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## Benefits of Mother Tongue in Communication Skills

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### ABSTRACT

Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure. A positive attitude towards communication in the mother tongue involves a disposition to critical and constructive dialogue, an appreciation of aesthetic qualities and a willingness to strive for them, and an interest in interaction with others. This implies an awareness of the impact of language on others and a need to understand and use language in a positive and socially responsible manner.

**KEYWORDS:-** Social status, cognition, Prominent, Improvement, Positive

### INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the primary prerogatives which distinguish human beings from animals. Even though animals think, feel, laugh, touch, look worried, weep and they do sniff with more intelligence than the former in some rare cases, Man is the only being who can use a complex, creative, and innovative system of symbols (both phonic and graphic) for purposes of communication ranging from the expression of everyday, ordinary, interpersonal interactions to the externalization of metaphysical perceptions. Hence language is what differentiates a man from an animal. Language is an extra ordinary gift from god to mankind which the animals do not inherit or develop on their own in the course of time. It is an excellent device with which the human beings agree or disagree over a whole slew of human affairs including politics, Social status, Education, Intelligence, varied Emotions and Passions etc. Language is peculiarly human prerogative and it is this element which cannot be dispensed with easily as the reason *raison de etre* of human being as the only thinking and reasoning being. His thought and reasoning should have a vehicle to be carried on. That vehicle is language. Tallerman and Gibson\* in their "Oxford Handbook of Language Evolution" shows the uniqueness of language among animal communication systems. Tallerman and Gibson opine that „language“ is not a monolithic entity, but rather a complex bundle of traits that must have evolved over a significant time frame, some features doubtless appearing in species that preceded our own. Moreover, language crucially draws on aspects of cognition that are long established in the primate lineage, such as memory: the language faculty as a whole comprises more than just the uniquely linguistic features.” (2012, p. 2). Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) defines the term "Language" as: A system of communication consisting of small and set of rules which decide the ways in which these parts can be combined to produce messages that have meaning. The noted Linguist and Anthropologist Sapir (1921) described, "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". What precisely was the origin of this faculty is still a matter of dispute, and many learned treatises have been written on the subject without any great measure of agreement being reached. At present four chief theories hold the field. They are (1) The bow-wow theory (2) The ding-dong theory (3) The pooh-pooh theory (4) The gesture theory The languages are classified into different types based on the functioning of morphology of a language: they are agglutinative language or synthetic language, Isolating or analytical language, polysynthetic language.

### THE PROMINENT LANGUAGE FAMILIES AROUND THE WORLD

Dr.C. George Boeree of Shippensburg University, quoting from Merritt Ruhlen's book "A Guide to the World's languages" (Stanford University Press, 1987) recalls the contribution of the great linguist Joseph Greenberg, (who died on May 7, 2001) to the study of world language families. There are a number of world language families among which the most prominent are The Khoisan Family, The NigerKordofanian Family, The Nilo-Saharan Family, The Afro-Asiatic Family, The Indo- 3 European Family, The Caucasian Family, The Dravidian Family, The UralicYukaghir Family, The Altaic Family, The Chukchi-Kamchatkan ("Paleosiberian") Family, The Amerind Family (South America) and The Amerind Family (North America).

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## THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

Language is a very powerful and sensitive tool. It is an important attribute of a population. It can create and also destroy, reveal and also conceal, heal and also hurt, ease and also obstruct, amplify and also restrict, act as a facilitator and also as a barrier, be a linker and binder and also a divider, be used as a secret code to which others have no access at all and also function as an open code. Language is the most creative form of human communication in terms of which culture is preserved and transmitted. India is a multilingual, multiracial, and pluri-cultural pluri-ethnic country where language has great relevance and significance. Initially fourteen languages were listed in the eighth schedule of our constitution, presently twenty two languages are recognized by the Indian constitution. The 1961 census identified as many as 1652 languages and dialects as mother tongues spoken in India and the number of mother tongues came down to 1369 in the 2011 census. What is crucial for the maintenance of multilingualism in our country is not the philosophy underlying the concept of „melting pot“ but the philosophy underlying the image of „salad bowl“ where each item has its characteristic features and yet it contributes to the richness of the overall pattern.

