



Language Learning- Instructional Language and Local Language of Children of Kaani Tribes Thiruvananthapuram District Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Anthropologists defined tribe as people sharing some specific social relation within a distinct area, vernacular, culturally similar integrated communal group (Harris, 2001). Tribal are a cluster of ethnic cluster of ethnic decent families having a specific identical surname, speak the same language may be local language also, having specific cultural aspects in rituals and functions. (Majumdar, 1958). Here, in this study, Kaani tribes or kaanikkaran tribes in Palode reserve forest Thiruvananthapuram district is considered. The word Kaani means land's hereditary proprietor. Kaani is evolved from *kaan* which means forest. Kaani tribes are fully forest based and dependant. Here in this study, researchers intended to find out the opinion of parents and teachers about the linguistic integration of Kaani children in normal classrooms and their suggestions to overcome the same.

Introduction

Kerala is having diverse variety of tribal population in almost all the fourteen districts of Kerala. So many tribes can be seen in between the mainstreamed pockets of the state. Also in most marginalized forest areas which are geographically separated from the mainstreamed areas can be seen most. Most of the tribes' lives related to forest and mountains bordering Kerala and Tamilnadu. Their livelihood will be related to the forest gatherings or specific products. Tribes are honest and open minded in their trades and business. This social living and collaborative mentality inside the hamlet is extraordinary. Sharing of resources to all the needed ones without considering the monetary aspects is their prime value.

They have ethnic lifestyles, culture, rituals, heritage and practices. Their history can be traced through their oral transmission of tradition and religious practices to generations (Mathew et al, 2016). The tribes are moulded as per the particular geographic and sociological aspects. Their development and evolution based upon their communication with the mainstreamed areas. To communicate well, language is an important factor. Since the Kaani tribes possess Kaani bhasha (local language) like major tribes, they will have integration problems with the mainstreamed society. In schools also, children from marginalized tribal hamlets like Kaani are facing issues in organic integration to learning activities which are in instructional language.

Children from tribal population are enrolled in primary schools in the premises of their hamlets. When they are enrolled in schools, even in pre schools or first standard, teachers who are qualified as per government standards are coming from mainstreamed areas. Since the children are dealing with a specific ethnic culture and linguistic background, they feel so many issues in linguistic integration with instructional language which is Malayalam or English. Children feel uncomfortable due to the issues of introduction of a very new language immediately after the enrolment. Researcher formed a structured interview for the teachers and parents with regard to the issues and difficulties of Kaani children in schools. Also the interview extended to some open ended questions related to the suggestive solutions of the issues related to linguistic and local specific issues.

Definition of the problem

Language learning- Instructional Language and local language of children of Kaani tribes Thiruvananthapuram District Kerala.

Definition of key terms.

Instructional Language: The language in which classroom instructions and learning materials are provided with.

Local language: The language spoken by a local group with or without letters.

Kaani tribes: An ethnic tribe seen in Kerala and Tamilnadu forest areas.

Sample selected for the study

50 parents from Kaani tribes, Palode reserve forest Thiruvananthapuram.

Teachers from SKV School Palode, Thiruvananthapuram.

Method of study

The investigator adopted survey method for this study. The investigator decided to use questionnaire on the linguistic adaptation and learning related issues of Kaani tribes.

Tools used

Structured interview with 25 questions were implemented for teachers as well as parents.

Interview questions are based on the areas like

- Children have integration issues with instructional language and experiences in normal classrooms.
- Children are less confident in primary classes due to the introduction of a new language in primary classes.
- Parents are concerned about the immediate introduction of instructional language in primary classes.
- Teacher faces difficulties in communicating and imparting learning objectives due to linguistic issues related to the introduction of new instructional language in primary classes.

Statistical analysis

Likert's three point scale was implemented to analyze the opinion of the respondents.

3 Point Likert scale which offers agree and disagree as to the polar points along with a neutral option. Commonly used 3 point Likert scale points are Agree, Disagree and Neutral.

Mean values and related conclusions were made out of Microsoft excel.

Analysis and interpretation

52% of parents opinioned that Children have integration issues with instructional language and experiences in normal classroom. 89% of teachers think that Children are less confident in primary classes due to the introduction of a new language in primary classes. Parents are not at all concerned about the introduction of mainstreamed language immediately in classrooms. Parents wish the child to speak Malayalam and English fluently. 94% Teachers faces difficulties in communicating and imparting learning objectives due to linguistic issues related to the introduction of new instructional language in primary classes. Teachers think that the support of a volunteer in local language can help in easy integration.

Conclusion

From the study, it can be concluded that children have integration issues in normal classrooms due to the local language spoken in their homes. But the parents intend to speak mainstreamed languages like Malayalam and English. They firmly believe that mainstreamed languages can be contributive in their better future. Teachers feel issues with local language in preliminary years of schooling, but children easily integrate in later years. As per the opinion of teachers, providing ample importance in creative works related to local language with the help of a volunteer from the same hamlet in school can build up confidence in children. Equity means considering all the children equally with considering their local surroundings and experience with similar dignity. Schools must be more equitable and welcoming for marginalized children with improved strategies and man power.

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