

understand both connotations and see what meaning fits in our situation. Standard language or standard variety is defined either as a language variety used by a population for public purposes, or as a variety that has undergone standardisation. Once a standard is defined, it is treated as prestigious and appropriate, while others' languages or dialects are marginalised. It also means the form of the language widely accepted as the usual correct form. For example, you might have heard of 'standard English', 'Standard Kannada', etc.

The second sense of standard language is the language accepted as 'standard', which is associated with status. It is the language proposed or entrusted by the people, who have more power on people who have less power.

In the Indian situation, it is the second context that is true. In the history of India, mostly foreign rulers were in power and they had a prestigious status and the language given by them was considered as the standard language, and these languages were attached with status.

Let us have clarity about this issue. In India, where each individual is almost multilingual, a special prestige is attached to the English language.

Both meanings which we discussed above related to standard language, are associated with higher status.

Thus 'standard language' means either the standard form of a given language or the language accepted by the people in power as 'standard', which is also associated with status.

**Home Language:** You are familiar with this concept in the previous Unit. Let us recall the same. A home language or dialect is a language that is most commonly spoken by the members of a family for everyday interactions at home. This is also called as the family language or the language of the home.

**School Language:** You are familiar with the concept of school language also. School language is the language spoken in the school. In many situations, these are different. A child who starts school, knowing only a home language that is different from the school language, frequently needs help learning to speak the school language. If he/she is very young, he/she will learn quickly, but older children may need special classes to learn the school language.

Children acquire their competency in home language not only with immediate family members, but also through larger kinship groups, street and neighbourhood. You have studied Chomsky's concept of language learning that states that children

are born with an innate language facility. Research has shown that Indians have special ability for learning languages. Children internalise an extremely complex system of language before they come to school. Indian children come armed with two or three languages, and schools hardly exploit this ability of the students. The language used at school is highly standard or teacher-centred one, whereas the students' home language gets no regard. Indeed, they are made to unlearn the native talent by forcing conservative school practices. Schools forget that home language is a special feature, which gives identity to the children and that is why home language is significant. It is also said that children think in their native language and translate into school language.

Now let us understand the meaning of the present topic, i.e., the power dynamics of the 'standard' language as the school language vs. home language or 'dialects'.

In the Indian educational system, as a result of power dynamics, we are forced to use a 'standard language' instead of home language or dialect. What is that 'standard language'? It is English. Who were involved in power dynamics? It is the British who enforced it and the same has been continued until today. This means that the British, when they were in power had considered English as the standard language, and had promoted a sense that only those who had knowledge of English were eligible to have higher status. The seed thus sown by them has continued until today.

Power dynamics of the standard language or English in India has a long history. Understanding this historical background will help us to clarify the problem better. Therefore, let us discuss the history of English as the standard language in the educational scenario of India.

#### 'Check Your Progress' - 1

Below are given some phrases/ words in Group 'A' and Group 'B'. Match them appropriately.

	Group A	Group B	
1	Standard language in India to children	a special feature which gives identity	a
2	Home language authority is exercised	specific interactions or ways in which	b
3	School language	English	c
4	Power dynamics	should be the language of the child	d

### 1.4.3.2. History of English as the Standard Language in India

Let us trace the history of English as the standard language in India. There is evidence to show that before the British rule there was a vigorous system of indigenous education with provisions for both sectarian and secular education. However, the learning of an elite standard language was always a part of the Indian education system. Before the British, the language of power was Persian, and before that, it was Sanskrit. The British rule debated the issue for many years before deciding in favour of English in schools as the medium of instruction which accorded prestige to the English language. Even during the British rule, controversy centred round the question of education through Indian languages versus English.

India has had a love-hate relationship with the English language. In its history of over two hundred years in India, English has continued to be a hot topic for debate. Long before English was introduced as the medium of Indian education, representatives of the East India Company in their dual role as merchant-administrators debated the role of English in relation to the 'native' languages in domains such as education, judiciary, and administration. The prolonged, and often bitter debate between the Anglicists and the Orientalists undoubtedly reflects the deep understanding, that the participants in the debate had, of the social and political consequences of the choice of a language as a medium of education. The Anglicists won and English was installed as the medium of education. Inevitably, with the medium came the system of Education prevalent in Imperial England. The total structure of Indian education was recast in the English mould. English quickly became the language of power and prestige. The Indian elite, long used to exploiting political and economic advantage, promptly accepted English as the medium of communication with the rulers.

