

Discrepancies of the Stakeholders in Implementation of ELT from the First Standard in Karnataka

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Abstract:

In the year 2007, the Government of Karnataka implemented the English as a second language from the first standard in Non-English Medium schools. Here, I try to analyze the opinions of the stakeholders such as teachers, parents, learners, inspecting authorities and administrators in this article. The opinions of the stakeholders that I sketch here are based on the data that I have collected through the questionnaires and ethnographic interviews. My intention here is to test whether the opinions of the stakeholders meet the objectives set by the Government and policy makers or not. The Government has already declared that it had passed the order after the serious discussions relating to the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard on the public demand, and it has quoted the findings of surveys in the field of English language teaching. But some of the intellectuals blamed the Government's action and complained that it was an act to secure vote bank and it did it to please capitalists. So, here I want to know the mindset of public/stakeholders towards English language and correlate it with the official objectives.

Key Words: ELT, discrepancies, stakeholders, policy, objectives, public

Let me state here the opinions of the parents as provided in the questionnaire and as observed and documented in my field work to find out if there are any discrepancies.

The data regarding the need to teach English seems to show some uniformity over the five regions. As the table below shows, 100% of the parents in Karnataka opined that it is necessary to compulsorily teach English in primary schools. The question, 'in which standard is English being taught?' is posed to parents to know their concern towards their children's education. Most of the parents wished that there is a need to teach English for the beginners but some of them did not know from which class English language is introduced. 53% of the parents knew correctly, whereas 17% of them do not know it. 3% of them opined that English was being started from the third standard, 27% of the parents still thought that it was in fifth class. Even though, they wished their children to learn English. Most of the parents seemed to prefer starting English earlier at class I that is 83%, while 10% do not prefer it and 7% of them do not come to any decision. 10% of the parents do not wish the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard of English language from the first standard. Among them, 67% preferred teaching of English from third standard and 33% from fifth standard. The preferences of parents

from the five regions seem to differ slightly regarding the objectives. 40% of them were of the opinion that English should be taught to become a successful person and it is necessary to get a job in the present scenario. So, they preferred an early introduction of English. These parents seem to think that English is important for life rather than for academic matters.

All the parents wish that English be made compulsory. It is an essential language for a successful life. But most of them do not know when English language is being taught. More than 70% of the parents never use English for communication. But they want their children to learn English language. I got an opportunity to interview the parents of Lambani learners. Among them, one of the parents told like this:

We do not know what subjects our children are learning. The teacher who teaches them knows it. Our children will become intelligent by learning English. At the same time, they repented that their children are not using their home language for communication and speak in Kannada (*Avaru Namma matu bittara, Kannada adtara*) (DVD 2 -2008/09- 28:30 to 31:33).

So, most of the parents wish their children to learn English. But, data shows that they had no concern about the progress of their children. This is also a complaint from the teachers. Thus the opinions of the parents as stated in the form of answers to the questionnaire and in the personal interaction recorded as part of the ethnography were conflicting and confusing. The Government told that the plan had been implemented in response to a public demand. But, here 47% of the parents did not know the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard and 10% of them do not wish the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard from the first standard. So, the Government restated its objectives of teaching English language from the first standard in the revised version of the resource books in Kannada language for the sake of parents.

Now, I want to compare the opinions of the learners as provided in the questionnaire and as observed and documented in my field work to find out if there are any differences and also to complement the two sets of data.

Relating to the question language and easiness in the questionnaire, 35% of the learners felt that Kannada is the easiest language, 18% of them felt English language is easy, 47% of them felt other languages are the easiest languages. Most of the learners who are studying in their home language medium schools felt their language is easy. Relating to the difficulty level in learning languages, 21% of the learners felt that Kannada is the difficult language, 44% of them felt that English is the difficult language, 35% of the learners felt that Hindi is a difficult language for learning. So, compared to the previous data, 18% of the learners felt that English is easy language whereas 44% of the same learners felt it difficult to learn. 52% of the learners who are between the age of 6 and 8 years feel that English is a difficult language for them. Relating to the gender factor, 43% of the male learners and 57% of the female learners feel that English language is difficult for them. The learners from I, IV, V, VI and VII standard express that they find it difficult to learn English language. The percentage is 43, 57, 89, 83 and 43 respectively. 94% of the learners who are between the age of 6 and 8 years say that they need to learn English

