

## **Conceptual Framework for the Proposed Learner Empowerment Programme on Bilingual Education**

### **Introduction, Background and Rationale:**

Bilingual Education introduced under the title ‘English medium education’ has been practiced in the Junior and senior secondary education in the Sri Lankan School system since 2002 demonstrating various aspects of bilingual education, mostly in inadequate its styles. According to the Report of the National Education Commission in 2003, bilingual education has been introduced to promote English as a second language in Sri Lanka ‘without jettisoning Sinhala and Tamil which will continue to be the medium of instruction in selected subjects.’”

Yet the use of bilingual education purely for upgrading English or any other language should not be the major target in any bilingual education programme. The primary goal should be developing Proficiency Skills (CALPS) while enhancing their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in the target L2. This is vivid in Coyle’s 4C s curriculum on bilingual education:

‘Some of the basic principles of [bilingual education- classroom],

- Language is used **to learn** as well as **to communicate**.
- It is the subject matter which determines the language required.
- A CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) lesson is therefore not a language lesson neither is it a subject lesson transmitted in a foreign language. According to the 4C s curriculum (Coyle 1999), a successful CLIL lesson should combine elements of the following: [This should be common for any learning material as well.]
  - ✚ **Content:** Progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to the specific elements of a defined curriculum.
  - ✚ **Communication:** Using language to learn whilst learning to use language.
  - ✚ **Cognition:** Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language .
  - ✚ **Culture:** Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness and self.”

(Dr. Marie, bilingual education lecture at the auditorium, NIE on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Aug 2007)

The use of English as a (weak) second language or foreign language in Sri Lankan society has not been considered when addressing bilingual education and/ or introducing ‘English medium education’. Whatever is done in education in relation to learning and teaching English, and in English at school level (and even at university level), this fact needs to be focused if considerable development is to be expected resulting in an effective product through a process oriented manner.

“Unless [curriculum designers on bilingual education] are knowledgeable about current theories of second language acquisition, about the relationship between the first and

second language, about the role of the first language in second-language acquisition, about bilingual education and second language instruction, characteristics of instruction that promote language learning for bilingual students, they will be unable to provide appropriate instruction [on bilingual education].

... Instruction in English as a second language should be a part of students' individualized educational plans and both regular and special educators must become familiar with current practices and research on second language teaching [ and learning]."

(Elsevier Science Ltd, 1998, Education: *The Complete Encyclopedia: Language Disorders among Bilingual Studies* P. 5)

At present, the focus of education has been shifted from teaching to learning and from information transmission view to the constructivist view of education. Within this paradigm shift, even the changes necessary in bilingual education have to be practised in such a way to optimize learning and learner development.

Growing up with more than one language certainly has its own advantages in today's global village. Yet bilingualism really is not something that simply happens. Raising kids to be successful in more than one language requires some careful planning and learning about bilingual language development. It takes normally at least four to six years for a child to be competent in a second language within an acquisition-rich environment.

'... The instructional treatment is provided to the participating students for a period of at least four to six years. This is the amount of time required, on average, to reach second language or bilingual proficiency, but not necessarily native-like proficiency, as confirmed by a number of evaluation studies on immersion and bilingual programmes. Cummins, 1981; Krashen & Biber, 1988; Swain, 1984; Troike, 1978"

(*Raising Bilingual Children*, P 12)

Due to lack of systematic planning and critical thinking on bilingual education, today so many deficiencies are visible even in the materials available for the learners and teachers. The text book has become the only material available for learners as well as for teachers. Yet the standards of learning materials are not rich enough to address learners' and teachers' needs in bilingual education.

