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A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN TAMILNADU

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Abstract

Translation should be attempted when the pupils have acquired a working knowledge of their mother tongue and English. The aim of translation exercise is not to make perfect translators or interpreters, but to help them in learning and understanding of a foreign language. Translation disciplines the mind. A pupil has to work within definite limitations. He cannot take liberties with the original. Through the exercises of translation, a pupil's knowledge of English as well as of mother tongue will be improved. New English expressions and novel words also recorded in the mind of the pupil through translation. So, translation exercises are useful to a certain extent provided they are attempted according to some plan. Teaching is not just telling. It is communicating. The information bits given by the teacher should be understood in the sense it was intended. If there is misinformation or no decoding at the receiving end, information gaps are created. It is not enough if the teaching is lauded as efficient. Unless it is reflected in the development of the students, it cannot be considered as effective. Efficient teaching is a part of effective teaching. It cannot be effective automatically. Efficient in the sense, a good English teacher should have the skill of teaching language for the students without any trouble of learning of learning a foreign language. To make them understand the core of the prose or poetry, he has to see what are the main concepts to be understood by the pupil. Without understanding the vocabulary used in the prose, or poetry and the language technique used according to the genre, the authors choice of words everything should be understood by the pupils.

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Monolingual method means, according to the skill of the English teacher, if he makes use of English to describe the English language in a simplified way, that is also monolingual way of teaching. If the teacher makes use of Tamil alone for the pupils who belong to Tamilnadu and knows nothing but Tamil, that also comes under the category of monolingual way of teaching. Anyway, the teacher of English uses only one language to explain the concepts of English. For one set of students English to English way of explanation is being used by the teacher and for the another set of students to teach English as a second language, he can use only Tamil to explain all the language aspects of English. To teach vocabulary to pronunciation the teacher is in the state of using Tamil as his weapon and that alone will be followed by the pupil of Tamilnadu. In both these ways there is a drawback in learning the language. English to English way of explaining things won't be helpful for the pupils those who belong to the category of having Tamil as their mother tongue, and knows nothing more than Tamil. Describing the problems of a language or the concepts of English absolutely in Tamil too won't be helpful for the learner and it will be somewhat a struggling method to teach English in Tamil. The learner too cannot get the structure of the sentences and the meaning of the vocabulary in English.

Then it is in the hands of the teacher to choose the method of teaching English for the non-native speakers of English as a second language. By means of following bilingual method of teaching English alone can be helpful for both the teacher and the student. In this method of teaching through the mother-tongue of the pupil, any concept, meaning, dictions and grammatical explanations can be explained. As the basic knowledge of the mother-tongue is already there in the mind of the learner, it will be easy for the teacher to explain things. This method of using the mother-tongue to explain the linguistic aspects and structural aspects of English can be called as 'Translation method' of teaching English for the non-native speakers of the language. For this way of teaching, the teacher should be resourceful. Then only he can make his teaching effective by means of using this translation method of teaching.

This system of teaching involves two languages. So, the teacher of English should be well versed in English and Tamil too. He should be a good communicator in both the languages. Then only he can stimulate, discuss, and create an interest in the students to learn through this method. It will enable the students to learn with interest and create an environment of using the materials whatever is available with a challenge.

The teacher is the most important factor with regard to the system of education. The real success or failure of any method, technique, device or procedure depends on the teacher. As English is a peculiar subject for the pupil who is studying in the school, very few will understand its true nature and value in the fast growing world. English is a subject which needs well preparation. More than any other subject it demands well prepared and conscientious men and women of sound knowledge and good training to teach the same. The teacher has to handle the raw human material and transform it into well adjusted, well-informed and happy citizens who will successfully participate in matters of national and international importance. To achieve all these things the English teacher has to supply pertinent information about the bilingual method of learning to the pupils. Then only it will be helpful for him to think and translate things from the foreign language into Tamil. By means of translating things into Tamil, the learner can understand the aspects of English in a clear cut way. Creating an awareness among the students on translation method will make them feel free to express his own favored choice for action and to substantiate it.

Through ‘Translation method’ of teaching English to the Tamil speaking pupils, the English teacher can assuage fears in using the language with hesitation. Teaching-learning of a language is a matter of practice. Unless the teacher loves his profession, he cannot teach and promote language skills to the students with involvement. Voluntary involvement is a predominant factor in the field of teaching. Henry Von Dyke had beautifully summarized the status of teaching profession in the following memorable words:

“And what is teaching? Ah, there you have the worst paid and the best rewarded of all vocations. Dare not to enter it unless you love it. For the vast majority of men and whom it has no promise of wealth or fame, but they to whom it is dear for its own sake, are among the nobility of mankind. I sing the praise of the unknown teacher, king of himself and leader of mankind”.

