

Teaching of Oral Language Skills in English for Tribal Students: A Brief Study

Peter Beligraham Pagolu

*Research Scholar
Osmania University*

Abstract

In a multilingual country like India, contexts such as community, household, and society determine the precedence and preference of each language. Depending on the constraints they face, speakers of a minority language hold diverse preferences and perspectives. Minority language speakers' perspectives influence their attitudes toward both their mother tongue and the dominant language. Consequently, attitude research focuses primarily on interdisciplinary topics such as psychology, social psychology, and ethnography, among others. Fundamentally, language attitude research is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that is bilingual and multilingual. The language of golden opportunities is English. It is essential for anyone who wants to create a good carrier. However, we should keep in mind that there is no easy way to acquire effective communication skills, just as there is no easy way to achieve success in life. The process of enhancing and empowering our English communication skills is continuous and ongoing. Almost every aspect of our daily lives revolves around communication.

The teaching of the English language and communication skills to tribal students is a challenge for many teachers in India. In addition, learning English as a foreign or second language is a difficult task for many students from rural and tribal areas. Effective communication in education is crucial to ensuring that students derive the greatest possible benefit from the teaching-learning process. Generally, it is observed that certain psychological and sociocultural constraints can lead to a variety of communication barriers. According to previous research, these obstacles are more prevalent in disadvantaged and underprivileged communities of a society than in privileged and wealthy communities.

Students from tribes areas make up a significant proportion of this marginalised and disadvantaged group.

The purpose of this study is to examine the language anxieties of tribal youth in Telangana's multilingual society.

Keywords: tribal learners, English language learning, oral communication skills, etc.,

English is an essential language not only in India, but globally as well. English is generally acknowledged as the international connection language or the international language. It is a method of international communication. In the current scientific and technological era, the English language is the only way to gain access to a wealth of information. As Crystal (1997) correctly stated in Eichhorst, K. (2008), a language attains true global significance when its role as a first language, second language, or foreign

language is acknowledged by every country on Earth.

India has a common language that is used to administer the country and serves as the official language of the state. In India, English is utilised in higher education, business, the legal system, news broadcasting, and the media. It is the language that brings the nation together. This is what Kachru refers to as daily English usage that includes at least one other language.

People in India are "naturally and diversely" multilingual, and as a result, a great number of them speak multiple languages. The multilingualism of India is natural, as opposed to the multilingualism of the United States, which is natural but homogenising (Agnihotri, R.L., and A.L. Khanna, 1998, p. 3). According to Southworth (1980), the effects of "Indian bilingualism" may differ significantly from those observed in Western social orders due to the distinctive characteristics of "Indian bilingualism." The Indian social structure does not always encourage bilingualism among individuals. Multilingualism at the grassroots level is a non-competitive form of multilingualism. Language characters are composed of multiple languages and codes that work together to convey the significance of each character. In Western society, the contact between languages is neither a struggle nor an invasion.

The English language has evolved into a lingua franca in today's globalised society. Consequently, proficiency in the language has become a requirement for all individuals. It is past time to learn and master the English language, regardless of one's nationality. When learning a new language, a second language, or a third language, however, difficulties and complications are ever-present. Moreover, it has been addressed predominantly through the socio-political context of the masses. English is a first language for some speakers, a second language for others, and a third language for others, especially tribal communities.

Language Acquisition Process

Language acquisition is not as straightforward as it may seem. To continue learning, a student must advance through a number of phases. As language and culture are inextricably intertwined, learning a language enables students to interact with diverse cultures and make new friends, in addition to enhancing their academic and employment prospects. Those who are naturally inclined to learn new languages will enjoy imitating, listening to,

comprehending, and analysing other people's speech. Thus, learning a new language improves the overall performance of the learners.

Language is essential to human survival. A civilization's language reflects the socioeconomic structure of its society on multiple levels. Individuals' preferences for one language or linguistic variety over another are therefore influenced by a number of sociocultural aspects of the society to which they belong.

Sociolinguistics aims to shed light on the connection between linguistic preference and social behaviour patterns. Sociolinguistics also investigates the social conditions in which individuals live, which includes code switching and code mixing. In addition, it investigates how a person's preference for one language over another impacts their interactions with others and how members of one speech community perceive the languages of other speech communities. To address these issues, it is necessary to investigate the numerous interrelationships between language and society on multiple levels.

