

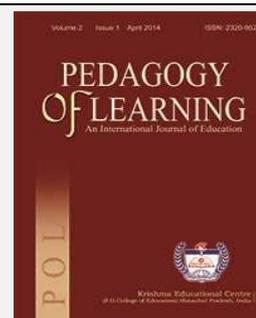
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## **Analysis of English Language Learning Outcome among Tribal Students of Class VIII of Government Schools of Gumla District, Jharkhand**

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### **Abstract**

Learning English as the second language raises its own issues in a multicultural society like India due to the diversity of students' socio-cultural background. Considering India as a diverse country with single largest tribal population in the world having specific ethnic uniqueness, attaining expected curricular outcome in English by tribal children also poses greater challenge. In this context, the paper tries to examine learning outcome in English by tribal children of Jharkhand through the lens of learning outcome framework developed by NCERT at elementary level. A descriptive survey was adopted using a qualitative approach to study the learning outcome in English and the problems face by tribal children in learning English with the help of learning outcome test, classroom observation, FGD with students and by interviewing English teachers. 60 students of VIII standard from six government schools of Gumla district and their English teachers had participated in this study. It is found that students have difficulty in understanding and comprehending the language, its grammar and its usage. They read without proper stress and intonation and frame grammatically incorrect sentences without proper use of punctuations and with spelling

errors. The major factors affecting the ELL of tribal students were found to be lack of foundational knowledge of English, dominance of mother tongue or local language in English class, use of traditional teaching-learning methods, lack of resources and facilities in school and home, irregularity of students and lack of parental support and the family. Language learning outcome of tribal learners is found to be inadequate and appropriate pedagogical practices have to be adopted to ensure better quality learning. Efforts from all the stake holders are to be geared towards bridging the gap in learning outcomes of tribal learners.

**Keywords:** English Language Learning, Learning Outcome, Tribal Education.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

English is recognized as a language of globalization and modernization. It is one of the languages used for communication and exchanging our views and thoughts with the whole world. In a culturally diverse and multilingual country like India, English acts as a medium to bridge the linguistic gap that persists among the people and their communities. Its importance is reflected in The National Focus Group Position Paper on Teaching of English (2005) which states, “English is in India today a symbol of people’s aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life”. English language learning has been emphasized in the present school curriculum as it prepares the individuals to face the global scenario. This has made many states to grant early introduction of English in state schools to meet the demands of people (Dutta & Bala, 2012). As per National Curriculum Framework- 2005, at the initial stages, “English may be one of the languages for learning activities that create the child’s awareness of the world”. However, the challenge of providing quality learning experience to children especially who belong to scheduled tribe population, one of the most marginalized and underprivileged group in India residing in the rural pockets of the country is alarming. The Scheduled Tribe population constitutes the single largest tribal population in India with a population of more than 10.2 crores (Census of India, 2011). Proficiency in English will not only help the tribal students to pursue higher education but also act as a means for upward social mobility. This in turn would help them face new challenges and sustain their lives in this competitive world.

### **English Language Education of Tribal Learners**

India has one of the single largest tribal populations in the world. The Scheduled Tribe population is primarily rural as majority of them reside in villages. Tribal children are trapped in an intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy and deprivation due to their primitive (shy) nature and thus remain isolated from the mainstream of life and other strata of the society (Roy, 2012). The education of the tribal children has been neglected due to lack of awareness and ignorance among the tribal population. The economic and social deprivation of the tribes is reflected in their educational backwardness. In spite of various initiatives taken by government to overcome educational backwardness of tribal groups, a vast majority of tribal population in India remains outside the education system (Varghese & Nagaraj, 2013). Education helps in the overall development of individuals and creates a sense of awareness leading to a better comprehension of their social, political and cultural environment. However, teaching English as a second language in tribal areas is a great challenge due to the diversity of the students’ socio-cultural background, motivation and

