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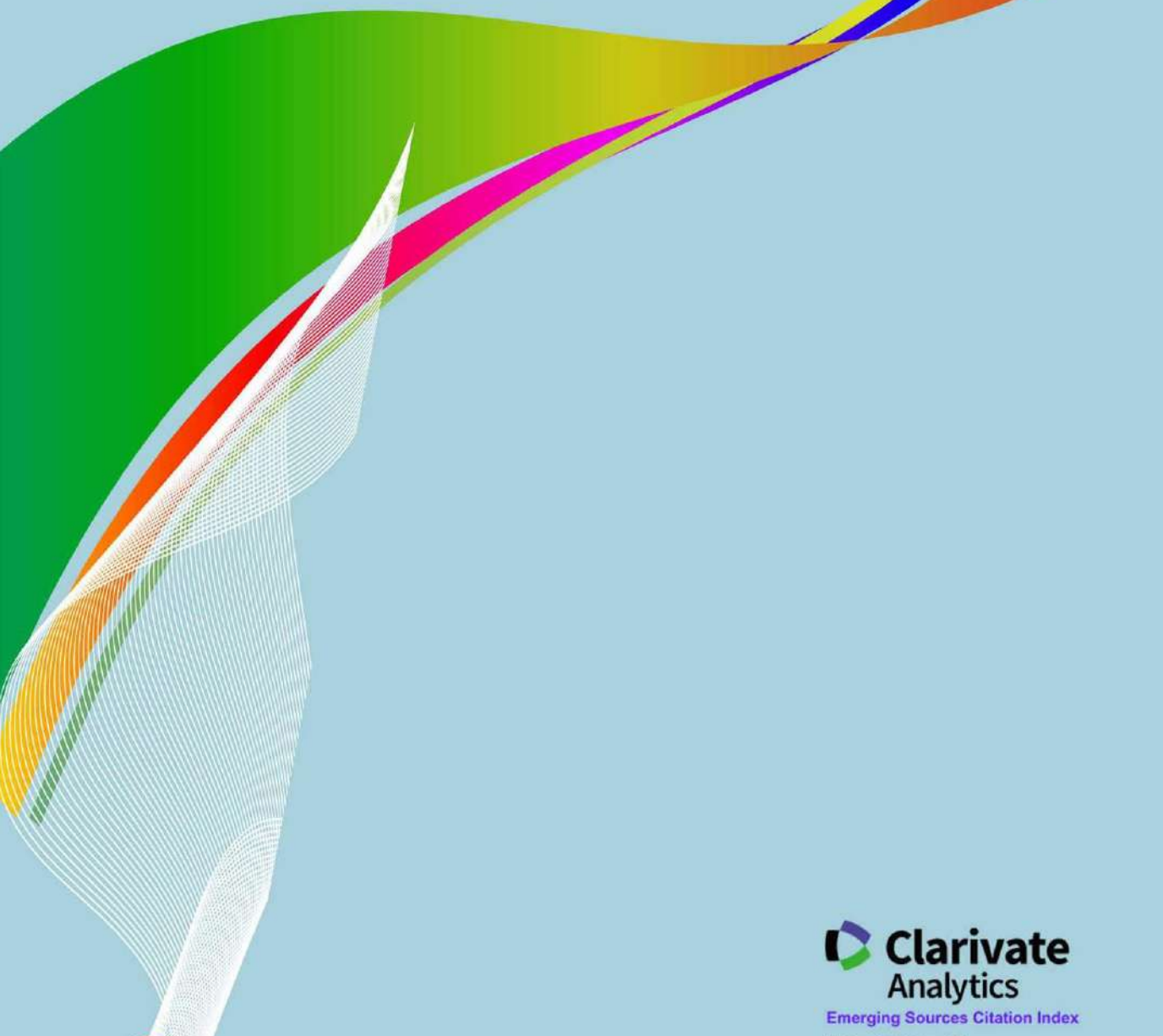
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**Mother Tongue as a Threat for English Language Learning at Primary Level
in Indian Schools: a Survey-Based Study**

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MOTHER TONGUE AS A THREAT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT PRIMARY LEVEL IN INDIAN SCHOOLS: A SURVEY-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

This study looked at the possibility of using the mother tongue (MT) as an instructional tool at the elementary level of schooling in India. Many academics have remained intent on using their native languages as a medium of teaching in elementary schools because of the country's multilingual character. This study explained why MT, as an instructional tool, may or may not be successful in the coming years, and many issues that make it impossible to carry out are also discussed. Through a purposeful sampling method, the researcher gathered data from 150 elementary school teachers from government-run and private schools in the western part of Uttar Pradesh, India. To gather data, the researcher needed a well-designed questionnaire consisting of questions in two parts- Part A and Part B. The first part wanted demographic data on respondents. In contrast, the second part focused on the many reasons that encourage or discourage primary school students in India from learning their native language. Alpha, mean, and standard deviation were used to evaluate the data obtained. Using MT as an instructional tool in Indian elementary education, the multilingual character of India, and the unavailability of instructional material and scientific equipment in indigenous languages constitute hindrances.

