their language skills. Traditional teaching methods using mother tongue are still followed in most of the rural schools in India. It is necessary to comprise latest technique digital tools in English language teaching.

The Language Policy

Education is monitored in India by state governments and this finds its expression in different figures for different states. Literacy rate among the urban population is higher than among the villagers. It is also higher among the men than among the women. Multilingualism is constitutive of Indian diversity. India today has 92.07% schools at the primary stage teaching through mother tongue, and the rural and urban comparison shows 92.39% schools in rural areas and 90.39% school in urban areas teach through mother tongue. There are about 1600 languages in India but only forty seven languages are used as media of instruction in schools. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 strongly advocates multilingualism in school education. This confers definite cognitive advantages. Researchers have shown that there is a highly positive relationship between bilingualism / multilingualism, cognitive flexibility, and scholastic achievement. Using the multilingual classroom or the languages of the classroom (i.e. children) as resources to teach-learn the subjects as also of the languages would benefit in locating the child in his / her context. This also takes us to language across the curriculum perspective. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 provides the following guidelines for language education in schools

- Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource.
- Home language(s) of children should be the medium of learning in schools.
- If a school does not have provision for teaching in the children home languages(s) at the higher levels, primary school education must still be covered through the home language(s). It is imperative that we honour the child's home language(s). According to Article 350A of our Constitution, 'it shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority with in the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups'.

- Children will receive multilingual education from the outset. The Three language formula needs to be implemented in its true spirit, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country.
- In the non-Hindi speaking states, children learn Hindi. In the case of Hindi speaking states, children learn a language not spoken in their area. Sanskrit may also be studied as Modern Indian Language (MIL) in addition to these languages.

1.1 English Language Training

The 'divide' between the urban and rural is further contributed by the way English language education is making its way as a medium of instruction. The diverse English language education situation in the country shows both a rosy and an abysmal picture. Schools in different regions and systems operate in their contexts. The state policy on language education, curricular statements and syllabi and materials for teaching-learning of English along with teacher inputs decide the quality of education in schools more so in rural schools. An analysis of language policy practices and the curriculum and syllabi reveals how planning for language in education is not looked at holistically in terms of basic assumptions about language learning / acquisition (how language learning takes place), learners profiles and the contexts in which learning takes place and the recent developments in language learning-teaching.

1.2 English Language Teaching Situation

English language teaching situation is a mixed picture from top to very low level in terms of teacher proficiency and the exposure of pupil to English in and outside school, i.e. the availability of English in the environment of language acquisition. The difference in the teaching-learning situation, learners' exposure to the language outside the schools and parental support divides into many levels. The teaching situation decides where a school stands. The most rural schools run by district and municipal education authorities in India enroll the largest number of children. They have almost nil or no exposure to the language, teachers' language proficiency is in question and here are the parents who cannot support their wards in learning the language.

The Curriculum and the syllabus of English language Education

In this scenario, it is essential to comprise digital resources as mode to teach English language teaching. A syllabus, which is a medium to realize the aims of language education, is driven by various needs and concerns that a curricular framework aims to achieve. We expect a syllabus to present textbook developers for deigning such materials that would give scope and space for teachers to exploit the perspective to maximum extent and to go beyond the textbook to engage the learners with their peers and immediate surroundings. The main objective of a good syllabus is to enable the learner to achieve proficiency in the language in different domains. The syllabus should reflect.

- ✓ Assumptions about language learning
- ✓ Appropriate themes the texts embody
- ✓ Objectives of teaching-learning English.
- ✓ Knowledge of methods expected of teachers who use the textbooks
- ✓ Ideas on how learning materials will be constructed (What? and How?)
- ✓ Ideas on how learning is to be evaluated

The state run schools which mostly fall under the category of using mother tongue as a medium of instruction would need to provide a curriculum for that ensures at least minimum level of exposure to the language, materials (receive inputs) that would present the language in contexts through authentic texts (Krahsen 1985), tasks and activities using internet , mobile where children would engage with the language and interact and develop communicational skills, proficient teachers who would ensure enabling conditions for learning the language in meaningful contexts, and an examination system that would not threaten the rural learner and declare him a failure because s/he could not pass the mark of 33% in the subject as that of a content subject. Curriculum should provide such conditions so that the rural learners feel comfortable being in school, particularly in learning English language.

