

## INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING SECOND LANGUAGE

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### ABSTRACT

*In teaching and learning a second language, influence of mother tongue is a controversial issue and debatable subject in the present scenario. Teachers have always been in confusion to use or not to use mother tongue (L1) of the students in the classroom. During the late seventies to early eighties, the idea of using L1 in language classroom was not a favoured one, it was believed that as a child learns mother tongue using his/her mother tongue, in the same way any second language should be learnt only through the use of second language and use of mother tongue can interfere in the process of mastering the second language. Moreover, the excessive use of mother tongue can reduce the exposure of the target language.*

*On the other side there is another assumption that use of mother tongue in teaching and learning second language is beneficial for it has several advantages that can support second language(L2) teaching and learning in the classroom. Educational research shows that during teaching and learning process, use of the mother tongue helps to overcome the difficulties like ability to use second language, shyness and fear of making errors, lack of understanding and lack of interest and make it easy to use the second language. Use of mother tongue in teaching and learning second language is sometimes referred to as the fifth language skill alongside the other four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. So it holds a special importance in teaching and learning new language and plays facilitating role in the gradual process of teaching and learning target language. This paper makes an effort to show positive effects of using mother tongue, when used appropriately and judiciously, in teaching and learning second language*

**KEYWORDS:** *Acquisition, L1, Mother Tongue, First Language, L2 (Second Language), Linguistics, MoI (Medium of Instruction), TL (Target Language), Teaching and Learning Second Language*

### INTRODUCTION

L. A. C. Strong once proclaimed, "For us who speak English, English is everything. English is not a subject, English is our life." But this is not true in some countries, because here it is a foreign language. It is taught as a second or third language in schools. Its learning and teaching in schools is inspired by one aim –the utilitarian aim. This objective can be achieved by acquiring a practical command of the target language. Yet, clear cut objectives should be stated so that good planning can be done and right type of methods and techniques of teaching and learning can be adopted.

As we know that due to globalization different cultures come close to each other, resulting in the need for communication between societies. Thus being bilingual has become a main aspect to become a successful professional. A person who knows many languages has more job opportunities than the one who doesn't. So it should be compulsory for students to learn second language. That's why second language should be taught not as literature but as language, as pointed out by P. Gurrey, "Our chief concern should not be about the difficulties of pronunciation, growth of vocabulary, grammar and structure but with language abilities.

Some linguists stress its negative role, but it has been found facilitating in the acquisition of foreign languages. In this reference P. Gurrey points out that "The teaching of mother –tongue and teaching of a foreign language can support and assist each other."

#### **Some general Objectives of this Research are**

- To know the influence of mother tongue in teaching and learning second language.
- To know teacher strategies for developing second language ability.
- To acquire all basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in order to communicate with speakers of a second language.
- To acquire the linguistic competence necessarily required in various life situations and required in different professions
- To develop their awareness about the importance of the use of another language as a means of communication.
- To develop positive attitudes towards learning new language.
- To develop the linguistic competence that enables them to be aware of the cultural, economical and social issues of their society in order to contribute in giving a solution.
- To develop their personal, professional and intellectual abilities
- To acquire the linguistic bases that enables them to participate in transferring the scientific and technological advances of other nations to their nation.

#### **Some Objectives of Using the Mother Tongue in Teaching and Learning Second Language**

- The worldwide objectives of language teaching can be defined as helping children learn a language or languages to perform a variety of functions.
- These ranges from the sociable use of language for public communication and a network of communicative uses to its use at the highest level of 'cognition', 'catharsis' and 'self-expression.
- The learner should ideally be able to use it as effectively for communication as he uses his first language.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

With the Reform Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the expansion of teaching a foreign language, there existed many contrasting theories about teaching styles. The theorists began to discuss the best way of teaching a foreign language among them. While they agreed on some issues, they also had many debates in some other issues. Whether to use mother tongue (MT) or not in second language teaching classrooms is one of the most discussed issues among the others. Starting with the hesitancy whether to use it or not, the debate grew up extending to very different aspects such as the amount of the usage, the purposes of the usage, and the pros and cons of the usage and so on.

One of the pioneering names dealing with the issue is David Atkinson (1987). With a good synthesis of the works he analyzed and states some advantages of the use of the MT in second language(English)classrooms, and that there should be permissions for the applications on condition not to overuse. According to him, by these permissions the teaching/ learning activity may gain a better atmosphere.

Another pioneering name interested in this topic is Wolfgang Butzkamm (2003) who sees the retirement of the idea that puts a ban on the usage of MT in second language(English)classrooms as a “death of a dogma”. In this study he sees the mother tongue as an assistance stands up straightly near you, waiting for you to be called for a help if you are in trouble with something in the classroom. However, he sees it as a base of the references.