language more. All the learners opine that they need to learn English language than others. Already, the learners had a year experience of learning English language. This question is asked to know their experience whether it is easy or difficult. 35% of them felt that it was easy to learn English, 40% of them felt it neither easy nor difficult and 25% of them felt it difficult to learn. Relating to the gender factor, male learners feel English easier than female learners. Their ratio is 40% and 30% respectively. A question was given relating to the attitude of the learners towards English class who learnt it from the first standard. 77% of them felt that it was interesting to be there in the English classes. 81% of the learners who are between the age of 6 and 8 years have an interest attitude towards English classes. Both male and female learners have the same attitude (interest) towards English language learning. The percentage is 77 each. 100% of the Marathi medium learners, 84% of Kannada, 69% of Urdu and 75% Tamil learners opine that they have interest attitude towards English class. This attitude is little less in Urdu, Tamil and Telugu medium learners because they have to learn 3 languages simultaneously. Kannada is introduced as a third language for them. So, they felt little difficulty in learning these languages at the same time.

Most of the learners opined at the time of field study that English is an interesting subject. English language learning is easy in terms of writing only. But it is difficult to speak, to read and to understand (DVD 2 -2008/09-104:01 to 126:07). But, the policy makers of the plan directed the teachers to begin the teaching of English language by teaching learners how to speak. It makes more difficult for the learners and it is against the will of the learners. In this case, the Government did not consider the mindset of the learners, because the learners wish to learn English through the writing practice. From the above data, we came to know that 18% of the learners felt that English is easy language to learn whereas 44% of the same learners felt it difficult to learn. 52% of the learners who are between the age of 6 and 8 years feel that English is a difficult language to learn. But, the learners want to learn English language. Their attitude towards English classes is very positive that is 77%. 81% of the learners have an interest in this language. The teachers expressed the same view that the learners have an interest to learn English language.

After assessing the data of the teachers, parents and learners, let me examine the opinions of the administrators on implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard. The administrators in the schools that I visited welcome the Government's decision. They agreed that some of their teachers are unable to teach English language. But, after some years, they hope that they will become 'smart'. One of the administrators says: "Teaching English from the first standard is beneficial for higher education. Teaching multi-languages will confuse the learners at the initial stages, but later stages they grasp it. But concentration on particular subject enriches the knowledge. So, we use some reference books along with our Government textbooks" (DVD 4 - 2008/09- 123:24 to 158:13). Another view was like this:

The decision of the government to teach English language from the first standard is a welcome and necessary step. Every child can grasp as many languages as s/he can. If we implement it properly, communication skills will be developed before coming to the fifth standard. It is good at the time of higher education. Now a days, English is inevitable. There is never over lapping of languages. Learning language itself is an interesting factor for children. For elders, leaning language is difficult. Compared to the progress of the Marathi and Kannada medium students, both are equally good. I observe the classes of our teachers and guide them and persuade them to read more. So, most of the teachers in my institution are post-graduates (DVD 5 -2008/09 -5.2- 27:26 to 32:18).

I met the Secretary of one of the schools and interview him. According to him:

The Government's initiation of teaching English is good. It is a boon for poor and rural people. That's why we wrote in the sign board that we teach English from the first standard. This is a competition era and English should be taught. For the fifth standard, it was difficult to teach but recent plan helped us to teach English and make the students fit for the world. Teaching three languages is not difficult because before coming to the first standard, the child would have had three years of schooling that is from pre-nursery to U.K.G (DVD 6 -2008/09 -06- 78:32 to 86:44).

The administrators from the tribal area, multilingual area and special schools expressed their helplessness with regard to the Government's English language policy. They told that they were following it mechanically as learners from Lambani and tribal communities, minority groups find it difficult to learn English language. The Secretary of one of the institutions spoke to me like this: "This is a border area. After two to three kilometers, we get Andra Pradesh. So, the home language of learners is Telugu. So, our goal is to teach them Kannada efficiently. Then we have to think about another language" (DVD 2 -2008/09- 79:11 to 83:27).

