

Role of The Teaching Learning Environment of English And Mother Tongue on The General Anxiety Level of School Students of The Hilly Region of Kalimpong



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Abstract

The people of Kalimpong town are blessed with the beauty of nature and at the same time rural people of the same hilly region are deprived of the basic amenities due to their geographical location which makes it impossible for them to avail facilities easily. In spite of the variations in the socio-economic conditions of the people there, they have managed to provide adequate educational opportunities to their younger generations. For the same reason there are two types of schools in this area: i) The first type includes the private schools where students from different corners of the country, even from the neighbouring countries come to take education in the calm and blissful environment of Kalimpong at the cost of a huge amount of programme fee, boarding and lodging fee. Such schools are totally of English medium quality of education having English as first language. ii) The second type includes those schools which are administered by the government directly or through grant-in-aid or by the local municipalities. Here the cost of education is much low and students from the middle and lower strata of the society get admitted. Such schools offer Nepali as the first language and English as the second language while the students are compelled to take English as their medium of instruction. Such students suffer a great difficulty in coming across the languages and most importantly in achieving confidence in English.

The main objectives of the study are to cater to the needs of the students studying in government schools of Kalimpong and to measure their level of anxiety with reference to their linguistic problems. It also aims to study their anxiety level and to enhance their motivational level. 100 students studying in government and private schools of Kalimpong were taken as samples. Self-made questionnaire measuring anxiety level was used as a tool for collecting data. Descriptive survey method was used for the study. The result suggested that the students lacked confidence and feared to volunteer in performing English-based activities. Their level of motivation was low. They were not comfortable with English as their medium of instruction.

It is suggested that the government schools should promote English based activities among its teachers and students, the teachers should frequently assess the language of students so that they become competent in speaking, reading and writing in English.

Keywords: English Environment, Anxiety Level, Self-Confidence, Motivation, Socio-Economic Condition.

Introduction

Teaching and learning are the two important elements of the educational system. Effective teaching and learning takes place when the environment is healthy and congenial. A language learning classroom requires such healthy environment where the students can communicate and interact in the target language. The study of language is vital in Indian classrooms because India is a multilingual country where English is treated either as a first language or second language. In the hilly region of Kalimpong which is located in the northern part of West Bengal, English is studied as a first language in privately owned schools whereas it is studied

as a second language in government schools. The second type of schools offer mother tongue (Nepali) as a first language but English being the second language has been the medium of instruction. In the plains of West Bengal the government schools offer Bengali as the first language and the same language happens to be the medium of instruction but it is just the reverse in Kalimpong where the government schools are compelled to make English as the medium of instruction in spite of it being the second language. It is in this area that the students studying in the government schools of Kalimpong face serious problems leading to an increasing anxiety level.

Anxiety refers to a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. It is a general term for several disorders that cause nervousness, fear, apprehension and worry. The American Psychological Association defines anxiety as an emotion characterized by feeling of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes. The students are usually competent in the first language but when they have to study all subjects in the second language they become incompetent hence affecting their academic scores and performance. Thus the teachers in the government schools should create an English learning environment which will facilitate the students to develop their linguistic skills pertaining to English. It will further lead them to perform well in English hence making them competent and confident.

Review of Literature

Researches carried out in the previous years serve as the base for the present study. They help in understanding the potentialities of the problem in hand.

Khadanga (2003) observed that in the tribal schools there were fewer facilities with respect to academic support like location of schools, provision of electricity, safe water supply etc. They were not of a very good standard which prompted the teachers to abstain from duty, thereby lacking in teaching personnel. There was also no deliberate attempt made by the teachers to develop language abilities. Maximum teachers were not specifically trained in linguistic and were not proficient for language teaching. Nag-Arulmani (2005) studied different types of school where English is taught i.e. English medium, vernacular medium, government and private and found correlation-between type of school management and the variables of teacher proficiency and environmental English. Wide variation was also obtained within each of these school types. Private English-medium schools may differ in the learning opportunities they offer, and this may be reflected in differential language attainment. Pupils in, for example, schools with class libraries read better than those in schools where reading is restricted to monotonous texts and frequent routine tests of spelling lists. Krishnamurti (2005) in his book "English Language Teaching" stated the problems which the students face while learning language – English or any other language – can be reduced by using appropriate teaching-aids in English class.

