

"Language, Cognition, and Culture: The Pedagogical Role of Gond in the Gond Tribe of Chhattisgarh"

Abstract

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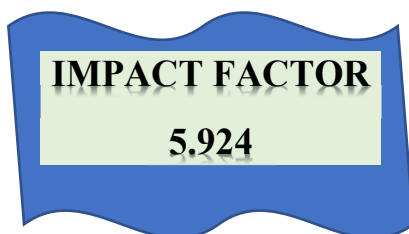
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Language is deeply connected to identity, indigenous knowledge and social continuity among tribal communities. The present study focuses on the role of the Gond language, a member of the South-Central branch of the Dravidian language family, which also includes Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. It is primarily spoken by the Gond tribe, one of the largest Adivasi communities in India, with a geographical spread across Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha. Within Chhattisgarh, the language holds particular significance in the tribal districts of Bastar, Dantewada, and Kanker. Although the number of fluent speakers is estimated to be 2-3 million, more than 10 million Gond people identify with Gond as a marker of their cultural affiliation.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the pedagogical role of the Gond language in foundational literacy among the Gond tribe. It investigates the challenges associated with incorporating Gond into the formal educational system in tribal areas.

Historically, Gond has existed largely as an oral language, rich in folklore, songs, and myths that preserve the Gond community's spiritual, historical, and ecological knowledge.

Teaching children in their mother tongue, such as the **Gond language**, has strong **pedagogical** benefits. For the **Gond people**, learning in Gond helps children understand concepts more clearly because it is the language they speak at home. From a pedagogical perspective, mother-tongue instruction improves comprehension, participation, and confidence in the classroom. It also helps teachers explain ideas more effectively. In regions like **Chhattisgarh** and **Madhya Pradesh**, using Gond in early education not only supports better learning outcomes but also preserves the language, traditions, and cultural identity of the Gond community.



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Studies have shown that teaching in the Gondri mother tongue is important because it helps Gond children learn better and also protects their language and culture.

Keywords: Gond Tribe, Mother tongue, Culture, Pedagogical

Introduction

The Gondri language is one of the major indigenous languages spoken by the Gond tribe of central India. It belongs to the Dravidian language family, which also includes languages such as Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada (Krishnamurti, 2003). The language is mainly spoken in the states of Central India, such as Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. It plays an important role in preserving the cultural identity, traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems of the Gond community (Devy, 2012).

Millions of members of the Gond tribe use Gondri as a language of communication within families and communities. Since the language is spread across a wide geographical region, it contains several dialectal variations in pronunciation and vocabulary. Despite these regional differences, Gondri continues to function as a strong marker of cultural identity among the Gond people (UNESCO, 2010). In Chhattisgarh, Gondri is widely spoken in tribal districts such as Bastar, Dantewada, Kanker, Narayanpur, and Bijapur, where a large population of the Gond tribe resides (Census of India, 2011).

Traditionally, Gondri existed mainly as an oral language and was transmitted from one generation to another through storytelling, folk songs, myths, and oral traditions. These oral traditions preserved the historical memory, moral values, and ecological knowledge of the Gond community (Devy, 2012). In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve and standardize the language through the development of scripts and written materials. One important development has been the revival of the Gunjala Gondri Script, which has contributed to the preservation and promotion of the linguistic heritage of the Gond people (Atram, 2021).

Language is a fundamental medium through which human beings express thoughts, emotions, and cultural values. It also plays a vital role in maintaining social relationships and transmitting traditions across generations. For the Gond people, the Gondri language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a symbol of cultural identity and collective belonging (Fishman, 1991). From an educational perspective, the importance of the mother tongue in early learning has been widely recognized. Research suggests that children learn concepts more effectively when education is provided in their native language during the early years of schooling (Cummins, 2000). For Gond children, education in Gondri can improve comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and cognitive development. It also helps create a meaningful connection between the child's home



environment and school environment. Nearly three crore members of the Gond community have consistently demanded greater recognition of their linguistic and cultural rights, including the protection and promotion of the Gondi language. Despite constitutional provisions and educational policies such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, tribal children continue to face exclusion from education in their mother tongue. The lack of adequate support for Gondi and other tribal languages in formal education has limited the educational and cultural rights of tribal communities (Atram, 2021).

