

SANSKRIT AS COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODOLOGY: AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

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Abstract: The Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary defines "communicative" as "ready and willing to talk and give information". Noam Chomsky's communicative view of language and theory of competence has much to do with linguistic competence. According to him "competence was internalized knowledge of the system of syntactic and phonological rules of the language that the ideal speaker – hearer possesses in the native language...", communicative competence is the ability to use the language appropriate to given social context. It is the ability to say or write something which is grammatical, appropriate, fluent, formally possible, feasible and socially and contextually acceptable.

Introduction: Communicative Approach focuses on message rather than medium. In it learners must be able to participate in their own learning process. This implies that the teacher must be prepared to deviate from his plan and enter into real conversation with his students. This highlights to the fact that the role of the teacher is one of facilitator and not of an instructor. A participatory atmosphere is to prevail in the classroom. Here there is a shift in focus of attention from grammatical to the communicative properties of language.

Communicative approach is based on the belief that acquiring a language means to communicate confidently and fluently in the language. The view is that the difficulties that the students encounter arise not so much from a defective knowledge of the system of Sanskrit, but from unfamiliarity with Sanskrit use.

There are two types of communicative language teaching. They are the Synthetic and Analytic approaches. Synthetic approach is characterized by the rigorous specification of communicative, coupled with a methodology which is not significantly unlike traditional methodology. In it the teacher isolates and orders the forms of the linguistic systems systematically present them to the student one by one thus builds up language competence. Analytic approach proposed methodological procedures that are quite often revolutionary. In this it is the student who does the analysis form data presented to him in the form of natural chunks.

Language teaching programmes must be oriented towards catering to the needs of the learners so that in an acquisition – poor environment, the learning of Sanskrit is facilitated by the intrinsic motivation and interest of the learners. The teacher can facilitate this process by providing opportunities for active language use to the learners. The teacher needs to function as an organizer and a facilitator in the classroom and provide the learners opportunities for language use. In an acquisition – poor environment the teacher needs to be especially sensitive to the

motivation or needs of the learners for learning the language. So that he/she may adopt the materials and organize the learning environment to fulfill the learner's needs.

The term 'Sanskrit' as used now means 'well done' or 'rectified'. The Vedas, the universally accepted first scripture of humanity are written in this language. The rituals and modes of worship mentioned in the Vedas are directly related to the gods (Devas). There is also a deep rooted faith among the Indian public that Sanskrit is the language of Devas. Hence this language is rightly called Daivi vak (Deva Bhishas) during the vedic period.

Panini, the great grammarian endowed this language with his famous grammar in the 7th century B.C. From then on, this language is known as 'Samskratam'. A number of great works of eternal value like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, Darsanas and equally valuable poetic and dramatic works of Kalidasa. Bhasa, Magha, Bharavi and the like are written in Sanskrit language. Besides, the great sciences indispensable to the life and progress of humanity like Astronomy Astrology, Medicine, Architectures, Physical sciences and other branches of knowledge were for the first time written in Sanskrit alone.

Even a layman of the olden days is quite able to understand and appreciate these great works though unable to speak in Sanskrit. But the Sanskrit Scholars of olden days acquired the rare ability to speak fluently in this language. Even in the modern days we know of several eminent Scholars in India and abroad having the ability to speak fluently in this language. It is therefore needless to say that Sanskrit is ever a living language. It will continue to be so as long as civilization exists.

People all over the world thirsting for knowledge has been evincing great interest to study Sanskrit from the days of distant past. The interest has gathered momentum in the modern times. The old method of learning the script and the grammar at the initial stage is indeed a difficult and tedious process. We

have therefore evolved a novel method to help people to learn Sanskrit, with the aid of their own script. The knowledge of Nagari script and a tutor are not necessary.

Sanskrit can be called as a “language of consciousness”, may be because it opens the door to India’s rich spiritual literature. Sanskrit is not restricted to spirituality and religion, however, but also encompasses a vast literature of many genres; and for us to understand the beauty behind those copious beautiful texts, learning the Sanskrit language is a must.

