

ELT for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Learners

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ABSTRACT

English, being considered the resourceful language of the globe, takes the attention of the students who are learners with limited English proficiency. The term Limited English Proficiency with acronym LEP originated from the United States with a reference to an individual who does not have a good command over the English language due to the fact that it is not their native language and the term is widely used by the Office for Civil Rights, a sub-agency of the U.S. Department of Education. In learning a language, the roles of teachers and learners need to be focused. Transition from primary to secondary then to tertiary level of education with different medium of instruction, environment, need, social background, parental education, teachers' interest to teach, students' interest to learn and all other things that are faced by an individual in the process of learning makes him either flourish or fail in life. This review paper discusses and reviews the concept of LEP.

Keywords: Limited English Proficiency, Education, English Language, Tamil Medium Students.

Introduction

Right to education or compulsory education is an Act of the Indian Constitution which was brought to proposal and implemented on 4th August 2009, which emphasises the essentiality of education for children between 6 and 14 years of age under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. Our country has become one of the countries to make education a fundamental right to all children of the nation irrespective of any sect which came into existence on 1 April, 2010.

Children are put in private schools based on their socio-economic background and are allotted with seats in the government schools based on the caste based reservations. The

National Education Policy, 2019 Part-I sub section of section 4. Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools explains about Education in the local language, mother tongue; multilingualism and the power of language. This section expresses that Language is the means of expressing self, reflecting society and its collective community. Language is the biggest instrument of communication. The child's receptiveness is best seen through the local language i.e. the language of their own, especially termed as mother tongue. Children between the ages 2 and 8 are too young to have the flexibility of learning multiple languages.

The concept of bilingual approach is also

encouraged so as to have a flexible language approach in the classroom, where teachers and the students are allowed to use two languages one the mother tongue and the other the second language which they have to learn ensuring calm and peaceful learning atmosphere, this is similar in case of students with disability whose mother tongue or the first language is the sign language. This method ensures smoother transition from home language to the medium of instruction.

Multilingualism is of great support and an extensive chance for acquiring and expanding one's knowledge. Despite the nature of the Indian languages, there has been an unfortunate trend in school and society towards English as a medium of instruction and as a medium of communication.

English as the Global Language

English, considered the richest and the most resourceful language in the world, is in demand in all fields, like education, business, healthcare, law, and so on. English is learnt by many in India as a channel of instruction and conversation, whereas the other countries have their own native language as the mode of communication. There is a contradictory statement that English has no added benefits over other languages in presenting thoughts.

English is looked upon as the language of the elite or the educated, and a necessity for jobs. This attitude is reflected in all sects of society causing socio-economic issues. This notion segregates the economically poorer sections of people into strangers in their own home land. Though they are hard workers, with skill and efficiency, without English

language proficiency they become someone not much in need in the job market.

Limited English Proficiency

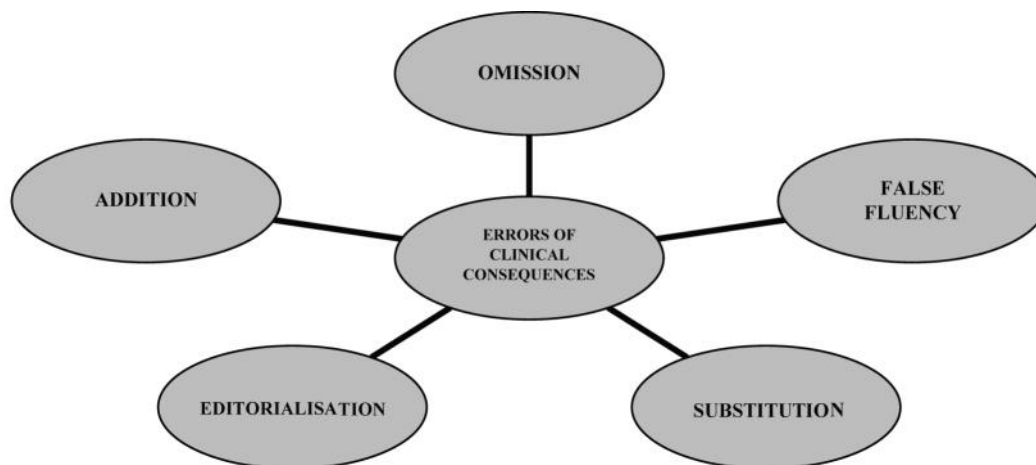
What is limited English proficiency? It is a term referring to a person who is not fluent in the English language, and it is obvious that it is not their native language. The terms LEP and ELL are terms observed by the office for Civil Rights, a sub-agency of the U.S. Department of Education. Many studies have been conducted in the foreign context in the system of healthcare, with a mounting description that patients need to communicate with a language concordant not just mere interpreters in order to receive quality care.

