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THE IMPACTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING ON THE VALUES OF THE TAMIL
PERSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka English is learned as a second language .This study investigates the impacts of English Language learning on the values of the Tamil perspective teachers. The study explores whether the learning of English language has an impact on the values of the Sri Lankan Tamil perspective teachers. Qualitative and quantitative methodology was utilized for the study. A questionnaire and interviews with the participants were utilized for the study. The findings show that the English language learning has positive effects on the values of the Tamil perspective teachers

Key Words: Sri Lankan Tamils, English Language learning, Values, Tamil perspective teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is a multiethnic society with Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others who coexisted for centuries. It is a social formation with more than a single ethnic group sharing a common country. Today the Tamil speaking community lives mainly in the Tamil dominated Jaffna Peninsula in the Northern, Eastern provinces and hill countries of Sri Lanka. They live scattered from the south of the island from Galle in the south to Colombo. The Tamil speaking communities give prime importance to its traditional, social, cultural, religious and other values. The values are cherished by this community from age old days from generation to generation. The values are transferred from the people through tradition, heredity and through an implicit process of education obtained from schools, parents, peers, and environment.

English Language in Sri Lanka

English Language is taught as a Second Language in the Sri Lankan schools from grade three to the General Certificate of Education in (GCE A/L) Advanced Level. English language has its own characteristics like any other language. It is researched in this study whether the learning of a language which is used by a totally different group or society or community with totally different values has a positive impact on the values on the Tamil perspective teachers. Values are defined by numerous scholars in a number of ways. Among the various value classifications Kulshrestha's (1979) classification of values becomes appropriate, clear, and useful for the present study.

Objective

Learning English as a second language has been researched with numerous variables. The researchers have found the degree of influence learning English as a second language (ESL) has on other variables. In this study, it is intended to research on the impacts ESL learning has on the values of Tamil perspective teachers, as

there have not been many researches on the values of a community and the impacts English language learning has on it. The major hypothesis is English Language learning has a positive impact on the values of Tamil perspective teachers.

Impacts of English language learning Positive on the values of Tamil perspective teachers

Methodology

Samples of this research are one hundred Tamil speaking perspective teachers, following a teachers’ training program at the Kopay Training College, Jaffna. As the perspective teachers are Tamils from various places of Sri Lanka who represent the Tamil speaking students, the sample was collected from the Kopay Training College.

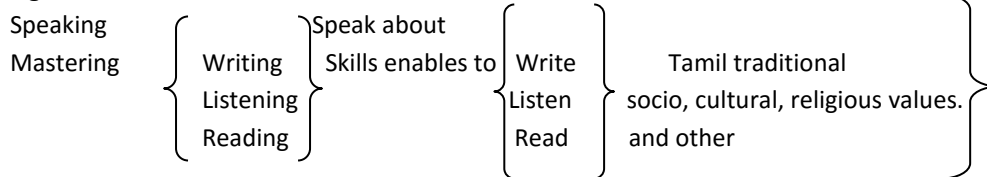
Sample and Data Collection

Random selections of one hundred perspective teachers from the Kopay Training College who follow two years teachers’ training were used as the sample for this study. As the majority of the teachers are Tamils in this institution it was found to be very useful to conduct the research here. The case study was conducted by administering a multiple choice value questionnaire, a language skill and value questionnaire and informal interview with the perspective teachers of the Kopay Training College, Kopai, and Jaffna. In this present study, ten values of the Tamil perspective teachers, which are considered as important or core values were chosen, and the impact of ESL learning on the values was tested. The values used for the study are chosen from the list of values which Kulshrestha uses in his research. The data were collected based on the impacts of English Language on the values of Tamil perspective teachers.

Analysis and findings

Analysis and findings of Skill oriented questionnaire

Figure 1



The analysis and findings of skill oriented questionnaire are shown in figure1. It is found that 84% of the respondents, by mastering speaking skills in English, are able to express more about the values of Tamils. By mastering the writing skills in English 78% of the respondents disclosed the fact that they are able to write more about their values with a lot of information gathered from various sources about values of Tamils. From the findings it is observed that 88% of them feel that after mastering the reading skills in English they are able to read and understand and could read more about their values. It is found that it has been an advantage for 80% of the respondents that by mastering listening skills they are able to listen and understand more about their values. On the whole the findings derived from the skill oriented questionnaire reveals the fact that learning the English language skills has influenced the respondents positively on the values of perspective teachers.