Sanskrit, which is a primary language of communication in ancient India, lives on in modern India, though not in its full form; it survives in bits and pieces, in one way or another, in the various Indian languages that have descended from it. For natives of India, therefore, it is a matter of recapitulation of a language, which is present in them and merely seeking a proper channel. Unlike English and other modern European language, Sanskrit seems somewhat difficult to understand for most Westerners. This is true not only because of its script (devanagari), which is quite foreign to Western and European countries, but also because of its grammatically complex structure and highly inflected forms, which can be more richly inflected even than Greek or Latin, particularly the verbal conjugations.

The Indian constitution recognized the eternal merit of Sanskrit when it approved this language as one of our fifteen National languages. The unique merit of Sanskrit lies in its outstanding achievement of the cultural unity of our great country. India is revered and respected because of her spiritual and cultural greatness endowed by the valuable Sanskrit scriptures like Vedas, Puranas and Smritis. It is clear therefore that Sanskrit has been recognized on its special merit. It matters little though millions do not speak and write it. The other fourteen Indian Languages have been accepted as national languages as millions speak and write them.

Sanskrit as the language of national integration and problem of languages in India:

In talking about national integration and the language problems of India, what do we really mean by the term national? The language problems are also worth considering” in accordance with this.

Is India a nation, or is it a super-nation or a union of nations? For, the Indian Union, or the India that is Bharat not merely a community as defined in anthropological terms, nor is it a nation as described in political terms. Everyone knows that Bharatavarsha (i.e., South Asian) subcontinent is a land of many communities and many peoples even though not all of Bharatavarsha is

geographically included in the Indian Union. The latter is also a nation of many states and many languages, a nation that is composite and whose states are also empowered to rule in certain respects but not autonomous and yet the Indian nation does not quite accord them complete rights over all their powers and call itself a federation. It considers itself to be a union constituted of several different states. we would like to accept both the integration of India and the internal integration of each of its constituent states as national integrity. We shall therefore assume India to be a super-nation and we shall accept the states included in it as being individual nation-like bodies.

Students of political science cannot help being perplexed at the identification of the entire Indian Union. This is because our Indian nation did not develop according to their concept of the nation-state. If we call India a nation, what shall we call the large and small states within it, or the different groups, big and small, that exist within it? They are certainly not all nations according to the principles of Western political science. Upon reflecting on this fact, many people have seen almost all the characteristics of a nation in each of the distinctive states of India and have called them nationalities-as though each one of them are worthy of recognition as a distinct nation-state. Again, there are small, distinct groups within each of these states. There are also distinctive groups in several respects. we might call them national groups i.e., they are not nationalities but they have a distinct identity owing to certain (internal) affinities. They do not wish to merge these identities into those of the states, but nonetheless, in some cases those identities are readily and naturally merging into the bigger identities of nationality. Again, in some instances a few of these groups are determined not to sacrifice their respective identities at any cost. Because of this they are almost in revolt against the state, they each wish to constitute a separate political identity based on their own socio-cultural life. Such small groups are certainly obstacles in the way of integration for the states that exist today. A distinct language (if it exists for a given community) is also one of the reasons why the groups think in terms of separateness from the relevant. For the present, we have to ponder over the integration of the Indian nation in general and one of its problems, viz., its language problems.

Despite being a single nation, India is a land of many languages and many races in its size and its population. If is said that its size is comparable to that of Continental Europe if one keeps in mind how many countries there are, how many languages are spoken, how many nation-states have evolved and

how many differences and at various points in time battles and wars have occurred amongst them on the European landmass, the complexities of national integration in India do not appear surprising at all. Instead, the extent of unity that has grown within it is an especially surprising fact of history.

