

## CHAPTER-33

### Using regional languages to teach general and cultural awareness courses

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#### ABSTRACT

Using the mother tongue (native language) in teaching specific courses like gender sensitization, Universal Human Values and Essence of Indian Traditional Knowledge It allows a more open dialogue that can effectively foster the thinking abilities of the undergraduate learners. This paper discusses the significance of using mother tongue during the process of discussing for specific subjects

Firstly, while teaching sensitive subjects like Gender Sensitisation, using mother tongue to make the students understand gender issues can be a powerful pedagogical tool that fosters deeper understanding, emotional connection, and cultural relevance and critical thinking. It allows educators to deconstruct complex societal norms—such as patriarchy, gender roles, and stereotypes.

Next, using the mother tongue to teach topics of general awareness like Universal Human Values (UHV) can be quite effective. While often overshadowed by English-medium instruction, the use of native language enhances critical thinking and allows learners to connect deeply with ethics and Values

The next point is about using the mother tongue or regional languages (Bharatiya Bhashas) to teach Indian Traditional Knowledge (ITK) and Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) is a cornerstone of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This approach bridges the gap between traditional wisdom and modern education, allowing students to comprehend complex philosophical, scientific, and cultural concepts more effectively with the medium of mother tongue.

**Key Words:** Sensitivity, patriarchy, stereotypes, Values and ethics, co-existence, humane Conduct.

#### 1. Introduction

Holistic education aims at overall development of a student, so, some courses like Gender Sensitisation, Universal Values are included in the curriculum which focus on the ‘Humane’ conduct of a person and also courses like Essence of Indian Traditional Knowledge which focuses on the culture and tradition.

At times, it may become essential to discuss some concepts using regional language(s), Give anecdotes/examples which relate to the society in which we live.

Let’s first discuss the use of (the) mother tongue during the teaching-learning process:

##### 1.1. Role of Mother Tongue in Learning

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The experience of teaching the courses- GNS, UHV and EITK indicated that the use of the mother tongue/Regional language as a supplementary medium of instruction played a crucial role in:

- reducing communication barriers
- encouraging participation
- improving conceptual understanding
- strengthening cultural connection with the subject matter

Students who were initially hesitant to speak in English became more active participants when they were allowed to express their thoughts in Telugu/Hindi

This paper focuses on three Courses, the teaching –learning process of each course is discussed in the order A. Gender Sensitisation B. Universal Human Value C. Essence of Indian Traditional Knowledge.

#### A. Teaching/discussing Gender Sensitisation

The course (and the course book) focus mainly on the problems faced by the women.

The following topics can be taught using a regional language to bring awareness among students

##### 1. Sensitising the students about gender issues in India

Teaching gender issues through regional languages can be an effective, culturally contextualized approach to make the young minds understand the stereotypes, as language often perpetuates gendered norms. Moreover, using a regional language makes discussing more relatable to the society around.

##### Patriarchal Society:

A patriarchal society is a system of social structure where men hold primary and authority, at times dominating roles both in public and private life.

A patriarchal family is a structure where the eldest male is the head of the family, holding primary authority, decision-making power, and control over members of the family, and the resources too.

The following Saying was taken for discussion, as an example, the way a home maker is treated in a patriarchal family

**Uttikekkaleni amma swargaanikkekkuna?" (The woman who cannot climb to the loft, can she climb to heaven?):**

- **Analysis:** This is a belief of women's lack of capability. It implies that the primary duty of a woman is to be able to handle house-hold chores effectively. Whatever she achieves in the society/profession is secondary.

**It is generally said to a man if he shed's tears- 'Edustavenduku, Nuvvemaina Aadapillava'? or, 'rote kyon ho, Mard bano'**

**A man can never cry** – he is supposed to be strong. A girl or a woman, on the other hand is supposed to be fragile and more emotional.

##### 2. Sensitising the Students in a co-education College

##### 2.1 Gender Stereotypes and Discrimination – as a Woman and a Mother

*The students were made watch some video clips (in Hindi) followed by discussions*

The most emotional Ads on Mother's Love

1. When you see a mother being tough, stand by her, because try to protect the next generation
2. A conflict between a teen aged girl and her mother
3. Relationship between a 10 year old boy and his working mother

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4. a short video –Tamanna
5. a short video –Tamanna (Hindi)
6. a short video- don't just save the girl child... (Hindi) (also stop discriminating a boy and a girl).

