The Role of Locally Developed Grammatical Materials in Middle School Education: A Focus on Sikkim and North Bengal

Eno Choudup Panlook, Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Mewar University Gangrar
Dr. Laxman Gnawali, Professor, Dept. of English, Mewar University Gangrar

Abstract

This research explores the role of grammar resources emerging from the region in school practice at the middle school level, especially in Sikkim and North Bengal. Such a demand for regional contextualized learning resources is particularly felt in these regions where the linguistic diversity is relatively more pronounced and the local languages are grossly underrepresented in the mainstream curriculum. The study investigates the impact of regionally specific grammar resources, constructed to fit the peculiarities of the region's language and the cultural contexts within them, on student learning outcomes and language acquisition. The research bases its argument on how standardized grammar resources cannot be used in regional dialects and styles of learning, largely through surveys of teachers and middle school students. Talking about the benefits of locally produced resources includes high pupil engagement rates, deeper understanding of the concepts of grammar, and enrichment in the development of indigenous languages. Lastly, it plans to show how such resources can be applied in linguistically diverse regions, as in Sikkim and North Bengal, to gradually integrate more inclusive productive learning methods aside from national curricula.

Keywords: Locally Developed, Grammatical Materials, Middle School Education, Sikkim, North Bengal

1. INTRODUCTION

The local grammar resources developed in mid-school become of great importance, especially in the places like Sikkim and North Bengal. Here, in those areas, the difference in language and cultural identity decides the learning environment. The students here speak different languages, besides English which is used by many as a means of teaching in schools, besides which languages Nepali, Bengali, Lepcha, and Bhutia are widely used here. Traditional teaching of grammar relies on standard resources, which do not reflect the real linguistic realities of these pupils, at times creating a chasm in understanding and interest. It is at this point that locally created grammatical resources come very handy.

Grammar resources are particularly shaped according to the needs of local students, considering their especially linguistic and cultural background. For instance, regional language incorporation, dialects, and cultural allusions can further assist in making grammatical principles more understandable and accessible to the people of Sikkim and North Bengal. These materials consider the challenges faced by learners in learning English grammar, particularly when the syntactical, morphological, or phonological patterns of their first languages differ. Such resources can thus also be designed locally to reduce linguistic constraints and influence the development of better language proficiency in students as they derive a more well-rounded understanding of grammar and develop interest in learning.

The other advantages of locally prepared grammar resources are that it would make children proud of their culture and identity. Whenever examples in grammar classes come from their culture, folklore, or daily life, students are more likely to be engaged with the teaching-learning process. Besides the improvement in academic advancement, the use of content from local sources maintains and promotes regional languages and cultures, particularly in a region as culturally vibrant as Sikkim and North Bengal.

The resources produced locally are culturally considerate and better still, effectively attuned to the educational needs of the middle school pupil. Linguistically, from mastering the basics of language, the students' progress to increasingly complex grammatical structures during the decisive years of middle school. It is easier for teachers to get students much more active about grammar learning if the resources used are contextualized to their experiences in school. That makes it much easier for the student to understand fairly abstract grammar principles. It is, for

this reason, that this method promotes individualized instruction since the resources may be tailored to the many learning styles and competence levels seen in a diverse classroom. Utilizing locally developed grammatical resources in middle school teaching and learning at places like Sikkim and North Bengal carries a range of benefits. The inclusion of local linguistic and cultural elements makes the grammatical resources more appropriate and effective in teaching grammar with a power added to the bond between the students and their language learning process. Thus, locally developed grammar tools are important for enhancing levels of language competency, for developing greater sensitivity towards cultures other than one's own, and, in general, for enhancing academic performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Das (2018) The paper elaborates on the use of English in primary schooling in India, centering on the importance of the language as a tool for teaching and learning. It is put forward that socioeconomic development is close to being totally dependent on knowledge about the English language, whereby using the language is considered a dominant determinant for having better job opportunities and attaining success in school in an increasingly globalized economy. It is observed by Das that English is introduced very early within the curriculum, but the implementation done by most of the teachers has not received proper training, which adversely affects the results of children. Das observed these findings while he visited different elementary schools. While demanding better teacher education programmes that focus on fruitful pedagogy methods for teaching languages, the research argues that without such efforts, the lack catalyzes students' failure to learn languages. This book provides an overview of the challenges as well as implications of teaching English at the elementary school level in India.

