
**Role of Media in Learning English at Secondary School Level:
A Study on Tribal Students (Kama Reddy District)**

Dhamsingh Halavath^[1] & Dr. P. Samata^[2]

[1] Dhamsingh Halavath: PhD Research Scholar in English, Telangana University, Dichpally, Nizamabad- 503322, Telangana.

[2] Dr. P. Samata: Assistant Professor, Department of English, Telangana University, Dichpally, Nizamabad-503322, Telangana

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Abstract:

This paper will explore the role of media as an effective means of learning the English language among the tribal secondary school students in Kama Reddy District, Telangana, India. The scenario of technology has changed rapidly, and this has impacted the pedagogical environment, which has marginalized the tribal people in these developments because of socio-economic and infrastructural factors. This was an empirical research study that took a mixed-method design that included a stratified random sample of 200 students, sampled out of four government and tribal welfare residential schools in Kama Reddy District. Structured questionnaires, classroom observations, and focus group discussions were used as the sources of the data collection. The results indicate that television and mobile-based media are the most accessible media tools, which greatly improve the acquisition of vocabulary and comprehension of listening. Internet connectivity, language barrier, and insufficient training of teachers in media-integrated teaching are, however, challenges. There are specific policy interventions that the study suggests (and these include) the development of digital infrastructure in tribal regions, multilingual learning based on mother tongue with the aid of the media, and teacher professional development programmes. The results are used to add to the existing body of knowledge on the topic of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) in disadvantaged educational settings and to offer some practical implications to curriculum designers and policymakers in India.

Keywords: Media in English learning, tribal education, secondary school, Kama Reddy, technology-enhanced language learning, digital divide, Telangana.

Introduction

Media involvement in the teaching of language has become one of the most radical changes in modern teaching. In a world that is characterized by high levels of digitalization, media technologies that include television, radio, mobile applications, and internet-based platforms have re-established the space of the English language classroom. To tribal societies in India, however, these changes promise and continue to be a challenge. This conflict between educational ambition and socioeconomic reality is especially sharp in districts like Kama Reddy, Telangana, where tribal populations represent a large share of the population of secondary school students.

The proficiency in the English language has historically been a prerequisite to post-secondary education and organized jobs in India. National Education Policy 2020 (Government of India, 2020) clearly recognizes the use of technology in democratizing access to quality education, and Scheduled tribes and other disadvantaged social groups deserve special consideration. However, the empirical study on media-based English learning on the tribal population at the secondary level is limited. There is a plethora of urban literature, but the available literature does not take much notice of the sociolinguistic and infrastructural peculiarities of tribal educational contexts.

The Gond, Lambada, Koya, and Chenchu tribal groups are found in Kama Reddy District, which was formed out of the old Nizamabad District after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. The schools are secondary schools that are managed in this region under the supervision of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS) and the Tribal Welfare Department. Those students who study in these schools usually use Gondi or Lambadi and other languages belonging to the tribes as their native language, so English, which is usually the third or fourth language, is a significant language barrier (Suresh & Reddy, 2019).

It is against this background that the current study aims to analyze the nature and scope of media usage among the tribal secondary school pupils in Kama Reddy District and how it affects their learning outcomes in the English language. The research is also found to present structural and pedagogical issues that prevent effective media usage there, thus providing evidence-based policy and practice implications.

Statement of the Problem

Tribal students in Kama Reddy District still face tremendous disadvantages in mastering the English language despite the national policy imperativeness and state-level projects like the Telangana Ku Haritha Haram and the digital literacy programmes. This policy gap has been caused by the lack of research on the pedagogical role of media in such

communities that has not been sustained and is contextually relevant, which is what this research attempts to fill.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study shall (a) determine the nature of the media available to tribal secondary school students in Kama Reddy District; (b) determine how exposure to the media has influenced the skills of English language in listening, speaking, vocabulary, reading, and writing among tribal students; (c) identify obstacles faced by the tribal students in using media to learn English; and (d) provide policy recommendation to maximize the use of media as a tool of learning English language to the tribal students.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions that will guide this study are as follows: (1) What media forms are used by tribal secondary school students in Kama Reddy District to learn English? (2) How do the media affect various aspects of English language proficiency as perceived? (3) What are the structural and attitudinal issues of tribal students to take advantage of the media to learn English?