Keywords: *Primary Education; Indian Schools; Mother Tongue; Medium of Instruction.*



A. Introduction

There is no doubt that language has played a central role in day-to-day interactions among human beings, giving rise to social order. Saville-Troike talks about language use in a setting where using spoken, audible, random symbols to communicate becomes a habit (Saville-Troike, 2012). Language is a valuable gift, The transmission of language from one generation to another may be seen as the transmission of culture. It has long been known that history and culture heavily affect the language of that specific population (Jiang et al., 2022; Ghahderijani et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021; Menon et al., 2014).

In India, three sets of languages play an essential role in communication: the primary languages, which may include many different dialects, the mother tongue, and English. Because of its colonial legacy, the English language has been of enormous importance to the country. It has initially served in trade, governance, education, and communications. It is thus essential for all societies to have a common language in order to transfer information. The only way to pass on education is via a language, whether it is the native language or a foreign one (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Communication is essential to all human interactions, and this can only be achieved via language that is mutually understandable by the speaker and listener. Due to the many languages and dialects, there has been no firm indigenous language strategy. For communication and social interaction among people from different states or regions, dependence on English can be observed. English has been essential to all aspects of national life for about one and a half centuries (Kumar & Supriyatno, 2021; Ritonga et al., 2021). At all levels of education for decades, the instructional tool in elementary schools is initially the native tongue or the language of the immediate community, and at a later stage, English (Pan et al., 2022; Çakmak et al., 2021; D. Lang-ay & M. Sannadan, 2021; Akinsanya & Tella, 2019; Fakeye, 2011).



This movement for using native languages or MT as an instructional tool in elementary education began several decades ago. Many educationists claim that youngsters understand better by practicing the vocabulary and language they use daily.

The study by Tonio and Ella (2019) investigated future teachers' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue as a medium of teaching in Grades 1-3, as well as the problems they believe to be related to its implementation (Tonio & Ella, 2019). They think it would help teachers interact with students more effectively and make learning activities more engaging for students. However, several problems connected to its use have been noted. These problems include the difficulty of translation, the teacher's lack of mother tongue proficiency, the students' lack of mother tongue proficiency, the students' deterioration in English proficiency, and the teacher's lack of mother tongue teaching experience. Further investigation revealed that origin—not age or gender—was the element that affected respondents' opinions the most. Their study showed that pre-service teachers are open to receiving training to teach in their mother tongue and have a good attitude about employing it as a teaching medium.

The UNESCO mission, one of the most prominent proponents of employing the mother language as MOI, guides those who advocate for its use as a method of instruction. UNESCO has promoted teaching young and elementary school students in their original language since 1953. (UNESCO, 1953). It has been demonstrated that allowing children to study in their original language increases the likelihood of enrolling in school and succeeding there (Kosonen et al., 2005). Additionally, it increases the likelihood that the parents of the kids would speak with their kids' instructors and be concerned about their education. In addition, Mukherjee (2015) reaffirmed the directive of UNESCO, which stated that initiatives for bilingual education should precede and be supplemented by efforts to help students study in their native language. The essay by Mukherjee covered this.



Additionally, Perez and Alieto (2018) note that even seemingly trivial choices like the language of instruction during a child's early years of education can have a substantial impact (Perez & Alieto, 2018). Choosing the appropriate language to study makes a difference in academic accomplishment. On the other hand, choosing an incorrect language harms the learning process.

Teaching using Mother Tongue in government schools in India received various criticisms or objections from the different sectors of society. Some agreed while others posed several arguments on the issue, saying it is a step backward and does not solve the problem in our educational system. Despite the negative perceptions toward the mother tongue, the overwhelming numbers of research that support the use of L1 have outweighed the misconceptions presented (Kumar et al., 2022; Yunus et al., 2022).