Islam (2022), From the literary landscape of Northeast India, several authors argue beyond the rather trite centripetal argument so commonly found in discussions about regional literatures. The anthology celebrates the richly diverse cultural narratives emerging from the region and shows how such tales problematize dominant cultural and language regimes. This compilation on Islam offers a sophisticated understanding of the role of English in this context, particularly in terms of interactions with regional languages and cultures. The authors soundly advocate for a new point of view-one that places regional settings and voices in prominence-and that Northeast Indian literature is an integral part of the larger Indian literary continuum. These indeed are lessons in the subtleties of language, identity, and representation in Indian literature-complementing in these matters what was and perhaps remains true of English as a contemporary medium of expression and legacy of colonialism.

Kumar and Halim (2023) Discuss the different issues the Indian language teachers face, considering mostly corrective feedback and raising the performance of students. The authors argue that despite advancing approaches towards the instruction of a language, many classes still lack material resources, several origins of learners, and varieties of skills. This study provides scope for corrective feedback as an essential teaching device that may be advantageous for learners to successfully negotiate the process of language learning. By analyzing different approaches to feedback and their impact on student engagement and learning, Kumar and Halim conclude that tailored feedback can add significant value to language proficiency, especially in a multilingual environment like India. This study underlines how crucial continued professional development is on the part of educators to develop their ability to give constructive criticism and accommodate the various needs of students.

LaDousa (2014) The contrast is flagged between Hindi and English as such scrutiny is executed to the intricate relationship involving language, education, and social class in modern-day India. The author posits that whereas English represents a lofty aim ("our sky") connected to upward mobility and global participation, Hindi serves as a groundwork ("our ground") for many students. Through ethnographic work, LaDousa shows how socioeconomic class disenfranchises children of high-quality English instruction through ethnographic work; children of wealthier families are likely to have greater opportunity to get the language. This is for this reason that there exists a linguistic hierarchy which further continues along lines of

existing social dispositions; LaDousa's work is important in stressing the need for inclusive education policies that close this gap and give children all backgrounds equal chances at an English education. This approach pays great attention to the social implications of teaching languages in India, specifically from the view of class relations and globalization.

Mahapatra and Anderson (2023) Discussing the issues of implementing India's multilingual language-in-education policy, which aims at good learning outcomes and linguistic diversity, it presents a comprehensive framework that lays out why teachers need to identify and react to the origins of their students' languages when teaching. The authors further opine that, just as a strategy to be used toward improved student understanding and engagement, multilingualism should also become a policy goal. Mahapatra and Anderson underline the necessity of creating a bilingual and even multilingual approach by allowing methods through which regional and indigenous languages would be honoured besides other languages. Their study does contribute to the ongoing debate about education reform in India by demonstrating how, when bilingual policies are properly implemented, they empower students and foster more inclusive learning environments.

Pappuswamy (2017) He grounds his concern in the difficulties related to the creation of orthographic systems effective for unwritten languages in Northeast India. The author addresses the linguistic and cultural diversity of the region. In such a context, most indigenous languages do not have standardized writing systems. This complicates the task of preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. Pappuswamy stresses the importance of involving local populations in the process of making orthography to ensure that the system established is both widely acceptable and culturally appropriate. The article promotes a collaborative approach which respects regional linguistic heritage but in a way that focuses attention on some of the challenges surrounding language documentation and teaching of unwritten languages. This study sheds more general challenges that may arise from linguistic differences within learning environments, particularly in areas with numerous spoken languages. The impact they bring to instructional strategies and how students will respond to them is massive in its own right.

3. EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT OF SIKKIM AND NORTH BENGAL

There is great linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity in Sikkim and North Bengal, which would also reflect in the educational environment. There are various ethnic groups in both regions, and each has their language or dialect. In Sikkim although Nepali is accompanied by Bhutia, Lepcha and Limbu, with English and Hindi, in North Bengal, in a multilingual community, Bengali-Hindi, Rajbanshi, and other indigenous languages are spoken. The same part, particular when teaching English grammar, rich linguistic diversity offers special obstacles as well as potential for educational progress.