In the ‘Translation method’ of teaching English, it is the duty of the English teacher to provide instruction and guidance. When the teacher gives the pupil a piece of knowledge, instruct him about something, impart some skill or make him wise about an object or thing, the teacher need not bother about the understanding of the same with the help of his mother-tongue. In the field of translation, there are various methods to follow. According to the nature of the situation, the translation takes place. Translation can be oral or written. Oral translation also is called interpretation. It must have preceded written translation just as the spoken language preceded the written one in the history of any language. In the modern world the volume of

translation has multiplied. Globalization has intensified the translation activity too.

On seeing all these things definitely the job of the English Teacher who follows the method of teaching through ‘Translation’ is definitely a tiresome and an ordeal for him. Translating such literary work is more artistic. The process is somewhat subjective too. If we give a translation work to many people at a time, there may be many different legitimate versions. Literary translation is an aesthetic exercise. Culture and Values are transmitted through the medium of translation. Works of literature produced in one language are made known throughout the world through translation.

Interpretation is another term for oral translation. Written translation is a leisurely activity when compared to interpretation. Unlike the translator, an interpreter will have no time to refer to dictionaries, encyclopedia, etc., The interpreter has to operate at high speed to keep pace with the speaker. The interpreter is in the position to translate anything from a monosyllable to a large paragraph. This kind of interpretation is done in the following four methods

1. Alternate
2. Consecutive
3. Simultaneous
4. Instantaneous.

Alternating method is quite suitable for political and religious speeches. Consecutive interpretation employed in Public speeches is the consecutive interpretation. Simultaneous interpretation is nothing but using many languages simultaneously to interpret a speech in the conferences. Translating for media is also a major activity plays in one language are translated into another and prevented over radio or television comes under this category. And with regard to machine Translation, computer can store and retrieve large amount of information such as bilingual dictionaries and syntactic rules. Linguistic is helpful in defining the rules of sentence formation explicitly, systematically and closely. This translation takes place without any human intervention. So, accordingly the role of an English teacher as a brilliant and veteran translator through the method of translation in which he is teaching, is extremely a crucial one. He has to be a translator from English to Tamil and Tamil to English. He cannot translate things superficially, with utmost involvement he has to see things. As Eugene Nida says,

“The principles and procedures of translation cannot be fully understood or objectively evaluated without recognizing the important part played by the personal involvement of the translator.”

He should have a satisfactory level of competence in both the Source language and Target language. It is usually the norm to translate from a foreign language into one's mother-tongue. It is not enough if the teacher is able to make out the general drift of the message of the source text. As an English teacher and as he is in the situation to explain the meanings of the text in Tamil to the non- native speakers of English, he should be able to respond to the implied meanings, tone and stylistic flavor of the source language text. He should try to be as objective as possible like a translator.

And in the case of mystical words and abstract words like fidelity, chastity and morality, he should not translate as he likes instead, with the help of the mother-tongue of the pupil the teacher can explain such words. However if a translator faces such dilemma in translating abstract vocabulary, Nida rightly cautions :

“The translator should never tack his own impressions or distort the message to fit his own intellectual and emotional outlook. At the same time, the human translator is not a machine, and he inevitably leaves the stamp of his own personality on any translation he makes. This being the case, he must exert every effort to reduce to a minimum any intrusion of himself which is not in harmony with the intent of the original author and message.”

The intrusion of the translator or the English teacher who acts in the place of the same, can be kept to a minimum if he sticks to sound principles of translation.

Language fulfils different functions. The three commonly recognized functions are :

1. Referential function (informative)
2. The imperative function (Directive or conative)
3. The Expressive function

Besides these main functions, some other functions a language performs are :

4. Phatic (contact) function
5. Contextual function
6. Metalinguistic function
7. Poetic function (Rhyming)

It is of course true that most utterances are multifunctional. Yet one particular function generally predominates in any particular instance. This characteristic function of a language should be

carefully transferred in the process of translation. Thus the translator should identify the dominant function of a given piece of text and ensure that the translation too performs the function as in the source text. There are certain problems which are peculiar to the teaching of English in India.

The first problem faced by the English teacher is nothing but, lack of proper aim. Teachers are not clear about the aim of teaching English. Unless he knows the ultimate end in view, the teacher can, at best, muddle along. The teacher of English divides his work into reading, writing, composition and grammar. He treats these related aspects as separate subjects. He does not realize that they are different means to the same end. In India, English has to play two different roles. First, it is the medium of science and technology, and secondly it is the medium of interstate and international communication. What is required is a working knowledge of the language. The emphasis should be on the functional aspects of English as a language. There are some fundamental principles which form the basis of all the different methods of teaching English. These foundations are :

- a. The spoken word must precede the written
- b. Practice in hearing should precede and provide matter for practice in speaking.
- c. Speaking should precede and provide method for writing.
- d. The basic unit of communication is a sentence. The pupil must begin with a sentence, understand its meaning as a whole and learn its structure and pattern and form later on.
- e. The teacher should help the pupil to learn the language rather than to teach him.

