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ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA:
CHINTAPALLE EXPERIENCE

KRISHNAVEER ABHISHEK CHALLA

Soft Skills Trainer cum Faculty

Department of Foreign Languages, Andhra University

PhD Research Scholar, Department of Linguistics, Andhra University

Secretary, Linguistics Research Society, Visakhapatnam, India



KRISHNAVEER ABHISHEK
CHALLA

ABSTRACT

English language has been in India for over 200 Years now. It has gone through numerous stages of development, acceptance and non-acceptance. Certain strata of Indian society have accepted it as the first language; some see it as the essential second language whereas others regard it as a link language, both at the notational and the international level. In all the above cases English remains an important language and hence the debates, the discussions, and the deliberations, throughout the country, have always continued to focus on the teaching and learning of English. India is a vast country and inhabits numerous tribes with varying ways of life. Thus, it would be better to perceive the topic in socio-economic, linguistic and geographical perspectives. This paper will deliberately confine the discussion to the teaching of English in the tribal areas of Chintapalle Agency Area in Visakhapatnam District.

Keywords: English Language Training, Tribal Development, Tribal Learners, Chinatapalle Mandal

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INTRODUCTION

No people can be on island in the modern world. There is a necessity of English language teaching and learning so that the best of the knowledge and communication can be extended to all. To make the students aware of the outside world in a broader sense, English language plays an important role. When teaching English for getting the desired outcome is a global problem, teaching English as a second language in tribal areas still remains a greater problem. It is easy to understand the difficulty of the situation as one has to teach English to some who have, perhaps, no or little English. One would not argue with the statement that at the school level, the major focus of students is to pass an English exam. The teacher shows the tricks of passing the exam and does not bother whether the students have learnt English at the end of the term/year or not. Such practice on the teachers' and the students' path create lack of interest in students and demotivate them from the learning of English at a very early stage in life, which by the course of time becomes one of the major problems of lack of communication skills. The student realises this by the time he/she is about to be graduate and searching for job in the market. One of the major problems of teaching English in tribal areas is to change

the mindset of the conservatives (those who do not feel the necessity of change) to persuade them for the change that education and the learning of English shall bring: after all, learning is a change of behaviour. So, a lot of things depend on the parents and relatives to educate their siblings so that they can also be on par with the modern world. Lack of motivation remains the major challenge for teaching English. If the teacher can establish a good rapport with the learners, his/her job would be easier. Studies suggest that teacher motivation contributes more to teaching learning process than the teacher competence. Therefore, it is rightly said: 'If you are teaching John Greek, you must know John, you must know Greek, and you must know how to teach John Greek'. It is in the context of this kind that the following small historical fact has been contextualised with the learning of English. (Bhatt, 2012)

The tribes are the essential gifts of our nature. Hence it is our duty to bring them up as developed in the society. They are also ordinary human beings like us, who should participate and socialize in the society. This is possible, only when they have a language at hand, which can bridge them to the larger world. Thus English language teaching is to be focused more in the tribal areas for their betterment and active participation in the society. This is possible only by creating more language teaching methods in the class rooms which makes the learning, a part of experience. Proper awareness is to be given among the communities to make them realize the prospects of English language in store for them. The knowledge on addressing bi-lingual classroom, understanding the tribal situation as a special group can bring the tribal children in to the mainstream keeping their level of achievement intact at par with the other children of other contexts. In the Indian situation, the content and process need to be adaptable for the children of special needs. Due to the gap between the home language and school language, and due to the gap that exists between the content of the curricula and the external context in which the tribal children live, the pedagogy followed in teaching the other learners will not be effective in the tribal classrooms. The questions relating to content, process, teaching, and learning follow only when the issues of language is addressed at first. The problems might change after two or three years, if steps are taken to make changes in the scheme and syllabus. But at the present we have to handle the learners in the higher classes who lack even the basic level of competency. This is not a task which can be achieved through ordinary teaching or training. It requires adaptable approaches. Varghese & Nagaraj (2013)

English Language Teaching in Tribal Areas:

English Language Teaching Methods in India-

1. Grammar Translation Method is one of the earliest and most practiced methods of English Language teaching. Though presently considered outdated in reference of modern methods, it is still useful and constantly applied in schools and colleges in India.
2. The Direct Method which is also known as Natural and Psychological Method stresses on developing oral and listening skills of English than bookish grammar.
3. Structural- Situational Method gives importance to language as a system of structurally related elements of phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentence types to encode and decode the meaning.
4. Communicative Method does not aim at language as a set of linguistic items, but aims at developing communicative competence in the learners. It focuses on the meaning and functions rather than on the form of the language.
5. The Bilingual Method considers that second language can be learned with the help of learners' mother tongue but it should not be used as word to word translation as in Grammar Translation Method but as a means to achieve the communicative end.

Having considered the above methods, we come to know that English language teaching in tribal region needs a mixed and comprehensive approach. No single method can serve the purpose; a mixed approach according to the mindset of the learners should be employed. Primarily, the Grammar translation Method is useful since the students are used to it from their school days. Also application of other methods can be considered as per need. Because tribal region is a special region in many respects. What is suitable to metros may not suit our students with a set of language difficulties. The teaching and learning of English is difficult in this region due to

many reasons. The students in tribal zone should be taught first to learn basic skills of language i.e. four language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking. It would enable them to have a close communion with the language. (Tayade, 2011)

Healthy and congenial atmosphere should be created in the class so that the students develop the self-confidence and be inspired to communicate in English. Relevant changes can be made in the syllabi. We should promote our students to use four skills of language effectively. They should be encouraged to listen to language and for this the teacher should read correct English; they should be encouraged to read, write and speak. This is not as easy as it seems to be but the difficult target of achieving language proficiency in English can never be got otherwise. Honest labour on the part of the teacher and the taught is a must; there is no other way. It is a time consuming approach and needs patience and perseverance. But we can reach our goal to a great extent and achieve success. Understanding student psychology and apprehension of their language learning capacity is necessary. It can help the teacher to prepare relevant teaching modules and apply it effectively. The students should be given language assignments containing preparation of CV, writing letters, reports, agendas, etc. to develop their language skills. (Tayade, 2011)

English Language Teaching in Chintapalle Mandal

Chintapalle or Chintapalli is a village and a Mandal in Visakhapatnam district in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It has an average elevation of 839 meters (2755 feet). The low literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes is a serious threat to Indian education. It is significant even to Andhra Pradesh. The increase in the number of failures and drop outs in the schools of Chintapalle Mandal is pointed out as major cause of the fall by educators and proponents of the State. A Pilot study is carried out in Chintapalle, the most educationally backward tribal pocket of Visakhapatnam District. The lack of proficiency in English language is identified as a major obstacle to the education of Schedule Tribe learners. The inappropriate syllabus and teaching method of English develops a negative attitude in learners towards learning. The fear of learning a foreign language is one of the factors to stop their education because English language is a criteria rather than an option at higher level. It is clear that tribal learners are not motivated well. They have adjustment problems with school curriculum and teaching of English language. Though the Government can provide grants and scholarships for the betterment of learners, the responsibility of their educational development are ultimately in the hands of teachers.

A sample of 50 weak learners of the class was chosen for the study on the basis of their examination grades. The study was conducted in one of the higher secondary schools of Chintapalle where tribal learners are educated along with non tribal learners. During the pilot study, a case study was undertaken by the researcher to assess the English language education of Tribal learners and study the area of weaknesses contributing to the lack of quality learning. Interviews were conducted among several project officials and educationalists of state and district level. The tribal hamlets were visited. The informal interactions were held with some teachers, parents and children.

The teaching of English language in schools and colleges in tribal areas should be integrated and graded. The teaching/learning materials should motivate and lead the learner ahead by inviting him/her to accomplish the tasks step-by-step, one after the other. At each stage the learning material should be slightly higher than the learner's cognitive ability so that the learner is inspired to reach the next or higher level. Annual examination should not be the only means of testing the learner's progress. Opportunities of expression in the target language (English) should be provided and encouraged. The learner should be involved in the process of formulation and revision of teaching/learning material. Students in secondary schools can be motivated to bring or create socially relevant tales, poems, stories, anecdotes and real life situations for discussion to the classroom. Learners at Higher levels of school can work with vocabulary and sentence structures that are not fixed or rigid. At graduation and post-graduation level students can be gradually initiated towards comprehension and writing skills in such a manner that the material they produce for evaluation serves as the reading/instructional material for the lower grades. (Kapoor, 2013)