Analysis of Multiple Choice Questionnaires

Table1 is formulated from the multiple choice questionnaire administered to the Tamil speaking perspective teachers following two years teachers’ training program at the Kopay Training College, Jaffna. The respondents expressed that even though they studied in Sinhala and Tamil mixed schools, 72% of their traditional values are retained. The respondents feel that 80% of the moral values are not affected. They further stated that, even though they studied at the Sinhala, Tamil students mixed schools, they could retain their socio cultural and religious values. The research indicates that 70% of the educational and 88% of the religious and aesthetic values are retained respectively. They also disclosed the fact that learning English as a second language has not affected their social and cultural values. Among the values that are tested the respondents expressed that 84% of economic and 80% of authoritarian values are retained. On the whole the

study reveals the fact that almost all the values are still retained but in different percentages indicating the positive influence of Learning English as a second language on the values of Tamil perspective teachers.

Table 1

Values	Affected value	Retained value
Traditional	28%	72%
Moral	20%	80%
Educational	30%	70%
Social	28%	72%
Cultural	16%	84%
Religious	12%	88%
Aesthetic	12%	88%
Professional	16%	84%
Economic	16%	84%
Authoritarian	20%	80%

According to Kulshetra's interpretation of the values, traditional value stands for the belief in old things, supporting religious practices and customs. Those who believe in the traditional value do not welcome the new changes. Such people are very conservative and god fearing. In this research it is found that the respondents' traditional value is still maintained and ESL learning has a positive impact on the values of the Tamil perspective teachers. Kulshetra's interpretation of the religious value is, "it is a broad value which includes non-violence, truth, love, peace, righteousness, kindness, equal mindedness, and more such values". He further states that it is observed that peoples' value patterns are related to their religions. Such people consider their service first and profession next. In this study it is found that the religious value is prominent in the respondents. It reveals the fact that the impact the ESL learning has on the values of the Tamil perspective teachers is positive.

All port (1958) in his study on the values stated that aesthetic value stands for appreciation of beauty, form, harmony, grace, symmetry and system. The respondents disclosed the fact that they wish to wear their traditional dress and they are proud to wear the dress which is symbolic of their community. This shows that the aesthetic value of the Tamil perspective teachers is very much retained and the influence the ESL learning has on the respondents is positive.

Varma (1972) defines the social value in terms of "charity, love, kindness, sympathy for the pupils, sacrificing personal comforts and gains to relieve the needy and afflicted of their misery." The respondent disclosed the fact that they show sympathy to their students. They stated that they have left their hometown and have sacrificed a lot to undergo the training in order to upgrade themselves for the benefit of their students, as well as their Tamil speaking communities. They further stated that their social values are not affected by learning ESL.

Kulshrestha stated that economic value indicates that the person who cherishes this value is "economic in time and in the use of material resources and even in his talks and teaching". The study reveals that majority of the respondents trust that ESL learning has a positive influence on the economic value of Tamil perspective teachers.

The respondents stated that they follow the values of their culture. They expressed that they are able to follow their culture in spite of learning ESL.

Kulshrestha describes the authoritarian value as a "prominent value in any worker". He further stated that "Authoritarian teachers lay more emphasis on prestige, position, dominance and power in the school affairs. Each worker tries to dominate his subordinate". As this value is indispensable for the teachers to have class control, most of the respondents stated that the authoritarian value is very much retained" by them.

In defining the educational value, Milton Rokeach (1971) writes that "there is somewhat larger value gap between the educated and the less-educated than between the rich and the poor". In this study the respondents disclosed the fact that learning ESL has motivated them to learn more about their values.

The Negative and Positive Impacts

The impacts of learning English as a second language has on the values are tested and then categorized as positive and negative, based on the findings from the data collected. The following table depicts the negative and positive impacts of learning ESL on the values of Tamil perspective teachers.

