

## Problem In Acquisition Of Grammatical Categories Of Tribal Children In Coimbatore District

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**Abstract:** This paper deals with the problem in acquisition of grammatical categories of tribal school children. According to Oliver and Boyed, the term ‘Tribe’ is that which differs from the people of the plains in their social and cultural entities and in their physical features. Tribes are the most backward people and their literacy rate is low. For centuries, they remained in isolation. Tribal population differs from state to state. The eastern section of India, tribes is thickly populated.

Scheduled Tribes, the most disadvantaged groups in India, were enlisted in Article 341 and 342 of the constitution. Traditionally referred to as *adivasi*, tribes, or tribals, scheduled tribes (STs) constitute about 9% of India’s population. The ‘aadhivasi baasha’ was the mother tongue of scheduled tribes without script. The major tribes in Tamilnadu are Paniya, Toda, kurumba, Kani, Malayali, Irular, Palliyan, Sholagar, Kadar, Kattunayakkan, and Veddar. Most of the tribal communities are small in size and the exceptions are Malaiali and Irular tribes. The majority of the tribal population in Tamil Nadu lives in hilly ranges (Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats). The realization of the need to mainstream tribal areas was based on the link between lack of education and under-development of tribal areas. ( A. M. Tiwari, Secretary, Tribal Development Affairs, Gujarat). In Coimbatore district tribes are scattered from uliyoor of Mettupalayam to Thirumoorthyhills of Udumalpet taluk, Valparai at Coimbatore district. They were more than six tribal communities in Coimbatore schools have been set up for their further uplift.

**Keywords:** Scheduled Tribes, Grammar, English, Errors, Percentage.

## INTRODUCTION

The important tribal groups are living in Tamil Nadu. Many of the scheduled tribes live in hills and remote areas. Census 2001 stated that scheduled tribe population in Tamil Nadu is 651321 and 1.04 percentage of total population. In Nilgiri District alone the tribal group population is 28,373 and 4.32 percentage of total general population. There are 36 groups of scheduled tribes in Tamil Nadu. The literacy rate of the tribe peoples is 41.53 percentages. The term ‘tribe’ is a foreign word means a cognate group of people, showing some amount of cultural and linguistic homogeneity in their structure, behavior, and culture etc., There are 36 scheduled tribes in Tamil Nadu, they are Badagas, Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas, Paniyas, Kattunayakans etc. They are majorly found in Nilgiri district and their populations are found in six taluks.

### Definition of Grammar

Grammar is defined as “the rules that govern how a language’s sentences are formed” (Thornbury, 2000, p.1). It is argued that mastering grammar is a complex process that requires “making a series of decisions about when and why to use one form rather than the other” (Celce-Murcia, 2002, p. 121). For English as second language learners starting to learn a new language, it is essential part that they learn the basic grammar rules of the target first. While it is easier to speak

Grammar is described as a system of categories and a set of rules that determine how categories merge to form different aspects of meaning. Languages differ extensively in whether categories are fixed through the use of categories or lexical units. However, several categories are so common as to be nearly widespread. Such universal categories include the encoding of the grammatical relations of participants and predicates by grammatically distinguishing between their relations to a predicate, the encoding of temporal and spatial relations on predicates, and a system of grammatical person governing reference to and distinction between speakers and addressees and those about whom they are speaking.

### Grammatical Errors

It is undeniable fact that an understanding of a language grammar is essential and as it is said vocabulary is the flesh of the language and grammar is the skeleton. However, most second language learners of English as a foreign language view the study of grammar as boring and there are frequent outcries about the difficulty of structures among the students (Qashao, 2006). English grammatical rules are intricate and the tribal school students are weary of taking grammar classes with rote memorization and drills which they find both boring and difficult to understand or appreciate. One of the misconceptions among the tribal students is the belief that without mastering most English grammatical rules they will not be able to communicate in English.

In schools, students are being taught that English is an international language. To learn this language requires constant practice and patience. The kind of feeling that prevails among students is that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery over English language. This kind of tendency prevents students from learning new languages like English.

Since most of the students are first generation learners, how can a student get acquainted with the foreign language with regard to English without any guidance from their parents and others? Even though students are studying English, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English.

