LEARNING DIFFICULTIES/ DISABILITY AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN ODISHA: A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY

MRS.BHARATI NAYAK

ABSTRACT

Learning difficulties/disability is the major constraint among school children in study of English language. Majority students more specifically in rural areas find had reality to coup with English learning. The moment, they hear something in English. They start feeling uneasiness. Such hearing difficulties for students also invite insurmountable difficulties for the English subject teacher. In Odisha learning difficulties of students in English language at secondary level is a major concern for both the subject teacher and the parents. As per earlier studies nearly 60 % students in Odisha have profound learning problem in English. Even majority student find it as great difficulty to listen and to understand the English language. The present paper is an evidence to understand the conflicting correct of the problem. It seeks to find the under laying reasons for such bourgeoning problem of learning difficulties. What are the remedial measures to be taken to do away with such problem? This paper critically valuates the problem faced by students in learning English language through empirical multi stakeholder's perception study and a diagnostic study on the basis of findings, attempts has been made to address the problems faced by students in learning English language.

Key Words: Learning Difficulties, Intellectual Disability, Mild Mental Retardation, Low Achiever.

1. INTRODUCTION

Differences, Difficulties, and Disability in second language learning are varied and challenging to both learners and instructors. These problems take on a greater level of severity for children who learn English Second Language (ESL), whose understanding, social identity, and sense of participation are threatened by often subtle and obscure language learning disadvantages. Instructors and program directors should explore reasons for students' lack of expected progress and apply useful adjustments, accommodations, and teaching Techniques to help ensure the success of a wider variety of learners, based on learning strengths and styles that have proven essential to successful second language learners in particular.

Language is the mirror of the society. This may be native or foreign language. Without the proficiency, no one can develop in his personal life or for the society as a whole. Besides our native language 'Odia' and national language 'Hindi', English language is foreign language for us. As to learn English language, the children of Odisha faced difficulties to adopt this language as like as native language. This language act as subject for language study in our schools to as second language and third language**.** As the point of higher/advanced study, this language is inevitable to learn for better understanding and higher study.

Most of the Students have various difficulties and problems in learning English. They make different mistakes in English pronunciation, grammar, and orthography and vocabulary usage. There is a connection between the native/mother language of a learner and the particular difficulties in learning and using English and the kind of mistakes a learner typically makes in English pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary as there is native/mother language interference in learning and using English.

Vocabulary is one of the most comprehensive and difficult aspects of English for Indian students to master thoroughly. They should first concentrate on learning the most frequently used and therefore most important English vocabulary for their practical real life needs Multiple sense, English words and synonyms (words with a similar meaning) present special difficulty for foreign learners. Other difficulties in learning and using English vocabulary include fixed word collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, proverbs and regional differences in vocabulary usage. Learning difficulties in English is witnessed among Indian students in terms of spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

English usage can also be formal and informal. Formal English is the language of the mass media, education, business, economy, commerce, technology, science, etc. Informal English includes colloquial, slang and dialect usage. It is harder for foreign learners to master informal than formal English vocabulary.

The present paper we have tried to find out the learning difficulties in English language among students at secondary level in Odisha through a diagnostic study and multi stakeholder perception on the problem in Gop Block of Puri district of Odisha.

2.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learning difficulties are often the result of an intellectual difficulties, physical sensor disability, emotional difficulties, lack of educational opportunities, and mismanagement of schooling and environmental factors. To learn this language requires constant practice and patience. The kind of feeling that prevails among students is

that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery over English language. This kind of tendency prevents students from learning new languages like English. Since most of the students are first generation learners, how can a student get acquainted with English as foreign language without any guidance from their parents and others? Learning difficulties in English language is found to be major problem in India and more so in Odisha. Mor importantly who are English language learners are sometimes misidentified as having learning disability, as these children are from impoverished background. The numbers of such type of students are more who encounter special problem in spelling, reading and writing English. The present paper, through a diagnostic study and multi stakeholder's perception on the problem highlights the conflicting currents of the problem, difficulties among 7th class students in learning English language.

3.   CONCEPTUAL DIAGNOSIS OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH

So far as learning of English language is concerned, the difficulties are multi dimensional. Research has unfolded that majority students have learning difficulties in English language due to basic reading comprehension, written expression, language disorders deficits in oral expression and listening comprehensions.

Experts argue that difficulty in learning English sometimes found to be genetic or hereditary get which cannot be altogether ruled out (OPEPA, 2011). Research confirmed that dyslexia has a hereditary basis (Fisher et.al, 1999) and behavior genetic analysis have shown that phonological and orthographic skills share heritable variance with hard recognition processes (Olson, Datta and De fries, 1999) complete lack of parental surveillance of homework, too much parental importance on grades secured by students, over and under guidance by parents were found to be related to an extrinsic motivational orientation and lower academic perforce. (Bins burg and Bronstein, 1993) Favourable school environment basically good teaching skill by trained teachers with special attention towards low achievers in language learning can be an effective solution to address the problem (OPEPA, 2011). Socio economic factors greatly impact English learning of students. It directly perpetrates poor concentration along with reading and writing difficulties (Janaki,1986). Besides psychological stress due to fear of school activities and English subject teacher, isolation among friends, rejection by teachers and difficulties in school subjects etc greatly contribute towards the problem of learning difficulties. (Jogi et.al, 1992). Finaly experts have found that social dynamics such as large family size, low financial status and low educational status of parents, low parental involvement and encouragement are also greatly responsible for scholastic backwardness of students (Ginsburg and Bronstein, 1993

4.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As review of literature in an important component of research, we reviewed some of the earlier works on our topic of research, so that the objective of our study could be well addressed.

Kannan, R. (2009) finds in his study that Twelve years of school study do not make students mastery over English. Why this happen? While they are in schools English is not taught properly. As majority of the students are hailed from rural areas, bilingual method is adopted in language classes. This method helps only to slow learners to some extent. Moreover, this act reduces the real learning process as a whole. If a student does not understand anything in English, he/she asks for explanation in L1 i.e. in his/her mother tongue. Consequently, the English teacher is in a state to adopt bilingual method. ELT specialists view this as a wrong methodology.

According to **Schwarz and Terrill (2000)** While much of the discussion on differences, difficulties, and other hindrances to learning ESL in the literature is generated in the context of learning disabilities (LD), and more specifically, language learning disabilities (LLD), the effects of the lack of progress can be critical and there can be many reasons for the lack of progress outside of the possible presence of LD.

According to **MacIntyre and Gardner (1991, as cited in von Worde),** language anxiety can interfere with the acquisition, retention, and production of the new language. He suggested that language anxiety may cause problems with Self-esteem, self-confidence and risk-taking ability and "ultimately hampers proficiency in the second language". At least some of this language anxiety may be generated by instructors and teaching methods (Young, 1991, as cited in von Worde), which suggests that the teaching-style/learning-expectation mismatch mentioned above can create more than just a contradiction of preferences in classroom methods.

Holm and Dodd (1996) outlined that non alphabetic first language learners of ESL had limited phonological awareness, and this restricted them to visual processing of non words that required phonological processing and created difficulties for them. At the same time, they found that the alphabetic learners of non alphabetic languages had some phonological awareness, and that they would use this in the processing of non words.

Ganschow et al. (1998) have revealed that students who demonstrated Foreign Language (FL) learning problems also exhibited native language learning differences that affected their learning of a foreign language, and that problems with one language skill such as phonology/orthography were likely to impact negatively on

both the native language and the FL. Further, they established that good FL learners had significantly stronger native oral and written language skills and FL aptitude.

Comstock and Kamara (2002) reported that Language Learning Disabilities (LLDs) are often unrecognized in adults, even by those who have them. Many individuals with LLD do a remarkable job as they compensate for these disabilities, but can suffer frustration, misunderstandings, and other communication breakdowns. The characteristics and severity of LLD vary and can influence many areas of life, including: (a) self-esteem, (b) personal relations, (c) social interactions, and (d) employment, as well as (e) educational pursuits. The majority of attention has been directed toward childhood LLD, but the underlying problems are likely to stay with the individual throughout adulthood.

5.   OBJECTIVES

The present research paper based on a diagnostic study of learning difficulty in English among school children in a particular specific block of Puri district in Odisha state with the following objectives.

- To identify the constraints of English language in study area
- To diagnose the nature of learners in study area
- To trace out he difficulty/disability of English language among children
- To suggest appropriate measures to do away with the problem

6.   METHODOLOGY

Since the micro study in an empirical study on learning difficulties of school children in Odisha, the methodology followed is survey method. Since the scope of the study is limited and micro in nature, we have Gop block as our universe, in the first stage, we have tried to draw a sample out of the total universe. In second stage, Sutan educational cluster has selected. In third stage, five schools from a developed GP and five schools from underdeveloped a GP have selected with proxy to literacy status. In the last, randomly, 40 students of class-VII of 5 schools of each GP are examined with structured test format which was conducted in two centres.   Besides that perception of multi-stakeholders such as school teachers, Parent, committee members have collected regarding problem and prospects of English language and learners among secondary level English learning children.

