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AN ANALYSIS OF RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE SKILLS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

India is known for embracing people from different socio, economic, cultural, linguistic and educational communities. It is a garden where flowers of different varieties, fragrances and colors bloom. The indigenous people fall an easy prey or encounter threats related to economic well-being, basic amenities like health facilities, education, food and employment. They have had a long struggle for cultural identity and inclusion in the mainstream. They have a nomadic life and are farmers, food gatherers and basket weavers. This is a clear indication of economic instability in their lifestyle. The Narendra Modi Government has added another feather to the Start Up India program which is known as Stand Up India. This program is specifically crafted for the marginalized groups to financially encourage them to start their own venture. Skill sets are required in order to convert this into reality. But this seems to be a far cry because the aboriginals lack basic education and language skills in particular. Achieving the objective of success of this Stand Up India without language skills is as difficult as driving a car without wheels.

Working on the LSRW skills would mean taking up a communicative approach towards language skills. Hence this would give a holistic or 360 degree picture. Reading and Listening skills fall under Language Reception Skills whereas Speaking and Writing fall under Language Production Skills. Reading and Writing enjoy lot of importance in the Indian school curricula hence this paper strives to find out the relation between receptive and productive skills and tries to learn the impact of reading skills on writing skills.

**Keywords:** Indigenous People, Receptive Skills, Productive Skills, L2, Communication Skills.

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1) INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people stay close to forests and depend on nature for their livelihood. They constitute a considerable chunk of the entire population. There exists 62 indigenous or tribal groups and out of which 13 have been declared as primitive tribes. These people follow an agrarian lifestyle and hence are economically and socially backward. There has been long struggle and persistent challenge in bringing them to the

mainstream. The current scenario clearly indicates that despite framing different policies, revamping rural development programs, designing education policies the objective is defeated or the purpose is half met.

The indigenous people are rich in natural resources. Tribals are innocent and naïve people who are far away from ill feelings like jealousy, discrimination, gender biasness, no segregation on the basis of class and religion. They are down to earth, culturally rich and dowry and corruption does not exist in their society. However basic facilities like food, water, shelter, health, literacy and education are all matters of concern.

Socio-economic and cultural development can only take place through education. It is the only weapon which can help in elevating their standards.

### **1.1) Literacy and Education**

As per 2001 census the male literacy rate of indigenous people was 51.5 whereas female literacy rate was 23.37. The Government has designed Non Formal Education (NFE), District Primary Education Program (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to encourage education. In addition to the existing program the Narendra Modi Government has initiated Stand Up India to financially encourage the marginalized groups to start their own venture.

However if English language continues to be seen as an alien language both by the teachers and learners then the effort will be futile. Grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, wrong use and choice of words, lack of dedicated and trained teachers are few aspects which need immediate attention.

Linguistic problems arise when there is gap between language reception and production. The indigenous people have weak cognitive skills, as a result of which language acquisition devices (LADs) function slowly. Every learner comes with a different learning speed. Language reception, transmission and production skills operate like input, process and output unit. Reading skills are input, processing part takes place in the brain which involves cognitive skills and then we have the output through written medium which is known as production. Similarly listening skills act as input and processing takes place in the brain and it is produced in the form of speaking.

This paper will endeavor to throw light on the impact of reading skills on writing skills.

### **2) Receptive Skills and Productive Skills**

When a person listens and reads a language then he receives the language and decodes the meaning to perceive the message. Receptive skills refer to understanding of the language through reading and listening. The message is understood and interpreted in the right light only when it is decoded properly.

One may come across many words during reading or listening but actual credit lies when the learners put to use the words they come across in either speaking or writing form. The appropriate use of the spoken or written words is a clear indicator of command and hold on the language. The percentage of people who can effectively put to use these words in a conversation is low and the case of tribal learners is worse. Hence there lies a gap between reception and production.

### **3) Current Scenario of English Language Receptive Skills**

#### **Reading Skills**

Studies show that there exist two types of approaches to reading Surface Approach and Deep Approach. The Surface Approach encourages the unconditional acceptance of information and does not persuade long term conservation of information. It involves retention of knowledge for the purpose of examinations only whereas in the case of Deep Approach the readers opt for conceptual understanding of the text instead of the surface level. The study says that high order cognitive skills are required in order to understand, analyze and interpret the text. The reader should be linguistically matured to construct new meanings from the text, catch meaning in between the lines, and link already existing knowledge to understand new issues and problem solving in those new contexts. The study also opines of the fact that these universities adopt the Surface Approach to reading and learning instead of the Deep Approach. (Hermida, 2009)

In a study conducted it came to the limelight that reading strategies should be taught to the students because it is only then they will develop the power of comprehension. It was also found that teachers need to construct effective comprehension strategies and develop suitable pedagogy. (Kucukoglu, 2012).

