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Reading Ability and Learning Achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu Speaking Secondary School Students

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Abstract : *The objectives of the present study were: (i) to find out the difference in reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students; (ii) to study the relationship between reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit of odia and Telugu speaking secondary students; and (iii) to explore the stakeholders recommendations on improving reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit. A sample of 40 Odia speaking students whose mothertongue is Odia; and 40 Telugu speaking students whose mother tongue is Telugu, but first language is Odia, were selected from two schools of Paralakhemundi Town, Gajapati district of Odisha. Two headmasters and two subject teachers of the schools included in sample of the study. The findings of the study revealed that Odia speaking secondary school students' reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit were significantly higher than Telugu speaking secondary school students. Reading ability in Sanskrit has high positive correlation with learning achievement in Sanskrit in case of Odia speaking students(r=.85), where as there was low positive correlation in case of Telugu speaking students (r=.20). The stakeholders reported that lack of practice in pronunciation in class, absence of homework and inadequate home support may responsible for poor performances of Telugu speaking students. They have emphasized that Sanskrit teachers should regularly conduct loud reading in class, give homework, conduct monthly exam, listen patiently and try to understand the exact problems of students etc.*

Keywords: *Reading ability, Learning achievement*

Background of the Study

The deteriorating performance of Telugu speaking students at secondary level in third language i.e. Sanskrit in Paralakhemundi Town, Gajapati district of Odisha for the last many years has become a major challenge to secondary education of the district. Gajapati district of Odisha is situated in the

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border of Andhra Pradesh. Many Telugu speaking peoples have been staying in Paralakhemundi Town, Gajapati district and their students are communicating with their family and community members in their mother tongue i.e. Telugu. But their official first language in school is Odia as residing Odisha. The Telugu speaking students who opts Sanskrit as their third language at secondary level could not perform at par with their Odia counterparts. The district education officials namely DEOs, AEOs and BRCs attributed this problem due to students' poor listening comprehension in Sanskrit as Sanskrit language teachers are teaching with odia accent and translation method. Further these students were not getting exposure to express their mother tongue i.e. Telugu in written work or any other official communication. In this trajectory, they might have problem in listening comprehension which resulted poor reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit. Research findings found that listening comprehension is the foundation for reading comprehension (Konold, Juel, McKinnon, & Deffes, 2003 as cited in Gillum, 2006). As morphology, phonetics and analytical skills of language starts from the oral/spoken language. The research study undertaken by NICHD (as cited in Lomas , 2005) found that oral language is important not just for building code related skills, but also for making an independent contribution to reading competence. Consequently, found that broad oral language skills were more predictive of preschool coding skills and reading achievement in 1st and 3rd grade than vocabulary skills. The poor listening comprehension of Telugu speaking students in Sanskrit language may be due to Odia accent of Sanskrit teachers. As noted by (Vellutino 1979 cited in Gillum), 'deficiencies in any aspect of linguistic functioning will presumably result in difficulty reading' (p. 1040). as well as inability to identify Sanskrit component both in Telugu . Further, Telugu language borrowed several features of Sanskrit that have subsequently been lost in Sanskrit's daughter languages such as Hindi, Bengali and Odia etc especially in the pronunciation of some vowels and consonants. Telugu savant C.P Brown states in page 35 of his book 'A Grammar of the Telugu language' modern Telugu vocabulary can be said to constitute a diglossia, because the formal, standardized version of the language, heavily influenced by Sanskrit, is taught in schools and used by the government and Hindu religious institutions. However, everyday Telugu varies depending upon region and social status. The vocabulary of Telugu, especially in Telangana region, has a trove of Persian-Arabic borrowings, which have been modified to fit Telugu phonology. This was due to centuries of Muslim rule in these regions, such as the erstwhile kingdoms of Golconda and Hyderabad. No one doubts that a child's reading competence is fundamental for academic success. Children who read proficiently read more, thus acquiring more knowledge in a variety of domains as found in the research study undertaken by (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Echols, West, Stanovich, & Zehr, 1996; Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger, 1995 as cited in Lomas, 2005). Thus, learning achievement in any language depends on listening and reading comprehension as well as exposure of context for application.