The deficiencies in the available text books and other resources

- Use of complex language in terms of vocabulary, syntax, sentence length
- Incorrect use of vocabulary
- Weak organization and presentation of the input
- Poor link between the input available in the text books available in first languages and those in English
- Less opportunities available for the teacher and the learner to attend to pedagogic exercises and activities under the given input

- Lack of additional learning materials
- Lack of variety

When organizing input for learning, importance and need of comprehensible input has been emphasized by so many scholars and research on bilingual education:

“Current research in second language acquisition indicates that a critical element in effective English as a second language instruction is access to comprehensible input in English (Krashen & Biber, 1988). One way of providing comprehensible input directly to the LEP student is by teaching content in English using strategies and techniques that make the content comprehensible to the second language learner. Research confirms that students in classes where such strategies and techniques are employed acquire impressive amounts of English and learn content matter as well (Krashen & Biber, 1988). It has [also] been long known that a second language can be effectively learned when it is the medium of instruction, not the object (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Campbell, Gray, Rhodes & Snow, 1985) “

*(Integrating Language and Content Instruction: Strategies and Techniques, P: 01)*

“Optimal language input and output: optimal input has four characteristics: (a) It is adjusted to the comprehension level of the learner, (b) it is interesting and relevant, (c) there is sufficient quality, (d) it is challenging. This is accomplished through communicatively sensitive language instruction and subject matter presentation. “

*(Raising Bilingual Children P 12)*

At present, another important need in learner empowerment programmes on bilingual education is development and use of L1 for progressive development. The text books available in second language and learners’ first language are not the same in content in some instances. This also negatively affects bilingual learners in their early period of bilingual education which allows them to be successful in their transitional stage. The support of L1 is not considered by the materials and the learning-teaching process.

“ Areas of direct relevance to meeting the needs of [bilingual learners] include 1) the native language, 2) bilingualism and academic achievement, 3) curriculum, 4) parent and community influences and 5) programmatic evaluation. These categories represent areas in which promising, ground-breaking research is being conducted in how best to educate [bilingual learners] limited language proficiency (LEP) students.”

*(Advances in Research in Bilingual Education p: 01)*

Usually in bilingual education learners and teachers need more supplementary materials than those in a monolingual setting. In the Sri Lankan context, this has not been sufficiently addressed and therefore bilingual learners and teachers have been hampered and hindered in their learning and teaching processes under bilingual education. This has

been clearly and repeatedly highlighted in the islandwide needs survey conducted in March, 2007 on bilingual education by the Unit of Language Coordination, NIE..

According to the needs survey, the major challenges faced by bilingual learners are as follows:

- Their poor language capacity both in Basic Interpersonal communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS) (the difficulties especially in comprehension, syntax, vocabulary and L2)
- Shortage of competent teachers who are capable of assisting to discuss the problems and difficulties of learning in an L2 learners (Lack of teachers in quality and number)
- Lack of opportunities for L2 improvement and using L2 in day-to-day life
- Lack of text books and difficulties in using the text books
- The urgent need for supplementary materials for learning in English and library facilities
- Additional support from the learning community such as teachers, elders and parents
- Poor motivation due to lower negative perceptions of bilingual education
- Shifting to L1 medium due to various reasons
- Inability to attend to tasks which need higher order of thinking
- The need of much memorization
- Low information literacy in L2
- Financial difficulties in attending additional classes
- Insufficiency in the time available for learning in comparison to the quantity and comprehensibility of input.
- However the students have said that they are very enthusiastic and interested in continuing with bilingual education even in poorly facilitated learning environments.

Considering all these factors, the Unit of Language Coordination, NIE has planned to develop a series of support materials for both teachers and learners in bilingual education. The target workbooks based on the input provided in the text books for each grade is one attempt among many of such endeavours. These workbooks are expected to be models

for teachers and supplementary for learners to bridge the gap between language difficulties and learning and development of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills and applications.

