

The English Classroom

A Peer Reviewed Bi-annual Journal



Regional Institute of English, South India

Jnanabharathi Campus, Bengaluru – 560 056

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About “The English Classroom”

The English Classroom Journal is a peer-reviewed bi-annual journal published in the month of June and December. The main objective of the journal is to publish articles pertaining to English Language Teaching. We hope that the research findings, strategies and topics discussed in the journal would enable the ELT community imbibe better understanding and insights for further research ideas and for classroom practices.

Asantha U. Attanayake in the article, **Confidence to Speak English: A Necessary Ingredient for Students in Post-colonial South Asia** states that the study conducted with more than 4500 students from the Post-colonial South Asia, revealed that the reason students refrained from speaking English is due to lack of confidence and fear of being ridiculed. Hence the researcher emphasizes on the need for developing special courses with the objective of building confidence to speak English among the students.

In the article, **Scaffolding Strategy for Improving Speaking Ability of ESL Learners**, **Dr. BonalaKondal** and **Dr. Nittala Noel Anurag Prashanth (Nittala, N.)** have made an attempt to use pictures as a scaffolding technique to develop speaking skills among 20 higher secondary ESL school students.

K. Chandrasekaran in the article **Effectiveness of Pragmatic Module in Enhancing Oral Communication Skills in English among of Students of Diploma in Elementary Education** discuss various ways tried to improve the communicative skill of the student teacher.

Munianjinappa.K, in the article, **Difficulties of learning English in Rural India and Some Remedies**, discusses various problems that students in rural India face with regard to English and also suggests some remedies to overcome the same.

In the article, **One Input- Many Outputs: Capitalizing on Pictures in a Multi Grade English Class**, **G.G.S.Nageswara Rao**, explores the use of pictures for developing oral and written tasks for different grades and using them to elicit outputs from the students.

Ravindra B. Tasildar, in the article, **Comprehension of Comprehension Questions: A Reflective Study**, reports an experiment conducted to test the reading comprehension skills of college entrants (First year BA (FYBA) students.

Jeyasakthi. V, and SmrutisiktaMishra, in the article, **Storytelling as a Method to Improve Listening Skills among Indian Ninth-Grade Students from Karaikal, Puducherry - An Action Research**, records the study conducted for students of Govt High School. In this experimental design of study, the researchers record that story telling improves the listening skill of the language learners.

In the article, **Error Analysis: L1 Impact and Syllabi Assessment**, **Dr. Manuel Macías Borrego**, examines the written errors made by Spanish L1 learners of English (CEFR levels B2 and C1Be2). Through these errors the researcher makes an attempt to assess the impact of learner's L1 on the target language. i.e. in the student's L2 learning process and the syllabi itself.

Umarova Dildora Rustamovna, in the article, **The Most Effective Test Formats for Activating Students' Vocabulary**, states the importance of testing vocabulary of learners and also points at the format and the variety of tests to be taken into account while designing the vocabulary tests.

Jushmi Gogoi in the article, **Implementing TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching): The need for a Standardized Framework in the Vernacular Medium Schools of Assam**, mentions that both government and non- government schools give priority to reading and writing over listening and speaking. The researcher states that introduction of TBLTs can be beneficial for the students to develop effective communication.

Dr. T. Sunand Emmanuel, in the article, **The Interpersonal Dimensions of Respectful Conversations**, emphasizes on the need for developing clear, effective and ethical interpersonal communication competence among engineering students who would eventually become tomorrow's employees or employers.

In the article, **Changing The Scenario Of Teaching During the Pandemic to Meet the 21st Century Skills Through Synchronous Learning**, **Sangeetha Gorikapudi**, discusses the voluntary project the researcher along with the other teachers took up during the Covid- 19 pandemic. Through the project titled, 'The Connecting Classrooms' the teachers and the students connected with one another. They shared classroom ideas and made effective presentations.

Dr. Chandrasekharan Praveen in the article, **Leveraging Chat box Posts for Learning- A Study**, shares the experience of using WhatsApp chat space to interact with the teacher trainees. The researcher in the paper reveals several pedagogical advantages of the WhatsApp chat space.

Confidence to Speak in English: A Necessary Ingredient for Students in Post-colonial South Asia

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Abstract

This study has involved more than 4500 students from the post-colonial South Asian nations of Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and it revealed that students' most desired English language skill is speaking, but that they refrain from speaking due to a lack of confidence that stems from a fear of being ridiculed by society. This large-scale study was instigated by studies that span from 2007 to 2017 involving about 2000 Sri Lankan undergraduates that produced similar findings. This leads us to believe that the language attitudes existing in society may influence students more than the numerous well-accepted teaching methodologies for teaching English that are currently used in post-colonial South Asia. The standards set by the elites in post-colonial South Asian societies works against English language learners in their efforts to speak English by causing Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA), which manifests in a lack of confidence to speak English. At the same time, societies that do not use English at all seem to negatively influence English language learners also causing LAA. This anxiety may then be projected onto learning English in general with a negative effect on learner identities and possible selves. Our work emphasizes the importance of dialogue on language attitudes as an academic discourse and building confidence to speak English as an essential rectifying measure to eliminate Language Attitude Anxiety.

Keywords

Anxiety, Confidence, Fear, Language Attitudes, Speaking

Introduction

Students in the post-colonial South Asian countries refrain from speaking English despite it being their most sought-after skill due to fear/shyness of being ridiculed by society. Herein, it is evident that societal attitudes towards languages and their speakers play a major role in this regard as they affect learners in their target language learning, here in this context, it is English, the most prestigious language in the post-colonial South Asian region.

... despite learners' desires to learn and use English, ideologies that valorize dominant varieties can provoke anticipation of shame, and reluctance to use the target language, based on fears of ridicule from 'native speakers' or peers for failing to demonstrate control of language 'norms' (Liyanage and Walker, 2021, p.291).

According to Attanayake (2019), such a situation has resulted in learners lacking confidence to speak English due to Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA) that can be defined 'as a complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours that affect language performance, which arise from the uniqueness of the language attitudes existing in both the larger society as well as in classroom situations' (Attanayake, 2019, p.67). This is in addition to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) that arises within the classroom language learning experiences (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cape, 1986). Therefore, it is envisaged that building confidence to speak English within the classroom situations eradicating fear and shyness is fundamental for the English language teaching in such contexts. This argument consolidates its validity in the background of the failure in English language teaching over 70 years in the said post-colonial countries with a large majority failing in written examinations as well as being unable to communicate in English in spoken form.

A Brief Literature Review

Insufficient attention is paid to the complex relations between learner drives (personal drives) and situated social constraints in language learning and therefore it is among the least understood of language learning variables (Scovel, 2001). The inhibition to speak English for fear of ridicule by society results in learners having poor L2 possible selves, which learners “are afraid of becoming” (Marcus & Nurius, 1986, p.954). In Possible-self theory, even though possible selves are discussed as individualized, many of them have resulted from previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted with those of salient others. What others are now, I could become (ibid). And when such comparisons are of negative nature, learners end up projecting the same onto themselves. The concept of learner identity is another dimension to look at socio-individual variable of language learning that goes in line with the possible-self theory. Identity refers to how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how it is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000). This definition helps locate the English language learner in a context where a poor learner identity is often the result of many negative learning experiences in the classroom and discouraging language experiences outside the classroom (Koay, 2018). A poor learner identity thus directly affects the learners in visualizing their future possibilities as limited, contributing to the creation of a poor L2 possible selves.

Objective

To find out whether it is common across the students in post-colonial South Asian countries namely Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are affected by societal attitudes when speaking in English contributing to a lack of confidence to speak English.

Methodology

Sample

The sample consisted of 4600 undergraduates from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. About 1000 from each country with a minimum of 250 students from 5 urban/semi-urban universities were selected. These students were in their 1st or 2nd years and had relatively low proficiency levels in English. Students with a higher English language proficiency were exempted as they would not demonstrate anxiety related to speaking English.

Tools

A questionnaire was administered that included MCQs for the respondents to comment about their English language learning experience. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by a native speaker of English with 10% of the students who were randomly selected to check whether the fear/shyness factor to speak English was present when speaking with native speakers.

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were used to analyse data. The qualitative data answered the *why* and *how* questions in line with *who* and *when* factors of quantitative data.

Results

Data was collected to find out the following and comparisons were made across countries in terms of

- a) The skill/s that are most desired
- b) The reason for learning the most desired skill
- c) The fear/shyness/uncertainty factor when speaking English
- d) The domain factor in speaking English
- e) The personal factor in speaking English

For this paper, only the data related to a), b) and d) are presented and analysed. The data obtained through interviews are incorporated to the discussion as necessary.

The following figure shows the most desired skills among the undergraduates.

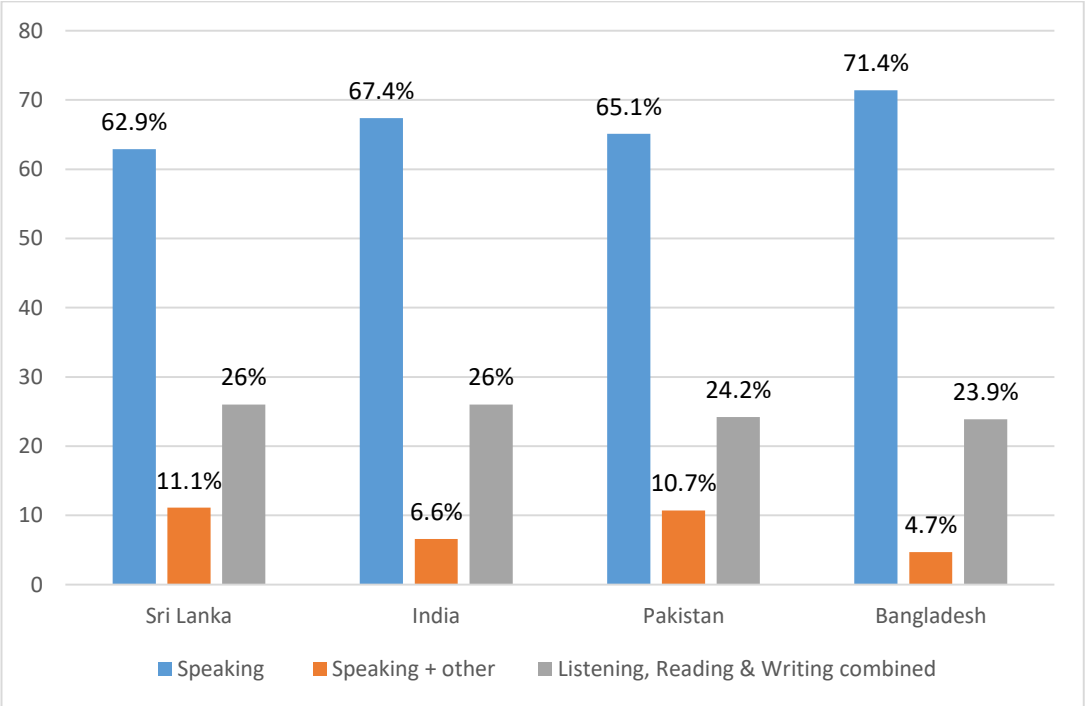


Fig. 1. English language skills students desire to learn the most across post-colonial South Asia

The data show that the most desired skill among South Asian students is speaking (Bangladesh – 71.4%, India – 67.4%, Pakistan – 65.1%, Sri Lanka – 62.9%). All four countries have a near-similar percentages of students who prefer listening, reading and writing and these are all far less than half of the percentage which prefers speaking. The middle column shows a preference for speaking in combination with other skills.