## 2.2 Gender and Labour: Housework: the Invisible Labour:

The house-hold work done by a woman is not considered as work at all. To help the young generation understand the amount of work done by a woman at home, a video was shown so that they learn the importance of 'Sharing the Load' at home.

- 1 minute video – Midea salutes the Home Maker

### 3. Sexual harassment

- Sexual harassment – not eve-teasing – coping with everyday harassment – “Chupulu” by Jayaprabha

-The poet makes it clear that as a woman she is assaulted constantly by the looks of men who have no hesitation or shame about affixing their gaze on her.

- Animated short film 'Chai pe Aur Ek Charcha' – A discussion over a cup of tea- (when a woman says NO, It is a NO).

### 4. Domestic Violence

Many women face domestic violence even today. The students are educated about the same and the importance of bringing awareness to report against any kind of domestic violence.

- Bol – one minute videos on speaking against domestic violence

## B. Teaching/discussing Universal Human Values

The aim of the course is mentioned in the text book itself:

A fulfilling life seems to be possible through discovering the humaneness that is potentially there in each one of us; and expressing that humanness in every aspect of our living – from the family to the workplace, in the society as well as in nature/existence.

The course is cyclic, and based on four levels of living in harmony:

-Harmony in oneself, harmony in family, harmony in the Society, and harmony in nature.

At first, it becomes mandatory for both the teacher and the students, to understand the difference between morals, ethics, and values

Morals are the welfare rules that the wise have established based on their wisdom and life experience. Ex: corruption

Principles and practises such as –what should or should not be done in a certain situation- are concerned with Morals

Ethics: the emphasis is on persuasion, instruction, and training through rules and regulations and correction, if necessary. Ex: notions or attitudes regarding laws and manners

Values are what are constructed, to define one's identity, hold some principles and thereby develop a strong character. It is how a human being behaves in a way that is consistent with what he/she values. The majority of time, a person's views, values, and sense are developed unconsciously based on his/her experiences.

Ethics is theorising about right conduct and good life, whereas morals are actual practice of right conduct and good life.

The Procedure followed during the teaching-learning process

Step 1: At the outset itself, students were asked to explain the importance of education in one's life. Based on the responses, where some of them opined that education leads to refinement in a person, the immediate collocation to the word education, 'Sanskar' was explained. (Unit 1)

Step 2: After discussing the fact that education should enable one develop one's Sanskar, the students were explained the importance of developing harmony within oneself (Unit 2).

The two terms Sampada (Wealth) and Samrudhi (prosperity via physical facilities) were

explained to drive home the fact that accumulation of wealth itself does not lead to happiness in oneself.

The following terms were discussed to make the understand this concept better:

SVDD, SSDD, and SSSS represent 3 categories of human living regarding material needs and happiness.

- **SVDD (Sadhan Viheen Dukhi Daridra):** Materially deficient, unhappy, and deprived.
- **SSDD (Sadhan Sampann Dukhi Daridra):** Materially affluent, but unhappy and deprived.
- **SSSS (Sadhan Sampann Sukhi Samriddha)**

**Step 3:** The nine values in relationship, both in family and society, were duly explained:

The difference between Human Consciousness and animal consciousness is discussed at this stage.



Physical facilities are complete for animals but not so for human beings. A human being craves for ore physical facilities, luxuries etc.

However, A human being, who is highly evolved and knowledgeable, unlike animals, requires physical facilities, relationships (family, society) along with right understanding to maintain healthy relationships and to be content with the required physical facilities

It is mandatory to make this distinction clear among for better living, living with human consciousness. Craving only for physical facilities is animal consciousness.

The famous saying ‘Vidya leni vadu vinta pashuvu’ is taken as an example to bring out the difference between human and animal consciousness.

The importance of the nine values in relationship is explained at this stage.

| S. No | Value (English) | Telugu Word                        | Hindi Word                        |
|-------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1     | Trust           | విశ్వాసం (Vishwasam)               | विश्वास (Vishwas)                 |
| 2     | Respect         | గౌరవం (Gouravam)                   | सम्मान (Samman) / आदर (Aadar)     |
| 3     | Affection       | ఆప్యాయత (Aapyayata)                | स्नेह (Sneh) /                    |
| 4.    | Care            | పోషణ / శ్రద్ధ (Posana / Shraddha)  | ममता / देखभाल (Mamata / Dekhbhal) |
| 5     | Guidance        | మార్గదర్శకత్వం (Margadarshakatvam) | मार्गदर्शन (Margdarshan)          |
| 6     | Reverence       | నివాళి / గౌరవం (Nivali / Gouravam) | श्रद्धा (Shraddha) / आदर (Aadar)  |
| 7     | Glory           | కీర్తి / మహిమ (Keerti / Mahima)    | गौरव (Gou)                        |
| 8     | Gratitude       | కృతజ్ఞత (Krutagnata)               | कृतज्ञता (Krutagnata)             |
| 9     | Love            | ప్రేమ (Prema)                      | प्रेम (Prem)                      |

