

1.3

POSITION PAPER

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP

ON

**TEACHING OF INDIAN
LANGUAGES**

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Language is not only a rule-governed system of communication but also a phenomenon that to a great extent structures our thought and defines our social relationships in terms of both power and equality. The speed with which normal children become linguistically proficient in not just one but often several languages by the time they are three years old shows that we are probably born with an innate language faculty. All specific linguistic development is, of course, socio-culturally mediated, and every individual successfully creates a repertoire of multiple registers to negotiate a variety of social encounters. It is indeed a pity that educational planners and language policy makers are not able to capitalise on this innate potential of the child. In a country like India, most children arrive in schools with multilingual competence and begin to drop out of the school system because, in addition to several other reasons, the language of the school fails to relate to the languages of their homes and neighbourhoods. Most children leave schools with dismal levels of language proficiency in reading comprehension and writing skills, even in their own native languages. In addition to a variety of socio-political reasons that adversely impinge upon our educational system in general, some reasons that are primarily responsible for these low levels of proficiency include: lack of any understanding about the nature and structure of language and the processes of language teaching-learning, particularly in multilingual contexts; acute failure on the part of educational planners to appreciate the role of language across the curriculum in contributing towards the construction of knowledge; not paying enough attention to the fact that a variety of biases, including caste, race, and gender, get encoded in language; inability to appreciate the fact that language consists of much more than just poems, essays, and stories; unwillingness to accept the role of languages of the home and neighbourhood in cognitive growth and failure to notice that cognitively advanced language proficiency tends to get transferred across languages. It is becoming increasingly clear that linguistic diversity is as important for our survival as biodiversity.

It is imperative that we make provisions for education in the mother tongue(s) of the children and train teachers to maximise the utilisation of the multilingual situation often obtaining in the classroom as a resource. Recent research has demonstrated the positive correlation between multilingual language proficiency and academic achievement. It has also shown that multilingualism leads to greater cognitive flexibility and social tolerance. What we need to do is to ensure comprehensible input in anxiety-free situations and make every possible effort to eliminate caste, colour, and gender bias. Unless the educational planners pay attention to language across the curriculum in all its dimensions, the goals of equity, justice, and democracy may remain distant dreams. Our recommendations in Chapter 10 should be seen in the above context and in the context of our proposals (Appendix III) about languages in the school curriculum.

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The members of the committee met many people to discuss a variety of issues central to our Focus Group. It is difficult to mention all of them, and we seek the indulgence of those whose names may have been unwittingly left out here.

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1. ON THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

1.1 Introduction

Most people, including teachers, teacher-trainers, textbook writers, curriculum designers, and educational planners, regard language simply as a means of communication. In order to appreciate fully the role of language in education, we must begin to develop a holistic perspective on language. We need to examine it in a multi-dimensional space, giving due importance to its structural, literary, sociological, cultural, psychological, and aesthetic aspects. Formally, language is seen as the pairing of a lexicon and a set of syntactic rules, where it is systematically governed at the level of sounds, words, and sentences. This is, of course, true but it gives us only one side of the picture, even though it is universal.

1.2 Language Faculty

It is important to realise that all children learn the basic systems and subsystems of their language, including a substantial part of their sociological correlates (i.e. they acquire not only linguistic but also communicative competence), before they are three years old. It is eminently possible to engage in a meaningful conversation with a three-year-old on any subject that falls within her cognitive domain.

The awareness that there is an innate language faculty has two important pedagogical consequences: given adequate exposure, children will acquire new languages with ease; and the focus in teaching should be more on meaning than grammar.

It, therefore seems obvious that in addition to the rich and caring exposure that they receive, normal

children may be born with an innate language faculty (Chomsky 1957, 1965, 1986, 1988 and 1993). In fact, for most linguists working on the acquisition of language, it has remained a great paradox: how is it the case that given so little (limited data in a short span of time), three-year-old children manage to create linguistic systems of such enormous complexity? The awareness that there is an innate language faculty has two important pedagogical consequences: given adequate exposure, children will acquire new languages with ease; and the focus in teaching should be more on content than grammar.

1.3 Language as a Rule-governed System

For linguists who study the structure of language in a scientific way, the grammar of a language is a highly abstract system consisting of several subsystems. At the level of sounds, the languages of the world are closely associated with rhythm and music in terms of their intonation patterns and pitch contours. Similarly, consonantal and vocalic sounds in all human languages are systematically organised. Most languages consist of sound segments that range between 25–80 sounds. They tend to prefer words that show an alternation of consonantal (C) and vocalic (V) sounds such as CVCV rather than have clusters of consonantal and vocalic sounds. For example, no Indian language or even English allows more than three consonantal sounds at the beginning of a word, and even when three are allowed the choices are highly restricted. The first consonant can only be 's', the second only 'p', 't', or 'k', and the third only 'y', 'r', 'l', or 'w', as in Hindi 'stri' or in English 'spring', 'street', 'squash', 'screw', etc. At the level of words, a set of small word-formation strategies that relate one set of words to another set of words both in terms of form and meaning helps speakers to process a huge lexicon, enabling them to

continuously enlarge it throughout their lives. For example, Hindi has a word-formation rule for making different plurals of masculine words that end in *-aa*, for example, *larkaa* ‘boy’. The three plural forms are *larke*, *larkon*, and *larkeo*, which are the Nominative, Oblique, and Vocative plurals of *larkaa*. You do not have to learn all the plural forms when you learn a new *-aa*-ending Hindi masculine noun. At the level of sentences, once again a small set of rules defines the relationship of different constituents in simple and complex sentences, enabling speakers to process an infinite number of sentences everyday. Consider the simple English sentence:

She goes to school everyday.

It has five words and the possible combinations could be five factorial (i.e. 120). But perhaps only two or three combinations are allowed. How does a child speaking English know that in information-seeking questions, the *wh*-word will always be in the initial position? For example, you say ‘Where is my pen?’, ‘What is your name?’, etc. In Hindi, the rule is quite different. The question words appear where the answers could potentially appear. Consider the following:

vah ghar jaa rahaa hai (He is going home).

vah kahaan jaa rahaa hai (Where is he going?)

kahaan ‘where’ appears exactly where *ghar* ‘home’ appears.

The level of discourse in society is structured in addition to all the above by a variety of linguistic, sociological, religious, and cultural conventions obtaining in a particular society. India has a very long and rich tradition of engaging with the complexity of language, and the contributions of scholars such as Pānini, Kātyāyan, Patanjali, Bhartrhari, Tulkappiyar, Candrakirti, Jainendra, and Hemchandra Acharya among others is indeed enormous. It is unfortunate that we have been consistently ignoring this branch of

Indian knowledge, and we do hope that we will be able to establish institutions that would undertake a scientific enquiry into this area and unfold its pedagogical implications for language teaching. What is encapsulated in Pānini’s *Ashtādhyāyī* is not paralleled by any modern descriptive grammar. In the Indian tradition, language is speech (not writing); cognition (not just communication); and a constructivist system (not just a representational one). According to Bhartrhari, language constructs the reality (it does not name a pre-existing reality) and it is the form that knowledge takes; as a process of conceptualisation and articulation, it is non-partitive and non-sequential (Kapil Kapoor, personal communication). Such a holistic conception of language may have important pedagogical implications.

1.4 Speech and Writing

The fundamental difference between speech and writing is that written language is consciously monitored and frozen in time; we can return to it whenever we want. Spoken language is far more transient in nature and changes far more rapidly than the written language. One should not, therefore, be surprised to notice discrepancies between the spoken and written languages. There is no intrinsic relationship between language and script, no sacrosanct connection between the English language and the Roman script, or between Sanskrit or Hindi language and the Devanagari script. Indeed, all the languages of the world, with minor modifications, can be written in one script, just as any single language can be written in all the scripts of the world. Such awareness about the relationship between language and script has important pedagogical implications. Teachers who become aware of this phenomenon often change their attitudes towards errors and begin to develop innovative teaching methods.

Spoken language is far more transient in nature and changes far more rapidly than the written language. One should not, therefore, be surprised to notice discrepancies between the spoken and written languages. There is no intrinsic relationship between language and script . . . Teachers who become aware of this phenomenon often change their attitudes towards errors and begin to develop innovative teaching methods.

1.5 Language, Literature and Aesthetics

There are several functions of language that have been paid lip service by language education planners. Apart from having the quality of unfolding the world, language has many fictional elements. Poetry, prose, and drama are potent sources not only of refining our literary sensibility but also of enriching our aesthetic life, enhancing our synaesthetic abilities, and enormously improving our linguistic abilities, particularly reading comprehension and written articulation. Literature also includes jokes, irony, fantasy, story, parody, and parable, which pervade our everyday discourse and in no way constitute an autonomous universe cut off from ‘the world’s business’ (Habermas 1996, 1998, 2001).

A considered appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of language would inevitably lead to a preference for linguistic vitality and creativity rather than an obsession with purity and correctness. Such processes would ensure space for dialogue and negotiation rather than monologue and aggression.

At Tagore’s Visva-Bharati at Shantiniketan, it was common practice for students to read a play with Tagore,

translate it into Bangla, prepare to stage it, set up the stage, and finally stage it in all its glory in front of the members of the community. A language education policy cannot afford to ignore the fictional, narrative, metaphysical, or rhetorical elements of language and treat it only as a useful vehicle or tool for achieving some worldly gains (Marx 1844). Human beings not only appreciate beauty but also often systematically codify laws that govern aesthetic dimensions. A considered appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of language would inevitably lead to a preference for linguistic vitality and creativity rather than an obsession with purity and correctness. Such processes would ensure space for dialogue and negotiation rather than monologue and aggression. This would also lead one hopes to a respect for minor and endangered languages that is legitimately due to them. No community wishes to let its ‘voice’ die.

