Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation

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Lecture-34

Lecture 34 : Creating pedagogical material

Hello everyone! This is Dripta. You are attending the Swayam NPTEL course on Tools and Technologies of Language Documentation and today we will be discussing Lecture 34 of Module 7. Module 7 is about Language Maintenance and Revitalization and the title of today's talk is Creating Pedagogical Materials. So, in today's class, initially we will be discussing the question, how to revitalize a language with pedagogical tools? I am sure you remember that we talked about the revitalization with pedagogical tools briefly when we talked about vitality. Then, I will be introducing some ways to develop and use pedagogical material for example, MTBE or mother tongue-based education, bilingual education, immersion, master-apprentice language learning programs, etcetera. Then, I will be talking about some strategies for creating literacy materials.

 I will also discuss the community members' perspectives and finally, I will point out towards some problems that may occur while you are creating pedagogical materials. I hope when I am saying revitalization with pedagogical tools, you can connect it to the lecture on vitality, where we discussed that pedagogy can be or language learning, language teaching can be considered as a major factor of assessing vitality as well as the revitalization initiatives. If you can recall the assessment of language vitality, I am sure you are doing that and you can always go back to the previous lecture if you forget about it. So, we mentioned that some materials for language education and literacy can be considered as a major factor of vitality.

 So, there are some communities who have very rich oral literature, but they do not have orthography or they do not have literacy, formal literacy in their own language. And at times, we also find that some communities do not want literacy in their own language. We can say that it is again, associated with language attitude. At this point, I hope you can recall the lessons of language attitude that some communities do have negative

attitudes towards their own language. So, when we talk about literacy, I am asking you to think about it that literacy is also linked to the socio-economic development of a community.

So, we briefly talked about it previously. So, I am again asking you to come back to this point. When we are emphasizing on pedagogical materials and saying that it is some kind of help for the community members to revitalize their language, we need to revisit this idea. So we did talk about language shift. So when we see that a community is shifting to a dominant language or a majority language, one major reason for the shift is non-availability of pedagogical materials in the community's language.

So, there are several other reasons, but this is a major reason that we often consider that there is no material for use in school or even home based literacy. So, we talked about the idea of reversal of language shift. If you remember, how we can talk about revitalization and in this week, we are talking about different ways of revitalization. So, you can consider pedagogical material as a tool of revitalization. That is the highlight of today's talk.

I hope you can understand by now. So when we talk about education, we don't mean education for children all the time, but we also consider education for adults of a community. So, we see that linguists often collaborate with community members in different countries, but I will give examples in Indian context. And when these linguists collaborate with the community members, the primary target is to revitalize their language. And there is another target which is to create a change in language in education policies.

So, if we come back to language shift, we often see that a long history of discrimination is quite common. Even in Indian context, if you think about the idea of language shift, you can often associate with some kind of discrimination. And in some cases, this history is not a very contemporary history, it is a very long history. So, we find that there are various indigenous languages which are spoken by children, but if they use these languages in a formal classroom setup, it was considered as a punishable offense, even in the 20th century. So, you can question at this point, whether it is a result of colonial mindset.

We already talked about some kind of colonial mindset previously. We also found that many parents, as a result, decide to teach the dominant language to the children, and they do not want their children to learn their language. First of all, it is not related to the socio-economic mobility or development. Secondly, there is a negative attitude in the society associated with the language. So, this creation of pedagogical material is another step

towards   the   reversal   of   language   shift.

So, how will we develop pedagogical material? There are different approaches or different models. So, let us talk about these different types of models briefly. And if you are a community member planning to initiate some kind of revitalization initiative, or if you are a linguist planning to collaborate with some community to revitalize their language, in both the cases, I will request you to consider different models. So, I am discussing some major models. So, the first one is MTBE or Mother Tongue Based Education.

We can talk about developing and using bilingual dictionary and also different kinds of bilingual education. We can talk about revitalization through pedagogic materials online, we can think about immersion program, there is something called Master-apprentice program. And finally, we can think about creating some literacy material. So, I will discuss some of them. MTBE or mother tongue based education is a very important model in today's world, because it is also related to the sustainable development or SDG goals-4   by   UNESCO.

So, I am sure some of you are familiar with the sustainable development goals. So, mother tongue based education is a part of an ecology which is related to the familiarity of the child. So, language is a part of the ecology of the child and it raises a familiarity question. So, when we talk about mother tongue based education, I am sure many of you are familiar with this idea of MTB-MLE or mother tongue based multilingual education, which is gradually becoming popular in Indian context as well. There are states like Odisha,   who   have   already   adopted   this   model.

And you have to consider the linguistic human rights issues. What does it mean? It means that the child should use his or her own language in school space. So, this is something which is again asserted by the UN, but we can also see that there are other platforms who are talking about LHR. For example, the Constitution of India is also talking about linguistic human rights in the Article, 350A. So, I will give one small example of a work that I did with my collaborator Asifa Sultana in Bangladesh.