Using Mother Tongue (Hindi) as a medium of classroom instruction is creating a threat to the students of Hindi medium schools that they cannot bring up to the level of the students who speak English. This study examines how the use of Mother Tongue affects language proficiency in English and its associated consequence on future achievement.

With this view, this research aims to investigate the idea of teaching scientific topics in elementary schools by using MT as an instructional tool, considering various other issues that may impede this method of education. Study participants include 150 elementary school teachers from government-run and private schools in the western part of Uttar Pradesh, India. The views of 150 elementary school teachers regarding whether mother tongue should be used as a medium of instruction. It also aims to uncover variables that may prevent primary school students from using their MT as an instructional tool and ultimately justify whether it is possible to teach scientific topics in elementary schools using the MT as an instructional tool.



B. Method

The research was conducted using the quasi-experimentation methodology, specifically a Pre-test, Post-test Control Group Factorial Design. A descriptive survey research design is employed to carry out this study. The subjects of the study are the 150 teachers teaching at the elementary level in the schools of the western part of Uttar Pradesh in India. Through purposive selection, a sample of 150 instructors was selected from government-run and private elementary schools (5 each). It was decided to select instructors from the three different ethnic groups to control any racial prejudice.

In order to gather data for this study, the researcher has designed a Questionnaire. Part A and Part B. Part A is meant for collecting demographic information, whereas Part B is divided into cluster A and cluster B. In cluster A, eight questions focused on investigating the various challenges inhibiting MT as an instructional tool in elementary schools. In contrast, in cluster B, four items were intended to determine how much mother tongue usage was possible in elementary classrooms. Three specialists from educational research verified the instrument, and their contribution to the final instrument was vital.

This study verified the reliability of the Questionnaire, which was then polytomous scored. The final instrument was given to twenty instructors in the region of western Uttar Pradesh. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, means, standard deviations, and ranks, were used to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in this study. The respondents' performance levels on the pre-and post-tests were determined using the mean and standard deviation, respectively (Ajmal & Kumar, 2020). The data were examined and utilized to calculate the instrument's reliability coefficient, which came out to be 0.75, the same value found as per standard, which maintains that instruments with reliability coefficients ranging from 0.5 and above are said to be dependable.



The data's mean and standard deviation were used for the study's analysis. For research question one, the conclusion was reached by determining a score between 0.00 and 4.00. The scale was leveled as under:

Strong Disagreement:	0.00 - 1.00
Disagreement:	1.00 - 2.49
Agreement:	2.50 - 3.49
Strong Agreement:	3.50 - 4.00

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

As stated in previous sections, the descriptive survey research design is employed to carry out this study. The subjects of the study are the 150 teachers teaching at the elementary level in the schools of the western part of Uttar Pradesh in India. To gather data, the researcher needed a well-designed questionnaire consisting of questions in two parts- Part A and Part B. - Part A and Part B. The first part, Part-A, was about demographic data on respondents. In contrast, the second part, Part-B, focused on the many reasons that encourage or discourage primary school students in India from learning their native language.

a. PART A: Profile of the Respondents

For data collection, the researcher selected a sample of 150 instructors from government-run and private elementary schools (5 each) through purposive selection. The average age of the respondents was 45.34 years old, and the vast majority were male. Regarding the kind of primary school respondents worked in, 87.3% were employed by public schools, while private schools employed 22.7%. Most of the respondents' school education was delivered in Hindi, which was also considered their Mother Tongue.



b. PART B: Cluster A- Factors affect the use of MT as an instructional tool at the level of elementary education

Part -B of the Questionnaire is about the reasons that encourage or discourage primary school students in India from learning their native language. It is divided into cluster A and cluster B. In cluster A, eight questions focused on investigating the various challenges inhibiting MT as an instructional tool in elementary schools. In contrast, in cluster B, four items were intended to determine how much mother tongue usage was possible in elementary classrooms. Alpha, mean, and standard deviation were used to evaluate the data obtained (Khan et al., 2020); (Praveen et al., 2022).

