AN INVESTIGATION OF LANGUAGE PROBLEM IN THE CLASSROOM IN PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR TOTO TRIBE

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List of Abbreviations

1P	First person
2P	Second person
3P	Third person
ABL	Ablative
ACC	Accusative
ASP	Aspect
BFP	Board Free Primary
CLA	Classifier
COMP	Complementizer
CONJ	Conjunction
CP	Conjunctive participle
DAT	Dative
DEM	Demonstrative
ERG	Ergative
ES	Eighth Schedule
F	Feminine
FUT	Future
Gen	Genitive
HAB	Habitual
HON	Honorific
INF	Infinitive
ITDP	Integral Tribal Development Project
ITM	Indigenous/ Tribal/ Minority
LOC	Locative
MT	Mother Tongue
N	Neutral
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCERT	National Council for Education and Research Institute
NEG	Negation
NOM	Nominative
NPE	National Policy on Education
POA	Programme of Action
PRS	Present

PRF   Perfective

PRS   Present

PROG Progressive

PST   Past

PGTs   Primitive Tribal Groups

PL   Plural

OM   Object marker

SM   Subject marker

POSS Possessive

SG   Singular

ST   Scheduled Tribe

SCB   Standard Colloquial Bangla

TLF   Three Language Formula

UNESCO United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

For many reasons, education for linguistics minorities is a matter of major concern all over the world. Along with the other major problem in education like economical problem, infrastructural problem and teacher absence, medium of instruction is one of the most important problem for the linguistic minorities (and in Indian scenario more specifically for the tribal children). According to Mohanty, (2009:283) "Education failure of linguistic minorities all over the world is primarily related to the mismatch between the home language and the language of formal instruction". In India even though there are many polices for the education of linguistic minorities, they have not been implemented other than few exceptions. Many scholars have researched upon the issue of language problem in tribal education in the past. This present research work is a preliminary study on language problem in primary education in the case of the Toto tribe. The details of the research work is going to describe step by step in following sections

1.1. Linguistics Scenario of India

India is a country of large language diversity. These languages belong to different language families. The language families are- (1) Indo-Aryan, (2) Dravidian, (3) Austro-Asiatic, (4) Tibeto-Burman, (5) Andamanese and (6) Semito- Hamitic. At present, the Constitution of India recognizes only 22 languages as "scheduled languages" and 100 languages as "non scheduled languages". According to the Census of India (2001), the number of scheduled languages in India was 18 and later in the 92nd Amendment of the Indian Constitution (2003) four languages were included Bodo, Dogri, Maithali and Santhali. Languages, which are not listed in VIII Schedule, are not less in number. Even a few of these non-scheduled languages have more than a million speakers e.g. Bhili 3,313,418 and Gondi 2,505,247. These languages are known as the Minority languages. Unfortunately there is no definition of minority languages provided by the Constitution of India. Generally, languages that are not included in the VIII Schedule are known as the minority languages. These minority languages include tribal

languages and again the term itself has no linguistic definition. Languages spoken by the Scheduled Tribes[1]of India are considered as 'tribal languages'. The tribal languages constitute almost 96% of total non-scheduled languages of the land and around 81% of the total languages of India listed in the Census. (Abbi, 2000: 2).[2]

1.2. Language and Education

In a country like India, drafting language policies for education is a challenging task for the policy makers. The main reason lies in its vast linguistic diversity. The problem regarding the medium of instruction in primary level which has turned out to be the most debated issue for Indian School Education policy makers and different scholars in recent times. Language policy in education is a very important mechanism by which states manage social and political conflicts as well as provide a citizen the rights to exercise their own language in education and in other fields of social and academic interaction. As there are so many languages spoken in India, it is even more difficult a task for the policy maker.

According to the Third All India Educational Survey conducted in 1973 mentioned 47 languages and The Fifth All India Educational Survey conducted in 1981 mentioned 43 languages are used in India as a medium of instruction in primary school level. It is a matter of regret that though we have hundreds of languages, yet languages recognised as medium of instruction among these are only 43. This number is very small and the situation is antagonistic to the enormous possibilities that the linguistic diversity of India could otherwise have yielded if given necessary attention to it. The Indian Constitution and other education policies (NPE 1986, NCF 2005 etc.) of India emphasised to initiate mother tongue as the medium of instruction in education. The present language policy situation only adds further to our discomfort as we still can afford to delay the necessity of its implementation.

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[1] In Indian context, these indigenous or aboriginal people mainly known as 'tribes'. These tribes are scheduled as per Article 342 of the constitution by the President and Parliament. According to, Anthropological survey of India's People of India Project there are 635 tribal communities of which 573 are so far officially notified as Scheduled Tribes.

[2] Linguistics Diversity in India, paper presented in Genetics-Linguistics Seminar.

1.3. Linguistic Rights in Education

According to the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, "All language communities have the right to decide to what extent their language is to be present, as a vehicular language and as an object of study, at all levels of education within their territory: preschool, primary, secondary, technical and vocational, university, and adult education" (Section 2 Education, Article 24). UNESCO recognized the importance of the mother tongue as the most suitable medium of education and stated it thus in its decree of 1957. The UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education in 1960 stated in Article 5.1.C. says that the earlier two years of a child's schooling should be done with her/his own mother tongue education. According to, Kangas and Philipson (1994:71) the two main linguistic human rights in education are: to learn the standard form of an official language in the country of residence and to learn and use one's mother tongue.

Traditionally, the mother tongue has been considered the obvious and optimal medium of instruction in schools, at least at the elementary level. The importance of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is both educational and socio-cultural. Skutnabb-Kangas aptly points out:

> *"In a civilized state, there should be no need to debate the right to maintain and develop the mother tongue. It is a self-evident, fundamental linguistic human right. It means the right to learn the mother tongue, orally and in writing, including at least basic education through the medium of the mother tongue, and to use it in many official contexts."*
>
> (Skutnabb- Kangas, 1994: 625)

Though the Eighth Schedule is discriminatory in nature, the Indian constitution gives enough safeguards to protect and practice the minority languages for various educational purposes. These articles are mentioned below:

Article 15 (4): Promotion of Social, Economic and Educational interests: "any special provision for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

Article 29: Protection of interests of minorities: According to this article, a cultural or linguistic minority has right to conserve its language or culture. "Any section of the

citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same."

Article 46: "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the SC and the STs and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

Article 350-A: "It should be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision for such facilities." The facilities translate as follows:

> "[…] *arrangements must be made for instruction in the mother tongue by appointing one teacher provided there are not fewer than 40 pupils speaking the language in the whole school or 10 such pupils in a class…*"
>
> (Sridhar, 1996: 333)

Article 350-B also makes the provision for a special officer, the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities; whose sole responsibility would be to safeguard the educational and linguistic rights of minorities.

Ironically, all these articles are merely statements on paper as these are scarcely seen to be in effect in a pan Indian scenario where every one of its citizens is concerned. Focus on the issue of the medium of instruction in education after independence in the governmental level started with the recommendation of the Radhakrishanan Commission (1949) (which is otherwise known as the University Education Commission's Report (1949)). Later, in 1952, the Mudaliar Commission Report has given two types of recommendations; both of these were in favour of mother tongue education at secondary level. The Central Advisory Board of Education reviewed this report and proposed yet another policy, generally known as the 'Three Language Formula' (TLF). Finally, Three Language Formula (TLF) was formally put down on paper in 1968. TLF mentioned the following policy:

In Non Hindi State:

Study of Hindi

Study of a language listed in the Eighth Schedule

Study English or any Modern European language

In Hindi States:

Study of Hindi

Study of Modern Indian Languages especially from South India

Study English or any Modern European language

The TLF strategy is impressive as it takes into account the pluri-linguistic and pluri-cultural nature of the Indian society. But it fails to introduce various minor languages as a subject or as a medium of instruction (Abbi 2006: 3).

The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) is another important policy for tribal education in India. This policy recommended the following objectives, as mentioned in Goutam (2003: 2):

- Priorities will be accorded to the opening of primary schools in tribal areas.
- Efforts will be made to solve the lacking in the curriculum and infrastructure.
- Promising tribal youths will be encouraged to take up teaching in tribal areas.
- Incentive schemes will be designed keeping the peculiarity of tribal need in mind, which specified, among other things, the following: There is a need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal languages at the initial stages with arrangements for switchover to regional languages.

After NPE (1986), the Programme of Action (POA, 1992) also recognized the heterogeneity and diversity of the tribal areas while underlining the importance of instruction through the mother tongue and the need for preparing teaching/learning materials in the tribal languages.

Another important policy in regarding tribal education is the National Curriculum Framework which draws the following directives (NCF, 2005:37)

- Home language of children should be the medium of learning in schools.

- If a school does not have provision for teaching in the children's home language at the higher levels, primary school education must be covered through the home language. It is imperative that we honour the child's home language.
- NCF also asks to initiate the mother tongue or the students' first language as a medium of instruction where the gap between school language and home language is high in the early stages of primary education.

Clearly, these directives add a more democratic and un-segregated enthusiasm to its predecessors and it provides for a more general and global appreciation and rendition of the perspective of the policy makers.

1.4. Linguistic Rights in India and its Reality:

From the policies and Articles of Indian constitution that we referred to in the previous section, it is clear that in India we have ample amount of safeguards in favour of mother tongue education. However, the real scenario of tribal education in India is very different. Other than a few schools of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and some other states of India, mother tongue education for tribal children is a dream. They get their education in state language, which in most of the cases is not their mother tongue.

Sridhar (1996) mentioned in his work that the real problem is the choice of medium of instruction for the minorities who speak one of the unrecognized, mostly tribal languages or other languages. On the other hand, the TLF gives an option or choice only among the languages of the Eighth Schedule (ES). However, an ES language or regional language may not necessarily be the mother tongue of all the learners in a State. A clear policy regarding minority languages needs to be spelt out.

Medium of instruction is one the most important issue in Indian education, especially in tribal education. Though the importance of mother tongue as medium of instruction in primary education is known and proved, in India most of the tribal children do not have opportunity study in their mother tongue. This is one of the main reasons for tribal students' push out[3]. According to Acharya (1984)[4], the reason for 26 percent of the push outs at the level of elementary education is the 'lack of interest in education' caused

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[3] Instead of drop out the term push out is used by Mohanty (1994), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000).

[4] cited in *Position Paper National Focus Group on Teaching of Indian Languages,* NCERT, 2006.

partly by the lack of cultural content in educational programmes; language is not only a 'component of culture' but also a 'carrier of culture'.

Moreover, the random appointments of teachers from different language backgrounds who cannot speak any tribal language create a considerable cultural and social gap between the instructors and the pupils. This form of negligence creates communication barriers and Sujatha (1994) found that one major cause behind the high push out rate of tribal students was their inability to establish a communication link with the teacher.

Ambashat (1970) mentioned in his research that in the schools of Ranchi district, the students did not like the non-tribal teachers as the teachers could not speak their language. They rather had a liking for the Christian teacher who could communicate in their own language. Srivastava et al. (1971, cited in Biswal & Mohanty, 2009) were the first who studied the education problem among Saoras in Orissa. They registered in their findings that the main reason for the educational backwardness and comparatively inferior educational performance of Saoras was due to the fact that they were taught in Oriya and not in their mother tongue.

Jhingran (2005) points out that over 12 percent children suffer severe learning disadvantages because of the language policy imposed upon them. Therefore, they could not get access to primary education through their mother tongues. Pattanayak (1981: 43) observes, "Where multiple languages and cultures co-exist, the notion of one dominant language as the medium of instruction leaves thousands illiterate in their mother tongue and fosters low achievement level in the dominant language itself."

The situation of Toto children in the northern part of West Bengal in their primary school is of the same type. Toto is their mother tongue and Bangla is the official language of the state as well as the medium of instruction in the primary level of education with a few exceptions. The Toto children on whom the research is based upon have been confronting the communication issue in their schools from their initial schooling. Totos, like the other understudied and under-privileged tribal communities in the Indian sub-continent has been denied the right to education in mother tongue and are still waiting for a comprehensive policy to be drafted for them.