Significance of Study

The research trends in Language education reveals that a number of research studies have been conducted particularly in Hindi and English languages than any other Indian languages. Most of the work deals with critical study of textbooks in different standards, standardization of reading achievement tests, teaching of poetry, orthography, and spelling, vocabulary study. There is dearth of research studies in Sanskrit language in India. As each Indian language has a component of Sanskrit within it. If the similarities are exploited, then Sanskrit could form part of mother-tongue teaching at the school stage. If Sanskrit is made a compulsory component of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Indian Philosophy, Indian Archaeology, Indian Epigraphy and Numismatics and Indian Polity, then there would be greater motivation for studying Sanskrit at the school stage either as part of mother-tongue

study or as an optional subject. (Pattnayak). Therefore, the performance of students in Sanskrit language is bare necessary to understand their reach cultural heritage. The overall observation of investigator from school record reveals that performance of Telugu speaking students in Sanskrit language in Paralakhemundi Town of Gajapati district is not at par with their Odia counterparts. Further, almost completely neglected in the research literature is the impact of the Sanskrit teachers' accent in reading ability and learning achievement of students. Thus, the investigator is interested to know whether any significant difference exist in reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking students at secondary level? Subsequently, do the reading ability in Sanskrit bears any positive relationship with learning achievement in Sanskrit? What are recommendations of HMs, teachers and students to improve the performance in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking students? Thus present piece of research has made an humble attempt to answer the above mentioned questions.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To find out the difference in reading ability in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students.

2. To find out the difference in learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students.

3. To study the relationship between reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit of odia speaking secondary students.

4. To study the relationship between reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking secondary students.

5. To explore the stakeholders recommendations on improving reading ability and learning achievement of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary students.

Hypotheses of the Study

H_{01} Mean reading ability score of Sanskrit of Odia speaking secondary school students does not differ significantly from that of their Telugu speaking counterparts.

H_{02} Mean learning achievement score in Sanskrit of Odia speaking secondary school students does not differ significantly from that of their Telugu speaking counterparts.

H_{03} There is no significant relationship between mean reading ability scores and mean learning achievement scores of Sanskrit and Odia speaking secondary school students.

H_{04} There is no significant relationship between mean reading ability scores and mean learning achievement scores of Sanskrit and Telugu speaking secondary school students.

Methodology of Study

Design

Keeping in view the requirements of the present study, the investigator used descriptive survey method to assess the present status of reading ability and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students.

Population and Sample

In the present study, all the secondary school students of Gajapati district constitute the population of the study. The investigator has selected two schools purposively where both Telugu and Odia speaking students were studying. Then the investigator selected 20 Odia speaking students and 20 Telugu speaking

students randomly and the H.Ms and Subject Teachers of concerned schools were included in the sample. In this way, the total sample of the study consisted 80 students (40 Odia and 40 Telugu), two HMs and two Sanskrit language teachers.

Tools Used

The following tools were used for the collection of data:

i. *Reading Ability Test for Students:* The investigator selected three paragraphs of the topic" Utkalagauravam" from Class- IX Sanskrit text book. The investigator has identified 20 words from these three paragraphs having different types of Sanskrit words having varieties of pronunciation, matras, and yuktakshyaras. These words were designated to identify errors in reading. Each word carries 1 mark for correct pronunciation, matras and yuktakhyaras. The reading ability test in Sanskrit consist 20 marks.

ii. *Learning Achievement Test for Students:* The previous year terminal examination marks in Sanskrit have been taken by the investigator as the learning achievement in Sanskrit of both Odia and Telugu speaking secondary students.

iii. *Opinionnaire Schedules for the Stakeholders:* The investigator has developed three opinionnaire schedules for the stakeholders namely H.Ms, subject teacher, and students.

All the above tools were developed by the investigator.

