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DILEMMAS FACED BY RURAL STUDENTS IN LEARNING AND READING

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ABSTRACT



The paper explores the rural students' point of view towards the Second language reading and learning. Results confirmed that majority of the students faced some common barriers. The study consists of college-level students in rural colleges in Kerala concentrating on causes that may have hindered the English language learning and Reading for students in rural areas. The paper introduces the English language education in India, the growth of the language and students' perception towards the English language as a Second language and the problems faced by rural students. A study was conducted among rural students' with close ended questions which helps to identify the problems to Read and Learn in English Language. Finally, the feedback of the students helped to identify the problems and suggest few ideas to overcome the barriers and to improve rural students'.

Keywords: Multiplicity, Interference, Pilot Study, Awareness

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INTRODUCTION

India is a multilingual country. Multiplicity of language is the hallmark of socio-linguistic reality in India. India has nearly 1652 active languages and 18 official languages recognized by the Indian Constitution. Languages in India vary from each geographical territory according to the Readers of the language which is used for Reading purpose within the territory. Though India has many languages, English is being taught and studied as the Second language throughout the country in schools, colleges and in universities.

English language education to India was brought by Lord Babington Macaulay in 1830s. The purpose of introducing English language was to bring an apparent administration as it was a mammoth task to administer the large Indians with different dialect. Gradually, the language became very helpful for

smooth administration and became a compulsory second language in the Indian educational system. This continued to remain constant in the educational field, as Indians understood the importance of English for further development purpose.

Teaching of English as a second language in Indian educational system has become compulsory. This Second language can be easily acquired with four well-known skills, viz., Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. But the first two skills Listening and Reading skills are neglected in Indian classrooms. Writing skill is focused in order to score marks and the writing skill includes the process of rote-learning which usually occurs in the Indian vernacular language.

Indian educational system differs from each state. Still, English is accepted and taught as a Second language throughout the country. One can never

expect a standard pronunciation for a Second Language in this vast country where there are numerous dialects. Indian dialects vary from region to region, community to community and are spoken differently by the people belonging to same language community. English was introduced as Second language throughout the country that has become a boon for India's educational system. At the same time English is considered as global language as it has created the necessity for Reading and commercial purpose. Later English had widely spread into different sectors, but had its root in the educational system as the necessity arose from the basic level.

A large number of schools in rural areas offer education in the local language till the student completes his/her matriculation. English becomes a compulsory medium in higher education, and the student who had education in the local language has to opt to study the higher education in the Second language itself which becomes a barrier for the local student who got education in the local language. To put it in simple words, the barriers are often caused by the students' mother tongue and students' inability to converse in English with each other.

While learning to Read in English there is an interference of mother tongue pronunciation, thus one cannot expect a uniform standard pronunciation from Indians. The interaction between learner and teacher as well as that between the learners happen with mother tongue influence. Hence, Indian students are not able to acquire the Second language in a perfect manner. As English is not a medium of instruction in Indian schools and colleges, English teachers in rural areas teach English without proper motivation and proper teaching practices. As a result, most people fail to read and write the language with accuracy.

Statement of the Problem

Learning to Read in English language has become a barrier due to certain factors. Though research has been carried out on this problem, much of the issues have been powerfully restrained by the western cultural assumption. Most of the students from rural area are not choosing specializations in

English, but they study English along with the core papers of the subject of specialization. This clearly indicates the problem of the rural students to learn to Read in English and the problem has not been resolved with proper measures from a longer period of time.

Review of Literature

Researchers have been conducting research based on the problems of the rural students' difficulty in Reading in English. Researchers have discovered and ensured many measures to eradicate the problem. (Crystal 434) in his work How language works, writes about achieving success in language learning. "There is yet no single theory that can account for the diversity of foreign language learning behavior, and explain why some learners succeed in their task, whereas others fail. Many variables are involved." Motivation, attitude and exposure are essential factors to learn a foreign language. Motivation should happen from the teachers as well as from students. Attitude towards the foreign language should not be negative as it influences language learning achievement and conversely. Exposure to foreign language has to be regular and the aim should be to teach 'little and often'. Too much exposure at any one time or little exposure hampers the foreign language learning.

(Betageri 37) in his research, "The Impact of English Language teaching on the Reading Skills of rural students" suggests few practical suggestions for improving English language at the rural. The measures are; Students should be taught basic sentence pattern, detailed verb patterns, complete knowledge about tenses should be provided and students should be encouraged to read English newspapers and to watch English talks on televisions.

According to (Baburao 417) in his research "Problems and Remedies of Teaching English as a second language "lists the barriers for second language learning for rural students, translation method helps in understanding the content but bars from learning the language. Mother tongue interference makes the students to forget the essence of pure language and crowded classroom is another

major barrier as the ratio of student teacher differs and hampers the students' participation in class work. Hence Baburao suggests applying different methods of teaching to build confidence among students to build Reading skills, and finally eradicate the socio-psychological problems.

(Tayade 332) "Teaching English in rural colleges: Realities and remedies" have identified that limited word knowledge and sentences has limited the vast area of experience for Second Language Acquisition. The other factor is Exam Oriented learning, the teaching faculties in rural motivate and prepare the students marking the system of examination, and students basic concern is to get passing marks, only to clear the examination which reduces the interest of learning and Reading in English.