And still another important work on this topic has been done by John Harbord (1992) who sees the use of MT as a humanistic right first of all. Besides, he thinks that it is mostly useful, and it has some advantages such as efficient use of time, good communication between the teacher and the learners, and also as a good facilitator for both the relationship between the teacher and the learners and for the effective learning.

Lastly, for the pioneering work on the subject, Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (2001) states the views of the basic approaches and methods about the use of MT in second language (English) classrooms among the others dealing with the teaching a foreign language. They denote the views objectively to leave the decision to the dealers whether to use any of them or not. Among those approaches and methods the Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, and Audio-Lingual Method may be thought the densely dealt with the issue.

### **Identification of Problems in Teaching and Learning Second Language in the Classroom**

Students face many problems in classrooms while use target language in learning new language.

- Students become overly dependent on the teacher. They automatically look towards the teacher for correct answers instead of trying themselves. If the teacher obliges them with the answer each time, it can create a detrimental problem.
- Persistent use of first-language is a barrier in learning. The persistent use of mother tongue in the classroom can cause inclination for the learners to use it always, even when they are able to express what they want to tell easily When the learners use their mother tongue, they feel more comfortable and safesince there is almost no possibility to make mistakes and to feel in a bad situation for them.

- One of the major obstacles in teaching a second language(English)is student's disinterest and fear which do not permit them to take an initiative role in language learning and automatically shyness is imbibed in them. This shyness of students does not allow them to use the communicative approaches i.e. communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, cooperative language learning, etc. so students get bored, inattentive, or unmotivated.
- Always waiting for the teacher to when teacher will teach by Using the Mother Tongue.
- The attitude of the teacher and the classmates towards the mistakes play a significant role in the case. Due to this child hesitates to use the second language. This can make him/her a silent person throughout the learning.
- Tardiness which causes distraction and disruption from other students.
- The heterogeneous nature of the classroom is again the major factor to affect the process. The students are of different abilities and background. It becomes difficult to manage with such class, and for the purpose of teaching second language, the teacher has to keep rapport with the class which is by many ways a very difficult task.
- As far as social use of a second language is concerned, it has lesser importance. In day to day life, it is not useful except at some places. Most of the times social communication takes place in concerned language i.e. mother tongue. Due to its optional or secondary role, students could not make use of a second language.

### **Frame of Theories**

### **Definition of Terms**

Mother tongue is defined as the language which a group of people considered to inhabitants of an area acquired in the early years and which eventually becomes their natural instrument of thoughts and communication (You may wish to re-consider other definitions of language} (Awoniyi, 1978). In terms of that view, the person is defined as a native speaker of the first language, although one may also be a native speaker of more than one language.

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart.” Nelson Mandela.

“What is a nation without a mother tongue”? Jack Edwards.

The term ‘mother tongue’ is the language spoken by the mother, which is the primary language that the child would learn. This was/is quite possible if the couples are from the same tribe or the same mother tongue. Native or first language is what a child learns from birth and his/her surroundings. To learn any language is linked biologically to age, and it is also related to social identity of the learner and this helps the learner in learning in school and society. The mother tongue is the language a person learns as a child at home, usually from the parents and from surroundings. Therefore, children groomed in bilingual homes can have more than one mother tongue.

Benefits to use the mother tongue in teaching and learning second language

The mother tongue is a very important tool for the around development of child i.e. intellectual, physical and moral. It is part of a child's identity. A child's life is shaped only with the help of mother tongue. On the whole, it can be said that weakness in mother tongue means a paralysis of all thought and power of expression.

Moreover, it has been observed through various worldwide educational researches that students learn better through their mother tongue. The educational benefits of using the mother - tongue in teaching and learning a second language are:

- To teach in mother tongue has positive effects on students' learning. It gives the child a feeling of positive identity. They learn to value their language and their culture which is a strong foundation they need on which they build the structure of their second language.
- For effective learning use of mother tongue is preferred by most of the learners. This is because many skills learned in the mother tongue transfer to the second language. So it acts a scaffold not a barrier to the second language.
- Students using the mother tongue in learning a second language generally perform better than other students using target language as Medium of Instruction (MOI). They show consistently a higher pass percentage than others.
- Children who use their mother tongue to learn target language are more likely to reach a higher level of proficiency in the second language.
- Learning to read in the home language makes the child a better reader in the second language.

#### **It is Therefore the Government's Policy**

- To encourage use of L1 as MOI in secondary schools.
- To discourage the complete use of L2 in teaching and learning.