Table-1: Sample selection

Sl.No	Type of GP	No. of School	No. of Student
1	Developed	5	40
2	Under Developed	5	40

Moreover, Information gathered from the available literature provided a foundation for understanding and helped to suggest a variety of reasons for the difficulties/disability of children; those are learning English and Interviews with them provided testimony and insight in this qualitative study.

7. PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Puri district has been divided in to 3 Educational District namely Puri, Nimapara and Pipili. A total no. of 11 blocks are there in these entire 3 Educational Districts. Puri education district comprises the blocks i.e. Puri, Brahamagiri, Krushna Prasad, Kanas and Satyabadi where as Pipli Education district has two blocks i.e. Pipli and Delang and Nimapara education district has 4 blocks i.e. Nimapara, Gop, Kakatpur and Astarang. The educational administrative set up of the district is headed by C.I of schools at district level, D.I of a school at education district levels and S.I of school at block level. The following table shows the details of schools in sample district.

Table-7.1: No. of schools in Puri District

S.N	Block/ Municipal Area	Primary Schools/ Primary Section in UPS or Secondary School					Upper Primary Schools/ Upper Primary Section attached to Primary or Secondary School				
				Unaided Private					Unaided Private		
		Govt. including local bodies	Govt. aided	Recognized	Unrecognized	Total	Govt. including local bodies	Govt. aided	Recognized	Unrecognized	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Astarang (R)	111	0	4	1	116	37	8	3	1	49
2	Brahmagiri (R)	162	0	9	12	183	50	31	8	4	93
3	Delang (R)	136	0	7	5	148	74	4	7	1	86
4	**Gop (R)**	**200**	**0**	**17**	**5**	**222**	**78**	**5**	**13**	**3**	**99**
5	Kakatpur (R)	128	1	19	1	149	48	8	12	1	69
6	Kanas (R)	156	0	1	12	169	63	13	1	4	81
7	Krushnaprasad (R)	122	0	5	1	128	59	15	6	1	81
8	Nimapara (R)	222	0	9	13	244	78	11	7	7	103
9	Pipili (R)	158	0	6	7	171	59	5	3	2	69

10	Puri Sadar (R)	165	0	8	8	181	58	8	8	3	77
11	Satyabadi (R)	136	0	4	6	146	54	2	2	3	61
12	Konark NAC (U)	10	0	4	2	16	6	1	3	2	12
13	Nimapara NAC (U)	15	0	4	5	24	7	1	4	3	15
14	Pipili NAC (U)	12	1	4	2	19	6	1	3	1	11
15	Puri MPL (U)	48	0	31	11	90	31	8	27	3	69
	Total	**1,781**	**2**	**132**	**91**	**2,006**	**708**	**121**	**107**	**39**	**975**

Source: Puri District portal updated 2017

8   DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS

Diagnostic analysis of learning difficulties is faced by school children in English language in the sample block. The present study is to ascertain the learning deficiencies strata among the learners at secondary level in English language. School wise and question wise status on learning deficiencies are presented in the following tables.

It is revealed from table-6.1 that the achievement of class-VII students in English language in developed and under developed Gram Panchayat. For this mark records have been collected from sample schools those mark were students achieved in last examination and compiled in Gram Panchayat level.

Table-8.I: GP wise average Marks secured by English learners

Sl. No	GP	Above 80%	Above 65%	Above 50%	Above 35%	Less 35%
1	Developed	5.48	13.76	21.56	37.41	21.79
2	Under Developed	3.23	8.45	17.56	36.45	34.31
3	Total	4.36	11.1	19.56	36.93	28.05

Source: Compiled from School records

It is observed that average as a whole sample, highest 37 % students have secured above 35 % marks, followed by 28 % students securing less than 35 % marks, 19.56 students are above 50 % marks, 11.10 % students have secured above 65 % marks and only 4.36 % students have secured above 80 % marks in English language test.

In comparison between two sample GPs, same trend is observed which indicate the low performance of students in English language. Developed GP has more performance rather than under developed GP.

As per the study objectives, GP wise position of correct answer scored by students in English test conducted in class-VII level. Accordingly study has covered 80 no. of students at class-VII level for language test. It was administered in two sets of forms (Form-I and form-2) for this purpose as a result of the diagnostic study in English test has been given below on GP wise.