So, we conducted this study among Chakma students in Bangladesh and Rajbongshi children in West Bengal and we used the same tool for both set of children in our field. So, we tried to understand the importance of mother tongue based education among these two communities and we found a very surprising result. We found that children are gradually becoming more accustomed to use the dominant languages, not their own mother tongue because there is no familiarity. So, that can be a problem and then, we thought that mother tongue based education needs to be explored more. If you consider

adopting a model of bilingual education, so I will talk about a few points which are associated with it.

So, what do you mean by bilingual education? It means that there is one language which is more familiar to children, may be the dominant language and then, the target language, which is probably the home language of the children and you are targeting to revitalize that. So, you are using both in the model. So, it has to be transitional in nature, because you know, initially, you may start with the dominant language and gradually shift to a more home language based usage. So, we develop bilingual Teaching Learning Material or TLM to help the children. There are different types of bilingual education material and I will talk about them in detail in the next class.

So, you can consider dictionaries, bilingual word cards, language games, etc, and it also includes training teachers to use the bilingual materials. It is not very easy to give the materials to any teacher without any training. So, you have to find teacher who are equipped or willing to use the materials. Immersion program is quite common around the world and it is a useful method, you can also find more about it. So, what do we mean by immersion schools? In the immersion schools, all the instructions will be given by using the target language.

So, here you can understand that fluency is a target. So, we want the children to be fluent in their language because that is the only language that they are using. Unlike the bilingual education model, there is no use of the dominant language. So, it is indirectly or directly forcing the children to use the target language. So, it is considered as an effective strategy of language revitalization.

So, there are several initiatives worldwide. So, I will give one example of Arizona, where the slogan was No Child Left Behind. And you can consider that immersion program is important, but it depends on the number of speakers left. So, if you find a language, where very few speakers are using the language or available for teaching. So, will you actually use immersion method? So, maybe you consider it as a useful method, but you do not have enough manpower to implement it.

So, you have to consider all these factors. And at times, we have also seen that immersion program is something where educational assistance is given to children in different schools. We have also found such examples in Indian context, where different state governments appointed local teachers who can help the local teachers to teach or at least, use some amount of local language. Master-apprentice language learning program is again, a community centric program, but it is different in nature. One very successful program was launched in California, but if you want to use such a method in India, you

can   also   consider   certain   factors.

It uses different language teaching methods. If you have done our previous course on Introduction to Language and Linguistics or if you have done some course on Applied Linguistics, I am sure you are familiar with different types of language teaching methods otherwise you can simply read by yourself and see how different teaching methods are there. For this MAP centric program, different types of methods are used and there is one community member who will head this language teaching learning circles and there are some apprentices. So, the apprentice learns monolingual language elicitation techniques used in linguistic field work. And here you can again, see that linguists play a role.

The linguistic fieldwork techniques are taught to the community members, so then they can elicit some data. So, there will be some teams, where one team will have one speaker and several community members, where community members are not the speakers, they have lost their language or gradually shifting. So, we are helping the community members to regain their language in this case. So, what kind of data do you need? Something like word list, sentence and communicative context. You have already learnt how to collect and elicit data from these three right? So, now you can use those whatever you   have   learnt   for   your   linguistic   fieldwork   strategies.

So when we talk about creating literacy material, again, I will ask you to think about this question whether your knowledge of linguistic fieldwork will help. It will definitely help you because you know, whenever you are planning to create some kind of literacy material, you cannot do it without the knowledge of linguistic fieldwork. So, I will discuss this and I will also give some example of my experience from the field in the next lecture, but at this point I will tell you that again, you need to understand several parameters of vitality. And we need to collect data through field work whether a linguist is collecting data or a linguist is training the community member to collect the data, it may vary, but you need to collect some language data and data from different levels. So, when we create literacy material we need data on word sentences and narratives, as I already told you and then, the circulation will be done after the materials are made.

At this point, I can ask whether you are thinking about a community member's perspective. So, if you are a community member, I am sure you have several questions inside your mind and again, if you are a linguist planning to collaborate with a community member, you need to be very clear about certain points. So, if you want to develop literacy material for your language as a part of the revitalization initiative, then you have to understand the nature of the material. and if you are actually planning to use the material for revitalization initiative, you need to understand that why you want to use it for revitalization initiative and how do you want to do it so you can think about the

implementation questions, how will you implement the revitalization process.

There are different ways to do it. I talked about them in a different context previously. You can, for example, conduct a Sunday school or arrange a Sunday school, maybe a school once a week, it can be on Sunday, Friday, any day, one day in a week. A class designed for government schools, you can offer a program and for the government schools, existing government schools where they will use it, maybe once a week, again. You can design a class for private schools. Again, you will be talking about specific days when you will use it.

You can use it for adult education program, which will be slightly better from children's context and you can also have vocational workshops. You have to take a call regarding the way. How will you plan to use your pedagogical materials for revitalization? And you have to think about the collaborator, so who will be your collaborator- linguist, whether you also want a community member, if you are a linguist, then you will think about a community member. We also involve some outsiders who are neither linguist nor community member, but they work with the community for something else. So, at times, I also involve policy or planning experts in my work.