Learning a language is a skill that can only be improved by constant practise and exposure to the target language. In India, students learn English as a second language, even though they start learning languages in elementary school. There seems to be a big difference between how children from cities and tribes and rural areas learn English Language. Most of the tribal students in India are learning English for the first time. This means that they are the first-generation English language learners

Tribal students' problems have been around for a long time, so they take their own time to solve. However, if we use good methods and strategies, we can strengthen and speed up the process of learning how to communicate in English.

Anxiety among English language learners

Masoud Hashemi, a professor at Islamic Azad University in Iran, investigated why EFL students at the university were anxious about learning a new language both inside and outside the classroom. Participating in the study were sixty EFL English language students majoring in English literature and English translation. They were chosen at random from a pool of 300 students. It was discovered that language anxiety is strongly associated with the language learning process of students, their self-perception, their performance during communication, and their linguistic abilities, which become a barrier when they use English.

The study examined the relationship between language anxiety and language acquisition. The researcher has determined, among other things, that learners are more anxious in oral communication due to their lack of linguistic skills, resulting in a high anxiety level.

When it comes to communicating in English, the tribal students are fearful and self-conscious. They simply do not comprehend that their verbal ability and conversational fluency in the language depend on their widespread and consistent use in actual interactions with actual people. They frequently lack creativity and perseverance when investigating multi-directional and multi-developmental techniques for enhancing and accelerating their English language acquisition.

The majority of tribal children enter school proficient in their mother tongue. Compared to non-tribal children, tribal children are found to be less proficient in language acquisition. English becomes a third language for the tribal children after they acquire the local dialect in addition to their native tongue (state language).

English is only taught in schools as a subject. It has been determined that the majority of tribal community members are less proficient in the local dialect (state language) because they have less contact with other people. Even in this modern era, the majority of tribal students who are learning English experience mental trauma. Due to the isolation of their community or settlements/hamlets from those of other groups, there are no opportunities for tribal children to develop their skills outside of school. Even in the school setting, tribal students are found to interact only with their own groups, limiting their opportunities to acquire the other language (English).

Not only does culture play an important role in one's social life, but also in one's academic life. Culture and language are intrinsically linked. Understanding culture and its relationship to language is therefore crucial. According to the majority of studies, culture plays an important role in language teaching and learning. It has been widely observed and recognised that language serves as a medium for cultural comprehension and expression. Language is related to culture because it communicates cultural concepts. Culture is the manifestation of what and how a group experiences and lives.

Consequently, it is necessary to be aware of the culture of the target language learners and how culture facilitates their use of the language as a communication tool, as well as how

culture is reflected in the teaching-learning process of the target language. This constant awareness of the significance of culture enables language learners to develop their critical thinking skills. It is observed that learners who have mastered the grammatical rules and vocabulary of the target language are unable to use it effectively because tribal learners are not familiar enough with the target culture, English.

In diverse, multilingual, and multicultural contexts, a particular culture may mean different things to different learners, making cultural awareness a crucial aspect of language acquisition. There is a problem with using the existing prescribed materials/textbooks to teach the tribal students the English language in general and oral communication skills in particular. The required instructional materials/textbooks represent the dominant and mainstream culture, which is foreign to the tribal students. They feel alienated and uneasy with such materials, resulting in poor language acquisition and learning. There is a problem with the teaching materials/textbooks and classroom methodology employed by English teachers. More emphasis is placed on reading and writing than speaking and listening. Ultimately, the proficiency of learners, particularly the tribal learners' speaking proficiency, is most affected.

The tribal learners do not participate in any speaking activities in class. These learners do not have access to a classroom or extracurricular environment in which their target language is spoken. Therefore, their English communication is a major concern. Therefore, in order to teach/learn English to tribal learners, one must be familiar with their culture and incorporate it into the teaching materials/textbooks.

Keeping in mind the points discussed above, it can be undoubtedly stated that culture and language are inter-related and inter-linked. Brown (1994) stated that culture and language are interwoven so that these two cannot be separated. Brown added that the learners and language teachers of the target language ought to know and understand the socio-cultural differences. They should also recognize that each individual is different from others. The unique differences between the learners and their cultures of the learners are vivid. As a result, language teachers cannot avoid conveying impressions of another culture where they realize or not, added (Rivers, 1981).