From a pedagogical perspective, the use of the mother tongue in early education is widely recognized as beneficial for improving learning outcomes and preserving cultural heritage; therefore, it is especially important for tribal and linguistic minority communities. According to UNESCO (2003), multilingual and mother-tongue-based education promotes inclusive learning and reduces educational inequalities. Similarly, Mohanty (2009) argues that the exclusion of tribal languages from formal education often results in educational marginalization and weak learning outcomes among indigenous children. Establishing community-based institutions such as Gondi-Language schools and nursery programmes can play a crucial role in this process.

The Gondi language is deeply connected with the cultural life of the Gond community. Traditional songs, festivals, rituals, and oral narratives are commonly performed and preserved in Gondi. Through the language, elders pass traditional knowledge, social values, and environmental understanding to younger generations. Thus, the language acts as a medium of cultural transmission and preservation (Elwin, 1947). Revitalization of the language should begin within the community itself. Encouraging families to speak Gondi at home can help strengthen intergenerational transmission and support the long-term sustainability of the language. In addition, dedicated teachers and community volunteers are essential for promoting literacy and educational programs in Gondi. Collective efforts at the household, community, and institutional levels can therefore contribute significantly to the preservation and development of the Gondi language and its cultural heritage (Atram, 2021).

The Gondi language is deeply connected with the culture and traditions of the Gond people. Many traditional songs, rituals, and festivals are performed in Gondi. Through the language, people express their beliefs, customs, and knowledge about nature and the environment. Elders in Gond communities often use Gondi to teach younger generations about their heritage, social values, and traditional practices (Elwin, 1947; Devy, 2012).

However, like many indigenous languages, Gondi faces several contemporary challenges. Modernization, migration, urbanization, and the increasing dominance of languages such as Hindi and other regional languages have reduced the use of Gondi among younger generations. Only a few young people are participating in learning the Gondi language. This situation has raised concerns about the future of the language. Linguists and cultural organizations are working to preserve and promote it through education, books, digital media, and community programs. As a result, concerns regarding language loss and cultural erosion have increased (UNESCO, 2010).



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Educational exclusion further contributes to the weakening of tribal languages. When children are forced to learn in unfamiliar languages, they often face difficulties in understanding classroom instruction, which negatively affects their academic performance and self-confidence (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The continued neglect of indigenous languages in formal schooling reinforces social inequality and educational disadvantage among tribal communities.

In recent years, the government and several organizations have started initiatives to protect and promote tribal languages, including Gondi. Schools in some tribal areas have begun introducing Gondi as a medium of instruction in early education. Cultural programs and research projects are also helping to document the language and its literature (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2011; UNESCO, 2003).

Educational underachievement among linguistic minority communities worldwide is often linked to the gap between the language spoken at home and the language used in formal schooling. In India, the education system has frequently overlooked one of the most valuable resources that tribal children bring to school: their mother tongue. By ignoring this linguistic resource, the system limits children's ability to learn effectively and restricts their opportunities to make informed life choices. Instead of strengthening human potential, this practice can create cumulative educational disadvantages (Cummins, 2000; Mohanty, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

When mother tongues are excluded from the educational process, access to knowledge and resources becomes restricted. Such exclusion can reinforce social inequalities by denying linguistic communities their fundamental rights, including linguistic human rights, democratic participation, cultural identity, self-confidence, and collective pride. For many tribal communities in India, linguistic discrimination has become a central factor contributing to their limited capabilities and educational marginalization (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Mohanty, 2009).