interests, learning styles, differing personalities and behaviour patterns, the teachers' attitude and traditional teaching learning practices (Gautam, 2003). The students acquire their mother tongue in a natural context but in the case of second language acquisition the natural context is not found in the surroundings of the students. Hence, the English as a second language learning becomes more challenging for the students as well as the teachers. The dominance of tribal children's mother tongue hinders the process of new language acquisition. Conventionally, teachers of English teach the foreign language either by explaining the meaning or by translating the text in English into the regional language. So their confidence level decreases while communicating using English (Sindkhedkar, 2012). Also, most of them are first generation learners of English, so the only place they get access to the learning of English language is at their schools. The heavy curriculum, non-availability of skilled teachers and resources contribute to their low level of achievement. It was found that the major problems that the tribal children face were the problem of easy access to school, teacher absenteeism, heavy syllabus, lack of awareness about government aid etc (Anbuselvi & Leeson, 2017). The inappropriate syllabus and teaching method of English develops a negative attitude and fear among learners towards English. 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 of education system (Varghese & Nagaraj, 2013). According to Shukla (1994), the achievements of tribal students are lower than that of non-tribal students in primary levels. The tribal learners are not motivated well in school and have adjustment problems with school curriculum and that aggregates the challenges of providing a motivating environment to learn English.

### **English Language Learning Outcome at Upper Primary Stage**

NCERT has developed learning outcome framework at elementary stage that aims to enhance the quality of learning in schools, by enabling teachers to ascertain learning skills more accurately and take corrective steps without delay and provide effective learning opportunities to all students including children with special needs. Learning Outcomes as proposed by NCERT has come up with the following curricular expectations for students of English at the upper primary stage:

- Acquire the ability to listen and respond orally and in writing/Lip reads where necessary.
- Speak about self, simple experiences; report events to peers accurately and appropriately make connections and draw inferences.
- Recite poems, dialogues; speak and write language chunks (phrases, sentences from stories, plays, speeches, etc.)
- Understand the central idea and locate details in the text (familiar and unfamiliar).
- Use his/her critical/thinking faculty to read between the lines and go beyond the text.
- Comprehend and uses the form and functions of grammar in context.

- Write coherently and with a sense of audience (formal and informal).
- Write simple messages, invitations, short paragraphs, letter (formal and informal), applications, personal diary, dialogue from story and story from a dialogue/conversation in English and in Braille.
- Engage in creative writing e.g. composition of poems, jokes, short stories, etc.
- Develop sensitivity towards their culture and heritage, aspects of contemporary life, gender, and social inequality.

All of the above curricular expectations are achieved as long term goals and it is expected that the students gain competency in the language over a given period of time. Learning outcomes in English as like other subjects, expected from each class are also identified by NCERT and corresponding pedagogical processes are suggested so that teachers can take a well informed decision to create better learning environment.

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

It is generally seen that the tribes are socially and economically marginalized in the society due to their primitiveness. Several efforts are being taken by the government to bring them into the mainstream but still a large population of tribals in India still remains outside the educational system. Language teaching task is difficult among tribal students due to their socio cultural diversity with specific mother tongue which is different from the regional language, motivation and their interests in learning. Many studies have been conducted by researchers on issues and challenges in tribal education (Sahu, 2014; Kumar, 2008; John and Singh, 2014; Pradhan, 2015 and Gautam, 2003). A few of the researches focused specifically on English language learning among tribal students (Kennedy & Anbazhagan, 2015; Chauhan 2012 and Anil, 2014). However, it is found that not much has been researched on the English language learning of the tribal students residing in the tribal belts of Jharkhand. Especially it became more significant in the context that it is expected from students to fulfil certain stage specific curricular requirements in English language learning in the form of learning outcome. In this context, the paper tries to examine learning outcome in English among tribal students of class VIII of government schools of Gumla District of Jharkhand. In the present study, students belonging to tribal communities such as Oraon, Munda, Kharia and Ho are taken into consideration.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To analyse English language learning outcome of tribal students of class VIII of Gumla district
2. To identify the problems in learning English as a second language among tribal students of class VIII of Gumla district

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. Whether the tribal students of class VIII possess expected learning outcome in English?
2. What are the problems faced by tribal students in learning English as a second language?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method adopted for this study was descriptive survey and a qualitative research approach was followed to explore the challenges of English language learning among tribal students of Gumla district, Jharkhand.

