


Chapter 13

Transparency in Language to Enhance Student Learning: Adaptation of TILT to the Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the unfocused paradigm of language as a tool to bring transparency to the teaching-learning framework focusing on the unique context of India. Insights are provided on how the language used as a medium of instruction within higher educational institutions can hinder students' learning experiences and how transparency dimensions can enhance students' learning and performances. Recent developments in India, including New Education Policy 2020 and the opines of stakeholders such as educational administrators, faculty, and students, are integrated to further broaden perspectives pertaining to transparency, language, and students' learning and performances.

INTRODUCTION

India is one of the most diverse countries in the world. India is a sociolinguistic

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paradox. It is unique in terms of languages as one can find a different spoken language after every 50km. Hence, language forms a key component of one's cultural identity in India. The Indian Constitution recognizes twenty-two languages, around 121 languages, are spoken by more than 10,000 people per the Govt of India's census data of 2001. Thus, multilingualism is an inseparable part of India's cultural and social ethos. The classrooms in Indian Higher Education are pretty complexed as the students come from different linguistic backgrounds within India and from outside India.

India has been ensuring the equity of access in setting aside seats in educational institutions for students from underrepresented categories in the Indian Social System. Education in schools, usually public education schooling in India is imparted using regional languages. While higher level education, i.e., colleges and universities, and research is usually in English medium. The mandated medium of instruction is thus English, although the classroom's default language is the local one. There is a linguistic double divide in almost all South Asian countries where English has become the language of power and people's aspirations while regional languages are neglected and allocated a lower place. English language has gained supremacy due to globalization and conflicting interests between other regional languages (Mohanty, 2013). It becomes more apparent and vital in India, where students study in their mother tongue until higher/secondary school education but then switchover to English in HEIs. So students from rural backgrounds or underdeveloped areas usually discover language becomes a significant barrier in their learning process. Research studies support that language can act as a barrier and an entry point to higher education (Sarma & Agarwal, 2010). The learning of a person might get negatively impacted if s/he has studied continuously in a vernacular mode. And then shifts to an educational institution that uses a non-native language as the medium of instruction. So if higher education is available in regional languages student enrollment will automatically increase. By giving some importance to the mother tongue, the gap between English speaking population and those who are non-English speaking can be substantially reduced (Chaturvedi, 2021).

Thus, the language used in the HEIs can be an unseen barrier to learning which some have found unsurmountable and had to give up midway. Even if they continued, they faced ridicule because of their inability to be comfortable in a language they had no exposure to. Internationalization of education in India has further created challenges to the universities with a mix of international and native students. In addition, faculty members in HEIs may not consider language to be a learning barrier and thus may not be a focus of outcome-based education. It is only when a student assimilates knowledge but is unable to demonstrate his/her learning it becomes a major stumbling block in the entire learning process.

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