This marginalization creates a cycle in which tribal languages are first excluded from education and other important public domains and then labelled as weak or inadequate. Such perceptions are then used to justify their continued exclusion from formal institutions. Consequently, social and educational neglect reinforces economic poverty and social disadvantage among tribal populations (Mohanty, 2009; UNESCO, 2003).

Therefore, the promotion of mother-tongue education should not be viewed as an obstacle to development but rather as an important strategy for inclusive education, cultural preservation, and social empowerment. Greater institutional support, community participation, bilingual educational models, and teacher training programs are essential for preserving and promoting the Gondi language in contemporary society (Mohanty and Mishra, 2009).

Review of Literature

Language is closely connected with culture, identity, and the everyday life of tribal communities. For indigenous groups, language is not only a means of communication but also a way of preserving traditions, beliefs, folklore, and collective memory. Many scholars have emphasized that the survival

of tribal languages is essential for protecting indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage. Research on tribal education and mother-tongue learning also shows that children understand and learn better when they are taught in the language spoken at home.

BhadrirajuKrishnamurti (2003), in his study on Dravidian languages, explained that the Gondi language belongs to the South-Central branch of the Dravidian language family. He discussed the linguistic structure, regional spread, and dialects of Gondi and highlighted its importance among tribal communities in central India. His work helps in understanding the historical and linguistic background of the Gondi language.

Review of Literature

policies promoting inclusive education, tribal communities still struggle for proper support for their mother tongue in formal education. The author emphasized that preserving the Gondi language is important not only for cultural survival but also for ensuring educational inclusion and linguistic rights for tribal children.

Overall, the reviewed literature clearly shows that language plays a major role in preserving cultural identity, indigenous knowledge, and social belonging among tribal communities. Previous studies strongly support the use of mother-tongue education as an effective way to improve learning outcomes and educational participation among tribal children. However, there is still limited research specifically examining the relationship between the Gondi language, cultural preservation, and cognitive learning outcomes among the Gond tribe in Chhattisgarh. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on the role of the Gondi language in education and cultural continuity among the Gond community.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the pedagogical significance of the Gondi language in relation to language, cognition, and cultural identity among the Gond community, this paper undertakes a systematic empirical investigation. Accordingly, the study focuses on the following objectives.

1. To examine the role of the Gondi language as a medium of cultural transmission among the Gond tribe in Chhattisgarh.
2. To analyze the relationship between mother-tongue education in Gondi and the cognitive learning outcomes of Gond children.
3. To explore how the use of the Gondi language contributes to the preservation of Gond cultural identity, traditions, and oral heritage.
4. To assess the challenges and limitations faced in incorporating the Gondi language into formal education systems in tribal regions of Chhattisgarh.



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Research Gap

The reviewed literature provides important insights into previous studies on tribal languages, indigenous education, and cultural preservation among tribal communities in India. However, most of these studies primarily focus on the linguistic features and cultural aspects of the Gond language or the socio-cultural life of the Gond Tribe. Limited attention has been given to examining the pedagogical role of the Gond language in shaping cognitive development and learning processes among Gond children. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical research that connects language, cognition, and cultural transmission within the educational context of tribal regions in Chhattisgarh. The relationship between mother-tongue education and the preservation of indigenous knowledge and cultural identity also remains insufficiently explored. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by analyzing the educational and cultural significance of the Gond language among the Gond community.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on theories related to cultural transmission, language and identity, and mother-tongue education. The Theory of Cultural Transmission explains how language helps transfer traditions, beliefs, customs, and indigenous knowledge from one generation to another through social interaction and communication (Lev Vygotsky, 1978). Among the Gond Tribe, the Gond language preserves oral traditions, folk songs, rituals, and ecological knowledge.

The study also draws upon Language and Identity Theory, which views language as an important marker of cultural identity and social belonging (Joshua Fishman, 1991). The continued use of Gond language strengthens the cultural identity of the Gond community and helps preserve their heritage.