The main objective of this work is to examine how the Toto Children are facing problems in their primary education due to the imposition of a medium of instruction which is not their mother tongue.

1.5. Why Totos as the Target Group

There are a few reasons to select Toto speech community as the target research group. The reasons are following:

1. Toto Tribe is one of the most endangered primitive tribe[5] in India.
2. The Toto and Bangla language are very different from each other.
3. The educational situation of Totos is really in a critical situation, the literacy rate is very low compared to the national and state literacy rate. The push out rate is also high.
4. Even though the students are not familiar with Bangla at all, they have to study in Bangla in the school from the basic levels of education.

Moreover, there are some previous and referable works done by Sanyal (1973), Majumder (1993) and other scholars, which focused chiefly upon the socioeconomic, educational and the socio-cultural situation of the tribe. Until now, there is no existing work done on the primary education of the Totos and the problem regarding the medium of instruction as well. This work has a good scope for a better understanding of their problems that they have to face in primary education and mostly because of its conflicting linguistic features with Bangla, the official medium of instruction in basic level schooling.

1.6. The Research Question

The mother tongue of Toto Children is Toto language, a language that falls under the Tibeto-Burman language family. On the other hand, the medium of instruction in Schools is Bangla, which is an unfamiliar language to the Toto children in the sense that they do not use it neither in their home domain nor in any social circle inside the community they belong to. The aim of this work is to find out:

 ➢ What are the types of linguistic problems faced by the Toto children in classrooms due to the influence of Bangla as the sole medium of instruction?
 ➢ What are the pragmatic problems faced by Toto children in classroom

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[5] The term 'Primitive tribe' is discussed in next chapter, Section 2.1.

instruction for their lack of understanding of the instruction given in the class in Bangla?

1.7. Hypothesis:

The main hypothesis of this study is-

As the medium of instruction in primary education for the Toto children is being conducted in Bangla, children face difficulties in learning.

1.8. Data Sources

Both primary and secondary data are used for the present study. Secondary data has been collected from multiple official sources

Primary Data Source Field work was the primary data source for this research. An extensive field work was done in Totopara from 15th March to 20th April. Interview of teachers and guardians and students was taken.

Secondary Data Sources are Census of India, Ethonologue, Grierson Linguistics Survey of India, NCERT, Other writings about Toto population, Education and language.

1.9. Methodology

This present research work deals with the language problem in primary education for the Toto tribe. Classroom observation was the main method followed for the purpose of data collection. How the students and the teachers were interacting in the classroom and the qualitative students' performance was observed for more than one month in the two primary schools mentioned here:

1. Totopara Board Free Primary (BFP) School and

2. Poargaon Integral Tribal Development Project (ITDP) Primary School.

Students' mode of interaction with their classmates and others on the playground and outside of the class was also observed. In both the schools, majority of the students are Toto. Classroom observation was done on the basis of qualitative questionnaires. There is also one English medium nursery school in Totopara in which almost all of the students are Nepali and some of the students are from outside the Totopara region. For

this reason, the field work was done keeping in mind only those schools which uses Bangla as the medium of instruction.

Other than classroom observation, some other methods were used to understand more about students' performance and achievement level. Other methods include tests and strategies like:

Story Telling Session: Students of class four were asked to tell stories. They were given the option of choosing their own topics and the medium of expression as per their individual preference of language.

Story Writing Test: A story writing test was also arranged in both the schools to evaluate the students' writing skills.

Cloze Test: Sudents were also given a Bangla Cloze Test for the purpose of better understanding of the students' overall language proficiency and the ability to use Bangla vocabulary in the classroom assignments.

Interview as a technique: The teachers are more actively related to school students. They can tell more about the students' problem than a researcher can who has worked in the schools for not more than one month. The interviews were informal and open-ended. This helped to analyze the data without any bias or personal judgements. The interviews were conducted with the teachers in both the schools. In this kind of research endeavour, it is important to mention the students' opinions about their own problem. As the school children were unable to articulate their problem related with medium of instruction, textbooks etc., interviews were conducted among some high school students as well as among some college-going youths at the end of the field work. It also seemed necessary to be able to reach a few guardians for interview for at times concerned parents can come up with valuable information about the students' educational achievements and difficulties in the home domain. Open-ended questions were used to get as many details as possible.

1.9. Organisation of the Chapters

The first chapter is Introduction which includes the linguistic and educational scenario of India. This chapter also includes the linguistic rights in education for Tribal children. Then the research question, methodology is introduced in this chapter.

The second chapter is about the Toto tribe in which the attempt is to provide a very brief over view of their history, their linguistic situation and the education scenario. In this chapter the background information of the primary schools, students and teachers are also included.

Chapter 3 contains the analysis of the data accumulated in various ways and methods as mentioned in the methodology section which includes classroom observation, story writing, storytelling, cloze test. Other than these, the opinion of the teachers, guardians and students are also included in this chapter.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion. In this chapter, the findings of the research work and further research-possibilities are discussed.

CHAPTER 2

Toto Tribes and their Language and Education

2.1. A Brief Overview of the Totos

The Totos are the smallest tribal community of West Bengal – at present, 1,387 Totos live in the small village known as Totopara[6], Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal. Totopara is situated in isolation between the foothills of the Himalayas and the Indo-Bhutan border. The Totos belong to the Mongoloid group.

The Totos are one of the 75 communities of India, which are registered under the category of the Primitive Tribe (PT). There are 573 Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India. These tribal groups are at different stages of economic, social and educational development. Though some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream lifestyle, there are certain tribal communities who have (1) a stagnant or declining population (2) a pre-agricultural level of technology, (3) extremely low literacy and (4) a subsistence level of economy[7]. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, prepared a list of 75 such backward tribal communities from 17 states and 1 Union Territory during the Seventh Five Year Plan in December 1984. These tribal communities of India are known as Primitive Tribal Group (PTGs). In West Bengal, Toto is one of the PTGs, along with the Birhor and Lodha tribes.

There is no archaeological evidence to show how long the Totos have been living in Totopara. Das (1969) in his book *The Totos* rightly informs us that at present we will not find even a single Toto who is able to narrate us the story of their past settlements. They have been living in this small isolated place since the middle of the 18th century, probably after the Anglo-Bhutan war (1864-65), by driving out another weak tribal group, Rabha.

The Totos shifted in the present Totopara from the western parts of Duars due to different diseases like kalazar and malaria, and to avoid the powerful Bhutiyas. Since

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[6] Two Maps of Totopara is given in page no. 14, 15.

[7] http://ncst.nic.in/writereaddata/mainlinkFile/File415.pdf accessed on 20.4.2012

then, they have been living in Totopara on their own. Regarding the Toto settlement, different scholars have different opinions. According to the Toto tradition, they have been residing in Totopara for at least seven generations. There is a legend about how the place got to be known as Toto. It is said there were some people who were employed by the Britishers during the Bhutan War in 1864-65, mainly to carry the supplies of 'tota' (cartridge) and because of this reason, this group of people were known as the Totos.

The ethnic environment of the Totos was completely different about two generations ago when the inhabitants were solely Totos. Nowadays, the scenario of Totopara has changed. The Nepali population has gradually taken possession of most of the land in this area. A few Bhutiya, Bihari and Bengali families also reside in Totopara.

Totos are mainly dependant on agriculture for their livelihood; a few of them also work in nearby Bhutan and other places. Very few Totos are employed in state government jobs, like in schools and banks.

Map 1: Location of this Research Work Totopara

TOTO TRADE ROUTES

N

W   E

S

89°0'0"E

B H U T A N

27°0'0"N   27°0'0"N

JALPAIGURI

B A N G L A D E S H   C O O C H   B E H A R

26°0'0"N   26°0'0"N

INDEX

◎ PLACE

●—● ROUTES

0 5 10   20   30   40
Kilometers

89°0'0"E

2.2. Previous Work on Totos

D. Sunder was the first government official to report the existence of the Toto community. He was the settlement officer of Jalpaiguri, deputed to survey the western parts of Duars in 1889-1894. Sunder had written about seven pages about their habits and language. (Majumder, 1998: 2).

After Sunder, J. Milligan, settlement officer of Jalpaiguri, conducted the second survey on the western parts of Duars during 1906-1916. "*His account of the Totos is very brief covering only two pages.*" (Sanyal, 1953: 10).

B. Mukherjee, in 1931-1935, conducted another survey. His note about the Totos covered only half a page. In 1909, Grierson in his Linguistic Survey of India wrote a brief description of the Toto language.

In 1947, Charu Chandra Sanyal wrote one or two newspaper articles on the Totos. It was A. Mitra, In-Charge of Census Operations in West Bengal in 1951, who added a valuable note on the Totos in the *District Handbook of Jalpaiguri* (1951). Mitra was the first person who realised the importance of publishing about the Totos. His concerns for the Totos reflected in his writing:

> "*Excluded from The President of India's list of seven scheduled tribes in West Bengal the Toto suffers an anonymity which is totally undeserved. He has the unique distinction of belonging to a very rare race; it lives in only one village in the wide world, has a spoken language of its own, and numbers only about 325 souls.*" (Majumder, 1998: 3)

In 1955, Sanyal published an important long article on the Totos in the *Journal of Asiatic Society*. In his article, Sanyal discussed about the social and domestic life of the Totos, and their language.

After Sanyal, Dr. B.K. Roy Burman, the then Cultural Research Officer of the Cultural Research Institute, Kolkata, worked extensively on the Toto society. Even his doctoral thesis was on the Toto community. He published a few articles in various journals. After Burman, a group of scientific workers from the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata undertook a study on the Totos during March-April, 1962, from the sociological, demographic and haematological points of view.

In 1969, the deputy director of the Cultural Research Institute, Kolkata, Amal Kumar Das published a bulletin titled *The Totos.* This bulletin covers different facts like the establishment of social and economic organizations, and various activities.

Sarkar's (1993) *Toto: Society and Change (A Sub-Himalayan Tribe of West Bengal)* is also a brief work on the Totos' society. It talked about the area and people of Totopara, social organizations of Totos, and social control, belief and practice issues.

Majumder (1998) published an extensive work on the Totos – *The Totos: Cultural and Economic Transformation of a Small Tribe in The Sub-Himalayan Bengal*. After Sanyal's work, Majumder's work is an important contribution to the Totos' socio-economic situation. At the same time, Majumder has discussed the developmental efforts and cultural adoption of the Totos. In the same year, Manibrata Bhattacharya published *Toto at Cross Roads.* In his own words,

> *"This book is essentially an anthropological study on the ethnic, environmental, social and cultural life of Toto…also includes changing demographic structure and economic activities of this 'primitive tribe'."*
>
> (Bhattacharya, 1998, p. 5)

Other than these works, different articles about the Totos were published in various Bangla and English newspapers and magazines.

2.3. A Brief Overview of the Toto Language:

The language spoken by the Totos is known as Toto language, a Tibeto-Burman language. Before discussing more about the Toto language, it is more appropriate to talk about the previous works related to the Toto language.

In his Linguistic Survey of India (1909), Grierson was the first person to talk about the Toto language. He added some pages on the Toto language.

> *"…and no non Toto knows their language. There is said to be only one Toto in existence who knows a little Bengali besides in his own language […] the material available are far from being sufficient for giving even the most superficial sketch of Toto Grammar…"*   (Grierson, 1909: 250)

The most important work about the Toto language was carried out by Sanyal in his remarkable work *The Totos: A Sub-Himalayan Tribe (1953)*. In this book, he discussed in detail about the Toto language in chapter V. Other than Sanyal's work, there are

some other works about the Toto language; however, they are composed of an insufficient bank of words. Recently, Sikdar (2005) has also written a paper – *The Toto Tribe of Jalpaiguri and their spoken language*. In this article, she has tried to sketch an overview of the Toto language. She has talked about the phonetics and syntax of Toto in brief; she has also added a list of words. Another remarkable project formulating the grammar of the language, is in progress under The Himalayan Languages Project at Leiden University. This work has not been published till now. Toto language does not have any written form, that is, they do not have their own script. Nowadays, some Toto youths and scholars are writing poems, stories and folk tales in their own language, using the Bangla script.