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## LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Civilization cannot take place unless cross-generational learning is present. This learning of skills by children from their parents and other contacts is the basis of education innate learning abilities eliminate the need for each human to figure out all of the secrets of life on their own, and be forced to reinvent improvements. By exposure to sensory experiences, we effortlessly acquire social, language, motor, and thinking skills. These are stored in memory cumulatively, and are the sources of intellectual and cultural growth. Throughout all of history, humans have recognized the advantages of education, and have implemented a plethora of creative strategies for teaching and learning to accomplish individual and group goals. The idea of formal education is over 2,500 years old. Academy is derived from Akademeia, the park in which Plato (427-347 BC) held his seminars. Greek parents saw to the education of their offspring, educating them in ethics, reading, writing, arithmetic, art, poetry, dance, music, and gymnastics. Civilization has progressed because of the learning of the new generation the knowledge of the old generation. This knowledge is then expounded upon, learned and added to by subsequent generations. Some ideas are kept, some are abandoned, some invented, some resurrected. The practical and romantic bodies of knowledge held in current esteem are a culture's historical fabric, its character foundation, and its reference for measure. In certain contexts, throughout all of history, learning was isolated from living, and attended to with exclusive concentration. The time away from other productive tasks, spent in teaching and learning, resulted in profits of efficiency and accomplishment of individual and collective goals. From one-on-one teaching, to 5 organized group learning, all cultures have invented methods of conferring essential knowledge upon their participants. All of education in its infinite forms is borne of individual or social needs. It serves the goals of the teachers, learners and collective culture as a whole. When established institutions and methods no longer serve the new needs of the participants, reform is called for, goals redefined, change planned, strategy implemented- the evolution continues. There is nothing static about life, living, teaching, or learning, but humans have always desired a static model that they could predict. The human mind strives toward an understanding of the gears of life, and is agitated, and disturbed by conditions it cannot understand, predict, or control. All of man's ideas, his religion and inventions, are efforts to make time stand still - long enough to grapple with the infinite. Of course, man's efforts are in vain. Each new generation marvels at the thoughts and creations of its ancestors, imagining itself the superior intellect. To temper such instinctive elementary reasoning formal education is prescribed. Hence the concept of education is dynamic and it has passed through many ages and stages in the process of evolution and at every stage it has had a different meaning according to the then existing social conditions. Language is central to the whole process of education and is the principal means of cultural transmission. It is also a very explosive tool and hence needs to be handled with care and understanding. In the growth of human beings as social beings, language has a very important role to play. It is through language more than any other means that experience is recorded, interpreted, and extended. 6 Sir G.Elliot Smith was almost certainly correct when he maintained that the discovery of speech marked the beginning of man. Language is not everything in education, but without language, everything is nothing in education. -Wolf Language is primarily something that is spoken, not written. The introduction of a system of recording thought and speech by writing (and later by printing) was a very important step forward, and without it we would have been very largely ignorant of the ways of life and the modes of thought of our ancestors. Radhakrishnan says "Effective use of language is a powerful help to good scientific thinking and especially to communicate in science, as well as a necessity in humanities." "Unless we learn to use and to organize words clearly and effectively our thinking will lack precision and accuracy." This assumes a special significance in a multilingual, urban setting in which it is not simply a problem of language choice; it is also a question of language ordering and language switch: what to say in which language. India has a rich repertoire of language and language varieties. The success of learners in a multilingual and pluricultural society needs more than one language for national cohesion, cultural integration, and social and geographical mobility. Different languages have different roles to play. The mother tongue has a role; the regional language has a role; foreign and classical languages have their roles. They are complementary.

