The languages of Education in multilingual India: Exploring effects on reading and maths

Event conclusion

Jeanine Treffers-Daller (j.c.treffers-daller@reading.ac.uk)
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED,
Charlie Brown
Terminology matters

- Diversity of language practices in India
- Languages of the home, languages of the playground and languages of the market place (U.R. Ananthamurthy)
- Tribal languages, regional languages, English
Dhir Jhingran

- When children learn language, they are not simply engaging in one type of learning among many; rather, they are learning the foundations of learning itself.
Instruction should be cognitively challenging and require students to use higher-order thinking abilities rather than the low-level memorization and application skills that are tapped by typical worksheets or drill-and-practice computer programs (Cummins, 1999)
• The development of critical language awareness should be fostered throughout the program by encouraging students to compare and contrast their languages (e.g. phonics conventions, grammar, etc.)

• and by providing students with extensive opportunities to carry out projects investigating their own and their community's language use, practices, and assumptions (e.g. in relation to the status of different varieties) (Cummins, 1999).
Basic Language Cognition/Higher Language Cognition

Professor Jan Hulstijn
(University of Amsterdam)
**Basic language Cognition:** most frequent vocabulary items and most frequent grammar rules; speech – not written language.

**Higher Language Cognition:** low frequency words, less common grammar rules; written language. Hulstijn (2015)
Issues to be looked at

- How can we develop creativity/critical awareness?
  - Experiential learning
  - Life skills may support learning. Can these skills be practised in school contexts?
- Learning through stories/narratives
What is English medium instruction?

- English as a medium of instruction: different meanings in different contexts
  - Hyderabad > Delhi
- English should not be the medium of instruction in the first years of primary schools
  - Use the children’s home languages as medium of instruction
  - English can be taught as subject
Multilingual practices

• What multilingual practices are found in classrooms?
• Translanguaging, code-switching
• Switching between home, regional languages and English

• Amy Lightfoot’s plenary
Through questionnaires/interviews getting “real answers” may be difficult

Teachers may avoid telling the truth about the languages s/he uses in the classroom

Need to use different methods (teacher questionnaires/children cognitive tests, classroom observations)
  – Teacher quality/direct evidence
  – Observers need to be trained.

More evidence needed about what teachers and learners do in the classroom
• Most common activities in the classroom:
  – Listening most common activity
  – Individual speaking more happening in the maths lesson than in language lesson
  – Choral response/repeating third most common activity

• Pair work and group work very low.

• Development of learner’s creativity, imagination and critical thinking least well developed.

• Teachers: use more Telegu only in Maths. More mixing in language classes

• Children’s mixing patterns differ from those of teachers.

• What is the quality of this translanguaging?
• Try to better understand translanguaging
  – What are the different ways to practice translanguaging?
  – Which of these practices facilitate learning?
• Raise self-awareness among teachers/head teachers
• Textbooks are in English only. No language support in textbooks
• Can video observations be used?
Break away sessions: resources

- Resources for teachers which enable them to more effectively implement multilingual education practices
  - Dr Padmini Boruah and Jemima Hughes

- Teacher himself/herself key resource; books, electronic resources, technology, parents, other stakeholders

- Learning can also take place if there are very few resources (e.g. Pratham’s work in villages throughout India - Rukmini Banerji)
Lessons for the UK

- In India teachers and educational policy makers are highly engaged in raising learning outcomes for multilingual learners.
- In the UK: teachers are very engaged; educational policy makers are not.
- How can we engage policy makers?
- Breakaway session: Bringing policy initiatives and teaching practices together (Dr Amol Padwad)
What can be good entry points with state governments?

From Dhir Jhingran’s plenary

MLE... children’s language and culture....

It will improve learning outcomes
How can we preserve linguistic diversity in India?

300 languages died out already

Languages of power/knowledge

How can we support those speaking tribal languages, also in education?

- Employ teachers who know tribal languages (Dr Nicolas, Joint Director Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Telangana)
- Resources for tribal languages?
Promoting 21st century skills involves:

From the British Council website:
Developing an awareness of and proficiency involves:

- critical thinking and problem solving
- collaboration and communication
- creativity and imagination
- citizenship
- digital literacy
- student leadership and personal development.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/overview/promoting-21st-century-skills
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• We all wish the British Council: