

TEACHING THE READING AND WRITING SKILLS TO THE TRIBAL CHILDREN OF ERODE DISTRICT

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Abstract

The English language, among various nations, serves as a *lingua franca*. It plays a major role in many sectors including medicine, engineering, education, business, technology etc. But, the tribal children lack opportunities in those fields due to the lack of proficiency in English. Keeping this in mind, different learning activities for reading and writing skill were given to 6-13 age group. Data were collected from various tribal hill-side villages of Erode District in Tamil Nadu. 12 students were taken as samples from each village. The overall assessment indicates that the students coming from developing villages and also from the villages near by the town showed much response and their learning is effective due to the exposure they get from the senior students and from the educated people living nearby. But the students from remote and interior villages showed less response and inhibition to learn things.

Keywords: reading skill, writing skill, activities, tribes, Erode district, learning outcome

INTRODUCTION

Language is a means or verbal medium for expression or communicating ideas, feelings, experiences and realization. Communication is about more than just exchanging information. It's about understanding the emotion and intentions behind the information. A Language for such communication requires four basic skills- listening, reading, writing and speaking. Effective communication combines a set of skills including nonverbal communication, engaged listening, managing stress in the moment, the ability to communicate assertively and the capacity to recognize and understand his own emotions and those of the person one is communicating with. Of course, it takes time and effort to develop these skills and become an effective communicator.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING ENGLISH

In this globalization era everyone is supposed to be competent and improve his or her quality in order to face the challenges of life. All our software development today, the communication facilities available to us through internet, our access to a variety of websites, are all being carried out in English. Most of the research works are conducted and compiled in English. Anything

written and recorded in this language is read and listened to, in wider circles. As a result, English is being taught and learned around the world as a second language today. English remains a major medium of instruction in schools. There are large numbers of books that are written in English language. English has become a crucial tool for continuing education, employment and social status. So, it becomes obligatory to teach English.

Language teaching implies three operations: Language, teaching and learning. The purpose of language teaching is to facilitate language learning. It is essential for a teacher to understand the concepts of language, teaching and learning because its nature is quite different. The focus to teaching is to facilitate learning. Such facilitation can be done effectively at elementary school age which is a brilliant time to learn a second language. 6-13 years of age is the right age to learn a second language beside the mother language because at that age children have a good brain condition to receive something new. According to brain imaging technological research conducted in California, Los Angeles, children aged 6-13 years old who are commonly known as in critical periods, states that areas of the brain that organize a language skill has the most rapid growth.

AIMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

According to Thompson and Wyatt, the four general aims of teaching English stages are :

1. To understand spoken English
2. To speak English
3. To understand written English
4. To write English

1. To understand spoken English:

The student should be able to understand spoken English required in ordinary conversation, exchange of greetings, receiving orders and directions, listening to lectures, talks, etc. This aim can be achieved if we give opportunities to our students to listen to English radio, gramophone, tape recorder etc.

2. To speak English:

To speak a student is required to produce sounds with proper stress and intonation. Speech occupies a unique position in hearing a language and is the base for all language learning. This aim stands totally neglected in our schools. We expect our students to talk fluently in English after 5-6 years of learning English. This ability to speak is required in big cities to communicate with persons from other Indian states and to talk to foreigners.

3. To understand written English:

We expect our students, when they leave the school, to be able to understand the written English in books, magazines, newspaper, etc. It is also expected that he will be able to adopt English as the medium of instructions and examinations in his studies. At present our students are not able to comprehend material published in English. Recognition of Vocabulary by the students should be increased to enable them read English with Comprehension.

4. To write English:

Writing English is in no way less than speaking English. In teaching English we aim to enable our students to write letters, applications, descriptions and accounts of events. Such ability is required for officers. It is also needed in schools and colleges for taking notes of lectures delivered in English.

READING SKILL

Reading is process of looking carefully at written or printed symbols and translating them into the spoken symbols. The spoken symbols are associated with the objects, qualities or actions for which they stand. Thus, it is said that Reading consists of three elements i.e, the written or printed symbol, the spoken symbol and the sense. And it is also said that reading is the ability to extract from the written or printed page, the thoughts, facts and information required.