Procedure of Data Collection

In order to study the reading ability in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students, the investigator administered the reading ability test on Odia and Telugu speaking students of two secondary schools of Gajapati district of Odisha. The previous year terminal examination marks in Sanskrit of the concerned students have been collected from the school record. Opinion of the stakeholders i.e. H.Ms, Sanskrit teachers and students about the problems of Telugu speaking secondary students in Sanskrit language were personally collected by the investigator.

Statistical Techniques Used

After collection of relevant information for the present study, the investigator analyzed and interpreted the data by applying 't' test, correlation and percentage analysis and thick description of the opinions of stakeholders.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Reading Ability in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu Speaking Secondary School Students

Mean score of reading ability in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students has been computed and presented in the Table-1.

Table-1 Mean, S.D and 't' Value of Reading Ability Score in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu Speaking Student

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	df	't' Value	Remarks
Odia speaking students	40	13.77	4.75			Significant
Telugu speaking students	40	9.47	5.01	78	4.22	

* Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The table-1 revealed that the mean score of reading ability in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking students were 13.77 and 9.47 respectively. Similarly, the S.D of reading ability score in Sanskrit Odia and Telugu speaking students were 4.75 and 5.01 respectively. The obtained 't' value is 4.22 with the degrees of freedom 78 which was greater than the table value 2.64 at 0.01 level. So the null hypothesis 'Mean reading ability score of Sanskrit of Odia speaking secondary school students does not differ significantly from that of their Telugu speaking counterparts' was rejected. Hence, it was concluded that the reading ability score of Sanskrit of Odia speaking students was higher than the Telugu speaking students. The findings clearly indicated that Telugu speaking students may have problems with Odia accent of Sanskrit teacher. This is supported by the research studies undertaken by Gupta (1983) & Mishra (1992) who found that hearing and understanding, pronunciation, were found in determining the Sanskrit reading ability of students. Similarly Agrawal (1981) in his reported that personal and cognitive factors were more meaningful in the context of reading ability scores than the noncognitive factors considered in the study.

Learning Achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu Speaking Students

Mean score of learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking secondary school students has been computed and presented in the Table-2.

Table-2 Mean, S.D and 't' Value of Learning Achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu Speaking Student

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	df	't' Value	Remarks
Odia speaking students	40	59.75	18.87			
Telugu speaking students	40	32.025	16.75	78	6.95	Significant

* Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The table-2 revealed that the mean score in learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia and Telugu speaking student were 59.75 and 32.025 respectively and the standard deviation in learning achievement of Odia and Telugu speaking student were18.87 and 16.75 respectively. The obtained 't'value was 6.95 with the degrees of freedom 78, which was greater than the table value 2.64 at 0.01 level. Thus, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis' Mean learning achievement score in Sanskrit of Odia speaking secondary school students does not differ significantly from that of their Telugu speaking counterparts' was rejected. The finding of the study has been supported by research studies conducted by Gaur (1980) & Mishra (1992) who found that the speed of reading, comprehension and vocabulary affected the students' marks in Hindi language as well as aggregate achievement. However contradictory findings found in the research studies conducted by Chinnappa (1978) Basavayya (1980) who found that bilingual students' performances in third language (Hindi/Sanskrit) were better than the mono-lingual.

Relationship between Reading Ability in Sanskrit and Learning Achievement in Sanskrit of Odia Speaking Secondary School Students

In order to know whether there is any correlation exist between reading ability in Sanskrit and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Odia speaking students, the Pearson's 'r' has been computed. The coefficient of correlation 'r' between reading ability in Sanskrit and learning achievement in Sanskrit was 0.85.with the degrees of freedom 38 and the table value at 0.05 level and at 0.01 level are 0.324, 0.418 respectively. So the null hypothesis i.e. "There is no significant relationship between mean reading ability scores

and mean learning achievement scores of Sanskrit and Odia speaking secondary school students" is rejected. Thus, it can be interpreted that the Odia speaking students whose reading ability in Sanskrit is high their learning achievement in Sanskrit is also high. The finding concludes that Odia speaking students did not have any problem in vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and reading comprehension in Sanskrit due to Odia accent of Sanskrit teachers. As result of which, their learning achievement in Sanskrit high. The finding is in confirmation with research study conducted by Mishra (1992) who found that better grade achievement, higher marks in Sanskrit, efficiency in Sanskrit pronunciation were found to be influencing in determining the Sanskrit reading ability of students.

