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## Social and Linguistic Arguments in favour of the Implementation of ELT from the First Standard in Karnataka

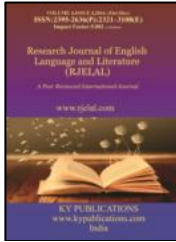
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### ABSTRACT

In the year 2007, the Government of Karnataka implemented the English as a second language from the first standard in Non-English Medium schools. Here, I try to analyze the opinions of the stakeholders such as teachers, parents, learners, inspecting authorities and administrators in this article. The opinions of the stake holders that I sketch here are based on the data that I have collected through the questionnaires and ethnographic interviews. My intention here is to test whether the opinions of the stakeholders meet the objectives set by the Government and policy makers or not. The Government has already declared that it had passed the order after the serious discussions relating to the implementation of the policy of teaching English from the first standard on the public demand, and it has quoted the findings of surveys in the field of English language teaching. But some of the intellectuals blamed the Government's action and complained that it was an act to secure vote bank and it did it to please capitalists. So, here I want to know the mindset of public/stakeholders towards English language and correlate it with the official objectives.

Keywords: ELT, Kannada Saahitya Parishat, Kangleish, Gov

When this language policy implemented in Karnataka, some thinkers opposed the Government's decision but, some intellectuals stood in favour of implementation because of many reasons. We can see six kinds of arguments in favour of implementation of the policy of teaching English from first standard.

Among six, the third kind of arguments focuses on the relationship between Kannada language and the downtrodden people. This argument opines that by teaching English language in Kannada medium schools, the Kannada language and Kannada medium schools get a new lease of life. Satish Chapparike says:

There should be compulsory Kannada medium schools throughout the state from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> standard. English medium schools should be converted into Kannada medium schools. Kannada should be made compulsory for all learners upto 10<sup>th</sup> standard as a language. Along with Kannada, English language can be taught to the learners as a second language. There is no problem (Chapparike, 2007:18-21).

Hampana, a scholar in Karnataka says:

Teaching English language from the first standard strengthens the existence of the Kannada medium schools and Kannada language. Teach English and then Kannada will survive. Use English and there will be a growth

of Kannada language (*English kalisi-Kannada ulisi, English balasi-Kannada belasiri*). Those who have learnt English have not ignored Kannada, instead have worked for the growth of it. So, if the teachers teach the best English in Kannada medium schools, the parents will send their children to government Kannada medium schools instead of giving more donations to private English medium schools. These are the real solutions for the conflict of medium of instructions. So, implementation of English as a language from the first standard is a good decision (Hampana, 2008: 21-24).

He expresses the same opinion in another magazine like this, "For the existence of Kannada medium schools, English should be taught from the first standard. Then the rural people don't send their children to English medium schools. Thus, Kannada can be made to survive" (Hampana, 2006: 71). Nataraj Huliyaar complains:

Our Jnanapeethis send their children to the English medium schools. They have no moral rights to peep into the matter of implementation of English language teaching. If the government wants to stabilize the schools, first begin English from the first standard. We can not solely depend on Kannada for our survival. He warns those who are opposing teaching of English "Don't exploit the Dalits and other backward communities in the name of language issue" (Huliyaar, 2007: 10).

Shridhar, the editor of weekly magazine *Agnee*, opines that Kannada medium should be made compulsory. At the same time teach English as a compulsory language (as quoted in Lakshmanarao K., 2007). Kannada Development Board President Siddalingayya says, "I am in favour of teaching English from the first standard. But, I oppose English as the medium of instruction. Kannada should be made compulsory language in CBSE and ICSE schools"

(Siddalingayya, 2007: 10). V.P. Niranjanaradhya opines, "For stabilizing education, English should be taught as a compulsory second language from the first standard" (Niranjanaradhya V.P., 2007: 12). K.V. Narayana, a linguist from Karnataka, speaks, "It is an age of bilingualism, not of monolinguals. So, learning English from the first standard is a welcome decision" (Narayana. K.V., 2007: 57). Justice A.C. Kabbin, Judiciary Bench at High Court announced in his verdict about the issue of *Kanglish schools*<sup>1</sup>, "You have taken the approval from the Government as Kannada medium schools. Your teaching should be in Kannada medium. You can teach English as a language. But, don't use English as the medium of instruction" (Kabbin A.C., 2007: 01). Thus the discussion was not only political and public but also one of judicial struggle. Ki. Rum. Nagaraju opines, "if the Government does not implement English language teaching from the first standard, backward communities and other organizations will approach the court very soon" (Nagaraju K.R., 2007: 12).

K.V. Narayana says, "The Government has decided to implement teaching of English from the first standard which no one should stop. It is an essential language" (Narayana K.V., 2007: 12). In this context, R. Mahadevappa opines:

Teaching of English from the first standard is a progressive step on the part of the Government. It decreases the gap between rural and urban in educational system. Kannada language will not be affected by English. This is proved by many professors of English who have contributed a lot to Kannada literature (Mahadevappa R., 2007: 09).