Thus, with the advent of British, English language was extensively exposed to our country. English entered our country when the British first came to India after the incorporation of the East India Company in 1600. Gradually, it found roots and continued its existence as a result of the educational policies of Lord Macaulay. From the time the British started their rule in India, English remained the language of power, status, and privilege.

The main aim of British domination was to create and maintain a class of officers, clerks, and civil servants for administration to rule the vast and expansive subcontinent. The British rulers did not want the progress of Indians, especially in the field of education. They were scared to give progressive education. They thought that with enlightenment, Indians may challenge the alien rule as was the case previously in America. Giving education for Indians was barely a political necessity for them. They encouraged classical learning for their educational policy. This was

opposed by missionaries like Charles Grant (1746-1823), who wanted to give the knowledge of English to Indians.

When there was a debate ongoing on the issue of imparting the knowledge of English to Indians, there was a controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists. It came in the way of the smooth progress of English in India. The Orientalists wanted to promote Sanskrit and Persian learning, but those who had a different vision, wanted Indians to learn English. Hence, they proposed and insisted western education through the medium of English. This proposal was strongly supported by Indian progressive reformers and intellectuals. Then the people belonging to the middle class advocated and aspired their education in English, which was the language of the rulers. They saw that the capacity to speak and write English enabled them to get well- paid, profitable jobs under the government and a decent status in society. A stronger opposition on the work of the committee was made by the directors themselves as they opposed the education of vernacular languages and literature. These differences stopped the discussion for some time, and Lord Macaulay was appointed as the President of the Committee in 1834. He strongly believed that English education was more beneficial than Arabic and Sanskrit. He made use of the available situation, and quoted that "since indigenous a great demand for English in India by the Indians. He claimed that "since indigenous languages were inadequate and chaotic, and indigenous arts and literature were petty futile things, only 'western' education with English as the sole medium would deliver the good". His aim of giving English education to Indians was only to create some interpreters for British. He wanted to create a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, morals and intellect. His recommendations were in favour of giving education in English, that too for few Indians. These recommendations were approved by.

Lord Bentick, and Macaulay's policy of education through English was passed. In 1854, Charles Wood made significant recommendations where he said, "The English is to be the medium of instruction in the higher branches, and vernacular in the lower. English is to be taught where there is demand for it, but it is not to be substituted for the vernacular languages of the country".

After this, English steadily expanded extensively in India and gained roots in the educational system. The establishment of three universities, followed by a number of colleges gave rise to the popularity of English in India. However, the Indians educated in these universities and colleges started demanding their mother tongue as the medium of instruction, and to resolve this conflict, the British government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. M.E. Sadler. The Commission argued that "mother tongue may be used only in high schools; in the higher classes

they urged the retention of English". This proposal was opposed by some great Indian leaders. Mahatma Gandhi made a significant remark saying that "real education is impossible through a foreign medium". He also said that "this is a sign of our slavery and degradation". He declared to Indians to criticise everything that was English, including the language. Therefore, English education suffered a serious setback.

By 1921, the mother tongue came to be the medium of instruction in middle schools, and its use was extended to high schools by 1937. However, the consequences were not good. The schools witnessed a complete deterioration of standards. The Wood Abbot Report (1936-37), recommended an alternative of simplified English in order to keep the flow of education through the medium of English. But the disaffection with English was growing deeper and wider as the struggle for freedom gained momentum. Until 1937, English continued to dominate the educational scenario. All ventures of life, all avenues of success could be opened only with the keys of English.

There was not much difference to the status of English after Independence. English, the language mostly of the colonisers during the British rule became accepted by the higher strata, the educationally, economically, and socially progressive class of the Indian society in the post-independence period. English became the language of industrialisation and modernisation, and now it is the language of globalisation. It is recognised as a global, international language, required significantly for professional and employment fields. It has become the cultural requirement for the middle-class group of Indians.