Varshney (2005) suggested that English teacher should use English speech, objects, pictures, sketches and other possible means to communicate the idea represented by work. Mishra (2010) remarked that the efficiency of a teaching method cannot be judged or realized on a general assumption that a method is a chemical with a definite course of process and results which are universally applicable. The method that a teacher uses varies depending on the teaching materials, learners' level of proficiency and their age group and also the needs and objectives of language teaching. No single is fully operative in the classroom. A teacher has to adopt a method and bring variation or modification as per the mood and mind of the learners and classroom conditions. Method remains a creative tool in the hands of a teacher to make the whole exercise of his teaching more effective and meaningful. Huang (2010) maintained that teacher academic support was the most pervasive variable in relation to language-learning anxiety. It showed significant relationships with different types of language-learning anxiety. Teacher academic support was negatively correlated with speech anxiety and fear of negative evaluation as well as fear of failing the class, and positively correlated with student comfort with English-language learning. Rass (2010) in his research entitled "Children's Literature in Traditional Arab Schools for Teaching English as a Foreign Language" has shown that the use of authentic children's literature is an effective and motivating *ESL* classroom strategy. His study indicates that authentic children's stories could be very motivating, enjoyable and a very effective source for foreign language learning. It also indicates the applicability of integrating authentic stories in the *EFL* instruction in traditional Arab classrooms. Using such stories will be a pleasant diversion unless serious steps are taken first. Well stocked library for everyday reading are needed. Sharma (2010) found that the potential source behind poor performance in the English language learning among the learners is negative transfer from the mother tongue. As suggested by Hashemi (2011) communicative approach should be adopted for language learners so that they can have maximum exposure to English language both inside and outside the classroom. Rathore (2013) found that Learning through group activity helps in learning concepts better and makes them learn through classmates. It also makes them active participate in the class. Teaching English through Group Activity helps the students in achieving higher score.

Karunakaran, Rana and Haq (2013) observed that the anxiety exhibited by the students in English language learning is due to the frequent tests that the teacher conducts. Moreover, their study showed that the teacher's inability to convey the necessary message increases the students' anxiety in the classroom. Mahmud, Sultana and Adhikary (2016) found that students experience anxiety in language classroom due to lack of motivation, interaction and democratic environment. Indrianty (2016) maintained that English language learners displays anxiety with regard to communication apprehension, test anxiety

and fear of negative evaluation. The study undertaken by Sadiq (2017) implied that the student's age can be a factor in demonstration of their anxiety in acquiring English language. Maria (2017) concluded that if the teachers act in a cordial way with the students and create a comfortable language environment then the students will easily overcome the anxiety of English language learning. Djafri and Wimbari (2018) concluded that teacher's behaviors, such as discouraged comments and harsh manner in correcting students' language errors, over-dominating inside the classroom, and inflexible teaching method that make it hard to understand the materials, were related to a higher level of foreign language anxiety.

Rationale of the Study

English and mother tongue go simultaneously in the schools of Kalimpong. The privately owned institutions prefer English to mother tongue therefore these institutions promote an English learning environment among its learners whereas the government schools prefer mother tongue to English yet the students are not provided facilities to enhance their English acquiring capabilities. Therefore, the learners passing out of government schools are not able to compete with students coming from public schools. Had the government schools made their mother tongue i.e., Nepali their medium of instruction they would have performed well academically and also had geared up to learn English separately and precisely. But these learners fear English not because it is their second language but at the primary level they are instructed in mother tongue while at the elementary level the students are taught through English. This transition creates a hindrance in their learning of English. Thus the following research questions arise:

1. To what extent do the students fear English?
2. How much weight age is given to English based activities?
3. How is the teaching learning environment of English and mother tongue dealt with by the teachers and learners?
4. To what extent are the students willing to make English as their medium of instruction in the government schools?