Chastian (1988) stated that there are numerous principles/techniques such as roleplays, narratives, films, games, proverbs, culture assimilators, and culture capsules can

be used for the language teacher to assist them in the process of acculturation in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to develop cultural awareness among the learners to meet the target language proficiency. Underhill (2012, p.3) provides the relationship between language and culture. According to him, language is viewed as a cognitive system or faculty of the mind, language as action and language as social practice. So, learning a language becomes easy when a learner is in touch with his/her own culture. Hence, the researcher intended to find out whether the own culture-based materials of the tribal learners would be effective in developing their oral communication skills in English.

The following are some pertinent issues that contribute to the low oral communication skills of tribal students:

1. The tribal students are primarily shy and have inferiority complexes.
2. They are frightened of the English language. During informal interactions and classroom observations, it became apparent that the students consider English to be a very difficult language to learn.
3. The students are unable to comprehend the assigned materials, which are alien to their culture and real-world circumstances.
4. The students are not exposed to the target language in the classroom or outside of the classroom.
5. They are also denied the opportunity to speak in the target language in the classroom due to the fact that speaking ability is not assessed by the examinations board.
6. Another significant issue is that the majority of instruction is delivered via lecture and conventional methods. Therefore, there is no opportunity for learners to engage in speaking tasks or activities. In addition, oral communication skills are not given equal weight in high school instruction and evaluation.
7. The majority of tribal students are not motivated or encouraged to use the language as a means of communication; instead, they study English to pass examinations.
8. Even though teachers are highly qualified and have extensive teaching experience, they do not teach English for communication but rather to help students pass exams.

9. Speaking is neglected in the classroom because teachers concentrate primarily on teaching reading and writing skills.
10. The majority of students in the classroom are apathetic and do not engage in any activity.
11. The majority of language learners fear making errors when speaking the target language.

Language skills

English is a global language and one needs to learn all the four fundamental language skills to have fluency and accuracy.

Listening or Hearing

Written English is easier to understand than spoken English because of the way words are spelled, how they are stressed, and how quickly they are spoken.

Listening to English and understanding what is being said takes a lot of practice. The tribal learners should pay close attention to someone who speaks English well, to English programmes on the radio or TV, or to the pre-recorded English cassettes that are played at the institute on Mondays. They should make it a habit to listen carefully to recorded speeches, conversations, interviews, and talks watching TV news, talk shows, commentaries, weather reports, and public service announcements, watching English-language movies on TV, Talk shows on TV, hearing the speeches of great politicians and statesmen can help tribal learners to strengthen listening skills.

1. Speaking

After listening practice comes speaking. It is not enough to learn how to correctly pronounce or utilise a certain word or expression. The learners must make a concerted effort to learn new terms and get acquainted to them. Speaking skill enhances the learners' ability to think broadly. It creates the groundwork for effective communication. It helps individuals achieve fluency in spoken language. It eliminates the speakers' hesitancy and timidity. It inspires confidence as well as encouragement in public speaking.

2. Reading

This ability emphasises the understanding of standard, everyday English.

This will eventually lead to an appreciation of literary English. The learners should read as many English-language books, periodicals, and newspapers as possible. When they read

extensively, they encounter numerous new words and phrases. They must record them in a notebook or we risk forgetting them. They should also develop the practice of perusing or lingering over the dictionary.

3. Writing

This competency is intended to enable students to write accurate English using the acquired vocabulary. "Reading produces a complete man, conferences a ready man, and writing an accurate one," says Francis Bacon. By simply writing, students become "precise" in their expression. By writing daily, they will not only learn accurate spelling, but also improve our writing speed. A graduate must be capable of writing above ten pages per hour. Ultimately, we should remember that a language such as English is a habit to be imitated, an activity to be developed, and a skill to be exercised.

Conclusion

Since English is the most frequently spoken language in the world, there are societal obligations linked with its promotion and instruction. English is the global "Common Language." It has educational and communication significance. It is a language of the globe, a language of the future, and is known for its richness.

English teachers, particularly those who instruct tribal students must be patient and methodical. It is expected of them to perform miraculously in terrible conditions. This is a real challenge that may seem impractical, but it would be grossly unfair for the English teacher to ignore the issue's seriousness, as it would deprive students of opportunities that are primarily attained through communication skills, and the purpose of teaching English as a tool for communication would be lost.

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