Apart from these the following methods were followed to understand Harmony in Family and Society and Ethical Behaviour

- **Movie Analysis:** Discussing films (e.g., family values, ethical dilemmas).

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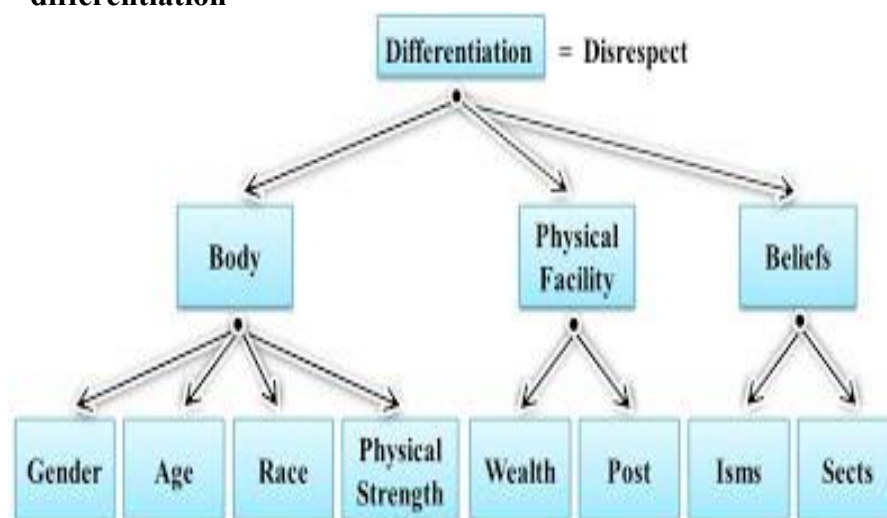
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Three movies, in Hindi, have been used by the researcher based on the three units- Harmony in Family, Harmony in Society, and the notion of ethics.

The students are asked to watch the three movies and provide a short summary on each of them:

- Old Hindi movie, Hum Hindustani, which depicts the family values, responsibilities and bonding with each other to ensure harmony
  - A Recent movie, the tourist village, which depicts the plight of a Sri Lankan (refugee) family and importance of striving for the betterment of the society
  - A movie Right ya Wrong, which depicts the predicament of a police officer whether to arrest a culprit under some (prevailing) conditions or not.
- Discussions:** Many discussions were taken up where code-switching was permitted to express their views without inhibitions.

### Unit 3: Harmony in society is explained based on the difference between respect and differentiation



The problems prevailing in the present society are discussed based on the differentiation based on body, physical facilities and beliefs.

Based on the discussion above, the fourth level, harmony in nature/existence is explained.

The term existence=Co-existence is explained in terms of four orders:

Material order, Plant order, animal order and human order

Material Order helps the Plant and Animal Order by providing soil, water, oxygen, sunlight, nutrients, minerals etc. and also provide the basis for movement.

Plant Order helps the Material Order by preventing soil erosion, producing Oxygen, absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> etc. It helps the Animal Order by providing food.

Animal Order helps the Material Order by enriching the soil through excreta. It helps the Plant Order in Pollination.

The students are explained the basic principle, using the terms

*Parasparata and paraspara purakata* i.e existence=Co-existence if we don't co-exist, we stop existing one day.

### C. Teaching/discussing Essence of Indian Traditional Knowledge (EITK)

The course Essence of Indian Traditional Knowledge (EITK) aims to introduce students to the basics of Indian Culture, Philosophy and diversity of India's intellectual and cultural traditions. It helps learners appreciate the knowledge systems that evolved in India in areas such as philosophy, science, education, arts, architecture, and social organisation.

In the context of engineering education, this course plays an important role in helping students

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develop cultural awareness, ethical sensitivity, and respect for indigenous knowledge systems. Since the majority of the students in the classroom come from a Telugu-speaking background, the use of the mother tongue as a supplementary medium of instruction significantly enhanced their engagement and in depth understanding of culturally rooted concepts.