Table-8.2: Percentage of students read correctly the English words (Form-I)

Words	Developed GP (N-40)		Under Developed GP (N-40)		Total GP (N-80)	
	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks
Government	36	90.00	23	57.50	59	73.75
Sovereign	22	55.00	14	35.00	36	45.00
Destroy	20	50.00	12	30.00	32	40.00
Development	21	52.50	16	40.00	37	46.25
Game	28	70.00	18	45.00	46	57.50
Internet	26	65.00	11	27.50	37	46.25
Essential	27	67.50	15	37.50	42	52.50
Better	25	62.50	14	35.00	39	48.75
School	36	90.00	21	52.50	57	71.25
Student	31	77.50	24	60.00	55	68.75
Average		68.00		42.00		55.00

It is observed from table-6.2 that the percentage of students read correctly the English words; the test (Format-I) was conducted in two GPs. Out of total sample, average 55 % marks achieved by the schools under both GPs. In comparison between two GP, the students of schools under developed GP secured highest 68 % marks while the students of schools under under-developed GP have achieved 42 % marks, which indicates the low performance in reading skill.

Table-8.3: Percentage of students read correctly the English words (Form-II)

Words	Developed GP (N-40)		Under Developed GP (N-40)		Total GP (N-80)	
	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks
Metro	39	97.50	23	57.50	62	77.50
Conspiracy	26	65.00	14	35.00	40	50.00
Quantity	21	52.50	12	30.00	33	41.25

Wonderful	17	42.50	16	40.00	33	41.25
Environment	22	55.00	18	45.00	40	50.00
Carefully	21	52.50	11	27.50	32	40.00
Dare	31	77.50	15	37.50	46	57.50
Technical	22	55.00	14	35.00	36	45.00
Livestock	23	57.50	13	32.50	36	45.00
Universe	20	50.00	11	27.50	31	38.75
Average		60.50		36.75		48.63

It is observed from table-6.3 that the percentage of students read correctly the English words; the test (Format-II) was conducted in two GPs. Out of total sample, average 48.63 % marks achieved by the schools under both GPs. In comparison between two GP, the students of schools under developed GP secured highest 60.50 % marks while the students of schools under under-developed GP have achieved 36.75 % marks, which indicates the low performance in reading skill.

It is observed from table-6.4 that the percentage of students write the correct English words; the test (Format-I) was conducted in two GPs. Out of total sample, average 51.50 % marks achieved by the schools under both GPs. In comparison between two GP, the students of schools under developed GP secured highest 60.75 % marks while the students of schools under under-developed GP have achieved 42.25 % marks, which indicates the low performance in writing skill.

Table-8.4: Percentage of students writes the correct dictation in English (Form-I)

Words	Developed GP (N-40)		Under Developed GP (N-40)		Total GP (N-80)	
	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks
Kite	29	72.50	18	45.00	47	58.75
Long	25	62.50	12	30.00	37	46.25
Daughter	10	25.00	13	32.50	23	28.75
Tiger	32	80.00	17	42.50	49	61.25
Mother	31	77.50	18	45.00	49	61.25
Return	18	45.00	14	35.00	32	40.00
Elephant	23	57.50	19	47.50	42	52.50
Education	20	50.00	16	40.00	36	45.00
School	34	85.00	26	65.00	60	75.00
Student	21	52.50	16	40.00	37	46.25
Average		60.75		42.25		51.50

It is observed from table-6.5 that the percentage of students write the correct English words; the test (Format-II) was conducted in two GPs. Out of total sample, average 51 % marks achieved by the schools under both GPs. In comparison between two GP, the students of schools under developed GP secured highest 59.50 % marks while the students of schools under under-developed GP have achieved 42.50 % marks, which indicates the low performance in writing skill.

Table-8.5: Percentage of students writes the correct dictation in English (Form-II)

Words	Developed GP (N-40)		Under Developed GP (N-40)		Total GP (N-80)	
	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks
Apple	36	90.00	31	77.50	67	83.75
Ballon	26	65.00	20	50.00	46	57.50
Cat	21	52.50	18	45.00	39	48.75
Deer	17	42.50	14	35.00	31	38.75
Elephant	23	57.50	17	42.50	40	50.00
Fish	21	52.50	12	30.00	33	41.25
Goat	25	62.50	13	32.50	38	47.50
Hen	32	80.00	18	45.00	50	62.50
Inkpot	17	42.50	15	37.50	32	40.00
Parrot	20	50.00	12	30.00	32	40.00
Average		59.50		42.50		51.00