In order to know whether there is any positive correlation exist between reading ability in Sanskrit and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking students, the Pearson's 'r' has been computed. The coefficient of correlation between reading ability in Sanskrit and learning achievement in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking student was 0.20 with df 38, the table value at 0.05 level of significance is 0.324 and at 0.01 level of significance is 0.418. So the null hypothesis i.e. "There is no significant relationship between mean reading ability scores and mean learning achievement scores of Sanskrit and Telugu speaking secondary school students" is retained. On the other hand coefficient of correlation 'r' is 0.20 which indicates a low positive correlations between reading ability in Sanskrit and learning achievement of Sanskrit of Telugu speaking student and. Thus, it can be interpreted that reading ability is not one of the single reasons which influence learning achievement in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking secondary students. They might have the problem of lack of interest, parental support and lack motivation in Sanskrit language.

Stakeholders Recommendations

Headmaster

The Head Masters of the two schools were of the opinion that, Sanskrit language teachers were not aware of appropriate methods and not clear about the four-fold objectives of teaching Sanskrit. They did not use teaching aids and other materials. They did not give assignments, evaluate students' progress. Inservice training facilities for the teachers were inadequate. Since most Sanskrit teachers were untrained, they were not able to create students' interest in the subject either through their teaching or other activities in schools. Lack of practice in pronunciation in class, absence of homework and inadequate home support also resulted in poor performance. About the steps should be taken by the subject teacher for the improvement of reading skill in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking student, the HM were informed that the subject teacher should regularly conduct loud reading in class, give homework regularly, conduct monthly exam, listen patiently, try to understand the exact problem and the teacher should write difficult word of Sanskrit on black board and also drill them properly in case of Telugu speaking students.

Subject Teachers

The subject teacher of the two schools are of the opinion regarding the difficulties in Sanskrit language by Telugu speaking students, as their mother tongue is Telugu they face pronunciation difficulties while reading Matras and Yuktakhyaras. They could not follow pronunciation of difficult words of the teachers because of Odia accent in Sanskrit teaching. While asking about means for the improvement of reading ability in Sanskrit of Telugu speaking students, the subject teacher suggest regular practice by the students in home and special in-service training programme by linguistic expert is required for them to handle the difficulties of Telugu speaking students.

Students

A large majority (80 %) of the Telugu speaking students stated that they could not understand the vocabulary and narration of the teachers many a times as well as difficulties in reading Sanskrit Matras, Yuktakhyaras and conjunction words while 20% students reported that they have difficulties in pronunciation and identification of alphabets. While probing about the type help they needed. Cent per cent of the students stated that they want regular extra classes in small groups to clarify their personal doubts and demand about the access of work or practice book for more drill and practice at home. About 60 % of the Telugu spoken students were in favour of appointment of Telugu speaking Sanskrit teacher.

Implications of the Study

The result of present study reveals that there is difference in reading ability and learning achievement between Odia and Telugu speaking students of Paralakhemundi Town. The Odia students possess better reading ability and learning achievement. But the Telugu speaking student posses lack of correct pronunciation ability, fluency in reading and committed more mistakes while reading matras and yuktakhyaras.

1. So the teacher should develop strategies for correct reading ability in Sanskrit. Proper care should be taken to correct the pronunciation of 'matras' and 'yuktakhyaras'. Specific instructional programme should need to be undertaken. So that students develop the insight into the rules and ways in which Sanskrit words are spelt.

2. Since pronunciation drill and reading practice alone do not help in remedying deficient spelling ability, these should always be accompanied by word-study and writing practice.

3. Use of the teaching-learning strategies which involved oral-aural-visual and motor experience of the word was most suitable for improving the spelling ability of students.

At the same time Telugu speaking Sanskrit teacher need to be appointed in the school where Telugu speaking students are studying as well as continuous in-service teacher training by expert resource persons need to organized on innovative teaching strategies.

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