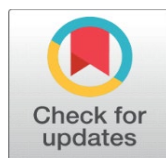
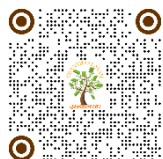


MOTHER TONGUE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF TRIBAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Language is an important part of children's cognitive, emotional and academic development. For tribal learners, the mother tongue is the basic language through which they understand their culture, environment and social experience. But learning and academic progress is stymied in many Indian schools, especially in tribal areas, where the medium of instruction is different from the pupils' mother tongues. This present study is an attempt to study the effect of mother tongue on academic achievement of tribal students. The study is based on tribal communities of Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh. This study used the descriptive survey approach. Data was collected from hundred secondary tribal students using stratified random sampling. The findings suggest that pupils taught in their mother tongue in early school years perform better in terms of comprehension, classroom participation, confidence and academic performance than those taught in a foreign language. Further, the study highlights the recommendations of National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 and need of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). The study found that tribal language education in schools can improve student performance, reduce dropout rates and create inclusive education for tribal students.

Keywords: Language and Learning, Multilingual Education, Academic Achievement, Mother Tongue, Tribal Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most important tools for communication and learning in the educational process. The child acquires the mother tongue, the language of home. Children are naturally able to express their ideas, feelings and experiences confidently and securely in their mother tongue. It is important to the development of students' cognitive skills, understanding ability, creativity and academic success. For indigenous pupils, whose everyday lives and cultural identities are so closely linked to their mother tongues, the use of mother tongue in education is even more important.

Madhya Pradesh is one of the major Indian states with a large tribal population. There are different tribal communities like Bhil, Gond, Baiga, Korku, Sahariya and Kol living in different parts of the state and speaking different tribal languages and dialects. But most schools use Hindi or English as their main language of instruction, which makes it hard for indigenous children to communicate. Many tribal children do not use their majority languages in school. This makes it difficult for them to understand directions, textbooks and classroom instruction. This leads to poor school performance, disengagement, low self-esteem, skipping school and even dropping out.

Therefore, the present study “Impact of Mother Tongue on Academic Achievement of Tribal Students in Madhya Pradesh” is to find out the importance of language in improving academic achievement of tribal students and to study the impact of the use of mother tongue on the educational performance.

Importance and need of the study

This study is important as language barriers continue to result in educational disadvantages for tribal students. Many indigenous children are unable to comprehend the lessons taught in the classroom because the teachers use other languages. This results in low self-esteem, poor academic achievement, absenteeism and dropout.

The following factors make the study important:

- It demonstrates the power of mother tongue to improve academic performance.
- It helps teachers to understand the language difficulties of tribal learners.
- It promotes the adoption of regulations for multilingual education.
- It contains recommendations for bettering education in the tribe.
- it advances inclusion and equity in education.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the impact of mother tongue on the academic performance of tribal students.
- To find out the language related problems faced by the tribal students in classrooms.
- To study the relationship between classroom teaching and mother tongue teaching.
- To suggest ways of improving the academic performance of indigenous students.

3. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- There is no evident correlation between indigenous students' academic achievement and instruction in the mother tongue.
- Students taught in their home language are no different than those taught in foreign languages in terms of classroom involvement.
- Language barriers do not have a significant effect on the academic performance of the tribal pupils.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive survey design was used to study the effect of mother tongue on the academic performance of indigenous pupils.

4.2. POPULATION

Tribal secondary students studying in government institutions of Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh constituted the study population.

4.3. SAMPLE

The respondents were selected by the method of stratified random sampling from Anuppur district:

Table – Showing Sample Distribution:

S. No.	Name of School	Standard	Girls	Boys
	Government Middle School, Tali, Pushpraj Block, District Anuppur, M.P.	6	16	21
		7	18	10
		8	17	19
		Total	50	50

The sample consisted of 100 indigenous students with an equal number of male and female pupils.