Thus, English the language of a few in the beginning, gradually spread all over India. Today, it has become the icon of status and an important tool to gain bread and butter. It continues as a link between the educated people and the elite. Though Hindi was introduced as the official language, English enjoys a prominent role and status. Unfortunately, it has resulted in a separate class of vernacular-educated natives. They, as a result of English domination, are destined to occupy a lower position in education, society as well as the job market.

As a result of this power dynamics caused by the British, the standard language is occupying the school system instead of the native language. Indian schools have to impart education in English in response to the demand of middle and higher classes of the Indian society. The reasons behind this are the economic and social factors, some overt and some covert such as:

- Parents get a higher social status by educating their children in English medium schools;

- Children, after receiving education in English medium institutions, are able to secure better job opportunities inside and outside India. This is the economically productive aspect and again, will bring the parents a better social status.

The demand for English emerges from many factors, as recognised by the Position Paper on the Teaching of English produced by NCERT in connection with the National Curriculum Framework- 2005: "English in India today is a symbol of peoples aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life". Thus, there is a great demand for English in the present educational scenario of India. No one denies the importance of English in the system of education, but at what stage and how it should be given is the question. If it is given at the pre-primary and elementary stage, it does more harm than good. If it is taught, as is normally taught, without any link to the native language, then also it does not yield any productive results. Hence, let us analyse further the pros and cons of imparting education in the standard language (English) at the pre- primary or elementary level. To put it in other words, what are the disadvantages of having a standard language as the school language, instead of the native language?

#### 'Check Your Progress' - 2

Below are listed some important events related to English as a standard language in India. Arrange them in chronological order.

- British government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of Dr M.E. Sadler.
- Charles Wood made significant recommendations.
- Mahatma Gandhi opposed the recommendation saying that real education is impossible through a foreign medium.
- Lord Macaulay was appointed as the president of a Committee.

### 1.4.3.3. Limitations of having the Power Language as the Standard Language

We have already studied the consequences of using a standard language as the school language versus native language under the Section 1.3.3.4- 'Home Language and School Language'. Let us discuss some more points here.

When the standard language becomes the school language, there are always chances of undermining the native language or the home language. A family's language is a bond that connects the child to the family. It is a tool which helps the younger generation to pass on the culture, unique features, and tradition of the family. When children do not use the home language, there are chances that they will not retain the culture and unique features of the family resulting in a great loss to the

community. There are a number of families in India, who are well-versed in craft, medicine, fine art, hand art, and other family-specific talents. Once the children are taken away from their home language, all that is related to it gets lost. There are chances of children undermining their home culture, thinking that the culture of the language they are learning in school is great.

Home language is the language used to support and guide children. Once the school language dominates, the basic tool of guiding and supporting is lost. You might have come across school authorities insisting on parents to speak the school language at home so that the children can score more marks and feel at ease in the school situation. This becomes the reality and students are deprived by learning the richness of home language and associated culture.

A child needs at least six to seven years to learn a language to use it with ease. In case the child naturally gets exposed to another language, he/she can learn it with ease without much effort. If the child has to put in deliberate effort to learn more than one language, before acquiring one language, it becomes a burden and the child neither learns the native language or the second language with real competency. You might have observed the same situation in your school. The children are forced to learn English, before they master the native language, and in the bargain they neither learn Kannada(home language) nor English.

Research has proved that a child learns better in the mother tongue than a non-native language. UNESCO, since 1953 has encouraged mother tongue instruction in early childhood and primary education (UNESCO, 1953). Yet, English is dominating the scene. We also know that children do better in studies when they are given opportunities to learn in their native language. Parents also can participate in the learning of their children. More enrolment also is possible in this case. Mother tongue-based education is meaningful and advantageous, especially for the disadvantaged group and for children in rural areas. They can converse with teachers and school personnel with ease. We always believe that the family is the first teacher for the children. If English happens to be the school language, majority of the parents cannot prepare their children for schooling. The child finds everything strange.

We cannot say that it is impossible to retain the mother tongue when school language happens to be different. It requires some special conditions. To retain their mother tongue, children whose first language is not the medium of instruction must have: (1) continued interaction with their family and community in their first language on increasingly complex topics that go beyond household matters; (2) ongoing formal instruction in their first language to develop reading and writing skills; and (3) exposure to positive parental attitudes to maintaining the mother tongue, both as a marker of cultural identity and for certain instrumental purposes.

