Evaluation of Primary school Tamil textbooks prepared by the School education

Dr.K.Umaraj
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Linguistics
M.K. University
Madurai
9487223316
umarajk@gmail.com
www.umarajk.in

Introduction:

Language is a vehicle for communication. Language is one of the chief attributes which differentiates man from the other animal species. Animals make noise to communicate with the other members of their group. For instance, a dog barks and gives a signal to its master about the approach of a stranger. But animal mode of communication is different from human means of communication.

Through Language, we can study the society. Language also related to mind. The Lexical item and linguistic rules are stored in the mind. Language is related to culture. Language has two parts. They are 1) The structure of the language and 2) The use of the language. Chomsky (1967) called this aspect as Competence and Performance. Ferdinand de Saussure describes this as langue and parole. According to Saussure, Language refers to the system of rules and conventions which is independent of, and pre-exists, and parole refers to its use in particular instances.

Chomsky is much concern about the Competence of the Language. i.e the grammatical structure of the language. He said that the objective of any grammatical study is to describe and explain how the Universal Grammar (Grammatical structure of a language)) is present in the mind/brain of a person. According to Chomsky (1981) , the Universal Grammar is present in the mind as modular structure. A Child at the age of three acquires the grammatical structure of a language without the help of a Teacher is due to the Universal grammar present in the mind or brain of a child. That means Universal grammar in the mind/ Brain plays a major role in learning. .

There are four skills are required for learning a language. As the Child acquires the mother tongue (i.e Tamil in Tamilnadu) in Childhood, they are able to speak and understand the Tamil language. They will acquire the writing and reading skills in the formal environment. However,

most of students in formal environment are failed or unable to attain the mastery in Tamil language. The present research work also deals with learning of Tamil as a first language at the primary level in Madurai district. The aim of the present paper is to evaluate the Tamil text books prepared by the Government of Tamil Nadu for primary schools in Madurai district.

Text books for the primary School students

There are several methods followed to learn Tamil by the Primary school children. The books prepared for the primary school level are given below.

In the first standard, the pictures are shown to the learners for leading the dialogue on this topic. Then the letters are introduced through words. The words could be drawn from the picture represented in a full page. The first lesson three letters were introduced. To teach those letters following facilities have been offered in this book 1) three words of the pictures consisting of those letters are presented 2) for example to teach 'pa' three words such as pattam, pazam, pamparam are used in terms of their pictures 3) when those pictures are read by the children, he or she indirectly pronounce the letter "pa". In this way all the consonants and vowels are introduced throughout the Text book.

In the second standard copy writing the words are given. The students are asked to arrange the letters from the list ,choosing the correct word for the picture, write words using a particular sound sequences etc are given importance .

In the third standard ability to write words, small essays are given importance.

In the fourth standard order the word and write them, segement the compound words , usage of punctuation etc are given importance . Fourth standard onwards, the students are requested to write names of animals, plants, household things etc.

In the fifth standard lot of writing exercises are given. Prose and poetry lesson given more.

Analysis

While keeping the above observation in the mind the researcher attempted to find out the suitability of the text book. The text book prepared by the school education was given to the students and asked them to do exercises. Generally words in a text book are selected for its strength to create discussion among the students. Also their accessibility is considered. However it was observed that students have some difficulty in perceiving the length, word final letters, length in subsequent syllables, doubling of letters etc. The educators should account these facts while designing exercises and tests. It was further observed that while teaching the literacy skills

only few a ll for reduction which is totally absent in the text book and exercise books. When introducing phrases following aspects were considered. For example Teaching Reading should cover the speed of writing. It is very necessary to select phrases ending with 'm' for the beginning level. Lexically impossible words and letters can be avoided while selecting the words for the exercises. The materials should be simple to complex. The material should not be restricted only with either male or female. For example a book carries the title mother and child means it will create the learners feeling that it is for ladies, the name thus could be given as family welfare . It is wise to avoid the words having of complex scripts e.g nastam juuz

Simple words could select on the basis of the content. The words have of large number of letters or syllable or hard grammatical elements should be avoided.While writing stories, by the method of comparative or discrimination content may be presented sense of nearness should be created , onomatopoeic words like cala cala kuru kuru can be used with pictures .So while preparing the materials for the learners are care should be taken and above points should kept in mind..

Apart from this , based on the corpus study we have to prepare the text books . letters which occur in large number are ka, pa and ma in the Tamil corpus. So ka, pa and ma are introduced initially. In the same way at the word level, the short and long phonemes should be introduced so that problem in long and short should identify e.g "padam", "paadam". At the sentence level most frequently occurring phrases should introduced.

 In nutshell, among the letters identified by this analysis, simple letters can be introduced first then the complex letters. Similarly, while teaching the letters, the letters taught earlier can be related for effective teaching. This research helps to identify the letters which are very essential to the children. There by the unwanted letters could be arrested in the initial stage. This will be a favourable factor to avoid learning difficulties. It is an uphill task initially, to teach all the 247 letters and those are not necessary too. For exercises, the following approach may be followed while giving exercises to the children. The rule of selectional restriction must be followed when selecting the vocabulary for the 'pattern practice' exercises. Otherwise it will confuse the children. The letter is an add construction, this will mislead the learners. This can be avoided. The rule of selectional restriction should strictly follow. Lexically impossible words can be avoided while selecting words for exercises.