Most students learn English as a second or third language, thus making it difficult for them to understand grammatical ideas in unique ways. The influence of regional languages renders a learner's understanding and construction of the sentences of the English language frequently affect the interference with grammatical structures. Socioeconomic factors also impact the learning environment, since many rural setups have few quality educational resources available to them and may lack appropriate school infrastructures, qualitatively competent teachers, and relevant materials to instruct the learner.

In these regions, language becomes part of identity formation. The curriculum within the schools of Sikkim reflects the state's value of sustaining indigenous languages and cultures yet risks local language traditions in order to fulfill academic objectives by requiring the need to become fluent in English.

The educational environment of Sikkim and North Bengal is appropriately described by the complex interplay of language variety, socioeconomic variables, and cultural identity. It is these uniquely varied grammatical resources that the middle school students are able to develop in order to surmount the unique challenges they face in gaining English competence.

3.1. Socio-cultural and Linguistic Diversity in the Region

North Bengal and Sikkim are acknowledged for significant language and sociocultural

diversity, which strikingly affects the learning environment. There are plenty of ethnic groups, such as Lepchas, Bhutias, Nepalis, and other minor indigenous tribes, inhabiting Sikkim. Every one of them has its own particular cultural activities, idioms, and custo ms. Some of the widely used languages include Nepali, Bhutia, and Lepcha. North Bengal is home to many ethnic groups speaking their various languages and dialects: the Bengalis, Rajbanshis, Santhals, Gorkhas-the Nepali-speaking ones-as well as many aboriginal tribes.

Because of this heterogeneity, the children there grow up learning to talk many languages, with often the local one being their main language at home. Since in schools English is usually taught as either a second or third language, there is also great linguistic complexity in the classroom. As the students often bank on their mother language principles while constructing sentences in English, the mastery over the mother language becomes a determinant of the way the students can manage syntax and grammar in English. English is an Indo-European language, and hence, problems in understanding its syntax and grammar surface for those whose grammatical structure and sentence formation are different from it, as is the case with Bengali or Nepali.

Cultural diversity at least partially influences student learning contexts. The many ethnic groups have their unique set of traditional beliefs and practices as well as customs that do influence viewpoints on and approaches to education. Education might simply not be prioritized by some communities if it does not hold significant positions in the alternative forms of knowledge and skill development or due to economic pressure. Children, due to limited access to modern educational infrastructure, often cannot cope with the demands of such a formal education system in rural regions. Such sociocultural factors may lead to disparity in what children learn, making some lag behind others either in grammar or other aspects of the English language.

3.2. Challenges in Implementing a Standardized Curriculum

The sociolinguistic diversity of Sikkim and North Bengal makes it almost impossible to adopt standardized curricula. When the teaching of English grammar and other language-related concerns are involved, there is little chance that these standardized curricula will be adapted considering varied linguistic backgrounds of the pupils, thereby failing to adequately meet the needs of kids whose first language is not English. Students who have already begun to find difficulty in coping with an education system that centers on the English language as the standard language of use may start becoming resentful towards this one-size-fits-all strategy.

Most books on standardized English grammar are written keeping in mind students who can speak little or closely comparable English. Such grammatical subtleties of languages like Nepali, Bengali, and other regional dialects which are common in Sikkim and North Bengal are rarely ever included in such textbooks. This means that students could feel a struggle while settling into the grammatical structure provided by such a set of materials, in case they have seen other alternative grammatical structures in their mother tongues. Such children faced a lot of struggling in relating and understanding the topic since examples relevant to a child's culture and language are absent from the standardized syllabus.

Moreover, teachers in these areas struggle when they try to implement a uniform curriculum. Most of them, and specifically the rural area-based teachers are not sound in the use of English because they themselves are products of the same socio-linguistic context. This hampers their role in imparting the art of using English grammar to their learners and acts as an impediment in their language. This is further exacerbated by the absence of teacher preparation programs that would help in tailoring standardized curricula into local contexts. As such, there is often the utilization of resources that are not enough to cater to the needs of students by teachers.

