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## Analyzing Language Policy and Pedagogical Practices: Language Teaching as Affirmative Sabotage

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### ABSTRACT

Introducing the language education in India from the imperial period to the age of Globalization different Policies as well as pedagogical practices has come into existence. The aims of all the policies and practices was quite general, the effective execution of language education in India. But the term in the title “affirmative sabotage’ is juxtaposed paradoxically with the concept, *teaching*. With the newly introduced idea of *affirmative sabotage* by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak this present study tends to focus the scopes, methods and methodologies of language (English language) teaching in the essence of effectivity. Prof. Spivak goes on to say “Affirmative sabotage doesn’t just ruin; the idea is of entering the discourse that you are criticizing fully, so that you can turn it around from inside. The only real and effective way you can sabotage something this way is when you are working intimately within it.” With the connection of the above lines spoken by Spivak the role of a language teacher is expected to imply the proper strategies to cope the modern attempt of language education. So far as this proposed study will try to shed light upon the critical analysis of the language policies and pedagogical practices in the context of affirmative sabotage.

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### Introduction:

The introduction of English Language Education in India is considered as one of the key form of colonial imperialism and subversion. There are obviously some of the factors behind such consideration:



➤ In Maculay's Minute the mission for the English language Education in India is stated, 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect'. (Macaulay's Minute, 1835).

➤ By the implementation of Wood's Despatch on July, 1835 in the English Education, it firmly recommended the transfer of western knowledge and informations about the western cultures to the Indians and develops a group of public servants from the Indian natives.

In that sense, the line from Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978) perfectly uttered, 'it was as vital for colonial powers to teach the 'other' as to study the 'other'.

Furthermore English education had the essence of stepping towards bureaucracy that was clear from the Court of Director's despatch to the Governor General in council on Sept. 29, 1830. It stressed upon the fact of affording the native youths to cultivate English language with the assurance that the diligent natives would be supported every assistance and pecuniary encouragement or in the civil and judicial administration of India.

As Prof. Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak reminds us , " Colonialism was committed to the education of a certain class. It was interested in the seemingly permanent operation of an altered normality". (Spivak, 2004, P. 524)

But Post-colonial disciplinary status of English education in India as mentioned by different commission and policies reformulated the aims of teaching English in India as the strategies towards the decolonization of the minds, mobilization of social and cultural status of the non-native speakers of India in general apart from the legacies of colonialism.

To follow this shift from colonial subversion into the decolonization of disciplinary status and aims to teach English demands to introduce the term 'Affirmative Sabotage' in the domain of English language teaching as second language in India. So, the focus in extended form is to observe and analysis the revolving pedagogical practices applied by the language educators to cope up the modern needs of learners and analyzing language policies as well as in the light of 'affirmative Sabotage'.

### **Context of the Study:**

The newly introduced concept of 'Affirmative Sabotage' though not directly familiar with the concept of teaching and learning of English as second language rather the evolution of the disciplinary status of English and the objectives of teaching from colonial legacies to decolonization and the destructuralization of teaching practices make it feasible to relate the concept of 'affirmative sabotage' in pedagogical practices.



So, the context of this present study relies upon the critical reading and perceiving some of the research articles available in the reputed Journals and good quality of books related to the English Language Teaching (ELT). Let us have a look to some of them:

Lightbown, M. Pasty & Nina Spada.( 2013) highlighted all the pedagogical approaches and second language acquisition in classroom and the teacher's activities to apply different suitable method and techniques in the second language learning.

Dishari, C. (2005) centralized the deconstructive space of English language and teaching. The author also aims to Providing a scenario of the convergent pedagogy model from an analogues postcolonial society .

Most importantly, the blog of *Spivak, Violence and Affirmative Sabotage* deals with the concept affirmative sabotage in Education.

Nair,R.B.(2012) aims to deal the current status of English language as second language in the Indian perspectives.

Another book, Dinda,M.(2016). *Teaching of English*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) in its first unit presented different policies and practices since Independence of India.

Kachru, Braj. B. (1983). *The Indianization of English* : The English Language in India, Kachru rightly discussed the English language in the Indian Perspective and the evolving status of language pedagogy.

### **Objectives:**

The specific objectives that this study aims to consider are:

- To observe the changing scenario of the English language teaching, analyzing the major language policies of both the pre-independence and post-independence period.
  - The pedagogical practices of teaching English as Second language (ESL) with the efficacy of 'Affirmative Sabotage'.
  - To establish the vigor of 'affirmative sabotage' in the task of teaching English as second language.
- This study will follow the qualitative method to follow the objectives through the content analysis critically.

### **Introducing Affirmative Sabotage in Language Teaching :**

The key word of this paper *affirmative sabotage* seems quietly critical to perceive the meaning as there two different words juxtaposed paradoxically with one another. The term *affirmative sabotage* in teaching become conceivable through the speech by Prof. Spivak; "Affirmative Sabotage doesn't just



ruin, the idea of entering the discourse that you are criticizing fully, so that you can turn it around from inside. The only real and effective way you can sabotage something this way is when you are working intimately within it”.