Evaluation of text book based on errors

While learning either a language or literacy the learner in general commits some errors. That may be due to the weakness of learner or the nature of the language/literacy. While selecting the criteria's for exercise, the areas in which the learner generally commit errors have be identified and included in the materials. Therefore, the materials used for imparting writing and reading skills should be based on the common errors which the learners generally commit. As far as Tamil is concerned, the following are the possible areas in which the learners commit errors.

Reading Errors :Due to Complexity of language

When the children are reading the word or letter they read the basic letters easily. If the letters possessing of secondary symbol they fell uneasy to read and consequently read it as basic letter. In the same way if the letters are di and trigraph then they will find difficult to learn. E.g ko, kai,kau etc. Similarly when a word occurs, with some grammatical marker they read the basic word separately and grammatical marker affixed with basic word is read separately.

Sometimes the children face problem in combining letters while reading. The learner can spell the letters individually, but cannot combine together as a word.Similarly, if a letter taught to them occurs out of the word through which the children learnt, that cannot be spelled out by them. It shows that the children are associating the letters with their neighbouring letter (in word level) and thereby treating the word as a single entity. As reformed letters have been introduced to the most of the children. Many a time they could not read the unreformed letters.

Spoken dialect influence on Reading :

The minority language children, while learning the Tamil letters their dialect words interfere with Tamil words for example " irantu" in Tamil will be pronounced as "iratu" by the kannada children

Writing errors

For all the writing errors many reasons can be attributed some of them are as follows:

Analogical creation

Interdialectal interference

Simplification

Using the rules wrongly

Non learning

Hyper correction etc.

Errors due to the above reasons can occur in all the levels of the language. They are

Graphemic level

Lexical level

Syntactical level

Students have some difficulty in perceiving the length, word final letters, length in subsequent syllables, doubling of letters etc.

CONCLUSION

The present research is an attempt to find out the usefulness of Teaching-learning materials which are available in Tamil. It is observed that a student while learning crosses atleast four stages namely sight vocabulary phase, the discrimination net phase, phono-logical re coding phase and orthographic phase. In each phase a distinct set of errors were observed two kinds of errors namely misplacement of letters, and missing of letters. A student writes his name, address and few words in the first few lessons r. In the second phase the learner commits errors either in the graphic level or in other levels. Word recognition at this stage depends upon analyzing out partial cues from the printed word. These cues may be individual words or letter group or even minute features. In the phonological re coding phase the children make use of rules relating letters to sounds. At this phase they attempt to words which are usually on familiar to them.In the orthographic phase words should be recognized in terms of their orthographic representations that is in relation to their specific spellings rather than pronunciation.

According to professor Thirumalai "Mere identification and explanation of errors are not the goal of language teaching. But suitable remedial steps should be suggested and implemented in order to eliminate the errors so as to achieve the ultimate objectives of the language learning. The following steps to be followed for improving reading and writing skills .

Reading

1. Making the learner read aloud and check the correct pronunciation of sounds.
2. Explaining the difference of spoken and written languages
3. Explaining the salient properties of written language
4. Selecting the apt content for reading material
5. Tape recorder should be used for hearing correct

Writing

1. More emphasis has to be given for hand movement
2. Encourage the learner to form correct letters

3. Flash cards should be used for tract writing

4. Encourage the learners to follow the writing convention of the letters.

Approach to material production for special groups

When attempting to use a minor or minority language, the following areas should be thoroughly analysed before producing materials

1. Attitudes of the minor/minority groups to accept their

   language for literacy.

2) The method of transfer from minor/minority language to

   regional dominant language.

The functional value of the minor and minority languages in the primary domain cluster (such as family, different dyeds, friendship, neighbourhood, traditional mass media, caste/village council, traditional education, economic institutions and regions, etc) and secondary domain cluster (such as central economic institutions like banking, police, judicial system, modern education, mass media, modern demogratic institutions and other institutions   of modernization and industrialization may be identified and this will give an idea of the importance of bilingual primers.

In minor/minority languages, the selection of script whether from the regional dominant language or from linguistic affinity depending on cultural content areas for which selection of lexical item and selection of variety must be kept in mind while preparing Bilingual primer.

The use of dialect items for imparting literacy

The structural arrangement of spoken and written language should be considered while preparing dialectal primer.   The spoken language with all its manifestation (philological, morphological, syntactic and total arrangement of information) should be found in the beginning of literacy materials. The following categories will be useful to identify the spoken language from the written language.

1. Involvement, detachment, and affect (eg. Pronouns, ergatic case marking intensifiers).

2. Losser and tighter information packaging (eg. anaphoric devices, focus marking, demonstrative discourse linkers)

3. Evidentially (eg. speech act verb, mental processes and quotes)

4. structural complexity (word length, subordinate clausics, raised NPs, nominalizations)

5. Informational elaboration (prepositional phrases, definite and indefinite noun phrases).

6. Context dependence and interactiveness (eg. pronoun, Questions and Quotes).

7. Relative immediacy of the context (eg. tense/aspect markers, demonstratives)

The spoken language techniques can be made use of while preparing a primer for tribals.