Table 1: Use of MT as an instruction tool in elementary education (N= 150)

SN	Statement: How much...	X̄	SD	Dec
1	The instruction using MT is affected by multi-linguality in India	3.25	0.93	A
2	The use of MT is affected by the status of the English language in India	3.21	0.93	A
3	The instruction using MT is affected by L1 of the instructors	3.19	0.93	A
4	MT as a medium of instruction is affected by inter-caste marriages	3.27	0.98	D
5	MT-based teaching is affected by learners of varied ethnic groups	3.24	0.97	A
6	MT as an instructional tool is affected by the language of available teaching-learning resources	3.16	0.90	A
7	MT as an instructional tool is affected by the language of a learner's immediate environment	2.21	0.93	D
8	MT as an instructional tool is affected by occupational transfers of parents	2.21	0.93	D
Cluster mean		2.84	0.94	A

Abbreviations used: MT = Mother tongue, L1 = First Language, A = Agreement, D = Disagreement, SA= Strong Agreement, SD=Strong Disagreement

The results, as given in Table 1, demonstrate the Mean (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for the elementary level of education in the western part of Uttar Pradesh when respondents opposed using their home tongue as a medium of teaching as determined by the Questionnaire. The research findings indicate that the values for items 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 are



generally between 2.50 and 3.49, whereas the values for items 4, 7, and 8 are between 1.50 and 2.49. The analysis results, which have a cluster mean of 2.84 and a standard deviation of 0.94, indicate that multilingualism, the prominent status of the English language in the country, and many variables impact the usage of MT as an instructional tool.

c. Cluster B- Possible to use MT as an instructional tool at this level to teach science

Table 2: Feasibility of using MT as an instructional tool for science subjects

SN	Statements	X̄	SD	Dec
1	To what degree do scientific inventions affect the use of MT for instruction in elementary schools?	3.25	0.93	HD.
2	To what degree do scientific equipment names affect MT's use for instruction in elementary schools?	3.21	0.93	HD.
3	To what degree do the translated scientific formulae affect the use of MT for instruction in elementary schools?	2.27	0.93	LD.
4	To what degree does the language of learning resources available in science affect the use of MT as an instructional tool at the elementary level?	3.19	0.98	HD.
	Cluster Mean	2.98	0.94	HD.

Abbreviations used: HD = High Degree, L. D= Low Degree, V.L.D=Very Low Degree, V.H.D= Very High Degree

According to the research results, as shown in Table 2, the respondents' use of MT in elementary education is practicable. Mean items 1, 2, and 4 are located within the defined high extent range of 2.05 to 3.49, while item 3 is within the defined low extent range of 1.50 to 2.49. The cluster mean of 2.98 with a standard deviation of 0.94 indicates the degree to which scientific equipment innovation and the lack of names for scientific tools influence primary-level education in the country.

2. Discussion

Based on the data analysis in the previous section, the researchers found that Mother Tongue is the first language every normal kid is born



with. It opens an opportunity to advance a child's inherent tendency and aptitude to pick up and speak the local dialect at a certain age and is referred to as the language acquisition device (LAD). Communication is the process through which children acquire their first language. The home language is the medium through which the practice is passed on, and close links of parental and filial affection are created. As mentioned before, language is a very regional phenomenon. It is inherited and then passed on; therefore, an individual who speaks a specific language as their L1 or as a native tongue has the highest fluency in that language, which they utilize daily.

The mother tongue is the language a kid acquires in his earliest experiences of life, which gives him the ability to think and fantasize, and where he may communicate his thoughts and emotions effortlessly and comfortably (Al-Harbi, 2020; Kumar et al., 2021). The analysis of Weisleder and Fernald supports the claim that all normal children know how to speak their native language by age five (Weisleder & Fernald, 2013). Goodwin explained how the mind and one's native language are linked (Goodwin, 2018). In his opinion, a kid is capable of recursively creating grammar in his home language simply by applying rules.

According to Ozoemena et al. (2021), "Using the native language or the first language to educate at formal and non-formal levels is referred to as mother tongue education" (Ozoemena et al. 2021). In agreement with Ozoemena's assertions, Davies says that squandered potentials are often seen when students try to learn a language without using their original tongue, which causes developmental and scholastic defeat (Davies, 2007). Yadav asserts, "Mother tongue education is the systematic way of training and instructing a child through the medium of first language" (Yadav, 2014). According to him, it utilizes a rigorous method in which children are taught using their original language or a mother tongue approach which is a way of official education in schools. MT or L1 has been promoted as a language of formal education since 1953 by UNESCO (Ezeokoli & Ugwu, 2019).



This evidence supports the need for a country's mother language education. Scholars have also expressed support for first language instruction in a particular society's educational progress. Numerous studies have been conducted on the language spoken in the local area. In a study named 'the Ife project,' carried out from 1974-1979 in Nigeria, it is claimed that the youngsters gain a better understanding of their cultural and democratic ideals and therefore empower them more to assist in the country's socioeconomic and political growth. In order to see whether using English was effective for teaching, the control group was given the responsibility of instruction. English was utilized for teaching in a formal yet traditional manner. The experimenters declared that the primary school students who had used the mother tongue method of instruction learned quicker and better and excelled in all areas.