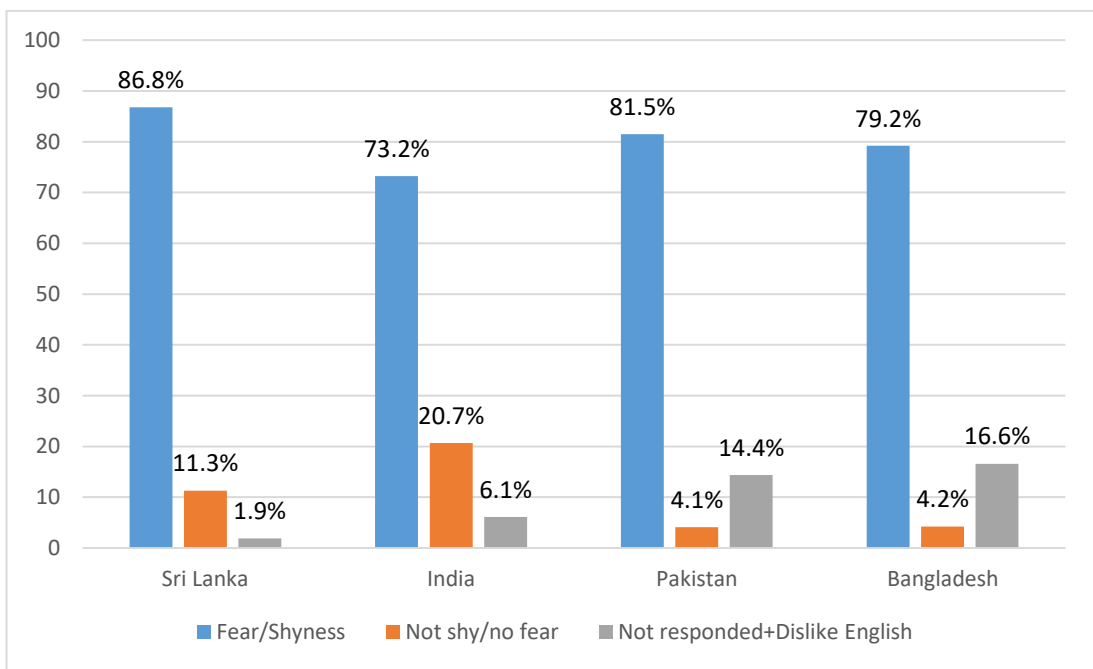


Fig. 2. Reasons post-colonial South Asian students do not want to speak English

A large majority of students in each country, i.e., more than 70% (Sri Lanka – 86.8%, Pakistan – 81.5%, Bangladesh – 79.2% and India – 73.2%) are reluctant to speak English as they are either afraid, shy or both, because they believe others will laugh at their mistakes. This fear factor seems to lead to an aversion towards speaking English.

Country	Inside classroom (%)	Outside classroom (%)	Everywhere (%)	No fear/shyness anywhere (%)
Pakistan	44.5	23.1	8.3	24.1
Bangladesh	29.7	30.9	20.5	18.9
India	15.8	12.9	45.6	25.8
Sri Lanka	9.2	20.8	54.4	15.6

Table 1. The context/place where post-colonial South Asian learners experience fear, shyness or both in speaking English

In Pakistan, 44.5% students stated that they felt fear, shyness or both in the English language classroom with 29.7% reporting the same in Bangladesh, 15.8% in India and 9.2% in Sri Lanka.

Among those who experienced fear, shyness or both in speaking English outside the English language classroom 23.1% were from Pakistan, 30.9% from Bangladesh, 12.9% from India and 20.8% from Sri Lanka.

In Pakistan 8.3%, in Bangladesh 20.5%, in India 45.6% and in Sri Lanka 54.4% stated that they felt fear, shyness or both in speaking English everywhere.

Those who stated that they had no fear or shyness in speaking English anywhere were as follows: in Pakistan 24.1%, in Bangladesh 18.9%, in India 25.8% and in Sri Lanka 15.6%.

In Goa, which was under the Portuguese rule until 60s and therefore has been highly influenced by the western culture, 57.1% stated that they were neither shy nor afraid of speaking English anywhere, which has contributed to the total figure of 25.8% in India (Attanayake, 2019).

Discussion

The Awe-inspiring Desire to Speak English

The preference for speaking English reveals the students' perception of the primary purpose of learning a language, i.e., for verbal communication. This is despite English being taught for and tested by written examinations in South Asia where the examination-oriented teaching and testing approach has been emphasized over the primary purpose of learning a language. In examination-oriented education systems prevalent in the region, it is interesting to see that students' desire to speak, despite speech not being tested, surpasses their desire to pass examinations.

Undergraduates in all four countries associate being able to speak English with positive outcomes such as for obtaining a white-collar job and getting a high social recognition. In addition, the ability to speak in English is

viewed as a growth factor by students in all four countries: they see English as essential to increase their abilities, to make them educated and to develop personality, etc. (Attanayake, 2019). Many see it as the most powerful language and some even call it a ‘weapon.’ English has been viewed as *kaduwa* (sword) by Sri Lankans to denote that it emanates power (Thiru Kandiah, 1984). Being able to speak English is a definite prestige class marker as viewed by students in all 4 countries. As an Indian student expressed, learning to speak English is a ‘life-changing experience’ (Attanayake, 2019, p. 43).