4. THE NEED FOR REGION-SPECIFIC GRAMMATICAL MATERIALS

The middle school curriculums will evoke the need for grammar resources unique to the linguistic and cultural variety of North Bengal and Sikkim. Standardized English grammar textbooks, which are often created on a national level, often fail to take account of the particular difficulties that students in linguistically diverse regions encounter. These official materials

can be hard for the students to understand and apply at these levels because children develop speaking regional languages and dialects. Grammar resources identified for use at a particular region are very essential for filling this gap and enhancing student levels in the mastery of the English language.

One of the key reasons for calling for a better contextual resource is because regional languages interfere in some instances with English grammar. The grammatical patterns of the languages most of the students of Sikkim and North Bengal speak at home-Nepali, Lepcha, Bhutia, Bengali, and others-do not resemble those of English in any instance. As a result, they often take the grammatical rules of their mother tongues over to English, which shows itself in subject-verb agreement, verb tense usage, and sentence construction mistakes. This type of grammar focuses on particular regions can work well with problems like these because it uses comparison examples that show how English and the students' mother tongues are alike and different.

Using content and examples which are culturally relevant is yet another essential element of materials targeted to a specific locality. The illustrations and exercises commonly found in the standardized textbooks often are not close enough to the pupils' reality that prevents them from being able to relate to the matter. Materials that are culturally relevant might make learning more meaningful and exciting through the use of generally known local names, scenarios, and stories. Grammatical activities: The student is more likely to understand and remember grammatical ideas when these are met with familiar circumstances.

Because students in such areas differ in their ability in English, materials for grammar are also necessary with specific targeting to the area. Since school and other settings within urban places use more frequent exposure to the use of English, pupils there will have varied acquaintance with the language, while those based in rural areas may be less exposed. In sparsely settled or rural areas, there may also be wide variations of English proficiency levels amongst pupils within the same school or classroom because of limited exposure outside of the classroom. These differences can be catered for when resources are tailored to specific regions, providing differentiated education that will both assist novice students and stretch the more advanced ones.

Region-based grammar resources also significantly support inclusivity and appreciation for the language backgrounds of the learners. If teaching and learning activities enable the curriculum to respect and appreciate the students' languages, then teachers can develop an even more inclusive learning setting because it makes learners feel valued for their cultural backgrounds and might make them more motivated to learn the language because they no longer feel as if learning English is something being implanted on them and being forced at the expense of their mother tongues.

4.1. Addressing Regional Language Influences on English Grammar

There are many local languages in places such as Sikkim and North Bengal which coexist with English and has a huge influence on English grammar. Students normally have English as an L2 or L3 while the first language could be one of the following: Nepali, Lepcha, Bhutia, Bengali, and others natively spoken by indigenous groups. Language transfer, where the student applies the rules of his or her L1 to English, is often due to the structural and grammatical differences between the two languages: one leads to common grammatical errors. For instance, in Bengali and Nepali, sentences follow a word order of SOV, while in English, they follow a word order of SVO. For this reason, many times, it can be mistaken as, for example, students putting together all the words of the home languages to form sentences in English. For example, in the same way, the various mother tongues of the different students will bring difficulty for them to comprehend the use of English tenses, conjugations of verbs and subject-verb agreement.

Region-specific grammar resources can be very useful in dealing with these matters. Such resources may have comparisons between the English language and the students' mother tongues, which will help them understand the differences between the structures of the two

languages, as well as potential areas of interference. With explicit acknowledgment and treatment of these language factors in instructional materials, teachers can facilitate the students in determining and correcting many of the most frequent grammatical mistakes caused by language transfer.

Apart from this, materials targeted towards a specific area can provide a localized explanation on the basis of regional linguistic contexts. This helps the learners to internalize the differences between English and their mother tongue and eventually leads to correct and confident usage of the grammar of English.

4.2. Bridging the Gap Between Local Dialects and Standard English

Students from groups speaking non-standard or local dialects, which could vary significantly from standard regional languages and English, are often found in multilingual areas like Sikkim and North Bengal. That puts students who learn English as a second or foreign language in an unenviable position because they have to negotiate the difference between their first language and the more standardized languages used by media and in schools. Local dialects differ significantly in vocabulary, phonetic structures, and grammatical practices from standard languages. Thus, they may not have learned the standard form of their local language before coming to be taught the grammar of English, further adding another layer of complexity for the learners.