So that, I can get their views and you also need to think about fund. It can use some community fund, it can use a government fund or private fund program. So, you have to think about all these beforehand. So now if you ask about the probable targets, what kind of targets do you have? So you can say that I am planning to produce a new set of speakers through the pedagogical intervention. So new speakers, a generation of new speakers will be born.

That's my target. Then you need to ask what kind of fluency do you expect, do you want the new speakers or the speakers who are partially using the language at this moment, you want them to gain some fluency. So, what kind of fluency do you want? What form of teacher do you want to adopt? So, I already talked about some probable models that you can utilize, and what form of teaching do you want to adopt, whether it is like weekly, once weekly or bi-weekly classes or something else. At times, we have seen that some revitalization initiatives involving the languages. They begin with extracurricular activities and not language teaching activities.

So, this is another way. So, you start with extracurricular activities and then move to language teaching. So, this is also possible. And if you have an aim to develop an immersion program, you need to think about the feasibility whether you have enough speakers in the community or whether they are willing to collaborate with you. So, manpower is an issue. So, if you are planning a bilingual program, you need to identify a

dominant   language.

 If it is a multilingual situation, like we have come across such situations, I can give you examples where there are more than one dominant languages. So, in that case what will you do? You have to select one and then, you have to use the target language. So, how to select that? We have to consider certain policies in Indian context because this course is primarily designed for Indian context. So, you can look at the National Curriculum Framework or NCF 2005 which was developed by NCERT in India. It clearly mentions that the language of the child which I am referring to as mother tongue in this context.

 it should be used in the first two years of schooling. So, this is important for us to know and also a more recent policy, National Education Policy or NEP 2020, it emphasizes the use of multilingual pedagogy in classroom. So, multilingual pedagogy is used by different countries of the world officially. So, now India is also trying to implement it, but there are lot of layers to it right? So, we are trying to understand revitalization initiatives through NEP as well. So, if you keep these two major policies in mind, now the question is how will you design your program? So, you have to keep both in mind the mother   tongue   and   multilinguality.

 For Indian context, there are certain issues that we always keep in mind. One is using your language as an additional language, instead of a medium of instructions. At times, we have seen that people who are trying to revitalize their language, the first target for them is to introduce the language as a medium of instruction, this may have a problem. So, may be initially you introduce it as an additional subject or additional language in the curriculum, and then gradually, you move to a medium of instruction based plan. So, following Agnihotri's work, we can say that multilinguality is always embedded in a language.

 In Indian context, we cannot find a situation where multilinguality is not present. So, it is default. So, we have to understand the nature of multilinguality which is present in your context. And there are of course, the vitality issues, how do you collect data, what is the need of the community, what kind of language shift can you observe. So, all these will be important   and   we   have   already   discussed   them   previously.

 At this point, I will also mention that you need to understand the linguistic landscape. I will elaborate it later, but in what kind of setting your language is used or the target language is used, you need to understand the picture. we do find some potential problems when we work on a revitalization by implementing some pedagogical plan. So, there are issues like language change. So, you can find that new vocabulary items are being transmitted   through   some   other   language.

There are influence of dominant languages. So, I have example of Kharia which is influenced by Hindi or Mundari is influenced by Bangla. So, we have worked on them and we found these things. And at times, we also need to collect data from different age group. We have already talked about it, if you remember. And, I hope you also remember the intergenerational transmission factor.

When we discussed vitality, we did mention it. So, we need language data from different age group and if we are collecting data from only one age group, then there is a problem. We will not be able to track the potential variation. So, without considering variation and change, our field work would not be complete. Community context may change. So, if you are collecting data from a grocery store and asking the community members to list the name of grocery items for example, you can find that many of these terms are coming from dominant language.

You can also find English terms. In Indian context, I am talking about. I mean this is very common. So, here you cannot find the community-specific words from a grocery store. May be, you can use it from a local vegetable garden, but not from a grocery store. So, you have to be alert that in some cases, there will be influence of other dominant languages and we cannot ignore them.

So, it is the natural situation. And as I have already talked about the manpower issue, number of trained teachers is very important. So, if you have some trained teachers in a community which is enough, you are fortunate, but if you do not have enough trained teachers, you may have to organize a training with someone. So, that is something you have to keep in your mind. So, coming to the conclusion of today's talk, I will say you have to remember all these factors. If you are planning to revitalize a language, it is possible to use pedagogical tools to revitalize it.

We need to assess the background for in terms of several grounds. We need to choose a method of teaching. We cannot randomly do it. You need to choose a model and also need to consider that how will you use field data. You just cannot randomly compile some language data and use it for developing pedagogical material. You need to systematically collect data through field work and then use it.

and you have to keep all the potential problems in your mind. So, these are the references. Hope you enjoyed the lecture. Thank you!