The Totos are usually surrounded by other tribes like the Nepalis and Bhutiyas, but nowadays, they too are being influenced by the Bengalis. Therefore, it can be seen that there are many borrowed words from Bangla in the Toto language. Sanyal in his writing has mentioned about the borrowing words. In his own words:

> *"...many words of Tibetan, Bhutias and Bodo and a few Bengali words are to be found in their vocabulary and in recent years the language has been subjected to a very close influence from Nepali and also from Bengali and Hindusthani."*   (Sanyal, 1973: 45)

2.4. The Toto Language: Differences with Bangla

Toto is different from Bangla or Nepali in terms of its phonological, morphological and syntactic formations. Toto is a Tibeto-Burman language, whereas the Bangla and Nepali are from the Indo-Aryan language family. In the following section, a very brief overview of Toto language and its comparison with certain constructions of Bangla has been discussed on the basis of the very small amount of data collected during field work in Totopara

Phonology: There is no detail study on Toto phonology till date.

Morphological and Syntactic Structure:
 Toto finite verbs carry aspect and person morphology, which is quite distinct from Bangla. The pattern is shown below:

Bangla	ami	ɟai	amra	ɟai
	I-Sg	go-HAB.1P	we-PL	go-HAB.1P
	'I go'		'we go'	
Toto	ka I-SG	ha-ro go-1P-ASP	kidia we	ha-daŋ-na go-3P-ASP
	'I go.'		'we go'	

Interestingly, the pronouns look lexically quite different from Bangla or Nepali, which are the dominant languages of the area.

Gender Inflection: Unlike Hindi, no grammatical gender agreement is found in this language. In this respect, it is similar to Bangla, which also has no gender agreement marking on the verb.

1. ako hadaŋna
   he/she go-HAB
   'he/she goes.'

2. abia hadaŋna
   they go-HAB
   'they go'

Plurality is shown by attaching the suffix /-*bi*/ to the nouns. It comes irrespective of the fact whether the noun is inanimate or animate.

3. heiga
   book
   'a/one book'.
4. poɟa
   boy
   'a boy'
5. poɟa-bi
   boy-PL
   'boys'

In Bangla, number is shown by classifiers on plurals for count nouns or numeral classifiers and adjectives for mass nouns.

6. boigulo
   book-CLA
   'books'

7. tinte boi
   three-CLA book
   'three books'.

8. ɔnek ɟɔl

   much water

   'plenty of water.'

Case Markers follow a usual Tibeto-Burman pattern. The subjects are marked with an optional /-hə/ suffix. The direct object is marked with /-hiŋ/.

9. mastar-hə   chaṯro-bi-hiŋ   porai-ku   jaŋ-he
   master-SM   student –PL-OM   teach-POSS   go-ASP
   'The teacher goes to teach the students.'

Possession is expressed by /-ku/.

The pattern of negation is different from Bangla as shown in 10-12.

10. garojit hinia skul-ḏa   mereṯo
    garojit today school-LOC come- Neg
    'Garojit has not come to school.'

11. rita-ku-ha   ɟupa iŋdapa maṯo
    rita-POSS-SM body good NEG
    'Rita is not well.'

12. sir-ku-ha   jupa iŋdapa maṯo
    sir-POSS-SM body good NEG
    'Sir is not well.'

When the negation comes in copula-dropped constructions, as in 11 and 12, it is the morpheme *mato* which expresses negation. When the verb is a finite verb, then *ṯo* gets attached to the verb as shown in 11.

Interrogative is formed by wh- expressions like haŋ and haŋta.

13. natia haŋ   ɟoŋa

   you what do-2P

   'What are you doing?'

14. natia haŋ   jo-di-ŋa

   you   what do-2pHON

   'What are you doing?'

The honorific marker shows up in certain constructions like 14 where *di* comes to express the fact that a question is being asked to an elderly person or someone who is older than the speaker.

Fig-1. Genetic Affiliation of the Toto Language (Saynal, 1973: 45)

2.5. Education in West Bengal:

The government of West Bengal has been providing free education for the primary students. Class 1[8] to Class 4 is under primary education. The condition of primary education in the tribal areas of West Bengal is poor. A lot of important problems exist in primary education of West Bengal, with the medium of instruction being one of the most important problems.

Though Bangla is the official language of the state and most of the people speak Bangla, there are other people whose mother tongue is not Bangla. In West Bengal, 5.5% population also belongs to different tribal communities. Their mother tongues consist of various tribal languages like Santhali, Oraon and Rabha. Almost in all the schools of West Bengal, Bangla is the medium of instruction. Though Bangla is a very different language from other tribal languages, the government of West Bengal has imposed Bangla on the tribal children. Despite the awareness of the existing language problem in primary education, the education policy of Bengal has not taken any initiative to solve this issue.

Policies like the National Policy on Education, the Three Language Formula, and the National Curriculum Framework have mentioned about the importance and recommended the need of mother tongue education, at least in the early stage of primary education; the use of local material in teaching; and the appointment of minority language teachers, among others. In practice, the West Bengal education policy does not follow any of these recommendations in most of the cases. Chaturvedi and Mohale (1976), has mentioned Bangla should be the medium of instruction in West Bengal in all the schools as it is the language of the majority. The only exception is West Bengal Primary Education Board's decision to teach Urdu, Hindi, Nepali and Santhali as the first languages in a few places of Bengal. For the other minority language speakers, Bangla is the only option.

In West Bengal, which is extensively multilingual, it seems to be a challenging task to construct, implement and maintain the policies for language classrooms for primary school children. There is no education policy regarding the other minority language speakers in West Bengal. Apart from the issue of medium of instruction, all these

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[8] Class 1 is divided into two sections, Choto (small) One [Lower 1] & Boro (big) One [Upper 1]. In Totopara, Lower 1 is called Adhi (half) class.

students get the textbooks in Bangla, which make their primary education more monotonous. In the textbooks of primary education, there is an instruction that the students should learn to read and write in 'Manna Bangla' i.e. Standard Colloquial Bangla (SCB).

2.6. Education Data on Totos:

The literacy rate of the Totos is very low. Around 30 per cent of the Totos were literate in 2011 (Table-2.1). Of the total literacy, 36.36 per cent of the Toto males and 23.53 of the females are literate. The percentage of literate people is much lower in the higher standards than in the lower standards. The proportion of literacy highly concentrated on the first standards is near about fourfold than the fifth and seventh standards. In all standard cases, female literacy rate is low in comparison to the male literacy rate.

T- 1. Literacy rate and the standard of education											
Standard	**< V**	**V-VIII**	**IX-X**	**XI-XII**	**B.A.**	**Total Literate**			**Total Illiterate**		
						Male	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Male	173	46	28	12	9	36.36	23.53	**30.35**	63	76.47	**69.65**
Percentage	23.47	6.24	3.8	1.63	1.22						
Female	106	26	13	6	2						
Percentage	16.3	4	2	0.92	0.31						
Total	20.12	5.19	2.96	1.3	0.79						
Source: Totopara ITDP Primary School, Totopara BFP School, Dhanpati Toto Memorial High School, Lokswar Patrika. (Das, 2011: 69)											

In 2003, Government of West Bengal[9] reported that the total 33.64 per cent Literate Totos was far from the state average of 68.64 per cent (Table-2.2). The literacy rate among the Totos has decreased by 3.29 per cent during the last eight years (2003-2011). This decline has occurred due to a higher decrease in the male literacy rate. Female literacy has also slightly decreased during this period.

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[9] Backward Classes Welfare Department, W.B, 2003, http://www.anagrasarkalyan.gov.in/htm/toto.html accessed 10th March 2012.

T-2. Literacy Status			
Category	Male	Female	Total
Total Population	653	574	1227
0-6 Population	144	120	264
Literates	215	109	324
Literacy Rate (%)	**42.24%**	**24.01%**	**33.64%**
State Literacy Rate (%)	**77.00%**	**59.60%**	**68.64%**
Source: Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal Report, 2003			

Besides, the enrolment rate of the Toto students has not been good in the past years**.** In the primary level, the total enrolment was 166 students (Table- 2). This number drastically decreased at the secondary level to only 13 students.

T-3. Enrolment Scenario[10]			
Enrolment	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Primary Level (1-4)	**100**	**66**	166
Middle Level (5-8)	86	24	110[11]
Secondary Level (9-10)	**10**	**3**	13
Source: West Bengal Government			

Generally in India, the push out rate among the ST students is very high. The table below (Table-2.4) reveals that more than 50 per cent of tribal children those who enrolled in Grade-I are pushed out before completing primary education.

T- 4. Gross Enrolment Ratio and Push Out Rate in India						
	GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (%)			**PUSH OUT RATE (%)**		
GROUP	**Class I-V (6-11 Years)**	**Class VI-VIII (11-14 Years**	**Class I-VIII (6-14)**	**Class I-V**	**Class I-VIII**	**Class I-X**
Scheduled Tribe	98.67	**48.19**	80.5	51.57	68.67	80.29
Total Population	95.39	60.99	82.51	34.9	52.8	62.6
Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Secondary and Higher Education) (2004). Selected Educational Statistics, 2002-2003. New Delhi: Government of India						

[10] Backward Class Welfare Department ,W.B, 2003 ,http://www.anagrasarkalyan.gov.in/htm/toto.html accessed 10th March 2012

[11] Source : Base Line Survey 2003

The Toto students who were able to continue their study till the tenth standard, failed to perform better in their board exam. From 2007 to 2011, 41 students had appeared for the boards. On an average, the percentage was not good and most of them failed the exam. Other than Bangla, they scored less than 30 per cent (Table: 2.5) in all the subjects.

Year	No. of Students	BENGALI	ENGLISH	MATH	LIFE SC.	PHY SC.	GEO	HISTORY
2007	3	36.66	17.33	9	19	28.31	18.3	20.33
2008	4	24.22	40.25	9	23	24.75	22.5	27.5
2009	7	35.26	27.14	18	26.14	33	30.71	28.14
2010	10	35.55	30.88	29.22	24.66	26.66	34.77	34.11
2011	17	31	28.64	24.82	24.76	29.23	18.64	26.56
Total	41	**32.538**	**28.848**	**18.08**	**23.512**	**28.39**	**24.984**	**27.328**

T-5. Average Marks Obtained by the Toto Students of Class X Board Exam (2002-2011)

Source: Primary Survey, Totopara Dhanapati Memorial High School

The poor classroom performance of the STs compared to other groups is a common finding in Indian studies. One of the studies on the classroom achievement of students at the end of the fifth standard was conducted by the NCERT in 2004, with a national sample of 88,271 children (Singh, Jain, Gautam, & Kumar 2004, as cited in Mohanty, 2008). This study covered the learning achievement in Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Language, Reading Comprehension, and Grammar and Usage (Table-2.6). It revealed that the ST students scored significantly lower than other students (i.e. SCs and Others).

T-6. Mean Achievement Scores of Class V Students

Subject Area	SC (n=18,146)	ST (n= 11,424)	Others (n=58,701)
Environmental Studies	48.53	**49.52**	50.99
Mathematics	44.97	**44.12**	47.45
Language	57.01	**58.19**	59.54
Grammar & Usage	60.78	**61.37**	63
Reading Comprehension	50.99	**52.89**	53.78

2.6. Background Information about the Schools and Students of Totopara

There are only two government primary schools in Totopara. Though there is an English medium nursery school, it was not chosen for the fieldwork because the focus of this work is on Bangla medium schools only.

2.6.1. Totopara Board Free Primary (BFP) School

Totopara BFP School is the first government primary school in Totopara. It was established in 1972. At present, majority of the students in this school are Toto. There are three Bengali permanent teachers, and two Nepali para-teachers.[12] Apart from these teachers, one Toto high school student and one Nepali high school student were appointed especially for Lower 1 and partly for Upper 1. These two teachers are also working to monitor the mid-day meal scheme in the school.

The school building is in good condition. They have separate classrooms for each of the classes. In Lower 1 and Standard II, they do not have benches to sit on; so they sit on the floor of the classroom. Almost all the students have their school uniforms. They have a proper facility for drinking water with a water purifier. There are separate toilets for girls and boys. In front of the school, there is a small playground and the school has a proper boundary. The quality of the meals provided by the school is of an average standard. The students are in charge of cleaning the school surroundings with the guidance of their teachers. A few students of this school stay in a hostel in Totopara. The number of students studying in the different standards are mentioned in the following table:

T- 7. Totopara BFP School				
Standard	Toto Students	Nepali Students	Other Students	Total Students
Lower One	28	20	0	48
Upper One	29	9	0	38
Two	34	15	1(Bengali)	50
Three	39	13	0	52
Four	37	22	0	59
Source: Primary Survey, Totopara BFP School, 15.03.2012				

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[12] Para-teachers refer to the part time, low paid teachers.

2.6.2. Poargaon Integral Tribal Development Project (ITDP) Primary School

This primary school is more than one kilometre away from the Totopara bazar. There are two Toto permanent teachers, one Nepali permanent teacher and two para-teachers in this school. The condition of the school building is average. They have a small separate school office room, separate kitchen for mid-day-meal, and a small storeroom. There are two separate toilets, but only one of them is effectively used by the students and teachers. The school does not have a proper drinking water facility. The school has no boundary as well. The quality of the mid-day-meal is average.

The number of students studying in different classes is mentioned in the following table:

T-8. Poargaon ITDP Primary School				
Class	Toto Students	Nepali Students	Other Students	Total Students
Lower One	24	17	0	41
Upper One	7	9	1(Oraon)	17
Two	13	9	1(Oraon)	23
Three	9	5	0	14
Four	10	10	0	20
Source: Primary Survey, Totopara ITDP Primary School, 3.04.2012				

In both the schools, majority of the students are Toto. At home, the Totos only use the Toto language. The children of Lower 1 and Upper 1 are able understand very basic Nepali words too. Standard III-IV students can understand and speak the Nepali language quite well. To communicate with their Nepali classmates or others, Toto students use Nepali.

CHAPTER-3

Data Analysis

3.1. Classroom Obsevation

Classroom observation was the major data source for this research work. Students of Lower 1, Upper 1, Standard II, Standard III and Standard IV in both the schools were observed for more than one month during the school hours. During the classroom observation detailed notes were taken from the classes. The questionnaires consisted of qualitative questions, with the focus of the orientation being the students' performance and problems in the classes.

Though all the classes were observed, the main focus of the observation was the students of Standard IV. Other than Toto students there were other Nepali, Bengali, Oraon students. However this research work concerns the Toto students only.

The qualitative questions[13] were focused on the following:

1. Do the students follow the teacher's instruction?
2. Can the students understand the texts?
3. Can the students participate freely in classroom discussions?
4. Are they performing well in the writing tasks given in the class?

I discussed below some of the facts gathered in answer to the above questions:

3.1.1. Problem with the Medium of Instruction

The majority of the students in both the schools were Toto. They did not have any knowledge about Bangla language. But in the school, the medium of instruction was mainly Bangla, so they were forced to study everything in Bangla. On the other hand, most of the permanent teachers in both the schools were Bengali and Nepali who could not communicate with the Toto students due to their lack of proficiency in those languages. Because of that, they could not understand what the student expressed in

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[13] The descriptive and qualitative questions are mentioned in the appendix section

Class 1 and Standard II. The findings of the classroom observation are discussed in the following sections:

Totopara BFP School: During the field work in Totopara BFP School it was observed that, in the Lower-1, the students could not understand a single Bangla word. The classroom was mostly comprised of Toto Students, who were 28 in number. Understandably, for Toto students, Bangla is an alien language. The students were able to understand only a few basic Nepali words. On the contrary, Nepali students do not understand Toto words at all. The two groups of students were therefore reduced to communicate with each other in broken Nepali. What complicated the situation was that the teachers were teaching mostly in Bangla, although some Nepali and Toto words were also used. When the teacher used Bangla, most of the students could not understand even a single word.

Use of Bangla as the medium of instruction is actually being a practice throughout. Even in the past, permanent Bengali teachers were appointed by the government. They tried to teach in the Lower 1 but were unable to do anything much for the students of the school then. Understanding this language problem in the classroom, the principal of Totopara BFP School appointed, one Nepali and Toto High School girl student to teach the Lower-1. In a few classes, these two para teachers did not turn up. So, another Bengali teacher had to go to teach the Lower 1 students. Those classes remained unfruitful for the students as well as the teacher, as both of the two could not properly decipher each other's speech. Another possibility was to stop classes for that day which only adds to the existing problem.

At the stage of collecting data, it had been noticed whenever the teacher was using Bangla, most of the Lower 1 students were unable to follow the class. For example, in the Lower 1, the teacher was teaching Bangla alphabets to the students. He was using examples like অ a- /ɔɟɡɔr/ (অজগর) (python), আ aa- /anarɔs/ (আনারস) (pineapple) etc, using a sound-word pair which is traditional practice and method. It is a way of teaching that is followed in English too, like A for APPLE etc. The example uses Bangla scripture to transcribe this with the English style of teaching alphabets. However, later when the class teacher asked the students to identify the fruit, showing them the picture of pineapple, they were unable to give an answer.

In Upper 1, the medium of instruction was mainly Bangla and Nepali was also in use as the medium of instruction, but marginally or a language secondary to Bangla. For the Toto students, it is a drastic change as they are not proficient enough to cope up with Bangla as a medium of instruction at that stage in their schooling. The Bangla teachers appointed by the government, use Bangla as the medium of instruction which in effect cause the students much problem in understanding the things they were taught. The students simply could not understand the language that they were being instructed in.

In another class, a Nepali teacher was using Nepali language whenever any term was not clear to the students, or otherwise in order to make the lesson clearer to the students. As Nepali language is the only language understood by all of the students, the teacher was using Nepali as the medium of instruction in a few instances. Despite the sincerest efforts of the teacher, who was using Nepali aiming to reach out to the maximum number of students, it was unfortunate for the Toto children, as they were unable to follow the lesson every time.

In Standard I mathematics class the teacher was mainly instructing in Bangla. It was easier for the Nepali teacher to communicate with the students, as the students knew the basic Nepali words which was used to solve mathematical problems. It was an interesting fact that when the teacher was using Bangla almost all the students were silent. The situation was such that they could not even answer the questions that the teacher asked. For example, when the teacher was asking them to add 5 and 7 in Bangla, most of them failed to do so. On the other hand, when the teacher expressed in Nepali most of them were able to solve the math exercise. The problem as it was identified during the classroom observation session, is with Bangla key words in case of math like 'jog kora' (add it) 'biyog kora' (subtract it) which is unfamiliar to an Upper1 student.

Standard II students already knew a few Bangla words, unfortunately not enough to understand or follow what the teachers were taught in the classes. One of the Bengali teachers shared his experience:

"Daily I come for the class but they do not understand what I am teaching them. Moreover I don't understand what they are trying to say."

The students tried to interact with a Bengali teacher in their mother tongue but he could not get what the students were trying to say. Generally, the usual practice is that the

teachers come to the class and start reading the lesson from the textbook and the students are then supposed to read with the teacher. In Standard II when the teacher asked them a question from *sɔhoj patʰ* , a textbook e.g.

1. gɔrur   gaɽi-ṭe   ki   boɟʰai kɔra   cʰilo
   cow-GEN cart-LOC what load   do-INF be-PST
   'What was there in the bullock cart?'

Most of the students answered together- /baŋʃi bɔdɔn/, (Bangshi Badan), a person's name who was actually driving the bullock cart. The answer was incorrect.

In another class, the students were unable to understand a lesson which class teacher explained to them. A question was asked from the textbook *'Kishalay'(kiʃaloj)* , the title of the lesson is '*anada babur masṭo bagan'* (Ananda Babu's Big Garden) –

2. bagan ki?
   Garden what
   'What is a garden?'

Most of them answered together- mɔsṭɔ bagan (big garden). When they heard about the word /bagan/, the word 'mɔsṭɔ bagan' appeared to their mind as the answer which is there in the title of the text. They did not know what does the word 'bagan' mean. In an another question-

3. baganer   mali   ke?
   Garden's gardener who
   'Who is the gardener?'

Some of them answered Ananda Babu who was actually the owner of the garden. A few more questions were asked to the students. Some of the students were able to answer while the rest of the students were silent. In the mathematics class students were facing problem with the Bangla words used in the textbook. When the teacher was solving the problems on the blackboard, the students could not understand what he was trying to explain.

In Standard III, the medium of instruction was majorly Bangla. The students have now learned Bangla better than their earlier stage. Still it was difficult for them to follow the

teacher's instruction. The students still could not figure out completely what they have been asked to do in the lessons or could not read the texts with complete understanding.

In Standard IV, the students were generally able to understand Bangla better than Standard I, II and III but not thoroughly. Most of the students were able to read the script. However, they were not able to follow the teachers while they discussed the lessons. Perhaps this relates to the problem of conflict between two different varieties of the same language, especially when the textbooks follow a standard variety and the instructions are given in a different one. When the teacher asked them to answer a few questions from the lesson, the students could not understand the questions. Moreover, they were not familiar with many Bangla words that appeared in the lesson. For example:

/kroʃ/- more than three kilometers distance,

/ɔnukul/- in favour

/tucchɔ/- trivial etc.

Poargaon ITDP primary School: In Poargaon Primary School, Lower 1 & Upper 1 students were sharing a small classroom. The classroom was in complete chaos due to this disorderly distribution. Students were unable to understand what their teacher was teaching. A teacher was communicating in Nepali but for the Toto students it was hard to process. Another teacher was using Bangla and Nepali. When the teacher was using Nepali language with the Upper 1 students, only a few of them understood parts of the lesson. But when the teacher switched to Bangla all of them seemed to be confused and lost. To know more about their knowledge of Bangla vocabulary we had a gaming session with them. The teacher was showing them a few picture flashcards which were related to their textbook and at the same time, their response to the flash card was noted down. In some instances they replied in Bangla which they had learned from their teacher. In other instances of the Students were replying in their mother tongue. Few examples are given below:

NAME OF OBJECT	STUDENTS RESPONSE	IN BANGLA
ANT	Mara	pipɽa
CAT	Bilalu	biɽal

FROG	bʰekuʈa	beng
MAN	Keta	manuʃ
RAT	muʃa	iɖur

In class II, a teacher was using Bangla and was partially using Nepali to make the lesson easier for the students. The students were able to read only with their teacher (reading the texts aloud) but not alone. Except two or three students who were able to memorize the lessons others could not follow that at all. Those who could not understand the instructions had a poorer vocabulary of Bangla than those who did.

In class III, the medium of instruction was mainly Bangla. Nepali was also used by the Nepali class teachers in a few occasions. When the teacher asked some questions from the lesson he taught in the classroom, most of the students were unable to answer. Some of them even did not process what did the questions mean.

Though most of the students of class four were able to communicate with their teachers in Bangla, it was difficult for them to follow the whole lesson that the teachers were teaching in Bangla. The student was asked questions from the lesson 'Prasna' a poem by Rabindra Nath Tagore. Few of them were able to give answers and others were just silent.

4. bagɖi buɽi cubɽi niye ki kor cʰilo?

    fisher old-woman container take-CP what do be-PST

    'what was the old fisher woman doing with her container?'

5. raʈ ɖupur   ar   ɖindupur niye   cʰeleti   ma-ke   ki   bolecʰe?

    night noon CONJ day noon take –CP boy-CLA mother-ACC what say-PERF-PRS

    'what has the boy told her mother about noon during the day and noon at night?'

The students were not familiar with most of the words used in these questions. Moreover the sentence seemed to be long and complex for them.

3.1.2. Student's Problems with Textbook

In West Bengal the problem of textbooks' language and content is one of the main problems for the 'indigenous/ tribal/ minority (ITM)' students. The language used in the books is beyond the understanding level of the early stage of primary school goers.