### **Overarching Aim of the Learner Empowerment Programme on Bilingual Education:**

The learner empowerment programme developed of bilingual education mainly aims at **motivating and empowering bilingual learners through introducing learner-friendly materials.**

### **General Objectives of the Learner Empowerment Programme on Bilingual Education:**

1. To develop language for day-to-day communication (BICS)
2. To develop Cognitive Academic Language proficiency Skills (CALPS)
3. To demonstrate self-directed learning skills
4. To promote and cater to individual learning styles
5. To encourage the spirit of working together
6. To inculcate interdisciplinary thinking
7. To create a sense of pride in the Sri Lankan identity while valuing English as a global and local language

### **Specific Objectives:**

In line with the above general objectives the following were identified as the Specific Objectives under each respective general objective so both types of these objectives are common for the learner empowerment programme developed on bilingual education.

<b>General Objectives</b>	<b>Specific Objectives</b>
1. To develop language for day-to-day communication (BICS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. To demonstrate basic communication skills in L2 while engaging in learning situations</li><li>ii. To use L2 in phatic communion (in social and discursal contexts)</li><li>iii. To support classroom management in the L2</li></ol>
2. To develop Cognitive Academic Language proficiency Skills (CALPS like describing, explaining, note-taking, repetition, paraphrasing, summarizing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. To use different strategies for developing vocabulary relevant in various learning situations</li><li>ii. To use relevant syntax to comprehend the target input in a given learning situation</li><li>iii. To express ideas in L2 appropriately in a given learning situation</li><li>iv. To present the input in a given learning</li></ol>

	<p>situation verbally and through visualization</p> <p>v. To use L1 to ensure comprehensible input in L2</p> <p>vi. To use L1 and transfer L1 skills to think and present critically the input in a given learning situation by using L2</p> <p>vii. To use contextual clues in a given learning situation to understand meaning</p> <p>viii. To demonstrate various skills in CALPS</p>
3. To demonstrate self-directed learning skills	<p>i. To display responsibility for his or her own learning</p> <p>ii. To transfer learning from one situation to another</p> <p>iii. To make use of previous experiences to learn the new input in a given learning situation</p> <p>iv. To construct his/ her own meaning in a given learning situation</p> <p>v. To use self-evaluation strategies in any given learning situation</p> <p>vi. To seek assistance of others in his/ her learning</p> <p>vii. To appreciate the wisdom of local personalities</p>
4. To promote and cater to individual learning styles	<p>i. To engage in activities that require different learning styles thereby identify styles best suited to each learner</p> <p>ii. To select and develop suitable learning strategies as an individual and changing agent</p> <p>iii. To individualize one's own learning by making use of activities targeting multiple intelligences</p> <p>iv. To adapt global situations to suit local identities</p>
5. To encourage the spirit of working together	<p>i. To demonstrate participatory behaviour in a given learning situation</p> <p>ii. To function as a resource person among others to promote and support peer learning</p> <p>iii. To demonstrate leadership and team spirit by working together</p> <p>iv. To share responsibilities by changing roles in a given learning situation</p> <p>v. To demonstrate self-confidence and strength by playing different roles within a team</p> <p>vi. To apply traditional practices of working together for betterment of the community</p> <p>vii. To respect and promote social values and</p>

	norms of Sri Lankan culture viii. To ensure individual development as a part of community development
8. To inculcate interdisciplinary thinking	i. To link input at intra and inter-subject level in a comprehensible manner ii. To explore personal/ group experiences in formal learning situations iii. To apply the learnt or the acquired experiences in a meaningful manner in real-life situations
7. To create a sense of pride in the Sri Lankan identity while valuing English as a global and local language	This aspect will be addressed as a value rather than studying about it separately by incorporating the input in the other six general objectives.

Specific objectives will later be identified more in number in the course of developing materials in its long run of the learner empowerment programme.

### **Developing Supplementary Materials for Learner Empowerment on Bilingual Education:**

The target bilingual learner development programme consists of a variety of supplementary materials designed both for learners and teachers of the target discipline. Workbook is only one way of accessing this process and a set of workbooks will be developed for each Grade covering the input available in the prescribed text books issued by the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka on the six subjects, Science, Mathematics, Health & Physical Education, History, Geography and Civics and Life Competencies/ Civics & Governance.

