

SEMINAR-CUM-WORKSHOP ON LANGUAGE POLICY IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Seminar-cum-Workshop on **Language Education Policy** in Arunachal Pradesh was organized by **State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERT)**, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh in collaboration with **Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL)**, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, from Dec. 5 to 8, 2012.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the Seminar was to deliberate among the experts from various disciplines on the issues of language and language policy for education to children of Arunachal Pradesh for a better generation.

PARTICIPANTS

Besides subject expert from CIIL, scholars and subject experts from SCERT, DIET, Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies of Rajiv Gandhi University, Language Officers from Directorate of Research, representative from various Literature Societies of Indigenous languages, NGOs and linguists in the State participated in the program.

In addition to the experts mentioned above, we were also fortunate to have two participants: one from medical back-ground and the other from engineering back-ground.

NATURE OF PROGRAM

On the first two days, participants from various disciplines presented their research papers/articles on the issues such as folk literature, development of language and literature in local languages, use of language in classroom and the importance of local-based textbooks with cognitively rich learning materials.

On the third day, the participants were divided into three groups on the basis of their expertise and disciplines for group discussion. Each group was assigned to deliberate on the issues they were more familiar with and arrive at consensus opinion.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS¹

1. Language Policy for Education

Forgetting the past inconveniences, the participants unanimously felt that innovations, inventions and new strategies must be developed for popularizing and developing mother tongues of Arunachalee.

The participants felt unanimously that it is paramount important for the State of Arunachal Pradesh to have its own comprehensive language policy for education.

2. What should be 1st, 2nd and 3rd language

It has been spelt out in the National Policy on Education (NPE'86) that "mother tongue has organic connection with thought; hence the best means in developing cognitive abilities in the children is education through their mother tongue". The NPE'86 directs all the States in the country to create space for children's language in their schools at least at the primary school level when children are still at the formative stage. Unfortunately, this has not been implemented in Arunachal Pradesh even today.

It is also important to note that using children's language as 3rd language in schools could create psychological negative impact on them, besides denying cognitive development.

In the light of the above it is recommended that the nomenclature of local languages be used as 1st language, instead of 3rd language. Accordingly, they may be introduced from Class-1, instead of from Class-VI.

Hindi is dominantly used at oral communication among the people in Arunachal Pradesh; whereas English is used as medium of instruction in schools and colleges as well as state official language. Functionally, however, except in a few exceptional cases, English has no space at home; children either use local languages or Hindi. Ideally therefore, Hindi can be said as lingua-franca of the state since it plays role both at home as well as in public places, but English is a foreign language to them till they begin formal schooling.

¹ All the recommendations are meant for both the government schools as well as private schools.

Even though it is so, Hindi cannot be said as a native language. English, though foreign to the children till they join the school, has to play central role in their future carrier.

Therefore, English may be called 2nd language and Hindi as 3rd language.

3. How to establish bridge between native language and school language

Since English as 2nd language is foreign to the children till they join formal schooling it is paramount important to establish effective bridge between children's home language and the school language.

4. Should written form of Hindi be introduced from beginning with mother tongue?

Some participants opined that Hindi could also be introduced along with mother tongue and English right from the beginning; while some others were afraid that it could be over imposing on the children since they are still at the tender stage.

Therefore, it is proposed that children may be allowed to establish mastery of roman script in mother tongue first so as to form firm footing of their neuropathways in mother tongue with roman script. In this way, the children had won the first battlefield for both the mother tongue and English, since both are written in roman.

5. Classroom Language

The classroom transaction of subject content should however not be restricted to one language only. Understanding of the concept by the children should be priority. Therefore, it can be bi-lingual, i.e. mother tongue, Hindi, or any other language depending upon classroom situation the teacher thinks it most appropriate.

6. Textbooks

The participants felt urgent to use cognitively rich local-based textbooks in schools; not only the mother tongue textbooks, but also other subjects as well.