4.4. TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE

Tribe	Frequency	Percentage
Gond	38	38%
Kol	28	28%
Baiga	24	24%
Panika	10	10%

4.5. MOTHER TONGUE DISTRIBUTION

Mother Tongue	Frequency	Percentage
Gondi	32	32%
Baigani	24	24%
Hindi	18	18%
Bagheli	16	16%
Others	10	10%

4.6. TOOLS USED

- Academic Achievement Record
- Questionnaire on Language and Learning Difficulties

- Observation Schedule
- Interview Method

4.7. STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

- Percentage Analysis
- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Correlation Analysis
- Descriptive Interpretation

4.8. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1

Table 1 Levels of Academic Achievement		
Academic Achievement Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	26	26%
Moderate	49	49%
High	25	25%

4.9. INTERPRETATION

- Data shows the overwhelming majority of tribal students (49%) are at the moderate level of academic achievement. Only 25% of children show excellent academic achievement and about 26% of students are in the poor achievement category.
- This shows that a lot of indigenous children are still struggling with their academic work, even if they are managing to get by at school. Language problems between home and school may be one of the major reasons for the low levels of performance of tribal children.

Table 2

Table 2 Distribution of Mother Tongues		
Mother Tongue	Frequency	Percentage
Gondi	32	32%
Baigani	24	24%
Hindi	18	18%
Bagheli	16	16%
Others	10	10%

5. INTERPRETATION

- The data shows that among the selected tribal students Gondi is the most frequently used mother tongue (32%) followed by Baigani dialect (24%). Only 18% of the sample are Hindi-speaking students.
- The linguistic diversity means that many indigenous pupils do not know the dominant language of instruction when they enter school. In most schools the medium of instruction is Hindi or English so students who speak indigenous languages may find it difficult to understand what they are being taught.

The

Table 3

Table 3 Major Challenges Faced by Tribal Students	
Challenges	Percentage
Language Gap between Home and School	34%
Lack of Tribal Language Textbooks	22%
Shortage of Trained Teachers	18%
Cultural Disconnect	14%
Low Self-Confidence	12%

6. KNOWLEDGE

- The results indicate that the greatest barrier tribal students need to overcome is the language barrier between home and school. The lack of qualified teachers and the absence of textbooks in tribal languages exacerbate the educational disadvantages.
- Effective learning, communication, and engagement are hampered by the language barrier between home and school.

Analyzing and interpreting data according to hypotheses

1st hypothesis:

The academic success of tribal pupils is not significantly correlated with instruction in their mother tongue.

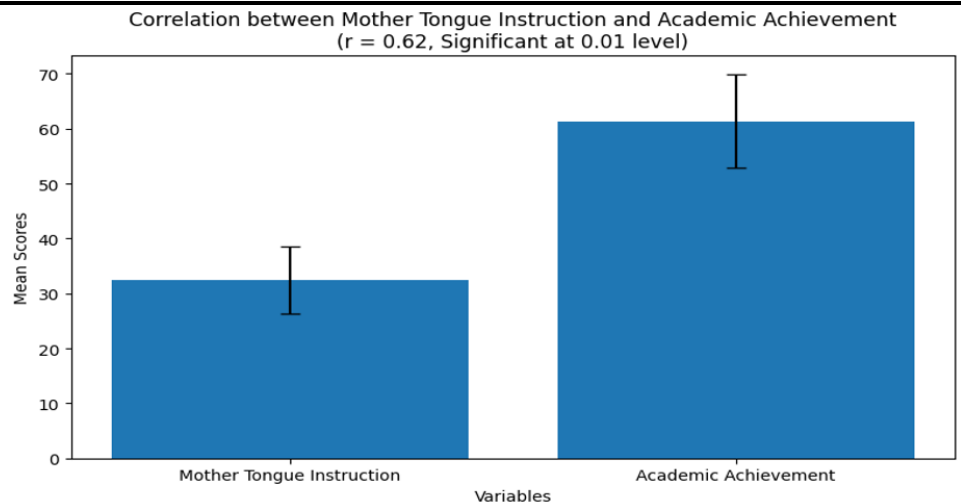
Table 4

Table 4 Correlation Between Mother Tongue Instruction and Academic Achievement					
Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r.-value	P-value
Mother Tongue Instruction	32.48	6.12	100	0.62.	P<0.01 Significant
Academic Achievement	61.35	8.45	100		

**Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation coefficient between mother tongue instruction and academic accomplishment is $r = 0.62$, as can be seen in the table above, indicating a somewhat positive association between the two factors. The computed p-value of 0.01 is below the 0.05 significance level.

