

A STUDY ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TRAINING OF LISTENING SKILLS WITH REFERENCE TO RURAL CBSE LEARNERS IN KERALA.

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ABSTRACT:

The literacy level in India is a serious threat to our educational system. The NCF 2005, has raised an alarm that in curriculum development and reform, learning needs to be made inclusive and meaningful, and teachers should be encouraged to move away from textbook culture. CBSE had made impressive strides in introducing Assessment of Listening and Speaking skills. The scenario in rural CBSE schools is not the same as practised globally. The need for language improvement stressing on Listening skill improvement is nullified. The textbook, though quantitative and qualitative, does not reach the target group in rural areas. Kerala, a state with highest literacy rate terms certain reasons for the negligence of listening skills. In reality, many of the schools take it up merely for the sake of examinations without getting sufficient level of training. A pilot study is conducted in Ottapalam, one of the rural regions in Kerala. The lack of proficiency in listening skills is considered as one of the factors that prevent them from acquiring the language. Though the syllabus provides sufficient activities for the betterment of the learners, their educational development is ultimately in the hands of teachers. The paper is based on the pilot study conducted to understand the training of listening skills with reference to their syllabus study. It describes the language learning and analyses the causes of the let-down in language acquisition.

KEYWORDS:

English Language Teaching, Rural Learners, CBSE Curriculum, Teaching Method.

INTRODUCTION:

India is a country with diverse multitude of cultures, religion and language. Almost 80% of Indian population live in rural regions. A majority of the population are unable to participate in the country's development because there is a deficiency in their language skill. Education plays an important role in village development. There is high number of rural people in developing countries. They require non-formal education so that they can avail education.

Schools in rural areas are promoted to raise the level of education and literacy in rural India. More than 40% of India's population is illiterate and cannot read or write. Schools in rural areas are inadequate and often equivalent to being non-existent. There is a difference between city and village student not in terms of brain or development but their initial environment, skills, learning ability, availability of infrastructure, and access to different facilities. All of these must be considered while making the curricula which should not be different but how it is going to be taught would make the difference. Encouraging the genuine rural students who are interested in education and make them competent is the need of the hour.

Several initiatives are taken by the CBSE curriculum to overcome the educational differences of rural students. But a large portion of these schools do not effectively practice the methods needed to be induced. Even tough learners get enrolled in such schools, the outcome is limited. Ineffective language training is one of the barriers in their education. The difference in their mother tongue and medium of instruction makes their learning difficult. The curriculum, medium of instruction and teachers contribute to their low level of achievement.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

CBSE schools are weighed heavy for the content of study and the method the subjects are imparted to the students. It is a belief that a student from CBSE can pass through any tough syllabus in their higher education. This may be true with subjects like Science and Mathematics, but what about Language study? A few urban schools in Kerala were targeted where the researcher identified that though the students were unable to score marks; their skills in Language acquisition were high. The reasons were domestic upbringing, schools with qualified teachers and additional classes in the form of camps, coaching and the like. Since CBSE is a common board across the globe, the Urban and Rural methodology would be the same.

An interaction was with a Kendriya Vidhyalaya senior faculty of the school, revealed certain aspects regarding their success in training the students.

- Qualified and experienced teachers are appointed to teach the students.
- Teacher exchange programme occurs in their schools across the globe. This helps the teacher to update themselves on new methods and trends in teaching.
- Students are given project work both individualised and as a group work.
- Oratorical competitions, Vocabulary quizzes, reading tests and essay writing competitions are conducted in the schools.
- Parents are educated and employed which leads to motivation in language acquisitions through social gatherings.

The researcher could not find any major problems in language acquisition in Kendriya Vidhyalaya students.

The operative method of language learning in rural schools with CBSE syllabus had to be analysed. A CBSE curriculum school was identified in Palapuram, Ottapalam.

An interaction with a senior teacher of the school was very helpful for the study. It was stated that the syllabus was a burden for both teachers and for students. Though the texts are culturally appropriate, it did not encourage critical thinking in students. The materials are

learner-friendly but more emphasis is given on Grammar, Speaking and Reading. It was stated that the textbook does not contain sufficient guidance for the teachers. It was also claimed that students do not have a proper base in language acquisition. The student's focus is not marks. She justifies by stating that students face examinations once in two weeks because the CBSE syllabus demands it. She asserts that the syllabus has to be liberalised. The expectations of the students are not met because the syllabus "pads" the students.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the educational scenario of rural CBSE learners with special reference to Listening Skills.
- To analyse the cause of learning problems.
- To understand the listening skills training problems of rural learners.

METHODOLOGY:

A micro approach was made to study and analyse the CBSE quality in education of rural learners. In the pilot study, a CBSE school in Palapuram was selected.

The study falls in the category of qualitative research as the hypothesis was formulated after the data was collected. The data was collected through Interviews, Observations, case studies and Experimental Group discussion.

THE PILOT STUDY:

A research was conducted with special reference to STD VIII students of a private CBSE school at Palapuram, Kerala. The research findings state that the students lack in a systematic listening practice. The students are given project work on topics which enable them to improvise their speaking, reading and writing skills. Though the syllabus highlights the need for listening skills through activities, the question paper does not have any option necessary to improve their listening skill or to place a test for their capability. It is a claim that listening has to be improved and that helps in supplementing their learning and also in due course the students can improve other skills. Majority of the students are first generation learners. So, teachers adopt a bilingual teaching method so the students would be able to understand the subject. The syllabus is "packed". Teachers find it to be a struggling task to finish the portions on time. There are 6 hours allotted for English language in a week. One unit takes six periods to be completed. Thereby, they are not able to train the students properly on the skills. Students are rarely able to perform the four skills. Nearly, 80% - 85% of the students are able to listen and reciprocate to the language. Students rarely speak and nearly 30% of the students score border marks for the examination. Students are not well-equipped with the skills. This is because 50% of the students are first generation learners. The social background plays a significant role in their skills acquisition. Students are taught the computer-oriented subjects in their computer classes and hence they are not introduced to the method of acquiring language with the aid of technology. Students show a likeness to use computers to learn as teachers feel that it would kindle the interest in students through

pictures, videos, and animations. Teachers welcome technology. But the strange fact is that the syllabus does not provide any scope for such usages.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). CBSE conducts two examinations, namely, the All India Secondary School Examination, AISSE (Class/Grade 10) and the All India Senior School Certificate Examination, AISSCE (Class/Grade 12). The examinations focus on the total achievement of language study but the feature of language skills are not focused on. Hence, scoring marks becomes the prime aspect while the perfection of language skills especially listening skill is not emphasized.

CONCLUSION:

Listening is not just something that happens naturally as most of us perceive. The training on listening skills has to be tuned and refined according to the needs of the learners. A majority of the experimental group belong to a community wherein external help with regard to language learning would be highly impossible. Trained teachers are to be employed in training such group of students. On the other hand, it is the language and other subject teachers who handle the class for English. The students who belong to the rural population are not trained properly. The emphasis should be on Listening skills which is the foundation for any language acquisition. Though the turn of the century has witnessed many positive changes in these areas, we are yet to attain the expected level of listening skill practices in the schools. CBSE has played a significant role in introducing listening skills in its curriculum and its recent attempt to introduce listening skills in examination is a promising move towards effective language teaching practices.

ABBREVIATIONS:

- CBSE- Central Board of Secondary Education.
- NCF - National Curriculum Framework.

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