

Discrepancies of the Teachers 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, teachers, policy, objectives

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After collecting data from the stakeholders, I would like to compare the opinions as provided in the questionnaire and as observed and documented in my field work to find out if there are any discrepancies, and also to enquire about the compatibility of the two sets of data.

The data regarding the need to teach English seems to show some uniformity over the five regions. As the table shows, 88% of the teachers in Karnataka opined that it is necessary to compulsorily teach English in primary schools. 12% of the teachers opined that it should be taught as an optional subject. The preferences of the teachers from the five regions seem to differ slightly regarding the objectives. 31% of the teachers felt that learning English language is necessary for communication, 3% of them felt that English is useful for high school studies, 11% of them believed that English is necessary for passing the public examinations, 14% of them thought that it is a link language and 41% of them believed that English is very essential for leading successful life. Thus, all these teachers seem to think that English is important for life rather than for academic matters. Most of the teachers seem to prefer starting English earlier at class I that is 76%, while 2% preferred class II, 9% class III, 1% class IV, 11% class V, 00% class VI, 1% class VII, 1% class VIII for introducing English. On the whole, teachers in all the five regions felt that learners are well motivated to learn English and a good percentage of teachers also feel that learners can be motivated positively. The data shows that learners and teachers are happy to participate in the process of learning and teaching English, they come to the scene with a positive frame of mind in the process of learning and teaching English.

The opinions of the teachers as stated in the form of personal interaction recorded are given below. According to their opinions in the questionnaire, “English language is very necessary and it should be made compulsory. It is very essential language to succeed in life. The learners are well motivated and both of us are happy to participate in the process of learning and teaching English”. But at the time of face to face interaction, they revealed different opinions. Some of the differences that emerged are: In Urdu medium schools, the teachers are teaching Urdu as the first language, English as the second and Kannada as the third. So, they felt it difficult to teach three languages simultaneously. One of the teachers urged that teachers should be recruited subject-wise. And teaching three languages was difficult for them and it created confusion in the learners. It was a burden for the beginners (DVD 1-2008/09-Gulbarga/Bagalkot-1-1.1- 0:00:01to

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0:16:30). Some of the teachers agreed that teaching English language was difficult for them because they did not learn English properly in their schooling. But, they appreciated the initiative of the Government which started English from the first standard (DVD 3- 2009/10 - 3.7- 00:01 to 01:01). At the same time they knew that the success of the plan depended on them. One of the teachers said, “If we teach English in an easy manner it will become easy for the learners. It depends on the method of our teaching” (DVD 5 -2008/09 -5.1- 21:50 to 41:06). Some other teachers opined that they could teach English well because the learners had the interest in English language. They enjoyed the teaching process (DVD 1 -2009/10 -01- 13:45 to 49:47).

We can see the opinions of teachers towards learners in two ways. One of them expresses that “Learners are interested in learning English. They learn English fast because of its easiness in structure of alphabet. It is very interesting me to teach English. Initially, it seems difficult for pupils but gradually they pick it up. Rhymes and activities create interest in learners. So, they prefer English period first” (DVD 3 -2008/09- 3.1- 00:01 to 21:50 and DVD 3 -2008/09- 3.2- 23:48 to 60:37). They opined that the learners could catch the words and understand what they taught but could not speak in English (DVD 5 -2008/09 -5.2- 32:32 to 61:07 and 5.3- 00:01 to 14:34). One of the teachers, who is working in the school located in Lambani area expressed his inability to teach English like this:

It is very difficult to communicate with the students because of their home language. They cannot understand English language without translation. For these students, Kannada is also a new language. It is very difficult for us to teach them two new languages simultaneously, because, first of all we do not know their language. The Lambani children are very sharp compared to other community children. But, we face the problem of communication with them. These students never read at their homes. Lambani children feel English easier than Kannada. They mix all three languages while talking (Lambani-Kannada-English). However, we welcome the government’s decision to introduce English from the first standard (DVD 2 -2009/10 -2.1- 25:53 to 37:49; DVD 7- 2009/10 -7.1- 24:34 to 43:10; 7.2- 00:01 to 11:13).

One of the teachers from the multilingual area has the negative opinion towards implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard like this:

We face language learning problems among our students. Because, it is a multilingual area and the Muslim Community learners face the problem of pronunciation while learning English. Environment is very necessary for learning languages. In Belgaum, the learners learn Marathi quicker than English and they learn English faster than Kannada (DVD 3- 2009/10 -3.3- 00:01 to 04:56).