The fourth category of arguments is related to the teaching methodology of English language. They urged the education department to teach English scientifically. In this context, K.T. Gatti says:

If you teach English scientifically as a language from the beginning in Kannada medium schools, English medium schools will also

<sup>1</sup> Kanglish schools is a popular name for those schools which are on paper Kannada medium schools as they have taken permission to teach in Kannada but teach in English medium. It was not possible to obtain permission to start

English medium schools in Karnataka due to an order by the court. In order to get permission and for the record many used to obtain permission to start Kannada medium schools but later operate as English medium schools.

begin to teach Kannada as a language perfectly or in the future, they will also turn into Kannada medium schools. Then the state will develop as Japan, Germany and China (Gatti K.T., 2006: 19).

According to N.S. Raghunath, English can be taught from the first standard on the following conditions:

- It should be taught as a spoken language for the beginners
- Examination and evaluation should be conducted only after 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> standard
- Special teachers should be recruited for teaching of English language. Other teachers, who are teaching other subjects, should not be given the responsibility to teach English (as quoted in Lakshmanarao K., 2007).

The fifth type of arguments is based on the language formula. The arguers demanded the Government to cancel the three language formula and adopt only two language formula i.e., Kannada and English. The organization named Kannada Rakshana Vedike urges the government, "cancel the three language formula and implement two language formula that is Kannada and English" (Kannada Rakshana Vedike, 2007: 01).

The sixth kind of arguments is related to the quality of education. According to the arguers, in order to improve the quality of higher education English language is necessary. Sam Pitroda, the President of Knowledge Commission of India opines:

For the improvement of quality in higher education, the knowledge of English is very essential. So, it is better to implement English from the first standard as a language. All the states should follow this guideline. In this case, we have already given a report to the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (Pitroda, 2007: 01).

In this context, Nataraj Hulyar, a scholar demanded that English language should be made compulsory from the first standard because:

- The famous linguists like Chomsky, Fishman, Dryden and Ramein opined that a child can

learn 4 to 5 languages when it is one year old.

- If you look at the students who are joining Engineering and Medical colleges, majority of them are from English medium background students
- Every year 75,000 jobs are generated in the private sectors. Out of it 70,000 jobs require somebody who is well skilled in use of English language
- By introducing teaching of English, the conditions of the government schools will improve
- Through this we can also achieve social justice to some extent (as quoted in Lakshmanarao K., 2007).

Thus, we can see both sets of arguments on the issue of introducing teaching of English from first standard. According to Narahalli Balasubramanyam, "It is a crucial issue. On one side it is related to commercial value (English is for the sake of living) and another side it is related to feelings and sensations (Emotive language i.e., Kannada). Both need to be balanced" (as quoted in Lakshmanarao K., 2007). In this scenario, the participation of educationists and psychologists in the discussion was very less. But, litterateurs and intellectuals of the state participated in a major way. Those who opposed the Government's plan talked in an emotional manner. According to them, educational issue should not be politicized. It must not be linked to the castes and communities. By, implementing English language from the first standard, the Government is trying to convert all Kannada medium schools into English medium. Teaching one more language is not the issue but it is related to emotional, cultural and social life of Karnataka. English language teaching is a psychological exploitation of Kannadigas. It decreases the critical thinking power of man and makes him compromise on everything. It is in the interest of the Government and capitalists not of the parents and other stakeholders. We lose our culture and tradition. Basically, English has a confusing structure and pronunciation pattern. So, if it is taught

to the beginners, they get confused and there might be a chance of discontinuation of their education. Learning English is a symbol of slavery and moreover it is a vote bank policy of the government. The Government has ignored all the reports whether it is Gokak, Champa and Baraguru on the issue of language teaching. English can be learnt by anyone who is in touch with that language. A panwala of the five star hotel can learn English within 3 months if he uses it constantly. So, language should not be taught but it should to be acquired. That is why, there is no need of teaching English language from the first standard.

I give in this paragraph, a summary of the arguments in favour of implementation of English language teaching in Karnataka. Most of the students fail in English language in S.S.L.C., P.U.C and in other competitive examinations like K.A.S. It is due to the lack of knowledge in English. So, teach it from the first standard. The call centers do not need any qualification but they need the knowledge of English. So, teach English as a communicative language. By teaching English, our Kannada medium schools survive. The survival of the Kannada medium government schools means the survival of Kannada language. English language is the best aid for development of Kannada culture. It develops the self-confidence in the learners especially rural learners. Otherwise, they will lose opportunities and the same will be grabbed by urban people. By adopting this language from the beginning, the quality of higher and technical education will be improved. The phobia towards English is actually developed by the teachers and intellectuals. It is an age of bilinguals. So, teach English from the first standard without a second thought.

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