1.6 Language and Society

Even though children appear to be born with an innate language faculty, individual languages are acquired in specific socio-cultural and political contexts. Every child learns what to say, to whom, and where. Languages are inherently variable and different styles tend to be used in different contexts by different age groups (Labov 1966, 1972; Trudgill 1974; Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Gumperz 1964; Habermas 1970, 1996). The variability in human linguistic behaviour is not thus randomly distributed, but links systems of language, communication, thought, and knowledge. As Aurorin (1977) points out, “language cannot exist and develop outside society. Development of language is ultimately stimulated by our cultural heritage and the needs of social development, but we should not overlook the reverse dependence either. Human society cannot do without language as the most important, most perfect and universal means of communication, formation of thought and accumulation and transmission of

expression.” It is equally important to realise that languages are not ‘discrete objects out there’, almost frozen in time and space, both physical and mental. They are actually constantly changing, fluid systems of behaviour that human beings acquire and change to define themselves and the world around them. Very often languages are treated as entities and people form strong stereotypes about them. We need to be aware of both these aspects of language.

1.7 Language, Attitudes and Motivation

The attitudes and motivation of learners often play an important role in all language learning. Similarly, the attitudes of the teacher and parental encouragement may contribute to successful language learning. Researchers working in the area of second/foreign language learning have identified several social psychological variables that influence the learning of a second language. Some of these variables are: (1) aptitudes; (2) intelligence; (3) attitudes; (4) motivation and motivational intensity; (5) authoritarianism; and (6) ethnocentrism. But the most significant variables out of these are attitudes and motivation, teacher attitude, and parental encouragement of the second-language learner.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) believe that a learner’s motivation for learning a second/foreign language will depend on his attitudes and willingness to identify with the linguistic and non-linguistic features that generally typify the speakers of the target language. According to them, a motivational orientation is said to be integrative if a person learns a second/foreign language in order to enter into an active interaction with the target language speakers. The motivation is called instrumental if the learner learns the target language in order to get a job or achieve some other utilitarian objective. Gardner and Lambert conclude that success in second/foreign language would be less if the

underlying motivation is instrumental rather than integrative.

... the variance in second-language proficiency is explained not only by motivational and attitudinal variables but also by a variety of social, cultural, and demographic variables, including claimed control over different languages, patterns of language use, exposure to English, use of English in the family, the type of school, size of the community, anxiety levels, etc.

In the Indian context, the access to the target language community may be highly variable. For example, in the case of English, even though the native target language community is absent, the amount of exposure available in urban settings may often be substantial. On the other hand, in many rural and tribal areas, English must be treated as a foreign language. In the case of Indian languages, native target language groups may often be far more accessible. A lot of research into the social psychological aspects of second/foreign language was carried out in several parts of the world. Most of these researchers found that proficiency in second/foreign language was significantly related to the attitudes and motivation of the learner. However, there was very little support for Gardner and Lambert’s hypothesis that integrative motivation was more significant than instrumental motivation. Several researchers (including Khanna and Agnihotri 1982, 1984) have shown that the theoretical claims of Gardner and Lambert lacked generality as the variance in second-language proficiency is explained not only by motivational and attitudinal variables but also by a variety of social, cultural, and demographic variables,

including claimed control over different languages, patterns of language use, exposure to English, use of English in the family, the type of school, size of the community, anxiety levels, etc.

1.8 Language and Identity

It should be obvious that attitudes and motivation do not get constructed in a vacuum. An individual creates the patterns of her behaviour in terms of the group(s) with which she wishes to identify, acquiring in the process communicative competence that equips her to move along a continuum varying from formal to informal language (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Labov 1966, 1971). More often than not, we find identities to be in conflict with one another. The question of identity becomes particularly relevant in the case of minorities, and there is a great need to be sensitive to their languages and cultures in the interest of national and global peace and harmony. Several studies (for example, Fishman 1966, 1978; Das Gupta 1970; Brass 1974; Gal 1979; Whiteley 1971; Dorian 1981; Agnihotri 1979; Mukherjee 1981; Cooper 1989; Verma 1998, among others)

If language facilitates identification rather than mere discovery of some existing identity, it turns out to be something more than a marker of identity maintenance and a repository of memories and symbols. It could be a springboard that could launch one into the as yet unfathomed depths of multiple possibilities.

have shown how the issues centred around minority status interact with patterns of language maintenance and shift. If we discuss the identity question in the context of language education (since languages have

been the bearer of the burden of identity politics), it would be more appropriate to speak of 'Identification', 'a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity, or by choice are engaged' (Bauman 2001).

If language facilitates identification rather than the mere discovery of some existing identity, it turns out to be something more than a marker of identity maintenance and a repository of memories and symbols. It could be a springboard that could launch one into the as yet unfathomed depths of multiple possibilities.

1.9 Language and Power

In spite of the fact that all languages as abstract systems or subsystems are equal, the complex ways in which history, economics, sociology, and politics interact with language, some languages become more prestigious than others and become associated with socio-political power. It is generally the language used by the elite that acquires power in society and becomes the standard language. All the grammars, dictionaries, and various reference materials will invariably address this 'standard' language. From the point of view of the science of language, there is no difference between what is variously called standard language, pure language, dialect, variety, etc. A language is often defined as a dialect with an army and a navy. Those who wield power create and perpetuate negative stereotypes about the languages of the underprivileged. As Chambers (2003: 277) points out, "Prejudices based on dialect are as insidious as prejudices based on skin, colour, religion, or any other insubstantial attribute, and they have the same result."

More than anything else, it is the socio-political and economic considerations that make people decide the national, official, and associate official languages

to be used in education, administration, the judiciary, the mass media, etc. In principle, it is eminently possible to do anything in any language, including advanced research in the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences. It should thus become obvious that the languages of the underprivileged will never become empowered unless we provide support structures that will ensure their use in a variety of contexts. It is also important to remember that 'standard' is never a fixed constant. Within the domains of power it keeps changing its locus: non-Brahmin Tamil replaces Brahmin Tamil and Pune Marathi makes way for Mumbai Marathi.

If we focus our attention on phenomena such as 'Sufi' poetry, the 1857 Revolt, the struggle for freedom, the formation of new States within India, or Dalit literature, the languages of the masses may also often constitute potent sites for dissenting voices. Indeed, with some notable exceptions such as Aurorin (1977), Lee (1992), Kress (1989), Fairclough (1992), and Kress and Hodge (1979) among others, the site of the association of language with social power and exploitation, on the one hand, and socio-political dissent and democracy, on the other, has remained largely unexplored.

1.10 Language and Gender

The issue of gender concerns not half but the whole of humanity. Over a period of time language has coded in its texture a large number of elements that perpetuate gender stereotypes. Several studies (Cameron 1985, 1995; Lakoff 1975, 1990; Tannen 1990; Butler 1990, among others) have addressed the issues centred around language and gender. It is not just that many scholars, including some distinguished linguists, have described female speech as 'trivial' and 'a string of pearls' signifying nothing, but a substantial part of the lexicon

and syntactic expressions encode gender bias. Detailed analysis of male–female conversation has also revealed how men use a variety of conversational strategies to assert their point of view.

It is extremely important that textbook writers and teachers begin to appreciate that the passive and deferential roles generally assigned to women are socio-culturally constructed and need to be destroyed as quickly as possible.

The received notions of what it means to be 'masculine' or 'feminine' are constantly reconstructed in our behaviour and are, sometimes unwittingly perhaps, transmitted through our textbooks. Indeed, the damage done by the 'gender construction of knowledge' is becoming increasingly obvious. Language, including illustrations and other visual aids, plays a central role in the formation of such knowledge and we need to pay immediate attention to this aspect of language. It is extremely important that textbook writers and teachers begin to appreciate that the passive and deferential roles generally assigned to women are socio-culturally constructed and need to be destroyed as quickly as possible. The voices of women in all their glory need to find a prominent place in our textbooks and teaching strategies.

1.11 Language, Culture and Thought

The relationship among language, culture, and thought has been an area of serious enquiry for sociologists, anthropologists, and linguists for a very long time. There is no doubt that in addition to a variety of gestures, rituals, and paralinguistic features, language remains the main source of cultural transmission and cognitive structures. The linguistic and cultural patterns of social behaviour are largely subconsciously acquired

and they gradually become constitutive of our identities. The role of multiplicity of languages and diversity of cultures in this context can hardly be overemphasised.

If language, on the one hand, structures our thought processes, it liberates us and takes us into unexplored territories of knowledge and imagination, on the other.

The relationship between language and thought is indeed very complex and has remained one of the most challenging puzzles for linguists, psychologists, and cognitive scientists in general. According to the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, our thought is entirely constructed by our linguistic system: “The background linguistic system of each language . . . is itself the shaper of ideas, the programme and guide for the individual’s mental activity” (Whorf quoted in Carroll 1956: 212–14). The cognitive, social, and cultural patterns that govern our perception of the world are largely shaped, formulated, and even dictated by the structures of the languages we speak. Whether we believe in the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis or not, language and thought feed on each other. If language, on the one hand, structures our thought processes, it liberates us and takes us into unexplored territories of knowledge and imagination, on the other. In the case of Indian languages and cultures, we, in general, share a linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural matrix, and an articulation of this matrix in different languages may eventually lead to an enrichment of both linguistic and cultural systems. English in India is also becoming a part of this matrix, though marginally at the moment, but with a clear indication of becoming an inevitable part of the overall Indian linguistic and cultural repertoire.

1.12 Education, Language and Responsible Citizenship

According to UNESCO, “Quality must be seen in light of how societies define the purpose of education.” The purpose of education is to ensure that all pupils acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for the exercise of responsible citizenship, to ensure the cognitive development of learners, to nurture “the creative and emotional growth of learners, oppose discrimination against any particular group in any manner or, in other words, lead towards an equitable society” (UNESCO 2004). In our contemporary war-ridden world, the role of responsible citizenship can hardly be overemphasised.

Responsibility implies a developed or evolved faculty of understanding because ‘the action oriented towards reaching understanding is the fundamental type of social action’ (Habermas 1998). It is no longer a question of knowing the world in order to master it. It is now a question of knowing the principles that govern its working to enable oneself, individually and collectively, to live in harmony with others who would be ‘different in many aspects and not view it as a comparison but a joyful experience’.

School education has been treated all over as a critical site where one can learn to find ways to ‘delight in differences’ (*Human Development Report*, UNDP 2004). The question of defining the ‘universal competencies that are involved when social actions interact with the aim of achieving mutual understanding’ has kept scholars, philosophers, and policy makers busy. Habermas says that communicative competence is crucial to achieve mutual understanding. Communication is a major function of languages as they contain ‘the possibility of universal understanding within the shell of the most individual expression’ (Habermas 2000). Indeed, if in the future language

textbooks, teacher training, and classroom transaction could be conceptualised in the multidimensional linguistic space proposed in this document, languages will go a long way not only in educating them but also in making them responsible citizens.

2. LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1 Introduction

As already pointed out, it remains a mystery how children manage to acquire complex linguistic systems at an extremely young age. Many children become fluent users of not just one but two or three languages by the time they are three or four years old. Not only this, they also know the language they should use in a given context, i.e. they acquire the capacity of keeping their linguistic systems separate and, of course, mix them in legitimate ways when they wish to. For behaviourists such as Pavlov and Skinner, language learning was simply a matter of stimulus–response association acquired largely through pattern practice, mimicry, and memorisation. It was Chomsky’s article (1959) ‘Review of Skinner’s Verbal Behaviour’ that shook the foundations of behaviourism. Chomsky argued that unless we posit an innate language faculty, it would become difficult to explain the acquisition of complex linguistic systems. Psychologists such as Piaget (1962, 1983 among several others), Inhelder and Piaget (1958) and Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argued for positions that would fall between these two extreme positions. For behaviourists, the mind was a blank slate; for cognitivists such as Chomsky, language was already there in the human mind, hard-wired in the form of a Universal Grammar; for Piaget, language is constructed through an interaction with the environment like any other cognitive system.

It is perhaps unfortunate that educationists and language professionals have not been able to exploit the full potential of Chomsky’s proposals. His suggestion that the process of language acquisition must inevitably involve processes of scientific inquiry such as observation of data, classification and categorisation, hypothesis formation and its falsification may have important pedagogical implications.

On the other hand, Vygotsky believed that a child’s speech is essentially a result of an interaction with society; in the course of her language development, a child uses two kinds of speech: egocentric and social, one addressed to herself and the other addressed to the rest of the world. It is important to underline the fact that Piaget and Vygotsky actually worked with children and observed, documented, and analysed their cognitive development. For example, Vygotsky noticed that small children not only develop their own socially mediated speech systems but also a fairly complex pre-writing system. Over a period of time, they need to develop a complex verbal repertoire to interact with a multilingual world.

2.2 The Piagetian Perspective

Although Chomsky’s mentalist hypothesis has had enormous influence on the way we look at language acquisition, it is Piaget who has had the most powerful influence in the field of education. The insight that all children pass through pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational stages of cognitive growth has conditioned the whole pedagogical discourse in a significant way. It is perhaps unfortunate that educationists and language professionals have not

been able to exploit the full potential of Chomsky's proposals. His suggestion that the process of language acquisition must inevitably involve processes of scientific inquiry such as observation of data, classification and categorisation, hypothesis formation and its falsification may have important pedagogical implications. Piaget does not accept the innate language faculty hypothesis. According to his constructivist approach, all knowledge systems are created through sensorimotor mechanisms in the process of which a child creates a variety of schematas through the processes of assimilation and accommodation.

2.3 Objectives of Language Teaching

Since most children arrive in school with full-blown linguistic systems, the teaching of languages must have very specific objectives in the school curriculum. One of the major objectives of language teaching is to equip learners with the ability to become literate, and read and write with understanding. Our effort is to sustain and enhance the degree of bilingualism and metalinguistic awareness that children have. We would also like to equip learners with such politeness strategies and powers of persuasion that they are able to negotiate all communicative encounters with tolerance and dignity.

Although the interaction of linguistic theory and applied linguistics has produced a variety of teaching methods and materials, the language-teaching classroom has remained one of the most boring and unchallenging sites of education, dominated largely by the behaviourist paradigms. In the case of languages that children already know, we rarely see any progress; in the case of a second language such as English, most children hardly acquire even the basic proficiency levels after six to ten years of exposure; and in the case of classical or foreign languages, the total programme

consists of memorisation of some select texts and noun and verb paradigms. There is no dearth of empirical studies that support these observations. It is imperative that we analyse and understand our specific contexts, identify specific objectives, and develop suitable methods and materials accordingly.

Our effort is to sustain and enhance the degree of bilingualism and metalinguistic awareness that children have. We would also like to equip learners with such politeness strategies and powers of persuasion that they are able to negotiate all communicative encounters with tolerance and dignity.

For a very long time now, we have been talking in terms of Listening-Speaking-Reading-Writing (LSRW) skills as the objectives of language teaching (in more recent times, we have started talking about communicative skills, accent neutralisation and voice training, etc. in an equally disastrous way). This exclusive focus on discrete skills has had fairly adverse consequences. In this paper, though we, to some extent, continue to describe the objectives in a similar paradigm, we will plead for a more holistic perspective on language proficiency. After all, when we are *speaking*, we are also simultaneously *listening* and when we are *writing*, we are also *reading* in a variety of ways. And then there are many situations (for example, friends reading a play together and taking notes for its production) in which all the skills in conjunction with a variety of other cognitive abilities are used together.

Some of our objectives would include:

- (a) **The competence to understand what she hears:** A learner must be able to employ various non-verbal cues coming from the speaker for understanding what has been said. She should also

be skilled at listening and understanding in a non-linear fashion by making connections and drawing inferences.

- (b) **Ability to read with comprehension, and not merely decode:** She should develop the habit of reading in a non-linear manner using various syntactic, semantic, and grapho-phonemic cues. She must be able to construct meaning by drawing inferences and relating the text with her previous knowledge. She must also develop the confidence of reading the text with a critical eye and posing questions while reading.
- (c) **Effortless expression:** She should be able to employ her communicative skills in a variety of situations. Her repertoire must have a range of styles to choose from. She must be able to engage in a discussion in a logical, analytical, and creative manner.
- (d) **Coherent writing:** Writing is not a mechanical skill; it involves a rich control of grammar, vocabulary, content, and punctuation as well as the ability to organise thoughts coherently often using a variety of cohesive devices such as linkers and lexical repetitions through synonymy, etc. A learner should develop the confidence to express her thoughts effortlessly and in an organised manner. The student must be encouraged and trained to choose her own topic, organise her ideas, and write with a sense of audience. This is possible only if her writings are seen as a process and not as a product. She should be able to use writing for a variety of purposes and in a variety of situations, ranging from informal to very formal.
- (e) **Control over different registers:** Language is never used in a uniform fashion. It has innumerable varieties, shades, and colours, which surface in different domains and in different situations. These

variations, known as *registers*, should form a part of a student's repertoire. Besides the register of school subjects, a student must be able to understand and use the variety of language being used in other domains such as music, sports, films, gardening, construction work, cookery, etc.

- (f) **Scientific study of language:** In a language class, the teaching approaches adopted and the tasks undertaken should be such that they lead a child to go through the whole scientific process of collecting data, observing the data, classifying it according to its similarities and differences, making hypotheses, etc. Thus, linguistic tools can and must play a significant role in developing a child's cognitive abilities. This would be much better than teaching normative rules of grammar. Moreover, this approach is particularly effective in multilingual classrooms.
- (g) **Creativity:** In a language classroom, a student should get ample space to develop her imagination and creativity. Classroom ethos and the teacher–student relationship build confidence in the latter to use her creativity in text transaction and activities uninhibitedly.
- (h) **Sensitivity:** Language classrooms can be an excellent reference point for familiarising students with our rich culture and heritage as well as aspects of our contemporary life. Language classroom and texts have a lot of scope to make students sensitive towards their surroundings, their neighbours, and their nation.

2.4 Some Pedagogical Proposals

Contemporary research on language acquisition has put the learner at the centre of language learning. It suggests that a learner will be able to construct the grammar of a language effortlessly if she is provided

with comprehensible input in anxiety-free situations. As Krashen (1985) has suggested, input is likely to become intake only if the affective filter is low, i.e. the attitudes are positive and the motivation is strong. There is no doubt that in some cases where even English becomes a foreign language, it may help to some extent to invoke the conscious reflection of the learner on grammatical values. Krashen has shown how children tend to improve their own output when they are given sufficient freedom and time to edit what they have written. The emphasis on relatively ordered stages of cognitive growth has encouraged language teachers to look at errors as stages in the process of learning rather than as pathologies to be eradicated.

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Piaget's emphasis on the interaction with the environment has highlighted the significance of teaching language in rich contexts. Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development has further led to child-centric approaches to language teaching. It has now become increasingly clear that every possible effort should be made to bring the classroom setting, howsoever formal, as close to natural language-learning situations as possible. Eklavya's *Prashika* (1964) experiment was based on the optimal focus on meaning than on form and the *Kbushi-Kbushi* books that it produced remain a landmark in the history of Hindi-language teaching.

'Prashika is easily one of the most exciting adventures in children's education in our times. It brought together a set of remarkable individuals whose interests and backgrounds varied . . . The ideas they pursued are recognised the world over as the basic ingredients of progressive pedagogy, such as acceptance of individual uniqueness, small-group activities, and relevance of out-of-school experiences in classroom work.' Krishna Kumar

3. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS AND THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss the language provisions made under the Constitution of India and the three-language formula. We feel that a considerable amount of intra and interstate flexibility should be allowed in the implementation of the three-language formula.

3.2 The Constitutional Provisions

Articles 343–351 of Part XVII and the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India deal with issues of the languages of the country. According to Article 343 (1), "The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script." Several special directives are given for the promotion of Hindi: "to promote the spread of Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as the medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India" (Article 351).

It is important to point out that Hindi is our official language. According to Article 343(2), the Constitution provides for the use of English for all official purposes

for a period of fifteen years. However, by 1965 widespread riots in south India and the fears of domination of Hindi and Aryanisation made it clear that English should not be completely demoted from its official status. It was given the status of an associate official language in 1965. The Constitution also provides that English will be the language of the High Courts, the Supreme Court, Acts of Parliament, etc. The Constitution also provides for the rights of its citizens to make representation in any language to the State. Article 350 A (7th Amendment Act, 1956) provides for adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minorities. We would also like to point out that the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution simply has the title *Languages*. The fact that its number has grown from 14 to 22 in about fifty years bears testimony to its open nature. It appears that any language spoken in this country could legitimately be a part of the 8th Schedule.

Hindi is our official. The Constitution also provides for the rights of its citizens to make representation in any language to the State. It also provides for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minorities.

