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Problems Faced by a Bilingual Child in Learning

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Generally, people start to learn a second language after a particular age when they would have a clear idea about a second language. However, in present society many children happen to be bilingual by birth, because of the multi-ethnic nature in their parents' marriage. The child thus begins to acquire the language from his parents' mother tongue. When the child lacks words in one language, he replaces them with the words from the other language. Though, children have a flair of understanding both languages from the childhood, they encounter some challenges when they start their initial education. For instance, the inability to understand the differences between the two languages, proceeding their conversations using both languages, making syntactical and grammatical mistakes and suffering to pronounce different sounds properly are some of the perennial challenges in this regard. It is difficult for a bilingual baby to keep every difference of the languages in mind. When a learner is exposed to unfamiliar situations in the learning at the first time, bilingual baby faces a difficult situation and ultimately seeks the help of the rules of his most familiar language to understand the learning. Consequently, the respective children are mentally affected and suffer considerably at the commencement of their primary education. Thus, it should be examined how these problems can be minimised. The aim of this research paper is to identify the problems faced by these children and to suggest viable solutions to overcome them. This study is based on a child whose mother's mother tongue is Sinhala while her father's mother tongue is Tamil. This is a qualitative research and data will be collected from a sample of selected bilingual babies and teachers. The ultimate goal of this research is to introduce techniques to overcome the problems faced by a bilingual child in the process of learning.

Key words: bilingual child, language acquisition, languages, learning, mother tongue