### LANGUAGE EDUCATION – ITS IMPORTANCE

Language is a human and social activity without which people cannot function in the society. It is one of their basic needs. One has to learn it. It is not something optional. That cannot be avoided. "Those who are good in language are good in all other subjects and those who fail in language fail in every other subject". -Bernstein. In fact all education begins with language. Without learning language, a person cannot grow intellectually, socially and emotionally. Studies have shown that not only mathematical skill but general achievement in education is also dependant on language achievement. It is therefore, essential that language teaching should be done systematically so that learners understand and grasp properly whatever is taught to them in the class. It is observed that a large number of language teachers generally take this subject in a routine manner and do not make any deliberate effort to try out new strategies of teaching and learning. The learning of one language in childhood is an inevitable process; the learning of a second language is a special accomplishment. Only a few learners succeed in mastering a second language. There are scores of reasons for this failure. A second language

learner is one who has had the experience of another language. When he acquired his first language, he tries to learn a second language. But the environment and the surroundings in which he acquired his mother tongue is not available for him now. He tries to find in the second He tries to find in the second language grammar features which are equivalent to those of his first language. Besides the linguistic and social factors there are some psychological factors which affect the process and progress of second language learning. These psychological 8 factors include age, motive, skill, intelligence and personality, auditory memory span, intention, or readiness to learn, emotion and drive.

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND EDUCATIONALISTS

The influence of mother tongue or first language (L1) on second language (L2) learning has always been the subject of debate among the educators, academicians, and policy makers. The goal of Second language learning is achieving a sort of native-like proficiency, but there are variations in Pronunciation, style, accent, spelling etc. even among the native speakers of Great Britain, America, Canada and Australia. Many Indian languages have the „regular“ alphabetic systems which make language learning easier. Whereas many words in English are „irregular“ or „exception“ words and are not spelled the way they sound. This poses a problem for 200 English as second language learners. Knapp & Seidlhofer, 2009 opine that foreign languages are learnt naturally, as one socialises because socialisation is a process which involves the concepts of spending time with people and also exposure to language. A study on immigrant textile workers in Chicago showed that computer training acted as a motivator for language acquisition (Belcher, 2006). Similarly technology does play a role in the enhanced use of English language, and thereby helps in improving communication skills in English of secondary school students. The modern technology should be made available such as computers, internet and language laboratories in sufficient number in all schools. The teachers who are accustomed to teach in Telugu should be given training and special orientation programs to equip them with special capabilities. The meritorious students can cope with the challenge and achieve better success but average students who will be more in number in a class may not be able to cope up and this leads to inferiority, frustration and finally disinterest towards studies. The passionate learning process is much more successful than forced or thrust learning. It is important to create a passion for learning than to forcibly impose upon the learner. There is also a lot of relevance of the MT to the teaching of L2 and it is better to recognize its efficacy than to try to and it is better to recognize its efficacy than to try to eliminate. The Teachers should Convert Interference into Relevance Most of the Parents are unaware of the positive interference of Mother Tongue and they are under the wrong notion that their children would perform better in English and other subjects by avoiding Mother tongue. Research shows that many countries like Germany, Japan etc are prospering faster than India by relying less on English and imparting education in their native languages. The Parents need to be educated. As the parents are driving their wards away from Telugu language and 201 Telugu Medium Schools, the Governments are forced to convert Telugu Medium schools into English medium schools. The government in Andhra Pradesh is working to increase the number of English medium schools state schools, with some proposals calling for English to be the only medium of instruction in state schools, claiming that this policy reflects the growing desire of parents and that the state sector is losing pupils due to its inability to meet the increased demand for English medium schools. Recently our AP Government has introduced English as the medium of instruction in all Government High schools without exception, at a time in all the classes. It proved not to be successful as the students who had the knowledge of only small words (i.e most of the three letter or four letter words) could not manage to learn the technical words that they come across while learning science social studies and even mathematics. So the Government has taken a good decision to provide an option to the student to opt for his choice of the medium of instruction either Telugu or English. To change the medium of instruction from Telugu, the mother tongue, to English the following points are to be considered. A sudden change will not be successful as the student should have a minimum knowledge of English i.e the four skills L.S.R.W. They should be provided with more number of dictionaries such as Telugu to English, English to Telugu and English to English in the school libraries so that each one could have his own copy of the dictionary to refer to in one class of students. The trend towards English medium education has caused distress among some Telugu language activists who claim that the state governments are placing Telugu language in an inferior position and depriving Telugu speakers of their language rights. On the other hand a study on the languages spoken in the US used data from the American Community Survey reported that Telugu is the fastest growing language in the US and Ironically India is home to about four times more English speakers than 202 the US. Telugu Language attained World language Status in Fremont Unified School District. On September23, 2014 Silicon Andhra Mana Badi Telugu language Curriculum was approved by Fremont Unified School District, Board of Education as a world language to be offered as for credit course in Fremont Unified School District high schools. Students in grades 7 to 12 attending any of the Fremont Unified School districts secondary schools will now be able to enroll in a Telugu class offered by Silicon Andhra Mana Badi and earn high school credits. Efforts are underway to have this facility available in other major school districts across USA. It is also noteworthy that Students with Telugu as their Mother Tongue have repeatedly won Spelling competitions in the United States including the Top spot at the Prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee Competition pushing back the Students with English as their Mother Tongue.

