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BILINGUALISM IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with teaching a language through bilingual method. The main objective of this paper is to show how English is taught through Tamil in a bilingual classroom. C.J. Dodson developed this method by combining both the direct method and the grammar-translation method. Teaching vocabulary is made easy through this method. Speaking tests are given to the learners and their improvement in pronouncing the words is checked. Difficulties in writing is corrected and solved through this method. The learners are trained to think, speak, and write in English without any difficulties, and this is proven by giving the learners a questionnaire. Teachers find this method as the quickest and the easiest method to teach English. In a bilingual classroom, a healthy interaction between the teacher and the learners is observed. Learning English through this method provides the learners the knowledge of culture if both the languages, English and Tamil. This method of teaching is very useful in teaching English.

Keywords: Bilingual method, C.J. Dodson, Questionnaire.

1. Introduction

Bilingualism is the fluency or the ability to communicate in two different languages. This method is effectively used in teaching English language through Tamil. Many researchers have worked on the principle of bilingualism and its advantages. The fact from the 2001 census states that Indian English-speakers are more than twice the native speakers. This shows the effective use of bilingual method used in the primary classes, to teach English. Only the teachers use Tamil and they make the learners to speak in English.

2. Bilingual method used in a classroom

Bilingual method is used in a language classroom to make the learners understand English. In this method, the work of the teachers is made easy and simple. The teachers use pictorial

representation to explain the subject. Also their gestures make the learners understand the subject and this makes the class lively. The English text is first read out loud in the classroom. The meaning of the text is explained in Tamil, for the better understanding of the learners. The same piece of text is read out by the learners and this time the learners try to understand the meaning of the text without the help of the teacher. Till they understand the English text, this reading practice is given. The teacher at times corrects the learners from mispronouncing a word. This reading practice helps the learners to know how to write a perfect sentence with proper grammar. Vocabulary, pronunciation, and punctuation marks are taught by giving the learners regular reading practice. The difficult words are made easy to pronounce by relating the Tamil meaning of that particular word.

Using Tamil meaning, helps the learners to retain the word and its meaning and usage, for a long time. It gets stored in their mind as they use Tamil as their local language. Later they are given activity-based questions in which they relate Tamil words to English words and their proper pronunciation is checked.

The teachers frame a questionnaire based on simple grammar like articles, prepositions, and few social functions. The questionnaire also includes a section where the teacher dictate words, for which the learners write the correct spelling. The teachers train their learners to memorize a poem. This helps them in making the class more interesting. This memorizing of a poem aids the learners to know how to recite the poem in a rhythmic pattern and they enjoy their classes. Being in the primary class, these activities make the learners to develop interest towards learning English. The teachers draw colorful diagrams, for example, to illustrate the parts of the body, name them in both Tamil and English, and this picture is pasted on the walls of the classroom. This pictorial representation helps the learners to learn the exact words used to name the parts of the body. Also this method of teaching lessens the work of the teachers.

3. Effect on the learners

Once when I attended a bilingual classroom, I observed how English was taught. The teacher gave the learners, the definition of the word CROWD. First the teacher explained the word with its lexical meaning like, CROWD MEANS A GROUP OF PEOPLE GATHERED TOGETHER AT A PLACE IN AN IMPROPER MANNER. Then the same word was explained through its Tamil meaning, for the better understanding of the learners. By teaching through this simple method, the learners were able to make use of the word in their context. Their confidence in conversing with native speakers of English has increased, as they learn new words everyday. Everyday the teachers gave the learners a worksheet with questions based on simple grammar like articles and prepositions. These worksheets helped the learners to improve their capability to think in English. The teachers had more time to teach their

lessons as they taught the subject in Tamil, which reached the learners quickly.

