Initiation of Blended Learning through Kannada Wikipedia, Issues and Challenges - A Case Study

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Deemed to be University

Abstract- Globalization has brought about a lot of technological changes in the field of Higher Education. Digital Learning is one among them. In many Academic Institutions, the medium of Instruction is English, so it continued to be the Language for the Technology enabled Teaching and Learning as well. When Knowledge Creation and Dissemination happen only through English, the Vernacular languages get marginalized. A not exposed to English section of society also gets marginalized. Each civilization has its own knowledge traditions. Due to Colonialism and other reasons, there is a break in this knowledge tradition, and it becomes sectarian. Even though, most of the held researches prove the existence of a local system of Knowledge Production, Preservation, and Dissemination in the vernacular languages, these already marginalized sections have not built their knowledge tradition on a par with the one of English. The Knowledge Acquisition through English and vernacular languages go hand in hand, but there is still a gap. It is the responsibility of the Academics to narrow this gap and to bring in the marginalized sections of the society to be the realm of knowledge. Wikipedia, a revolutionary and democratic source of knowledge has embarked upon creating and strengthening the Vernacular Knowledge Tradition by involving the higher educational institutions. Wikipedia has taken up the responsibility of making available a pile of social and cultural data to the younger generation and the public at large, through the vernacular languages in a digital form.

Keywords: digital learning- higher education- knowledge creation- cu experimentation..

GJHSS-G Classification: FOR Code: 130309

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

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This paper discusses the scope for occupying a big space in the Language Wikipedia through a systematic training given to undergraduate students. The perils and pitfalls, the students undergo in the process of acquiring the technical knowledge and then creating his or her article are discussed. This Christ University Experimentation has borne fruit, but a lot has to be done to achieve a reputable status for Indian language Wikipedia with reference to Kannada.

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I. Introduction

Print media had a vital role in the field of Education just about two decades ago. The books in all the disciplines like Humanities, Social Sciences, Commerce, Management, Law, Medical Sciences, etc.

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were in the printed form. So the reader used to go where the book was. Now the world has changed, you can access knowledge through gadgets from where you are or wherever you go. Earlier, you need to print the book to get the information in "as is where is" condition. But now, through Digital media you can edit, make corrections, and update information continually. This manuscript briefs about the issues and challenges faced while digitizing Kannada texts through Kannada Wikipedia, as part of Digital Learning. To add to the few existing digital sources in the Kannada language like Kannada Varnamalegalu (Kannada alphabets), Pre-school Learning Kit- Kannada kids' songs, Kannada Rhymes, Panchantantra Tales, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias & Digital Libraries, Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading & Writing, Listening & Speaking, Online Course Materials, News & Media, Arts, Films, & Music etc., such a Blended Learning was incorporated in the Undergraduate Curriculum containing the most essential elements of High-Quality Digital Learning namely Student Eligibility, Student Access, Personalized Learning, Advancement, Quality Content, Quality Instruction, Quality Choices, Assessment & Accountability, Funding and Delivery.

Universities and Colleges in India also realize that the Internet is a boon for the current Educational System. Students often refer to informative websites for their projects and assignments, with Wikipedia articles topping the list of the reference resources that are easily accessible. Although English Wikipedia is more viewed and referred by the students, of late, there has been an increase in both readership and voluntary editorial contributions to the Indic language Wikipedia such as Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, and other language versions of Wikipedia.

This project is an initiative towards developing e-content for Kannada Wikipedia as part of Digital Learning. The *Wikipedia Foundation* awarded *Centre for Internet &Society* a two year grant to act as an anchor and catalyze the growth of Indian Language Wikimedia Communities via the Indian undergraduate language classrooms at Christ University, Bangalore. This was in order to instill Writing skills (ability to write in an objective passion), Digital Information literacy skills, the Ability to critically engage with a concept/theme and Language Proficiency Skills in the students.