The multiplicity of languages in the country and the continued presence of English for a variety of important functions made it clear that no straightforward simplistic solution could sustain the participatory nature of democracy in a plurilingual society. The continued dissociation of English from colonial rule has gone a long way in diluting negative feelings towards the English language. Its importance

as a language of vital opportunities and international contact has become increasingly clear. On the other hand, the number of minority and tribal languages that are claiming their share in the country's educational and power structure is increasingly multiplying. Nor could anyone deny the significance of Hindi developing as a national link language.

3.3 The Three-language Formula

It is, therefore, not surprising that the three-language formula evolved as a consensus in 1961 at a meeting of the chief ministers of different States. The three-language formula was modified by the Kothari Commission (1964–66) seeking to accommodate, as Sridhar (1989: 22) says, the interests of group identity (mother tongues and regional languages), national pride and unity (Hindi), and administrative efficiency and technological progress (English). As Pattanayak (1986) points out, the three-language formula is only a strategy and not a national language policy. A national language policy will have to take into account a variety of issues and domains that are not covered either by the Constitution or the three-language formula. The complexity of the language used in education, even in schools, may be seen in some of the charts provided in Appendix III. These charts were prepared by some of the members of the Focus Group based on the analysis of the school education situation obtaining in their respective states. They underscore the diversity of linguistic situations in the Indian States.

It is the complexity of this situation that the 1968 three-language formula tried to capture; it has been reiterated in the National Policy of Education (NPE) in 1986 and we see its revised version in the Programme of Action of 1992. The NPE-1986 (*see www.education.nic.in/NatPol.asp*) had largely supported the language related provisions made

in 1968. The Education Policy of 1968 (*www.languageinindia.com*) had examined the question of the development of languages in some detail; its essential provisions, it was believed, could hardly be improved upon and were as relevant today as before. Such a position avoids several complex issues and assumes that nothing has happened in the field of languages since 1960. Even the 1968 policy was rather uneven in its implementation. The 1968 policy states:

- The First language to be studied must be the mother tongue or the regional language.
- The Second language
 - In Hindi speaking States, the second language will be some other modern Indian language or English, and
 - In non-Hindi speaking States, the second language will be Hindi or English.
- The Third language
 - In Hindi speaking States, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language, and
 - In non-Hindi speaking States, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language.

It was suggested that the medium of instruction at the primary stage should be the mother tongue and that the State Governments should adopt, and vigorously implement, the three-language formula which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking States and of Hindi in the non-Hindi speaking states. Suitable courses in Hindi and/or English should also be available in Universities and Colleges with a view to improving the proficiency of students in these languages up to the prescribed university standards.

The three-language formula is not a goal or a limiting factor in language acquisition, but rather a convenient launching pad for the exploration of the expanding horizon of knowledge and the emotional integration of the country.

The spirit of the three-language formula thus provides Hindi, English, and Indian languages, preferably a south Indian language for the Hindi-speaking States, and a regional language, Hindi, and English for the non-Hindi-speaking States. But this formula has been observed more in the breach than in the observance. The Hindi-speaking States operate largely with Hindi, English, and Sanskrit, whereas the non-Hindi-speaking States, particularly Tamil Nadu, operate through a two-language formula, that is, Tamil and English. Still, many States such as Orissa, West Bengal, and Maharashtra among others implemented the formula.

3.4 Merits and Demerits of the Three-language Formula

By adopting the three-language formula as a strategy, space was created for the study of proximate languages, classical languages, and foreign languages. Space was also made for the study of the mother tongue. The States were free to adopt languages in education outside the three-language formula. Sanskrit could be introduced as a classical language. It could also be adopted as a Modern Indian language (MIL) without violating the spirit of the three-language formula. Since 1953, with the declaration of UNESCO that the mother tongue is the best medium for a child's education, pressure groups worked for the recognition of their languages and their incorporation in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution. As long as the basic spirit of the three-language formula is maintained, there is no restriction on studying new languages.

Primary education should be bilingual. Successive stages of bilingualism are expected to build up to an integrated multilingualism. The first task of the school is to relate the home language to the school language. Thereafter, one or more languages are to be integrated, so that one can move into other languages without losing the first one. This would result in the maintenance of all languages, each complementing the other.

In Appendix III, you will see five 'ideal charts' formulated by participants from different States and one chart proposed by our group. Indeed, in many ways the National Focus Group Chart reflects the consensus at which we arrived. The six charts show significant similarities: the MT must be the medium of instruction at the primary level; English must be taught as a compulsory subject; Hindi must be taught as a compulsory or elective subject; and classical and foreign languages must find a place in the school curriculum.

The proposed National Focus Group Chart in Appendix III has been developed in the context of societal and individual multilingualism obtaining in our country. In this context, we define mother tongue(s) as the languages of the home, street, neighbourhood, peer group, and kinship networks; regional language(s) as the language(s) widely spoken in the State, or in the case of minorities outside the State; and state language(s) as language(s) officially recognised by each State. We also work all this out against the backdrop of Hindi being our official and link language and English being our associate official and international link language. It is in this context that we suggest that:

(a) Mother-tongue(s) should be the medium of instruction all through the school, but certainly in the primary school. The Working Group on the Study of Languages constituted by NCERT in 1986 recommends in its report that 'the medium of early education' should be the mother tongue(s)

of the learners. In the Indian context, it is all the more necessary because:

- (i) it enables people to participate in national reconstruction;
- (ii) it frees knowledge from the pressures of limited elites;
- (iii) it builds interactive and interdependent societies;
- (iv) it provides greater opportunity for the advice and consent of a greater number of groups and thus is a better defence of democracy;
- (v) it leads to the decentralisation of information and ensures free as opposed to controlled media; and it gives greater access to education and personal development to a greater number of people.

According to UNESCO's Educational Position Paper (2003), mother-tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy and should be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. Some studies (for example, Sahgal 1983) have shown that children who study through the mother-tongue medium do not suffer any disadvantage, linguistic or scholastic, when they compete with their English-medium counterparts. Based on an empirical study of 78 children in the 15–17 age-group, Gupta (1995) argued that 'two years of mother-tongue medium in the initial stages immensely aids the child's acquiring better linguistic proficiency both in the mother tongue and [the] second language'.

The mother-tongue as a medium of instruction can eliminate the linguistic and cultural gaps caused by the difference between school language and home language, i.e. the reference point might be a minor, or minority, or major language. Acharya (1984) points out that the reason for 26 per cent of the dropouts at the level of elementary education is the 'lack of interest in education' caused partly by the lack of cultural content in educational programmes; language is not only a 'component of culture' but also a 'carrier of culture'.

A smooth transition from home language to school language in terms of discourse can be ensured if the mother tongue is the medium of instruction.

Education in the mother-tongues will facilitate richer classroom transaction, greater participation of learners, and yield better learning outcomes. All efforts must be made to provide adequate facilities for this purpose. A positive attitude towards mother-tongue education must be ensured from all quarters, so that learners do not hesitate to opt for the medium with which they are comfortable.

However, a regional language may not necessarily be the mother-tongue of all the learners in a State, or for that matter in a classroom. Though the Kothari Commission does say that ‘children belonging to the linguistic minorities . . . have the right under [the] Constitution . . . to have . . . primary education through their mother-tongues’, a clear policy regarding minority languages needs to be spelt out.

The National Curriculum Frameworks of 1988 and 2000 advocate the mother-tongue or the regional language as the medium of instruction ‘at all levels of schooling or at least up to the end of [the] elementary stage’ (NCF 2000). However, it does not show sensitivity towards the difference between the mother tongue and the regional language. This framework suggests that if the regional language is not a learner’s mother tongue, then her first two years of education may happen through the mother tongue. Class III onwards the ‘regional language may be adopted as a medium’ (NCF 2000). It is extremely important for educationists and education planners to realise that children may often come to school with full-blown home and neighbourhood languages (i.e. mother tongues) that

may be very different from the recognised, official, scheduled, or regional languages of the neighbourhood. As approved by the Education Minister’s Conference (1949), children of linguistic minorities have a constitutional right to obtain education in their mother tongue(s) if they so desire and if the minimum number of such children is ‘10 in a class of 40 in a school’ (Kothari Commission). The regional language must not come in at this stage. This will facilitate richer classroom transaction, lead to greater participation of learners, and yield better learning outcomes. All efforts must be made to provide adequate facilities for this purpose. A positive attitude towards mother-tongue education must be ensured from all quarters, so that learners do not hesitate to opt for the medium with which they are comfortable. As Jhingran (2005) points out, over 12 per cent children suffer severe learning disadvantage because they are denied access to primary education through their mother tongues. These children belong to different categories, including scheduled tribes, children speaking a language that carries the stigma of being a dialect, children of migrant parents, and children speaking languages such as Sindhi, Kashmiri, Dogri, Konkani, etc. However, the utmost care must be taken to produce textbooks, which are not poor translations of English books, in the languages of these children. This is also the only way in which we may be able to save some of our fast disappearing literacies and local systems of knowledge as well as create a space for the construction of new knowledge in these languages. For the use of the mother tongues in education, see Pattanayak (1986a).

- (b) In the middle or higher stages of school education, the medium of instruction may be gradually changed to the regional or State language, or to Hindi or English.
- (c) Since we believe that primary education is to a great extent language education, mother-tongue(s) or

regional language(s) should also be taught as compulsory subjects.

- (d) Human beings have enormous capacities to learn languages, particularly when they are young. English at the conversational level may be introduced at the primary school level if adequate facilities are available. Merely adding a few more years to the teaching of English is not likely to produce any results. We strongly recommend that the teaching of English be woven into the texture of developing strategies of teaching in a multilingual classroom. Contrary to common belief, languages flourish in each other's company.
- (e) It should be obvious that three languages are the minimum and not the upper limit of the three-language formula. Sanskrit should be studied as a Modern Indian Language (MIL) (in which case, its nature should be very different from classical Sanskrit), but nobody should use it as a shield to get around the spirit of the three-language formula.
- (f) Classical and foreign languages need to be studied in their own right. They open up new horizons of grammatical complexity; they also provide access to traditions, cultures, and people that may otherwise be inaccessible.

