



A STUDY OF CERTAIN FACTORS RELATED TO THE LEARNING DISABILITIES/DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS.

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ABSTRACT

The literature, at hand, throws light at the fact that many studies have been pointed on the learning difficulties/disabilities abroad. On the Indian screen, the study on learning difficulties/disabilities is negligible and meagre. The purpose of this study is to throw light into the numerous studies that have been conducted on different aspects, such as the prevalence and characteristics of learning difficulties and specific studies on reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic skills. A good number of studies have been concentrated on different factors related to learning difficulties/disabilities such as biological, social, cultural, economic and environmental.

A learning difficulty is any diverse group of conditions that cause significant difficulties in perceiving or processing auditory, visual and/or spatial information. Learning difficulties are significant problems of synthesizing (bringing together information within the brain), organizing (making sense and order of this information), and memorizing (holding onto this information in order to use it at will)(Dorothy Smith, 1996). The unfortunate fact about learning difficulty is that a child already with a learning disability does not fit into any category that is represented by various definitions for learning difficulties but still has a problem to read, speak write and solve arithmetic problems.

Key words: *learning disability/difficulty, synthesizing, organizing, memorizing, auditory, visual, spatial information*

INTRODUCTION

Learning difficulties are rarely caused by a single isolated factor. It is more likely to be an integral part of some imbalance in the forces governing the child's whole life. Such major

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forces include the child's whole life and the innate constitutional make up as it affects its growth and intellectual capacity, as well as the environment in which it develops.

The interplay of these forces influences its social and emotional growth. The child brings this whole pattern with it to any situation that includes learning. Thus investigation of causation is extremely complicated. It is observed in most cases, many factors are found together in various combinations. The most common factors include biological, social, cultural, economic and environmental.

In the present study, factors refer to those responsible to create difficulties in the learning of reading, writing and spelling skills in English by the students, their sex, age, class, community, father's educational qualification, mother's educational qualifications, location of the school, medium of instructions, exposure to different media, parents income, parents occupation, number of children in the family, teacher's sex and teacher's educational qualifications of the students. Likewise, awareness of parents and teachers on learning disabilities of student in English, attitude of parents and teachers towards the learning disabilities of students in English are also considered as factors.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES / DISABILITIES:

1. Educational qualification of the parent:

Parental education plays a very important role in the life of the student which led to the learning disability either way due to extreme pressure.

2. Location of the school.. (rural or urban):

It means that the location of the school has a significant impact on the reading, spelling difficulties and learning difficulties experienced by the students in English. It is interesting to note from the mean values that the student from the rural schools have more reading, spelling difficulties and learning difficulties put together than their counter parts in the urban. It may be due to their poor environment. In the rural areas, the use of English Language is almost confined to the classroom and at the most to the school.

Hence, rural students have no chance to exercise their skills acquired in the learning of English language as they are not exposed to the outer world through any media and also has teachers' with less skills.



3. Influence of student medium of instruction:

It reveals that the Kannada medium students face writing difficulties in English, whereas English medium students do not experience these difficulties. Thus, the stated hypothesis, there exists significant difference in reading, writing, spelling difficulties and learning difficulties put together by the students in English due to variation in their Medium of Instruction, is accepted with respect to spelling difficulties and learning difficulties put together.

From the above, it is concluded that the medium of instruction of the students influences significantly their spelling and learning difficulties put together in English only.

4. Exposure to different media:

There exists difference in reading, writing, spelling and learning difficulties put together by the students in English due to variation in their exposure to different media.

5. Influence of parent's income on students:

Parent's income has significant influence on the learning difficulties of students in English; whereas, the reading and writing difficulties of students are not influenced by their parental income. (since it becomes instrumental on the type of school attended during their initial stages of life).

6. Influence of parents occupation:

As the employed parents and business background parents are well aware of the social needs, they encourage their children to study the courses that lead to high social status and money earning (medicine and engineering) thereby, giving less importance to the language learning particularly, English. Also, a mere pass in English examination is enough to enter these courses, with very high marks in Science and Mathematics. Further the entrance examinations for these courses are conducted minimizing the importance of the English language,

Contrary to this agriculturists encourage their children to learn English as they wish to join their wards to urban schools for higher classes, where English knowledge is essential for admission and will be at par with the urban children.

7. Influence of the number of children in the family:

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In small families of one to two children, are watched and protected by their parents. They are guided well and it helps the student to practice freely hence they do not face more spelling and learning difficulties put together in English in contrast to the condition of bigger families.

8. Nutritional factors that lead to learning disability:

The right type of food and food habits determine the growth of the child both physically and mentally. Malnourishment leads to related problems.

9. Biological factors:

Certain health related conditions of a pregnant mother could put the foetus at risk of developmental disabilities. Health problems low birth weight, hearing problems etc., account for the cognitive development of the children particularly with the poor and the middle class children.

10. Socio-economic and cultural factors:

It is quite possible that the quality of the child's literacy experiences will be significantly affected by living with one parent and parents and such a child encounters difficulties in learning to read. Some children cannot respond to social responses of people around them and to engage in behaviours that elicit social responses from others.

Children who come from impoverished homes are exposed to a limited range of experiences, where educational materials are scarce and where language usage is restricted.

CONCLUSION

Even though poverty, ignorance of parents about education, low social status of the people are the causes of drop outs at primary level, one may not ignore the difficulties faced by the student while learning, particularly in learning languages. Due to the learning difficulties experienced by the students, many students are unable to attain even basic literacy skills.

Educationists have concentrated more on the physical and human resources ignoring the learning difficulties in children. Unless learning difficulties in reading, writing and spelling, particularly in foreign languages like English are identified and recognized as hurdles in learning and find the ways and means to overcome the same in children, it is not possible to arrest wastage, stagnation and dropouts in the school level. Thus this study is aimed to predict



to what extent and to how far the independent variables (sex, age, class, community, father's educational qualification, mother's educational qualifications, location of the school, medium of instructions, exposure to different media, parents income, parents occupation, number of children in the family, teacher's sex and teacher's educational qualifications, parent's awareness and attitude) influence the dependant variables(reading, writing, spelling difficulties and learning difficulties put together).

The identification of difficulties at an early age makes it possible for a comprehensive programme at the very beginning of the child's career. Thus, a pre-school identification programme of learning difficulties is a welcoming aspect in the modern world. To overcome these problems, parents and teachers are to be sensitized to the concept of learning difficulties in students, particularly in English. If this is not done it may not be possible to wipe out problems leading to wastage, stagnation and drop outs from Indian soil and the concept of Universalisation of Education at the lower level and cent percent literacy will be a myth.

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