In the term the *sabotage* mainly refers to something destructive that is generally negative in its etymological meaning. The dictionary defines sabotage as ‘an intentional (planned) impairment of the performance of political, military, disruption of the work process , or damage to and destruction of equipment, machinery or the like’. But the position of the word ‘affirmative’ just before *sabotage* establish it with the positive sense in the aspect of teaching more specifically in the pedagogy of English language.

Prof. Spivak’s approach to define the affirmative sabotage is an attempt to re-formulate Audre Lorde’s oft-cited statement , “ A Master’s Tool will Never Dismantle the master’s house”. Spivak posits here that the consideration that perhaps possible after all to dismantle the master’s house with one’s own tool. The Institute for Affirmative Sabotage , the IAS (2020) want to sabotage scientific and cultural institutions in a power-critical way. IAS is an attempt to affirmatively sabotage cultural and scientific enterprises with their own tools.

In this regard, this recent observation attempts to shed light specifically on the different pedagogical approaches and methods considering the language theories and policies by the language educators in the classroom practices to cope up the modern aims of English language teaching as second language.

### **Analyzing the policies and need of affirmative sabotage:**

Language policy has been defined as” the deliberate choices made by the Governments or authorities with regard to the relationship between language and social life.” ( Djite, 1994, p. 63). In the area of education “the concept of language and its place is the key dimension of the relationship between the language and the social life about which some of the deliberate choices are made by the Governments. This aspect of language is called language in Education policy”.

(Baldauf, 1990; Kaplan and Baldauf, 2002; Paulston and McLaughlin, 1994).

In the case of close observation the changing scenario of English language study from the colonial legacy to utilitarian aspect of teaching and learning, English become gradually effects the pedagogical practices through the implications of different policies. Further analysis will proceed to trace the changing aims of English education in India.



In the pre-Independence era, the initial stage of introducing English Education in India it may be said that from the Christian missionaries' purpose to spread the religiosity or Christianity through educating the non-native speakers in India and Macaulay Minute's concern to make the native Indians aware about the western knowledge and culture to the present status of teaching English in the heterogeneous classroom as language to secure the global standard set some of the changing perceptions as the altering aims and objectives of ELT.

The era of institutionalization of English as a subject in Indian schools it is claimed in the report of *Indian Education Commission, 1882* that the English Language is to be the medium of instruction in the higher branches and vernacular in the lower. (1883, 22-23). The 'Three Language Formula' by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) has rightly placed English Language as the second important language in the school curricula.

To add different phenomenal title with English language in the modern perspective like English as Lingua Franca, as Library Language and the language of maintaining global and local mobility here summed as "a nation, which chose not to have a national language in view of its ethnic and linguistic diversity, is also a nation which has transformed the colonial language, English into a link and library language, and an associate official language, now perceives it a language of upward mobility". (NCERT,2005&Graddol,2010). It is also noticed even in the recent curricular revision, the National Curriculum Framework, 2005 states, "The level of introduction of English has now become, a matter of political response to people's aspirations rendering almost irrelevant an academic debate on the merits of very early introduction". (NCERT, 2005,p.1) .

The present NEP2020 also put emphasis on the following facts regarding English Teaching-

- The priority is placed on interaction and conversational skills.
- NEP 2020 encourages the constructive outlook in the teaching of English.
- With the multidisciplinary approach importance has laid upon other discipline like science, mathematics, language, arts, sports and social science.
- Enquiry-based and project-based learning are intensified in the domain of English language activity.

Considering the significant role of English in the curriculum some major pedagogical difficulties to select proper methods and approaches in the classroom of non-native learners of English language is truly a matter of challenge to the language educators. Braj Kachru has said properly, "In India English is



widely taught second language at practically all levels of education, All the Indian Universities, graduate colleges and junior colleges have separate departments for the teaching of English. But unfortunately in these departments a majority of students get no serious exposure to English as a language. Their appreciation of the classics of English- often taught to a dazed class – is very superficial. The teachers are not trained at all in the basic methodology of teaching language or in the teaching the structure of English. This has created a serious pedagogical and educational problem.” ( Kachru, 1971, p.36).

Thus the problematic language teaching practice demands for the ‘affirmative sabotage’ to select the appropriate methods, approaches and techniques to adjust the modern utilitarian role of English language.

### **How Affirmative Sabotage Promote Language Teaching with efficacy:**

IAS, the Institution of Affirmative Sabotage was developed in 2020 by Miriam Yosef and Tua Hoai Tran. Through the affirmative sabotage this institution targeted to bring the changes through a power-critical way in the artistic and scientific research and interventions. Moreover, if we state affirmative sabotage as a tool of deconstruction of language teaching it seems that nothing will be wrong with the term. In that case, it can be said that ‘affirmative sabotage’ is a strategy that turns the instruments of colonialism into tools for decolonization.