Objectives of Reading:

The objectives of reading are as follows:

- ✓ To enable pupils to pronounce words correctly
- ✓ To enable them to understand the meaning of words and sentences.
- ✓ To enable them to interpret sentences of paragraph
- ✓ To enable them to use ideas gained from reading in other situations.
- ✓ To enable them to read with clear expression and pronunciation.
- ✓ To enable them to read easily, fluently and rapidly with proper understanding.
- ✓ To enable them to form the habit of reading for some definite purpose.
- ✓ To enable pupils to take pleasure in reading.
- ✓ To enable students to read material in English after school life. E.G., books, reports, magazines, novels, dramas, newspapers, etc.
- ✓ To widen the eye-span which means the number of words that our eyes see in one complete movement.

Types of Reading:

- (a) Silent reading
- (b) Loud reading
- (c) Intensive reading
- (d) Extensive reading

Silent reading:

Silent reading is regarded as the most important type of reading. *Mehta* points out, “we all read faster than we speak and children must be initiated into the silent reading habit as early as possible”. Silent reading is preceded by loud reading. *Morrison* says, “Loud reading by students should be followed by silent reading”. In fact, loud reading are latent in silent reading which is a kind of mental whispering to oneself.

Advantages of silent reading:

- (i) It saves time because it is quick
- (ii) It saves energy, too
- (iii) It develops the ability to read with interest

- (iv) It acts as a deterrent against the tendency so common amongst beginners to translate what they read in English into their mother-tongue.
- (v) In later life, it has immense value because it is used in public places and bigger classes.
- (vi) It initiates self-education and deep study
- (vii) It enables attention and energy to be concentrated on meaning and so saves a division of attention resulting in a greater assimilation of information.

Loud reading:

This is known as oral reading also. It is introduced after two months of reading. This means that when pupils learn what they have to read in a book, it should be introduced.

Advantages of Loud Reading:

- (i) Students learn the proper method of reading, because they follow the model reading done by the teacher
- (ii) This develops the skill of speech and giving lectures.
- (iii) The mistakes related to pronunciation can be corrected because, in loud reading they work in co-ordination.
- (iv) It makes students learn by imitation which is a natural method of learning for students.

Intensive Reading:

Intensive reading is a type of loud reading with a minute and detailed study of the text. It concentrates upon:

- (a) Assimilation of language which consists of study of words, phrases and sentence structures,
- (b) Study of sentence structure including grammar, word order and syntax
- (c) Grasping of the sense, and
- (d) Getting information

Advantages of Intensive Reading:

- (i) Intensive reading increases the active vocabulary
- (ii) It helps in learning grammar
- (iii) It explains the meaning
- (iv) It improves the power of expression

Extensive Reading:

All the above said types of Reading help a person to do effective Extensive Reading.

ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE READING SKILL

Name of the Activity: I - Rhyming Words

PROCEDURE:

- The investigator read some rhyming words with proper pronunciation
- The students were asked to repeat
- Once again the words were pronounced slowly for their observation

- Again they repeat
- Then they were asked to pronounce individually.

Name of the Activity : II- Read Aloud

PROCEDURE:

- The investigator read a story and a rhyme which were read for listening
- Then each one was asked to read loudly one or two sentences which they like most
- In case of errors, the help was rendered by the investigator
- No. of stories and rhymes were added to provoke their interest

Name of the Activity : III- Bite the Whole

PROCEDURE:

- Now the students were taken to the next level
- They were given small, simple moral stories to read in full
- While stammering, the investigator helped them by teaching the proper pronunciation
- They were allowed to take their own time to finish reading

Name of the Activity : IV- Fresh O' Fresh

PROCEDURE:

- The investigator brought some interesting newspaper cuttings on different topics
- Lot system was followed to create interest
- They were encouraged to read from newspapers the allotted topics.
- Topics covered sports, movies, current affairs and they were with pictures

WRITING SKILL

It's fairly obvious that there are two main ways to communicate, although more obscure forms exist. Basically, we talk and we write. That's how we let other people know what's going on, and it's an important skill to have. Writing is important because it's used extensively in higher education and in the workplace. If students don't know how to express themselves in writing, they won't be able to communicate well with professors, employers, peers, or just about anyone else.

Much of professional communication is done in writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, e-mails, and more are part of the daily life of a college student or successful graduate. Even if students manage to learn the material in their college classes without knowing how to write well, they won't be able to express their knowledge to the people who are making the big decisions. Potential employers won't know whether or not head knowledge can be applied to everyday demands unless it's through a spoken interview. Even the majority of certifications and licensures require basic writing skills to obtain. The inability to write makes for a stillborn career.

