

## **Recapitulating the Essence of Bilingual Education**

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### **Abstract**

In India English has become important from primary till the higher secondary sector. The usage of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools is gradually decreasing in the Indian classrooms. English has easily taken over other Indian languages with the colonial rule. Consequently learning and teaching English poses a great challenge both from the student and teacher perspective in this multicultural scenario. The English language teaching (ELT) is to present the possibility of bringing millions of people into the global traffic of meaning. Yet it is unable to accomplish because global ELT is paradoxically viewed as a monolingual enterprise. Both the theory that underpins much of this spread and the ways in which the global spread of English has been described and resisted emphasize English as a language that operates only in its own presence. English is always seen as a language in translation rather than looking at it, as it needs to be seen in the context of other languages. If students are to enter the global traffic of meaning, translation needs to become central to what we do. Translation, being one of the traditional teaching methods has its own significance despite being criticized by many language experts. This paper analyses the challenges of “English Only” classrooms, merits of using translation as a tool to enhance communication among ESL learners and how bilingual education can be successfully practiced in language classrooms.

**Keywords:** own language usage, L1, L2, language acquisition, motivation, bilingual approach

### **Introduction**

Though India celebrates its linguistic diversity, English being a foreign language dominates its presence amidst all other native languages. A person travelling from the North to South or vice versa across India for education, commerce or business needs to have a common language as a mode of communication. Thus English made this task easy by acting as a bridge for people who come from different linguistic backgrounds. From a description of an historical monument to the advancements of technology everything is conveyed, only through English language. This made

English to become more powerful in India to an extent that, people who are not fluent in English Language are termed as unemployable or one who lacks employability skills. As a result most of the Indian classrooms emphasize students to become communicative in English. But acquiring communicative skills in English has always remained as a challenge in India, due many reasons like ideological and political opposition, encouraging education through mother tongue and lack of qualified language teachers. Several methodologies are attempted to enhance the communicative skills among learners. One such traditional method is translation where the learner acquires second language through own language usage. Though in the late 1900s monolingual approach had been patronized by many language experts, recently there has been a shift towards own language use which is gaining momentum. Before implementing second language as a medium of communication and instruction, many years of well-resourced teaching is mandatory. If this condition is not met, then the whole essence of learning in second language becomes a nightmare for a learner. The major fallback in monolingual approach is that, it puts a learner in crucial position to acquire the language. But translation method of teaching helps to improve bilingual identities and bilingual skills that are much needed for learners.

Numerous studies have documented bilingual teaching, code switching and code choice (emphasizing learner choice during classroom interaction and teacher choices in curriculum design and teaching practice (Levine 2011) in a range of English language classrooms around the world, for example in Botswana (Arthur 1996); Brazil (Fabr'icio & Santos 2006); China (Qian, Tian & Wang 2009; van der Meij & Zhao 2010; Littlewood & Yu 2011); Cyprus (Copland & Neokleous 2011); Finland (Nikula 2007); Germany (Butzkamm 1998); Hong Kong (Pennington 1995; Lin 1996; Carless 2002, 2004, 2008; Littlewood & Yu 2011); Hungary (Harbord 1992; Nagy & Robertson 2009); Italy (Moore 2002); Japan (Hobbs, Matsuo & Payne 2010); Malta (Camilleri 1996); South Africa (Adendorff 1996); South Korea (Liu et al. 2004; Kang 2008); Spain (Unamuno 2008); Sri Lanka (Canagarajah 1999); Sweden (Cromdal 2005); Thailand (Forman 2007, 2008); and Turkey (Eldridge 1996; Ustunel & Seedhouse 2005). Studies from Canada, with its particular history of bilingual education, also document own-language use and code choices (e.g. Behan & Turnbull with Spek 1997; Swain & Lapkin 2000, 2005; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain 2005; Cummins 2007; Dailey-O'Cain & Liebscher 2009).

Translation has been playing a vital role in ELT for quite a period of time. Language expert Duff (1989) says learners have developed to use translation rather than to study translation. This is the new trend in translation now, using L1 to acquire L2. This method has showed better motivation levels which has resulted in commendable communicative results. Imparting translation knowledge to learners' results in holistic development of the four skills viz. listening, reading, speaking and writing. A language classroom with well-organized translation activities makes the classroom informative and interesting where students will participate with enthusiasm. It deals greatly with the motivational levels as it involves the use L1 which puts learner at ease

while practicing L2. Learners when they translate vocabulary from L1, they are more likely to comprehend and perceive the diction well. Improvement in diction leads to development in writing skills. With the emerging trends and technology translation has moreover become a daily life activity where people are urged to translate in a global environment. Thus when translation is practiced in language classrooms, a learner can easily associate himself/ herself with the given situation, which makes him/her to participate and engage more. A language is best acquired during a necessity. Translation paves way for the learner to look into everyday situations, where English is a need.

Translation heightens language awareness. While translating students are focused on identifying differences in structure and vocabulary, they have to evolve strategies to deal with them and to negotiate the potential of both languages. The real usefulness of translation in foreign language classes lies in comparison of grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in the target language and the student's mother tongue. Students are directly exposed to contrasting language systems of the target and the native languages. Therefore, the learners should be required to discuss and correct common mistakes. It may be appropriate at this point to mention Perkins's (1985) observations: In order to develop in the students a linguistic awareness of contrast between L1 and L2 grammatical structures, and thus counteract inter-lingual interference, the teacher can quite legitimately get students to translate L1 sentences designed to pinpoint and clarify structures and patterns the student still has not assimilated. The material for translation should be interesting and varied, expressive and related to the learners' knowledge. As students should cover different aspects of the foreign language, the material is required to be authentic, diverse in terms of structure and function.

### **Conclusion**

Translation as a method of language teaching is still a subject under research and continues to be one of the most frequently discussed topics among linguists, methodologists and teachers. However, the present study shows that translation activities are a useful pedagogical tool. When introduced purposefully and imaginatively into language learning program, translation becomes a suitable language practice method for many students. When integrated into daily classroom activities translation can help students develop and improve reading, speaking, writing skills, grammar and vocabulary. Translation in foreign language classes enhances better understanding of structures of the two languages and also strengthens students' translation skills. It is an effective, valid tool in the foreign language learning and can be used in the university classroom to improve knowledge in English. Still, translation should not be overused and should be integrated into language teaching at the right time and with the right students.

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