Further, the study uses the concept of Mother-Tongue-Based Education, supported by Jim Cummins (2000), which states that children learn better when taught in their native language. Mother-tongue education improves comprehension, participation, confidence, and cognitive learning outcomes among tribal children.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the pedagogical role of the Gond language in foundational literacy among the Gond tribe. The research was conducted in primary schools located in Damkasha village of Durgukondal block in Kanker district, Chhattisgarh. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers working in these primary schools. Classroom observations helped document how teachers use Gond and other local linguistic resources during literacy instruction, as well as how students participate and respond in a multilingual classroom environment. Interviews with teachers provided insights into their experiences, teaching strategies, and perceptions regarding the use of the mother tongue in early literacy education. In addition, secondary



data were collected from books, academic articles, government reports, and policy documents related to multilingual education, tribal languages, and foundational literacy. The collected data were analyzed thematically to understand how the use of the Gondi language supports teaching practices and enhances learning in multilingual classrooms.

Discussion

Researchers such as Robert Caldwell and Henry Heras suggested that Gondi may represent an ancient linguistic form related to Tamil, while scholars like Russell, Hiralal, and Stephen Fuchs identified it as part of the broader Dravidian language family. According to historian A. J. Rajurkar, Gondi can be considered a “forest language,” reflecting the geographical and cultural environment of its speakers. Due to its contact with neighboring languages such as Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, and Kannada, Gondi has incorporated several lexical influences from these languages (Rajurkar, 1982). Nevertheless, Gondi maintains its own distinctive linguistic identity. Motiram Kangali, a prominent scholar of Gondi literature, argued that Gondi once functioned as the official language of the ancient Gondwana kingdom and possessed its own script, grammatical system, rhetorical forms, etymology, and literary traditions.

The rapid decline of indigenous languages across the world poses a serious threat to cultural heritage and traditional knowledge systems. In India, despite decades of democratic governance, many tribal communities continue to struggle for access to education in their mother tongues. Mother-tongue education is widely recognized as crucial for the preservation of indigenous languages, cultural traditions, and community knowledge. However, mainstream schooling systems have often prioritized dominant regional or national languages, which creates barriers for tribal children whose first language differs from the medium of instruction.

Historical Marginalization of Indigenous Languages and Education

The Gond communities have historically been the indigenous inhabitants and traditional custodians of their regions. However, over time, their cultural and linguistic environment has experienced gradual erosion. One of the major factors contributing to this decline has been the structure of the formal education system introduced during the colonial period and largely continued in post-independence India.

During British colonial rule, education policies often promoted dominant regional or colonial languages, which led to cultural and linguistic displacement among indigenous communities. This pattern has persisted in many parts of India even after independence. For example, in districts such as Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, Gond families are generally required to enroll their children in Marathi-medium schools. As a result, many tribal students are expected to learn in a language that they neither speak at home nor fully understand. Consequently, the language of instruction, the curriculum, and sometimes even the teachers may appear unfamiliar and distant from the children’s everyday cultural experiences.



Furthermore, the formal school curriculum in many government institutions rarely incorporates Adivasi languages, cultural practices, festivals, or histories. From the early years of schooling, students are often encouraged to adapt to the cultural and linguistic norms of dominant groups, while their own indigenous identities and knowledge systems remain largely unrepresented in educational content. Despite substantial research highlighting the importance of mother-tongue education in preserving indigenous languages and cultural heritage, the integration of tribal languages into mainstream education in India remains limited. Adivasi leaders and community representatives have repeatedly raised concerns about the impact of the prevailing education system on their communities. They argue that the lack of culturally responsive education has contributed to a decline in the use of indigenous languages among younger generations. As noted by Bavsu Pave, a member of the Mohagaon Gram Sabha, younger members of the community are becoming increasingly disconnected from their language, culture, and traditions, raising concerns about the long-term survival of their cultural identity.

