Learning of English as second language in the Rural areas of Odisha: A special reference to Kantapada Block of Cuttack district

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Abstract:

This paper examines the basic problems of learning English as second language for the senior secondary high school learners in the rural areas of Odisha. A special reference has been given to Kantapada Block of Cuttack district in Odisha. Learning of English has become a great challenge for them in the overcrowded class room. Mostly, they are incompetent in speaking skill of the target language. They feel uneasy to convey their message in English language. Even they don't show their willingness to communicate inside the class room in English language. They always use odia language in the speaking classroom. So this study has provided various techniques to improve their willingness to communicate in English language.

Keywords: ESL (English as second language), speaking skills, willingness to communicate.

Introduction: Language is a means of communication. It is a very difficult task to think without language. It is a way of developing civilization and culture (Bolinger, 1968). Particularly, English communication is very essential for the young learners as it may give scope to the learners to express their ideas to the world. English is a second language in both secondary and senior secondary high schools in India. (NPE, 1968). This study deals with the problems of learning English in the overcrowded classroom of the rural areas of Odisha, special reference has been given to Kantapada Block of Cuttack district in Odisha. Mostly it emphasizes on the productive skills of the Senior secondary high school learners, such as speaking and writing skills. Speaking is one of the difficult skills in second language teaching and learning process. It is a skill which needs rigorous practice and strong determination. It involves pronunciation, intonation, stress patterns and prosodic features which are the difficult tasks for non-native speakers of English. According to David Nunan (2004: 48), speaking involves producing systematic verbal utterance es to convey meaning. One's ability in a language is often seen from their ability to produce that language in expressing opinions, thoughts and feelings (Malihah, 2010). In addition, speaking skill is often used as a parameter for learner's success on English. (Richards, 2008). The purpose of teaching speaking is to get competence on grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse and strategic skill. (Brown, 2007). Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. (Chaney, 1998,p.13). Of all the four macro English skills, speaking seems to be the most important skill required for communication. (Zaremba, 2006). There are a number of factors relating to speaking skill to be considered for effective English speaking performance. Pronunciation, vocabulary,

and collocations are singled out as important factors to be emphasized in building fluency for ESL speakers. Various situations and frequent speaking tasks plays a significant role in the improvement of students' fluency when speaking. (Tam, 1997). Confidence and competence usually lead to strength of English speaking skills, (Patil , 2008) asserted that building up the learner's confidence, to eliminate fear of making errors was a priority that the teacher should consider in order to make the learners feel comfortable with their language use. Confidence and competence in speaking could be developed from appropriate syllabus design, methods of teaching and sufficient tasks and materials.(Bailey, 2005). For effectiveness of speaking, Shumin (1997), pointed out a number of elements involved, including listening skill, sociocultural factors, affective factors and sociolinguistic competence.

Statement of the problems.

Generally the learners of senior secondary high schools in Odisha are very poor in the speaking skill of English language. The major difficulties are found among the learners in the overcrowded classroom such as: linguistic complexity, mother tongue use, inhibition, untrained teacher and lack of drills and practice in communication.

Research questions:
➤ Why do learners lack confidence in speaking skill in the overcrowded classroom?
➤ What are the ways of developing their confidence in participating the communication skill?

Objectives:
➤ To develop the communicative competence among the learners in the senior secondary high schools of the rural areas of Odisha.
➤ **To develop** the habit of Reading & listening skills.
➤ **To investigate** the major and minor errors made by the learner in speaking activities inside the classroom.

Scope of the study:
The research is confined into Kantapada Block which is situated in the remote area of Cuttack district in Odisha. It has the system of education that takes place according to the Mass education of Odisha. Odia is the mother tongue of the learners. They use their mother tongue frequently inside the language class room. The scope of the study is limited in a single senior secondary high school.(Udayanath senior secondary high school).

Research design and Methodology

Introduction

This research followed both qualitative and quantitative approach and used case studies by nature. Hence I have followed the qualitative approach of sampling, data collection, tools preparation and presentation and analysis of data. The total methodological process of the study is explained below.

Research Sampling

Sampling is one of the important methodology in research project. There are various types of research sampling. Here I have followed the Random sampling method. As I have conducted this study in

qualitative style of research the sample of the study was small (Best, 2010;Gay, 2000; Creswell,2009 & 2012). One senior secondary high school from Kantapada block was selected conveniently (Best, 2010;Gay, 2000;Creswell 2009 & 2012). From this Higher Secondary School 11 students of +2 1st year Arts,Science and Commerce were selected purposively (Best,2010;Gay, 2000;Creswell 2009 & 2012). Hence the total number of students was

have divided into four categories such as Reading skill included eleven students

,writing skill included six students, speaking skill included seven students and listening also included seven students. Two English language teachers of the sampleschools were selected. So the total numbers of sample was 13 which can be broken down in the following manner.

Number of students : 11 (5 boys + 6 girls)

Number of teachers : 02 (Two from U.N Junior College)

Total participants =13

Hypothesis:

Hypothesis is also an important step in literary research. It means the factual answer of the research questions. In literature, it means a supposition or proposed explanation made on the basis of limited evidence as a starting point for future investigation. Based on the research questions the following hypothesis are made:

(i)   There is a negative attitude towards English in the mind of the students of rural areas because of slower negative performance in English at school level.

(ii)   There are many barriers that affect the techniques and methods of language learning in higher secondary education such as psychological factor, social factor, lack of teaching aids, learning environment is not suitable for the learners, schedule of class arrangement and climaticcondition etc.

(iii)   The main cause of students disinterest in odia medium to learn English language is their fear or nervousness, lack of proper coaching in the primary stage of learning English language. Apart from that the motivationand guidance of the parents seem to be lacked.

(iv)   The learners of the second language lack confidence because they have not got any exposure of the target language outside the classroom. They lacked practice of different skills (LSRW) in English language. Lack of listening English news, music etc. lack of watching English movies and reading English news paper. They always prefer to read odia newspaper. Lack of writing independently and also lack of exposure in communicative competence. Day to day life they communicate with there mothertongue. Hence the language learning process gets failure with the students of the rural areas.

(v)   The gap in learning English language is at the following levels.

• Phonological level
• Morphological level
• Semantic level
• Syntactical level

When the learners of odia language speak English they face the following challengeslike:

• Pronunciation Sentence structure
• Vocabulary
• Take much time for contents

- Lack of exposure

Data collection

Data collection is the primary step to gain meaningful information. Data was collected from all the relevant sources and it is mostly primary data. Secondary data is also used on this subject. It was emphasized that the data collected is genuineand pure.

Data source:

➢ Higher secondary school
➢ Lecturers
➢ Students

The data was collected from a higher secondary school under the govt. of odisha.
i.e. Udayanath Higher Secondary School, Adaspur, Cuttack. English languageteachers from this higher secondary school of rural area are covered.

Data collection method and tools

I decided to use two methods, namely questionnaire and observation and three tools such as teachers questionnaire, student questionnaire and classroom observation chart.

➢ **Questionnaires:** A questionnaires required respondents to fill out the form themselves and so requires some levels of literacy. Questionnaires were prepared based on the different skills of language such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Two types of questions were sent namely: open ended and closed ended.

➢ **Interviews:**In interviews, information is obtained through inquiry and recorded by enumerators. Structured interviews are performed by using survey forms. Whereas open interviews are notes taken while talking with respondents.

Direct observation:

Observation was conducted in the classroom. It was conducted in the twophases.

First phase – Speaking skills

This phase was conducted in the classroom through the method of conversation and extempore speech. The data was recorded through the voice recording device. As the following table shows:

Activity	Male	Female
Conversation	4	3
Extempore speech	4	3

Second phase: writing skill

The second phase of the classroom observation was writing skill. There were only six students participated in this activity. All of them were girls. They were assigned two activities such as paragraph

writing on the topic and interpretation of diagram.As it follows:

Activity	Boys	Girls
Paragraph writing	00	06
Diagram interpretation	00	06

Data of academic qualification of lecturers and their proficiency:

It has been learned that academic qualification of the lecturer is of requisite standard. They use both English and local language in the classroom. In the rural areas, most of the teachers are unable to impress the crowd with their English. Data of lecturers was collected during the course of study considering their qualification, medium of instruction and proficiency level of English.

Analysis of data & findings

Findings

College background

The U.N higher secondary school is located in the rural area of Kantapada block under Cuttack district of Odisha. Socio-political and socio economic environment of the area seemed to be very supportive, but students are not benefited.

This is an autonomous and composite college of higher secondary education, degree education and postgraduate degree education.Especially for thedevelopment of language skills of higher secondary students, there was no such provision made by the government like language lab, smart classroom, and theory classroom of the students according to the comfortable of learning. It was found that in a single classroom, there are more than 100 students in the language class whichis the biggest obstacle for language learners.

Recommendations:

➢ There should be the provision of a spacious language lab along with all theequipment for the students.

➢ The sitting arrangement of the students in the classroom must be changedand each language classroom should contain not more than thirty students.

➢ Smart classroom should be used by theteachers properly.

Outcome from teacher's qualification:

Q.1 What is your academic qualification?

Subject	MA	BA	B.ED	ELT Training	Ph.D
Teacher A	✓	✓	X	X	
Teacher B	✓	✓	X	X	
Teacher C	✓	✓	X	X	✓

Skills of language	Materials/ Tools
Listening skill	Text Book
Speaking skill	Group discussion, debate competition etc. question answer session.
Reading skill	Text Books
Writing skill	Writing paragraphs from the text book, essay writing, advertisement writing and Notice writing.

Table – 3 Material for various skills:

The above table illustrates the use of materials in the language classroom by the teachers for the development of different skills in language such as for listening skill, teachers use only text book. For speaking skills teachers use different tools andmaterials such as group discussion, debate competition, question answer session in the classroom. They only use text books as material for this skill. Besides they also use the same materials for reading skill. There was no use of any modern technology for reading skill. Similarly for writing skill, they use only the prescribed text books, like paragraph, essay, diagram interpretation and notice writing etc. bythe council of higher secondary education of Odisha.

Recommendations:

➢ Regarding the use of materials and skill development in language,Teacher's should be trained first.
➢ Secondly, the mass education department and the management should beconscious of the language proficiency of the students.
➢ Rural areas students should be motivated to come to the class regularly andparticipate in the classroom activities.

Classroom observation activities:

There was conducted four classroom observation activities such as listening- speaking, reading and writing skill activity. Two of them are called receptive skills such as listening and reading and another

two of them are called productive skills such as: writing skill & speaking skills. Productive skills are developed through the listening and speaking skills. Though the students of this higher secondary school are not so weak in receptive skills, but they seem to be too much weak in speaking and writing. This two are the source of product in learning a language. This two skills must be developed among the students of the rural areas. I have focused on the development of the speaking skill and the writing skill.

This research project aims the use of techniques and methods in speaking and writing skills of second language learning.

Speaking skill:

Speaking skillis an important area of activity for second language learners. They should use the language for interpersonal purposes. There is need for speaking in virtually all situation where learners of second language participate in the L2 speech community. The language knowledge involved in bottom up process for speech production includes appropriate vocabulary, features of pronunciations, grammatical patterns that will convey intended meaning and understanding of discourse structures that will provide cohesion and coherence within a conversation or other spoken communication event. The top down process simultaneously involved in speech production required content knowledge about a topic, cultural knowledge thatinforms determination of properties and provides macro-social context for expression and knowledge of micro-social context such as the significance of the immediate communication activity. Speaker's role and relationship to addresses and appropriateness conditions.

Findings:

Speaking is considered to be one of the four macro skills necessary for effective communication. In the rural areas of Odisha, the problems of speaking skill is crucial. In order to find out the problems of the learners in speaking skill, I did the following activities among the students of higher secondary education. There was conducted two activities having seven students such as extempore speech and conversation.

Activity:

In the first activity, the following topics were given to the students to speak without preparation such as :"The impact of corona virus". The role of leader in the nation" and "The duty of the students in the society". The following problems were observed among the students in extempore speech and conversation activities.

(i)   Low confidence and nervousness:

Most of the students have the major problems i.e. lack of confidence, nervousness or anxiety. In speaking skill which is stated by **(Trent, 2009),**most of the college students are not confident in their ability to speak.Teachers must overcome their reluctance in order to change this situation.

(ii)   Lack of willingness:

Willing to communicate is part of a second language learning,which is the ultimate goal of language. The learners of the rural areas lack willingness. In this respect,*Julius Kuhl's* theory of action control is introduced as an expansion of the conceptual framework for the study of willingness to communicate

(WTC). Kuhl proposed three key concepts: Preoccupation, volatility and hesitation,which form partof the base from which WTC in the second language is built.

(iii) Lack of content knowledge:

Content knowledge and language integrate which is the most important part ofsecond language. Without knowledge in content, a speaker can not stand in the public now-a days. The learners of second language take a lot of time to think on a particular subject.

CLIL provides learners with a richer, more naturalistic settings that improves language acquisition and learning and thus contributes to a higher level of knowledge among learners of all abilities *(Lyster, 2007)*. The CLIL can be developedthrough grammar translation method and direct method. According to Shumin (1997), the problems of the higher secondary students of the rural areas can be divided into four main groups which can be adopted in the case of Kantapada Block.

1.   Students feel shy speaking English because they are afraid of making mistakes. It is usually seen at the initial level as they are afraid of being criticized by teachers and other students.
2.   Working on pairs (or groups) students often begin to use their native language.
3.   Student's don't have enough information on the topics discussed even in theirnative language.
4.   Students feel a lack of linguistics and verbal resources for solving the given task. In that case the teacher should create a friendly atmosphere of collaboration so that they will not be afraid of admitting their mistakes.

Implications and recommendations:

Based on the above problems of the learners the following techniques and methods should be applied in the classroom.

E-learning:

It is widely accepted that information technology and new developments in pedagogy provide opportunities to create well designed, Learners centered interactive, affordable, efficient and flexible e-learning environment *(Khan, 2005)*,. For this reason, it could be suggested that internet surfing is an alternate way to study English. Web based technologies and useful internet sites provides various new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and learners. Today it has become possible to enhance speaking skills with the help of tools such as skype, email, blogs, chats and mobile devices.

To build effective communication skills,students must learn to:

1)   Communicate using digital media and environments to support personal and group learning.
2)   Share information efficiently and effectively using appropriate digital media and environment.
3)   Communicate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively to different audiences using various media and formats.

Apart from that, the following activities should be done in the classroom.

➢   Reading aloud.
➢   Students give their thoughts on the topic assigned by teacher.
➢   Students listen to classmates'thoughts and respond.

- ➢ Oral diary
- ➢ Oral weekly report
- ➢ Group presentation on a completed project.
- ➢ Picture description
- ➢ Story telling
- ➢ Chained story telling
- ➢ Creating riddles
- ➢ Role play
- ➢ Debates
- ➢ Dramatic monologues

Secondly, we can choose any methods in ELT because all of them help to develop speaking skills. The teacher must use the following methodology for communicative competency.

1) Communicative language teaching method
2) Audio-lingual method
3) Grammar translation method
4) Silent way method
5) The direct method
6) The reading method

Promoting speaking confidence, together with appropriate task design, was recommended for the English skill development of ESL learners **(Bailey, 2005; Nuan, 2006;Patil, 2008; Trent, 2009; Zhang, 2009)**. Besides the other factors that enhanced speaking abilities including frequent listening to English materials such as listening to English music, watching English movies, listening to the radio, watching television programmes, and accessing multimedia websites. Practice and exposure to both listening and speaking activities in real world situations appeared to be practical method to promote speaking *(Songsiri, 2007)*.

Thirdly, classroom interaction is also necessary and useful as all educational strategy to enhance speaking skills. The role of the interaction in a classroomcontext in enhancing speaking skills comes from the understanding of its main type: teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction,where negotiation of meaning and the provision of feedback are highlighted. Classroom interaction involves verbal exchanges between learners and teachers.

Fourthly,students should be given motivation, encouragement, some psychological training, reassurance and counselling for removing their shyness and fear of being laughed at by their classmates and scolded by their teachers. Teachersshould also be trained not to discourage the students and to control the other students in order to provide a friendly and stimulating environment in the classroom.

Fifthly, linguistic skill such as familiarity with grammatical structures,vocabulary and phonetics should be emphasized by the teachers in the classroom.

Sixthly, ways of overcoming the language barrier. During my research I foundout that the main reason for poor speaking skill of rural area students was their reluctance to communicate for several reasons,including psychological discomfort and fear of making mistakes. In this respects,WTC (Willingness to communicate)has been proposed as one of the key concepts in L2 learning and instruction. Given that language development can occur only through interaction, it can be assumed that more

interaction leads to more language development and learning. Under this assumption, it is reasonable to argue that WTC, which has been found to influence the frequency of communication(**Clemen at, 2003; MacIntyre and Charos, 1996; Yashima et al., 2004**) can contribute to second language learning (SLL) and needs to be emphasized in L2 Pedagogy. Researchers have suggested that generating WTC is crucial component of modern language instruction (**MacIntyreet al., 1998, 2003**). WTC as a goal of language learning and instruction can lead to outcomes thatmay not be achieved when communicative competence is the only goal of language learning and instruction. By developing WTC, language instruction may achieve its social and political goal of bringing cultures into contact and nations together (*MacIntyreet al, 1998).* Besides when we create WTC in L2 learners, we can expect to produce more active language learners. First L2 learners with the high WTC are more likely to use L2in authentic communication which facilitates their language learning. Second, they can function as autonomous learners making independent efforts to learn the language through communication, without the teachers helps. Third, they can extend their learning opportunities by becoming involved in learning activities not only inside but also outside classrooms. SoWTC is a significant factor in determining the success of SLA or learning, which in term supports the need for WTC as a goal of L2 learning and instruction.

Seventhly, speaking skills can be developed through task-based materials:

There are some studies that had been conducted by some researchers related to task and speaking improvement. Mostly the previous research found that the use of task on learning could give impact on speaking improvement. *Wahidin (2016:149)* found that task based learning gives impact towards speaking skill. The pre-task activities could improve the students awareness towards the topic. It can help the students in getting background knowledge before speaking. The pair or group activity in task cycle also gave chance for them to decrease their communicative pressure. At least it increases their accuracy and fluency. Even *Albino (2017:8)* found that task-based learning could increase Fluency, grammar, utterances and interactional language on transactional conversation. During teachingprocess,the students were engaged to speak because the task promoted meaning making and focused on linguistic forms that use recasts as the corrective feed back. Then the students might be more fluent in speaking because the tasks were related to their real life situation.

In the current research *Anjum, et, al (2019: 289)* investigated that task-basedlearning could help students to be active in classroom activities. The students get speaking improvement in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, communication skills and speech pattern.

According to *N.S Prabhu (1987:1)* task-based learning is method that emphasizes communication activity through task accomplishment. The students are asked to use English while accomplishing the task. Therefore, this provides speakingfor students in the classroom.

From the explanation above, it is indicated that task-based learning influencesspeaking. Through task activities the students have chance to practice speaking skill within the group. Based on the result of this research, it can be implied that task- based learning can enhance the student's competence on speaking.

CONCLUSION

The basic aim of this research project is to find out the problems of the learners in the rural areas of Odisha in the process of learning English. It also provides the use of authentic learning materials and methods of teaching for second language. This project has identified the real problems of the learners in thesecond language i.e. lack of development of language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are the source of acquiring language. Generally listening and reading are called receptive skills whereas speaking and writing are called productive skills. I have focused on the productive skills of the senior secondary learners in the rural area of Odisha because they are very poor in both communicative competence and the writing skill.

In this study, I discussed the issues of communicative competence, methods of enhancing oral communication, motivation and ways of overcoming the language barrier. It was significant to learn different views of Indian and foreign researcherson the problems of speaking skills of students. So the aim this study: "the define strength and weakness of speaking skills of today's students in Odisha and to demonstrate the possibilities of speaking skills enhancement of students learning English" was achieved as we proved that the integrated use of modern techniques may create positive results and lead to the improvement of communicative competence. Learning English by using new methods in education and travelling and working abroad makes students willing to learn the language, develop their ability to speak fluently and help them overcome the language barrier. The findings from this study also shows that the main reason of poor speaking skills of rural area students in Odisha is their unwillingness to communicate due to many factors. WTC needs to be an important component of second language learning. So the main suggestion is to overcome the language barrier and build a strong WTC. Apartfrom that the CLIL (Content Learning and Integrated Language) is a new creative method that gives substance familiarity through a language that involves careful planning based on the different context. There are many condition for implementing the CLIL particularly proficiency in a language, knowledge in subject matter, intercultural communication, teacher training and polices among others. By implementing the CLIL, the teacher succeeded by involving in academic performance, critical thinking collaboration and through the interaction of classrooms. Besides, task based learning give significant influence in enhancing speaking skill of senior secondary students. TBL provides opportunity for studentsto practice speaking through the task accomplishment. In accomplishing task, the students are suggested to use English in doing, planning report and presenting the task. Through task-based activities, the students can practice their English in classroom, therefore it can improve their speaking skill. It emphasises a meaning making process rather than grammatical focused learning. This means the students are free to speak without much grammatical correction, therefore it can enhance their fluency in speaking. Also the use of real world task in TBL can activate students motivation to speak using target language. The motivated students have high effort to improve their speaking skill, automatically it also develops their speaking. Thus learning based on task is effective to enhance speaking. In the caseof writing skill, there are four studies for the category of genre based, Process genrebased and process product based. There are five studies on process based approach and one study from product based approach. All the approaches employed in the researches have their advantages and disadvantages yet a good and proper selection of approaches based on the students need is vital to make the students writing successful. Moreover enough time should be given to students to get used to a certain approach.

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