

Discrepancies and Perceptions of Commons 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 stake holders 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

Relating to the opinions of the inspecting authorities on implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard, they too have the positive attitude towards. But, some of them are not satisfied about teachers' performance and are concerned about this plan. One of the inspecting personnel says:

Now, first of all teachers are not ready to speak in English. When he speaks in English while teaching English, then only learners can learn it. Otherwise, the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard will be a failure. There is also a lack of English atmosphere out-side the class. But English language is very essential for higher education. If a student speaks fluently in English, he doesn't hesitate to learn in future (DVD 1-2008/09-Bagalkot-01-0:00:01 to 0:21:02).

Some inspecting personnel opposed the Government's stand. One of them told, "It is very difficult to handle three languages because of the less IQ of the beginners. Urdu students are always slow learners of Kannada than of English" (DVD 1-2008/09-Gulbarga/Bagalkot-1-1.1-0:00:01to 0:42:03). But, most of them welcomed the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard and said that implementing English language teaching was not a burden. They directed the teachers to introduce the things around them in English at the initial stages. I met the Cluster Resource Person who shared his feelings like this:

No language is difficult. With regard to English, the child comes to school having 20% of English words in his mind. So, by using those words we can teach better English. For the commons, it is difficult to send their children to English medium. So, this Government's plan is a boon for poor and rural people. Still, higher education is in English and for communicating with the people of other states or other countries, English is a must. Textbooks are prepared by the expert committees after various discussions. They are good. Moreover, textbooks are not the end. For effective teaching, we have to use TLM and other references (DVD 5 -2008/09 -5.2- 32:32 to 61:07 and 5.3- 00:01 to 14:34).

Thus, every stakeholder has a desire towards acquiring English language. But, the opinions of the stakeholders as stated in the form of answers to the questionnaire and in the personal interaction recorded as part of the ethnography seemed me sometimes conflicting especially with regard to the opinions of the teachers and learners. In this regard, more investigation is necessary.

After knowing the opinions of the stakeholders on implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard in Karnataka, let me briefly sketch the common people's views towards learning or teaching English language across the state in this section. Most of them are coolies, college students, farmers, housewives, labourers, salesmen, elected representatives, receptionists, vendors and others. People across age groups and gender gave various reasons for learning English.

One of the college students opines, "Just I have joined a Diploma course. I felt difficulty in understanding the terminologies; I started getting inferiority complex because I studied in Kannada medium up to S.S.L.C. So, I feel by learning English from childhood, we can come up in our career and come out of this inferiority complex." Most of them were of the opinion that English is necessary for getting jobs or carrying out business. Some of them also felt the need of English for communication purpose when they go out of states or countries. One of them said, "If we learn English from 1st standard, we will get a good foundation. We can converse well." Some other college students expressed that they need it for further higher studies and to do research in the disciplines of science. The college students from the rural areas pointed out that English language is essential for facing interviews, to learn computers and to fill the applications on-line. Thus, they need this language for academic purpose as well as for their future life.

Some youth welcomed the Government's decision and showed their concern towards their village and people. They opined like this; "If English language teaching is not provided in the villages, the village people move out to cities for a better education in English. For poor people, it is difficult to send their children to private schools to learn English. So, it is a boon for village people, especially poor people, it will be highly useful". By this opinion, we come to know that the villagers migrate looking for better education especially learning English for their children.

People like farmers, vendors and businessmen expressed their views on English language like this: "If we do not know English, many people cheat us. So we should learn English. We did not study in English Medium. At least let our children study English at least as a language." One of the businessmen said that he used to print his advertisement in English because most of the people could read it. They told that English language is necessary for reading sign boards, to make any enquiries and if they went to any office to do business with non-Kannada speakers. So, they wanted to get a sound knowledge of English. Some of them said that the people at the bank,

at the reservation counters and at the commercial areas abuse them in English and expect them to follow the procedures in English. That is why they decided to send their children to English medium schools. One of the coolies expressed his views like this: “Our children need not do coolie like us. If our children know English, they can survive in any part of the world”. Thus, they assume that if their children learn English, they will be settled in life.

Some of the retired government servants shared their views on English language learning like this: “If English is taught to rural children from first standard, they can compete with the English medium students. It is good to start with the provision of good English teachers. It is not a burden, learning English along with other languages. It is good for learners’ future”. They said that with the help of English, learners know the new techniques, methods and the ideas of the world. Thus, they were in favour of Government’s decision and they had the notion that learning multiple languages helps the persons to develop their personalities.

One of the literate parents especially housewife expressed her views like this:

Learning English from the fifth standard will make the language difficult for the children. Starting English along with other subjects from the first standard is very good. Children will not face any difficulties, but it will be hard to pick up from the fifth standard. All the offices have English influence. The educationists send their children to English medium schools while they speak about Kannada. If it is started from fourth or fifth standard, they will not be able to understand.

One of the elected representatives speaks on the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard of the policy of English language like this:

We should learn both Kannada and English languages. It provides good knowledge for higher education, business and improves communication with all people. ABCD and Kannada script should be learnt at the same time. We can progress and function in society. In today’s world, English is imperative. Learning English does not mean condemning mother tongue. Priority should be given to both the languages. But it is better if English is taught from the first standard otherwise children will feel English as a big burden.

Thus, the representatives voted for the Government's act and at the same time they tried to manage the opponents who were opposing the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard. According to them English is a global language, they should have a good knowledge of it. Also since Kannada is a regional language, they should give priority to Kannada. There should be a balancing of Kannada as well as English.

Some persons spoke against the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard and they said, "Slow and weak learners will not be able to pick it up. Therefore, introducing English from the fifth standard is good".

Thus, most of the common people favoured an early introduction of English language. The reasons may be different but their main intention is to learn or teach English as early as possible.

Conclusion

To conclude, 88% of the teachers opine that it is necessary to teach English for the beginners whereas 100% of the parents felt the same and opined that it should be made compulsory. At the same time, the teachers and the parents expressed that English language is necessary to succeed in life. They gave importance to English language teaching for the sake of life and communication rather than academic matters. 76% of the teachers supported the Government's action. And 64% of them thought that the learners were interested in learning English language. The learners also felt the same. Thus, every stakeholder desired that they were in need of learning English language. Most of the parents felt happy. The administrators were also in favour of the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard. But, the success of the plan depends not on the opinions/perceptions but on the transactions in our class rooms.

Thus, both surveys that is videotaped and questionnaire clearly bring out the fact that studying English language is a must and indicate that it is required in the present age of globalization.

References:

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

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

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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