### Teaching–Learning Process Followed to teach Es

#### Step 1: Introducing the Concept of Indian Knowledge Systems

At the beginning of the course, students were asked to reflect on questions such as:

- ✓ What do we mean by “traditional knowledge”?
- ✓ How is traditional knowledge different from modern scientific knowledge?

Students initially associated traditional knowledge only with religion or mythology. Through classroom discussion, they were introduced to the broader concept of Indian Knowledge Systems, which includes contributions in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, metallurgy, architecture, and linguistics.

Key terms were explained in both English and Telugu, enabling students to connect abstract ideas with familiar cultural expressions.

For example: Even though the words “Philosophy” and “Darshana Shastras” are used interchangeably, the English term “Philosophy” does not fully convey what the word “దర్శన శాస్త్రం” conveys because of its meaning. “Philosophy” means the intellectual pursuit of truth through reasoning and inquiry where as the word “దర్శన శాస్త్రం” means a systematic discipline that enables one to “see” or realize ultimate reality.

#### Step 2: Understanding the Scientific and Rational Foundations

i) A major objective of the course was to demonstrate that many elements of Indian traditional knowledge have rational and experiential foundations.

For instance: Importance of “ప్రతః సంధ్యావందనం (Praatah Sandhya Vandanam)”.

ii) Concepts from ancient texts were discussed in simplified form, with explanations often supported through examples from daily life.

For instance: अहस्ता यदपदी वर्धता क्षाः शचीभिर्वेद्यानाम् ।  
शुष्णं परि प्रदक्षिणिद् विश्वायवे नि शिश्रथः ॥

(A hymn from Rig Veda 10.22.14 (Mandala 10). Many modern explanations paraphrase it as “Earth has no legs but moves; it has no hands yet holds/supports us.”)

iii) Students were encouraged to analyse traditional practices critically rather than accept them blindly. The use of Telugu explanations helped students understand the contextual meaning of terms that do not translate easily into English.

For instance: Greeting through “Namaskara (నమస్కారం)”

#### Step 3: Exploring Cultural Heritage through Arts and Architecture

i) The course also explored India’s contributions in fine arts, temple architecture, and sculpture, which reflect the philosophical and aesthetic traditions of Indian Civilisation.

For instance: Ajanta & Ellora Caves

ii) Students discussed the relationship between art, spirituality, and social life in traditional India. Visual examples of temples, sculptures, and classical art forms were used to illustrate these concepts.

For instance: Various classical and Folk dance forms

iii) Many students expressed their understanding more comfortably when they were allowed to explain their observations in Telugu, demonstrating how the mother tongue enabled deeper participation in discussions.

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For instance: When the Sanskrit shlokas were recited explaining the meaning in their mother tongue i.e. in Telugu was natural for them.

#### **Step 4: Discussion on Education and Knowledge Traditions**

Another important theme of the course was the evolution of the Indian education system, including the Gurukula tradition and the contributions of scholars from different historical periods.

Students were encouraged to compare traditional educational approaches with modern systems of learning.

Through guided discussion, students reflected on how education in ancient India emphasised holistic development, ethical conduct, and harmony with nature.

#### **Pedagogical Methods Used**

To improve engagement and conceptual clarity, the following teaching methods were adopted:

##### **1. Code-Switching**

Students were allowed to shift between English and Telugu during classroom discussions.

This reduced hesitation and enabled them to express complex ideas more freely.

##### **2. Cultural Examples from Local Context**

Examples from regional traditions, festivals, and practices were used to relate course concepts to students' lived experiences.

##### **3. Interactive Discussions**

Students were encouraged to ask questions and analyze traditional knowledge from a rational perspective rather than memorizing facts.

##### **4. Audio-Visual Learning**

Short documentary clips and visual presentations on Indian architecture, scientific achievements, and traditional practices were used to support classroom teaching.

#### **Conclusion**

Teaching of culturally oriented courses such as EITK becomes more effective when students are allowed to engage with the subject in their mother tongue alongside English.

This approach enables the students to connect emotionally and intellectually with India's rich knowledge and traditions.

Thus, the integration of mother tongue can significantly improve the learning outcomes of courses dealing with culture, ethics, and traditional knowledge.

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2. Podcast with Dr Himmat Singh Sinha
3. Podcast with Prof. Ramnath Jha

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