### Aim and objectives:

1. Identify and describe the educational problems are being faced by the tribal children who study in government tribal residential school.
2. To bring to light those errors that occurs due to the impact of the English language teaching for tribal children.
3. To make the process of education and learning easier and natural.
4. To identify the influence of learning and teaching second language in middle-schools atmosphere.
5. Lack of teaching materials, scientific approach to teach the English language in the tribal context, poor learning conditions, inadequate supply of teaching materials and a host of other things have contributed for the existing state of affairs.
6. Suggestions for the improvement of the teaching second language strategies to be followed in teaching English for the tribal students in future.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present studies follows a micro level examination of the developmental sequences and the skills among the tribal students of GTR schools of Western Ghats, Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu in order to give a full-fledged primary analysis . For this study 300 students have been selected for sample from five GTR schools located in Coimbatore district, namely Valparai, Palamalai, Anaikatti, Muttathuvayul, Mavuthampathy. The test materials have been constructed and the data have been collected mainly in written mode. The methods are i) students profile sheet ii) questionnaire method.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

### Test Item: 1- Nouns

The task is given to the sixth, seventh and eighth standard students of tribal school to identify the proper noun, common noun, abstract noun, collective noun, concrete noun, countable and uncountable noun, compound noun in the given sentences.

The question is to identify types of nouns in the given words. For example the given words are Malar, Pudukottai, boy, station, pack of lions, Raja, car, gold, milk, honesty, William Shakespeare, fifty, wood, fish, love. Only 37% of the sixth standard students have identified correctly and the rest 63% of them have identified incorrectly. Seventh standard students only 46% have responded correctly and the remaining 54% have responded incorrectly. Only 58% of the students of eighth standard have replied correctly and the remaining 42% of students have replied incorrectly.

### Test Item: 2 - Articles

The task given to the students is to fill the blanks with appropriate articles. The expected response from the sixth standard students is “I want to be a designer”, “I want to be an artist”, “I want to clime the highest tree”, “The girl sat on a rock” and “He wrote an open letter”. The underlined articles in the sentences are the keys to the given question.

The expected response from the seventh students is “She is a gentle woman”, “He is elected as an MLA”, “The people of this land chose non-violence”, “Janakinath Bose was a famous lawyer” and “Subash Chandra Bose led a group of volunteers”. The underlined articles are the keys to the above given questions

The expected responses of the eighth standard students are “Lakshmibai had given birth to a baby boy in 1851”, “Her mother told her many stories from the Ramayana”, “India has always been a multi-cultural country”, “Fuel was always an important need” and “The children looked at each other”. The articles which are underlined in the above statement are the keys to the given question.

There are certain rules for using articles in English language. The students while using articles they translate the given sentence into their mother tongue, so they may get lot of confusion to fill the articles. Only 24% of the students of sixth standard have responded correctly and the rest 76% of them have responded incorrectly. . Only 33% of the students of seventh have answered correctly and the remaining 67% of the students have answered wrongly. Only 48% of the students of eighth standard have responded correctly and the remaining 52% of the students have responded incorrectly.

### Test Item: 3 - Adjectives

Adjective is a word which describes or qualifies the noun. For example in the sentence ‘Rani is a cheerful girl’, the word cheerful is describes or qualifies the noun ‘Rani’, the meaning of the noun gets qualified and enhanced.

The task is given to the students to find out the adjectives. The sentences like “He would learn to build a big ship”, “King offered some rice”, and “Adityan has five boats”, “This school is more famous than Rajan Vidhyalaya” and “His mother loves me as her son” are given to the sixth standard students to find out the adjectives.

The expected response from the sixth standard is ‘big’, ‘some’, ‘five’, ‘this’, ‘more famous than’ and ‘his mother’. They are the adjectives belongs to different types. The sentences “He is an honest man”, “she ate the whole apple”, “The hand has five fingers”, “Those mangoes are sweet” and “your aim must be high” are given to the seventh standard students to find out the adjectives in the sentences. The expected response from the students is ‘honest’, ‘whole’, ‘five’, ‘those’ and ‘your’.

And the sentences given to the eighth standard students are “Taj Mahal is a wonderful building”, “He spent all his money”, “Manmohan Singh is the fourteenth Prime Minister of India”, “What time is it?” and “Our house is in the corner of the street”. The expected reply from the students is ‘wonderful’, ‘all’, ‘fourteenth’, ‘what’ and ‘our’ as adjectives.

Only 35% of the students of sixth standard have responded correctly and the rest 65% of them have responded incorrectly. Only 46% of the students of seventh have answered correctly and the remaining 54% of the students have answered wrongly. Only 57% of the students of eighth standard have responded correctly and the remaining 43% of the students have responded incorrectly.