### ***Population***

The population of the study is class VIII standard students belonging to tribal community studying in Government schools of Gumla district, Jharkhand.

### ***Sample***

6 co-educational government schools from one of the tribal dominated blocks (Raidih) in Gumla district, Jharkhand were randomly selected. 10 students from VIII standard of those schools were also selected randomly from each school for the study. English teacher of the schools were also the participants of the study. So, a total of 60 students and 6 teachers of class VIII of 6 schools were considered as sample for the study.

### ***Tools and Techniques***

In order to collect relevant data for the present study, English Learning outcome tests for VIII standard students, Observation of English classroom process, Interview with the teachers and Focus Group Discussion with students were developed and employed. Content validation was done by experts in English language learning including English teachers at school level.

## **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING OUTCOME AMONG TRIBAL STUDENTS OF CLASS VIII**

A detailed analysis of data obtained through learning outcome tests based on the eight learning outcomes in English as identified in NCERT document at elementary stage and data based on class observation is presented below.

### ***Gives appropriate response to English words and sentences spoken/used in class/school.***

While observing the class, it is found that students in all the schools greeted their teachers and took their seats on being instructed by the teacher to do so. On being asked by the teacher to take out their text books, they took out their text books. It was felt that since greeting is a regular and common practice in schools so the students are conditioned to give appropriate response. When the teacher instructed them to write the difficult words and

phrases on their notebooks, the first benchers had attentively written but many students especially who were sitting at the back were staring at the teacher or the blackboard. It was appeared that those students couldn't follow the instruction given by the teacher. When the teacher repeated the same in Hindi, they followed it. It is observed that the students had difficulty in comprehending *specific instructions*, when it was given only in English.

***Engages in conversation about self, using simple sentences***

To study this dimension, students were asked to introduce themselves in front of others in English. The students fluently started by telling their names, the class they study in and the name of the school and the village they live in. But when asked further about their hobbies, they were hesitant to speak. Some of them spoke in Hindi and some didn't speak at all. They used phrases such as "My hobby are playing football", "I want to go army", "I want to be police officer" etc. Some of them required assistance to speak in English. It is observed that students find it difficult to construct correct sentences and many of them used grammatically incorrect sentences with errors in the usage of tense, verb and articles.

***Uses formulaic/polite expressions to communicate such as 'May I borrow your book?', 'I would like to differ' etc.***

The researcher asked the students 3 questions - "How will you ask for a book from me?" "What will you say to apologize to someone?" "What will you say to the person who gives you a gift?" No student respond to the first question as they had difficulty in understanding the meaning of the word "*borrow*". When they were explained the word meaning, they answered the second and third one in a single word "*sorry*" and "*thank you*" and not as a complete sentence. So it might be inferred that the students know some of the common words or phrases but lack the knowledge of specific words and find it difficult to construct sentences or questions.

***Narrates stories (real or imaginary) and real life experiences in English.***

The students were asked to narrate their daily life experiences to study this dimension. Some of the students replied in full sentences. Some used short words and phrases. The students got stuck in the narration and used Hindi to express themselves. Some asked for help regarding the translation of certain Hindi words and phrases into English. The responses of the students were "I wake up 5 in the morning.", "I walk", "after that I take bath and eat breakfast", "after that I go to school", "I eat lunch", "I study", "I help parents in home", "I play", "I eat dinner", "I went tuition". It is observed that the students face difficulty in the correct use of prepositions, verb, tense etc. due to their lack of knowledge and practice in the use of English language. Connecting different sentences to make it more meaningful was found difficult for most of the students.