4. OTHER LANGUAGE ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

4.1 Introduction

We need to locate language education programmes in a multilingual perspective. Multilingualism is a natural phenomenon that relates positively to cognitive flexibility and scholastic achievement. What is critical is that curriculum makers, textbook writers, teachers, and parents start appreciating the importance of multilingualism, which sensitises the child to the cultural

and linguistic diversity around her and encourages her to use it as a resource for her development.

There is a general consensus among language education planners that bilingualism should be maintained throughout school education. It is, therefore, necessary that the special features and contexts of the languages that fall under the rubric 'other' for a child are kept in mind while devising pedagogy for teaching and learning.

This chapter seeks to draw the attention of curriculum makers, textbook writers, teachers, and parents to the social, cultural, and historical contexts of minor, minority, tribal, and endangered languages. These languages are repositories of rich cultural traditions and knowledge systems and every effort needs to be made to keep them alive. This can be done only by making provisions for them in the school curriculum framework. Special reference has been made to Urdu since it holds a unique position among Indian languages by virtue of not belonging to any well-defined geographical area, which has deprived it of the benefits that a language enjoys by being the language of a particular State. This chapter also dwells on the necessity of learning classical languages with special reference to Sanskrit. The Indian educational system has been alive to the need to acquire foreign languages, and this chapter only seeks to underline this fact.

4.2 Urdu

For linguists, there is no fundamental difference between Urdu and Hindi. Both languages have the same syntax and share a greater part of their phonology, morphology, and lexicon. It is only during the last fifty years that efforts have been made to increasingly Sanskritise Hindi and Persianise or Arabicise Urdu, with the result that the two varieties at the extreme ends of the continuum often become mutually

incomprehensible, largely because of differences in the lexicon. On the other hand, the symbolic and socio-political significance of these two varieties of Hindustani is indeed immense. The fact that Hindi is written in the Devanagari and Urdu in the Perso-Arabic Urdu script has become extremely important (though it could easily be done the other way around). It is a pity that along with the increasing unfamiliarity of the current generation with the Perso-Arabic script, a whole literary and cultural tradition that is an integral part of the Indian ethos is being lost. Every possible effort should be made to create a social environment where learners can become bi-scriptal in two 'languages' that are structurally essentially one. We could make a beginning by publishing a large number of bi-scriptal books of general interest to children and parents and also introducing some lessons in textbooks in both the scripts in Classes III–V. (We owe this suggestion to Dr Gyanam Mahajan of the University of California, Los Angeles.)

Urdu and Hindi have the same syntax and share a greater part of their phonology, morphology, and lexicon . . . yet for historical reasons, the symbolic and socio-political significance of these two varieties of Hindustani is indeed immense . . . and today we need to recognise their separate status . . .

Since all 8th Schedule Languages, including Hindi, have a minority status outside the States where they are the principal languages of the State and since practically every State and district, given the increasing social mobility in the country, is increasingly becoming multilingual, there is a clear need for evolving a National Policy on Minority Languages in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution.

Urdu (along with Sindhi) is unique in that, while it is spoken all over the country, it is not the language of the majority in any State. But while Urdu demands special attention at the national level, at the State level the problems it faces are the same as those faced by other minority languages, and these can be resolved only within the framework of a uniform National Policy . The evaluation of public policies and the monitoring of the state of Urdu, including an assessment of the facilities available for instruction in Urdu and the teaching of Urdu from the primary to the senior secondary levels, should be continuous exercises for the development of a suitable strategy for according Urdu its due place in the curriculum of secular education.

The educational backwardness of any region or community can only be remedied by maximising its access to modern education, which is, in the Indian context, almost wholly the responsibility of the State. The State governments should provide due place and adequate facilities within the educational system to every language that is claimed to be the language of the inhabitants of any region of India. In particular, Urdu should be included in the school curriculum at the primary level as the medium of instruction in all government and government-aided schools and in the schools affiliated to the recognised Boards of Education for those who declare Urdu as their mother-tongue.

4.3 Minor, Minority and Tribal Languages

The underprivileged speakers of minor, minority, and tribal languages often suffer severe linguistic deprivation. It is important for us to realise that the major languages of this country, including English, can flourish only in the company of and not at the cost of minor languages. The ideological position that the development of one language also helps in the development of other languages leads one to expect that the development of

even some of the languages could provide a marked impetus to the rest of the languages in the case of the linguistically diverse tribal areas, and spur the speech communities to consciously strive in that direction.

This document, therefore, envisions a time when all the languages will have their own orthography, grammars, and dictionaries. Even in the absence of standardised varieties, they could become accessible tools for literary endeavour that allows for free expression to develop in all varieties and results in the consolidation of knowledge bases in each language.

The fact that the development of one language also helps in the development of other languages leads one to expect that the development of even some of the languages could provide a marked impetus to the rest of the languages.

This endeavour should lead to further the status of these minor, minority, and tribal languages by allocation of new communicative role(s) and functions, especially in the domain of education at all levels and mass media and thereby lead to more supportive acquisition planning.

Many languages are becoming endangered and some have actually disappeared from the Indian linguistic scene despite our claims to multilingualism and maintenance. Every time we lose a language, a whole literary and cultural tradition is likely to be erased.

4.4 Classical Languages

The social and cultural institutions of contemporary societies are constantly illuminated by the past, and classical languages remain their vehicles. The Indian educational system has kept itself open to several classical languages, including Tamil, Latin, Arabic, and

Sanskrit. But the study of Sanskrit deserves far more attention, for according to Nehru (1949), Sanskrit language and literature was the greatest treasure that India possessed and he believed that that the genius of India will continue as long as it influences the life of the Indian people.

Sanskrit has been treated as the language of rituals or the language that performs the function of disseminating moral values, with the result that the rich aesthetic aspect and variety of Sanskrit literature has often been lost sight of. Recent Sanskrit scholarship has brought to light a rich variety of voices that were lying buried under the expressions of high culture.

The democratisation of the Indian educational system has made it possible for the vast masses of India, who had been denied access to it for ages, to study and enjoy Sanskrit. The literary, aesthetic, and grammatical traditions of Sanskrit have opened up new horizons for the modern world. For example, there is an extremely promising interface unfolding between Panini and computational linguistics.

The problem with the study of Sanskrit literature has been that it has been treated as the language of rituals or the language that performs the function of disseminating moral values, with the result that the rich aesthetic aspect and variety of Sanskrit literature has often been lost sight of. Recent Sanskrit scholarship has brought to light a rich variety of voices that were lying buried under the expressions of high culture. It has helped one to talk about many traditions in the Sanskrit language and to contextualise them. This would

have serious and far-reaching implications in terms of the pedagogy of teaching-learning Sanskrit. In the case of Sanskrit as an MIL, it has now become possible to convince textbook writers to write not only in classical Sanskrit but also in conversational living Sanskrit, something that learners can use in their own lives.

4.5 Foreign Languages

In the context of this document, the term mother tongue(s) refers to the languages that a child learns before coming to school. These would include the languages of her home, neighbourhood, and peer group. On the other hand, the languages that a child learns in school but which are still a part of her larger environment may be termed second languages.

Since a foreign language is not at all available in the immediate environment of the learner, it demands different pedagogical strategies from those of first or second-language teaching. It is possible that the focus on the teaching of grammar increases as one moves from the first to the second and finally to the foreign language.

But languages that are learnt in tutored settings in classrooms, and where the target language community is not accessible to the learner, may be called foreign languages. In addition to the mother-tongue and other languages of the country that a child learns in school, foreign languages such as German or French have a legitimate place in the school curriculum. Every new language provides a new perspective on the world and enriches the cognitive growth of the learner. As a Czech saying has it: “Every additional language you learn is another soul added to your being.”

Since a foreign language is not at all available in the immediate environment of the learner, it often demands different pedagogical strategies from those of first or second-language teaching. It is possible that the focus on the teaching of grammar increases as one moves from the first to the second and finally to the foreign language. However, even in the case of a foreign language, it appears that comprehensible texts constitute the most potent tools of language teaching. As is clear from the various charts reproduced in Appendix III, most of them agree that a foreign language should be introduced only at the secondary or senior secondary stages. Since Cognitively Advanced Language Proficiency (CALP) tends to get transferred from one language to another, it would seem appropriate that a foreign language is introduced when learners have achieved a certain level of cognitive maturity and significant proficiency levels in one or more languages.

4.6 Teaching other Languages

In the case of teaching other languages as subjects and using them as media of instruction, we need to emphasise that the greater the degree of distancing the nature of the language from the linguistic variety that the learner’s community actually uses, the greater will be the problems that learners are likely to face. This is particularly true in the case of the ‘Sanskritisation’ of different languages, including Hindi and Urdu. Very often the artificial style that is used in language textbooks makes them almost incomprehensible to an ordinary learner. One of the most effective pedagogical practices in this context is to move from the known to the unknown. Unfortunately, we tend to move from the ancient to the modern.

5. MULTILINGUALISM AND SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

5.1 Introduction

Multilingualism is constitutive of Indian identity. Even the so-called 'monolingual' in a remote village often possesses a verbal repertoire that equips her to function adequately over a large number of communicative encounters. Indeed, the multiplicity of Indian voices interact with each other in the Indian linguistic and sociolinguistic matrix, which is built on a variety of shared linguistic and sociolinguistic features. On the other hand, several recent studies have effectively demonstrated the positive relationship of bilingualism with cognitive growth and scholastic achievement.

5.2 India as a Multilingual Country

The facts about India being a multilingual country are well known. The 1971 Census, which can legitimately be considered most authentic in this respect, recorded a total of 1,652 languages belonging to five different language families in this country. Over 87 languages are used in the print media, 71 languages are used on the radio, and the administration of the country is conducted in 13 different languages. Yet one notices with a sense of regret that only 47 languages are used as the media of instruction in schools. One hopes that, as a result of this position paper, more and more mother tongues will be used as the media of instruction in schools. In spite of this enormous diversity, several linguistic and cultural elements bind India into one linguistic and sociolinguistic area. Indeed, very often genetically unrelated and geographically separated languages share a common grammar of culture articulated through language. Pandit (1969, 1972, 1988), Pattanayak (1981, 1986, 1986a, 1990), Srivastava (1979, 1988), Dua (1985), and Khubchandani (1983, 1988)

have worked intensively towards characterising Indian multilingualism. Pandit has shown how variability in linguistic behaviour facilitates rather than breaks down communication in multilingual societies.

