

SOCIO-LINGUISTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS THE LOW PERFORMANCE OF JATAPU TRIBAL STUDENTS IN USING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT SCHOOL

K. Swathi, Prof. S. Prasanna Sree

Research Scholar, Professor

Department of English, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Abstract : this paper investigates the socio-linguistical, socio-cultural and psychological factors that play an important role in English language learning among Jatapu learners. It also focuses on motivation as key factor in learning English language. Need of English language learning was discussed in the paper.

Index terms : Jatapu learners, English language, Contributing factors

The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or in any other environment. Further, the students' skill in writing in a second language is faced with several challenges. There can be many social, cultural as well as cognitive reasons for this, such as a negative attitude towards the target language, cultural distance between students and target language, and lack of motivation. Students are even ignorant of the basic rules and structural patterns which they are supposed to have learned at the school level. Some EFL teachers may be perplexed by such problems in their writing classes and are unable to find an efficient way to awaken student's imagination and set their minds working. As a result, students feel that using the English language amidst all their doubts and uncertainties is a cumbrous affair.

Besides the reasons mentioned above, another major hurdle that students face is the dearth of time to practice writing in the classroom with the teacher available for clarifying their doubts. Coping with the pressure to complete a set syllabus, teachers hardly have time to allow students to practice writing. Writing is a skill and like any other skill, becoming proficient in it requires plenty of practice. Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) writing is given the least importance, and both teachers and students neglect writing.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

Cognitive factors play a very key role in second language research along with social aspects. There have many different approaches to the sociolinguistic study of second-language acquisition, and indeed, according to Rod Ellis, this plurality has meant that "sociolinguistic SLA is replete with a bewildering set of terms referring to the social aspects of L2 acquisition".

Ellis identifies three types of social structure which can affect the acquisition of second languages: sociolinguistic setting, specific social factors, and situational factors. Sociolinguistic setting refers to the role of the second language in society, such as whether it is spoken by a majority or a minority of the population, whether its use is widespread or restricted to a few functional roles, or whether the society is predominantly bilingual or monolingual. Ellis also includes the distinction of whether the second language is learned in a natural or an educational setting. Specific social factors that can affect second-language acquisition include age, gender, social class, and ethnic identity, with ethnic identity being the one that has received most research attention.

There have been several models developed to explain social effects on language acquisition. Schumann's Acculturation Model proposes that learners' rate of development and ultimate level of language achievement is a function of the "social distance" and the "psychological distance" between learners and the second-language community. In Schumann's model, the social factors are most important, but the degree to which learners are comfortable learning the second language also plays a vital role. Another sociolinguistic model is Gardner's socio-educational model, which was designed to explain classroom language acquisition. The inter-group model proposes "ethnolinguistic vitality" as a key construct for second-language acquisition. Language socialization is an approach with the premise that "linguistic and cultural knowledge are constructed through each other", and saw increased attention after the year 2000. Finally, Norton's theory of social identity is an attempt to codify the relationship between power, identity, and language acquisition.

LANGUAGE LEVEL, LEARNER LEVEL, AND SITUATION LEVEL

Dornyei (1994) in his study defines a framework for motivation that comprises three levels: the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level. These three levels of learning motivation are connected respectively to the social dimension, the personal dimension, and the educational subject matter dimension. He

explains that the language level focuses on motives and orientations related to diverse aspects of language such as how it carries the culture, the milieu where it is spoken, and the potential necessity of proficiency in it. The learner level focuses on a synthesis of effects and cognitions to form fairly static personality traits to increase learner's self-confidence and learning goals. The learning situation level consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational conditions and focuses on the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching methods, and the learning tasks.

TRIBAL EDUCATION IDEOLOGIES vs. REALITY

Tribal constitute a substantial part of India's population. Their long isolated life, poverty, ignorance, superstition, and exploitation by the non-tribal have made them backward in many respects. Recognizing them as the weaker sections of the society, the Constitution has made ample provision for their upliftment. As equality of opportunity, if defined, formally, would work to their disadvantage, the Government has provided compensation mechanism to allow them to catch up with other advanced communities. Education has been accepted as the main instrument for their upward mobility. In the Indian context, the tribal are learning English as a part of their education is ineluctable.

The lack of proficiency in the English language is identified as a major obstacle to the education of the learners of the Schedule Tribes. Inappropriate syllabus and teaching methods develop a negative attitude in learners towards learning. The fear of learning a foreign language is one of the factors to hinder their education because English is a criterion rather than an option at the higher level. It is clear that tribal learners are not motivated well. They have adjustment problems with school curriculum and the teaching of the English language. Though the Government can provide grants and scholarships for the betterment of learners, the responsibility of their educational development is ultimately in the hands of teachers. The Government schools are situated far away from the tribal hamlets and hence, the tribal children have to reside in hostels for education.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITING FOR JATAPU LEARNERS

In Andhra Pradesh, English has long been taught as a second language and it is also the most widely accepted language for communication. For Jatapu, learning English is the biggest problem because it is a third language for them in Andhra Pradesh, after their home language and the language of the society they live in. English for them is only a classroom language and therefore they cannot use English in their day-to-day

communication. In order to realize the role of English in contemporary tribal life it is essential to bridge the gap between the terminal point of learning and the actual situation in which the target language is to be used.

The present-day Jatapu learners are mostly first generation and few are second generation learners of English. Owing to the lack of exposure and lack of resources, the learners in the Tribal Welfare Schools have problems in learning English. Here “learning” of English includes learning to read, write, and speak it in day-to-day life.

Writing in L2 is a complicated process, which may be similar to writing in the first language (L1) in some manners (Myles, 2002). The present paper thus attempts to identify the causes for the low achievement in English language of Jatapu learners, to investigate their present level of language use and finally find a solution to bridge the gaps and discrepancies. Jatapus’ have problems with English because they speak Jatapu language at their home and with the members of their community and with their fellow members in telugu (dominant language) and need to learn a third language English at school. In the process of this bilingual speaking, they find it hard to learn the English language and hence, are neglecting English.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION: IT’S RELEVANCE

Bilingual education is broadly defined as “educational program that involves the use of two languages of instruction at some point in a student’s school career”. It is also defined as “instruction in native language most of the school-day for several years”. Bilingual teaching have changed over time in different countries but the rationale for bilingual education is employed either for educational enrichment or to address the needs of the nation’s multilingual student body. The educational system and families often create bilingual education programs to promote fluency in a second language that enjoys prestige or economic importance.

The report of experts from around the world sponsored by UNESCO declared that the home language (also called the mother tongue or native language) was the best initial medium of instruction because it is a vehicle through “which a child absorbs the cultural environment”. It facilitates literacy development and learning of different subjects and prates understanding between the home and the school. UNESCO recommends using students’ native language for instruction and literacy development for as long as possible acknowledging a number of practical limitations’ inadequacy of vocabulary in technical areas, shortage of trained teachers and educational

materials, multiplicity of languages in a district and popular opposition to use the native language. The national interests are best served by optimum advancement of education, and this in turn can be promoted by the use of the local language as a medium of instruction”.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The significance of the present study is that to identify the importance of writing skills in the academic writing of Jatapu learners at the high school level. As Jatapu learners do not have script, they were not exposed to writing. Their language is orally transmitted for generations. The problem is that Jatapu learners are very poor at writing skills. Therefore, the study examines the problems of teaching writing at the high school level in order to suggest the importance of writing and how to handle the problems in writing. Writing in the English language teaching classroom has two purposes. One is learners may want or need, to learn to write in English. Second is it is a means of consolidating other learning. There are certain skills which are important for writing. Learners need to spell with reasonable accuracy. They need to construct sentences in a way which allows them to be readily understood, and link sentences together.

Three language formula was adopted by the Ministry of Education of the Government of India in consultation with the states. The formula as enunciated in the 1968 National Policy Resolution which provide for the study of “Hindi, English, and modern Indian language (preferably one of the southern languages) in the Hindi speaking states and Hindi, English and the Regional language in the non-Hindi speaking states. It gives due importance to regional languages and attempts to promote national integration and national identity through a national link language that serves as a “Window of the World”. In 1964 an Education Commission was set up to resolve the question of instructional medium. The commission discussed this question and proposed that mother tongue should be used up to the highest level of instruction, but English should be taught both as a subject and as a library language at higher levels. However, this did not happen for Jatapu learners.

Learners also need to become familiar with the different types of languages associated with different types of text. There are huge differences between different types of writings like writing essays and texting friends. Choice of words, grammar, layout, and conventions and so on. Learners need to become familiar with the expectations associated with the types of text. With regard to writing as a means of consolidating other learning,

teachers have to provide some written practice of new language. In addition, teachers need to assist students in developing their writing skills.

Bibliography

Dornyei Z. "Motivation and Motivating in the Foreign Language Classroom". *Modern Language Journal*. 78 (3), 1994, 273-284.

Ellis R. *The Study of second Language Acquisition*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford Press, 2008.

Myles J. "Second language writing and research: the writing process and error analysis in student text". *TESL-EJ*, 6(2), A-1. Retrieved January 31, 2009, from <http://tesl-ej.org/ej22/al.html>.