Also, students associate the ability to speak English *well* with personality traits such as ‘confident’, ‘independent’, ‘sure of what they do’, while implying non-Anglophones do not possess the aforesaid personality traits. This goes close to the findings of Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) where standard language varieties are seen to offer people access to political, economic, and educational fora and opportunities.

Fear/Shyness to Speak English

Fear/shyness to speak English for being ridiculed by others is overwhelmingly high in all 4 countries. They fear for being ‘mocked’ at by others or seen as ‘showing off’ when they speak English. As a result of this fear/shyness, students develop Language Attitude Anxiety (LAA). LAA can be defined ‘as a complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours that affect language performance, which arise from the uniqueness of the language attitudes existing in both the larger society as well as in classroom situations’ (Attanayake, 2019, p.67). LAA that stems from a lack of confidence to speak hinders learners from speaking English.

The instances where students experience this fear/shyness for being ridiculed by society both inside and outside language learning contexts can be owing to their English language learning histories. Some of them are listed here: a) A learner might have had a teacher/friend or someone else who spoke English ‘well’ and who laughed at/ridiculed/mock that learner’s mistake in pronunciation when he or she was in their primary grades; b) A learner might have witnessed a friend being subjected to such mockery by a teacher/friend or someone else; c) A learner might have been made to feel (not through overt

actions like those described in a) and b), but in a more covert manner) that he or she or a friend who mispronounces a word in speaking was 'wrong' to have spoken English in the first place; d) A learner might have been continually overcorrected by a teacher in regard to pronunciation and/or grammar; e)

A learner might have been made to feel that they were not understood when they spoke in English in spite of many attempts; f) A learner might have faced/heard of cases like these many times in his/her learning career; g) A learner might be mocked for speaking English by friends or strangers who are English illiterate; h) A learner might be negatively evaluated for his or her writing by teachers in the classroom as a result of being unable to express concepts in English due to a lack of practice in regard to speech (Attanayake, 2019).

As a result of the experiences such as above, the fear or shyness or both is extended to a dislike towards their English language learning in general. Subsequently, their ability to learn the language and become familiar with its usage is hampered too. This is due to LAA being reinforced in these contexts impeding the learner's ability to benefit from the English language learning process.

Considering the instances listed above where learners have had negativity ingrained in them vis-à-vis English language learning, it is quite natural for them to avoid the repetition of these scenarios and avoid situations that create anxiety-related feelings in them. This is known as avoidance in psychological terms and it hinders the nervous system from becoming habituated to stressful circumstances like those found in the language classroom. As these anxiety-producing scenarios remain novel, they will continue to arouse the nervous system and create anxiety, which we call as LAA.

It is more than a possibility that a learner in the post-colonial South Asian context will have experienced the instances stated above (one or more than one) given the attitude problems that are prevalent vis-à-vis the English language and its speakers. And that too both inside and outside the classroom. This results in negative snowball effect: initially, the learner will avoid speaking in English with, and/or in the presence of, the person who made the learner feel anxiousⁱ and will avoid all situations where English is spoken.

Then, as psychology suggests, avoidance will tend to become more general over time. Learners will gradually avoid people who speak to them in English, then people who speak English, then instances/situations in which English may be spoken, etc. Thus, the fear/shyness/uncertainty felt when speaking English always remains novel and continues to arouse their nervous system while preventing the learner from becoming habituated to speaking in English (Attanayake, 2019, p.82).

However, among these students, even though they are inhibited by fear/shyness to speak English, there were many students who showed very high confidence levels where their academic and related matters that involve mother tongue are concerned: some were student union leaders and active union members while some others were outstanding dancers, actors, singers, announcers, etc. who have earned a name in the university. As all the said activities were mother tongue-related, they showed very high levels of confidence. Nevertheless, in the English language classroom, they were very meek and fearful. One union leader in a leading university in Colombo avoided coming to English classes as he did not want to be viewed as lacking confidence to speak English in front of other students resulting in him failing English. This led him to not obtaining the degree for many years after the completion of the degree programme as it was compulsory to pass English to get the degree certificate.

