

A Study on the Problems of Tribal Students in Learning English as a Second Language in Odisha

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ABSTRACT: English is an official language in India. But Indians face many problems while learning English. Especially the tribals face acute problem as they have their own language too for communication. This study has focused on the problem of tribal students of Odisha in learning English as a second language. The researchers has followed Descriptive survey method to conduct the study and taken the help of research tools like questionnaire, oral and written tests to collect information from the subjects. The results show that the tribal students face innumerable problems in learning English.

KEYWORDS : Tribal students, learning English, second language, Odisha.

I.INTRODUCTION

Of all the languages in the world today English deserves to be regarded as a World language. It is the world's most widely spoken language. It is the common means of communication between the people of different nations.

In India, the students particularly from rural and tribal pockets consider the seven-letter word as a magical and mystical word. The moment they hear something in English, they start feel uneasy. As a result of this, teacher who handles English students find it difficult to make them understand the language. What are the reasons for this ? What are the remedial measures to be taken to alleviate these problems ?

In Odisha, students read English as a compulsory subject up to the secondary school and higher secondary school. The twelve years of study do not make students to gain mastery over English. In the tribal areas, the students read English for a period of ten years, but still than they could not able to learn a single sentence in English. Why does this happen? While they are in schools, English is not taught properly. As majority of the students are hailed from rural and tribal areas, Bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps only to slow-learners to some extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand anything in English(L2), he/she asks for explanation in his/her mother tongue-Odia(L2). Consequently, the English teacher is in a state to adopt the Bilingual method. ELT specialists view this as a wrong methodology.

Apart from the above, there are vernacular medium schools established by the Govt. across the state in the rural and tribal belts. So it again acts as significant cause for not developing language habits. Further, environment, family background stand as great obstacle. The students eventhough listen English in School, they can not apply it in home. Moreover, the teachers in school use Translation method or Bilingual method while teaching English. For this, the students are unable to develop language habit.

As the people are still below the poverty line and majority of them depend on agriculture and wood collection from the forest as their main source of occupation. Their income is inadequate to meet the expenditure on education. Hence the parents are not interested in giving education to their children. Rather they are willing to engage them in their

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household work to get some relieve from their daily work. Most of the children are unable to develop language habit as their parents are uneducated who do not give much importance to educate their child.

The present study has been selected to find out the major problems faced by students from the tribal belts of western Odisha namely Rayagada, Kalahandi, and Koraput District. It is delimited to class IX students only.

II. RESEARCH REVIEW

Kannan R. in his study “Difficulties in learning English as second language by the secondary school students of Tamil Nadu” stated that, defective method of instruction act the serious obstacles in learning English as a second language.

Bose A.C. in his study “The problems in learning model auxiliary verbs English at high school level” stated that the family background, defective medium of instruction, method of teaching, less number of hours spent in English language laboratory for practice are various problems which are faced by students at the High school level.

Murali M. in his article entitled “Teaching English as a second language in India- A review” in the modern Journals of applied linguistics stated that the effect of first language on second language is obvious and can not be eliminated. Linguistics, volume 1: 1 February 2009 stated that adopting regional languages as the medium of instruction, environment and family background of learners infrastructure in rural areas, income of the family act as hurdle in learning English as a second language.

Fillmore Lily Wong in her study “when learning a second language means losing the first” University of California, Barkley stated that the American immigrants and native children and adults who have lost their ethnic languages in the process of becoming linguistically assimilated into the English. It has been that as immigrant children learn English, the patterns of language use change in their homes and the younger they are when they learn English, the greater the effect.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher has followed the descriptive survey method for undertaking the study. As this method deals with the problems as such and seeks to answer those questions about present state of affairs, so it has been selected. The researcher has developed a questionnaire to get information about the problems faced by the tribal students. Apart from this, he has also conducted tests class wise on the four skills of language learning i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing.

IV. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The students of class IX studying in Ashram schools in Kalahandi comprise the population of the study. Among them, 200 students have been selected randomly from schools located at Kalahandi the sample of the study.

V. OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the problems of the tribal students in learning English as a second language.
2. To identify the factors affecting learning English namely home environment, family background, income, medium of instruction and method of teaching.
3. To examine the effect of first language on learning second language.
4. To compare the problems faced by the tribal boys and girls at the secondary stage.
5. To suggest remedial measures to get rid of the problem.

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VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data collected by the help of different tools, the following results have been interpreted.

- i. The tribal students face many problems in learning English. These problems include home environment, lack of guidance by the parents and defective method of teaching.
- ii. There are many factors which affect negatively to learning English by the tribal students. Among them, the most crucial are unsuitable home environment, lack of parental education, background of the family and defective method of teaching.
- iii. There has been seen the effect of first language on learning English. There is wrong pronunciation of words, defect in the structure of sentences the students framed while speaking and writing.
- iv. The tribal girls face more problems than the boys at the secondary level. This due to their shyness and inability to accommodate with the classroom teaching.
- v. Some measures may be suggested to overcome the problem of the students. These are taking remedial classes, conducting drills, practices on English vocabulary, structures and teaching by the help of audio and- visual aids.

VII. FINDINGS

Following are some of the findings of the study.

- i. The tribal students face many problems in learning English.
- ii. There are many factors which act as hindrance on learning English. They are unsuitable home and school environment, lack of parental guidance background of the family and school, income, medium of instruction and defective method applied in classroom teaching.
- iii. Tribal students spell the English words incorrectly due to the effect of first language on learning English. The structures of different sentences are also found as wrong only due to the above factor.
- iv. Girl students face acute problems in learning English as they are habituated in their mother tongue at home. For them, learning English becomes a serious problem. Thus, girls face more problems comparatively than the boys.
- v. Few measures may be suggested to get rid of the above problem like taking remedial classes, conducting drill and practice of the English words, structures etc. Apart from this written and oral exercises on daily basis can help a lot in overcoming the problem of learning English by the tribal students.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The tribal students face innumerable problems in learning English as a second language in the state of Odisha. It is due to low of level of income, family background, lack of education of the parents and defective method of teaching adopted by the teachers. As a result, the students could not develop the ability to master the minimum competency in learning English. Learning English becomes a difficult task for them. Therefore, the tribal students should be exposed to English language in the school and outside too. Then only we can expect about the development of English knowledge in them. The problem of these students are remain hidden in the corner of the parts of the country where they belong to. It is the duty of the Government and NGOs to spread the knowledge of English to them.

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