2. Review of Literature

The media in second language acquisition (SLA) is a topic that has been given considerable academic interest in the last thirty years. The Input Hypothesis created by Krashen (1982) was that language acquisition would happen when the learners received comprehensible input that was slightly above their current competence, which, in the case of media, is well placed in the multimodal richness. Continuing on this, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) showed that input of real listening (TV and audio) via television and audio channels also enhanced the L2 listening comprehension competence significantly.

At the Indian scale, Choudhury (2014) noted that students in the rural setting who consistently viewed the English-language television programmes registered a statistically significant increase in vocabulary acquisition rates compared to those whose textbook-only instruction. On the same note, Shankar and Vijayalakshmi (2018) also established that the positive influence of mobile-based learning applications on learning English grammar and vocabulary among secondary school learners in Tamil Nadu was statistically significant. Non-tribal urban and semi-urban communities were, however, mostly selected in their sample.

Digital equity is the primary question in the analysis of media-enhanced learning in tribal settings. Warschauer (2004) contended that the digital divide is not just about the availability of technology but also about social, economic, and educational aspects, which essentially define how good technology-mediated learning experiences will be. The data of the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC, 2011) in India show that internet access in

Scheduled Tribe households is a mere 3.9%, which has increased slightly but is still significantly lower than the national average (NSSO, 2019).

Particular to Telangana, Reddy and Naik (2020) studied the use of technologies in tribal welfare residential schools and observed that despite the improvements in the infrastructure with TV and radio access, the educational application of technologies was still shallow. Teachers were not trained on media-assisted instructions, and students' interaction with English language materials was mostly incidental and not intentional. The results highlight the necessity of research that is context-specific, such as the one that the current research does.

Theoretical perspectives that underlie this research involve the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which considers that learning in the media can be scaffolded by means of provision of information in a rich context, suitable to a particular culture; to media, that is built up to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) advanced by Mayer (2009), which assumes that learning is improved when the information is conveyed through both audio and visual channels at the same time, and which audio-visual media, in particular

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design of this study is a concurrent mixed-methods research design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018), a combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative information through classroom observations and focus group discussions (FGDs). The mixed-methods methodology was chosen in order to reflect the extent of media use patterns and the depth of learning experiences of students and achieve triangulation of methods.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The sampling unit used was tribal students of Classes IX, X, and VIII in government and tribal welfare residential secondary schools in Kama Reddy District. The stratified random sampling was used to make sure that the proportion is represented in terms of the types of schools and the levels of classes. Two hundred learners were randomly chosen from four schools, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of the Study Sample Across Schools in Kama Reddy District

School Name	Type	No. of Students	% of Total
ZPHS Bheemgal	Government (Tribal)	48	24.0%
ZPHS Ranjole	Government (Tribal)	42	21.0%

School Name	Type	No. of Students	% of Total
TTWRS Kamareddy	Tribal Welfare Residential	56	28.0%
ZPHS Yellareddy	Government (Tribal)	54	27.0%
Total		200	100%

Note. Data collected through a primary survey conducted by the researcher (2024–25). ZPHS = Zilla Parishad High School; TTWRS = Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential School.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire of 45 items was designed in a structured way and evaluated using a pilot study of 30 students. The questionnaire was designed in four parts, namely: (a) demographic data; (b) media access and frequency of use (Likert scale, 1-5); (c) self-perceived effect of media on English language skills; and (d) challenges and barriers. The alpha ($\alpha = 0.84$) values were used to measure internal consistency, which is high, hence good reliability. A blend of Telugu and tribal dialects (3 groups of 6-8 students each) focused group discussion was conducted to give honest answers.

3.4 Data Analysis

SPSS Version 26.0 was used to analyze quantitative data. The frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (descriptive statistics) were calculated to summarize the patterns of media use and the level of skill improvement. Data in FGDs were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis that followed the six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, with the output being themes associated with motivation, access, comprehension, and teacher support.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Media Patterns of access and use.