An informal discussion revealed that this was true in India as well. A student studying in the remedial English class at a university in New Delhi, India, confided that he was an active member of a union and was instrumental in organizing a protest against the university administration that crippled the functioning of the university for a week or so, yet he was afraid to speak English and failed the subject thus having to study in the remedial English class.

This is a very clear duality: on the one hand, a high level of confidence level for mother tongue-related social and academic life while an extremely low level of confidence to speak English. Norton (1995) supports this duality emphasising the importance of considering the reciprocal effect of the social context on the learner during the language acquisition process:

... many have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual (p. 12).

This duality and associated concepts related to a lack of confidence to speak English among the students can be explained juxtaposing them alongside the concepts of learner identity and possible selves.

Learner Identity

Identity refers to how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how it is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000). Studies show that educational institutes foster learners constructing a specific identity alongside other identities (Coll and Falsafi, 2010). However, this is an identity which is specific to the context and is determined by the specific situation and the diverse aspects of the learning activity and 'its particular characteristics, in terms of, tasks, objectives, learned subjects or abilities, etc.' (Coll & Falsafi, 2010, p. 220).

Osguthorpe (2006) conceptualizes (as cited by Coll and Falsafi, 2010) the relationship between learning and identity construction as something that is multifaceted: According to him, learning influences at least five different kinds of identity, namely, professional, personal, talent, character and learner identity. While developing for instance, a strong talent identity for dancing, announcing and singing, some students end up getting a poor learner identity in the English language classroom by being fearful, shy and backward. This proves the notion of this 'reciprocal and variable relationship between learner and context underscores the idea that learners identify themselves and others around them as changeable' (Johnson, 2011, p. 2).

Considering the negative English language learning histories a student may have had as stated elsewhere, we would argue that these identities in a

learning environment are influenced not only by learning, but by other learners and teachers as well. At the same time, even though learners seem to accept their 'changeable' identities, the manifestation of these multiple contradictory identities in one person may restrict the growth of students where the totality of education is concerned as the manifestation of student growth is inevitably social and not restricted to academic settings only (Attanayake, 2019).

The definition of identities as cited in Coll and Falsafi (2010), Burke's (2006) as an individual's understanding about what it means to be who they are and the description of the same by Bernstein's (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999) as a way of achieving a sense of belonging and recognition of self and others to manage specific situations, learner identity can be viewed as generalized meanings about how one is recognized as a learner both by oneself and others. This then 'mediates the sense making of participation and the perceived sense of recognition as a learner in specific situations and activities of learning' (Attanayake, 2019, p.86). Juxtaposing this notion alongside Coll's and Falsafi's (2010) observation that 'learner identity is defined by the specific situation and the diverse aspects of the learning activity with particular characteristics, in terms of, for example, tasks, objectives, learned subjects or abilities etc.' (p. 220), teachers can find endless prospects to make use of by creating specific situations whereby tasks, objectives, etc., are designed so that the negative identities of learners are changed into positive ones. This may bring a sense of belonging to a group that emerges from a poor language learning identity and allows for a better learner identity to be developed (Attanayake, 2019, p. 86).

Possible Selves

'Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming, and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation' (Marcus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Even though possible selves are considered individualized or personalized, they are clearly social as well. This is because many of these possible selves are directly resulted from previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics and behaviours have been contrasted with those of salient others that

contributed to creating the notion, ‘what others are now, I could become’ (Marcus & Nurius, 1986). Referring to the negative experiences of friends and peers in the English language classroom enlisted elsewhere in this paper, they can induce anxiety in other learners making them completely shun the English language classroom with the feeling of ‘what others are now, I could become’ (ibid).

Also, the widely perceived notion that compared to British or American English, local varieties are lesser in status, causes learners to be less confident about the variety of English they are able to speak. One Bangladeshi student stated for being scared to speak English because, “they mock my accent”. The latter was expressed quite often in learner responses in our study. On the other hand, aspiring to speak English with a British or American accent may make learners increase their idea of standards of speaking like a native speaker of English. This may create a negative impact on generating a possible self, which is in fact an “impossible self” as such standards are not achievable. This in turn makes them frustrated adding reasons to feel less confident in speaking English. Horwitz (1988) discusses the positive relationship between high anxiety and negative concepts among students as language learners tend to have negative expectations for language learning. One of the most daunting implications is that learners may reinforce the wrong values prevalent in society vis-à-vis language attitudes in that they may pay more attention to ‘how’ a person speaks English rather than to substance of ‘what’ is said (Attanayake, 2019).