Influence of Mother tongue in a child's education and in learning a second language

When given a chance to articulate in their mother's tongue, children are more likely to succeed in school and the parents also get a free hand to get involved in the children's learning. Mother tongue-based education, especially benefits, especially those children who do not have much exposure to a second language.

Educational Research also shows that children learn well with their mother tongue as compared to other language in multilingual education because their ability to learn new language does not suffer when children are taught with their mother tongue which should be the first language of instruction. If, however, students are forced to switch from learning in their mother tongue to utilization of second languages, their self-confidence as learners and their interest in what they are learning may decline, leading to lack of motivation, school failure and early school drop-out etc. Their first language acquisition may also suffer or even may be lost. When students are provided opportunities to develop their mother tongue skills in higher studies, they definitely become multilingual learners.

Use of traditional methods in teaching and learning target language

The events such as technological innovation, cultural interaction among nations, important economic movements and subjects that concern the whole world, including global warming and ecology and so on. . . have led to an inevitable need of being able to understand or/and speak another language beside the mother tongue. However, with all its aspects it is not an easy task to succeed in.

The long-time-taking feature of the process of teaching and learning new language has been brought up different ideas about teaching styles. Each has style and its own procedures which may sometimes play a contrasting role with another's or support it on the other hand. By the way, their views about the use of mother tongue (MT) in Second language (English) teaching classrooms may differ from each other's. Actually, it is one of the most discussed topics in the field between them.

In the field of teaching and learning traditional methods of teaching a language are as: Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, and Audio-lingual method.

### **Grammar Translation Method**

Originally appeared to teach Greek and Latin Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) was then generalized to teaching modern languages. Since its main goal in teaching a foreign language "is to learn a language in order to read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development. . ." (Richards & Rodgers, T., 2001, p. 5). There should be no problem with the use of mother tongue in second language (English) classrooms by both students and teachers at the same time. Supporters of the GMT see that the translation of sentences and texts into the mother tongue or vice versa is the second stage of foreign language teaching after the stage in which the grammar rules are taught. One of the only drills is exercising in translating disconnected sentences. Furthermore, the vocabulary is taught in the same way. The unknown words are given in a bilingual list with the use of an L1-L2 & L2-L1 dictionary and followed by the memorization process. Moreover, as stated in Richard et al. (2001). The mother tongue is the resource of instructions given in the classroom and for the introduction of new materials by relations in the mother tongue in exchange for them.

To conclude the view of Grammar-Translation Method about the use of mother tongue in second language (English) classrooms with a single sentence we can say that the target language is taught through the mother tongue with little or even no active use of the target language.

### **Direct Method**

The Reform Movement, as in various fields, has led to serious changes about the teaching styles. Contrary to the traditional teaching styles, the importance of the spoken language, phonetic training for a good pronunciation, and most importantly the intensive use of target language has gained a very different position in second language (English) styles. Based on 5 those changes Gouin designed the Direct Method initially and clearly as a reaction to the Grammar-Translation Method in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language and even an absolute ban of mother tongue in second language (English) classrooms.

Sauveur and other supporters think that it is possible to teach a foreign language with no need to translate the items into or out of mother tongue if they can be taught by demonstration or action (Richardet al. 2001, p. 11). Franke also thinks that “ language could be best taught by using it actively in the classroom” (Richardet al., 2001, p. 11).

Since the oral communication skills are very important to the supporters of the method, the use mother tongue in classrooms is something out of order. The role of MT can best be seen in a sentence which is the first guideline in Berlitz’s schools which apply this method: “Never translate: demonstrate” (Richardet al., 2001, p. 12)

### **The Audio-Lingual Method**

This method was first designed in need of good assistants in interpretations or translations from other languages during World War II in the U.S.A to accomplish the governmental missions. With adaptations from the principles and procedures of the Direct Method it also serves a reaction to the lacking-of-speaking approaches.

Since the oral communication skills are important to the supporters of the method, the use of mother tongue is seen as an interrupter during the conversations in the classrooms. The new items are introduced in the target language and followed by repetition drills since the language learning is seen as habit formation and imitation. Larsen-Freeman (2000) argues that “...students achieve by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language “ (p. 45).

Nevertheless, the use of mother tongue is not forbidden completely; it is permitted to use only by teachers to make a comparison between the target and the native language in need of the clues that will help him/her about in which areas the students may have difficulties. (Larsen, F., 2000, p. 44).

