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WRITING CONSTRAINTS AMONG JATAPU TRIBAL COMMUNITY SELECT SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS

KOPPOLU SWATHI

Ph.D. Scholar (Part Time), Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.



KOPPOLU SWATHI

ABSTRACT

Even though English enjoys a high status in the wake of globalization, its teaching and learning in the education institutions is rather inadequate and unproductive.

The national policy of education (1986) has given special place for the education of schedule tribes. The knowledge of English, in a way, strengthens and perpetuates the tribal community and the haves-and-have-nots division, cutting across the regions, religions and language of India. The tribal education system needs total rethinking in the line of language planning and usage of their native tongue to enable them to gain access towards English in a much convenient way.

This study will focus on Cognitive, Social and Cultural, Psychological and Linguistic Problems as they Influence the Education of Tribes through many facets. The linguistic complexity is more for the Tribal learners as it does not help them to immediately understand English.

The main objective of the study "WRITING CONSTRAINTS AMONG JATAPU TRIBAL COMMUNITY SELECT SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS" is to improve writing skills in English language thereby helping them to write English language on their own, thereby communicating effectively.

Writing gives the opportunity to the students to be adventurous with the language, to take the risk and to go further of what is learned to talk about (Shouman, 2002, p.1).

Writing skills need to given prior importance at high school level because learning would start from then forth. Writing was given least preference when compared with other skills. Writing becomes the main medium of communication in near future with the rapid growth in technology.

KEY WORDS: ESL Context, Effective Factors, Purpose of teaching writing

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INTRODUCTION

With a population of 84.3 million, the Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 8.2% of the population of India. The 623 tribal communities speak 218 languages out of which 159 are exclusive to them (Singh 2002).

Most of the tribal languages do not have a script and are written in the script of either the dominant regional language or another major language; but some tribal languages, such as Santali,

have developed their own writing system. The Sixth All India Educational Survey of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT 1999) shows that, out of 41 languages used in schools (grades 1–10) as languages of teaching or the medium of instruction (Mol) and as school subjects, only 13 are tribal languages, all but one (Nicobaree) from the North-Eastern States which have a much higher concentration of tribal population compared to the rest of India. Further, only three to four of

these 13 tribal languages are used regularly as Mol (Jhingran 2005) whereas the others are taught as school subjects or used as Mol in occasional special programs. Less than 1% of the tribal children have any real opportunity for education in the medium of their mother tongues. Exclusion of tribal languages in school education is problematic since a very large number of classrooms throughout the country have a sizable proportion of tribal children (Jhingran 2009).

It is also quite striking that the tribal mother tongues are denied a place in formal school education in practice, despite constitutional and other policy related provisions which mandate education in mother tongues. In view of the poor educational performance among the tribal communities in India, various programs of special intervention have been floated from time to time. But surprisingly, even if mother tongue education has traditionally been emphasized in India and use of mother tongues is widely viewed as crucial for better educational performance, the actual school practices continue to ignore the constitutional and statutory commitments in respect of minority mother tongues. The problems in tribal children's early education lead to large scale push out and cumulative failure throughout all levels of education which, in effect, push the tribal population to the lowest level of educational attainment in India.

The exclusion of tribal mother tongues from education limits tribal children's chances of adequate classroom learning and success in academics and, consequently, limits their freedom and ability to influence the direction of their lives.

ENGLISH FOR JATAPU LEARNERS

Jatapu tribes are the inhabitants of central India and apart from Orissa, some of these groups are settled in several districts of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The history of Jatapu tribal people is still not known. The language of this tribal people is called Jatapu but most of the people of this tribal community use Telugu language. Some are also well conversant in Oriya language as well. Even the Jatapu tribes can speak in various Oriya dialects.

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, English learning 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 everyday 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 the first generation learners in using 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 English in everyday life.