Role of Gondi Language as a Medium of Cultural Transmission

The Gondi language plays an important role in preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage of the Gond Tribe in Chhattisgarh. For the Gond community, language is not only a means of communication but also a medium through which traditions, customs, beliefs, and indigenous knowledge are carried from one generation to another. Historically, Gondi has functioned mainly as an oral language, and its cultural richness has survived through storytelling, folk songs, myths, legends, proverbs, and oral narratives. Elders in the community use Gondi to teach children about their social values, moral responsibilities, cultural practices, and ancestral history. Through these oral traditions, the community preserves its collective memory and cultural continuity (Devy, 2012).

The Gondi language is deeply connected with the religious and cultural life of the Gond people. Traditional festivals, rituals, dances, and ceremonies are often performed in Gondi, which strengthens cultural identity and social unity within the community. Folk songs sung during marriages, harvest festivals, and worship ceremonies reflect the relationship of the Gond people with nature, forests, and community life. These cultural expressions not only entertain but also educate younger generations about customs and traditions. According to Verrier Elwin (1947), tribal oral traditions are important sources of cultural continuity and social organization among indigenous communities.

Another important aspect of cultural transmission through Gondi is the preservation of indigenous ecological knowledge. The Gond community has traditionally depended on forests and natural resources for survival. Knowledge related to medicinal plants, agriculture, seasonal cycles, environmental conservation, and forest practices is transmitted through the Gondi language. Many traditional expressions and concepts embedded in the language are directly connected with local ecology and cannot easily be translated into dominant languages. Therefore, the decline of the Gondi language may also lead to the loss of valuable indigenous knowledge systems.



However, modernization, migration, urbanization, and the increasing dominance of languages such as Hindi and English have affected the intergenerational transmission of Gondi. Younger generations are increasingly shifting toward dominant languages for education and employment opportunities, which has reduced the use of Gondi in everyday life. Despite these challenges, several community organizations and cultural groups are making efforts to preserve and promote the language through cultural programs, documentation of folk literature, and mother-tongue education initiatives. Thus, the Gondi language continues to function as a powerful medium of cultural transmission and cultural preservation among the Gond tribe (Fishman, 1991).

Mother-Tongue Education in Gondi and Cognitive Learning Outcomes of Gond Children

Mother-tongue education plays a crucial role in the cognitive and educational development of tribal children. In many tribal regions of Chhattisgarh, children enter schools speaking Gondi, Halbi, or other indigenous languages, while classroom instruction is mainly provided in Hindi. This mismatch between home language and school language creates significant barriers to learning. Children often struggle to understand lessons, participate in classroom discussions, and develop foundational literacy skills because the language used in school is unfamiliar to them (NCF, 2005).

Research has shown that children learn more effectively when education begins in their mother tongue. According to Jim Cummins (2000), mother-tongue education improves comprehension, cognitive development, classroom participation, and self-confidence among children. When students are taught in a familiar language, they are able to connect classroom learning with their daily experiences and cultural environment. This creates a meaningful learning process and improves conceptual understanding. In contrast, education in unfamiliar languages often creates fear, confusion, and educational exclusion among tribal students.

The use of Gondi in early education also supports emotional and psychological development among Gond children. Children feel more comfortable and confident when they are able to communicate freely in their native language within the classroom. This encourages active participation, questioning, and interaction with teachers and peers. It also helps reduce school dropout rates, which are often higher among tribal students due to linguistic and cultural barriers in formal education systems (Mohanty, 2009).

An important example of mother-tongue education can be seen in Damkasha village in the Durgukondal block of Kanker, where community members introduced Gondi language books in primary schools. This initiative aimed to improve children's engagement with education through culturally relevant teaching materials. Similarly, the "ParamparikKoyaDnyanbodhSanskarGotul" school in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra uses Gondi as the medium of instruction while integrating local knowledge, environmental education, and tribal culture into the curriculum. Such community-led initiatives demonstrate that mother-tongue education can strengthen both educational outcomes and cultural identity among tribal children. The school is entirely managed by local Gram Sabhas and



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aims to integrate formal education with traditional knowledge systems. Its pedagogical approach emphasizes culturally relevant learning, where subjects such as arithmetic and basic sciences are taught in Gondi while also introducing English as an additional language. The curriculum incorporates practical knowledge rooted in community life, including local history, contributions of tribal social reformers, agricultural practices, traditional medicine, and environmental knowledge. The institution is named “**Gotul**,” a term in tribal tradition referring to a community learning space where youth are educated and socialized through cultural practices and shared knowledge.