Table-8.6: Test in reading passages from text book

Words	Developed GP (N-40)		Under Developed GP (N-40)		Total GP (N-80)	
	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks
Very Good	18	45.00	14	35.00	32	40.00
Good	22	55.00	17	42.50	39	48.75
Average	24	60.00	18	45.00	42	52.50
Poor	18	45.00	23	57.50	41	51.25
Very Poor	22	55.00	26	65.00	48	60.00
Average		52.00		49.00		50.50

It is observed from table-6.6 that the Test in reading passages from text book, which was conducted in two GPs. Out of total sample, average 50.50 % marks achieved by the schools under both GPs. In comparison between two GP, the students of schools under developed GP secured highest 52 % marks while the students of schools under under-developed GP have achieved 49 % marks, which indicates the low performance in passage reading skill.

Tble-8.7 Grammar test

Words	Developed GP (N-40)		Under Developed GP (N-40)		Total GP (N-80)	
	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks	Frequency	% of Marks
Very Good	15	37.50	12	30.00	27	33.75
Good	17	42.50	16	40.00	33	41.25
Average	19	47.50	17	42.50	36	45.00
Poor	23	57.50	24	60.00	47	58.75
Very Poor	25	62.50	28	70.00	53	66.25
Average		49.50		48.50		49.00

It is observed from table-6.6 that the grammar test, which was conducted in two GPs. Out of total sample, average 49 % marks achieved by the schools under both GPs. In comparison between two GP, the students of schools under developed GP secured highest 49.5 % marks while the students of schools under under-developed GP have achieved 48.5 % marks, which indicates the low performance in passage reading skill.

9. SUMMARY ON THE DIAGNOSTIC TEST

In English language test, more than 70% questions are not answered by the students of all the sampled panchayats. Among the sample panchayats, developed panchayat is in ahead of other study area. In all the tests, achievement level of developed panchayat is satisfactory in comparison to under developed panchayat However, as per the diagnostic study, Student's of under developed panchayat needs special attention to improve the English standard of class-VII students.

10. MULTI STATKE HOLDERS PERCEPTION ON THE PROBLEM

From the multi stake holders perception study, it has found that all most all stakeholders perceived that students of class-VII had difficult in English due to difference local pronunciation and text book language

- Shortage of subject trained teachers, a major obstacle for learning English in students.

- Panchayat wise comparison revealed that learning difficulties by students in English have noticed more frequently in Developed Gram Panchayat and less frequently in Under Developed Gram panchayat

- Again, a large majority stake holders perceived that language problem was the main reasons for class-VII students to have learning difficulties in English

- A large majority of stake holders perceived that textbooks do not have precise subject matter, sufficient practice sets and clarity of pictures.

- Stake holders' perception at the subject matter, presentation and practice tests in the text book in English has not encouraging and significant region wise variation were not noticed.

11.   SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

'Education for all' is the right of every child to be shaped to live a normal life and for sound/optimum all-round development of an individual. Success of universalisation of education does not mean universal enrollment only, but it required universal achievement of all children in the school going age. It is found from the result of the study that at least 21% of children in a class had learning difficulties most commonly writing and reading of English which is an alarming condition that needs attention. On the basis of diagnostic test and multi stake holders perception study the following recommendation are suggested.

- The role of parents in their child's learning is important. Having parents read and interact in a positive way with their child rather than reacting negatively to child's error improves reading achievement. So there is a need of guardian school dialogue as well as trained qualified subject teachers to overcome the problem.

- The teaching learning strategies often have to be more specific in order to meet the learning needs of the children.

- Student's progress is enhanced through task relevant feedback and motivating practice due care to be given for it

- Slow learners should be given extra coaching and counseling, if a particular student's performance is not good, he/she instead of being scolded should be separately counseled by the teacher.

- More attention is needed for girl children from ST, SC and rural communities' through unit tests, remedial classes and fields work should be mainstreamed for improved learning. Curriculum textbooks and session plan should be in place in reference to ground needs and requirements of different student group

- In learning of English language the teacher should use games, jokes, stories, etc to make the class more entertaining and motivating for learners. Teachers should make student's need extra texts, such as newspaper magazine, poem, short stories, etc To reinforce the listening skill, technical problems should be reduced through the help of tape recorders as many times as needed.

- The English class should be student-friendly learner centric, so that fear of learning English will be eradicated from students.

- To conclude, teaching learning is not one way process, it is a multiply process, which involves multi stakeholders. The school authority and specifically the subject teacher should take adequate step to make the English learning class room learner-friendly.

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