Ideally, the gap between standard and regional English should be bridged through the effective teaching of language by integrating regional accents with standard English. With a scaffolding methodology that acknowledges the linguistic features of the students' dialect and incorporates mainstream English gradually, regionally specific grammar materials can bridge this gap in the end. Regionally specific grammar activities might begin with simple sentence patterns that imitate the spoken dialect of the pupils and then work their way to more complex aspects of the principles of English grammatical.

The existence of dialectical differences in the learning processes of their students can enable students to understand both linguistic systems much better as they gain more insight into how their local dialect contrasts with English. Teachers may introduce bilingual examples to show the ways in which translation works and the reasons for certain kinds of grammar corrections.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF LOCALLY TAILORED GRAMMATICAL CONTENT

The process of developing educational resources that precisely reflect the special linguistic, cultural and social background of the pupils in a specific area is referred to as "locally tailored grammatical content development." Grammar books can simply not accommodate the special problems which children face studying English in Sikkim and North Bengal, which have the maximum linguistic diversity and children speak many local languages or dialects. That is, developing grammatical resources especially for a location can vastly enhance the quality of language instruction by making the learning process more accessible and more relatable.

This is local adaptation in grammar content, which considers the students' linguistic reality, including common grammatical errors they may commit as a result of interference in their native language, vocabulary known, and structure to them. For instance, grammar materials should be crafted with difference-of-pattern exercises which directly contrast structures from English with similar structures that occur in the local language, such as Bengali or Nepali, if it is shown that students frequently shift to sentence pattern from the latter to the former. In a personalized way, this enhances student engagement and turns out to become a better element for understanding, as the content gained will seem somehow applicable to the student's everyday language experience.

For example, pupils' familiar cultural allusions can be included with locally contextualised content. Because they can relate the exercises with grammar to their immediate environment and experiences, the students become interested and more active in the learning process. Exercises can, for instance, contain names, places, and conditions that represent local realities, such as customs, traditional festivals, or local flora and fauna. Besides facilitating the

understanding of the material, these examples culturally relevant can make students apply grammar principles into understandable circumstances.

5.1. Strategies for Creating Contextually Relevant Grammar Materials

An actual process of generating grammatically relevant resources for context would involve great care that uses a structured approach focused on the specific needs of local student populations. Some strategies considered in the development of such materials might include.

1. **Linguistic needs Assessment:** Requirements assessment must be conducted before the formulation of locally customized materials to identify the peculiar linguistic problems students face. This involves identifying common errors, understanding the mother tongues that the students are familiar with, and understanding how such languages impact their learning of English. For instance, even though Nepali and English grammars differ, it can be found that Nepali mother-tongued Sikkim students lack proper sentence formation or article use in English. The results of this study may contribute to the framing of materials to address these problems.

2. **Comparative Language Teaching:** Comparative language instruction is the best way of teaching grammar in a multilingual class. Such a process works by bringing comparisons and contrasts between the students' first language and English to the front - thereby helping them understand that English grammar is not the same as in their first language. For instance, grammar materials tailored to a region may, while attempting to help students understand the differences, contrast the subject-verb-object structure of English with that of Bengali or Nepali. This method reduces the interference caused by language transfer as well as makes the grammar rules clearer.

3. **Cultural Relevance:** The exercise of grammar becomes more interesting for the students if the examples and situations used in grammar exercises bear cultural relevance for them. In this regard, it would utilize known names and places in the place of general words such as "John went to the market." To this end: "Tashi went to the monastery," or "Rani bought vegetables from the village market." This assists in developing their everyday living relationship with English grammar and makes the material more relatable. This also serves to make abstract grammatical abstractions seem less removed from the students' concrete experience than they would otherwise appear.

4. **Awareness of Code-Switching:** Students will code-switch between the two languages or dialects while communicating in a multilingual setting. Being alive to this, grammar workbooks may take on activities that respect the child's intrinsic propensity to code-switch by emphasizing the right use of English in different situations. This ability makes it possible for pupils to realize instances when they should speak in English rather than their mother tongue or accent while reminding them they are already accomplished at code-switching among various languages.