This present theoretical analysis now directs the way towards the decolonization of English language teaching. In the Educational Conference 2023 in Dubai the aspect of de-colonizing the English language teaching and pedagogical practices is discussed that the decolonization of English language teaching and pedagogy requires a fundamental shift in perspective, from a western-centric approach to one that is more inclusive, culturally responsive, and equitable. This shift involves acknowledging the diversity of learners and their cultural backgrounds and embracing teaching practices that are rooted in local cultures and languages. Here are some views on the basis of the discussion by the experts in the conference regarding decolonization of English language pedagogy:

- **Acknowledgment of the colonial legacy:** They claimed that acknowledgement of colonial legacy of English language teaching and its effect on the local languages and cultures is the foremost step towards decolonization.
- **Embracing multilingualism:** Acceptance of multilingualism and the use of the mother tongue along with English can prioritize the decolonization of English language teaching.
- **Promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity:** Promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity to create proper learning environment is an essential strategy for decolonizing English language teaching.



➤ **Challenging power imbalances:** Decolonization of English language teaching and pedagogy also be effective through challenging the imbedded power imbalances in the western pedagogies and following the teaching practices to promote social justice and equity.

Considering the foremost facts to promote the English language teaching and pedagogy as a tool of decolonizing the language study, the appropriate methods and techniques in classroom practices is long been a matter of controversy and discussion. Researchers and experts have mandated different methods and approaches in respect of different socio-cultural settings of Indian institutions. So the affirmative sabotage or the appropriateness to choose the methods and techniques of teaching English as second language in India is truly a subject of hurdle for the educators as there is no single method or approaches to cope the modern of language teaching. In that case, if we look into the second language acquisition process there is some of the behaviourist, cognitive and socio-cultural theoretical approaches where some of the methods of teaching are elaborated the methods suitable in diverse cognitive and socio-cultural domain. Some of the suitable methods are mentioned categorically:

The Behaviourist approach emphasized the teaching to encourage the *memorization, mimicry, and students learned dialogues and sentence pattern* in the classroom practice. Behaviourists viewed language development or learning as formation of habits and in that case of habit formation they said to put emphasis on the first language as the prior knowledge by the educators. So in the multilingual and bilingual settings teachers may follow the method of drilling and practicing through habit formation using first language as support of second language learning.

The Cognitive approach used in the classroom basically emphasized the *information-processing model* of language learning and performance in ESL classroom. Researchers like Robert De Keyser (1998), Richard Schmidt(2001) and others have suggested, “learners must pay attention at first to any aspect of language that they are trying to learn of produce. This pay attention in this context is to accepted to mean *using cognitive resources to process information* but in that case the teachers should limitize that how much information a learner can pay attention to.”(2007, p. 108).

The Socio-cultural approach tends to focus to satisfy the communication skills through interaction in the classroom. Hence a language educator using this approach may play the role of an interlocutor as a support for scaffolding in the ESL classroom. Here the teaching basically is the process to interwoven the speaking and thinking as an independent process. So language teachers here teach the language to strengthen the speaking and writing as the means of critical thinking so that the ESL learners gain the control over their speech to others and perceive others speech to them, shortly the communication competence. Researchers of socio-cultural perspective said to identify the Zone of Proximal development



(ZPD) ‘as metaphorical location or site in which learners co-construct their knowledge in collaboration with an interlocutors’ namely the teachers or the peers in the classroom settings.

A factor that is undeniable that the effective classroom teaching is to be initiated by the motivation and inspiration by the educators to the learners. In that case, a teacher must be a source of inspiration as the active role playing and beliefs is necessary to create a consistent and effective teacher-taught relationship in the ELT classroom. According to Borg, “Belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment” (Borg, 2001, p.187) . Moreover it is to be said that a self-motivated teacher always be willing to incorporate new ideas, methods and methodologies as per the suitability in the classroom to promote a learner friendly effective ESL teaching and learning.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude it can be said that the ‘affirmative sabotage’ is something to the teacher that enable them to dismantle the traditional master’s tool to teach and particularize a consistent environment in the second language learning classroom. In the detail discussion related to specify the changes in the objectives of language learning since decolonization of teaching and learning the English language in the Indian second language classroom the appropriate methods and methodologies become the matter of consideration by the teachers or language educators as per the classroom needs.

New methods, approaches, techniques to cope the broad and evolving aims of teaching English as second language in the different linguistic and socio-cultural environment will be truly effective if we follow spivak’s utterance thoroughly that *affirmative sabotage* does not only ruin rather one can only sabotage something when one working intimately within it.

### **Short Bio of Author:**

I am Nandita Mondal belongs to Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Since 2023 she has been engaged into research as a PhD Scholar in the Institute of Language Studies and Research and Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Her research interest includes Family Language Policy, English Language teaching and learning, tribal parents and child’s attitude to English study, Sociolinguistics and so on. She is also a English language teacher educator in Balurghat B.Ed. College(Autonomous), India.

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