It should be obvious from the discussion of multilingualism that our educational system should make every conceivable effort to sustain multilingualism (see Crawhall 1992; Heugh et al. 1995 among others) rather than suppress it. Pattanayak (1981) has argued how our educational system has consistently weakened the advantages of grass-roots multilingualism that characterises our society. Education planners in this country should pay immediate attention to the centrality of language in education before it is too late.

... if participatory democracy has to survive, we need to give a voice to the language of every child . . . rather than a strict implementation of the three-language formula, it is the survival and maintenance of multilingualism that should be at the heart of language planning in this country.

As Illich (1981) points out, we need to make every possible effort to empower the languages of the underprivileged and tribal and endangered languages. Affirmative action is called for in this domain. One cannot keep waiting for people to ask for their language rights. According to Illich, we first spend millions of dollars to demote tribal languages and then invest token amounts of money to celebrate them as objects of wonder. As Pattanayak (1981) points out, if participatory democracy has to survive, we need to give a voice to the language of every child.

The three-language formula that has been reinforced by a variety of educational commissions

should be seen in this context. It is with a sense of regret we note that the three-language formula has rarely been implemented in its true spirit anywhere in the country. We have, therefore, suggested throughout this position paper that, rather than a strict implementation of the three-language formula, it is the survival and maintenance of multilingualism that should be at the heart of language planning in this country.

The National Association of Bilingual Education in the US has made it clear that the gains made by bilingual education include 'improved academic achievement test scores, reduced rates of school dropout, and student absenteeism from increased community involvement in education and enhanced student self-esteem' (Hakuta 1986).

5.3 Bilingualism and Scholastic Achievement

For a very long time, it was believed that bilingualism has a negative relationship with cognitive growth and scholastic achievement (see, for example, Jespersen 1922; Saer 1923, among others). For example, Saer (1923) tried to show that 7–14 year-old Welsh English-speaking bilinguals had lower IQ levels as compared to their monolingual counterparts.

On the other hand, several recent studies (see, for example, Peal and Lambert 1962; Gardner and Lambert 1972; Cummins and Swain 1986, among others) have now convincingly shown that there is a highly positive relationship between bilingualism, cognitive flexibility, and scholastic achievement. Bilingual children not only have control over several different languages but they are also academically more creative and socially more tolerant. The wide range of linguistic repertoire that they control equips them to negotiate different social situations more efficiently. There is also substantial evidence to show that bilingual children excel in divergent thinking. There is thus every reason to

promote bilingualism in the school curricula. We need to recognise here once again that a variety of advanced-level linguistic skills are easily transferred from one language to another and that the learner does not have to put in any extra effort for this largely unconscious transfer. Cummins (1976, 1981) and Cummins and Swain (1986) have made a very fundamental distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Advanced Language Proficiency (CALP). The language ability that is associated with BICS largely involves the skills to perform effectively in situations that are rich in context and undemanding at the level of cognition. The language of the here and now and that of peer-group interaction belongs to the domain of BICS.

Bilingual children not only have control over several different languages but are also academically more creative and socially more tolerant. The wide range of linguistic repertoire that they control equips them to negotiate different social situations more efficiently. There is also substantial evidence to show that bilingual children excel in divergent thinking.

It would appear that BICS-level abilities have to be acquired almost afresh in every language, though in multilingual societies such as those of India they do get far more easily acquired through natural-acquisition processes. CALP-level abilities are needed to perform effectively in contextually poor and cognitively demanding situations. They would generally be acquired in tutored-language settings. For example, when a secondary or semi-secondary student is asked to write an essay on a topic with which he/she is not familiar, or to read a newspaper editorial to critique it, he/she may have to invoke his/her CALP-level abilities. These

abilities, as we have said, often tend to get transferred from one language to another.

5.4 Need to Promote Multilingualism

Social harmony in a country as diverse as India is only possible through mutual respect for each other's language and culture. Such respect can only be built on knowledge. Ignorance breeds fear, hatred, and intolerance and this is indeed a major barrier to the building up a national identity and responsible citizenship. With each State having one dominant language, there is bound to develop a certain amount of ethnocentric attitude and linguistic chauvinism. This not only hampers the free movement of people and ideas but also imposes restrictions on creativity, innovation, and diffusion and retards the modernisation of the society. Now that we also know of the positive relationship between multilingualism, cognitive growth, and educational achievement, there is every need to promote multilingual education in schools.

6. METHODS

6.1 Introduction

The number of methods that linguistic and learning theories have produced over a period of time irrespective of whether we are talking of first, second, or foreign language teaching is indeed very large. Indeed, most of these methods have been developed in the context of second-language acquisition. We are concerned with the teaching of not just first but also second and third languages as well as classical and foreign languages in a variety of different contexts. These methods range from the traditional Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Approach, Communicative Approach, Computer-aided Language Teaching (CALT), Community Language

Learning (CLL), Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response (TPR), and language-teaching methods emerging out of such second-language acquisition theories as Krashen's Monitor Model and Schumann's Acculturation Model (see, for example, Nagaraj 1996; Littlewood 1981; Brumfit 1980; Brumfit and Johnson 1979; Anthony 1972).

6.2 Limitations and Lessons

Each of the methods mentioned above has its merits and demerits. What we need to underline is that each one is developed in a specific historical context in theory and practice, and in response to specific needs. The Grammar Translation Method, for example, was eventually located in behaviourist psychology and structural linguistics as well as the needs of the colonial government. However, it did show us how a literary language would be learnt fairly effectively when the focus is on content and holistic text. Even if we decide to adapt the Grammar Translation Method to our contemporary needs, we will not only need to modify it in a variety of ways but will also need to turn to some lessons learnt from the Direct, Audio-lingual, and Communicative Approaches to take care of the spoken component of the language being learnt. Methods such as the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Total Physical Response (TPR) were targeted at very specific needs. Research has shown that the TPR method may prove to be highly successful in the initial stages of language learning by breaking down the inhibitions of the learner.

6.3 Towards Appropriate Methods

Here we will try to explain in some detail some of the basic principles that should inform our language-teaching methods. Needless to say, every teacher will evolve his or her own specific method depending on a variety of social, psychological,

linguistic, and classroom variables. The new dispensation must empower the teacher to use his or her space in the classroom more effectively and innovatively. Some of these basic principles include:

- (a) **Learner:** Whatever be the method used in the classroom, the learner should never be treated as an empty receptacle. She should be at the centre of the teaching-learning process. The teacher will gradually need to explore the cognitive potential and interests of the learner in order to adjust her own language-teaching methodology.
- (b) **Attitude:** It is only when the teacher is positively inclined towards all pupils, irrespective of their caste, colour, creed or gender, that they will tend to become positively motivated to be involved in the teaching-learning process. Teachers' positive attitudes will also go a long way in lowering the anxiety levels of learners, which are known to obstruct the learning process.
- (c) **Input:** Following Krashen (1981, 1982), we suggest that the input should be rich, interesting, and challenging and should be woven around topics that encourage peer-group learning. Modern technology may help schools in a significant way in this regard.

The teacher will gradually need to explore the cognitive potential and interests of the learner in order to adjust her own language-teaching methodology.

- (d) **Multilingualism as a Resource:** As we have argued elsewhere in this paper, language-teaching methods can be suitable sites for utilising the multiplicity of languages available in the classroom.

A sensitive analysis of the multilinguality obtaining in the classroom in collaboration with children will help in creating a metalinguistic awareness among the teachers and the taught. Translation may prove to be a very powerful tool in this context.

- (e) **Issues of Gender and Environment:** It is necessary that modern language-teaching methods create awareness about gender and environmental issues among children. It should be possible to address these issues implicitly and effectively through careful and sensitive language-teaching methods.
- (f) **Assessment:** Every possible effort should be made to make assessment a part of the teaching-learning process. Whenever we break the normal classroom processes for a test or examination, we manage to raise the anxiety levels of the learners, disrupting the learning process in a significant way.

7. MATERIALS

7.1 Types of Materials

'Materials' include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic, and they can be presented in print, through live performance or display, or on cassette, CD-Rom, DVD or the Internet. They can be instructional in that they inform learners about the language, they can be experimental in that they provide exposure to the language in use, and they can be elicitive in that they stimulate language use, or they can be exploratory in that they seek discoveries about language use. (Tomlinson 2001: 66).

7.2 The Textbook

No one course book can be ideal for any particular class. An effective classroom teacher needs to be able to evaluate, adapt, and produce materials so as to ensure

a match between the learners and the materials that they use. Every teacher can be a material developer, and therefore should provide additional teaching material over and above course book material.

Some advocates of course books argue that these materials help to achieve consistency and continuation and give learners a target that teachers and learners try to attain at the end of a specific period. However, there are some researchers who believe that course book materials cannot cater to the diverse needs of all their users; they impose uniformity of syllabus, and remove initiative and power from teachers (see Allwright 1981; Littlejohn 1992; Hutchinson and Torres 1994). It is a pity that language textbooks, which should always be most inviting and challenging, generally end up being boring and unimaginative. In particular, the language textbooks for pre-primary and primary education should be written with great sensitivity and care. They should be contextually rich and provide suitable challenges to the creativity of learners. These books should not consist of just stories and poems but should reflect a whole range of genre and themes, including tasks that would involve careful observation and analysis, and finally an aesthetic synthesis in oral and written articulation. Illustrations, layout, and design are an integral part of textbooks. In most cases, textbooks are written first and then handed over to illustrators. This process results in a pathetic mismatch between content and illustration, and this comes, of course, at great cost to the public exchequer. A team of textbook writers, layout professionals, and illustrators should work in tandem right from the beginning, and a smaller team from this group must be associated with the production of textbooks. What we think is most disastrous is that a master textbook is generally produced in one language and then it is translated into other languages. It is indeed a mockery of the kind of

relationship that we have been trying to unfold between language, thought, and culture.

In spite of all the major technological breakthroughs, we know that the textbook will continue to be the major source of knowledge for the ordinary child. It is, therefore, important to produce it with as much care as possible. During the process of production, there should be continuous trialling in collaboration with teachers and children; it should also be possible to develop feedback mechanisms, which will help us to improve the books all the time.