5. **Differentiated instruction:** Grammar resources can be created with differentiated education in mind to consider the possible range of English skill amongst the students in a multilingual region. This involves designing an activity which manages students of any talent, thereby devising easier tasks for the novice and more complicated ones for the experience learner. Basic sentence structure and subject-verb agreement, for instance, may be the focus of entry resources but more advanced materials can include intricate grammatical features such as conditionals or passive voice. This means that all learners can move along with their learning curve, whatever level of proficiency.

6. **Multimodal Learning:** The use of visual, aural, and kinesthetic learning modalities can be a valuable addition to grammar teaching especially in multilingual classrooms. Locally adapted resources could be audio exercises in practice pronunciation and intonation; if one can interpret graphics well, visual aids illustrating grammar rules, such as comparison charts of sentence patterns in English and Nepali. They make things more meaningful through multichannel interaction modes, which adapt to various learning styles.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study point to a strong imperative for the development of locally produced grammar resources to bolster middle school instruction in linguistically diverse areas such as Sikkim and North Bengal. Results indicate that while useful in some contexts, standard, off-the-shelf grammar resources often fail to account for the distinctive linguistic characteristics of regional dialects and languages in these places. Teachers may, therefore help in the preservation of indigenous languages and cultural identity while using curriculum-specific grammatical elements to facilitate student engagement and understanding with authorized literatures. The paper draws emphasis on how curricular content localized to learner contexts can contribute towards raising both relevance and accessibility and making grammar instruction more reflective in nature for multilingual learners. The present study thus encourages the cooperative development of these resources along with regional educators, linguists, and community people for linguistic and cultural authenticity. Ultimately, the study concludes that the products of locally made grammar resources can be a viable tool to counterbalance language barriers in the classroom, encourage inclusion, and facilitate better learning outcome in the middle schools of Sikkim and North Bengal.

REFERENCES

1. Agnihotri, R. K. (2021). Linguistic diversity and marginality in South Asia. In Handbook of education systems in South Asia (pp. 1401-1436). Singapore: Springer Singapore.
2. Bhutia, K. D., & Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, A. M. Y. (2021). Decolonising Sikkimese Bhutia Language and Cultural Production: The Journey from Colonial Representation to Revival And Reclamation. Alison Booth & Henry Johnson, 23(1), 75.
3. Chettri, U., & Sharma, S. (2022). The Longchoks of Sikkim and North Bengal: The Need for Heritage Preservation and Awareness. In North-East Research Conclave (pp. 49-70). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
4. Das, J. (2018). English in primary school education in India: a few observances. International Journal of English Learning & Teaching Skills, 1(2), 131-148.
5. Islam, K. B. (Ed.). (2022). Literatures from Northeast India: Beyond the Centre–Periphery Debate. Taylor & Francis.
6. Kumar, A., & Halim, H. B. A. (2023). Addressing challenges in language teaching in india: exploring the role of corrective feedback in enhancing learning.
7. LaDousa, C. (2014). Hindi is our ground, English is our sky: Education, language, and social class in contemporary India. Berghahn Books.
8. Mahapatra, S. K., & Anderson, J. (2023). Languages for learning: a framework for implementing India's multilingual language-in-education policy. Current Issues in Language Planning, 24(1), 102-122.
9. Pappuswamy, U. (2017). Issues and challenges in search of effective orthography for unwritten languages of North-East India. Unwritten languages of India, 117-159.
10. Rai, S. (2023). Language and the Question of Identity: A Study of the Nepali Language Movement in India (1956-1992) (Doctoral dissertation).
11. Sinha, P. K. (2012). A study of motivation and attitudes in second language acquisition at the Higher Secondary level in West Bengal (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Bengal).
12. Turin, M. (2011). Results from the linguistic survey of Sikkim: mother tongues in education. Buddhist Himalaya: studies in religion, history and culture, 2, 127-142.
13. Verma, M. (2021). English language teaching and learning (ELTL) in the high schools of Mokokchung district of Nagaland (Doctoral dissertation, Nagaland University).
14. Wouters, J. J., & Subba, T. B. (Eds.). (2022). The Routledge Companion to Northeast India. Taylor & Francis.
15. Yliniemi, J. S. (2021). A descriptive grammar of Denjongke [HL Archive 10]. Himalayan Linguistics.