The teachers periodically gave the learners an interesting reading practice. The learners were given a small piece of a text or a poem. Each and every learner was motivated and encouraged to read the text loud. While they were reading, the teachers rectified the mistakes committed by the learners. This was observed, listened, and followed by the other learners, so that the correct way of pronouncing a word is learnt. The teacher helped in pronouncing a word with stress and pause. The learners repeated the word again and again to get the word registered in their minds. Reading a poem taught the learners, how to sing a memory poem and developed the learners' cognitive process. This reading practice developed interest among the learners to read English books. As a result, when the learners got elevated to the higher classes, they excelled in their writing skill. While reading the text, the learners were taught about the structure of the sentences, subject, predicate, nouns, verbs, articles, prepositions, and adjectives. This helped them to construct a sentence without the teacher's help.

4. Advantages of bilingual method

There are many advantages in this bilingual method. This method benefits both the teachers and the learners. The prime advantage of this method is, it is the easiest and the quickest method to learn English. This method of learning helps both the teachers and the learners to get attached to both the environment, where English and Tamil languages are spoken. Present days, being very competitive, the children should have confidence to face the world. And now English being the universal language, it is essential to be fluent in English language. This fluency is easily acquired by learning English through this bilingual method. After learning the language, the children can compete with the native English speakers. The learners can shift from Tamil to English, immediately, when they are given a text or when they are exposed to speak on a topic. Though they think in both Tamil and English, they can reproduce in English, with high vocabulary. Learning English through Tamil helps the learners to know about both the cultures. In this method of

learning, the learners use their mind intensely for thinking in both languages. The important skill for life, the decision-making, is improved through this method. The psycholinguistics state that, knowing two different languages and using that in everyday life, reduces the risk of having stroke in the learners' earlier ages. Having knowledge on two languages, creates more career opportunities. On the other hand, there are huge demands for bilingual teachers. Bilingual teachers are paid high salary. The work of these teachers are less in compression with other teachers. The teachers should be creative to make the learners enjoy English. The patience calmness of the teachers helps to run the classrooms in a peaceful phase. Bilingual teachers excel in language skills. Their organized lesson plans helps the learners to learn English in a very short period of time.

5. Questionnaire

Different questions are given to the learners and their skill in English speaking and reading is tested. The below questionnaire is a sample, given to a group of students, who learnt English through Tamil.

Set 1: To check their speaking skill

1. Tell me about your family and about your hobbies.
2. Do you have a pet in your home?
3. Which is your favorite subject?
4. How will you ask a pen from your friend?
5. What did you had for your dinner, last night?
6. How will you greet your teachers?

Set 2: To check their reading skill

A paragraph is given and questions were asked from that paragraph.

Paragraph:

There was a small bird on a big tree. The bird was fat and was eating a peanut. A big eagle came flying near the tree. The eagle met the bird and it asked the bird to share the peanuts. Because the eagle was very hungry. They both became

friends. They sang a beautiful song and they flew away from the tree. The next day the bird waited for the eagle to come and the peanuts. But the eagle did not return. After sometime the eagle came to the bird with a large piece of apple. They both enjoyed eating the apple. They lived happily.

6. Analysis

The above given two questionnaires help the teachers to check the learners speaking and reading skills. The *set 1* questions are based the simple vocabulary. This checks how the learners pronounce a word and how they use it in a sentence. Sentence framing is corrected through these questions. This also helps the learners to speak fluently without any fear or hurdle in speaking English. The *set 2* questions helps the teachers to check the learners' understanding capacity. As the learners finish reading the paragraph, few question are asked orally, to which the answers are in the paragraph. For few new words, the learners ask the teacher's help to know the meaning of that word.

This method of using a questionnaire, is very essential in this bilingual method. Because, the teachers can check their learners how well they have learnt English. The questionnaire is always set on the basis that the learners answer them easily, so that they don't get depressed when they don't know the answers.

7. Results

It is evident from the above given information that bilingual method is the easiest and the quickest method to learn English. Learning a language is always made easy when it is learnt through mother tongue. Here the mother tongue of the learners is Tamil and this helped them in learning English without any difficulties. Thus this method is very important both in teaching and learning English. Though it is implied only in the primary classrooms, it has its impact on the learners when they study further in their higher classes. So, this method is very important in learning a language.

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