A teacher from the tribal area says:

It is very difficult to teach the tribal children in the beginning for about three months. Gradually, they take interest in learning. For these learners, learning two languages is a burden because they do not know Kannada in the first place. They cannot understand English if we teach in English. It is a multilingual area. Here, we get the learners who speak Malayalam, Kadukuruba, Jenukuruba, Soliga and Yarava languages. Their home language is not Kannada. So, it is very difficult to teach the learners because I do not know their language (DVD 5- 2009/10 -5.1- 00:01 to 25:14).

A teacher from the private school opined like this:

I welcome the government's decision of teaching English from the first standard. But it is not suitable in our area because it is a border area of Andhra Pradesh. Here, we have the influence of Telugu. So, it is difficult to teach them Kannada properly. That is the reason English language should be started at third or fourth standard where the child gets the knowledge of the first language (DVD 2 - 2008/09- 104:01 to 126:07).

One of the teachers in Bangalore city complains like this: "The learners feel English is an interesting subject. But, their learning level is very low. Because they come from North-Karnataka and their parents are coolies. They face the problem of pronunciation when they want to speak in English" (DVD 6- 2009/10 -06- 30:16 to 43:24). Another teacher highlights the inability of the learners: "The learners feel difficult to recognize the words, which have more

than four syllables. They are eager to learn English. Most of the learners come from multilingual background. So, teaching English for them is a difficult task. But it depends on the teachers” (DVD 7- 2009/10 -7.2- 42:03 to 49:44 and DVD 8- 2009/10 -8.1- 00:01 to 34:01).

Some teachers expressed their dissatisfaction on implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard and blamed the education system. One among them opines: “I was the product of English medium school. I am very eager to teach English but not possible because of the workload given to me. We have only two teachers for five classes. Government’s plan is good. Children are always intelligent and they learn whatever you teach at the initial stages” (DVD 6 -2008/09 -06- 00:09 to 50:32). The teachers from the border area felt discomfort with the system and said that the language of the administration is Kannada. Therefore, it was very difficult to convince the parents regarding the progress of their children and about the school. The teachers who are teaching English language are not the teachers of English. Most of them are teachers of science or history. One of them objected to this kind of make-shift arrangement and expressed his views: “I feel difficulty in teaching English. Children like the language. Parents expect their children to learn English. Most of them are coolies and hamalies. But, they do not show any concern about the learning of their children. I am basically a History teacher. How can I teach them?” (DVD 6- 2009/10 -06- 73:14 to 90:27). The teachers from the private schools complained that they had not given the in-service trainings and the government had not supplied the resource books for them (DVD 3 -2008/09- 3.1- 52:05 to 86:18).

A teacher from the urban area opines:

Teaching three languages is difficult for them and it creates confusion in learners also. It is a burden on the beginners. So, after two or three years of schooling, second and third language should be introduced. It is not suitable to introduce a new language like English at an early age, and if they were taught everything from the first standard, what to teach in the fifth standard (DVD 5 -2008/09 -5.2- 14:12 to 27:07).

Thus, the opinions of the teachers as stated in the form of answers to the questionnaire and in the personal interaction recorded as part of the ethnography were conflicting, this reflects the nature of the data itself. The opinions of the teachers are mismatched. In the given questionnaire, the

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teachers supported the Government's plan. But, at the time of the interview, most of them agreed that they have difficulty in teaching English language, they were unable to narrate the stories, they had no fluency and they had not taken any training. They opined that it was difficult to teach English language in Non-Kannada medium schools, special schools in Lambani Tandas, Camp Schools, tribal schools and the schools which were located at the border areas, as they did not know the home language of the students. They told that they felt difficulty in translating English into the home language of the learners. If they tried to translate into Kannada, that was also a new language for them. So, they urged the Government to recruit the local teachers who knew their language. They complained that most of the parents were illiterate and had no concern about their children. The teachers told that they had an interest in teaching English language to their level best. But, they were assigned other works such as census, economical survey, caste census, animal census, supervision of mid-day meals and other works. Along with such works, they were forced to teach. Many plans had been introduced in their department like Chaitanya, Nali-Kali, Remedial Teaching and others. They are in confusion what to follow and when to follow. They felt that they were working as clerks, not as teachers in the department. They forced the Government to recruit the teachers on the basis of subjects. Thus, they blamed the current state of affairs in the department. Totally, they are just following the plan mechanically and they are not serious about the new step of the education department.

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

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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