This initiative has faced bureaucratic challenges in obtaining formal recognition from the state education system. Community members and activists have therefore pursued legal avenues to assert their constitutional rights, invoking provisions related to cultural and linguistic protection as well as legislations such as the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, and the Forest Rights Act, 2006. The emergence of this school thus represents a significant effort by tribal communities to create an educational framework that respects their language, culture, and traditional knowledge.

Despite these positive outcomes, mother-tongue education in Gondi still faces several challenges, including limited teaching materials, a shortage of trained teachers, and inadequate institutional support. Nevertheless, the use of Gondi in education remains an important strategy for improving cognitive learning outcomes and educational inclusion among Gond children (UNESCO, 2003).Linguistically, Gondi belongs to the Dravidian language family. However, according to the **UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (2009)**, Gondi has been categorized as a vulnerable language, indicating the need for efforts to preserve and promote its use. Tribal languages in India are often considered “folk languages,” as they have traditionally been transmitted through oral traditions and are spoken mainly by indigenous communities who often live in relatively isolated geographical regions.

Contribution of the Gondi Language in Preserving Gond Cultural Identity, Traditions, and Oral Heritage

The Gondi language is closely linked with the cultural identity and oral heritage of the Gond Tribe. Language serves as a symbol of identity and belonging, and for the Gond community, Gondi reflects their history, traditions, worldview, and social life. Through the language, the community preserves oral traditions such as folk songs, myths, stories, proverbs, and ritual chants that have been transmitted across generations. These oral forms carry important cultural meanings and historical memories that strengthen community identity and social unity (Devy, 2012).

The Gond community has traditionally maintained a close relationship with forests, land, and natural resources. This relationship is reflected in the Gondi language, which contains indigenous knowledge related to agriculture, medicinal plants, environmental conservation, and traditional ecological practices. Many concepts embedded within the language are deeply connected with the natural



environment and cultural life of the community. Therefore, preserving the language is essential for safeguarding traditional knowledge systems and indigenous ecological understanding.

The use of Gondi during festivals, dances, rituals, and community gatherings also strengthens cultural continuity. Traditional performances and songs performed in Gondi express social values, collective memory, and spiritual beliefs. Elders use the language to educate younger generations about cultural customs, social norms, and community responsibilities. In this way, Gondi acts as a medium for preserving oral heritage and transmitting cultural knowledge from one generation to another.

However, the growing influence of dominant languages such as Hindi and English has created challenges for the survival of Gondi. Many younger members of the community are gradually shifting toward dominant languages because of formal education, urbanization, and employment opportunities. As a result, traditional oral practices and indigenous knowledge systems are weakening. Scholars such as Joshua Fishman (1991) have argued that when minority languages decline, cultural identity and community memory are also threatened.

Community organizations and cultural activists have therefore emphasized the importance of preserving the Gondi language through education, cultural documentation, and community participation. Initiatives such as Gondi-medium schools, documentation of folk literature, and promotion of the Gunjala Gondi script are helping preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Gond community. Thus, the Gondi language continues to play an important role in protecting Gond cultural identity, traditions, and oral heritage.

Challenges and Limitations in Incorporating the Gondi Language into Formal Education Systems

Despite the cultural and educational importance of the Gondi language, its incorporation into formal education systems faces several challenges. One of the major challenges is the dominance of mainstream languages such as Hindi and Marathi in schools and administration. In many tribal regions, children are required to study in languages that differ from their home language, which creates barriers in comprehension, classroom participation, and learning outcomes. This linguistic mismatch often leads to educational exclusion and higher dropout rates among tribal students (Jhingran, 2012).