These foundations should never be forgotten while evolving and using any method of teaching.

The examination should be conducted and marks should be awarded according to the candidates understanding of the right type of book and the intellectual qualities like, how far they appreciate the spirit style and atmosphere of the work candidates age and psychology etc., should be considered. The teaching of grammar for the sake of grammar has no value. The functional character of grammar is ignored. Pamela Gradon in “The Teaching of Grammar” says:

“Teaching of grammar must go hand in hand with the linguistic and the psychological developments of the child. Grammar teaching can only be of benefit when it reinforces and organizes the child’s own linguistic development. Otherwise, however skillful our methods, we are only teaching skillful our methods, we are only teaching a child a grammar as we teach a dog tricks and it is extremely doubtful whether the child is any the better. The process must be two fold; constant practice in reading, writing, and

speaking and constant practice in analysis of what we read, write and say.”

Translation is a means of understanding for the second language learners. That is not meant for a special purpose. So, with regard to the Tamil speaking pupils, the teacher’s duty is to make an awareness of the basic concepts of translation superficially. There is no need for him to go in between lines or theories of translation. Low level question requires students recall of their learning. This response requires memorization on the part of the student and requires no processing of information. High level response requires a degree of intellectual processing on the part of the student comprehension application analogy, synthesis and evaluation. Descriptive questions are easy to ask, quite easy to answer and excellent for promoting student’s involvement. Comparison questions require the learner to look at two or more objects, statements, illustrations or demonstrations and identify similarities or differences between them. Convergent questions refer to questions which have one correct answer. There are questions of fact or recall. Divergent questions have many different and appropriate answers. Redirection questions involve large number of students. It creates positive patterns and high levels of interaction in a classroom.

Prompting is required when a student is asked a question and he fails to reply or responds correctly. It has two major components. Basic questions and advance questioning. In basic questioning, phrasing, focusing, direction, distribution, pausing and promoting, such skills are used. In the advance questioning the following sub skills are used. Recalling, comprehension, application, Analysis, synthesis, Evaluation. Probing, clarification, support examples and pausing.

The importance of effective blackboard writing should be stressed for the students of Tamilnadu. Every potential teacher should be proficient in the use of the blackboard. A good blackboard writing clarity the concepts easily. The matter which is already conveyed verbally can be reinforced. It draws the attention of the students to the relevant points. Neatness in blackboard work should be followed by the English teacher to focus the relevant matter clearly. Appropriate use of blackboard lies in brevity and simplicity in explaining. The skill of stimulus variation is concerned with, the manner, voice and teaching style of the teacher. The media and materials used during teaching too is also important. It contains the major components as movement, gesture, international style, pausing, shifting sensory channels and variety speech pattern. To attract and retain the attention of his pupils the English teacher has to follow such objectives.

Reinforcement skill can increase students involvement in their lessons in a number of

ways. The skill is being used when the teachers reinforces good behavior with a smile or praises a good answer and encourages the slow learner. Regarding Demonstration of a concept the teacher has to convey the concept of relevance in a simple manner, so that the lesson can be taught clearly. Correctness in usage of language is predominant in demonstration and it should be flowed from the teacher in a natural way.

Then finally by means of the integration of all skills, the teacher of English can make his teaching effective and efficient. And the most inevitable and important method that the teacher has to implement is nothing but the 'Translation method' of teaching which will make the clarity of understanding and satisfaction for the students of Tamil. Particularly with regard to the students of Tamilnadu who are studying English for communication and as a second language there is no other easy way to teach them English.

As how there is no single method for effective teaching. It includes a variety of competencies. These competencies can be developed through training. Experiments in teaching, conducting minicourses, competency-based education and self-instructional devices have yielded valuable information about the development of teaching skills.

To develop the skill of a teacher and to be a guide in learning, particularly English the afore said methods will be very much helpful. In one way or other all these three methods can be implemented and practiced in the process of language learning effectively. The Linguistic method of teaching in the beginning level, the monolingual method in the advanced level and finally in both methods with an integration and to make the Tamil speaking pupil understand English clearly, the Bilingual method of teaching will more effective and the English teacher too can reveal his utmost efficiency and his veteran qualities as an ideal teacher who is capable of instigating the students to learn and understand various genres of literature through his mother tongue without any difficulty. The researcher sincerely hopes that the outcome of this study will help the teachers in modifying the methods of teaching and the students in improving their learning strategies.

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