It is imperative that teachers in the English language classroom provide role models for learners vis-à-vis speaking English to help learners develop ‘achievable’ possible selves so that they will develop realistic aspirations that can be materialised. In addition, curriculum designers and teachers need to develop systematic mechanisms aiming to develop possible selves while eliminating a humiliated self that the learners are afraid of becoming (yet again).

Confidence to Speak English

The study shows that learners with an overwhelming desire to speak English are inhibited by societal attitudes causing a lack of confidence to speak

English resulting from Language Attitude Anxiety. LAA arises from experiences both inside and outside English language classroom situations. As a result of LAA, learners in the post-colonial South Asia develop negative possible selves and poor learner identities. Thus, 'Language attitudes can be ... causing stress and anxiety that requires information management depending on the social groups targeted, methods employed, and the plethora of social contexts in which they are evoked'. (Giles and Rikac 2014, p.22).

In such a scenario, building confidence to speak English becomes a paramount importance in the post-colonial English language classroom where learners can eliminate LAA and develop positive possible selves and learner identities. To this end, developing special courses with an objective to build confidence, using long-term systematic strategies for the same, and including language attitudes into the academic discourses are suggested as beneficial.

Conclusions

The demand and the power of English is indisputable in the Post-colonial South Asian region. Unfortunately, learners lack confidence to speak English due to a variety of reasons which some learners bring from their past learning experiences. The outside society, with its prejudices about English language and its diverse speakers contributes to the sustenance of negative experiences of learners. The practitioners in the English language classroom in the post-colonial South Asian region need to, without having resorted to internationally accepted teaching methodologies, develop courses and teaching methodologies that are suitable to the context specific complexities of the learners. Therein, a discussion on language attitudes and building confidence to speak English towards eliminating LAA and FLCA become paramount.

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Scaffolding Strategy for Improving Speaking Ability of ESL Learners

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the most essential language skills used for expressing one's views, thoughts and feelings with others. Further, speaking practice is considered as a significant realm to be mastered by all the learners. The present paper attempts to propose the use of pictures to develop speaking skills and to analyze the uses of various strategies of scaffolding as an effective tool to arouse learner's interest among ESL learners. Twenty higher secondary school students formed the sample of the study. The results of the study demonstrated that scaffolding technique assisted learners to develop their oral skills. It is also concluded that the chosen technique may facilitate language competence of the learners. However, it suggests some recommendations for effective use of scaffolding strategy in the second language learning and teaching context.

Keywords

Scaffolding strategy, Speaking Skills, Oral skills, teaching strategies, instructional scaffolding.

Introduction

The present paper attempts to explore the use of pictures in developing speaking ability among ESL learners incorporating the scaffolding strategy. Enhancing speaking skills require real situation and exposure to the audience.

These aspects inhibit students to speak in front of others. Though, students may be afraid of making mistakes and being humiliated (Ur, 1996). Further the students feel shy about speaking in front of others. To overcome these, different strategies of scaffolding are used for improving speaking skills. Scaffolding is one of the teaching strategies based on the theory of constructivism.

Scaffolding Strategy

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian Psychologist first proposed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is defined as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky elaborated the concept of ZPD to pedagogical activities (Wells, 1999). Based on the theory of ZPD many researchers came forward with new theories in education that contend scaffolding as the most influential one.

The word scaffolding is used to describe children's oral language acquisition and later on depicted as a process of mental stepping that allows the students to step in the Zone of Proximal Development (Bruner, 1974). The purpose of scaffolding is to help students reach their ability and provide guidance to grow one step at a time (Lewis, 2021). In the entire process, the teacher assists the learners to master a task or a skill that they are unable to grasp on their own. The essential assistance is given to the students, whenever the task/skill is beyond their ability. However, the significant aspect is to allow the learners to accomplish as much task/skill as possible without more assistance. At that moment, the learners are allowed to make a mistake/error but with teacher feedback, the learner can accomplish the goal. The assistance is provided till the learners master the task/skill, then the teacher slowly removes scaffolding that provides the students more chances in working independently.

