

Effective Use of Home Language and Translanguaging in Learning Spellings

by ESL Learners

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Recent studies show that educational programs that systematically incorporate the use of English Language Learner's (ELLs') home languages result in achievement in English literacy and other academic subjects often better than ELLs in English only programs (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, in press). Lindholm and Aclan (1991) found a significant positive relationship between ELLs' bilingual proficiency and their performance in reading in English. The aim of the study is to examine whether the Sinhala speaking ESL (English as a Second Language) learner's bilingual home language (Sinhala and English) shows a positive influence in learning spellings of English words. Sinhala spelling is phonetic whereas English spelling is not phonetic that some of its words cannot be spelt by merely following the way they are pronounced (e.g. psychology). The hypothesis of the study is that the young Sinhala speaking ESL learners follow their parents' pronunciation in English words and spell them as the way they are pronounced. A pool of 65 students in Grade 4 were examined. A dictation task consisted of 40 sentences containing one preposition each was used. Both accurate spelling of the prepositions and the number of home languages of each learner were analyzed. ANOVA will be computed using SPSS12. If there is a significant positive impact on the accuracy of the spellings of the given prepositions by the bilingual home language, these learners' home languages and translanguaging can be used to facilitate teaching spellings of the English words which can be merely spelt following their pronunciation.

Keywords : Home languages, Translanguaging, ESL, Spelling