

Unit - 8: Economics and Mother tongue:

I. Introduction: Mother tongue refers to the language that a human learns from birth. Throughout this site, you will notice the words "mother tongue," "first language," and "native language" are often intermixed. These terms are all related to this same idea, and refer to the language a child is first exposed to, particularly from birth to 9 months. Children growing up in bilingual homes can have more than one mother tongue, provided that two languages were introduced at birth and equally developed through childhood.

Meaning of Mother Tongue:

The term 'mother tongue' harks back to the notion that linguistic skills of a child are handed by the mother out, therefore, the language spoken by the mother would be the primary language that the child would learn. This was/is quite possible if the couples are from the same tribe.

The mother tongue, native or first language, is what a person has learned from birth or within a critical period, where the ability to acquire a language is biologically linked to age, and thus becomes the basis for social identity.

Allan Kaziro, a secondary school teacher and mother of two, says: "The mother tongue may indicate a language that a person is as proficient in as any other local person who speaks the same language and the language is common to that community. For example, Luganda."

Significance:

The mother tongue is part of a child's personal, social and cultural identity. It is this identification we get from speaking our mother tongue that forces successful social patterns of acting and speaking, our diverse social backgrounds make us unique and appealing in society.

The mother tongue is an indispensable instrument for the development of intellectual, physical and moral aspects of education. Habits, conducts, values, virtues, customs and beliefs are all shaped through the mother tongue. Needless to say, weakness in the mother tongue means a paralysis of all thought and power of expression.

Mother tongue and a child's Education:

Early childhood care and Education UNESCO [2007] points out that overboarded advantages of multilingual education in the early years, when children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school and their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning.

Mother tongue-based education, especially benefits disadvantaged groups, including children from rural communities and girls, who tend to have less exposure to an official language. They tend to stay in school longer, achieve better and repeat grades less often when they are taught in their mother tongue.

Most children speak a home language that differs from the language of instruction in education programmes. Research also confirms that children learn best in their mother tongue as a prelude to and complement of bilingual and multilingual education. Whether children successfully retain their mother tongue while acquiring additional languages, depends on several interacting factors.

Advantages of a Mother tongue based education:

1] Expand the reach of education

Many rural kids would have their parents and relatives with no knowledge of English. Forcing an English medium education can put them at a significant disadvantage.

2] Improved learning outcomes during primary school

A few researchers have shown that having a mother tongue education enable the kids to easily grasp the course content as they are used to the vocabulary.

3] Protecting and preserving local languages.

4] Mother-tongue teaching has positive effects on students learning.

Disadvantages of a mother tongue based education:

1] Painful shift in higher education

The students will have a painful shift at high school or college when they are required to learn engineering, medical or

accounting concepts in English. couple of my roommates at college had Tamil based education and had to suffer a lot during the first two years at college.

Although they were very smart, they had to keep translating all the concepts from Tamil to English.

2. Connecting with the rest of the world:

Mother-tongue based education promotes the mother-tongue at the cost of the bridge languages (in India it is Hindi and English) that would enable the students to connect with the rest of the world. If the school doesn't expose them to English, they will find it very hard in mastering the language (as their parents and surroundings don't).

3. Getting Greater opportunities:

In the highly fluid world we are in, people need to be conversant with English.

The Europeans and Japanese are at a disadvantage in this aspect.

Important Aims and objectives of Teaching Mother-Tongue

Determination of aims and objectives is absolutely essential to succeed in any undertaking. We always do a thing better if we know what we are trying to do. Our methods are more likely to be to the point if we first decide what we want to do.

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The following are some of the important aims and objectives of teaching mother-tongue:

① To Give Command of Language

The first and foremost aim of teaching mother-tongue is to help our pupils to say simply and clearly what they want to say, and write simply and clearly what they want to write. In other words, mother-tongue teaches them to express themselves clearly and simply.

② Acquisition of Knowledge

Another important aim of teaching mother tongue is to teach the pupils to read for information and for pleasure. Mastery of the mother-tongue will cultivate in him the habit of reading for the acquisition of knowledge.

③ To bring about Mental and Emotional Development:

One of the important aims of teaching mother-tongue is to give our pupils a medium through which they can express themselves, not only for purpose of day-to-day life. They will be able to express their feelings, thoughts and experiences. This expression may be oral and written.

④ To Develop Creative Faculties

Developing creative faculties of the pupils is one of the most significant aims of teaching mother tongue.

The pupil has in his mother-tongue a medium through which he can give expression, in different directions, to his creative urge.

⑤ To give training in logical thought and expression:

Another important aim is to give pupils training in logical thought and its expression. This aim is in fact the aim of all education; but mother-tongue is the most suitable instrument for providing training in logical thought and its expression.

From another point of view, the aims of teaching mother-tongue can be divided into the following four categories corresponding to the four aspects of language:

I - Receptive Aspect

II - Expressive Aspect

III - Appreciative and critical Aspect

IV - Creative Aspect.

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Receptive aspect implies enabling the pupils to understand properly spoken and written language.

Expressive aspect implies enabling the pupils to express their thought orally and in writing in the language which is clear, correct and effective.

Appreciative and critical aspect implies enabling the pupils to appreciate the beauty of literature, as well as, critically assess the same.

Creative aspect implies enabling the pupils to develop their imaginative and creative faculties through the study of literature and thus, creating literature themselves.

Thus the teaching of mother tongue has diversified aims, from just learning to speak to the creation of literature and bringing about the development of various aspects of the personality of the pupils which is also the avowed aim of education.