Researchers have noticed that good reading strategies should be framed in order to improve reading skills. Phonetic, phonemic, fluency, vocabulary strategies should be improved. It is only then comprehension strategies will improve. This study stresses on the fact that reading should be kept first. Teaching of comprehension skills will improve cognitive and meta cognitive aspects of the learners. (Ambruster, Lehr, Ralph, Osborn, 2001)

The ability to comprehend, adding to the stock of vocabulary through reading, real life use of words and not just meaning mentioned in the dictionary lead to fluent and accurate reading and eventually acts as food for writing skills.

Receptive skills act as base for productive skills. Gaps and problems in reception will definitely lead to problems in transmission and hence affects in production skills. Reading skills act as building blocks for writing skills and if the base is not strong then we cannot expect a strong foundation.

#### **4) Current Scenario of English Language Production Skills**

In a study conducted by Richards (1990) it was found that interacting with the students helps in enhancing the cognitive skills and this leads to generating ideas. Writing is an ability and skill it can be mastered and improved through repetition. A teacher has to be well versed in the writing process then it would facilitate the teaching strategies and hence enhance the writing skills (Oberman and Kapka, 2001)

There exist five stages of writing process – Prewriting, Drafting, Editing, Revising and Publishing. Practicing the process would help the students express their emotions and thoughts confidently and efficiently (Casewell,2008; Ozbell, 2006 & Smith, 2005).

The above mentioned five stages make the writing process all the more difficult activity. It is a challenging task to strike a balance between all the five stages and transiting from one to the other stage is a challenging activity.

#### **5) Link between Reading and Writing Skills**

Loban (1963) in his study stated that there is a relation between reading and writing and he also observed that students who were good in reading also wrote well and vice-versa. As per the study conducted by Stotsky (1983) it came to the forefront that good writers used to read more in comparison to not very good writers and were linguistically matured in generating syntactically sound writings.

Researchers have analyzed that generally writers include the pieces of knowledge what they have learnt and gathered about language, vocabulary, structure and style from other write ups, texts which they experienced and encountered as readers. They mirror their ideas, opinions as readers which acts as food for thought, give birth to ideas and fuse thoughts for writing.

All the above mentioned facts clearly indicate that if a learner has low level of proficiency in reading skills this will lead to low level of competence, performance and proficiency in writing skills as well. They share a parasitic relation and reading acts as food for thought for writing.

#### **6) Reading and Writing Skills – Focus on Indigenous People**

There are high rates of dropouts due to socio economic status, less, or no exposure to the modern world, the different mindset in the context of learning, linguistic problems, problems associated with learning English, psychological challenges and the tribal parents, teachers and students wear an indifferent attitude. (V.A, H. and Mohammed,A.P., 2014).

Reading and Writing becomes difficult because they have an oral culture. Teaching and learning of English to the tribal learners continues to be a concern. There is trouble in adjusting with the curriculum because of the gap in home language and school language. The future demands change in teaching methodology, syllabus and the current situation is asking for ways and means of handling learners in higher classes who lack the basic level of competency. (Varghese & Nagaraj, 2013)

From the above study it is relevant to say that the scenario of indigenous people is deplorable. There are many factors contributing to low levels of reading skills which ultimately creates a weak base and affects writing skills.

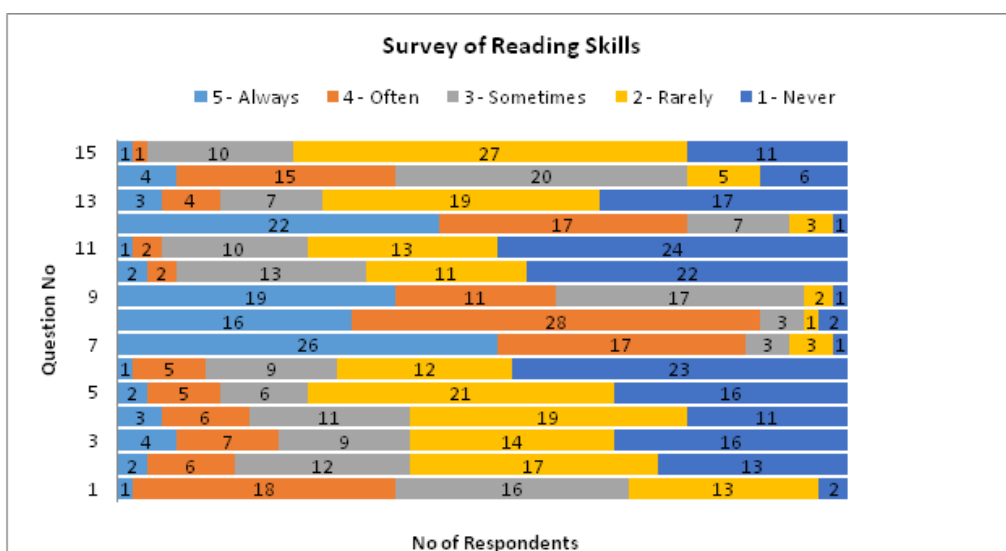
7) Survey

Taking a survey of the relation between reading skills and writing skills, below are the responses of 50 teachers teaching indigenous students on a scale of 5 to 1