It is highly expensive to have a language discordant and most of the Asian Americans are not comfortable with their physician, resulting in a gap with health care facilities. Limited English Proficiency is not only the problem of the not native speakers but also with people who are comfortable using English when they face trouble identifying and describing different symptoms, medications and health conditions.

One of the studies done on Limited English Proficiency states that a seven-month period of audio typing and transcribing at an outpatient clinic in a hospital faced by the children at the paediatric ward, where a Spanish interpreter was employed to transcribe every transcript, and it was categorised with error in medical interpretation and determined that it had a potential clinical results. The most found errors were fluency (16%), substitution (13%), omission (52%), editorialisation (10%) and addition (8%), on the whole 63%

of all errors had greater clinical consequences, with a mean of 19 per case. Also it was found that the errors committed

by the ad hoc interpreters were more likely greater than that committed by the hospital interpreters (77% vs 53%).



The above representation shows that the errors of clinical consequences happen because of variables like omission: omission of questions about drug allergies, instruction about the dose and its frequency, where the interpreter has omitted a word or a phrase said by the clinician, parent, or the child, secondly false fluency where the interpreter attempts to utter with fake commands leaving out the history of present illness and the past medical history, the interventions, parental understanding of the child's medical state, etc. On the contrary, the use of medical jargons and the idiomatic expression and its interpretations were not considered to be the medical interpreters' error. The medical interpreters can also work as a cultural broker or an advocate and the utterances that are interpreted as cultural explanations are not taken as interpreters' errors. Addition, where the interpreter added a word/phrase to the interpretation that was not uttered by the clinician, parent or child. Substitution, where

the interpreter substitutes a word or a phrase for a different word or a phrase uttered by a parent, clinician and the child. Editorialisation, where in the interpreter provided his or her own personal opinions as the interpretation of a word, phrase said by the clinician, parent or a child.

The Springer briefs in Education: Corporal Punishment in Rural Schools Student Problem Behaviours, Academic Outcomes and School Safety Efforts states that LEP students who sought an effective instructional method were given little attention in discipline or school violence studies. Most of the studies on disadvantaged students included LEPs associated with lower achievement which reflected in school disorder and violence, this disorder is not because of the LEP students but when the interaction happens between the LEPS and the peers of them this conflict arises and causing victimisations due to the following reasons cultural differences, accents,

nationality etc. as said by Haynes, 2014. Besides the LEPS are very vulnerable when English becomes the only instructional policy inducing in higher rates of suspension, rural schools have fewer LEPs than the non-rural schools. The English language learners are observed with a much negative attitude in the classroom giving disruptive talks, sleeping in the classroom, getting absent or not doing the homework rather than acting violently as said by Wadden and Megovern, 1991.

