

The languages of education in multilingual India: exploring effects on reading and mathematics

1st dissemination event: 12–13 July 2018, New Delhi, India

Session summary:

What is the role of technology in supporting students from varying language backgrounds in the classroom? How can this be further utilised more widely?

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The session primarily focussed on three areas:

- 1 The use of technology in the language classroom and how best it can be harnessed
- 2 The kind of apps that can be used for language education
- 3 The pervasive use of multilingual exchanges in the digital medium and how it can be used to promote a multilingual environment in the classroom.

The session began with discussions on the role of technology in the language classroom and kinds of apps that teachers used for transacting language in their lessons. This led to quite a few debates on the use of technology and the definition of technology itself. Some participants suggested that anything that aids in the learning process externally may be termed as technology.

Each group of discussants suggested a number of apps by producing a pool that can be used. The workshop convener too suggested a few innovative use of common apps in the classroom.

The third part of the session was based on some samples of language use from two projects that the workshop convener had conducted with his students. The samples of language were discussed in detail by the groups and the following points emerged from the discussion:

- a Multilingualism seems to be the dominant mode of expression in student exchanges.
- b The affordances of technology often allow playful use of language and can be very creative.
- c Negotiating the digital medium is an important skill to be taught in the language classroom.
- d Context-bound language awareness needs to be taught to students to ensure that they use appropriate language in the different media that they are engaged in. Furthermore, a distinction between formal and informal uses of language needs to be brought into the classroom pedagogy.

The final part of the session was meant to elicit responses on five questions:

- 1 Should the integration of ICT also mean teaching of negotiation as a skill?
- 2 Should the language variations be made integral?
- 3 Should multilingualism, a common practice, be looked into?
- 4 What platforms can be used to make sure that the blending/flipped nature of classroom can be potentially maximised?
- 5 Should there be an ICT policy for multilingual teaching?

Here are samples of some of the responses from the participants:

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'Integration of ICT also means teaching of negotiation as a skill. There should be certain essential agreements agreed upon and followed regarding negotiation skills online.'

'...there should be an ICT policy for multilingual teaching created by including all the stakeholders of the school at an institutional level.'

'The idea of using multilingual oral practices seeping into writing [in the digital platforms] isn't agreeable. The different languages (HL or L2) can be used as a tool but not as a medium while teaching the target language.'

The session thus produced a rich variety of viewpoints and possibly showed how the use of technology is viewed distinctly when employed as an everyday practice as compared to its use in pedagogy.