Table 2 shows the media type of accessibility to the respondents for the purpose of learning the English language. The most commonly used media were television (74.0%), mobile phones, and YouTube applications (66.0%). Although radio and FM stations have a low level of interaction, 43.0 percent of the students listened to them, indicating that the traditional broadcast media are still relevant in the tribal communities with unequal coverage of smartphones.

Table 2

Types of Media Used by Tribal Students for English Language Learning (N = 200)

Type of Media	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Television (English channels/programs)	148	74.0	1st
Mobile (YouTube/Apps) Phone	132	66.0	2nd
Radio / FM	86	43.0	3rd
Newspapers / Magazines	54	27.0	4th
Computer / Internet	38	19.0	5th
Educational CDs/DVDs	24	12.0	6th

Note. Multiple responses were permitted; hence, percentages exceed 100%. Primary survey data (researcher, 2024–25). Cf. NSSO (2019) for baseline digital access statistics in Scheduled Tribe households.

These results are consistent with Choudhury (2014), who had reported television in rural Indian contexts as the most important media means of learning English. The active use of mobile-based services, especially YouTube, is an indication of the increasing spread of low-cost smartphones among the tribal welfare residential school students, which is supported by central government programs like PM-WANI and Digital India plans (Government of India, 2023). Remarkably, broadband computers and internet access were significantly low (19.0%), which supports the existence of a stable digital infrastructure gap observed by NSSO (2019) in the tribal districts of Telangana.

4.2 Media Impact on English Language Skills

Table 3 highlights how the self-perceived effects of media exposure can be summarized on five measures of English language proficiency. The highest mean score was registered in vocabulary acquisition (3.94 out of 5 points), with the 48.0% of the students claiming significant improvement, which is consistent with Nation (2001), concluding that incidental learning of vocabulary after exposure to the media is one of the best ways of lexical growth.

Table 3

Perceived Impact of Media on English Language Skills Among Tribal Students (N = 200)

English Language Skill	Highly Improved (%)	Moderately Improved (%)	No Change (%)	Mean Score
Listening Comprehension	42.5	38.0	19.5	3.82
Speaking & Pronunciation	35.0	41.5	23.5	3.54
Vocabulary Acquisition	48.0	34.5	17.5	3.94
Reading Comprehension	31.0	43.0	26.0	3.41
Writing Skills	24.5	38.0	37.5	3.12

Note. Mean scores based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = No improvement, 5 = Very great improvement). Primary survey data (researcher, 2024–25). Cf. Vandergrift & Goh (2012) for comparative listening comprehension benchmarks.

There was also a good improvement in listening comprehension ($M = 3.82$), which is consistent with Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) seminal findings regarding the positive nature of audio-visual media exposure (authentic) and L2 listening competence. Speaking and pronunciation, although it demonstrated moderate change ($M = 3.54$), depicts a more complex situation: FGD participants pointed out that the media exposure not only improved the receptive pronunciation awareness, but the lack of interactive speaking with skilled speakers inhibited the productive development of the oral skills.

The lowest mean score was shown by writing skills ($M = 3.12$), with 37.5 percent of students stating that there was no noticeable change. This observation fits in with that of Harmer (2007), who observed that the media mostly favors receptive skill growth and that it only needs intentional pedagogical scaffolding to be translated into writing proficiency gains. The findings indicate that the media has the greatest skill-enhancement capacity in vocabulary and listening, whereas the ability to improve writing requires more formal instructional intervention.

4.3 Challenges in Media-based English Learning

The frequency and severity ratings of the major issues confronting tribal students using the media to learn English are provided in Table 4. Access to devices and internet

connectivity was the most serious problem (81.0%; severity = 4.52), and then there was the linguistic barrier of tribal mother tongues (79.0%; severity = 4.46). The results are repeated in the digital equity framework by Warschauer (2004) and highlight the fact that the lack of infrastructure is not just an inconvenience on a technical level, but a barrier to educational equity.