Battling against many odds, the people of India have gradually discovered in their own way of life a very real and yet lofty principle. We are extremely familiar with this principle, a principle which is described as 'Unity in diversity' the uniting of all though according special recognition to their differences, whether they are big or small, not by force but by applying this principle naturally and humanely according to India's own socio-cultural mores practiced in her way of life. The Indian people are never very actively interested in political matters, they are accustomed to pursuing social and cultural matters and a relatively simple economic life. Kings came and went, their socio-cultural life would continue at a steady undisturbed pace. A new king would come in and gradually be assimilated into this mainstream climate. There is no need for us to repeat the celebrated line from Tagore's poem, Bharat- Tirtha 'India - the Place of Pilgrimage'. "The Saka and Hun hordes, the Pathans and the Mughals have merged into a single body." Even before that, by virtue of a unique way of life the Indians of earlier days are at work constructing their society and civilization according to this humanitarian principle, without even realizing it. In their origins, the inhabitants of India did not all belong to a single ethnic group, either. According to the anthropologists, at least five distinct human groups came to India during the most ancient period. In brief and in general terms, discounting all the terminological distinctions drawn by the anthropologists one may say that at first there are Negroid people in India. They also had one or more languages of their own. However, not many of these Negroid people survive today in India and perhaps we have inherited just one word from their language, viz., the word *badur* 'bat' (as a mammal). At the second and the third stages, almost around the same time the people of the Ancient or Proto-Dravidian group came in via the Western coast and the people of the third group by boat and across, Myanmar (Burma) from the direction of Eastern India into all regions of Northern Indian. These People are called the Austro-Asiatics. We know about the native languages of the Dravidians, of course and ample evidence has been found of the languages and other aspects of lifestyle of the Austro-Asiatic people. In short, one may say that all of the four ethnic groups and languages of present day Southern India (Viz., Tamil, Telugu, Kannadiga and Keralite or Malayalam) are originally of the Dravidian family. We also know that they were quite advanced in civilisation even in the ancient times. Even without embarking on a debate one

can assert that they are advanced communities for their times, there are no other communities in South Asia that are comparable. They coexisted next to their contemporaneous Austro-Asiatic people and perhaps even mingled with them, these people of the Austric group are the first ancestors of the people of regions such as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. We of the modern period adopted some elements of their lifestyle and their customs a long time ago without realizing it. We cannot claim that we get very much from them directly today. However, once upon a time the people among them who belonged to branches possessing a more advanced way of life constituted the backbone of communities such as the Bengalis and their customs and practices still remain intermixed unawares in our way of life.

Thereafter came the fourth group, the one that is called Indo-Aryan we may simply call them the Vedic Aryans. There is no point in discussing them again afresh. These were the people who spread all over South Asia through their languages, their customs and their cultural procedures. Only the Dravidians in the South preserved their own identity and civilisation. Gradually, however, the Aryans grew more powerful and with the advancement of their civilisation, spread amongst the Dravidians of the South with their 'Aryan' languages. The Dravidian languages and Dravidian society continued to evolve under considerable Aryan influence. Since the past thirty years or so, the Tamils and more generally the people of the Dravidian group who were oppressed by the Brahmanically driven Aryans have begun efforts to activate a Non-Brahmin movement against this Aryanisation and virtually eliminate all Aryan words from Dravidian languages and they have begun to curb the sociopolitical powers of the Southern Brahmin descendants of the Aryans (who have long since become Dravidian-speaking) and they themselves (the Dravidians) are instead becoming dominant.

Of course, apart from these four original groups, different branches of the Mongoloid group have always been coming into Eastern India; they have come across the Himalayas as well and in the east they have spread through modern Mizoram Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland and the valleys of Myanmar (Burma), through North Bengal right up to Eastern Bihar. They are also scattered over many regions with their respective dialects or languages of the Tibeto-Burman subfamily. On the other hand, their languages have also influenced the language of the people of areas such as Sylhet, Cachar, Tripura, Mymensingh (in Bangladesh), etc. Of course, it goes without saying that even though the Assamese language is of the Indo-Aryan family in origin, it has come under considerable influence of the Tibeto-Burman group.