Even, the Standard IV students did not know many Bangla words which are used in the textbooks.

The socio-cultural environment of a Toto child is very different from Bengali children. The Toto children see, feel and understand their visible world through their language. The Bangla textbooks are made for the Bengali students whose culture is very different from the Toto culture. Textbooks focus more on urban lifestyle and the plains which are too difficult for Toto students to relate to their life. These biased textbooks fail to capture the interests of the tribal children. Though, it is an age-old demand that the content and curriculum of textbook should be changed and it should contain study materials in textbooks that are pertinent to the tribal context, no serious effort has been made in this direction in any state. The findings regarding the Toto students' problems with textbooks are discussed the following part:

Totopara BFP School

The children of Lower1 who didn't know a single word of Bangla, for them it is impossible to understand the meaning in the first place. Upper I students were also facing problem with their textbook. They were asked meaning of a number of Bangla words but unfortunately as they could not understand the language itself they were unable to answer.

In one class students were reading one rhyme-

1. 'abinaʃ kate gʰas'
    Abinash cuts   grass

The meaning of this Bangla sentence 'abinaʃ kate gʰas' was asked by the teacher. None of the students were able to give an answer. Then the teacher asked the meaning of the words separately; they did not know the meaning of these words. In case of math textbook, they did not know the very basic terms that were used for Standard I math textbooks.

The students of class II were able to read few rhymes from their textbook. Though they knew a few Bangla words, but unable to handle most of them in the text. In class two one question was asked-

2. amǝra beʈ ɖiye   ki   ki   ʈoiri kɔrʈe   pari?
    We   cane give-CP what what make do-INF can-PRS

'What can we make by using cane?'

None of the students were able to give an answer. They did not know the Bangla words- / beʈ /(cane) used in this question, so they could not get hold of the question. When the teacher simplified the question in Nepali language few of them were able to provide an answer.

Even students of Standard III were not exposed to a lot of Bangla words. It was too difficult for them to get the proper meaning of a sentence. In Standard III, the Bengali teacher was teaching them one chapter məhioʃi rokeya (The Great Begam Rokeya), and he taught them the same chapter in previous class also. The teacher asked a few questions after the text was introduced and was read in the class

3. abu ali saheb ki korlo?
   Abu Ali Saheb what do-PAST
   'What did Abu Ali Saheb do?'

Only a very few students answered this question. One more fact was noticed, some of the students were not attentive to what the teacher was asking. The Bengali teacher was only teaching in Bangla and moreover not simplifying many complex words which the student did not know. On the basis of the chapter 'Mahioyshi Rokeya' (The Noble Begam Rokeya) a few more questions were asked. Most of them were silent as usual, few of them tried to give answers and fewer were able to give the complete answer.

In most of the cases it was noticed that the students of Standard III and IV who are able to give an answer in Bangla have a problem elsewhere and that is when they are supposed to write their answers in the Bangla script. Other than that, some of them were silent because they did not know how to express what is there in her/his mind. The same thing has been noticed in the mathematics classes in both of the schools.

The condition of the class four students in this respect was a little bit better than Standard III students but they were facing difficulties in case of complex sentences. A few among the students were only able to read without any problem while most of them had problems at the time of reading the textbook. Some of them could not even read. The class teacher was helping some students to read the text and it is only then when the other group of students with reading difficulties were able to read it.

Totopara ITDP Primary School: Class I students were not able to understand the meaning of most of the words which were there in the textbook. Few of them were able read rhymes from textbook. The Headmistress of the Poargaon ITDP Primary School was sharing one incident. In the textbook, there is a phrase bone pakʰi. As the students do not understand the meaning of /bon-e/ (in forest), it is difficult for them to understand the meaning of the whole phrase. Even some students did not know what the Bangla word /pakʰi/ (bird) means in their mother tongue. In Toto /ɟiya/ means bird which is totally dissimilar to its Bangla counterpart /pakhi/.

The students of class II were reading poems but were unable to give answers to short questions that were asked by the teacher in the class. In Standard II, a task was given to the students. It was to find out the meanings of a few Bangla words taken from the lesson *anada babur mɔsʈa bagan* which was being covered in the classroom that day. The words were-

/mali/: মালী (gardener),

/biːdʒ/ বীজ (seed),

/bɔndobɔsʈo/ বন্দোবস্ত (arrange),

/ʃanʈo/ শান্ত (silent)

None of them did not know what do these words stand for. But they understood these words when the teacher simplified or elaborated these words for them. A few students of class III were able to read and give answer from the questions given in the textbook. A similar situation occurred when the class teacher in Standard III asked the following words' meaning

/kʰaɖɖo/ খাদ্য, (food)

/ʈɔʈʈo/ তত্ত্ব, (theory)

/biʃuɖɖho/ বিশুদ্ধ, (pure)

/ɟibanu/ জীবাণু (germ)

/puʃtikɔr/ পুষ্টিকর (nutritious)

Standard IV students were able to read and write from their textbook. In the Geography class when the teacher asked them to answer a few questions, most of them replied incorrectly; some of them misplaced the answers with the wrong questions which refers to the fact that they could not match the questions to their respective answers for they

had little acquaintance with the vocabulary. The replies of one student Dhiman Toto is stated below-

4. ḍʰan ṯʰeke ki ki ṯoiri hoy?
   paddy from what what make be-PRS
   Answer: gʰɔr, tebil, nouka (house, table, boat)

There was another question

5. Katʰ ṯʰeke ki ki ṯairi hoy?
   wood from what what make be-PRS.Indef
   'What are things produced from wood?'

And the answer was - house, table, boat etc. From this it can be assumed that Dhiman could not make a clear idea about the different Bangla words- /ḍʰan/ (paddy) and /kat/ (wood). It proves that he did not understand the meaning or the semantics of the questions correctly and because of that they had answered wrong.

3.1.3. Classroom Participation

There are many differences between the Toto and Bangla cultures and the two languages are mutually unintelligible. The Bengali as well as the Nepali teachers adopted an attitude of indifference towards the Toto language, traditions, culture and lifestyle. They fail to perceive that the human values are ingrained in the folk cultures. When these teachers try to impart an education which neglects these human values and culture, they fail to make the lesson interesting for the Toto children and ultimately they end up at imparting almost no education to the desired group of pupils. Moreover, students also dislike such a teacher who can not speak in their mother tongue (Srivastava et al. 1971). Thus language can become the main hindrance for students to participate in classrooms. The scenario of students' classroom participation which is an essential part of the field work in both the schools, is going to be discussed in the following part.

For the Lower 1 student it was very difficult to participate in the classroom because of the language gap. Other than reading rhymes along with their teacher, they could not do anything Their language proficiency seemed to be restricted in copying the teachers' instructions blindly. For example, in one class the teacher was teaching 'A for Apple'

and students were also simply copying the exact words of the teacher. In the classes of Lower 1, teachers were only supposed to teach Bangla and English Alphabets and numerical expressions which was a novel experience for the students in a different environment outside their home. For the first time they were encountering these new lessons and were invariably baffled by it. Moreover, because of the language barrier, the students did not have any scope to interact. In some instances, they were even using their mother tongue for different purpose phrases like-may I go to the toilet, May I drink water etc.

Some of the students even did not have paper and pencil, so they were sitting idle and they had nothing to do. Few of them were talking with their friends which is very natural for kids of that age in similar situations.

In Upper 1, it was difficult for the students to participate in the classroom activities because they could not follow the teacher's instructions or could follow them in a very limited way. Only a few of the students were replying when the teacher was using the Nepali language. This was true even in the case of the students of Standard II. For example, in Poargaon ITDP Primary School, when the teacher was using Nepali or Toto, the students' response was good; at least they tried to participate in group discussions during the class. But while the teacher started to discuss something in Bangla the student became silent.

In Standard I & II, it was a very difficult situation for the students when the teacher was instructing in Bangla. He was unable to communicate with the students in Nepali or in Toto. Some of the students were sitting idle as they were not familiar with the words at all that were there in the textbook.

In Standard III, students were silent in their Science class because they could not understand anything, as the teacher was teaching in Bangla. Even for the students of Standard IV, it was difficult to participate in the classroom activities sometimes as they did not have enough knowledge of the Bangla vocabulary. Only a few students were responding to the teachers' questions or were participating in classroom activities. In a few cases, though the students knew answers to the questions asked, they could not reply because of her/his language barrier.

There were only a few students active in the classroom. In the Science and Geography classes at most two or three students were participating as most of the others did not know the language they were being instructed with. There were some students in Standard IV who remained silent all the time in the class because they could not understand Bangla properly. They can only speak in broken Bangla which is also very difficult to grasp sometimes.

3.1.4. Writing skill

In the Lower and the Upper 1, there was no way to test the Toto childrens' writing skill because most of them could not even write Bangla alphabet correctly. But most of them were able to copy the alphabet from the textbook. The Upper 1 students were also able to copy rhyme.

In Standard II some of them could not write alphabet. When the teacher asked the students to write a few random Bangla alphabet, most of them failed to do so. The majority of the students also failed to reproduce some spellings from their textbook. Some of them wrote it correctly and some of them tried to write it but failed.

Even the Standard III students were facing problems in writing Bangla words correctly from their textbook. A number of students were able to give short answers comprising of one or two words, some of them were also able to write complete simple sentences. Even the students who were able to provide the answers, failed to write it properly. For example, in the Tototpara BFP School and the ITDP Primary School the students were able to give answers to the questions asked based on the chapter *pipɽer buɖɖʰi* from the textbook, but they could not write the answers in the target language language because of their inadequate knowledge of Bangla script.

Standard IV students were able to write simple answers, but faced difficulties in case of complex Bangla sentences and compound and geminated morphological constructions.

This section deals with the process of conjugation of phonemes or cluster formation. There are particularly a few words which seemed very difficult for the students to pronounce or produce.

For example- the words have germination

BANGLA	ENGLISH
kʰaḏyo খাদ্য,	Food
ṯɔṯṯo তত্ত্ব,	Theory
biʃuḏḏho বিশুদ্ধ	Pure
ɟibanu জীবাণু,	Germ
/puʃtikɔr/ পুষ্টিকর	Nutrious

3.2. Other Methods

3.2.1. Story Writing Test

To know more about the students' writing abilities a picture - story writing test was designed for them in both the schools. At the Totopara BFP School, they were asked to write a story based on a picture drawn by a class four student named Anchal Ray. This picture was deliberately selected, because it was assumed that it would be easier for the students to depict a picture which is pertinent to their surroundings. However, the performance of the students in the picture - story test was not satisfactory. So another story writing test was conducted among them. This time they were asked to write a story from their textbook (Standard IV, Bangla Textbook – Kishalay) named *Bhombol Sardar*. This lesson was already taught in their classroom. It is an interesting story of one village boy whose name is Bhombal.

During the fieldwork in the Poargaon ITDP Primary School, the students were asked to write a story, showing them the same picture that was used in the other School. And like the Totopara BFP School, they were asked to write the story of *Bhombol Sardar,* but the students of Standard IV had not come across the story *Bhombol Sardar* by the time the test was conducted. So, they were asked to write any other story from their textbook or at least any tale they had heard at home. At the end of their writing, it was found that all of them wrote about their village. Actually, after talking to the Class teacher, got to know that all of them memorised a short essay on 'Our Village', and so it was easier for

them to write about a known topic, and consequently all of them wrote pretty well about 'amader gram' (Our Village).