Table 4

Challenges Faced by Tribal Students in Media-Based English Learning (N = 200)

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Severity Rating (1-5)
Limited access to devices/internet	162	81.0	4.52
Language barrier (tribal mother tongue)	158	79.0	4.46
Lack of electricity/power supply	124	62.0	4.18
Unavailability of English content	116	58.0	3.92
Inability to comprehend accents	108	54.0	3.74
Lack of teacher guidance in using media	98	49.0	3.56

Note. Severity ratings based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not severe, 5 = Extremely severe). Primary survey data (researcher, 2024–25). Cf. Reddy & Naik (2020) for infrastructure challenges in Telangana tribal schools.

Intermittent power (62.0%; severity = 4.18) characterises an infrastructural shortfall within the system, which is unusual for remote tribal settlements in Kama Reddy District, specifically, mandals of Tadwai, Bheemgal, and Ranjole. Participants of the FGD recounted heart-rending experiences of how discontinuity in learning was caused by power outages during the scheduled TV viewing hours, which were usually the only source of exposure to the English audio-visual content. Failure to understand various accents of English (54.0; severity = 3.74) is a major cognitive impediment, especially when students watch YouTube or satellite television that have very different accents from the styles of their teachers.

There was also an issue of social stigma of using the English language in the tribal peer groups that could not be well defined in the quantitative instrument, but through qualitative data. Several FGD participants observed that communication in English, even in an informal context, was occasionally considered by some as cultural distancing, posing a psychological obstacle to practice. Suresh and Reddy (2019) observe this psychosocial aspect of English language anxiety in the tribal setting and should be addressed in more detail in future studies.

5. Policy Recommendations

Based on the analysis above, it is possible to promote the following policy and pedagogical suggestions:

To start with, the Telangana Tribal Welfare Department and the Department of School Education must focus on creating Digital Learning Centres in tribal welfare residential schools in the Kama Reddy District that will have continuous internet connectivity through optical fiber as a part of the BharatNet Phase II programme. To eliminate power outages, solar energy back-ups ought to be installed.

Second, the teacher professional development programmes must be restructured so that they contain modules on media-assisted English language instruction. In particular, educators need to be taught to select culturally contextual content of English-language media in the form of tribal folklore, local stories, and bilingual media as a way to minimize the psycholinguistic gap between the native language and English.

Third, it is highly suggested that mother-tongue-transitional media content, that is, audio-visual content that starts in Gondi, Lambadi, or Telugu and gradually transitions to English, be developed. Telangana State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) are in a good position to develop such knowledge with the help of specialists in the documentation of tribal languages.

Fourth, specifically created mobile learning applications with gamified vocabulary learning features, dialect-sensitive pronunciation correctors, and the offline capabilities of working in regions with low connectivity must be designed and tested at the state-level EdTech initiatives.

6. Conclusion

This paper has empirically shown that the media has a significant and multidimensional role in learning the English language among tribal English language learners in the secondary schools in Kama Reddy District, Telangana. The most convenient and pedagogically effective media tools with significant advantages to vocabulary development and listening comprehension are television and mobile-based platforms, specifically YouTube. Nevertheless, these advantages are limited by an interdependence of

other systemic problems: a shortage of devices and the Internet, power outages, language barriers, and a lack of pedagogical support in media-based teaching.

The conclusions made by the study prove that media integration in tribal English teaching is not a panacea or impossibility: this is a feasible and useful pedagogical tool that depends on purposeful infrastructural investment and capacity building on the part of teachers. The theoretical implications of Krashen (1982), Vygotsky (1978), and Mayer (2009) all point in the same direction: the fullest language learning potential of the media is not in passive consumption but in interactive mediation with scaffolds purposefully, which is the vision of pedagogy and which requires urgent consideration in tribal educational policy.

The need to do longitudinal research to quantify the long-term effects of structured media-based interventions on the English language proficiency scores in the future is not to mention the role of communication through community radio and regional-language transition media as a culturally sensitive medium towards English literacy. The experiences and voices of tribal students in Kama Reddy District, elicited by this research, should be used not only to inform but also to decorate the educational policies that will influence their future.

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