

The Pedagogical Problems of Translation in Teaching English Language for Rural School Students

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I. Introduction

“Learning a second language constitutes a very different task from learning the first language. The basic problems arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language themselves but primarily out of the special ‘set’ created by the first language habits’- Fries. The present paper is mainly based on the conversation method observing everyday conversation, the mass media where the medium of communication is Tamil, like television, radio and so on. The words are identified and listed out. The meanings of the words are then compared with the English dictionary meanings to trace the change in meaning. The observations are recorded on the tapes, CD’s, as well as to study changes in the pronunciation. As a result the root word is lost e.g. ‘coffee’, ‘water bottle’, ‘ticket’, ‘train’, ‘vegetable rice’ etc. And observations are made in the journal and books.

The reasons for such changes are ranging from misunderstanding, change in the usage, pronunciation and to their limited knowledge of English culture, of their usage and grammar. And it leads to learning about the language instead of learning the language itself. Therefore, the tendency of students waits for the subsequent translation made by the teacher. Using translation, as a device sometimes makes life easier for the teacher or students, or on the contrary as a means of punishment.

The Status Of English Language:

The status of English varies from one country to another. It needs to be decided whether English is a foreign language or second language. Richard defines the term “second language” as a language which is not a native language in a country but which is widely used as a medium of communication and which is usually used alongside with other languages. Based on this definition English language plays crucial part in the daily life of the learner whether in the school environment or outside. The English lessons in the classrooms environment may be the only exposure to a sample of British English for the students. For the majority of learners this is the only contact they ever get with English. English language is taught extensively as a foreign language in Tamilnadu.

Problems Of Teaching English As A Second Language:

The status of any language can be determined by the perceptions of the language users regarding the value of that language and their desire for using it. Accordingly a language may be classified as mother tongue or first language (L1), second language(L2) and foreign language(L3). English language is usually not a native language but it is widely used as a medium of communication. For Indians English is a second language.

“It is only with the help of this language we get information about advancement taking place throughout the world. We cannot think of taking India into 21st century without capitalising on English. The study of English language continuous for the progress of our country”. – P.J.Nehru

Apart from those private English language centres and institutions, methods of teaching in Tamilnadu have been subjected to a great deal of confusion that makes it hard for anyone to specify which method is actually applied. The understandable reason for this is the intangibility of the education process as a whole. As a result, classroom practices have not been allowed to keep pace with the certain methodological principles. Although teachers from different backgrounds in training may have a marginal chance to individually practise one method or another in teaching translation a method practised widely. In this situation the teachers whose mother tongue is Tamil or Hindi may allow occasional use of translation in order to facilitate learning. The student’s at least at the early two years often seek help in finding the texts being studied in a translation version. As a result the problems arise in translating new scientific technology and cultural words in Tamil or Hindi also cause the replacement of them in the English words. Apart from this there are various expressions which are unique to the culture and therefore untranslatable without confusion especially the terms associated with fruits and games such as ‘ready,start,over’.

There is yet another chief reason is that of growth of English language where as Tamil or Hindi as a language is never taught. When Tamil as a first language is taught, its literature is taught for its own sake. Literary Tamil is vastly different from spoken Tamil. And even this knowledge comes to an end with their schooling. Very few happen to gain knowledge of its vocabulary. On the other hand, the fast growing English vocabulary reaching the people through mass media keeps on increasing. There is not much possibility for people to develop their Tamil vocabulary after a particular period.

Teaching Second Language (L2) By Always Using First Language (L1):

In most of the rural schools where English language has become a second language teachers follow the methods of teaching English language by using Tamil for the convenience of students. And this pattern becomes a routine where students have to find the second language equivalents, re-translation into the target language with that of the original and even make comparisons among themselves to discover how they are developing control of the new language and how they are doing it. By which students, read in one language (English) and listen (Tamil) in the other. As a result students develop passive understanding of their second language L2. And the North Indians they find it even more difficult. They become a passive listener. Dagut(1986), suggests that “First language(L1), which is always present in the learners mind can be constructively exploited in two ways—first to help eradicate the persistence of errors or mistakes arising from the numerous syntactic and lexical in congruencies between L1 and L2. Second, “to provide immediately meaningful explanations of all these lexical items of L2 for which quick and clear explanation is given though the L2 paraphrase is not available”. Thus, through translation teaching L2 by always using L1 is not allowable. The mechanical substitution of first language words and expressions without taking into consideration the peculiarities inherent in both languages and cultures could be misleading.

Pronunciation

English has various native and non-native dialects spoken throughout the world. A majority of change in the second language is due to the translation of first language (L1) or either due to pronunciation. The main reason for such changes in pronunciation is attributed to the influence of native languages. Beside various changes take place due to the poor understanding of the Tamil speakers. Moreover the students learn many of the pronounce English words on the basis of what they hear from the teachers. And they think their ideas in their native language and attempt a translation. And as a result they don't take interest to learn the English language in a proper way. Therefore, because of translating from the native language to the second language they commit mistakes in the formation of sentence pattern.

The major pedagogical deficiencies observed were:

1. Students were neither able to converse in the regional accent nor were capable of training sentences on their own without mistakes.
2. There exist no proper systems to test the student's oral skills in using the language.
3. Influence of guides and the translation of all essays in native language kill the creative impetus as well as the individual initiative of each student.
4. Lack of sufficient knowledge of the subject.
5. Latest teaching tools like computers, televisions and other gadgets never used in teaching English language.
6. Unable to follow other person if he/she is fluent in English language.
7. The tendency of students to wait for the subsequent translation made by the teacher.
8. Students lack of ability to think directly in English language.

II. Suggestions:

1. Educational technology enhances the ability of learners and develop their learning skills
2. Encouragement of dictionary to use especially monolingual ones is necessary.
3. Train learners to use word parts (prefixes and suffixes).
4. To enrich vocabulary and to understand the words.

III. Conclusion:

As we enter the twenty-first century, it is advised to use techniques which involve the students and motivate them to learn and allow them to practise the concepts, correct usages, and to find the standard versions of native language (L1) texts for them to improve communicative skills and develop their ability to translate through proper channel.

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