Concerning the country's education policy, one of the challenges in implementing it is that it is a multilingual nation with many states and union territories. Although this study was conducted to assess using the mother tongue as a tool in language education, it cannot be relied upon as a benchmark for validating that system. This means it does not represent a broad agreement on using the mother tongue as a tool in the country. While considering the social issue and dislocation, using the mother tongue as a tool may create a problem due to a system of regional-based education. The parents with transferable jobs would have to move their children to new places to get their primary education. It will take a long time and expenditure on the child's education if the mother tongue remains the medium of instruction. Indian languages are full of traditional concepts, ideas, thoughts, skills, and methods but are lacking in conveying newer western conceptions, ideas, thoughts, skills, and procedures. In a study by Böhmann & Trudell on mother language education, he advocated for an unprecedented change in the use of English in formal education and school systems, and they maintained that using the local language would promote national development (Böhmann & Trudell, 2008).

All these studies in this area reflect the views of either a specific language community or an instruction strategy that does not include the whole nation. There was also no consideration of the obstacle to the language barrier in schooling. In addition, they cared little about teaching scientific topics in the native language. This research hopes to resolve this information gap by asking elementary school teachers to provide their views on the importance of language they prefer as an instructional tool in education. The objective of the research is also to discover why people favor using their mother language for instruction in their primary schools and whether it is possible to use MT as an instructional tool in elementary schools in the scientific disciplines.

India has received a permanent gift in the form of the English language from the former British colonial rulers. Even though the indigenous language - Hindi - has been declared the national language, the English language plays a pivotal role for several reasons. As a result, it will continue to be its lingua franca and the language of wider communication. The English language is the language of the mass media, electronic and print media, and the preferred official language of the government. It has been used at all levels of education and in several disciplines and has also been learned as a separate subject. It has become an essential requirement for admission to higher study programs for several reasons, one of which is the availability of study materials in this language. Additionally, it is involved in various international transactions (Abdelrady et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2022).

English, thus, fulfills three functions, all of which may be summed up as follows:

- a. In the language of the masses, the English language is widely regarded as a global language due to the widespread use of international functions. First, it connects individuals from diverse multilingual cultures with the rest of the globe. For instance, English is used in international relations, commerce, and sports. In order to be able to participate in discussions at organizations like WHO,



- WTO, UNA, UNSC, etc., one has no other common language but English. Because English allows involvement in technology, research, commerce, and diplomacy, it also provides a gateway. It is also the language individuals of many ethnic groups use to interact with one another and is a factor of social and political cohesion.
- b. To a large extent, English facilitates participation in all walks of life, social, political, or economic. These individuals must be extremely well-versed in English. Admission into the parliament, the bench, the civil service, and other vital services usually requires proficiency in English. At all levels of education, there is an option for English to be used as an instructional tool.
 - c. Both horizontal and vertical mobility of individuals is enhanced by the reputation of the English language, which causes people to be seen as ignorant no matter how literate they are in their native languages.

Hoff states, "...a child is born with an innate ability to learn any human language (Hoff, 2009)." He claims every child has an inherent language acquisition device (LAD). It reflects a language's primary identity by its grammatical structures. It happens to all typical children between the ages of five and six. Dąbrowska claims that in addition to inherent principles and changeable criteria, every language has a standard set of universal grammar (Dąbrowska, 2015). Grammar is the foundation of language, and all people are born with the inherent capacity to learn and use these rules since various languages may have their grammar (Kumar, 2021).

D. Conclusion

This research shows that primary schools cannot afford to implement mother tongue teaching, at least for the time being. Through this study, the conclusions above have been validated, along with other related findings, demonstrating that the multilingual makeup of the country is impeding the use of MT as an instructional tool at the elementary level of education.



The research question related to if there is a correlation between the availability of learning resources and scientific equipment not having names in the native language and new scientific innovations not having names in the mother tongue was also supported by this study. Because of the multilingual character, none of the country's major ethnic groups and minority ethnic groups would tolerate any of the other languages being imposed on them. Mass development of learning resources in the native language of instruction, together with the training and recruitment of teachers in the adopted language of instruction, will come about due to mother tongue education. Long-term planning and testing will be required before the implementation of these ideas is feasible. The findings of this research also suggest that the government should use a long-term approach to prepare for creating a national language to take the place of English as the country's preferred language.

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