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## CONCLUSION

The best way to deal with mother tongue is to make second language learners aware of its interference in the areas of pronunciation, Intonation, word formation and usage, Grammar, Idioms and Discourse structure so that they can communicate better in the second language. Each language is structured differently, and the different structures offer users different meanings and also suggest different ways of usage and construction of sentences. A comparison of L1 and L2 at various levels in order to examine and identify the differences between L1 and L2 helps in avoiding negative transfer and understand similarities to enhance internalization. Direct Method which revolutionized Teaching of English as foreign-language worldwide considered the use of the L1 as undesirable. However, recently the attitude to mother tongue and translation in language classes has undergone a positive change. According to Nation (2003) the use of L1 has a minute but significant role in language learning. Thus, the foreign language teaching field is dynamic. There are many linguists and researchers in the field of second language acquisition who agreed that L1 should be utilized in the language classroom in

particular with students who are not highly proficient in the target language. Research also shows that students learn English more quickly and effectively if they maintain and develop their proficiency in the mother tongue. L1 does the pioneering works much to the benefit of L2. If the learner has developed good reading skills in L1 i.e. the ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from context, it will be positively transferred to L2 learning. Similarly, the skills of being able to plan out a piece of writing or develop an argument in a persuasive essay can be applied in L2 once they are learned in L1. The skills acquired in mother tongue can thus be instrumental in enhancing Second Language i.e. English communication skills. The laws of learning state that the knowledge is easily gained through comparative study from known to unknown. Aruna Mohan.G (2004) opines that Pupils should never be allowed to learn in Isolation because nothing in this world exists all by itself. Israel.G (2013) also suggests teaching from the known to the unknown and building on prior knowledge for effective teaching and meaningful learning. A scholar who masters one language can easily learn many other languages, This is demonstrated by many multi-linguists/Polyglots such as our former prime minister late Sri P.V. Narasimha Rao who mastered sixteen languages. There are several polyglots in the world who mastered more than six languages. The influence of Mother tongue is inevitable. Even if no use of Mother Tongue is made interference in some measures is bound to be there. Some people are under the impression that there will be no Mother Tongue interference on Communication Skills in English if no use of Mother tongue is made in the process of teaching. But the fact is that this interference is there on account of the psychic processes at work internally and unconsciously during learning. Mother tongue serves as a buffer and a link, not a disjoiner. Telugu ranked third with 8.16% of speakers in 1971 census, the speakers' strength dropped to 7.61% in 1981 census, in 1991 census the Telugu speakers' strength slightly rose to 7.87% and again dropped to 7.19% according to 2001 census. Telugu consecutively ranked third in 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 census with the highest number of speakers in India but dropped to fourth place in 2011 census with 6.70% speakers and Marathi occupied the third position with 6.86 % speakers after Hindi 43.63% and Bengali. It is observed that there are alarming signs of people mortgaging their mother Tongue for the sake mastering communication skills in English, which is like throwing the baby along with bath water. If some measures are not taken immediately the state of Mother Tongue will be pitiable, as the enormous Traditional heritage, literary and cultural wealth hidden in the Mother Tongue will be endangered and extinct for the future generations.

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