

ABSTRACT

Learning English as a second language or a foreign language becomes quite challenging for various reasons. It becomes challenging especially for those living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas or for those originating from diverse linguistic backgrounds. India being a multilingual and multicultural country, in most of the regions people can speak multiple languages. In case of tribal population, it includes tribal languages as well. In the Indian state of West Bengal, there are several areas where multilingualism operates behind learning English as a second/foreign language. There are several schools where teachers (who may or may not belong to any linguistic minority group) have to teach English to linguistic minority learners along with other learners. Often the contrast between the mother tongue of the linguistic minority learners and English creates difficulty in learning English with regard to grammar, pronunciation and basic sentence structure.

The present study incorporated three primary objectives. The first objective was to explore strategies employed by teachers for teaching English to linguistic minority learners at government primary schools in the Sundarbans of India. The second objective was to identify the challenges faced by teachers in English language teaching and the challenges faced by linguistic minority learners in English language learning at government primary schools in the Sundarbans of India. The third objective was to study the perceptions of linguistic minority learners and their parents towards English. The study adopted a qualitative multiple case study design for delving deep into the phenomena and for gaining deeper insights from the participants. Data, required for the study, were collected through different methods, namely interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations and document analysis. Incorporating a triangulation

method using various sources of data, while investigating the phenomena, the study validated its findings.

The data collected for this study were analyzed qualitatively using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach. However, from the analysis of data five major themes were generated under which a number of sub-themes were placed. The generated themes are – teaching strategies, challenges, perceptions, discrimination and lack of initiatives. The findings of the study explore that teachers of English (EFL/ESL teachers) employed various teaching strategies for teaching English to the linguistic minority learners. Some of the strategies were pedagogical translanguaging, integration of technology, use of textbook and various teaching-learning materials, bridging previous and new knowledge, and promoting bilingualism and multilingualism. At the same time the study investigated the challenges faced by both teachers and learners, especially during teaching and learning English. The findings of the study identified several challenges related to poverty, infrastructure, evaluation process, teachers' knowledge and skills, learners' problems in learning English and lack of parental support. The study also explored the perceptions of teachers, linguistic minority learners and their parents towards English.