10

Christ University and CIS have co-designed and jointly developed and implemented relevant training programmes to achieve this objective. The endeavor has been to bring Teaching-Learning processes on to free and open digital platforms including Indian language Wikipedia. The Kannada Wikipedia is the Kannada language edition of Wikipedia incepted in June 2003;it is moderately active till today.

II. Implementation and Processus

Writing and editing articles in Kannada Wikipedia is a part of the Continuous Internal Assessment for undergraduate students of Christ University since 2013. Students in first and second-semester B.A/B.Sc./B.Com/BBA and students in third and fourth semester B.A/B.Sc./B.Com do their projects with Wiki source and Wikipedia respectively. In every section of the I and II year classes, select student ambassadors take up training to help out the other students to participate in the project. Students also get the Orientation by the CIS-Access regarding the knowledge about the process and procedures of Wikipedia project. Lab sessions too are conducted by CIS to test the typing skills. The members of the faculty go through Wiki training to facilitate the technical process.

The students enter details like Name, Registration Number, Class, Course, and their Areas of interest on the Moodle page to create a user account. And then, they work towards creating wiki contributions of rare books of Kannada literature from Digital libraries using crowd sourcing initiatives which in turn encourage Kannada literary, technical and digital enthusiasts to be new editors, to contribute and enrich Kannada Wikimedia projects.

The objective of this programme is to encourage the students to acquire the necessary skills in digital learning, equip themselves to create new knowledge and to edit the existing articles available in Wikimedia. This effort gave more digital space to the Indian languages. The change from the traditional mode of learning languages to the digital has been well received and appreciated by the student community. They have immensely benefited from the Wikipedia content creating and editing experience. It has also helped them to develop their language, writing skills, and research aptitude and knowledge. As of, December 2015, our students have digitalized three out of fifteen novels of Shri Niranjan, a well-known Kannada Novelist to wiki source. Rangammana Vathara, Vimochana, and Abhaya are the books that have been digitalized by Christ university undergraduate students.

III. Assignment and Evaluation

For CIA I, thefirst-semester B.A/B.Sc/B.Com students have to type one page from any one of the novels of Shri. Niranjana assigned by the teacher and the second-semester students will have to create a user page and write about themselves in 200 to 250 words and develop the same with inter-Wiki links sections, images, etc. for a CIA-3. The assessment of CIA-1 is based on the number of Bytes typed by the students without any mistakes, and the CIA-3 is on whether the student has followed the given rubrics like the usage of proper language, formatting of Bold, Italics, Sections, Images, etc. to create the article.

The third-semester students create an article on Language, Literature, and Culture in Kannada in about 500 words in the sandbox; develop the same with Language Usage, Sections, References, Links, (Internal and External) principles and get it live. The assessment pattern followed with the selection of topic, the length of the article, and above said criteria.

The fourth-semester students have to create subject-specific articles. B.A/B.Sc./B.Com students have to select the topic on their subjects like Humanities, Sciences, Commerce, and Management respectively following the similar task. This Continuous Internal Assessment will be assessed based on Wiki data Linking, inter-language linking, adding the article title and username in the Christ University Project Page, Putting a message in any user's talk page as well as in article's talk page. All the four semesters carry 20 marks each forCIA-1 and CIA-3, with the specified criteria.

IV. Analysis

The target and strategy of CIS as implemented in our project is to improve quality, increase participation, increase reach and encourage innovation in Kannada and other Indian languages Wikipedia and Wiki source. In general, the Kannada Wikimedia projects lack in concentrated efforts, so enhancing the articles with reliable sources is the need. With our initiatives, we understand that crowd sourcing efforts will help to develop the same.

CIS has been conducting the workshop very often to the interns to give the knowledge about how to edit the project and how to getit live. In the year 2014, eight students of Christ University worked as interns for Encyclopedia Digitization- Mysore University. In 2015, seven students took the internship to edit the Wikipedia articles created by Christ University students.- The quality of Wikipedia articles varies widely; many are very good, but some lack depth and clarity, or contain bias, or are outdated.