7.3 Discrete Language Teaching versus Communicative Teaching

Most textbooks aim at explicit learning of language and practice. Most textbooks follow an approach that adds communicative activities to a base form-focused instruction. It is believed that learners can gain confidence and a sense of progress by focusing on a systematic series of discrete features of the language. But those textbook writers who have been influenced by theories of researchers such as Krashen (1982, 1988) have produced materials that aim at facilitating informal acquisition of communicative competence through communicative activities such as discussions, projects, games, simulations, and drama (see LaDousse 1983; Klippel 1984).

Some researchers advocate a strong focus on language experience through a task-based or text-based approach (see Willis 1996), and some advocate experience plus language-awareness activities (Tomlinson 1994).

7.4 Nature of Materials: Authentic versus Contrived

For quite some time now, there has been a debate about the nature of materials. Most books that aim at explicit learning make use of examples of language that focus

on the linguistic features being taught at a particular point of time. The examples chosen are usually contrived so that they look short and simple. However, this is done at a great cost. Redundancy, which is an integral part of natural language, is eliminated making the texts artificial, meaningless and incomprehensible.

Those who wish to provide learners meaningful exposure to language choose authentic texts that are typically used in everyday life. These texts may not be produced specifically for language-teaching purposes.

These researchers stress the motivating effect of using authentic materials on learners; (Bacon and Finnemann, 1990; Kuo 1993). Even though many scholars have attacked the cult of ‘authentic materials’, we suggest that textbook writers should use authentic texts; they should not temper with them at all. If they feel that it is necessary to make some changes, they must first obtain the permission of the author(s). It is in the exercises and activities designed on the text that the textbook writers can indeed play an innovative and constructive role.

7.5 Themes/Topics

While some form of censorship might be desirable, most researchers believe that learners should be exposed to the themes or topics that would stimulate them and facilitate learning. The materials should make learners socially sensitive and encourage them to respond to issues relating to drugs, gender, AIDS, premarital sex, violence, politics, etc. The materials should gradually shift from local cultures to neighbouring cultures and then to world cultures.

7.6 Evaluation of Materials

No material is fit for all times and for everyone. A set of criteria needs to be identified before any material is evaluated. Recently there have been attempts to help teachers to conduct action research on the material they use (Edge and Richards 1993; Jolly and Bolitho 1998) and to develop instruments for use in conducting pre-use, whilst use, and post-use evaluation (Ellis 1984; Ellis 1996, 1998). In fact, what is important is to continuously enrich the guidelines for producing new materials. For example, it should become increasingly clear that textbooks should provide space not only for different themes but also for different varieties of language. In the context of India in particular, we feel that language textbooks should attempt to introduce teachers and learners to the richness and diversity of our linguistic and cultural heritage. In addition to including lessons on the languages of different states, it may be very useful to provide a linguistic map of India.

7.7 Who Should be the Material Writers?

The material writers may be teachers and teacher trainers who are in touch with the needs and aspirations of the learners. College and university language teachers, linguists, and innovative NGOs should collaborate with these teachers to produce a variety of learning materials. It is not uncommon that materials jointly produced by teachers and learners become learning materials for them and for junior classes. Indeed, local dictionaries, wall magazines, folk tales and songs, ethnographic narratives, documentaries, etc. are increasingly becoming effective sites of classroom transactions. Our experience shows that the most effective materials are produced in workshops in which teachers, teacher trainers, and university academics work together and try out their materials in classrooms on a regular basis.

7.8 Developing Integrated Skills

If we look around us in our daily lives, we can see that we rarely use skills in isolation but rather in conjunction with each other.

. . . textbooks should provide space not only for different themes but also for different varieties of language; . . . materials jointly produced by teachers and learners become learning materials for them and for junior classes. In fact, local dictionaries, wall magazines, folk tales and songs, ethnographic narratives, documentaries, etc. are increasingly becoming effective sites of classroom transactions.

Therefore, one of the tasks of the teacher is to make students ‘communicatively competent’ in the language being learnt. The course books should focus on situations where in our daily lives we would be performing tasks that involve a natural integration of language skills. As ‘integrated skill materials are more likely to involve the learner in authentic and realistic tasks, their motivation level will increase as they perceive a clear rationale behind what they are being asked to do’ (McDonough and Shaw 1993: 203–4).

8. TEACHERS

8.1 Introduction

The classroom constitutes an important site where children, teachers, and texts of all kinds interact in a variety of complex ways; in this interaction teachers have an extremely important role to play. We are convinced that there is no substitute for professionally trained and socially sensitive teachers. Both the Central

and the State governments should invest in carefully planned ways in a qualitative teacher-training programme, which would enable every teacher to become a meaningful researcher eventually in her own right. We should also create systems and structures through which the knowledge that the classroom teacher creates becomes a valuable part of educational knowledge in general (Roberts 1995).

8.2 The Teacher’s Role in the Classroom

The role of the language teacher, to the extent that language cuts across the curriculum and to the extent that language knowledge reinforces social relationships in a variety of complex ways, is indeed of special significance. We know that in the ultimate analysis a teacher remains the holder of a delegated authority who cannot redesign his task without landing himself or his audience into major contradictions (see Bourdieu 1993). Yet we are equally strongly aware that the processes of social change must also to some extent start in the classroom (Agnihotri 1995).

8.3 Teacher-training

Teacher-training programmes in our country are in a dismal state. The outdated one-year B.Ed. programme hardly equips the teacher to meet the complex challenges of a modern classroom. Substitutes such as *shikshakarmis* have further demoralised the teaching profession. The situation is worse when one takes into account tribal education. Tribals constitute 8 per cent of the Indian population (see the 1991 Census of India details at www.censusindia.net/scst.html). Although percentage-wise they appear less, they are probably bigger than the population of Australia (in the 1991 Census of India, the Tribal population of India was 67,758,380, and according to the Australian Census of the same year, the total population of Australia was 17,288,044). In a

state like Orissa they constitute 24 per cent of the population. In Orissa, there were 62 tribal groups. Now, only 22 languages survive, threatened and endangered. The rest of the languages have joined the mainstream. (For details in the case of Orissa, see *www.languageinindia.com 2005/smitasinhaorisa1.html*)

The role of the language teacher, to the extent that language cuts across the curriculum and to the extent that the use of language reinforces social relationships in a variety of complex ways, is indeed of special significance.

Generally, the teachers in the tribal schools know neither the languages of their students nor of their parents. In the tribal schools in Orissa, students are warned not to use their home language in the school between 10.00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Similar situations exist in schools in the North-East and Delhi!

Several studies have shown that students in tribal schools cannot read a full sentence in their textbook in Class V. They recognise letters and construct words with difficulty. It is not considered important that teachers should know the languages of learners, or that special methodologies may have to be evolved to bridge the gaps between the languages of home, neighbourhood, and school. More often than not, classroom transaction is a one-way communication from the teacher to the student, with no guarantee of comprehension on the part of the learners. In order to promote multilingualism and encourage the kind of cognitive growth that we have been trying to articulate in this paper, it should be obligatory for a teacher to learn the language(s) of her pupils.

One hopes that the teacher-training programmes will focus on some basic elements of designing a

research study focusing simultaneously on sampling, tools, data elicitation, procedures, analysis, and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data. Special analysis in the case of classrooms should be given to case studies of children. This part of the training will, of course, cut across all disciplines.

8.4 Need for Intensive and Innovative Training

Our classrooms are still dominated by the teacher and textbook-centred language-teaching methods in which the teacher is regarded as the ultimate repository of knowledge and where learning largely takes place through pattern practice, drilling, and memorisation. We hope that new teacher-training programmes will sensitise the teachers to the nature, structure, and functions of language, language acquisition, and language change, and equip her with strategies that can help her to build on the resources of a multilingual classroom. Work done by a variety of agencies and individuals, including STAMP (Scientific Theory and Method Project in the US), particularly in Honda and O'Neil (1993), Sproat (1984), National Language Project (1992), Agnihotri (1992, 1995), show how teachers can participate as researchers as well as facilitators of linguistic and cognitive growth of children in multilingual classrooms.

8.5 The Teacher as Researcher

It is important to appreciate the value of teacher research as feedback for textbooks and curriculum design. The real voices of children and their parents are most likely to be heard through the agency of teachers. If we can train our teachers to be sensitive observers at all linguistic levels such as those of sounds, words, sentences, and discourse, there is no doubt that we should be able to produce more effective and challenging syllabi, textbooks, and teaching aids.

There is no doubt that teachers in general and in countries such as India in particular work under highly disadvantaged conditions. In addition to their normal duties, they are asked to participate actively, often without any additional payment and sometimes at the cost of teaching in schools, in elections, literacy drives, family planning, census activities, etc.

New teacher-training programmes will sensitise the teachers to the nature, structure, and functions of language, language acquisition, and language change, and equip her with strategies that can help her to build on the resources of a multilingual classroom. The real voices of children and their parents are most likely to be heard through the agency of teachers. If we can train our teachers to be sensitive observers at all linguistic levels such as those of sounds, words, sentences, and discourse, there is no doubt that we should be able to produce more effective and challenging textbooks and teaching aids.

The school conditions are also in many cases not particularly conducive to teaching meaningfully even at a minimal level. Yet the teacher is the only link that we have who can sensitise the children in her classroom to the rise and fall of tones and changes in pitch contours, the only one who can sensitise them to the rhythm of poetry and the precision of prose. If she is properly trained, she should be able to appreciate that children come to school with an enormous linguistic and cognitive potential. In the case of language, it is particularly true that every normal child is a flawless speaker of her own language. A sensitive teacher would know how best to build bridges between the languages that children bring to the school and the languages that

are used in the school. She should be able to appreciate that standard languages do not appear as God's word or do not emerge out of a vacuum but are the creation of social forces, and that given a certain history and a certain social structure any language could potentially be a standard language. She should be able to see errors as stages, almost invariably as necessary stages, in the processes of learning of language.