Statement of The Problem

On the basis of the above need the problem has been stated as "Role of the teaching learning environment of english and mother tongue on the general anxiety level of school students of the hilly region of Kalimpong."

Operational Definitions of the Term Used

1. Teaching learning environment- refers to schools where both English and mother tongue are used for transacting the curriculum.
2. English and mother tongue- refers to English as the medium of instruction in private schools and mother tongue as the medium of instruction in government schools.
3. General Anxiety level- refers to the intensity of nervousness and worrying feelings that lead to fear and tensions.

4. School students- refer to the adolescent students studying in the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades.
5. Hilly region of Kalimpong- refers to the hilly rural locale located in the northern part of the state of West Bengal.

Objectives of The Study

Following are the primary objectives involved in the study:

1. To assess the needs of the students studying in the government schools of Kalimpong.
2. To measure their level of anxiety associated with linguistic problems.
3. To study their level of anxiety and to enhance their motivational skills.

Hypotheses of the Study

HO₁

There is no significant difference in the teaching learning environment of government schools and private schools.

HO₂

There exists no difference in the anxiety level of the students studying in government schools and private schools with regard to English and mother tongue.

HO₃

Maximum teachers do not have knowledge for transacting the curriculum effectively.

HO₄

There is no significant effect in English language attainment by the students due to difference in the medium of instruction in schools.

Delimitation of the Study

The present study was limited to the rural area of the hilly region of Kalimpong. 100 adolescent students studying in government and private schools of Kalimpong were taken as samples.

Methodology of the Study

The Method

As per the objectives of the study, a descriptive survey type of research was considered suitable. Hence the researcher adopted that method in order to obtain precise and pertinent information concerning the role of the teaching learning environment of English and mother tongue on the general anxiety level of school students of the hilly region of Kalimpong.

Sample

The study was limited to the rural area of Kalimpong where 100 adolescent students studying in ninth, tenth and eleventh grades of government schools and private schools were taken as samples. Purposive sampling method was used for determining the samples.

Tools Used

A self-developed questionnaire for assessing the anxiety level of the students was used for collecting data. The questionnaire contained items like "I find English easier than my mother language, I am motivated to work very hard at English lessons, I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class, I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am, It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English

class, I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says," etc.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using mixed method involving both qualitative descriptions and quantitative analysis. 't' ratio was calculated along with graphical representation of the mean scores showing difference in the anxiety level of students studying in government schools and private schools. Detail description of the attitude of students studying in two different environments was assessed.

Findings of The Study

The findings of the study are discussed under:

1. There existed a significant difference in the anxiety level of students studying in government schools and private schools of Kalimpong.
2. The students of government schools were more competent in mother tongue than English.
3. The students of government schools expressed fear and high level of anxiety in comparison to the students of private schools.
4. The students of government schools were less motivated to study English. Hence, it was the task of the teacher to promote an English learning environment both inside and outside the school.
5. In English-based activities the students studying in private schools excelled those studying in government schools.
6. The government school students expressed fear when asked them to volunteer in English based activities like debate, quizzes and elocutions.
7. A proper teaching technique was not used by the teacher in motivating the students to read, write and speak in English.
8. Teachers of government schools were using grammar-translation method while transacting the curriculum.
9. The students studying in government schools were not comfortable with English as their medium of instruction.

Conclusion

It was concluded that the teaching environment has an important role to play in determining the level of anxiety among the students with regard to their first language and second language. It has been suggested that if the first language is the mother tongue of the students then the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue itself so that the students develop proper linguistic skills. If not, then the students will lag behind in acquiring both the first language and the second language. Their anxiety towards learning English as the second language and making the same language their medium of instruction will hinder their language learning abilities. In the government schools if English is the medium of instruction then the students should be given a room to develop their English language skills. Teaching in grammar-translation or bilingual method should be done away and direct method and communicative approach, primarily should be adopted. It is only then the students will be motivated to learn English and accept it as their medium of instruction.

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