***Reads textual/non-textual materials in English with comprehension.***

The students were given a poem "*The Duck and the Kangaroo by Edward Lear*" to read aloud. One student wasn't able to read at all. Some students read the poem but without the use of proper stress and intonation. Some had difficulty on pronouncing certain words

like “gracious”, “nasty”, *dee and the Jelly Bo Lee*”, “kangaroo” etc. When asked them about the meaning of the poem, it was found that they were unable to comprehend it. The students were able to read but with difficulty in pronouncing unfamiliar words.

***Identifies details, characters, main idea and sequence of ideas and events***

The students were asked to write answers to the questions given from the aforesaid poem. The students after being explained the poem in Hindi, attempted to write the answers. The questions were framed such that the students had to identify the details, main characters, central idea and sequencing of events as stated in the poem.

The answers of the students were assessed and scored. The mean (M) and standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) was found out to be 7.38 and 2.19 respectively. It was found that only 2% of the students had obtained marks above 9.57 ( $M+\sigma$ ), 78% of students had obtained marks between 5.19 and 9.57 and 20% of students had obtained marks below 5.19 ( $M-\sigma$ ). One of the students wrote ‘d’ as ‘b’ and vice-versa. Some students wrote incomplete sentences. Some didn’t answer a few questions. There were errors in students’ writing and comprehension. Errors in punctuations, spellings, syntax, verb, tense, articles were observed in their writing.

***Writes short paragraphs coherently in English with a proper beginning, middle and end with appropriate punctuation marks.***

Picture comprehension was given to the students to write in their own words to assess their writing skills. The mean (M) and standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) was found out to be 2.62 and 1.83 respectively. It is found that that 16% of the students obtained marks above 4.45 ( $M+\sigma$ ), 76% of students obtained marks between 0.79 and 4.45 and 8% of students obtained marks below 0.79 ( $M-\sigma$ ). Some students just wrote in single word what they observed in the picture or the elements in it. Some used Hindi phrases written in English. Some of the students attempted to write full sentences. A few of the students did not attempt the question. Writing errors like mistakes in punctuation, spelling, grammar usage, syntax were observed such as “house and boys **surag** and river girl boy” “**mont everist** is boy is **sustar**”, “**ek gaw tha uske piche** mountains **tha uske niche Ghana** tree **hei. Vilege** very **naise tha**”, “This is **housh**, and tree and grass. This is **vallage** Kothatoli. This is **an** mountain and mother and son **is talk.**”, “house and tree”, “mother and son in picture is see hills, sun, house, **dore**, tree, sit and **bore hogaya**, “this is tree. This is boy. This is village. This is road. This is house. This is door. This is mountain. There is window. There is forest grass.”

It is very clear from the response that students find difficult in expressing the situation in English, though they comprehended the situation given in the picture. Writing skill of students were found to be inadequate and the main errors were found to be in constructing sentences by using appropriate terms, linking words, spelling, grammar, punctuation and in using correct tense in the sentence.

***Refers dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopaedia as reference books for meaning and spelling while reading and writing.***

The students were asked to search the words 'Drift', 'Recollect' and 'Trust' from English-Hindi dictionary and find the meaning. The students were found not very quick in finding the meanings of the words given. It was found that students didn't have proper exposure in using dictionary so they found it difficult to search the corresponding meaning in Hindi from it.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: TO IDENTIFY THE PROBLEMS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AMONG TRIBAL STUDENTS.**

### *Analysis of Classroom Observation*

Total of 6 observations of English class VIII of duration 45 minutes were done. The duration of the classes was 45 minutes each. In 3 classes lessons from the text book were taught whereas in the other 3 classes grammar was taught. All the teachers taught "Noun" in the grammar portion as it seems to be an easy topic by the teachers. 83.33 % of the classes were settled good prior to teaching by the teacher as it was observed that the students followed the instructions of the teacher before the beginning of the class. 50% of the teachers tested the prior knowledge of students in a good way by linking their present knowledge to introduce them to the topic. In 33.33% of classes, students were engaged to create interest towards the topic in a good way. 66.67% of the classrooms used appropriate strategy for the introduction of the topic.

