
Language Problems of Kok-borok Speaking Tribal Students of Tripura

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ABSTRACT:

The present study was carried out on the tribal students of secondary schools of four districts of Tripura namely West Tripura, South Tripura, North Tripura and Dhalai, which are recognized by S.E.B.T (Tripura Board of secondary education) to identify the language problems of kok-borok speaking tribal students studying through Bengali medium. Three hundred (300) tribal students were selected from urban, semi-urban and rural areas randomly. The study indicates that the tribal students are able to read and write English language, but no one of the selected student can speak English. Bengali is used as the medium of instruction in most of the secondary school in Tripura. It has been found from the data that some students mentioned that due to the lack of Kok-borok language medium schools they admitted in the school of other languages.

Keywords : *Language , Kok-borok , Tribal students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education of tribals has always been a matter a great concern and the lack of it has always had negative impact on the development of the tribal people (Bhattacharjee, 1996). Primary education in the rural and remote areas has suffered due to lack of institutional facilities, absence of teachers, study materials and other physical facilities in the primary schools. Similar problems have been found in the secondary and high schools also. It has been found that a very few schools are running properly in the remote areas of Tripura (Census Report, 1981, 1991 and 2001). It is well accepted that effective output of teaching is possible if it is done through the mother tongue of the student. But in Tripura Kok-borok speaking tribal students do not have the scope to receive education through their mother tongue. So, how far the secondary education is effective for them is a question.

Medium of instruction is the main obstacle of tribal society and education. There are number of unilingual tribal communities who remained unaffected by the process of acculturation and have

not picked up the regional language. Adoption of the regional language as the medium of instruction for them may mean denial education (Sinha ,2000).

For the tribals the medium of instruction in the schools is a genuine and difficult problem. Even after 67 years of Independence we have not been able to provide the tribals education in their mother tongue. The tribal children are not generally able to follow the lessons given to them in the school in the language which is totally strange to them.

But the problem of medium of instruction is still there and no final and static solution has so far been evolved out to tide over this erratic problem and more particularly in Tripura. The problem of the medium of instruction appears to be very critical because most of the students are coming from tribal family. The collision arises between their language used outside the school, in the family, surrounding environments and language used as a medium of instruction in the secondary schools of Tripura. For this reasons tribal students of Tripura have been still facing a crucial problem in the field of education. As a result, the society has to face many agitational programs which ultimately given-rise, to some revolutionary organizations (Raja,1984).

Under such circumstances a scientific analysis was needed to study the language problems of Ko-korok speaking tribal students.

2. OBJECTIVES

To identify the language problems of Kok-borok speaking tribal students regarding - (a) problems in reading, writing and speaking, (b) medium of instructions and (c) problems related to Kokborok language.

3. METHODOLOGY

Sample

In this study the tribal students of secondary schools of the four districts of Tripura namely West Tripura, South Tripura, North Tripura and Dhalai, which are recognized by S.E.B.T (Tripura Board of secondary education). Three hundred (300) tribal students from ten secondary schools three from urban areas four from semi- urban areas and three from rural areas were selected in the study randomly. Only the Kok-borok speaking tribal students of secondary schools were included. considering the availability of Kokborak speaking tribal students 30 students from each school were selected for the sample. The schools are as follows :-

1) Boys Budhjang H.S. Schools (S1) ; 2) Bijoy Kumar H.S. Girls Schools (S2) ; 3) Birendra Nagar H.S. Schools (S3) ; 4) Champak Nagar H.S. Schools (S4) ; 5) Riyabari High School (S5) ; 6) Kirit Bikram Institution (S6) ; 7) Pabiachara H.S. Schools (S7) ; 8) Gachiram Para H.S. Schools (S8) ; 9) Chandrai Para H.S. Schools (S9) and 10) Dalubari High School (S10).

Tool

Questionnaire to identify the problems faced by the Kok-borok speaking tribal students in secondary schools was constructed.

A questionnaire on language problem was constructed for the students of Kok-borok speaking tribal group. During the process of construction following steps were adopted. Items related to the medium of instruction at the secondary schools were collected and Items related to the language problems of tribal Kok-borok speaking students were selected and arranged systematically. The initially prepared questionnaire was presented before 10(ten) experts in this fields. They were requested to go through the items related to the language problems of Kok-borok speaking tribal students of the secondary schools.

According to experts' opinion the items were modified or altered where necessary. The questionnaire was again presented before the same group of expert. According to their suggestion the questionnaire ready for try out. The questionnaire was administered on thirty students parallel to the sample group. The students were asked to give the responses against each item. On the basis of student responses minor modification of statements were made. The questionnaires were again presented before the experts. According to the experts opinion a questionnaire was finalized.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tool was administrated on the respective target sample. School survey was conducted with the co-operation of the school teachers. The school survey was undertaken on the selected secondary schools. Before conducting survey personal contact was made with the school teachers and they were requested for whole hearted co-operation to the researcher. After a thorough discussion, the teachers of the selected schools were agreed to extend their co-operation for supplying necessary records and giving appropriate responses against the questionnaire. Among various statements only the following three statements were analyzed for this study.

