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LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS OF UNDERGRADUATE TRIBAL
STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KISS, BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

India stands for oneness even after differences. It has one of the oldest civilisations and has embraced people from many ethnic groups. The marginalised group comprises a considerable part of the rich cultural heritage and strength of the Indian society. The state of Odisha has a healthy tribal population. The ST population is 22.85% whereas SC population is 17.13%. Some of the tribes are Santal, Munda, Oram, Juanga, Saora, Dharua, Bond and Koya. These indigenous people stay in the hills and forests and are farmers or food gatherers and hence don't have consistency in lifestyle. Many steps have been taken to elevate the standard of living of these people.

Education can be used as a tool to elevate the standards of the tribal population and hence it is important to develop language skills. Keeping in mind the current scenario, the entire drive of making them employable and bringing the entire group to the mainstream has become national agenda. The whole tribal population can be nurtured, developed and groomed so that they can embrace life.

The paper studies the errors and competency in English writing skills among tribal students and how it affects employability of tribal students of KISS, Bhubaneswar. The data and facts are supported and substantiated by questionnaire, graphical and statistical tools have been used, and analysis and suggestions have been furnished for a better perspective.

Keywords: Tribal writing competence, L2, Error Analysis, Employability, Social Inclusion.

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I) INTRODUCTION

India has been a symbol of oneness despite geographical, linguistic, cultural differences. It has incorporated people from many ethnic groups. The indigenous people play a major role in constituting the rich cultural heritage and strength of Indian society. The state of Odisha has a thick tribal population which constitutes 22.85% of ST population and 17.13% of SC population.

These people reside in the hills and forest and are farmers, basket weavers, cattle breeders, fishermen, and hunters. Some of the tribes of Odisha are Santal, Kolha, Munda, Bond, Soara.

II) Present status of English language and English language skills

Academic language is a perfect amalgamation of many skills. The knowledge of vocabulary constitutes both depth and breadth. The bottom part includes gaining knowledge of more

than one meaning of many words. It also involves the use of more than one word for the same or related concepts. It covers a vast area of knowing the difference between written and spoken vocabulary, understanding, interpreting complex sentence structures, syntax and semantics.

In a study conducted, it came to the forefront that the language and literary skills of adolescents must be honed, and content area learning or domain knowledge is needed. Instruction should be imparted in academic language which is required to comprehend the text. The mode of instruction should be clearly stated directly so that the processes of comprehending challenging texts become accessible for the adolescents. As per (Nandwana and Joshi,2010) adolescents need to be treated with love, emotions and humane touch is essential. Emotional intelligence should be used to handle the situation. The current circumstances and conditions of the tribal students are very deplorable. 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)

In a study conducted it was seen that cognitive, social, psychological and linguistic problems influence the education of tribes. More stress should be laid on the writing skills in the English Language so that they can communicate effectively. Writing skills should enjoy prior importance at high school level because learning starts from that level. This study foresees that soon writing will become the primary medium of

communication with the advent of technology. (Koppolu, 2015).

The use of vocabulary and grammar are essential to support other skills. Writing can be used to come closer to technology. Writing desires sound knowledge of topics, designing, producing and crafting texts, motivating participants to write and guiding their thoughts through writing techniques and strategies to achieve the desired purpose. It is a process of attaching sense and meaning, but grammar and vocabulary knowledge lacks and is a common problem. (Thanh Huy, 2015).

As per (Tayade,2011), stress should be laid on giving assignments related to CV, letter writing and reports.

The above literature reflects on the fact that writing skills are the important and right amount of emphasis should be given to business writing skills like E-mails, CV, Reports and Letters. If it does not enjoy desired attention then employability, sustenance and retention will become a major problem and if this problem continues then social inclusion will become a far cry.

Mother tongue influence, low level of grammar competence, fear for the language, improper use of idioms and proverbs have been seen as common problems in the process of language learning, and they are not only weak in speaking skills but also possess a poor level of writing skill competency.(Mishra,2014)

III) Survey

Taking a study of the learning skills among the adolescent tribal learners, the following were the responses of fifty students

Table.1. Responses to Learning Skills

I love English as a subject			
63	33	4	
I am active in asking doubts and answering questions			
37	40	23	
I look forward to participating in extra-curricular activities in the college			
36	42	22	
I do share my academic and non academic problems with my teachers			
41	43	16	

I am not afraid to write and I feel good to offer others to read

15 58 27

I feel happy when my mistakes are identified

22 55 23

I read all academic information and notices in the right light

17 61 22

As far I perceive teachers are addressing my problems and motivating me

12 40 38

I am happy to be a member of different literary societies of the college

27 63 10

I have received appreciation for drafting letters, e-mails, CV s, reports and power point presentations