V. Result

The work done by our students in this project has been well recognized and appreciated. *Kaamanabillu*, a supplement of the daily "*Prajavani*" on Thursday, 15 May 2014 published a news-coverage on Wikipedia project of Christ University titled *Habbali*

Kannada Wikipedia Rasaballi. Apart from these, our student interns edited approximately a hundred articles in the sandbox and made live during April 2015.Moreover, many students are interested in contributing to Wikipedia even after completing their degree.

Following our model, other Undergraduate colleges across Karnataka such as SDM College, Ujire and Alvas College, Moodabidare have opted for Wikipedia Project. Also, SDM College, Ujire on the 13 August 2015 organized a Kannada Wikipedia workshop. Similarly, a two-day workshop on Digital Collaborations in Tamil-language was organized by Tamil Virtual University in Anna University Campus, Chennai.

However, there were few issues and challenges while implementing this project.

a) Issues

1. Kannada Wikipedia is having less number of articles compared to English and other Indian languages (except Sanskrit)!
2. Due to lack of Digital Technology, people neither create knowledge nor contribute to Kannada Wikipedia. A small group of people with Computer knowledge. In that small number, many deprived of Internet facility.
3. In the Indian Education System, Digital Learning is not a part of the curriculum either at school or college. In both levels, less space and scope is given to the Curriculum. Lack of proper infrastructure and Training.
4. Keyboard Operation in Indian languages is not as easy as the English keyboard. Many software like *Nudi, Baraha,Sreelipi, Unicode,* etc. are available in the market but some of them are not free of cost, and if you want to translate the article from English to Kannada or any other Indian languages, the language structure varies, for example- the English language having SVO (Subject, Verb, and Object) but Kannada language, as well as Dravidian languages, belong to SOV(Subject, Object, and Verb) language system.
5. The Kannada language has many dialects; due to which, one common standard language is not used as the medium of instruction across the state. Colloquial language is different from literary language. So, many of them do not know the writing style of the article and spell check is not available as in English.

b) Challenges

1. Digitalizing of the important texts in Kannada.
- Obtaining copyrights from the authors for the books is a challenge. Few authors may not like to bring in through online because they do not want to open it for the general public.

2. In the absence of the author, obtaining copyrights is a challenge.
- Books belonging to ancient age,i.e., from 10th to 18th century have no copyright issues. But 19th century onwards the copyrights of the books are transferred to any member of the family from the author, having difficulty in yielding the copyright for digitalization.

3. Contributing new articles with reliable sources is easier with groups when compared to individuals.
- Creating a new knowledge by having one to one contact is an advantage in a group. They discuss the quality of the article,and share the work.

4. Digitalizing ancient text requires a lot of scholarship.
- Present generation does not possesssuch knowledgeas they lack training in the language, phoneme, morpheme, the alphabets used in the above mentioned period.

5. Need of advanced training to create Digital Enthusiasm.
- To create knowledge in Indian languages is not that easy. The present generation needs proper and thorough training regarding language usage, syntax, the rule of language while translating from one language to another.

6. To involve and increase the number of participation in Kannada Wikipedia, in order to create articles and improve their quality and make those live, is a challenge.
- After creating the article, in order to edit and improve the quality is not that easy because of inadequate time, manpower, enthusiasm, and knowledge. In April 2015, only 7 out of 500 Kannada language students have involved in this work as interns, during their summer vacation. So, all the students are not eligible to work in this regard.

VI. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented the initiative taken by the Department of Languages at CHRIST (Deemed to be University) in association with CIS, to create, edit and develop e-content for Wikipedia in Indian languages, focusing Kannada. We have also discussed some of the issues and challenges faced by us in this project while enhancing the digital usage in the Indic Languages.

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