All good writings that you come across in newspapers, magazines, journals or books, are the result of great and sustained effort on the part of the writers. Many a time, a writer revises his or her writing or article three-four times before it is given the final shape. In other words, each one of such writings passes through various steps involved in the process of writing. Three steps are:

1. Determining or delimiting the topic
2. Collecting material (thoughts)

3. Organizing them

Selecting and delimiting a Topic:

As there are infinite numbers of subjects to write about, a writer has to be extremely careful while selecting a subject for the purpose of writing. The following points will be of immense help to the prospective writer(s):

- (i) The writer should be absolutely clear about the nature and scope of the subject selected.
- (ii) The subject should be as specific as possible. This enables a writer to focus on the chosen subject, and discourages him/her from any kind of digression in the treatment of the subject, which very often results in monotonous reading
- (iii) The subject selected should not only be known to the writer, but should also be a subject of interest for the prospective readers. If the subject lacks either of the two elements, the readers might not appreciate the writing at all.

Collection of Ideas or Subject Matters :

Once the topic has been finalized, the next important step would be to decide what to write. In other words, a writer must collect ideas or the subject matter first to be able to write on the subject chosen. In order to do full justice to the topic selected, a writer must explore it well before starting to write about it. In doing so, the writer must objectively try to assess how much he or she already knows about the subject, and how much of it is further needed for a comprehensive treatment of the subject. There are various techniques employed by the successful writers for adoption of new ideas.

Organization of Ideas :

This step is equally important as effective organization of ideas enables a writer to write a well-knit article/write-up. For this, all related sub-points and sub-sub-points, clustered together, may be connected to the main points concerned with the help of straight lines. Having done so, the picture appearing on the paper will resemble a cob web, which will certainly help one to write on the selected topic coherently and logically.

ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILL

Name of the Activity : I- A Structure through picture

PROCEDURE:

- The students were shown pictures which showed an action being done by a person
- They were asked to notice the action properly
- Then they were asked to write a sentence for that picture
- Some more pictures were shown for practice

Name of the Activity: II- Developing a story

PROCEDURE:

- The students were given stories with hints
- All the stories selected were known stories
- The investigator taught them how to do it with a model
- Hints carried maximum details they needed to develop the story

Name of the Activity : III- Dialogue writing

PROCEDURE:

- The investigator gave printed papers which carried dialogues between two
- Some missing dialogues were filled by the students by using their imagination
- Creativity was encouraged by the investigator
- Dialogues had day -to-day relevance

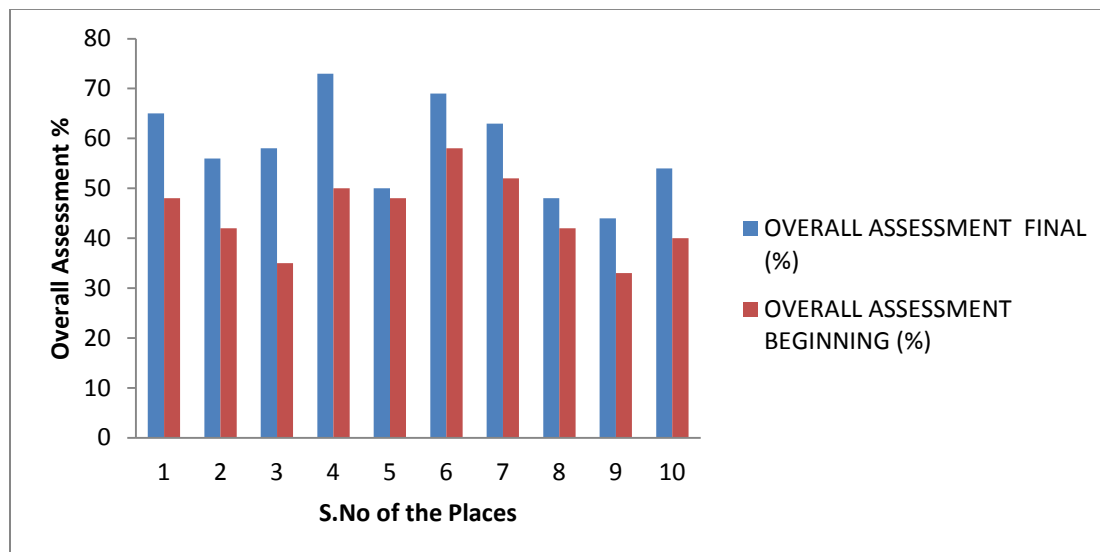
Name of the Activity : IV- A family frame