### Test Item: 4 - Adverbs

The task is given to the students to underline the adverbs and name the kind of adverbs in the given sentences. The following words are the expected response from the sixth students. The words like ‘slowly’, ‘tasty’, ‘quickly’, ‘loudly’, ‘later’ are adverbs. It is observed that the students have committed errors by underlining adverbs as ‘moved’, ‘food’, ‘tree’, ‘climbed’, ‘were’, ‘come’, ‘said’, ‘will’, ‘Vimal’. They misunderstood that verbs as adverbs and responded wrongly.

The expected answer from the seventh students for the given sentences is ‘tomorrow’, ‘always’, ‘hard’, ‘so’, and ‘how’. The students have responded incorrectly of the given sentences like ‘working’, ‘to’, ‘best’, ‘students’, ‘rang’, ‘left’, ‘bell’, ‘kala’, ‘tomorrow’, ‘are’ as adverbs.

The words ‘fluently’, ‘forward’, ‘since’, ‘why’ and ‘ago’ are expected adverbs from the eighth standard students for the given sentences. The students have replied the words ‘speaks’, ‘English’, ‘walked’, ‘forward’, ‘it’, ‘very’, ‘are’, ‘late’, ‘tired’, ‘since’, ‘you’, ‘got’, ‘letter’ as adverbs.

The sixth standard students have responded only 38% correctly and remaining 62% have responded incorrectly. The seventh standard students have answered only 49% correctly and the rest 51% of the students have answered wrongly. When compared to sixth and seventh standard students, the eighth standard students have replied only 60% correctly and the remaining 40% have replied incorrectly.

**Test Item: 5 - Prepositions**

The students are asked to fill the blanks with suitable preposition given in the bracket.

Sixth standard – Expected response

1. The ball is under the table.
2. He will meet me at 5pm.
3. She is standing across the river.
4. They fought against Pakistan.
5. The dog jumped into the water.

For the first correct response the students have responded as at, across, against, into. Second response as under, into, for, across and third response as into, at, under.

The fourth and fifth responses as under, for, across and at, under, against, for respectively.

Seventh standard – Expected response

1. He is from Delhi.
2. The box is on the table.
3. They went through this road.
4. She went for shopping yesterday.
5. The house was besides the river.

For the first correct response the students have responded as for, on, besides. Second response as from, at, for, through and third response as for, to, besides.

The fourth and fifth responses as from, at, on, to, through and to, from, on respectively.

Eighth standard – Expected response

1. She is speaking with me.
2. The match is between India and Pakistan.
3. He came down the hill.
4. Raymonds since 1990.
5. Sita will come before 12 pm.

The students have answered wrongly as for the first question between, down, before, to. The preposition 'between' is the correct answer for second question but students have answered as with, to, down, since. For the third question they have responded as between, since, before, with. For the fourth and fifth question down, between, before and since, down, to.

Only 28% of the students of sixth standard have responded correctly and the rest 72% of them have responded incorrectly. Only 37% of the students of seventh have answered correctly and the remaining 63% of the students have answered wrongly. Only 52% of the students of eighth standard have responded correctly and the remaining 48% of the students have responded incorrectly.

**Test Item: 6 - Tenses**

The task is given to the students to fill with correct tense form of the given sentences.

The expected responses from the sixth students is

1. Dr. Vikram works (work) in the Primary Health Centre.
2. I am cooking (cook) dinner.
3. Yesterday I went (go) to a movie.
4. We were (be) playing football last week.
5. She will play (play) tomorrow.

The students have responded for the first question as 'worked', 'working', 'work'. For the second question 'cooked', 'cook', 'cooks' and for the third question 'goes', 'go', 'gone'. Students have answered for the fourth question as 'was', 'are', 'being' and for the fifth 'played', 'plays' and 'playing'.

The expected responses for the given questions from seventh standard students

1. Children make (make) a lot of noise.
2. Sheena posted (post) the letter yesterday.
3. The bus will come (come) in a few minutes from now.
4. I will be (be) going to Chennai next month.
5. They have played (play) football.

The students have replied as for the first question as 'makes', 'maked', 'making' and 'posts', 'posting', 'post' for the second question. The students have answered for the third question as 'coming', 'comes', 'come' and the fourth answer as 'being', 'be'. For the fifth question the students have responded as 'play', 'playing'.