(Asraf and Ahmad 87) collaboratively suggested in their research "Promoting English language development and the reading habit among students in rural schools through the guided extensive reading program" would help the students to learn the language effectively. Key features of Guided Extensive Reading; teachers to inform their students about the books and materials that would appeal, Reading for pleasure in a relaxed, informal class room atmosphere, Students should be encouraged to retell, to the class the stories they had read, Students should be praised and rewarded for their reading and interpreting task.

In this research I state that "English teachers, especially those who teach rural students need to be very patient and systematic. They are expected to do a miraculous job under the adverse conditions. That is a real challenge which may sound impractical, but it would be highly unjust on the part of the English teacher if he/she overlooks the seriousness behind the issue and it would deprive the students' opportunities which are mainly attained through Reading skills and the specific purpose of teaching English as a communicative tool would get lost."

According to Feasible Rural Education system writes about the rural scenario where the rural students Read fluently in their native language and demanding Reading learning in local language. To

improve the Reading skill he addresses several needs for ural students. Teachers should ensure an interesting and challenging representation of free education material, to get the attention of the students, more interaction with students of other schools of the same curriculum, will ensure rural students to Read English fluently.

Methods Used- Pilot Study

Pilot study was done with questionnaire, related to the major problem revealed by the students during the interaction. The questionnaire has tried to address various aspects of the problem. The study was held in St.Alosiyus Degree College, a college in the rural area of Edathuva village that came under Thalavady rural thaluk in Kerala state. A group of thirty undergraduate students that comprised of equal number of boys and girls were randomly chosen for the pilot study. The questionnaire was distributed to this group.

Interaction

The interaction with the group of students from rural background was chosen to understand the major problems faced by them in learning English. This interaction was to find out the difficulty level of the students in terms of language acquisition. The group comprised of undergraduate students, peer group and prospective teachers.

Design of the Study

The study was conducted among 60 students. These students were from in St.Alosiyus Degree College, a college in the rural area of Edathuva village that came under Thalavady rural thaluk in Kerala state. A group of sixty undergraduate students that comprised of equal number of boys and girls. This was a mixed group from different streams.

Inclusion Criteria

- Undergraduate students
- Courses –Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Commerce
- Semester – Annual
- Rural background

Collection of Data

Data collection is one of the most important aspects of research. The primary data was collected

from a sample consisting of 60 sampling units selected from a finite population through simple random sample method. Here the researcher has prepared different schedules for collecting the primary data. The data were compiled, classified, tabulated and analyzed separately.

Sample

It is only a part of the universe or the whole population from which it is drawn. The population is the total number of all possible observations of the same kind. Therefore studying the characteristics and attitudes of the members of the sample rather than of all members of a relevant universe, not only makes possible to complete the study in less time but result in lower research cost.

- Degree college students
- Students of BA, B.Com
- 18-20 years
- Male and Female
- Edathuva (village) Talavady Rural taluk, Kerala.

Data Analysis

The data was collected with respondents from various branches of undergraduate students. Out of 60 respondents 5 gave the positive response, 8 responded negatively where as 24 respondents feel that they get an opportunity only sometimes and 23 respondents rarely get an opportunity to read and learn English. Likewise when enquired about their reading habits of English books and newspapers, out of 60 respondents 6 responded positively, 27 replied negatively and 27 responded they would rarely like to read English books and English Newspaper. And Finally when asked about their dislike to read and learn English, out of 60 respondents, 22 responded as English is difficult, 17 responded their teacher never explains the term in Malayalam, 19 respondents do not like English because it is difficult for the respondents to get along with their English teacher and 2 responded they do not understand English so, they do not like English.

Conclusion

The study revealed the major barriers that had hampered the students Reading skills in rural

areas, though researchers have been conducting research and giving suggestions to improve the Reading skills, teachers in rural areas are less paid and the teacher with best teaching methodologies want to earn better and shift to urban areas and the less opportunists settle in rural areas, they are not equipped with the teaching methodologies this has become a barrier for rural students.

In order to improve the learning and reading skills of rural students, proper teaching methodologies should be introduced and interesting word games, debates and speeches on controversial topic should be introduced. Learning English language will never hamper the student's vernacular but improves the exposure to the global world and helps in overall development of the nation. Rural students usually have attachment towards their mother tongue and are not ready to Read in English. The students in rural areas are to be educated to learn and Read in English at the primary level of education when English is introduced to them.

Teaching English would be easy if the teacher teaches according to the learners need, where as that lacks in rural areas and students are burdened at higher level of education to converse in English in order to accommodate to the urban Reading skills. Teachers should be updated with methodologies and syllabus and are to be encouraged to teach in rural areas. They should also follow the latest research articles to eradicate the difficulty of Reading in English language. Students have the problem and are ready to overcome, but the barriers have been deep rooted strongly within the students.

Suggestion

Students who have problems with learning the Second language would be able to easily overcome their barriers by learning the language with the help of peer groups who can converse in English language. This process would be helpful in overcoming the limitations of Second Language acquisition. Most of the students alienate themselves in order to escape from the languages exposure which eventually hinders their language learning. The problem is not with the language but with the learner's ability to surpass it.

Students should strictly spare sometimes to read English newspaper and watch English programs. Students should not hesitate to ask doubts in the classroom and try to Read in English in the classroom.

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