Another major challenge is the shortage of trained teachers who are capable of teaching in Gondi. Most teachers posted in tribal areas are trained only in mainstream languages and may not understand the linguistic and cultural background of tribal children. As a result, communication between teachers and students becomes difficult, and classroom learning becomes less effective. In addition, there is a lack of textbooks, dictionaries, learning materials, and standardized curricula in Gondi, which further limits the implementation of mother-tongue education.

Institutional and policy-level limitations also affect the promotion of Gondi in education. Although Article 29 of the Constitution of India guarantees the protection of linguistic and cultural rights, the practical implementation of multilingual education policies remains weak in many tribal areas. Educational systems introduced during colonial and post-colonial periods often ignored indigenous



languages and knowledge systems while promoting dominant cultural norms. This historical marginalization has contributed to the gradual decline of tribal languages and identities.

Community-led initiatives such as the “ParamparikKoyaDnyanbodhSanskarGotul” school in Gadchiroli represent important efforts to challenge this exclusion and promote culturally relevant education. However, such initiatives often face bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining formal recognition and financial support from state authorities. Community activists and organizations have therefore continued to demand greater institutional support for tribal language education through policies, teacher training, and development of educational resources.

Modernization, migration, urbanization, and the growing preference for dominant languages among younger generations also pose challenges for the survival of Gondi. Many parents encourage children to prioritize mainstream languages for better employment opportunities, which sometimes reduces the use of Gondi within households and communities. Therefore, preserving and promoting the language requires collective efforts from educational institutions, policymakers, cultural organizations, and the community itself. Incorporating Gondi into formal education is not only important for improving educational inclusion but also for protecting the cultural identity and linguistic rights of the Gond community (UNESCO, 2003; Mohanty, 2009).

Findings

The study found that the Gondi language plays a vital role in preserving the cultural identity, traditions, and oral heritage of the Gond Tribe in Chhattisgarh. The language functions as an important medium through which folk songs, myths, rituals, storytelling traditions, and indigenous knowledge are transmitted from one generation to another. The research revealed that elders within the community continue to use Gondi to educate younger generations about social values, customs, environmental practices, and community history, thereby maintaining cultural continuity and collective identity.

The study further found that mother-tongue education in Gondi positively influences the cognitive learning outcomes of Gond children. Children learning in their native language demonstrate better comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and conceptual understanding compared to those studying only through dominant languages such as Hindi. The use of familiar language in classroom instruction helps children connect educational content with their lived experiences and cultural environment, resulting in more meaningful and inclusive learning processes.

The findings also indicate that the Gondi language contributes significantly to the preservation of indigenous ecological knowledge and oral traditions. Knowledge related to forests, agriculture, medicinal plants, festivals, and traditional lifestyles is deeply embedded within the language. However, the study observed that modernization, urbanization, migration, and the growing dominance of mainstream languages are gradually reducing the use of Gondi among younger generations, creating concerns regarding language decline and cultural erosion.

The research additionally identified several challenges in incorporating Gondi into formal education systems. These include the shortage of trained teachers, lack of standardized textbooks and teaching

materials in Gondi, inadequate institutional support, and the dominance of mainstream languages within schools and administration. Although constitutional provisions and multilingual education policies support linguistic diversity, their implementation in tribal regions remains limited. The study therefore concludes that strengthening mother-tongue-based multilingual education and promoting community participation are essential for preserving the Gondi language, improving educational inclusion, and protecting the cultural heritage of the Gond community.

Suggestions

The study suggests that mother-tongue-based multilingual education should be strengthened in tribal regions of Chhattisgarh because children learn more effectively when education is provided in their native language (Jim Cummins, 2000; UNESCO, 2003). Primary schools in tribal areas should therefore incorporate Gondi as a medium of instruction during the early years of education to improve comprehension, participation, and literacy development among tribal children.