The expected responses from the students of eighth standard is

1. The vendor sold(sell) a kilo of brinjals last week.
2. Abirami has drawn (draw) a picture.
3. Raja had completed (complete) the work yesterday.
4. They will have reached (reach) Delhi next Tuesday.
5. Ashok saw (see) a girl last week

The students have responded for the first question as 'sells', 'selling' and 'draw', 'draws' 'drawing' for the second question. The students have answered the third question as 'completes', 'completing'. For the fourth and fifth question as 'reaching', 'reaches' and 'had saw', 'sees', 'seeing' respectively.

Only 24% of the sixth standard students have replied correctly and the rest 76% have replied incorrectly. The seventh standard students have responded only 36% correctly and remaining 64% have responded incorrectly. And the eighth standard students have answered only 43% correctly and the rest of the students 57% have answered wrongly.

### Test Item: 7 - Subject Verb Agreement (Concord)

Subject verb agreement is also called concord. A verb must agree with the subject in number and person.

The task given to the students is to fill the blanks with suitable verbs. The following responses are expected from the sixth standard students.

1. Shantha with all her sisters is (am/is/are) here.
2. The captain, with all his men, was (was/were) safe.
3. Either Leela, Mani or Rita is (is/are) thirteen today.
4. Each one of these houses is (is/are) to let.
5. The committee has (has/have) decided this.

The students have responded incorrectly as 'Shantha with all her sisters are here', 'The captain, with all his men, were safe', 'Either Leela, Mani or Rita are thirteen today', 'Each one of these houses are to let' and 'The committee have decided this'. The sixth standard students have responded only 33% correctly and the remaining 67% have responded incorrectly.

The expected responses are from the seventh standard students is

1. Neither Raman nor Hari was (was/were) present.
2. The farmers or his servants were (was/were) always working.
3. Each of these boys has (has/have) passed.
4. No news is (is/are) good news.
5. Neither you nor I have (has/have) to drop this project.

The students have responded incorrectly as 'Neither Raman nor Hari were present', 'The farmers or his servants was always working', 'Each of these boys have passed', 'No news are good news' and 'Neither you or I has to drop this project'.

The seventh standard students have replied only 41% correctly and the rest 59% of the students have replied wrongly.

The expected reply from the eighth standard students is

1. Mathematics is (is/are) an intellectual subject.
2. The United States has (has/have) a big army.
3. Everyone was (was/were) happy.
4. Ants have (has/have) two antennae which serve as their sense organs.
5. Either Samy or Bhoopalan is (be) on time.

The students have committed errors as 'Mathematics are an intellectual subject', 'The United States have a big army', 'Everyone were happy', 'Ants has two antennae which serve as their sense organs' and 'Either Samy or Bhoopalan are on time'. Eighth standard have answered only 52% correctly and the remaining 48% of the students have answered in correctly.

### Test item: 8 - Modal Auxiliaries

A modal is a mood-defining auxiliary verb. Modals express very many moods of the speaker such as expressing politeness, doubt, apology, willingness, certainty, ability and so on. Modals are an indispensable component of spoken English. The modal auxiliaries are can, will, may, shall, could, would, might, should, must, ought to, used to, and need.

Sixth standard – correct response

1. I can drive a cycle.
2. May I go home now?
3. We will support you.
4. I would like to tell one thing.
5. The President said he might come.

The sixth standard students have responded incorrectly as 'may', 'could', 'will' for the first question. In the second question the correct response is 'may' but the students have replied wrongly as 'can', 'might', 'would'. The modal auxiliary 'will' is the correct answer for the third question and the students have answered as 'might', 'would', 'can'. The correct response for the fourth question is 'would' and the students have answered wrongly with 'will', 'can' may'. The fifth question takes the modal auxiliary 'might' as the correct response and the students committed error by inserting modal auxiliary 'would', 'may', 'will'.

Seventh standard – correct response

1. It may rain this evening.
2. Can I use your car?
3. You ought to write to his father.
4. Shall I order a coffee?
5. Tomorrow I will be in Chennai.

The seventh standard students have responded incorrectly as 'can', 'shall', 'will' for the first question. In the second question the correct response is 'can' but the students have replied wrongly as 'shall', 'ought to', 'will'. The modal auxiliary 'ought to' is the correct answer for the third question and the students have answered as 'will', 'shall', 'can'. The correct response for the fourth question is 'shall' and the students have answered wrongly with 'will', 'can', 'ought to'. The fifth question takes the modal auxiliary 'will' as the correct response and the students committed error by inserting modal auxiliary 'can', 'ought to', 'shall'.

Eighth standard – correct response

1. Raja can swim.
2. They might win a prize.
3. You should carry a bag.
4. Will you join us?
5. That story could be false.