The workbooks have **an interdisciplinary approach** in terms of subject content, linguistic aspects, learners' individual differences, difficulties and an **eclectic approach** in instructional design, learning styles and learner strategies. All the workbooks will be based on **thematic approach** when accumulating the input in the text books. Therefore learners find it more meaningful relating to their real life. There will be several **units** in each workbook covering selected items from each text book.

Each unit (developed under a certain theme) of each workbook consists of several rich **learning contexts** followed by a number of **pedagogic exercises and activities**. The pedagogic exercises are supposed to provide the learners with ample opportunities to be familiar with the target learning input (**practice** with understanding through familiarity) and the activities are designed in such a way providing learners with opportunities to apply the learnt input in more or less real life situations (**praxis**). Thus the activities are expected to send the learner beyond the classroom and to see how far they are successful in their productive skills based on what is learnt in the classroom.

The workbooks will motivate the learner in various ways and the opportunities provided for **self-assessment and evaluation** will also motivate and provide **feedback** for the learner. The learners are supposed to seek their teachers' or elders' support in this regard.

Each workbook possesses **two sets of cards: word association cards and memory addressing cards**. The former will address the technical jargon and the concepts with paraphrasing, meaning given in L1 and sentences or meaningful chunks in which the target vocabulary is contextually embedded to highlight the meaning. The memory addressing cards will be prepared by introducing various ways of presenting the input of a certain learning context as a summary to make learners easy to find strategies for accommodation in their long term memory.

The **footnotes** in the workbooks themselves will also support the learner with additional help in relation to vocabulary. **Reminders** in the workbooks are used to make the learners aware of the relevant input with the page numbers in the relevant text books and subjects.

Teachers and learners will be offered **guidelines** separately to make them aware of instructions when using the workbooks.

Instructions will be simple and wherever necessary, they are provided with the learner in L1. In addition, L1 is expected to be used wherever in the workbooks as it is necessary.

### **Instructional Design:**

The instructional design of the target workbooks will be **eclectic**. It will be **learner-centred** and addresses **second language learning principles, principles of bilingual education (BICS and CALPS) and general methods. Competency based approach on constructivist principles** will be used to present the content of the workbooks encouraging **self-directed learning principles, cooperative and collaborative learning principles and addressing principles of individualization of learning, learning styles, multiple intelligences and strategopaedia**.

When developing the supplementary materials, the Unit of language Coordination will seek special help at advisory level from psycholinguists, sociolinguists, applied linguists, educational philosophers, TESOL experts, subject experts and others who are able to represent the system of education at various levels and institutes in relation to the target discipline.

The personnel on developing the workbooks will consist of **resource persons at three levels:** writers' panels, panel of screeners and panel of advisors at first level. There will be a separate panel for writing each workbook and each panel consists of four-six subject experts and two second language experts. The screeners are selected from the writers' panels themselves and they will be responsible for the output of all the panels in addition to their panels. This group consists of 11 members representing subject experts (06), second language experts (03) and L1 experts (02).

The advisors will be responsible for the input, its appropriateness, accuracy and guidance to be provided to the other two levels of resource persons.. They are ultimately expected to provide the Advisory Board and the Academic Affairs Board an evaluation report on each set of workbooks.

In 2007, according to the annual plan, the first set of workbooks has to be developed there will be six workbooks for Grade 6 covering the input of the target subjects. For each term, there will be two workbooks.

### **Piloting Programme:**

The piloting programme is to be discussed in future and implemented in the year, 2008 for the materials produced in 2007. A selected number of schools first will be targeted and then necessary modifications are made in the materials and introduced to the all bilingual schools later.

Prepared by G.H. Asoka, the Head of the Unit of Language Coordination, NIE on the 20<sup>th</sup>, August 2007.

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