9. ASSESSMENT

9.1 Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Current final examination-oriented assessment procedures induce very high levels of anxiety. For the past few years, the number of suicide attempts near the terminal Class X or XII examinations has been multiplying. Several studies (see Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986; Steinberg and Horwitz 1986; Abdul Hamid 2005) have also shown that high levels of anxiety are negatively associated with performance in examinations. Every possible effort should be made to make assessment procedures increasingly challenging and enjoyable rather than boring and threatening. The amount of research done in the evaluation of various linguistic skills (for example, reading, writing, speaking, listening), including communicative skills and coherence, is enormous (see, for example, Alderson 1979; Bachman 1989; Davies 1990; Oller 1983; Valette 1967; Harris 1969; Spolsky 1978; Harrison 1980; Kintsch 1974, 1988) and we should benefit from them.

As many of these studies suggest, evaluation is a continuous process, and it aims at assessing the learner's acquisition of the structure and form of the target language, her ability to use it in different authentic communicative situations, and her potential to appreciate the aesthetic aspects of language. It helps us to know

about the progress that the learner may have made, and to use this knowledge as feedback for timely intervention for the benefit of the learner and the teacher.

The evaluation of the learner should be based on the assessment of both linguistic knowledge and communicative skills. The learner should be assessed both in relation to herself and her classmates using a battery of tests and test types, for example, open or closed type questions, multiple-choice questions, or free-development tasks. Innovative ways of evaluating the learner's progress can be based on group work and projects.

9.2 Types of Tests

Tests refer to any procedure for measuring knowledge, ability, and performance. In language teaching, a test must be seen as an extension of class work, providing the learner and the teacher with useful information that can serve as the basis for improvement in the teacher's teaching methods and materials.

(a) Aptitude Tests: An aptitude test measures a learner's aptitude for foreign/second language learning. It helps in identifying those students who are likely to be successful in it.

(b) Criterion-referenced Tests: A criterion-referenced test is designed to measure well-defined and fairly specific objectives. In other words, it is course/programme specific. Diagnostic and achievement tests belong to this category. A diagnostic test reports on the learner's progress in learning particular elements of the course. It is normally used at the end of a unit in the course. An achievement test is intended to show the standard that the learner has reached in comparison with other learners at a particular stage of learning. The purpose of the achievement test is to gauge how successful learners have been in attaining the objectives laid down at the beginning of the course.

(c) Norm-referenced Tests: A norm-referenced test is a test of global language abilities. Most of the placement and proficiency tests are norm-referenced tests. The aim of a proficiency test is to assess the learners' ability to apply in actual situations what they have learned and to find out whether the learner has reached a certain standard in relation to specific abilities.

These tests can be objective or subjective. Objective tests can be scored mechanically. They consist of multiple-choice questions and questions based on transformations, completion, true/false, matching, etc. Subjective tests require personal judgement on the part of the examiner; they are difficult to mark and are time consuming to administer and assess. They are not considered appropriate for examinations that involve very large numbers of examinees.

9.3 Developing a Test

The development of any test, including a classroom test, goes through three stages: (1) the design; (2) the operation; and (3) the administration of the test.

The design stage includes the description, identification, and selection of the items to be used. The operation stage involves developing specifications for the types of tasks to be included in the test and a blueprint that describes how the test will be organised to form an actual test. It involves the actual test tasks, writing instructions, and specifying the procedures for scoring the test. The administration stage involves giving the test, collecting information, and analysing the scores.

Evaluation is a continuous process . . . its primary objective is to get feedback to improve methods, materials, teacher training, and classroom transaction . . .

Test development helps the teacher monitor the usefulness of the test. The process of test development is interactive. It helps us to reconsider and revise decisions regarding the test at a later stage. It also helps to develop and define scoring scales/methods.

9.4 Test Tasks

There is a variety of test tasks ranging from *non-productive test tasks* (matching, multiple choice, sequencing, etc.), *productive test tasks* (cloze testing, dictation, translation, note taking, composition, etc.), to *portfolio assessment* (a file of students' creativity over a period of time). A language portfolio is an organised collection of documents, which individual learners can assemble over a period of time and display in a systematic way. It is considered as an alternative to standardised testing. It allows the learners to assume responsibility for their learning.

Recent trends in language evaluation suggest that it might be useful to have a balanced battery of discrete point and integrative tests. Integrative tests such as the cloze procedure, based on gestalt psychology, are extremely versatile and can be used creatively at all levels in a variety of formats (Cohen 1980). Similarly, translation is beginning to be used in a variety of productive ways, particularly in multilingual classrooms.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following from the foregoing discussions, we make the following recommendations:

- (1) Primary education is essentially language education. Even elementary arithmetic and early knowledge about society and environment are best acquired through the mother-tongue(s) of learners. The medium of instruction at the level of primary school must be the mother-tongue(s) of learners, building upon the rich experiential, linguistic, and cognitive resources that they bring to schools. The medium of instruction for the rest of the school education should be the mother-tongue(s)/regional language(s) of learners. But in the case of Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas, where Hindi and English are used from Class I, the practice may be continued. The creation of at least one Hindi-English bilingual college in each state may be pursued to accommodate students from Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas.
- (2) Where qualified teachers and adequate infrastructural facilities are available, English may be introduced from the primary level, but for the first couple of years it should focus largely on oral-aural skills, simple lexical items, or some day-to-day conversation. Use of the languages of children should not be forbidden in the English class, and the teaching should as far as possible be located in a text that would make sense to the child. If trained teachers are not available, English should be introduced at the post-primary stage and its quantum increased in such a way that learners should soon reach the levels of their classmates who started learning English early.
- (3) Every possible effort should be made to build bridges between the languages of home, peer group, and neighbourhood, on the one hand, and the languages of the school, on the other. Even in English-medium schools, mother-tongues should be developed to function as media and to allow learners to switch from one medium to the other without a change of school.
- (4) Mother-tongue(s)/regional-language(s) should continue to be taught until all levels because high levels of proficiency in the mother-tongue(s) or the language(s) of the neighbourhood ensure

better cognitive growth, foster healthier interpersonal communication skills, and promote conceptual clarity.

- (5) Every possible effort should be made to sustain a high degree of bilingualism throughout school education since there is a highly positive relationship between bilingualism and scholastic achievement. Unless we ensure high levels of proficiency in language(s), levels of achievements in mathematics, social sciences, and sciences may not improve.
- (6) All possible efforts should be made by curriculum designers, textbook writers, and teacher trainers *to build networks across different subjects and languages* in order to enhance levels of language proficiency. Since advanced levels of language-proficiency skills tend to get automatically transferred from one language to another, it is eminently desirable to focus attention *on languages across the curriculum*. The expected levels of language proficiency in different subjects should be in consonance with the levels of languages as subjects.
- (7) Sanskrit may continue to be taught as a Modern Indian Language (MIL) from Class VI, but as a classical language Sanskrit, classical Tamil (which is distinct from the contemporary spoken standard), or Latin should be taught in an interesting and challenging way for at least two years at the secondary or senior secondary level.
- (8) As far as possible, efforts should be made to teach a foreign language for two years at the senior secondary level.
- (9) Input in terms of methods, materials, classroom strategies, and assessment procedures should be such as to ensure that pupils leave school with very high levels of proficiency in Hindi/Regional Language(s) and English.
- (10) Teachers of Hindi and English may be required to have some knowledge of the regional language to encourage participation of learners; in less bilingual tribal areas, it should be essential to engage teachers who know the tribal language as well.
- (11) It is extremely important to produce interesting and challenging textbooks and other books covering a wide range of genres, themes, and registers and to provide for professionally trained teachers to ensure high levels of proficiency in different languages.
- (12) It is essential to have a holistic perspective on language pedagogy. Texts involving the use of language in a variety of contexts should constitute the basis of teaching.
- (13) In order to ensure the quality of teacher-training programmes, it is imperative to build institutions that would ensure a rich crop of master trainers in the pedagogy of language. It is equally imperative to network with different NGOs that may have made significant innovations in language pedagogy.
- (14) Immediate efforts should be undertaken to decentralise language in education policy at both the intra and interstate levels. This process could begin by introducing different kinds of flexibility in the implementation of the three-language formula while maintaining its essential spirit.
- (15) Multilingual classrooms, which are the most common scenario in India, should be seen as a resource rather than as an obstacle in education. Teachers should regard the classroom not only as a space for teaching but also as a site for learning. Multilingual and multicultural classrooms should be creatively used to foster awareness about linguistic and cultural diversity.

- (16) Every possible effort should be made to preserve, sustain, and develop minor, minority, tribal, and endangered languages whose survival is increasingly threatened by the processes of rapid social change and globalisation
- (17) Though efforts to eliminate religious, cultural, and social biases should be the burden of the entire educational curriculum, language classrooms may prove to be the most subtle and most successful domains of desirable social changes in this regard, and producers of learning materials may be encouraged to create responsible discourses in this regard.
- (18) A substantial part of our knowledge carries a distinct gender bias, which is transmitted and consistently reconstructed through language. If we wish that our dream of a democratic society should become a reality, we must make every possible effort to eliminate gendered construction of knowledge.
- (19) Assessment procedures should neither be terminal in character nor focused merely on the knowledge of grammar and local reading comprehension. They should be continuous and reflect the recommendations made above, including addressing different aspects of linguistic diversity seen in different registers and genres and incorporating communicative tasks that cut across the curriculum.
- (20) While many of the *differently abled* learners (who may be physically or mentally challenged) may pick up the basic language skills through normal social interaction, and may have little difficulty in handling computers, they may be provided special access to modern technology and specifically designed materials to assist their growth in attaining enhanced proficiency.
- (21) We suggest that NCERT, in close collaboration with other like-minded bodies like CIIL, Mysore, provide for the online interactive teaching of Indian languages. In addition, relevant and interesting television programmes may be created that will aid both language learning and metalinguistic awareness.
- (22) Since the role of languages across the curriculum is being increasingly recognised, it would be important for all teachers to undergo a special orientation course, which is focused on the nature, structure, and function of language, and evolve strategies that will help share the responsibility for the development of learners and the development of languages.
- (23) In order to encourage the reading habit, every school must have a well-equipped library where every possible effort is made to involve children in the processes of reading and writing independent of their normal course work.
- (24) In the context of teaching English, it is important that it is not situated in an entirely western framework, but rather is taught through a contextually rich local perspective.
- (25) Every possible effort should be made to encourage small research projects in the areas of language-learning and language-teaching methods.
- (26) It is important to build bridges in the type of language that is used across language textbooks and the textbooks of science and social science. Scientific and social concepts often remain incomprehensible to students because of language problems.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

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