5 – Always; 4 – Often; 3 – Sometimes; 2 – Rarely; 1 - Never

Table - 1 : Survey of Reading Skills

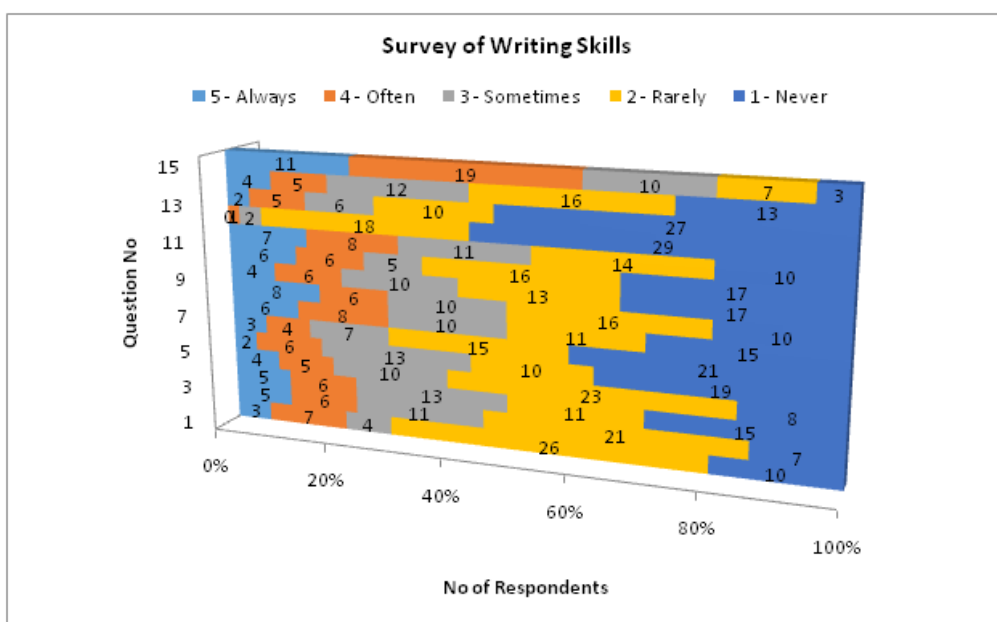
SI	Question	5	4	3	2	1
1	Students can convey basic sense of the message	1	21	20	16	2
2	Students can infer the meaning of words and interpret in between the lines while reading	2	6	12	17	13
3	They can simplify the text and substitute words for better understanding of it.	4	7	9	14	16
4	I feel that students understand punctuation marks and read fluently	3	6	11	19	11
5	Students put to use what they read into their own words well	2	5	6	21	16
6	I feel they use what they read in their writings well	1	5	9	12	23
7	I feel they lose place frequently while reading	26	17	3	3	1
8	I feel they lack concentration and get distracted while reading	16	28	3	1	2
9	I find that the students have to read a particular text repeatedly	19	11	17	2	1
10	I feel students are good at filtering information and find out what is relevant.	2	2	13	11	22
11	They can select the most important information out of the content of the text.	1	2	10	13	24
12	Students don't ask the meaning of words very frequently while reading	22	17	7	3	1
13	I feel they are good at summarizing information	3	4	7	19	17
14	Time constraints pull down the level of confidence of the students	4	15	20	5	6
15	I feel students can guess or anticipate the content of the text from its heading itself.	1	1	10	27	11



Graph - 1: Survey of Reading Skills

Table – 2: Survey of Writing Skills

Sl	Question	5	4	3	2	1
1	While reading the content written by the students I feel they meet the basic objectives and purpose behind writing	3	7	4	26	10
2	Students can logically organize their ideas while writing a paragraph	5	6	11	21	7
3	I feel that students can substitute one word with the other or use synonyms with ease	5	6	13	11	15
4	Students convey the real essence or sense of what they write	4	5	10	23	8
5	Students can incorporate variety of sentence structures in their writings	2	6	13	10	19
6	Students can confidently use appropriate words, correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation marks	3	4	7	15	21
7	Students are good at accurately summarizing of information that they have read in English.	6	8	10	11	15
8	My students can organize paragraphs just in the same fashion in which they have read a text	8	6	10	16	10
9	I feel that the students use a logical arrangement of paragraphs	4	6	10	13	17
10	I notice that the students can take good notes on the basis of their readings and then put them to use to support their ideas during writing	6	6	5	16	17
11	Students are happy to edit their writings to improve grammar, punctuation and spellings	7	8	11	14	10
12	I feel students can effectively write under time constraints	0	1	2	18	29
13	I feel that the students can identify fundamental problems in their writings	2	5	6	10	27
14	I feel students revise their writings so that they can improvise their writings	4	5	12	16	13
15	I feel that the students are totally dependent on reading in order to write	11	19	10	7	3