The development of English as second language (ESL) writing is very complicated. Angelova (1999) has illustrated such factors affecting the process and product of ESL writing as language proficiency, L1 writing competence, use of cohesive devices, metacognitive knowledge about the writing task, writing strategies and writers' personal characteristics. As Harmer (1998) points out, the writing skill has finally been recognized as an important skill for language learning. He lays stress on the essentiality of the writing skill saying "The reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language Development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right"(p.79). Writing is indeed becoming necessary not only in L2 in school settings, but also in our daily life, particularly owing to the prevalence of information technology, such as writing e-mail, or business letters overseas

Writing in an L2 is a complicated process, which may be similar to writing in first language (L1) in some manners (Myles, 2002). The present study thus attempts to identify the causes for the low achievement in the English of Jatapu learners, investigate their present level of language use and finally find a solution to bridge the gaps and discrepancies. This study may enable them to be on par with their counterparts in the urban areas. The Jatapu have problems with English because they speak jatapu language at their home and with their

community whereas they speak telugu with their fellow members and need to learn a third language English at school in the process of this bilingual speaking they find it hard to learn English language and hence are neglecting English.

PROBLEMS OF JATAPU LEARNERS

The Jatapu are one of the major Scheduled Tribes in the India state of Orissa, mainly in the Srikalulam and Vizianagaram districts, and also in the Koraput and Ganjam districts. The Jatapu are part of the Khondas, who speak the Khond language in the hills and Telugu on the plains. They speak a dialect called 'Kuvi ' according to the 1911 available Census Report of Madras, the Khondas and Jatapus are considered as synonymous.

The titles Jatapu or Jatapu Dora, Khond, Samanthulu, Korings, Kodulu are used synonymously for the Kuvi speaking people. Kuvi is a Dravidian language spoken by the Khond. Jatapu is the 6th largest tribes of Andhra Pradesh with population of 1, 18,613 (2001 censuses). They are originally part of the ancient of Jeypore. As per the historical evidence this kingdom was under the Nawab of Bedar in the 13th century.

The literacy rate is very low among the Jatapu, since they consider that a child can contribute better by engaging in some economic activity at home rather than going to school Jatapu learners have problems with learning the English language in general, but they are very poor in their writing skills in particular because they are very backward socio-economically, psychologically, linguistically and culturally. When compared to other learners, the Jatapu learners can be said to have special and specific problems. Jatapu is a community which does not have a social status in the society, and they are culturally backward because they are away from the society, especially they live near forests. The Jatapu learner's economical position is not good and so they go for hunting the animals, collect the forest food and besides these, agriculture happens to be their main profession. The Jatapu learners have psychological problems, and as a result they are unable to move freely with their friends. They also have several linguistic problems which have a significant effect on their second language acquisition. Widdoson (1972)

has pointed out the futility of an approach, which focuses on language forms and ignores ways in which these forms can appropriately be used to realize communicative acts. Educational failure of linguistic minorities all over the world is primarily related to the mismatch between the home language and the language of formal instruction. State policies in respect of languages in education often recognize but ignore in practice the problem of exclusion of languages.

Policy proclamations appear to support the rights of minor and minority language communities for preservation, use and development of their languages and, in many cases; there are explicit statutory provisions for education in mother tongues. But, as several contributions to this volume show, there are contradictions between policy provisions and actual ground level practices.

COGNITIVE PROBLEMS

Second language writing is believed to be cognitively complex. The term "Cognitive" refers to the process of information. Cognition denotes more than simply reasonable thought like processes. It also refers to the various mental processes used in thinking, remembering, perceiving, recognizing, classifying, etc. Indeed, writing is the product of the complex interaction of the linguistic environment and the learner's internal mechanisms. Writing in a second language is divided into three stages: construction, in which the writer plans what he/she is going to write by brainstorming, using a mind map or outline; transformation in the form of the message when the writer is composing or receiving; and execution, which corresponds to the physical process of producing text. The first two stages have been described as "setting goals and searching memory for information. Then using production system to generate language in phases or constituents" (O' Malley and Chamot, 1990, p.42).