The writing samples of the students of both the schools are analysed in terms of the following parameters:

1) Number of words

2) Number of Sentences

3) Words per sentence

4) Punctuation marks

5) Numbers of bisyllabic and polysyllabic words used

6) Number of simple, complex and compound sentences used

7) Spelling mistakes

T- 9. Mean Score of Story Writing

Mean Score	Totopara BFP School Story from textbook	Totopara BFP School Picture Story	Poargaon ITDP School Writing about their village n= 8	Poargaon ITDP School Picture story
No. of Words	41.88	41.83	46.87	41.87
Number of Sentences	6.5	8.83	7.62	6.75
Number of words per sentences	6.44	4.73	6.14	6.2
Polysyllabic words	5	4.16	6.25	2.75
Bisyllabic words	32.94	31.83	38.35	42
Simple sentences	6.33	8.33	7	6.75
Compound sentences	0.55	0.5	0.62	0
Complex sentences	0	0	0	0
Spelling Mistakes	2.05	2.41	3.37	5.62
Punctuation Marks	0	0	4.37	0.37

From the above table, it is clear that, on an average the students were able to write approximately seven sentences. Some of them wrote two or three lines, which was incorrect. Few of them tried to write, but it did not mean anything. Almost all of them used simple sentences. There were a few compound sentences in all the writing samples. There was no complex sentence at all. The students had a general problem with Bangla spellings though many minor spelling mistakes were overlooked.

The performance of the students in both the schools in picture story writing test was poor. Other than writing a story on the basis of the picture, most of them wrote a description of the picture shown to them. From the above data, it becomes evident that the students' best performance was recorded only in the writing sample named *Our Village* in Poargaon Primary School. Because, they memorised this topic from their earlier assignments. From the writing samples of the students in both the schools, some common observations were generated:

- Almost all the students had problems with sentence-organization. In a few instances, they were confused how to frame the beginning of a sentence and in what way to end it. For example:

1. !Pahaɽ ḍekʰte   ama-ke   kʰub sunḍɔr
    Hill   look INF 1P-ACC very beautiful
    'Hills are beautiful to look at for me'

This is a case of semantic incoherence and it is syntactically ill-constructed too. Syntactically *amake* cannot be licensed in this position because the case marking on the first person is incorrect; the subject should be marked with genitive case where as in this example accusative case is marked on the subject.

- Some of the students were unable to construct a single correct sentence, not even a single sentence. They simply mentioned the name of the objects in the picture without any punctuation**.** The students could not process the constituents which build up the phrases.

- Only a few students in both the schools used punctuation marks in their writing. The most common punctuation mark used by them was a full stop and comma. In some cases the punctuation marks were used in one sentence while in the very

next sentence, the punctuations were dropped. During the story writing test, one Toto student of Standard IV wrote-

2. !/ʔpahar surʝa gacʰ pʰɔl pʰul pakʰi**?**
   hill sun tree fruit flower birds?

He was writing exactly what was there in the picture rather than composing a story on the basis of the it. He could not complete the sentence. He wrote the words together without any punctuation, and finally used a question mark which is not applicable here.

The students of Totopara BFP School wrote the story of 'Bhombol Sardar'. Sequence of events as it was described in the original text was:

1. Bhombol was a small boy.

2. Bhombol came out from his home.

3. After reaching a neighbouring village, he saw a pomelo tree nearby the potter's house.

4. He climbed up the tree to collect pomleo.

5. The potter's wife came out of the house hearing a noise coming from the back of the house.

6. They (The potter and his wife) started scolding Bhombol and asked Bhombol to come down.

7. Bhombol did not agree.

8. Potter started to climb to the tree in order to catch Bhombol.

9. Bhombol jumped down from the tree and managed to escape from there.

10. Potter also jumped from the tree and failed to catch Bhombol.

Only one among the students was able to write the complete story. Some students managed to write half of the story, while others wrote just one part of the story. The sequence of the story described by most of the children were not consistent to the actual one mentioned above. Some of them were able to maintain the sequences of the main story line. Few students repeated some events over and over again.

Taniya Toto:

3. bʰombɔl   ek-ti   cʰoto   cʰele.
   Bhombol one-CLA small   boy
   'Bhombol is a small boy.'

4. *caki mɔʃai-er   cʰele bɔle   dʰɔrlɔ.
    Caki   -GEN   son   say-CP   catch-PERF-3P
   'The son of Mr. Chaki caught saying.'

5. *kumor baɽiʈe   baʈabi lebu curʈe   giye cʰilo
    potter house-LOC pomelo   steal-INF   go-PAST-3P
   'He went to steal pomelo in potter's house'

Note: * = ungrammatical sentence

Taniya did well to write the beginning of the story. She could not maintain the sequences of the events of the story. When the potter asked Bhombol who he was, in Bhombol's reply there was a reference to one 'caki moshay'. Before this name comes, there are other incidents in the story. However, Taniya wrote about caki mashay, skipping the other preceeding incidents. Some problems regarding sentence construction were identified in her writing.

Ugesh Toto started the story nicely but could not complete it. After the first half of his story, further informations was merely redundant in nature.

Sanjoy Toto had a critical problem in his writing. He could not construct even a single grammatical sentence. Other than a few Bangla words nothing could be understood from his writing.

Rani Toto tried to write the story. She was not able to express the whole story. Moreover, due to a lot of spelling mistakes and sentence construction problems the story did not look good at all. Though she used punctuation marks, they were not correctly placed. For example from her writing sample:

6. *bhombɔl baɽi   tʰeke pale   kumɔl baɽi   pale?
    bhombal house from ran away   potter house ran away

This sentence is also ungrammatical because there is no finite verb at the end of the clause. Here she instead of writing /paliye/ (English) wrote 'pale' in this context it does not mean anything. / kumɔr / (potter) was incorrectly written as / kumɔl/.

Though my focus was on Standard IV students, in an addition to it, I was also looking at the writing performance of the students of Standard III in both the schools. In the Totopara BFP School they were given the task to write any story from their textbook and at the Poargaon ITDP primary school I asked the students to write upon a general topic e.g. your family and your surroundings, and likewise because they had not covered the same story which was given to the students in the BFP school.

At the Totopara BFP School, the students were asked to write a story from one Bangla text titled *Bandhu Chena Bisham Day*. This is an animal tale. This story was already taught in the Classroom. The story goes on as follows: there was a crow and a deer in a forest. They were very good friends to each other and were living a happy life. There was a clever and greedy fox in the same forest who wanted to eat the meat of the deer. Therefore, the fox started to make friendship with the deer. Despite the warning of the smart crow, the deer made friendship with the fox. The deer started to go to the specific field which was shown by the fox. One day the deer fall into a trap. The fox did not help the deer. When the deer started running, the farmer threw a stick which hit the fox instead of hitting the deer. Thus, the fox died.

Other than one student of Totopara BFP School none of them could write the complete story. Most of them wrote half of the story, few of them only could write one-third of the story. The most common problem in their writings was syntactic organization. Almost everyone had a problem with organising the sentential constituents meaningfully. On many occasions, they left the sentences incomplete. There were minor mistakes like they did not use any punctuation other than a few exceptional cases which has been noticed in the previous schools too.

Barun Toto was the only student who completed the whole story. Even then, he wrote grammatically wrong sentences, and in few sentences he had organisational problems as well. There were a few spelling mistakes in his story. Few other students also wrote their story (though incomplete) correctly, with a few minor mistakes that are redundant.

In the samples, it was difficult to understand or guess what they were trying to write except for a few instances. First, there were spelling mistakes, then the sentences were incomplete, and they had problem of organisation too.

In Poargaon ITDP, there were 14 students in Standard III. On an average, everyone wrote 4/5 sentences. Almost all the sentences were incoherent. Few of the students could write a few words sequentially. None of the students used any full stop in their writings. Two of them used comma in one sentence. One Standard III student of ITDP wrote the names of her family members sequentially and then tried to write what is there in her environment like birds, mango tree etc. She wrote two lines in Bangla and among them only two words were correctly spelt. Moreover, those two lines were incoherent.

Bimala Toto also wrote two meaningful and correct sentences. Most of the students did make mistakes at the time of writing 'Amader (we)'. Instead of writing 'Amader', they wrote 'Ama' or 'Amar' (my). (Toto Pronominal System)

7. *ʔamar   gacʰ pala gʰɔr   pɔʃu pakʰi manuʃ acʰe*
   I-GEN   trees   house animal   human have-PRS
   'I have trees, house, animal and men '

This sentence clearly has organisation problem. He actually wanted to write that they have trees; they have birds too; there are animals in their house and likewise. The word 'Amra' is incorrectly used here; it would be 'Amader'. Because of the wrong use of pronouns, the whole sentence changed. Even the words - trees, house, animal, birds, human are not properly organized. Here are the examples of correct sentences:

8. amad̪er baɽit̪e   goru cʰagɔl *acʰe,   pakʰi acʰe*
   we-GEN home-LOC cow   goat   be-PRS, bird be-PRS
   'At home we have cows, goats, and birds.'

9. amad̪er   baɽit̪e   kukur *acʰe*
   we-GEN home -LOC dog   be-PRS
   'At home we have a dog.'

Another Toto student also wrote three correct sentences without any punctuation marks.

10. ʔamar baɽiʈe dʒɔn *gacʰ pala pɔʃu pakʰi gacʰ pala manuʃ* -dʒɔn *acʰe*

    I-GEN home-LOC CLA   animal bird   trees   man be-PRS

    Lit.'I have trees, animals, birds and people in my house'

11. choto   chot manus jan *acʰe*

    Small small man-CLA be-PRS

    'There are small people.'

Examples of few incoherence in their writing-

Bindi Shri Toto Wrote an incomplete sentence, which is just a few words in one line-

12. * *gacʰ* baɽi macʰ ʈar *gacʰ garu paira*

     Tree home fish   he/she-GEN tree   cow   pigeon

In the above example, probably the student wanted to write – we have trees, cows, and pigeon at home or in our environment. The Bangla word for environment is 'paribesh'. Though in Standard III textbook, the word exists and the teacher taught them this chapter in the Classroom too; yet they do not have enough knowledge on the pragmatics of Bangla to express or use this word 'paribesh' in a sentence properly.

3.2.2. Analysis of the Story Telling by Children

The main objective behind the story telling secession was to get a clearer view about their language production and fluency. The students of Class four in both the schools were told to tell any story that they know. In this part, I asked them to tell any story as they liked. Most of the students were very shy. Though they are very interested to hear stories from their teacher, none of them was interested to take part in the story telling secession. Only after asking them repeatedly, the students agreed to participate. As the students of Standard IV are not that much comfortable and were not interested to participate, I did not put any language restriction. They had a free choice. They could write in the language they use and know. Most of the stories the students wrote were about animals. Most of the students used their mother tongue.

Sonam Toto, a Class four student was telling a story about lion and rabbit. His fluency of speaking was not good. He stopped repeatedly in a sentence. Even pronunciation was not good enough, i.e. he could not utter them in the manner they should be pronounced.

He also had a problem with Bangla sentence construction, which is clear from the following narrative of Sonam Toto:

1. ek ti   siŋho cʰilɔ.
   One. CLA lion be.Pst
   'There was a lion'

2. ***tar**   sɔb- ke   kʰabe bole
   He-GEN all-ACC eat-CP COMP
   Intended 'He wanted to eat all other animals.. '

3. *sɔb ke   pakʰi guli kʰabe   bole
   all-ACC   bird pl.   eat-CP COMP
   Intended 'He wanted to eat all the birds '

4. ʈar   kʰide peycʰe ʈa keo   ɟabe   na ʈar   kacʰe
   he-GEN hunger get.Perf. (still) no one go-FUT NEG he-Gen near-LOC.
   'He is hungry still none will go to him.'

5. ekta   kʰərgoʃ   cʰilo
   One.CLA rabbit   be.Pst.Perf
   'There was a rabbit.'

6. *ʈar   ekti   ʈomar   ceye bɔɽo acʰe   bole,
   he-.GEN one.CLA you.GEN than big   be.Prs COMP,
   Intended 'There is big one compared to you'

7. *ʈar   kɔtha bɔle o-ta
   He. GEN talk   says Distal DEM.CLA

8. *okʰane   bole ota   kʰɔrgoS kukur ke dekʰai cʰe
   There. LOC COMP Distal DEM.CLA rabbit dog-ACC show. PrsPerf.

9. or cʰaya dekʰe hehe korcʰe o lapʰ diye mɔre gelo

It.GEN shadow see (Inf) laugh do.PrsProg and jump give-CP die go.PstPERF.

'He is laughing by looking at his shadow and then jumped and died.'