PROCEDURE:

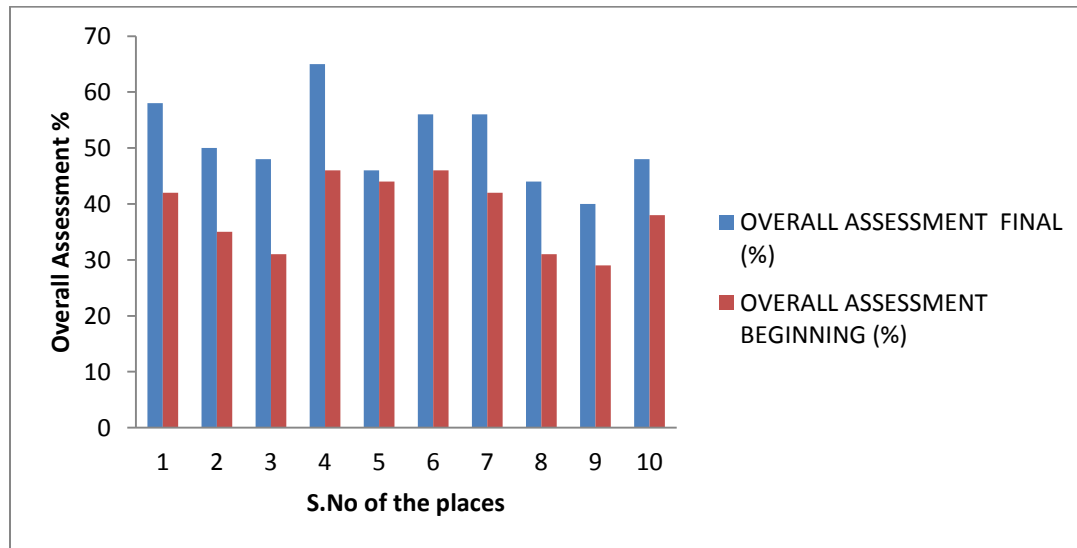
- The students were given the gradation task of preparing their own material
- As a first task, they were asked to write about their family
- The names, relationship and their occupations were discussed orally
- And then they were asked to prepare their frame.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

I have selected samples from the places which I have taken for my research. I have selected the reading skill. In the beginning of my research, I have given the same type of activities to test and understand their level of knowledge. Then I have planned my learning modules. At the end of the research, the same types of activities were given and the results were shown in the following chart.



Then I have selected the writing skill and the results were shown in the following chart.



1. Neithalapuram, 2. Geddesal, 3. Dhottagajanure 4. Kermalam 5. Pallappadugai
 6. Basuvanapuram,
 7. Thingalur 8. Talamalai 9. Theiginarai 10. Thattakarai

The students coming from developing villages and also from the villages near by the town like Neithalapuram, Basuvanapuram, Keermalam and Thattakarai showed much of response and the effective learning took place. This is because of the exposure they get from the elder students and from the people living nearby. But the students from remote and interior villages like Talamalai, Theiginarai and Pallappadugai showed less of response and the inhibition to learn things.

The charts clearly indicate the existed status and the present status. When compared, the reading skill was acquired by the tribal children easily. But I found that the writing skill was not easily understood or learnt by the tribal children and the students who responded well to the activities came from the developing villages and also from the villages where they have high schools. This may also be due to various reasons like mother tongue influence, lack of oral communication, locality, lack of facilities and learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The results of my research and the experiences which I have gained during my work indicate that the students coming from developing villages and also from the villages near by the town showed much of response and the effective learning took place. This is because of the exposure they get from the elder students and from the people living nearby. But the students from remote and interior villages showed less of response and the inhibition to learn things. Generally, children show much of interest in the learning process. The skills when they are taught with interest and intensity could bring some notable progress in the tribal children. But the environment, the economic condition and the lack of awareness and encouragement make the school drop-outs.

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