In structuring information, the writer uses various types of knowledge including discourse knowledge, understanding of audience, and sociolinguistic rules (O' Malley and Chamot, 1990). Organization at both the sentence and the text level is also important for effective communication of meaning, and ultimately, for the quality of written product (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1987). As writing

finishes, revision is a cognitively demanding task for L2 learners because it not only involves evolution and modification of text written (Grabe Kaplan, 1996). From this it can be understood that writing is cognitively challenging task, which is very difficult for the Jatapu learners.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROBLEMS

The community life, the economy, the life style, the traditions of the tribal and their outlook of the world is totally unique. All these have their humanitarian values and cultural significance. The greatest problem is that though the tribal's have come to recognize the modernization and the demands of time they are not coming forward to bring reforms in the educational status and economic standards. The oral tradition in teaching must be an important device to develop the personality of a tribal child from its own cultural environment, instead of creating an artificial blurred personality dissociated with home and school environment. To bridge the gap of the socio-cultural environment with that of the school curriculum exploration of rich tribal folklore can be helpful in the promotion of tribal education.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Writing is a solitary activity and students are required to write by their own. Writing in a foreign or second language is a courageous experience especially for students whose native language is not of the same origin as the target language. These students are faced with the school curriculum that includes the four main skills (LSRW) of English language. Among these skills, they find writing skill the most difficult one. To start writing one needs to generate ideas, compose, develop the ideas and frame it in sentences. To complete the whole process he needs practice and motivation. Fear of language builds up their psychological anxiety which results in their inability to reproduce on paper what they have learnt. In order to overcome these problems, teachers who teach writing at any level of education must employ suitable strategies of the different stages of writing, encourage and supply the necessary input to their students.

LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS

Linguistic problems differ from cognitive approaches and socio-cultural problem. They

consider language knowledge to be unique and distinct from any other type of knowledge language. Learners have linguistic problems in their second language writing. The first language linguistic knowledge may help to motivate, facilitate L2 writing. On the other hand, the process of writing in L1 is not equal in the process of writing in second language. But L1 helps in understanding the particular meaning of a words, sentence of L2. The Jatapu learners have major linguistic problems in second language writing. The linguistic complexity is more for the Jatapu learners as it does not help them to immediately understand English. Hegemonic position of dominant languages, imposition of their norms on the languages of minority and disadvantaged groups and common biases in assessment of verbal skills of bilingual/multilingual children have led to propagation of the myth of linguistic deficit (Mohanty 2000: 106)

EFFECTIVE FACTORS

The learner's attitude to the learning process has also been identified as being critically important to second-language acquisition. Anxiety in language-learning situations has been almost unanimously shown to be detrimental to successful learning. A related factor, personality, has also received attention. There has been discussion about the effects of extravert and introvert personalities. However, one study has found that there were no significant differences between extraverts and introverts on the way they achieve success in a second language.

Social attitudes such as gender roles and community views toward language learning were also proved critical. Language learning can be severely hampered by cultural attitudes. Self interest and motivation of the individual learner is of vital importance to the success of language learning.

THE PURPOSE OF TEACHING WRITING SKILLS FOR JATAPU LEARNERS

The main purpose of the study is to identify the overall patterns of interaction prevailing in English for the Jatapu learners at the high school level and examine the nature of learning of the Jatapu learners, teacher interaction in the classroom and the behavior of Jatapu learners in these classes

which, would provide an insight in to the reasons responsible for the poor proficiency of Jatapu learners in English.

The purposes of teaching writing skills at the high school level are as follows:

- To improvise their other three languages skills.
- Make them to find out what problems they have and provide them with appropriate materials,
- Give ideas, and motivate them to improve their writing skills.
- Make them to read texts and do guided written activities in order to improve their skills.
- Give the suggestion to the teachers' and students to record the progress made during the course.

Learning to write well is a difficult and long process which requires more effort in terms of language and thoughts. Traditional approaches to the teaching of writing focus on the product: in other words, the production of neat, grammatically correct pieces of writing (Mahon 1992). Good writing skills are essential for academic success and written work service to provide learners with some support to prove themselves as academically sound. It also helps to become more effective learners through better thinking and better learning leading to effective writing.

CONCLUSION

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. The problem is that Jatapu learners are very poor in writing skills. Therefore the study examines the problems of teaching writing at the high school level in order to suggest them 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 letters, reports and so on. Second is it 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.

Learners also need to become familiar with the different types of language associated with different types of text. There are huge differences between an academic essay and an email to a friend in terms of vocabulary and grammar choices, layout, conventions and so on. Learners need to become familiar with the expectations associated with the types of text. With regard to writing is a means of consolidating other learning, teachers have to provide some written practice of new language? In addition, they need to help learners by giving them time to copy new vocabulary and grammar from the board, and checking that they are making effective and accurate notes during a lesson.

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