Here, most of the sentences were incomplete. What he really wanted to tell, he could not express in Bangla. In sentence 2, instead of using /sɔbay ke/ he used / sɔb- ke/. In sentences 4, he missed the link. In the few examples, Sonam even used the object incorrectly- as in example 8 instead of the lion he mentioned /kukur/ (dog). The finishing sentence of Sonam's story also had problems with the use of tense.

Another student Prasant Toto was telling a story about one boy who went to Bhutan for some work. There he met some foreigners who praised him for his work and said '*good';* in reply, that boy replied '*boot'*. What he said during the story telling was incoherent. Even it was not understood what he was trying to say at the first time. Here are the sentences or words from his story-

10. bid̪eʃ gecʰilo bɔle

    Abroad go. PstPerf COMP.

    'He went abroad that's why…'

11. * buɽa manʃi bʊt korcʰilɔ bɔle

        old   man   boot do-Pst COMP

12. *eta   gud bɔlcʰilɔ   bɔlə bʊt bɔl cʰilo

     This.CLA good say PstProg COMP boot say-PastProg

It was difficult to understand what he is trying to tell us. The sentences could hardly make any sense, even if the characters are put in a situation or a context. I can only make out two rhyming words *good* and *boot.* Therefore, I asked Garajit Toto who was able to speak Bangla better than Prasant to tell the story again. Even the story was not so clear to Garajit that he asked Prasant again about the story in Toto language.

Garajit told a 'Hamjaga' story. Ham jayega is a funny character in Nepali. There are lots of jokes of Hum jayega. The story was about what happened in a football match in which Ham jaga participated after eating hundred eggs. Sentences from Garajit's story or joke are like:

13. *ekta   hamɟaga acʰe bɔle, ʈɔkʰɔn ora futbɔl kʰelcʰe bɔle,
     one CLA hamjaga be-Prs COMP Then they-CLA football play-Prs COMP

14. dim ekʃɔ ta kʰaiche bɔle, tɔkʰɔn futbɔl kʰelcʰe bɔle
    egg hundred CLA eat-Prs COMP then football play-Prs COMP

Sajib Toto also joined in the story telling session. He was narrating a story in Toto language. The narrative was about a man who used to eat a lot. Once he went to a marriage ceremony where he ate a lot and ultimately suffered due to over eating. He was narrating the story in Toto language and then in Nepali. Sajib was asked to try to explain the story in Bangla.

The Syntactic Analysis of the Story Telling Session:

1. Most of the sentences are not complete, e.g. Examples 2, 3, 6, 8, etc.

2. A few sentences in the above mentioned examples end with a complementizer. In Bangla 'bole' is a verb final complementizer and does not occur in that position in general. The sense of the sentence remains incomplete. It needs a complement phrase to follow it in order to complete the phrase structuring.

3. Occasionally objects are missing as in example 4.

4. The sequence of tense is not kept constant by the students. Generally, the story starts with simple past and then gradually as conversations arise among the characters, the tense then change to present or in future modals.

In Poargaon ITDP Primary school, Standard IV students were willing to participate in the storytelling session. Most of them told their story in Toto.

Ranika Toto narrated a story in her mother tongue. Her fluency was good. She never stopped in between one sentence.

Sudan Toto tried to tell a story in Bangla. His Bangla pronunciation was not clear enough to understand in a few ocassions. He has taken a long time to complete a Bangla sentence.

Debingka Toto also participated in the story telling. Though she had started the story in Bangla, she could not finish it. Then she switched to Toto language and completed the sentence.

From the above discussion of the story telling session by the Toto students, we get an overview of what kind of mistakes they usually commit. Moreover, it is clear that they are seriously facing a problem in Bangla language production as well as their fluency of speech is below average. Other than this, it was noticed that whenever they were telling stories in Bangla, they were giving it a lot of pause, producing broken and sometimes incoherent sentences. Sometimes, they finished the story hastily.

In a situation where the story was narrated in mother tongue, they performed much better. They were not hesitant or would stop in between the sentences. They were even seen to elaborate their account more than they did while telling them in Bangla. As I do not know Toto, it was very difficult for me to analyse their story. The teacher who was present there saved the situation and translated them into Bangla for me.

Finally, from the analysis of storytelling session we can conclude that they performed better while they were using Toto. The fact that they could be able to perform better in the classroom if their mother tongue was used in the Classroom is implied by this observation if not validated.

3.2.3. Analysis of the Cloze test

A Cloze test was conducted upon the Standard IV students in the both the schools. There were 15 blanks in the cloze test. The goal of this test was to get a better understanding about their language proficiency. They were given instruction about the test in Bangali just to see whether they could understand the instructions of the teacher and follow it. The test was based on the story of 'Bhombol Sardar'. A short passage with 15 blanks was given from the text only. The test was taken at the final phase of the fieldwork. The story was already covered by the teachers.

The result of cloze test was not satisfactory. The actual score was 4.86 out of 15 points for the Totopara BFP school and actual score for the Porargaon ITDP school was 5.60. After studying the story of Bhombol Sardar, they were only able to give 34.86 percent of correct answers. From the result of the Cloze test, it is clear that they could not understand the passage properly.

T-10. Score of the Cloze Test

SCHOOL NAME	ACTUAL SCORE	ACCEPTABLE SCORE
Totopara BFP School	4.86	7.09
Poargaon ITDP School	5.6	9

3.2.4. Interview as a Technique

It always come handy for the analysis if students could be made to speak about their problems. During the fieldwork, I tried to talk to a few students and due to the language gap I could not carry on the discussion for long. As an important part of this research work interviews were conducted among the teachers of both of the institutions. The interview was conducted in two steps:

At first, the interview was conducted among the junior teachers. As new to the teaching they were asked about their experiences in the school and in the region. Next were the senior teachers who are teaching in both the schools for more than ten years. The ex-headmaster of Totopara BFP School was also interviewed. He was the first school teacher in the Totopara Primary School and so his experiences were educational.

The result of the interview session is restated in the next subsection:

3.2.4.1. Opinion of the Teachers

According to the teachers of both the schools, language problem was the main problem for the Toto children. Even a Standard IV student cannot speak a whole Bangla sentence in the correct order. Teachers had to take resort to Nepali to make the lessons comprehensible for the students, for in the textbooks, there are many words which were difficult for the students to process. Adding to this problem, the students use Bangla only with their teachers in school, and in any other ocassion they have very little scope to use Bangla. At home, they always use Toto. A few students even wrote Toto words at the time of writing answers. For an example, it was mentioned by the teacher, that instead of writing 'dhan' (paddy) one student wrote ' mouŋ' (toto word for paddy) There were few students in Standard IV who could not speak Bangla at all even after finishing more than three years of schooling.

3.2.4.2. Guardians' Opinion

Because of several reasons, it was difficult to take an interview of the guardians. Interviwing only three guardians was possible who were employed in government jobs. Everyone among the guardians shared the same view about the language problem in education as they said that Toto is different from Bangla. So, for a Toto student it is difficult to cope with Bangla - an unknown language - in the classroom, in his/her primary school.

One guardian said that, learning Bangla is important for us, but it would be better for children if they could get their early education in Toto. He also reflected upon the question of their language and cultural identity.

3.2.4.3. The Students' Opinion

The students' opinion about their own problem is the most important and considerable point. As the primary students were not able to express about their own problem, only the students who had completed their Secondary level of schooling and who had finished Graduation and continuing their study were interviewed on their opinion on the language problem as it has cast its shadow upon primary education.

One high school student, who has completed the course by the time this interview was conducted shared his early primary school experiences and commented that his childhood were not colorful, as he could not understand what his teacher used to teach in the classroom. Besides this, the language of textbooks was also unknown to him. Though he used to read the lesson with his teacher during the classes, he could not enjoy the classes as it was like a heavy pressure for him to study what he could not understand at all.

Another Toto girl who is working as a para teacher, informed us that it took a long time for her to read Bangla without anyone's help. Still, even now she has a problem in writing Bangla properly. Sometimes she faced difficulties to find out the suitable Bangla word to express her view or opinion while she spoke.

Prakash Toto completed his graduation and was now teaching as a part - time teacher. He told us about the problems of his primary schooling which was caused by the conflict of medium of instruction and the home – domain language of everyday he was used to. When asked about his opinion in regard of Mother Tongue education, he

commented that it would be a good opportunity for the next generation. However, he was also emphasizing on the importance of learning Bangla. The overwhelmingly sad part of the lives of the Totos lie in the fact tha the moment they would step outside Totopara, Bangla is the main language for communication, and sometimes the only one. Moreover, even to get any state government job in West Bengal, the knowledge of Bangla seems so necessary, so according to Prakash, the necessity of studying Bangla becomes indispensable. This feeling is always there among the aspirant students from the Toto community and this may also be true for every member of any underdeveloped and overlooked tribal speech community in India. However, in this pragmatic and practical approach, there lies a feeling of deprivation too and particulary this sense of linguistic segregation and depravation of rights is the more poignant one.

CHAPTER-4

Conclusion

4.1. Research Findings

After an intensive fieldwork for more than a month, it is clear that the Indian government and more specifically the West Bengal Government failed to provide mother tongue education for the Toto children. Even the school curriculum seems to be typically designed keeping the urban students in mind in particular and thus fails to provide any room for the underprivileged tribal section of the population. This dissertation tried to find out the problems that the Toto school children encounter in the classrooms because of a different language used as the medium of instruction and in the textbooks. Classroom observation and the other tests in both the schools helped to bring out many important points regarding education among Toto Tribes. These points and observations are stated below:

➤ The Toto children face serious problem in their primary education because of the Bangla medium of instruction; a language that they do not use in the home domain and are using in schools everyday for they have no other choice. This clearly questions the exercisability of the universal linguistic rights that the UNESCO ensures, in a given conflict situation like the Totos have at present which the responsible policy making authorities of the land fail to manage.

➤ Textbook language and material is one of the most important problems in their primary Education.

➤ As Bangla is a different language from Toto and Totos has no scope to be in touch with Bangla speakers during their school days, learning the Bangla vocabulary and the language is too difficult for them.

➤ It has been also found that they have problems with Bangla pronunciation. Even the students in the Higher Secondary level cannot pronounce Bangla words properly.

➤ The students cannot respond quickly to the teacher's questions. Some of them even do not understand what their teacher asked in the classroom. That means

they encounter communication failure inside the classroom at a daily basis which diminishes the pupil's inclination for higher studies and unfortunately results in self or pushed out removal from the main stream of education.

➢ Because of all these reasons, language is one of the most important problem for them. As this education system is like a pressure or burden upon them and as they cannot cope up with Bangla and the textbooks written in it, they leave their education after trying few years in primary school.

➢ The mentality of some Bengali teachers about Toto language and students did not seem to be positive. This essentially affects the whole process of education as the role of the instructor in language education should be more than just unbiased and sympathetic. The instructor needs to understand the community and its psychology just like a social - worker, and in the process the instructor's experience would let him/her know what is necessary to implement or conduct for a better communication of the instructions given in the textbooks which is generally standardized for a larger section of students. The instructor may chose to reflect upon some materials that are culturally congruous to the section of the population he/she is working on, and thus separate teaching learning materials can be developed for the target groups. The main problem lies in the process of selection and appointment of the language instructors and teachers who are selected via general eligibility tests conducted both in nationwide and statewide without any particular stress given upon the candidates' linguistic proficiency and knowledge of the target speech community.

4.2. Further Possibilities

The language problems of the Toto children in primary education has enormous scope for future research. A few issues can be:

1. The issue of Linguistics Human Rights, Education Policy of India and Toto School Children.

2. Language and Identity of Toto children.

3. Language Pressure, Primary education and the issue of language conflict and how the Toto language due to all these can gradually erode to a more endangered language than ever.

4. Curriculum Designing, preparing suitable Teaching-Learning Materials(TLM) for the special needs of the communities like the Toto.

5. The possibility of introducing multilingual education for Toto children that recognizing their language and utilizing it for the purpose of education which will generate a few more choices for them to take advantage of.