I met the Secretary of one of the institutions who shared his feelings with emotion like this:

I have two children. Elder one is in Kannada medium and younger one is in English medium. I take two news papers, one is in Kannada and another is in English. Elder son never touches English paper and younger also never touches Kannada. I oppose the struggle for medium of education, because the only sufferers in this land are rural people. Vatal Nagaraj speaks a lot about Kannada language, but he sent his children to English medium. Speaking in Vidhana Soudha is different and it is not appropriate and will not hold good everywhere. The Rich send their children to English medium schools and grab the opportunities. What about the poor? Let him also learn English as a subject. Otherwise, the son of a coolie becomes a coolie. You eat rice. Let them (the poor) also eat it. Do not give them soil for eating. If you teach the students in English medium, our culture will be lost. But, teaching English as a language is different. There is no loss to our culture, society and morals. We started teaching English as a language 20 years back that is 1984-1985 from the first standard. We referred the books of Delhi publication, 'First Step in English, Second, Third Step in English, First Reading Book, Second Reading Book, etc. We start English from LKG. So, we began the first standard with writing skill. We follow some of the

steps in teaching language. They are listening, speaking, reading, writing, comprehension, functional grammar, self-learning, and enrichment of vocabulary (DVD 1-2008/09-Gulbarga-1.7- 0:00:01to 0:12:59).

One of the Head Masters of Government High School shared his opinion like this:

Implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard of English language teaching is a welcome decision by the Government. Now a days, it is a craze that all children should have knowledge of English. It is the criterion for choosing the schools for parents. Government schools are lagging behind in students' strength. Theoretically speaking, mother tongue should be taught at the younger stage. The Supreme Court has given the order that up to the fifth standard mother tongue should be the medium of instruction. Language learning is always helpful. One can learn as many languages as one can. At a younger age, it is easier because they do not have any shyness in learning other languages. But, creating an atmosphere of a particular language is an important task. Intelligent Quotient (IQ) of the learners is important to learn more languages. But more than that, atmosphere of the target language is important. Teaching English for beginners is a challenging task for teachers. They should overcome the psychological barrier that English is a difficult language. If they can cross this barrier, they can teach English properly. But, nothing should be made compulsory. We should not teach anything by compulsion. So, implementation of English language teaching should be made optional. The teachers' background is very poor to teach English. They have a mental barrier that is, 'We cannot teach English'. They have to learn the language at least for the sake of effective teaching. Learning a new language is not a big deal. They must be trained properly. Proper care should be taken. The knowledge of English is very essential to have access to wider knowledge. It should be continued in the schools. We have to have English. Kids are learning English not as their own choice but of their parents. Effectiveness of trainings is not up to the mark. Because of the limited knowledge of Block Resource Persons and Resource Persons, the effectiveness of the training has decreased. The professors who can teach Teachers' Education has to be brought as RPs and brought to the classrooms. The difficulty level of any language is same. But, only the difference is how we deal with it, what approaches we adopt. Language learning is a multi-dimensional skill. It depends on teacher, nature, parent and school. They learn as many languages as you teach. Atmosphere and love towards a language are important things to learn a new language. The policies of government are good. Sometimes, if there are students, there will be no teachers. If there are teachers, there will be no students. If both of them are there, there will be no classrooms. If you provide good facilities, quality automatically improves. Using other textbooks is not a serious matter. But, teaching is important. Teachers can use them in case of the scarcity of textbooks and difficulties" (DVD 8- 2009/10 -8.1- 50:28 to 66:31 and 8.2- 00:01 to 11:39).

Thus, the administrators talked about the conditions of the learners, parents, teachers, in-service trainings, the education system and their inabilities in implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard. Most of them welcomed the Government's decision and were concerned about it.

References:

Based on Questionnaire and DVD materials i.e., ethnographic study

DVD 1-2008/09- 00:00 to 03:24 hours

DVD 2-2008/09- 00:00 to 02:47 hours

DVD 3-2008/09- 00:00 to 02:47 hours

DVD 4-2008/09- 00:00 to 02:59 hours

DVD 5-2008/09- 00:00 to 02:52 hours

DVD 6-2008/09 -00:00 to 02:15 hours

DVD 1-2009/10-00:00:00 to 00:56:55 minutes

DVD 2-2009/10-00:00 to 01:13 hours

DVD 3-2009/10-00:00 to 01:40 hours

DVD 4-2009/10-00:00 to 01:33 hours

DVD 5-2009/10-00:00 to 01:33 hours

DVD 6-2009/10-00:00 to 01:31 hours

DVD 7-2009/10-00:00 to 01:33 hours

DVD 8-2009/10-00:00 to 01:18 hours

DVD 9-2009/10-00:00 to 01:34 hours

DVD 10-2009/10-00:00 to 01:23 hours

DVD 11-2009/10-00:00:00 to 00:41:58 minutes