2. DISCUSSION AND SYLLABUD

The syllabi of the states inform us how language learning is understood; the basic conditions for learning a language as a second or foreign language aimed at and the essential of a good language learning-teaching in a situation like the rural Indian settings. The essentials may be listed as

(i) Proficient language teacher having ability to digital journalism as mode to teach.

(ii) Amount of exposure of students to the language using internet and various applications.

(iii) Motivation of children through social networks, online News and internet resources.

(iv) Materials that would provide opportunities for the learner and teacher to act and react and move beyond the texts.

2.1 Interactive / Communicative Activities

There is lot of confusion in understanding what an activity or a task is in language classroom. The activity / task needs to let the learner use the language, i.e. get engaged with the language. This requires learner initiating, turn taking, suggesting, debating, etc. the syllabi and a cursory look at textbooks shows that the activities are teacher directed and teacher centered. The syllabus does not visualize (except cursorily in the objectives) how activities in the classroom can be organized and what roles learners and teachers have in the classroom. We can notice the paradox of the syllabus aiming to design communicational syllabi and doing the opposite of the same. So it is necessary to include activities on current affairs using mobile phone. The class room can be used to provide opportunity to the students to initiate, discuss about latest news. The learner can express his opinion on the news which is recently heard or seen.

2.2 Teaching of Grammar

Everyone seems to be bothered about teaching of grammar and the rules of language explicitly from the earliest. The grammatical item to be covered in each class and thereby ompleting the whole grammar of English language by the end of class X. What is worrying is that the idea of teaching of grammar in an isolated manner through single sentence examples and telling the rules followed by example. We recognise learner as constructor of knowledge through his / her engagements with the language and encounters, the learner discovers the rules of language. Contrary to the beliefs of constructivism, the syllabi aim to teach grammar explicitly, though attempts are made to contextualise the 'grammar' worksheet / exercises in the workbook with corresponding units/ lessons of the textbook. Instead grammar' exercises using activities like responses to various social media excite rural learner.

2.3 Curricular package

Many state suggests teaching-learning material for each stage. Rightly all recommend only one book for primary stage. Three textbooks are prescribed from class six onward. They are: a textbook (the main reader), supplementary reader and a workbook. Some

states prescribe number of units to be included for each class, number of poem and grammatical item. The textbook is aimed at providing comprehensible inputs (Krashen 1985) and the input needs to authentic i.e. texts which are written not for the purpose of textbook, but written for some other purpose like stories, novels, travelogue, autobiography, etc. The curricular statements on materials do not talk about the authenticity of texts, texts that would provide opportunity to exploit the maximum learning, variety of genres, and translation from Indian languages. The workbook aimed to teach grammar items explicitly need to be introspected further as the recent trends advocate learning-teaching of grammar in context rooting it in the texts of the main textbook, thus connecting it with the experiences of learners. Apart from text book, reading and listening exercise using online journals, video can stimulate learner to react immediately.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Multimedia teaching focuses active participation of rural learner. Besides computer and mobile phone with internet stimulate the learner get involved in learning. When the English language class room facilitated with latest digital environment rural learner can get the following benefits:

- Readily available materials,
- Chances to access outside of class room,
- Enriches students' imagination skill as well as immediate reaction,
- A lot of online resources,
- Opportunities for various kinds of communication,
- Get to know and acquire knowledge on global scale.

If the teaching-learning situation is to be made rural learner centered, the curriculum in language education needs to:

- ➢ Have a holistic approach to language planning where language education is perceived as whole in which English language education find its complementary and supplementary role.
- ➢ Use the languages of children as a resource for teaching-learning of languages and other content subjects (NCF -2005). Adopting the multilingualism as strategy for learning of languages and other subjects will help the rural learner finding their contexts and connecting their life outside the school with happenings of the classroom.

> Create (English) language environment in the classroom and attempt to enable the learner to explore finding the language in use outside the classroom. This requires bilingual proficient teachers, who are conformable in the mother tongue(s) of children and in English.

> Comprise the activities and assignments that would demand children to move beyond the textbook and the classroom in finding to use the language. Television, computer, online news channel, internet resources, mobile phone, social media applications could be exploited for the purpose.

4. CONCLUSION

Multimedia teaching encourages the rural learners to get involved actively in English language learning activities. All kinds of technical resources help the students to understand and to react immediately. English language teaching comprised of digital journalism provides so many options to enhance language skills among the rural learners. It becomes necessary to update the rural learner language class room with all kinds of digital tools. Resources in digital journalism widen the opportunities of students and create better teaching learning environment.

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