### **Some Suggestions to Minimize Mother Tongue Effect in Second Language Teaching**

Undoubtedly, there are many hurdles in Second language (English) teaching, but “where there is will there is a way.”Aftat (2008) suggests that to encourage students’ motivation, teachers should provide constant encouragement because encouragement also gives students a feeling of security and welcome in their learning. Other suggestions to encourage are shared by Liu and Huang (2010). They suggest that teachers can do various activities like the promoting students’ awareness of the importance of TL, enhancing students’ interest in second language, and developing their self-confidence to motivate students. Some other methods which a teacher should adopt for better results are:

- The first method is the students themselves. They can join oral communication club that consists of their own classmates. They can share their views in the target language without any hesitation during that time. In this club, students can perform various activities for their betterment and they can learn together. Students can correct each other without feeling embarrassed.
- Teachers should create a comfortable environment by encouraging the confidence to use the target language.
- Teachers should not try to correct the local errors of students when they struggle to get their meanings across. Although the teacher can speak to the children about their mistakes in personal. So that, they won’t feel embarrassed.

- Teachers should not insist on the errors of the student while they are speaking.
- The teachers should encourage all students to speak with them in TL by creating a suitable and friendly environment.
- The teacher can use Enactment method in classrooms. In teaching a language enactment method plays a very significant role. This helps the students in the formation of sentences and to express their thoughts, emotions, and a lot of other things. When students enact the stories or the plays, they personally get engaged with the stories which help them to bring their own interpretation about the character to life. It helps them to understand other people's interpretation about the story. All this requires a lot of conversation which again helps them in learning the language.
- The teacher can teach second language through conversations' method in classrooms, which is one of the most useful ways of teaching the language. A child learns his or her mother tongue only by listening and speaking the conversations which takes place between them and others. Hence, conversations play a very important role in the teaching and learning process. The sentence formation and the grammar is not something that can be entirely taught by rules. They have to be taught intuitively. That can only happen through a lot of reading and a lot of listening.
- Everybody knows that conversation needs a topic. And the teacher can assign any topic to the students in the form of written documents which they have to read it first, then form an opinion and then, it can be spoken out, and then, they can listen, understand and also take part in the conversation. After this, all aspects of the conversation can be evaluated through such points which will always encourage students to participate in the conversation. These conversations should be general. Conversations should happen as if friends are talking to each other. By this way the students can easily express themselves in the best possible way. No doubt, this process is time taking but in the end it would be the most efficient one in teaching any language.
- Teaching through Games is a very interesting method of teaching. Students and children generally like games and want to play them more and more. The games part of learning would help the students keep their interest as the desire to win is very strong. It keeps us going and when included with different aspects of learning, the learning process would continue almost throughout the day without the children getting tired or bored with studying.
- The integral part of any language is the vocabulary. To understand the meaning of the words and to implement them in day to day life is a very difficult task. To solve this problem we can take help of word game. These word games can help the students overcome this problem. Word games like scrabble, house etc. are designed for this specific purpose only. These games are just based on words which help to improve vocabulary or word building power of the students.
- Competitions like debates, group discussion, declamation and elocutions also help the students a lot in learning the language. The purpose of these competitions is to keep them at the best in discussion and conversation. It compels them to use the best possible formation of sentences and to use good vocabulary etc. to present their opinion or thought. This is a very important way in helping the students to learn the language. These competitions also build confidence of students and thus help in grooming their personality.

- Creative assignments help the students to learn something on their own and many times students have to research on a given assignment, and then they have to submit a write up on it on their own. This helps in improving their writing skill.
- Multimedia sources like songs, movies, TV series, magazines; newspapers play a very important role in learning and teaching a language.

The teacher can use multimedia to teach the contents of material in more interesting and meaningful ways. By using these technologies, the students are able to learn in a much better way as they use multiple sensory organs which help them to pay more attention to receive the information. Not only these, but use of multimedia technology also help the students to retain the information for the longest time because of a combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video, or interactivity content forms.

Students can use this technology in their spare time also. Songs and dialogues of movies are the best way to learn any language and to express their feelings. These sources help them to learn new words and sentences.

The purpose of using multimedia in education is to promote students' motivation and learning interest, because it is a practical way to get them involved in the language learning.

No doubt, traditional methods of reading newspapers and books, novels are also very good methods to teach the language but when these traditional methods are modified along with some innovative ideas, the entire learning and teaching process is enriched and guarantees a success in efficient learning.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the end, I would like to profess that use of mother tongue or first language has both merits and demerits for learner to learn second language. The mother tongue is a primary language which a child receives from his parents. It acts as an important contributing factor in teaching and learning target language. So it is very important to understand the correlation of mother tongue and target language because both of them affect teaching and learning process. No doubt, excessive use of mother tongue can interfere in the process of mastering the second language. But the appropriate and judicious use of mother tongue in learning a new language has positive results as well. This helps the students to progress in second language acquisition. Children who have the chance to maintain their first language can extend their cognitive development.

Summing up, L1 needs to be seen as a useful tool (like other tools) and should be used where needed but should not be over-used.

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