Students with Limited English Proficiency in Our State

The state government of Tamilnadu, realising the need to fulfill the desires of the parents in getting their children educated in English medium, introduced it in a few (14,636) of the government schools in the year 2018-2019, with 6,34,110 children enrolling themselves in to the medium. The teachers employed have been given regular training. The state education department's policy notes for 2013-14 listed the introduction of English medium instruction as the final of nine welfare measures ensuring to attract the children of rural areas. However, there is a major issue of whether this produces 'quality education'. Teachers complained that the change in policy was not discussed before implementation. For instance, Supriya, who teaches classes 3-4, felt that children would be better off learning in Tamil. "But we are afraid they will leave, so we do not say anything to their parents," she said. Teaching simple words through an activity-based learning system and teaching English as the second language from class 1 to make them understand the concepts in English where she herself had difficulty in explaining it in

English, resulted in most of her classes being classes in name only. This focus was turned to bilingual classroom teaching where the teacher is efficient in delivering the content both in the regional and English language. Mangala, an award-winning Activity Based Learning teacher, agreed that English as the medium of instruction in primary schools is a "real problem". This made Mangala switch from English to the vernacular that enabled the students to understand and engage with the lessons taught. Mangala's spoken English was insufficient for a conversation. The state's policy is symptomatic of undervaluing language education, as reported by the historian AR Venkatachalapathy. He attended a government-funded school in Chennai and worked in both Tamil and English. As a university teacher observing the school children at the government-funded school, he noticed that the children lacked the ability to read even a newspaper. He also stated that "Language is germane to thinking and no one seems to understand this".

English is poorly taught and barely used in communication. An English lecturer at Chennai's District Institute for Education and Training said that most trainee teachers, even after studying English for 12 years at school, had practically no communication skills. This is because they get through the English paper by cramming. She said that expecting fluency from adults in a short time is impossible.

Difficulties Faced by Rural Students in Learning the English Language

The students from a rural background, though given free education are not properly taught at schools as there is a lack from the teachers'

side to teach the second language. The most spoken about issue is the NEET examination. Although children score well, the state says NO to NEET. Is it because the question paper is in English? And, is it possible to clear NEET without any coaching? The government has submitted a report stating that only 2% of the medical students cleared NEET without private coaching.

The major problems to be kept in mind with regard to the rural students in learning the second language are:

1. Their way of looking at the language, since it is not their mother tongue.
2. The way it is taught.
3. Difficulty in understanding the translation from Tamil to English.
4. Difficulty in understanding the lessons delivered with English as the medium of instruction.
5. Lack of communication.
6. Lack of exposure.
7. Socio-economic status.
8. Lack of parental education and care.
9. Fear and anxiety of being introduced to an alien language.
10. Lack of motivation and an indifferent attitude towards the language.
11. First generation school or college goers.
12. Exposure to a new atmosphere from village to city life.
13. Difficulty in mingling with peers who

do not speak their mother tongue.

14. Lack of fighting spirit, willingness to learn.

Conclusion – “Change in the Changes”

All good changes are for the betterment of the nation and its people. It is good that policy makers think, discuss, and then implement the changes needed to enrich their state. To conclude, the political system and the education policy of the nation plays a major role in the uplifting of its people. Education is the right of any individual. It is high time to equip teachers with a good command of the language, which will result in better teaching, thus reducing the rate of limited English proficiency.

Personal Experience

I have been in the field of teaching for nearly 12 years and have had a chance to teach the technicians in a medical college, who take up the course which is for a year. The students hail from economically and socially poor sects. I have asked the students why they find learning English tough, how many do not like the subject, did they learn English at school, were they taught well, and what was the medium of instruction. The responses given were that most of the English language classes were free periods and the teacher would just give the answers, not bothering to check if the child has really understood or not. With these responses in mind, I encourage them by making them read and speak about what they know, even if they read

from a paper. I use the bilingual method of teaching, to explain words, teach them simple sentences, and motivate them. There are many other good techniques to enrich them in the learning of the English language. It is important to make our nation literate and our children competent when it comes to education in English, abolishing the thought that English is the prerogative of the elite.

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