Table 2

Values	Negative impact	Positive impact
Traditional	28%	72%
Moral	20%	80%
Educational	30%	70%
Social	28%	72%
Cultural	16%	84%
Religious	12%	88%
Aesthetic	12%	88%
Professional	16%	84%
Economic	16%	84%
Authoritarian	20%	80%

Table 2 is derived from table 1. The affected values are considered as negative impacts and the retained values are considered as positive values. The analysis shows that ESL learning has 28% negative influence on traditional and social values. The respondents expressed that due to the learning of a second language a negligible number of the Tamil perspective teachers are compelled to conceal or give up their traditional and social values. They further stated in the informal interview that the ESL learning has influenced a considerable number of people in their community to shift to the cities and made them go abroad. The respondents disclosed the fact that once they leave their home towns, especially their Tamil speaking environment, the moral and authoritarian values are affected. Similarly the respondents expressed that ESL learning has 12% negative influence on the religious and aesthetic values. The respondents stated that while learning ESL the educational values are 30% affected. They stated that the traditional way of providing education is very much disturbed after the introduction of ESL learning. The study shows that due to the ESL learning the participants have given up the professions that their ancestors have been doing. They also disclosed the fact that ESL learning had induced them to leave their native places and home towns to seek better jobs with better salaries which had resulted in the negligence of their cultural and economic values. However majority of them, who are adults, reveal the fact that they are able to retain their values even now.

On the whole the questionnaire survey reveals that ESL learning has positive influence on almost all the values of the participants. At the same time it can be concluded that the Tamil perspective teachers have not given up their values. Instead they have retained their values.

Analysis of interview with the respondents

The interview with the Kopay Training College perspective teachers revealed the fact that by mastering the four skills in English, they are able to understand more about the cultural values. They expressed that mastering English language skills facilitates them to read, write, listen, and speak more about their own religious and other values in English. They further stated that they can speak about their values to people belonging to other communities too, due to the English language proficiency they obtained. They believe that mastering ESL skills promotes communication with other communities which will lead to the spread of their values.

A few respondents disclosed the fact that leaving their native places compels them to get exposed to the values followed by the other communities. They disclosed the fact that their colleagues who have studied in private schools have given up wearing their traditional dresses. Some of them have changed their religion and food habits. Others have even got married in a different community. The respondents further stated that

those who leave their homes to obtain English medium education in the private schools get exposed to another culture followed by another community. Such people naturally tend to get influenced by the other community and its values. The respondents concluded that for the ESL learning has a negative impact on all their values.

The respondents expressed that majority of the Tamil students retain their values as they are matured and rooted in their cultural, religious, moral and other values. This leads to the revelation that the English Language Learning has a positive impact on the values of the Tamil perspective teachers.

Conclusion

The data elicited in the study reveal that English Language learning has positive impact on the values observed by Tamil perspective teachers. The perspective teachers seem to be absolutely free from the anticipated 'cultural shock' which may be experienced when learning a second language to which the culture at the speech community that speaks the language is interwoven. There seems to be no clash between the native culture encompassing the values specified in the study of the perspective teachers and the new culture associated with the second language. Further the perspective teachers possess confidence and vehemently stick to their own ethical standards. They have even gone to the extent of expressing about their preparedness for mentally adapting to the western culture so as to prompt themselves to learn English in an environment conducive to calm and pleasurable learning.

In order to retain the values of the Tamil speaking students, the following suggestions are presented. English language should accommodate the Tamil lexical concepts, terms and ideas phonetically and orthographically. The participants who have mastered the English language should be exemplary in retaining their values. The terms of traditional, religious, social, cultural, educational, aesthetic, economic, professional and authoritarian values should be retained and maintained by individuals with the help of their parents, communities and other kith and kin to make them strongly follow the values on their own. Educationists and religious leaders should disclose their views on the impacts of ESL learning without affecting the values of the individuals. Several concepts and contents of the values of the Tamils should be incorporated into English as a second language syllabus and in teaching.

Recommendation

When designing syllabus for English language, adequate focus should be made on incorporating language items concerning native cultural elements and values which the students are familiar with. In this manner, the barrier created by cultural variation between the languages concerned that checks learning can be eliminated.

The second language teacher should play a major role in illustrating the basic constituents that compose the entire cultural aspect appreciated with the native language and second language so that students could be free from confusing between the two cultures and learn the second language more confidently. The teacher should also provide ample explanation on how certain expressions become fixed in the second language as they are linked with the respective culture.

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