Therefore, for many centuries Bharatavarsha had been a land of many communities, a land of many languages;

since then many groups of people such as the Sakas, the Huns, the Pathans and the Mughals have come and continued to come a fact that need hardly be mentioned. What is important to realize, however, is that India has always been a land of many communities, many races, many languages, many dialects and that the communities of India, perhaps because they have to live amongst so many different kinds of people, have learned through their immediate senses to 'live and let live' and have learned by virtue of their mental perception and human awareness that unity in diversity is their principal *telas* (goal) or purpose in history.

That history has never flowed on an uninterrupted course. Today, likewise, there is no dearth of obstacles to the application of the principle of 'unity in diversity'. These are, for instance, (a) communal conflicts, (b) regional conflicts, (c) all manner of fights arising out of caste and class distinctions, (d) animosity over language (i.e., conflict over the national language question and various anomalies in the efforts on the part of minor languages to establish themselves and finally, (e) a variety of deprivations of the rights of all the other classes belonging to the entire country owing to the vested interest of the oppressor class.

The communicative view of language can be summarized as follow:

- 1) Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
- 2) The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
- 3) The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
- 4) The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features but categories of functional and communicative meaning exemplified in discourse.

One would get an excellent model of language use if one uses Searle's illocutionary acts to fill in Haliday's matrix of language functions. Significantly, J.A. Van Ek (1979:113), while setting up his list of language functions, has distinguished six main categories of verbal communication:

1. Imparting and seeking factual information;
2. expressing and finding out intellectual attitudes;
3. expressing and finding out emotional attitudes,
4. expressing and finding out moral attitudes;
5. getting things done (suasion);
6. socializing

Communicative competence thus rests on a set of composite skills. Emphasising the communicative aspect of language learning Canale and Swain (1980:27) have observed:

"Communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communicative strategies, or what

we will refer to as strategic competence. There is no strong theoretical or empirical motivation for the view that grammatical competence is any ore or less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic competence or strategic competence. The primary goal of a communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge for the learner, an outcome that is not likely to result from overemphasis on one form of competence over the other throughout a second language programme."

Communicative Language Teaching, like any other kind of language teaching, should be geared to the objectives of the course and the learners' needs. Piepho (1981:8) has discussed the following levels of objectives in a communicative approach:

1. interactive and content level (language as a means of expression)
2. linguistic and instrumental level (language as a semiotic system)
3. affective level of interpersonal relationships (language as a means of expressing value judgments).
4. level of individual learning needs (remedial learning) level of general extra linguistic needs.

Teaching materials play an important role in taking the learners to the threshold of independent language use. Incorporating authentic materials, creating realistic situations and encouraging learners to participate in activities which help develop communicative skills and strategies should be a concern for the teachers. By encouraging learner's interest, challenging their intellect, teachers can provide much of the stimulation, which will motivate them to become more independent in their use of sanskrit. It is not enough to teach learners how to manipulate the structures of the second language. They must also develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time. The teachers must therefore provide learners with ample opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purposes, which is otherwise very limited. The learner can be placed in situations where he must use language as an instrument for satisfying immediate communicative needs, and where the criterion for success is functional effectiveness rather than structural accuracy. The learner can be helped to use language as an instrument for social interaction in which emphasis is on both the communicative effectiveness and the social acceptability of the language used.

The portfolio assessment showed that as learners achieve greater independence in their learning and use of language, they will be able to move more swiftly from the initial learning of new language to

the point where they have integrated it into their repertoire and can use it in more independent forms of interaction. Portfolio assessment activates learners as it is the assessment of evidence of effort, progress and product and provides the learners with feedback and assistance at their individual levels, helping learners to become meta-cognitive.

The development of communicative competence can take place if learners have motivation and opportunity to express their own identity and to relate with people around them. It therefore requires

a learning atmosphere, which gives them a sense of security and value as individuals. In turn, this atmosphere depends to a large extent on the existence of interpersonal relationships which do not create inhibitions but are supportive and accepting.

The teacher needs to be especially sensitive to the motivation or need of the learners for learning the language, so that the learner may adapt the materials and organize the learning environment to fulfill the learner's needs and lower the affective filter.

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