Table-1: Students able to read, write and speak in English language

Type of schools	No. of students	Able to read & write English (%)	Able to speak English (%)
S1	30	100	0
S2	30	100	0
S3	30	100	0

S4	30	100	0
S5	30	100	0
S6	30	100	0
S7	30	100	0
S8	30	100	0
S9	30	100	0
S10	30	100	0
Total	300	100	00

S1- S3 =Urban school, S4 - S7 = Semi-urban school and S7- S10= Rural school

It is seen from the results of Table – 1 on the issue of English Language ability that all the Kok-borok speaking tribal students are able to read and write English language, but no one of the selected student can speak English.

It is evident from Table-2 that over all data of ten schools indicate the trend of difficulty level of Kok-borok speaking tribal students in the medium of instruction. Only 5% students said that the medium of instruction followed by the schools is very difficult, 66% mentioned more or

Table-2: Difficulty level of Kok-borok speaking tribal students on the medium of instruction in schools

Type of schools	No. of students	Medium of Instruction		
		Very difficult (%)	More or less difficult (%)	Not difficult (%)
S1	30	10.00	56.67	33.33
S2	30	6.67	86.67	6.67
S3	30	0	53.3	46.67
S4	30	3.33	56.67	40.00
S5	30	3.33	76.67	20.00
S6	30	10.00	73.33	16.67
S7	30	3.33	83.33	13.33

S8	30	3.33	70.00	26.67
S9	30	10.00	53.33	33.33
S10	30	0	50.00	50.00
Total	300	5.00	66.00	29.0

S1- S3 =Urban school, S4 - S7 = Semi-urban school and S7- S10= Rural school

less difficult and 29% said that the medium of instruction is not at all difficult. Bengali is used as the medium of instruction in most of the secondary school in Tripura. The results highlighted that Kok-borok speaking tribal students generally may not face any serious difficulty for the medium of instruction.

Table- 3: Opinion of the Kokborok speaking tribal students regarding the medium of instruction in schools (why they enrolled themselves in hools following medium of instruction other than Kokborok language)

Type of schools	Total no. of students	Percentage of students mentioned				
		Easy to understand (%)	Less expenditure (%)	According to parents wishes (%)	Lack of Kokborak school (%)	Advantage for further education (%)
S1	30	10.00	0	3.33	63.33	23.33
S2	30	10.00	10.00	6.67	43.33	30.00
S3	30	16.67	3.33	13.30	16.67	50.00
S4	30	3.33	0	23.30	40.00	33.30
S5	30	0	0	3.33	50.00	46.67
S6	30	0	0	30.00	30.00	40.00
S7	30	6.67	0	20.00	40.00	33.33
S8	30	6.67	0	50.00	13.33	30.00

S9	30	6.67	0	46.67	20.00	26.67
S10	30	0	0	23.33	36.67	40.00
Total	300	6.00	1.33	22.00	35.33	35.33

S1- S3 =Urban school, S4 - S7 = Semi-urban school and S7- S10= Rural school

It has been found from the Table-3 that, 6% students indicated Bengali as the medium of instruction is easy to understand, 22% indicated, they enrolled on the wishes of their parents, 35.33% students mentioned due to the lack of Kok-borok language medium schools they admitted in the school of other languages, and 35.33% students mentioned, they enrolled themselves for future higher education.

The study was conducted to estimate the problems of Kok-borok speaking tribal students in secondary schools. The question specifies for the medium of instruction at the secondary level. Majority of the Kok-borok speaking tribal students had received their primary education through their mother tongue (Kok-borok language) but later they had to enroll themselves in schools having Bengali/English/Hindi as the medium of instruction (Chowdhury, 1994). This is because a large number of primary schools have crept up in the tribal dominated areas with the respective tribal languages of those area as medium of instruction. These tribal languages even Kok-borok language are not adequately developed. For this reasons they are unable to use it as a medium of instruction at the secondary level (Government of Tripura, 1992). So, the Kokborok speaking tribal students studying in such schools have to adopt a new medium of instruction after the primary stage. That Kok-borok speaking tribal students in general feel that if Kok-borok language (mother tongue) and the medium of instruction, both are same then it will be highly beneficial for the students especially in case of rural one.

5. CONCLUSION

Both urban and rural students opted first preference to Kok-borok language as this language is their mother tongue and medium of instruction at the primary level. It is remarkable that Kok-borok language has more influence on rural students than students of urban area. But most of the students of urban and rural area are going to the Bengali medium schools at secondary level due to greater advantages during their education and to enjoy facilities and guidance in school (Ozha,1966). From the above findings, it can be concluded that Tripura having not a clear-cut linguistic policy regarding medium of instruction about the Kok-borok speaking tribal students.

The Kok-borok speaking tribal students are therefore bound to study through Bengali/English/Hindi or other language medium at the secondary level.

It may be mentioned that the Government of Tripura should form a “Tribal Language Cell” designed to prepare learning materials for school going children especially for Kok-borok speaking tribal students. These learning materials must be prepared based on mainly popular tribal folk tales, folk songs, poems and process written by modern writers of Kok-borok language (Tiwari, 1980). Time has come to prepare “Adult Literacy Materials” in Kok-borok language. To fulfill this objective teachers and social workers working in the Literacy Movement should take up this job. As a result Kok-borok speaking tribal children can be included with the mainstream of advanced society.

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