In this way teaching/learning of English in tribal areas can become or develop into self initiated exploration. With the help of English teachers in tribal areas and other peer groups comprising sociologists,

psychologists, educationists, N.G.O. and the like socially relevant curriculum can be formulated. This graded curriculum should have a well-marked starting point and a finish line. At every stage the learner should be able to identify and experience the difference between the achieved position and the previous state. The present syllabus in schools and colleges is obscure and repetitive. The grammatical categories prescribed at the high School level like Parts of speech, Sentence Structures, Transformation, etc, are again included in the under-graduate curricula. As a result the learner constantly revolves in the realm of the unknown never fully realizing the progress in the real sense. S/He often returns to the starting point after mapping the imaginary terrain of education. The exam-oriented teaching encourages the teachers and the students to solve the linguistic and grammatical problems with mathematical formulae or solutions. The rule based method of teaching structural grammar in the classrooms ignores the communicative purpose of language. (Kapoor, 2013)

Thus, English language teaching/learning shares an equal amount of expectation and limitation. Teachers are not provided with the freedom to choose instructional material. Moreover, in an exam oriented system all efforts are digressed towards performance in exams. The teacher has no liberty to move away from the prescribed text and has to teach the prescribed text in the prescribed manner. In such a situation even an intuitive teacher is always faced with the dilemma of whether to help learners acquire competence in English or prepare the pupil (examinee) to obtain higher grades. So the teaching of English in tribal areas should cater primarily to the economic, cultural and interactive needs of the tribal people. The course should not endeavour to transform the tribal people into the so called civilized society. The tribal population is civilized. It lives in the lap of Nature. Their association with Nature, myths, beliefs, practices along with their indigenous knowledge can best be known to the world if English becomes a tool in their hands but if it becomes only an ornament, like it has become in many parts of the country, it will differentiate between those who possess it and those who don't. (Kapoor, 2013)

Conclusion

Language learning is a skill. It is more difficult to teach because language is taught by the use of language itself. Every section of the society has his/her own idiosyncrasies. Due to the nomadic, agrarian lifestyle, the tribal's are somehow cut off from the mainstream students. They have their own pace and ideologies of learning. Nurturing thousands of tribal students of different sections, Andhra Pradesh has its own share of language problems to share. The students have their own language problems, and the paper has tried its best to offer some pragmatic solutions to the problems. If it can be given a thought upon and worked on, these so called backward sections of the society can acquire the centre than the occupying periphery. (Mishra, 2014)

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About author

Mr. Krishnaveer Abhishek Challa (b. 1991) is currently the Secretary of Linguistics Research Society and CEO of Tao Educare. He worked as Assistant Professor of English at Gayatri Vidya Parishad College for Degree & PG Courses (A), Visakhapatnam, India. He worked as Guest Faculty at Andhra University College of Engineering (A). He is currently working as Soft Skills Trainer cum Faculty at Department of Foreign Languages, Andhra University. He is pursuing PhD from Department of Linguistics, Andhra University. He received MA in English Language & Literature from Adikavi

Nannaya University and Masters in Journalism and Mass Communications from Andhra University. He qualified State Eligibility Test (SET) for Lectureship/Assistant Professorship. His specialization is International Communication. He also completed Masters in Linguistics and Computer Science. He did P.G. Diplomas in English Language & Linguistics, Communication Skills, Functional English, English Language Teaching and Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy. He did Diplomas in French, Functional Arabic and Yoga. He authored 36 books and published 71 Research Articles, Poetry and Book reviews in reputed Journals, Edited Volumes and Newspapers and Seminar Proceedings. He presented his research papers in numerous Seminars and was the resource person for many Workshops. He was selected as a student at Blekinge Tekniska Hogskola (BTH), Sweden and completed many courses. He won first prize in National Level Debate Competition on 'Green Manufacturing'. He acted and directed many Short Films and Documentaries and won an award.