The null hypothesis is therefore disproved. This shows that mother tongue instruction and indigenous pupils' academic success are positively correlated. Pupils who receive instructional help in their mother tongue typically perform better academically and have greater comprehension and classroom involvement.



Hypothesis 2

Students who are taught in their home tongue and those who are taught in a foreign language exhibit similar level of classroom participation.

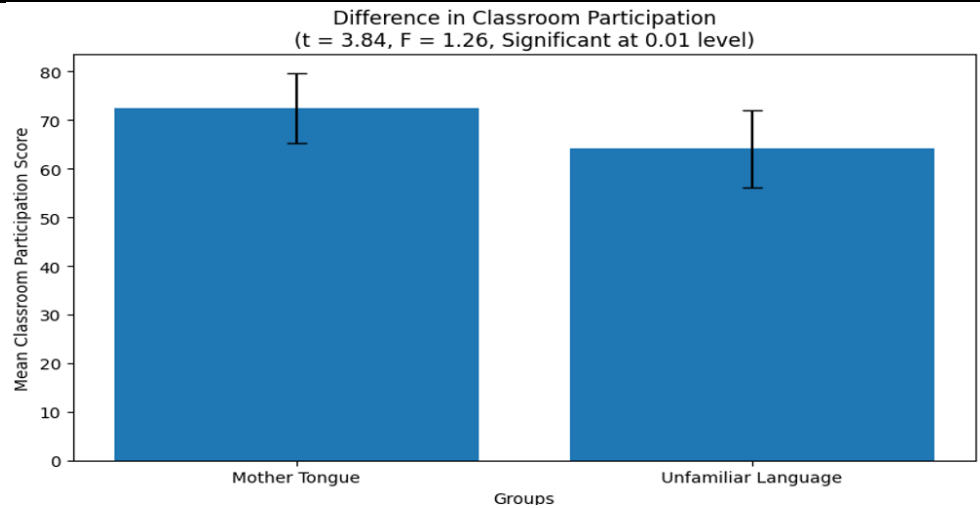
Table 5

Table 5 Variations in Classroom Participation								
Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	t-value	F	P-value	Remark
Students taught in Mother Tongue	50	72.40	7.15	1.5163	3.84	1.26	0.01	P<0.01 Significant
Students taught in Unfamiliar Language	50	64.10	8.02	1.4391				

7. INTERPRETATION

According to the chart, tribal pupils who were taught in their mother tongue had a higher mean classroom engagement score (72.40) than students who were taught in alien languages (64.10). At the 0.05 level, the computed t-value of 3.84 is statistically significant.

The null hypothesis is thus disproved. The results imply that the two groups' levels of classroom participation varied significantly. Because they feel more at ease and secure in the medium of teaching, students studying in their mother language typically participate more in class discussions, activities, and interactions with professors.



Hypothesis 3

Language constraints have little impact on indigenous pupils' academic performance.