Human intelligence is based on the composite structure of language, organism and environment. Therefore, school textbooks need be written by taking care of local environment.

The members suggest the following local features to be incorporated in the textbooks: habitation, geography, kinship terms, counting systems or arithmetic concept, health & hygiene, plants & animals, vegetables, shapes & sizes, stories & proverbs or folktales, body parts; seasons, months, handicrafts, colours. Basic grammar of local languages, traditional scientific concepts and discoveries such as traditional medicines, flora fauna, etc. may be incorporated beginning from either Class-III or IV.

7. Who will prepare textbooks?

Textbooks prepared by outsiders do not contribute much in the development of cognitive abilities of children since they are not based on local environment.

The members therefore strongly felt that self-reliance is utmost important. SCERT must be made fully equipped, not only man-power, but also library and other modern technologies so that the organization can fully shoulder in preparation of all school textbooks and other learning materials for schools in the state.

8. Curriculum and Syllabus

As follow-up action, SCERT will conduct a workshop in collaboration with CIIL and prepared mother tongue syllabus. For mother tongue syllabus, the model for teaching of mother tongue prepared by CIIL, MHRD will be used as reference book. Local specific syllabus for Arunachal Pradesh will be framed by referring the one framed by CIIL.

SCERT will also initiate action to frame curriculum for the state. When framing curriculum, the participants suggest the curriculum framers to ensure that it must suit contemporary generation so that learning activities do not confine to imparting knowledge to the younger generation alone, but most importantly human development. This can also contribute in solving many social problems, including gender parity or equality. Innovations and inventions, children centre programs, etc. for exploration of knowledge must be ensured.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

- a. The designation of the Principal, SCERT, may be changed to the Director, SCERT, as on par with other States.
- b. Department of Tribal Language Development may be set up under SCERT. To start with, the present Language Officers may be brought here to set up the Department.

One post of Deputy Director, Dept. of Tribal Language Development may be created and senior most Language Officer with good confidential report may be appointed against the post.

Under Dy. Director, two or more Asst. Director post may be created and appoint the next senior most officers with good confidential report.

In this way, Asst. Directors will supervise the research works of Language Officers.

- c. In future recruitment, candidate having minimum qualification of MA (Linguistics) may be recruited against the post of Language Officer.

To monitor the Dept., if the Govt. deems it necessary, Board of Studies may be constituted. The Board Members may be as the following:

CIIL, RGU, SCERT, TRIBAL LITERARY SOCIETIES, DIET, ANY LOCAL LINGUISTS/LANGUAGE ACTIVISTS.

d. Teacher Training

Training of teachers of mother tongue should be jointly taken up by govt. agencies such as SCERT, DIET, R.G.U, CIIL in collaboration with NGOs and Tribal Literary Societies.

e. Appointment of Teachers

Teachers must be appointed by conducting interview. In teacher interview, due importance should be given to efficiency in mother tongue. In addition, a Competency Certificate to be acquired from respective Tribal Literary Society.

f. Salary of Mother Tongue Teachers

The participants unanimously felt that when the government is able to appoint Hindi teachers all over the country why there should be any difficulty in appointing mother tongue teachers in the same footing with Hindi teachers.

Therefore, it is recommended that mother tongue teachers may be paid with full salary on par with Hindi teachers. If there is any difficulty for the State Govt. to bear the expenses, pressure may be given to the Central Govt. to shoulder the responsibility.

In case, if this also did not work, reasonable amount of honorarium should be paid to the teachers.

g. PROMOTION OF LOCAL WRITERS

Writers in local language engaged in promoting mother tongue should be given incentives by way of awarding honorarium.

S/d
(DR. KEDUTSO KAPFO)
Coordinator
CIIL, Ministry of H.R.D.,
Govt. of India, Mysore.

S/d
(MR. GANIA MEIJ)
Principal, SCERT,
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh,
Itanagar.