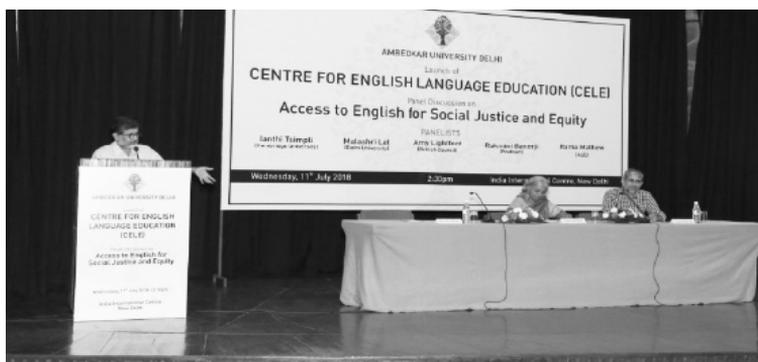


Report

CELE Launch

A Report by Amrita Mehta

Ambedkar University Delhi formally launched the Centre for English Language Education (CELE) with a panel discussion at India International Centre on 11 July 2018. The panel comprised of eminent ELE experts—Professor Ianthi Maria Tsimpli (Professor of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Cambridge); Professor Malashri Lal (University of Delhi and currently member of the English Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi); Ms Amy Lightfoot (Assistant Director, British Council) and Dr. Rukmini Banerjee (CEO, Pratham Education Foundation). The discussion was moderated by Professor Rama Mathew, Visiting Professor at Ambedkar University.



The program began with a welcome address by Professor Amol Padwad, Director, CELE. Professor Padwad outlined the role of the centre as one that would: address the English language needs of the university students; undertake outreach programmes to build capacity in teachers for providing quality English education to students of Delhi; and lastly, function as a premier centre for research and curriculum development in English Language Education (ELE) in India. Professor Shyam B. Menon, Vice Chancellor, Ambedkar University emphasized the need for institutional efforts to provide language access and proficiency in order to enable equitable outreach of higher education. He added that CELE has been envisaged

as an academic effort to take on the challenges of capacity-building and quality enhancement of learners from diverse multilingual and multicultural contexts, promote innovation and research through outreach programmes for teachers, and design pre-service and in-service programmes for professionals. CELE also offers credit-based as well as non-credit courses in language enhancement and enrichment to undergraduate, postgraduate and research students; Diplomas/ undergraduate/postgraduate/Ph.D. degrees in English language education courses; and provides consultancy services to policy makers, organizations or publishers that require expertise in ELE.

In the panel discussion, the panellists contextualized the dissemination of English language skills and its role in education at all levels in terms of learners and teachers from multi-ethnic communities, disparate socio-economic backgrounds, availability and use of digital platforms and vastly varying educational resources in our country. Amy Lightfoot emphasized the need for quality assurance and constant monitoring and evaluation of teacher competence and performance. Ianthi Maria Tsimpli talked about her experiences with bilingualism and its role in language acquisition, and the complex ways in which socio-economic and geographical contexts interact with and feed into English language education. Malashri Lal focussed on indigenous and folk traditions of story-telling and songs for learning dissemination and how language acquisition can be enhanced by using ethnic traditions that have survived and incorporated change through generations. She added that a people and culture-friendly approach would contribute greatly to the agenda of education for equity and social justice, and ease the impediments to foreign language acquisition. Rukmini Banerjee presented the rich experiences of the Pratham classrooms in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. She spoke about the different ways in which learner diversity and resource inadequacies were not only overcome by Pratham but were also channelled to modify their approach towards imparting language familiarization and initiating fluency and accuracy. Rama Mathew contributed by weaving her vast experience in the field of ELE into the discussion, and highlighted different facets of the connotations of English proficiency in India.

The discussion continued over a sumptuous high tea. This was indeed a stimulating start to the CELE centre, and it raised the hopes of those present that it would assume a significant space in the field of research, curriculum development, training and collaboration in ELE in India.

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