Graph – 2: Survey of Writing Skills

**Analysis and Interpretation of Reading Skills (Table – 1)**

From the above furnished graphical representation we learn that students face difficulty in narrating, and conveying the basic sense of the message on the basis of what they have read. The responses make it evident that they cannot infer the meaning of words and understand between the lines. They often find difficulty in rephrasing a text or writing in their own language. According to the responses it comes to the forefront that students are not confident in the use of punctuation marks. As a result of which it affects the fluency and with which they read. The use of words in their writings does not paint a good picture because they find it difficult to put to use what they read. As perceived, reading is an individual activity, learners lose place, track and concentration while reading. This leads to the effort of reading a particular text again and again. This also makes reading a time taking affair and adds to the level of distraction. 22% of the teachers did not hold very high opinion about the competency of the learners in the context of filtering information and segregate the important from rest of the text. The respondents felt that the learners were frequently asking the meanings of difficult words and this led to delay in the process of sending and receiving inputs and hampers the pace of completion of course. The students at times miss out on some the main points or sub points while summarizing the text. From the survey it is also evident that time does play an important role in pulling down the level of confidence of the learners and acts as a constraint from the learners because they cannot put in their best. The teachers have also learnt that the learners fail in perceiving the content of the text from the heading or title of the text.

**Analysis and interpretation of Writing Skills (Table – 2)**

Taking a survey of the writing skills maximum teachers responded that students rarely meet the basic objectives and purposes behind writing. 21% teachers can logically arrange their ideas and main ideas, main points and sub-points while writing a paragraph. It is also observed that students never use synonyms or substitute one word with the other with ease. Teachers also opine of the fact that the cream is not reflected in their writings which also includes sense and essence of the text. Considerable amount of students find difficulty in incorporating or using varieties in sentence structures or elaborating a particular point to bring clarity in explanation. The students lack basic idea of correct spelling, capitalization and use of appropriate words. The students lack summarizing skills and the art of organizing paragraphs. The teachers on being interviewed shared that while preparing for examinations the students fail to construct good notes on the basis of reading. They also shared that the levels of motivation, interest and enthusiasm drop down when they used to receive feedback on their writings and that included grammar, punctuation, spellings and styles of writings. Time does play a negative role in pulling down the level of competency in writing. It increases their nervousness. The teachers also revealed that students lack the ability of assessing themselves and hence fail to identify their fundamental problems and cannot improvise their own work. While evaluating the writing skills of the students the teachers observed that maximum students often depended on reading in order to write.

**Conclusion**

From the above study it is evident that reading acts as base or input for writing. Brain is like a computer processing unit. It works like input, process and output. In the case of language learning process, reading acts as input and writing acts as output. The case is same with listening and speaking. It is a well accepted fact that if the input is not sufficient and base is not strong then output also will not be standard. It is essential to have a well-built base or foundation and this will lead to a strong structure. Focus should be laid on reading exercises and skills and the learners should be encouraged to guess or anticipate the meanings of words during the loud reading activity in the classrooms. Reading should be made innovate and interesting. Tribal learners are shy so more and more classroom participation should be encouraged. It is only then their level of communication can be elevated. The teaching pedagogy should embrace reforms and refresher courses and teachers' training programs should be conducted regularly.

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#### A Brief Bio of Authors

**Ms. Disha Bhatt** after completing her Masters in Applied Linguistics in 2008 from University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad is currently pursuing PhD in Linguistics from School of Humanities and Social Sciences, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Ms Bhatt has a rich experience of working as a teacher – trainer in the area of English and Business Communication for BBA, B.Com, B.A and B.Tech students since 2008. Besides an enthusiast research scholar, she is a visiting faculty at various Engineering colleges. She is also a certified trainer from Indian Society for Training and Development, New Delhi and has the credit of organizing seminars, workshops in the domain of Management.

**Dr. Leena Lilian** is working as Assistant Professor at Department of English, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar. She has completed PhD in the year 2012 from Behrampur University. She has a rich experience of teaching B.Tech students for the past 7 years now. Dr. Lilian carries the experience of teaching the marginalized children at KISS. Besides possessing a bright academic career Dr. Lilian has been a judge at various academic activities and events held in the university. She also has lot of national and international publications to her credit.

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