Students learn the school language very fast.

#### **1.4.3.4. Measures to be taken in this Situation**

There are two possibilities here. First and foremost, it is always advisable to give elementary education in the native language. If giving education in the standard language becomes imperative and inevitable, some measures and care should be taken seriously, so that children are not denied the benefits of the native language. Let us discuss these measures.

- The members of the family should follow the 'whole' home culture including language, without fail. They should not switch over to any other language for temporary reasons. Some arrangements can be made to support the school language.
- Teach the social language first. These are the words required to manage the day- to-day activities of the school like 'May I take this', 'Good morning', 'Please come', etc.
- Teach language sounds with songs, rhymes, and repetitive exercises. Let there be rhythm in what you teach. These can be bilingual. Kannada songs can be converted / translated in to English or vice versa.
- Correct and accurate language models should be presented whether it is speaking, writing or reading in English or Kannada.
- Do not correct the students' mistakes, instead pose correct form / present the correct version in the form of a question. If a child says, 'parents gone home' you will say, is it so? Your parents have gone home?



- Children learn more by listening and seeing. Give opportunities to learn by seeing visuals and listening to stories, songs, etc.
- Parents should narrate stories and their experiences to children. They will help them to develop their registers and language structures in both school and home languages.
- Provide books in the child's home language at home. Make the child listen, or read or tell stories or explain the pictures given in the book.
- Teachers should always consider parents as the first teacher. Converse with them, learn what their children know, and use them to enhance children's present knowledge.
- Never use the home language only for disciplinary purposes. I have seen teachers in English medium suddenly switch over to the native language when it comes to scolding the students. That makes the child think that the native language is used for that purpose only.

#### **What can a teacher specially do?**

- The teacher is supposed to use culturally responsive pedagogy. This means that the teacher should accept a pedagogy, which gives due regard to the culture and dialects of different students from different social and cultural backgrounds.
- The teacher should learn more common words and usages of different dialects used by the different students of his/her classroom.
- The teacher should find time to visit the homes of different students to get an understanding of their cultural background and rituals.
- The teacher should read books on local literature and locally important aspects and events..
- The teacher should appreciate the dialectic differences and never ridicule their usage.
- Observe how the child is using and acquiring the mother tongue than the standard language to evaluate his/her growth or progress.

Course - TV

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## 1.4.2. Introduction

When a child is admitted to a school, he/ she is placed in a restricted environment. Many issues related to the child are decided by the school. Where should the child sit, what should the child wear, when should the child eat, and the list continues. You also think about it and identify behaviours where you find this restriction

Have you ever noticed the restriction in terms of learning languages. The child cannot learn what language she/ he should continue to learn. Even the parents cannot. Whatever language is offered should be accepted. Don't you think it creates problems for the child? Can we take it for granted and say, that the child, if wants to go through the process of education should abide by whatever the school prescribes? Should n't we pause for a while and see what the consequences of such one-sided decisions are? The child is used to home language and should immediately switch over to the standard language of the school. Have you ever thought about the difficulties?

You may think this is the fault of the school. No! Even the schools, including the personnel, have no choice of selecting the language as per the needs of the children.

So many other factors act on this situation. In the Indian context, it is mainly the power dynamics of the standard language that works in a school situation. What is this power dynamics? Whose power are we talking about? We are going to discuss these issues in the present Unit.

## 1.4.3. Learning Points and Learning Activities

### 1.4.3.1. Conceptual Clarification of the Terms

We need to understand four concepts to appreciate this Unit. They are as follows:

1. Power dynamics,
2. 'Standard' language,
3. School language, and
4. Home language.

**Power Dynamics:** Let us understand the concept of power dynamics. In general, "power dynamics" refers to the way power works in a setting. It refers to specific interactions or ways in which power is exercised. Power dynamics can be found at any level, like, national, international, state, regional or even institutional level. In the present context, this term refers to the political power exercised by the British when they ruled India in the context of language, especially the school language, and continues to mean the 'power' role in the existing system as far as school language is concerned.

**Standard Language:** Let us understand the concept, 'standard language'. If you glance through the related literature you come across this word in two senses. Let us