The presentation part was mostly traditional as the teachers were not trained in teaching English and it was somewhat evident in their teaching and content knowledge. A few of them lacked mastery in content knowledge. They used the traditional teaching methods and a very few activities were conducted in class. The only activity that was conducted in class was reading activity for students and question answering. No ICT or extra learning resources like teaching aids were used in the classroom. 83.33% of the concepts were explained with familiar knowledge/ mother tongue in a good way. Excellent use of stress, intonation and pronunciation was observed only in 16.67% classes. There was 16.67% excellent, 50% good and 33.33% very poor engagement of students in reading out aloud. Students were not engaged in any writing activities in any of the observed classes. 16.67% teachers wrote excellently, 66.67% good on blackboard. Only in 16.67% classes, illustration of the concept by relating it to the local context was done in a good way. Creative thinking was encouraged among students in 33.33% in a good way, 50% in average way and 16.67% very poorly. No pair work/group work was encouraged to ensure peer learning.

Assessment of the students' learning was done only in a few classes throughout the class. Some of the teachers failed to summarize at the end of the class. Homeworks to the students were given at the end of the class. Only in 16.67% classes, assessment was found to be excellent. Importance on students' work in assessment was given in a very poor way (83.33%).

Overall analysis indicate that the classroom only focused on the content teaching rather than the use of different strategies and aids to facilitate the learning of the students. The main aim of the teachers was to finish the lessons and not assess and evaluate the

students' learning. Since no teachers were trained to teach English they lack content knowledge of the subject too.

### ***Analysis of Focus Group Discussion with Students***

The responses of the students during FGD was analysed under different categories such as Perception towards English as a subject, Participation in classroom, Perception about teaching of English, Use of resources in addition to text book and Difficulties faced. The students found the subject to be interesting and like listening to stories and poems from their text books. It is clear from student's expression that "*I like English but I cannot understand it wholly*". Students' participation in all the schools was limited to reading from textbooks and answering and asking questions. They were not involved in any group activities or oral or written activities. Students expressed that they are satisfied with the teaching of English by their teachers. All schools' English teachers used translation as a method to teach English. Students expressed that "*Writing activities are not given to us*" which was evident from classroom observation and learning outcome analysis too. No other resources apart from textbooks were used in class for learning English. The students said that there was non-availability of English newspapers and periodicals in schools. Students faced difficulty because of lack of practice and revision.

### ***Analysis of Interview of Teachers***

The responses of English teacher interviews conducted at schools are categorised under categories such as Expectations from tribal students towards ELL, Methods adopted to teach English, Classroom learning environment, Assessment, Challenges face by the teachers and Suggestions. Teachers expected all the tribal students to have a basic competency in English language LSRW skills. Teachers expect that the students to be bold and confident while using English language. Teachers of all the schools use bilingual method and grammar-cum-translation method to teach English. They expressed that no interactive activities are carried in the class due to lack of time. All the teachers had a flexible classroom environment and the students followed the teacher's instructions attentively. Teachers expressed that they encourage the children to speak in English. All the schools assessed their students' performance on the basis of the criteria prescribed by JAC Board, i.e., formative and summative assessments. Teachers expressed that no extra efforts were made by them to assess the learning of their students on a continuous basis. All teachers agreed that the biggest challenge for them was the lack of basic English LSRW skills among the students. Teachers also face problems because the students are irregular to classes so they lose track of what was taught in previous classes. The students also lack practice. The syllabus is vast and teachers face difficulty in completing the lessons due to time constraints. All the teachers face challenges due to the lack of subject specific teacher and also the overburdening due to assignment of other school activities. It is evident from teacher's expression that "*I am trained to teach science but since there is a lack of teaching staffs I have to teach other subjects also including English. Sometimes it's even difficult for me to comprehend some lines or phrases*". In addition, lack of parent and community support also poses as challenge. Teachers suggested for contextual curriculum and digital resources. Teachers suggested for the recruitment of subject specific teachers to make English learning productive.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS**