Table 6

Table 6 Impact of Language Barriers on Academic Achievement

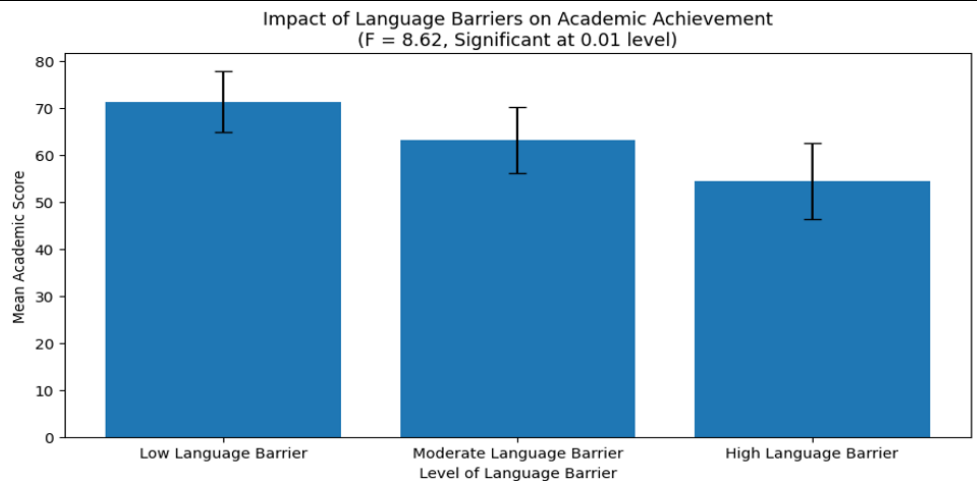
Level of Language Barrier	N	Mean Academic Score	SD	F-value	p-value	Result
Low Language Barrier	30	71.25	6.48	8.62	0.01	Significant
Moderate Language Barrier	45	63.14	7.12			
High Language Barrier	25	54.36	8.05			

8. INTERPRETATION

The table shows that pupils with low language barriers did better academically than those with moderate and high language difficulties (Mean = 71.25). Students with high language difficulties (M=54.36) had the lowest academic attainment.

The calculated value of F (8.62) is significant at 0.05 level, which shows that language difficulties are significantly affecting academic progress.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The results clearly show that language difficulties negatively affect the academic performance of indigenous children. Students with difficulties in understanding the language of instruction have problems in comprehension, communication, participation in class and performance in exams.



9. SUMMARIZATION

The hypothesis-wise study found that the mother tongue plays an important role in the academic achievement of tribal pupils. The study finds that students learning in their native languages perform better academically, are more engaged in class and face fewer educational challenges.

The data also shows that one of the principal obstacles to the learning of tribal pupils is linguistic. Therefore, the implementation of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) can greatly impact the academic success, understanding, self-confidence and educational participation of the tribal students of Madhya Pradesh.

9.1. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

The study indicates a positive correlation between academic achievement and mother tongue training.

- Students learn better when they understand concepts taught in the classroom in their own languages.

Students are more likely to take part in class and interact with teachers if they are taught in their mother tongue.

Tribal pupils learn well in their mother tongue.

- Using familiar language helps students overcome hesitancy, fear and anxiety.

*Dropout rates among tribal pupils reduced in language-friendly classrooms.

The shortage of qualified teachers and materials for indigenous languages is a serious problem in education.

9.2. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

- The findings of the present study are in agreement with the previous studies on tribal and bilingual education. The study found that children perform better when taught in a language with which they are familiar. Tribal students taught in mother tongue exhibit better conceptual understanding, engagement, confidence and retention.
- It also corresponds to the National Education Policy 2020's guidelines, which suggest use of mother tongue in the foundational years. The

findings also emphasise the need for culturally inclusive education that respects indigenous knowledge systems and tribal identities.

9.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING

The study's conclusions emphasise the importance of:

- Introduction of mother tongue teaching at primary level.
- Production of digital learning materials and textbooks in tribal languages.
- Training educators on multilingual teaching pedagogies.
- Using teachers from indigenous communities.
- Supporting inclusive education initiatives as per NEP 2020.
- Education to maintain tribal languages and cultural traditions.

Suggestions and Ideas:

- Mother tongue education should be introduced in tribal primary schools.
- Prepare text books and teaching-learning materials for Tribal Languages.
- Educators should be taught multilingual and culturally sensitive pedagogy.
- Curriculum development should involve tribal community members.
- Digital resources to maintain and promote tribal languages.
- Government policy should support Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE).
- Parents should be involved in awareness programmes about the importance of education.

10. CONCLUSION

- The research clearly shows that the mother tongue of tribal students has a significant impact on their academic performance. Students learn best when they are taught in a language they understand. Lack of mother tongue education leads to poor academic performance, low confidence, poor involvement and communication obstacles.

Therefore, the inclusion of tribal languages in the classroom through the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) can improve the comprehension, engagement, retention and overall academic performance of tribal learners. Educational policies and school systems need to accept linguistic diversity and create culturally relevant learning environments for Indigenous children.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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