The government and educational institutions should develop textbooks, storybooks, dictionaries, digital resources, and culturally relevant teaching-learning materials in Gondi. Educational content should include local history, folk traditions, ecological knowledge, and tribal cultural practices to create a more inclusive and meaningful learning environment.

The study also recommends the recruitment and training of teachers who are familiar with the Gondi language and tribal culture. Teacher training programs should focus on multilingual and culturally responsive pedagogy so that teachers can effectively address the educational needs of tribal students. Further, universities, tribal research institutes, and cultural organizations should undertake systematic documentation of Gondi oral traditions, folk literature, songs, myths, and indigenous knowledge. Community participation is equally important, and families should be encouraged to use Gondi in everyday communication to strengthen intergenerational language transmission.

Finally, constitutional and educational provisions related to tribal linguistic rights should be implemented more effectively at the grassroots level. Policies supporting indigenous languages must move beyond symbolic recognition and ensure practical support through educational programs, institutional funding, and community-based initiatives. Such efforts can help preserve the Gondi language, strengthen cultural identity, and promote equitable educational development among tribal communities.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the important role of the Gondi language in preserving the cultural identity, traditions, oral heritage, and indigenous knowledge of the Gond Tribe in Chhattisgarh. The findings of the study reveal that Gondi is not only a medium of communication but also a carrier of cultural memory, social values,



ecological knowledge, and traditional practices that have been transmitted across generations through oral traditions such as folk songs, myths, rituals, and storytelling.

The study further demonstrates that mother-tongue education in Gondi positively influences the cognitive learning outcomes of Gond children. Children learning in their native language show better comprehension, participation, confidence, and conceptual understanding because classroom learning becomes connected with their lived experiences and cultural environment. The use of Gondi in education therefore supports inclusive and meaningful learning while reducing the linguistic barriers faced by tribal children in mainstream schooling systems.

At the same time, the study identifies several challenges in incorporating Gondi into formal education systems. The dominance of mainstream languages such as Hindi, lack of trained teachers, shortage of educational materials, and weak institutional support continue to marginalize tribal languages within education. Modernization, migration, and increasing preference for dominant languages among younger generations have also contributed to the gradual decline of Gondi usage.

The study concludes that preserving and promoting the Gondi language is essential not only for safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Gond community but also for improving educational inclusion and protecting indigenous knowledge systems. Therefore, strengthening mother-tongue-based multilingual education and encouraging community participation are necessary for ensuring the survival and development of the Gondi language for future generations.

Future Directions

The present study opens several possibilities for future research on the Gondi language, mother-tongue education, and tribal cultural preservation among the Gond Tribe community. Future studies may undertake detailed empirical research on the long-term impact of mother-tongue-based multilingual education on the academic achievement, cognitive development, and social participation of tribal children in Chhattisgarh and other tribal regions of India. Comparative studies between tribal children educated in their mother tongue and those educated only in dominant languages may provide deeper insights into educational outcomes and classroom experiences.

Further research can also focus on documenting the oral traditions, folk literature, myths, songs, rituals, and indigenous ecological knowledge preserved through the Gondi language. Since much of the language and cultural heritage still exists in oral form, systematic documentation and digital archiving are essential for preserving these traditions for future generations. Studies related to the development and promotion of the Gunjala Gondi script, tribal literature, and digital language resources can also contribute significantly to language revitalization.

Future research may additionally examine the role of government policies, educational institutions, and community organizations in promoting tribal language education. There is also scope for studying the challenges faced by teachers, students, and communities in implementing multilingual education programs in tribal areas.

Another important area for future study is the impact of modernization, migration, urbanization, and digital media on the language practices and cultural identity of younger generations within the Gond community. Such research can help understand changing linguistic patterns and develop effective strategies for language preservation.

Finally, interdisciplinary research involving sociology, anthropology, education, linguistics, and tribal studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language, identity, cognition, and indigenous knowledge systems. Future studies should therefore continue to explore ways of strengthening culturally inclusive education and preserving the linguistic heritage of tribal communities in India.

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