The students have answered wrongly as 'might', 'should', 'will' instead of can'. In the second sentence they have responded as 'can', 'should', 'could' in the place of 'might'. The third question takes the modal auxiliary 'should' as correct response but students have responded incorrectly as 'will', 'could', 'might', 'can'. They have responded wrongly for the fourth and fifth question as 'should', 'could', 'can' instead of 'will' and 'should', 'might', 'will' in the place of 'could' respectively.

It is observed that the sixth standard students have responded only 28% correctly and remaining 72% of students have responded incorrectly. The students of seventh standard have answered only 35% correctly and the rest 65% of them have answered wrongly. And the eighth standard students have replied only 46% correctly and the remaining 54% of the students have replied incorrectly.

### Test item: 9 - Sentence Pattern

A group of words which makes complete sense is called a sentence. The students are asked to identify the sentence pattern of the given sentence.

The students have responded incorrectly for the given questions. For example 'Birds fly', this sentence is structured with subject and verb. But they have answered as 'S+C', 'S+V+O', 'S+IDO'. The second sentence 'My father gave me a watch' as 'S+V+O', 'S+V+C', 'S+V+O+A'. In the third sentence 'He painted the car blue' as 'S+V+IDO+DO', 'S+V+C', 'S+O+C'. In the next sentence 'We meet every Friday' is wrongly responded as 'S+V+O', 'S+V+C', 'S+V+IDO'. In the final sentence

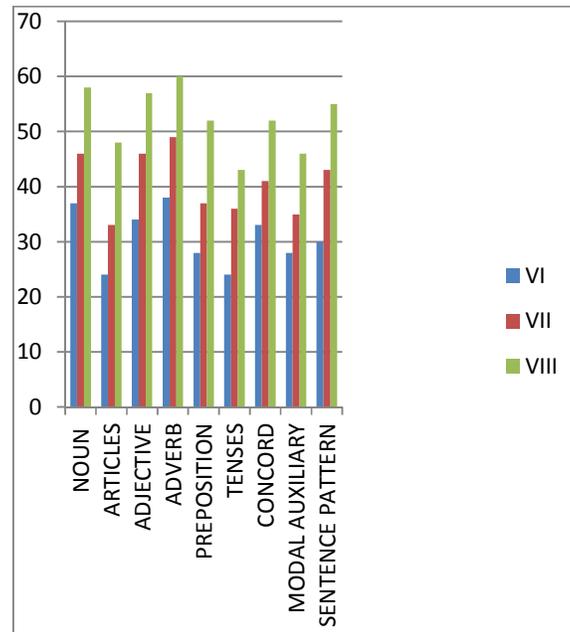
'The teacher read a story today' as 'S+V+C+A', 'S+V+IDO+DO'.

The students have responded incorrectly for the given questions. For example 'The crowd laughed', this sentence is structured with subject and verb. But they have answered as 'S+C', 'S+V+O', 'S+DO'. The second sentence 'The collector inspected the building' as 'S+V+C', 'S+V+A', 'S+V+C+A'. In the third sentence 'They elected her the class leader' as 'S+V+IDO+DO', 'S+V+A', 'S+O+C+A'. In the next sentence 'The crowd cheered him lustily' is wrongly responded as 'S+V+O', 'S+V+C', 'S+V+IDO'. In the final sentence 'We shall meet tomorrow' as 'S+V+C+A', 'S+V+DO'.

Eighth standard – Expected response

The students of eighth standard have answered wrongly for the given questions. For instance 'Birds fly in the sky', they have answered as 'S+C+O', 'S+V+O', 'S+IDO+DO'. The second sentence 'He gave me a pen' as 'S+V+C', 'S+V+A', 'S+V+C+A'. In the third sentence 'They presented him a bouquet' as 'S+V+C+DO', 'S+V+A', 'S+O+A+A'. In the next sentence 'Ronaldo scored three goals' is wrongly responded as 'S+V+A', 'S+V+C', 'S+V+C+A'. In the final sentence 'They borrowed money from the bank' as 'S+V+C+A', 'S+V+IDO+DO', 'S+V+C'.

### Performance of the Students



As it has been stated earlier those errors committed by the students are found to occur in almost all levels of language that is from phonology to syntax. Many errors have been made by the tribal school students in the grammatical level. Grammatical errors are found to occur in articles, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, tenses, prepositions, modal auxiliaries, subject verb agreement and sentence pattern. They have poor knowledge in grammar.

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