17 41 42

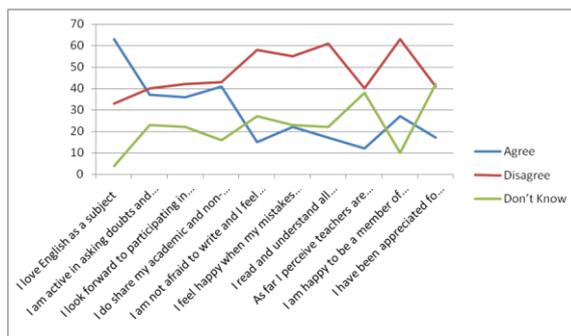


Figure.1. Graphical representation of responses to Learning Skills

IV) Analysis

From the above responses, it is observed that there is mixed feeling for the subject. They love the subject but do live with the phobia. The learners are conscious of participating in extra-curricular activities of the college. It is also seen that the students hesitate in sharing their academic and non-academic problems with teachers. A large number of learners are afraid of feedback and are not happy when their mistakes are corrected. Another significant finding was that many students find difficulty in interpreting and understanding academic information and notices. Learners also feel that their problems are not being addressed and hence run short of motivation. Students are not confident enough to be members of different literary societies and lack competency in drafting letters, CVs, e-mails, reports and power point presentations.

V) Writing Competency Assessment

In a class assignment, the students were asked to answer the following questions in English. Given below are few responses out of fifty respondents

Case 1 – What did you have for lunch?

- 1) I eat a chicken and rice
- 2) I eaten
- 3) I eat my lunch with rice and muttons

Case 2 – How did you spend your summer vacation?

- 1) Village I went
- 2) I go grandfather and grandmother house
- 3) I saw TV only

Case 3 – They were shown the image of a children's park and asked to describe

- 1) I saw child play on the swing and mother enjoying with friends
- 2) Park is butiful and I like parking.
- 3) Park near me I go play 4 o clock always

VI) Error Analysis of Writing Competency

From the selected responses we can summarise that

- I. The errors identified are collective in nature.
- II. Inappropriate use of tenses, verbs, prepositions, plural formation and conjunctions have been identified.
- III. Problem has been established in the construction of sentence structure.
- IV. The problem has been observed in failing to choose the right word for the right expression.
- V. Spelling errors have been identified.
- VI. There exists a gap in sense and meaning in the writings.
- VII. Levels of drafting letters, CVs, reports and power point presentations are weak. Learners have difficulty is getting a flavour of the composing processes, formats and customised writing techniques.

From the above analysis we can conclude that all the four skills (LSRW) are weak but in the context of writing skills, the flaws are very evident as it is a printed medium of communication. The condition is very poor and needs attention.

VII) Reasons for drawback in the English subject

- I. Closed mindset related to the subject and treated as a foreign language.
- II. Lack of motivation, exposure to the language.
- III. Lack of use of the language in real life.
- IV. Failure on the part of the learner to catch the difference in the structure of home language and English.
- V. The rough transition from L1 to L2 to L3.
- VI. Fear of the language.
- VII. Cognitive and genetic problems.
- VIII. The pace of learning varies from learner to learner.
- IX. Unavailability of trained teachers and failure on the part of teachers to brief on the learning objectives.
- X. Mother tongue influence pulls back the learner in the journey of learning.
- XI. Weak grammatical base.

VIII) Suggestions for improvement

- I. Initiatives should be taken to dispel the fear of the language.
- II. Steps should be taken to boost the level of motivation of the learners.
- III. Recruitment of trained teachers.
- IV. Innovative and interactive teaching pedagogy.
- V. Remedial measures to be taken for slow learners.
- VI. Lectures should accompany the practical relevance and real-life use of what is being taught.
- VII. Grammar should be taught in a logical manner and the dos and don'ts should be properly justified and explained.
- VIII. Meanings of different words should be explained involving the actual use of those words in sentences.
- IX. Focus should be laid on bi-lingual classroom and should be student-centric.
- X. Societal bilingualism and communication should enjoy the driver's seat and not language.

- XI. Activities and workshops on LSRW skills should be taken up to increase employability.
- XII. The entire classroom activity should be a mix of teaching, training and development.
- XIII. Teachers should instill love for the subject in the hearts of the learners.
- XIV. Parents of the tribal learners should be briefed and oriented so that there is change in the environment at home. This will infuse holistic education and care.

Conclusion

Mastering a skill demands repeated practice. It is then this skill will pave way for excellence. Tribal community is driven by agrarian lifestyle and has hence has been away from the mainstream. They have their set of mental blocks and come with a very slow pace of learning. The transition is the toughest part in the case of tribal language learning. English is third language for them. First is their native tribal language, the second being the language of the State which is Odia and English is the third language and similarly this gives birth to three different contexts – home, society and school. There arises gap in communication because hurdle lies in switching language depending upon the context in which the interaction is going on. The state of Odisha has own language problems to offer, and the paper strives to offer solutions to the problems of employability arising due to linguistic problems. Concerned authorities, people and Government may give it a thought on this and frame policies which can elevate the standards of living of the indigenous people.

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