- i. Teachers teaching English in the schools were found to be trained teachers of other subjects. Their content mastery and pedagogical skills are not adequate.
- ii. Class VIII tribal students do not possess learning outcome as expected. They have problem in speaking and expressing their ideas fluently. They read without proper stress and intonation and write grammatically incorrect sentences without proper use of punctuations and with lots of spelling errors.
- iii. Bilingual and traditional methods are used for teaching English. The English texts are explained to the students by the teachers through its Hindi translation.
- iv. Student - teacher interaction is very less and less emphasis is given on creative thinking of the students.
- v. Less emphasis is given in engaging students in writing and speaking activities.
- vi. No learning resources other than prescribed textbooks such as ICT resources, English newspapers, magazines or periodicals are neither used in English class nor available in the area.
- vii. The major factors affecting the ELL of tribal students were found to be lack of foundational knowledge of English, dominance of mother tongue or local language in English class, use of traditional teaching-learning methods, lack of resources and facilities in school and home, irregularity of students and lack of parental support and the family.

## **DISCUSSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION**

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the students are lagging behind in basic competency of English language. As a result, they have a difficulty in understanding and comprehending the language, its grammar and its usage. They read without proper stress and intonation and wrote grammatically incorrect sentences without proper use of punctuations and a lot of spelling errors. It was observed that the students study in regional language of the state which is different from their mother tongue and find it difficult to learn a new language. This was also observed in the findings of Varghese & Nagaraj (2013) where they stated that the tribal learners face difficulties in learning a foreign language because they have a mother tongue of their own and also the regional language of the state. It was also found in the present study that the teachers teaching English language were not trained for teaching the subject so they lack competency in teaching English. Irregularity on the part of the students to come to school due to engagement in other activities at home led to the hampering of learning. Also, there was a lack of support from the parents and the community. These findings were in consonance with the findings obtained in the study conducted by Pradhan (2015) who identified the above reasons for low level of achievements among tribal students. It was found in the study that the teachers used bilingual method to transact lessons in classroom. Anil (2014) and Chauhan (2012) in their study also supported these findings. The transactional method was limited to chalk and talk method so the interest of the students

was less in learning English. The lack of facilities, non-availability of English books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers and ICT resources make the classroom a monotonous one thus obstructing the creative minds of the students and the finding is in consonance with that of Sahu(2014) and Kumar (2008). Thus, from the present study it may be inferred that the English language learning of class VIII tribal students needs to be enhanced through equipping them with the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing from their initial stages. They should be encouraged to use English as a medium of conversation and should be engaged in activities that facilitate the learning of English. Teachers should pay attention to the occurrence of language errors in order to provide relevant remedies. Further, to enable students to write more accurately, they need more practice. English curriculum could be prepared based on the learning outcome identified for upper primary stage and suggested pedagogical strategies as given in the Learning outcome document could be adopted to facilitate English language learning experience in the class. The text books should be revised and made contextual and should be prepared according to their level. The schools should be equipped with adequate infrastructure, ICT and other learning resources for effective learning of English among the tribal students. Library facilities should be provided in schools with availability of books and periodicals in English. The effort would be fruitful only if government recruit teachers trained in English for teaching English and conduct professional development programmes for teachers from time to time. Also, awareness should be created among the community and parents so that they can send their children to school regularly. Therefore, school administrators should hold regular parent-teacher meetings for better school-community linkage so that lack of attendance of students could be controlled.

## **CONCLUSION**

English language learning in a multilingual country like India is of great importance. The role of English in opening new horizons for the individuals and helping them to stand in the modern world and also to attain upward social mobility cannot be denied. However, the learning of English language poses many problems in the country especially in the case of marginalised sectors of society like tribal learners. Language learning outcome of tribal learners is found to be inadequate and appropriate pedagogical practices have to be adopted to ensure better quality learning. Efforts from all the stake holders are to be geared towards bridging the gap in learning outcomes of tribal learners so that they are motivated to use the language fluently.

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