These are the areas that show promise for further research. The present study seems an important work for further research in the above mentioned domains too. The work can be a good example to show how the Toto children are lagging behind because of the Bangla medium of instruction followed in the schools. In addition to the field work, the teachers, guardians and most importantly students' own opinion, confirms the fact of language problem in primary education. In this situation mother tongue based multilingual education is be the ultimately suitable possibility to overcome the language problem in primary education for the Toto Tribe.

Appendix

Appendix one. Questionnaire: Classroom observation (Descriptive)

1. Which language do the teachers use for class room instruction?

2. Do the students understand the teachers' instructions or follow the teacher?

3. Which language the children use for asking questions to teacher/ to answer any question asked by the teacher?

4. If the students use Toto / Nepali word, how do the teachers react?

5. Do the students understand the lessons of the textbooks prescribed by the school?

6. Can the students participate freely in classroom interactions?

7. Are there some particular students who are not following the teacher?

8. If the student don't understand lessons in Bangla then how do the teachers clarify/ explain to student?

9. Can the students perform well in writing tasks like dictations in the class?

Appendix Two Questionnaire for the Background Information of the Schools

<u>Name of the School: Toto para BFP Primary School</u>

- ➢ School Category:

- ➢ Type of School: Boys/ Girls/ Co-Educational

- ➢ Total Number of Students:

- ➢ Number of Students per Class:

    Toto   Nepali   Others

- ➢ Location of the School: Urban/ Semi-Urban/ rural/ Slum

- ➢ Nature of Building: Well-maintained/ Reasonably good Building/ Building in Poor Condition/ Schools in Tents/ No Shelter

- ➢ Boundary wall: Yes/ No

- ➢ Gate: Yes/ No

- ➢ Drinking Water: Yes/ No

    Source of Drinking water:

    Any water purifying facility/Aqua Guard:

- ➢ Playground: Yes/ No

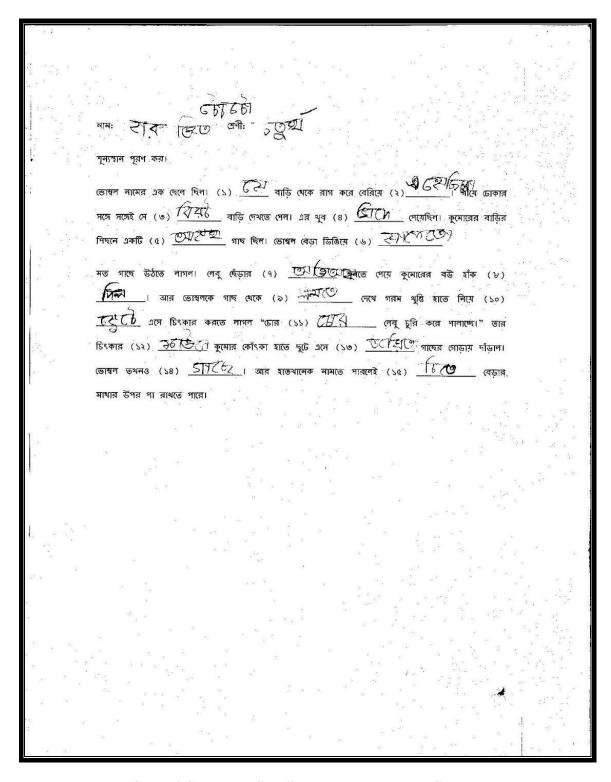- ➢ Toilets: Boys: Yes/ No
    Girls: Yes/ No
    Teachers: Yes/ No

- ➢ Conditions of Toilets: Good/ Satisfactory/ Bad

- ➢ Staff Room: Yes/ No

- ➢ Support- System and Co-curricular Activities

- ➢ Electricity: Yes/ No

- ➢ Mid-Day Meal: Yes/ No

নাম: ~~শ্রবন কচৌ~~ শ্রেণী: চতুর্থ

শূন্যস্থান পূরণ কর।

ভোম্বল নামের এক ছেলে ছিল। (১) ___সে___ বাড়ি থেকে রাগ করে বেরিয়ে (২) ___গ্রামে___ গাঁয়ে ঢোকার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই সে (৩) ___একটা___ বাড়ি দেখতে গেল। এর খুব (৪) ___সুন্দর___ পেয়েছিল। কুমোরের বাড়ির সিঁড়নে একটি (৫) ___বড় লেবু___ গাছ ছিল। ভোম্বল বেড়া ডিঙিয়ে (৬) ___সিঁড়ের___

মত গাছে উঠতে লাগল। লেবু ছেঁড়ার (৭) ___শব্দ___ শুনতে পেয়ে কুমোরের বউ হাঁক (৮) ___দিল___। আর ভোম্বলকে গাছ থেকে (৯) ___পামটে___ দেখে গরম খুন্তি হাতে নিয়ে (১০) ___ছুটে___ এসে চিৎকার করতে লাগল "চোর (১১) ___চোর___ লেবু চুরি করে পালাচ্ছে।" তার চিৎকার (১২) ___শুনে___ কুমোর কোঁৎকা হাতে ছুটে এসে (১৩) ___আগাম___ গাছের গোড়ায় দাঁড়াল। ভোম্বল তখনও (১৪) ___গাছ___। আর হাতখানেক নামতে পারলেই (১৫) ___উঠে___ বেড়ার মাথার উপর পা রাখতে পারে।

Copy of Cloze Test: Ranika Toto , Poargaon ITDP Primary School

নাম: রাব জিত   শ্রেণী: চতুর্থ

শূন্যস্থান পূরণ কর।

ভোম্বল নামের এক জেলে ছিল। (১) সে বাড়ি থেকে রাগ করে বেরিয়ে (২) ___ গিয়ে ঢাকার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই সে (৩) বিয়ে বাড়ি দেখতে গেল। এর খুব (৪) ছোট সেয়েছিল। কুমোরের বাড়ির পিছনে একটি (৫) আম গাছ ছিল। ভোম্বল বেড়া ডিঙিয়ে (৬) ___

মত গাছে উঠতে লাগল। লেবু ভেঁড়ার (৭) ___ তে পেয়ে কুমোরের বউ হাঁক (৮) দিল। আর ভোম্বলকে গাছ থেকে (৯) ___ দেখে গরম খুন্তি হাতে নিয়ে (১০) ছুটে এসে চিৎকার করতে লাগল "চোর (১১) ___ লেবু চুরি করে পালাচ্ছে।" তার চিৎকার (১২) ___ কুমোর কাঁৎকা হাতে ছুটে এসে (১৩) ___ গাছের গোড়ায় দাঁড়াল। ভোম্বল তখনও (১৪) ___ । আর হাতখানেক নামতে পারলেই (১৫) ___ বেড়ার মাখার উপর পা রাখতে পারে।

Copy of Cloze Test Garajit Toto, Totopara BFP School

Appendix Four The Picture Used For Story Writing Test

নির্মলা মেধা = ৭২ ক্লাস = ৪

আমাদের গ্রামের নাম চৈতন্যপাড়া ।

আমাদ গ্রামের চাঁর পাশে মোহনাদিয়া ঘেরা ।

আমাদের গ্রামের দিকে বাহায় মৈত্র গ্রাম ও বে ।

আমাদের গ্রামের পুর্বদিক বর্ত তোর্ষা নদী আছে)

কমাকালে এই নদীতে মাছ পাওয়া যার

আমাদের গ্রামের বাড়ি ঘর বাঁশ কাঠ ২ কুত দিয়ে তৈরী

আমার বাড়ি মা বাবা দাদা দিদি ভের বোই আছে

আমার বাড়ি গোরু আছে ছাগল আছে

আমার বাড়ি আছে সুপাড়ি বাগান

Writing Sample: Standard IV Student Nirmala in

Poargaon ITDP Primary School

Story Writing Test

Our Village

Writing Sample: Standard IV Student Sonam Toto

Totopara BFP School

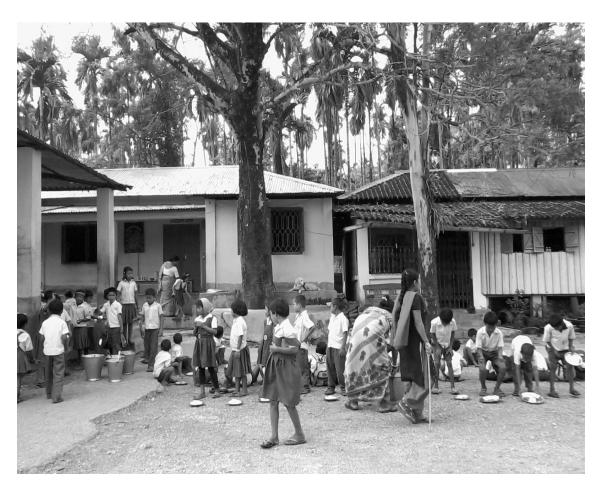**Story Writing Test**

Bhombal Sardar

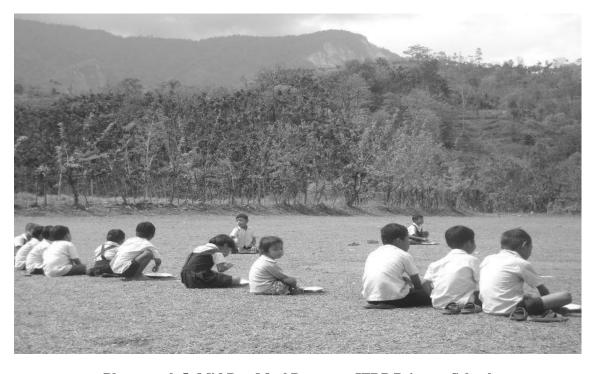Photograph 1: Lower I Classroom in Totopara BFP School

Photograph 2: Standard IV Students in Mathematics Class in Totopara BFP School
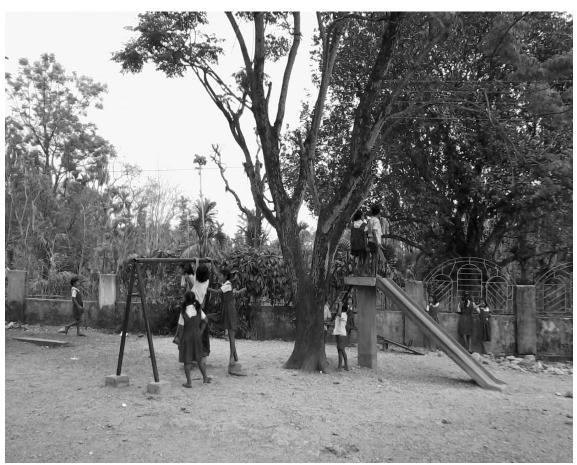

Photograph 3: Standard IV Classroom in Poargaon ITDP Primary School

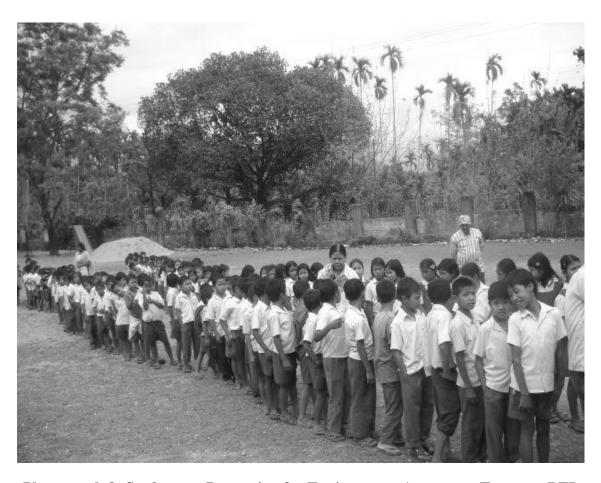**Photograph 4: Mid Day Meal Totopara BFP School**

Photograph 5: Mid Day Meal Poargaon ITDP Primary School

Photograph 6: student playing in Totopara BFP School

Photograph 7: Students were playing on the Ground

Photograph 8: Students at Procession for Environment Awareness Totopara BFP School

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