Scaffolding is used as a bridge to fill the gap of what students already know and something they are not aware of. When it is employed

systematically, it will be an enabler, not a disabler (Benson, 1997). Sometimes, scaffolding can be utilized to facilitate students' transition from traditional to independent performance (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Therefore, different scaffoldings are provided to assist students to cross the ZDP with the amalgamation of the teacher's instruction and students' cooperation in achieving the goal.

Scaffolding Instruction

Scaffolding, a teaching strategy is used for teaching new skills or concepts by engaging students collaboratively in the teaching tasks that would be challenging for them to accomplish independently. The instructor offers essential and meaningful scaffoldings to the students that prompt them to comprehend what they learned and internalize it. In this teaching process, the teacher acts as an initiator, guide, facilitator and instructor. So, scaffolding is presented in various forms in teaching especially based on a variety of activities. Scaffolding mainly focuses on the role of a teacher as a facilitator to assist learners to learn and evaluate students' learning and to give required assistance (Wiesen, 2019). Scaffolding assists students to learn more by working with the help of a teacher or more advanced students to accomplish the learning goals (Sarikas, 2018). The researchers used picture description task/technique in the present research to sustain scaffolding strategy in teaching of speaking skills i.e. oral ability and fluency.

Speaking Skill

As part of the research, picture describing technique and group work are selected to incorporate the scaffolding strategy. It is one of the activities used to develop speaking skills. Richards and Renandya (2002) state that speaking skill is regarded as difficult for second language learners because effective speaking skills entail the ability to utilize the use of language appropriately in professional contexts (p.204). Speaking skill comprises three realm of knowledge – pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. However, speaking may demand fluency, appropriateness, intelligibility and accuracy.

Picture Description

The use of picture description in the classroom has many benefits such as facilitating teaching learning process so that the learning is enjoyable and it raises students' motivation to involve in the class and produce sentences orally. The use of this technique relies on visual aids to express thoughts, ideas and views. The purpose of this activity is to get the students to perform with a little instruction from the teacher. Pictures are one of the visual aids that can be incorporated in teaching speaking. It makes learning more interesting and enjoyable. The instructor can use this technique in many ways for teaching vocabulary and speaking skill.

Pictures make students active and seize their attention. Students develop cooperative and collaborative skills and lifelong learning. It enhances social skills and interactions with other members.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are

- Does scaffolding strategy enhance students' speaking skills to communicate effectively?
- How does picture description activity assist learners when scaffolding technique is incorporated in speaking class?

Research Methods

Twenty students were chosen as a sample for the study. The students are studying first and second year of intermediate in different colleges. It was conducted on the secondary level students of different schools in an online mode. Classroom action research was used as part of this study to improve students' oral skills.

The researcher used picture activity to make conversations and the learners were supplied a picture. Task completion and engagement; fluency; pronunciation and listening comprehension are used as speaking test rubric. After completion of the activity, students were given an evaluation sheet for rating the scaffolding strategy for speaking activity with the following scale: 1= poor, 2= good, 3= very good and 4= excellent. The students' oral skills were graded as high (3-4), medium (2.99-2) and low (1.99-1).

Research Procedure

According to Anne (2010), action research is research that is conducted in the classroom by the instructor to solve the problem/improve the teaching and learning process (p.5). In the present study, the focus is on how scaffold instruction assists in teaching learning context to develop speaking skills with the use of pictures.

Scaffolding has five steps such as setting up scaffolding, entering the context, thinking for themselves, collaborative learning and evaluation (Cameron, 2001).

Setting Up Scaffolding

Based on the theory of ZPD, the teacher mainly concentrates on the teaching items and scaffolds the teaching instruction by retrieving information from students' existing knowledge to fit into the new information. The teacher might anticipate students' existing knowledge such as personal experiences and what they had learned. Initially, teacher provides lucid directions and clarifies the learning purpose in which the teacher explores challenges that students may face and assists them to learn why it is significant. During the process, learners may get better and deeper comprehension of the new teaching item and make sense. In the beginning of the class, the teacher must clarify the purpose of learning and provide some new lexis and language expressions related to the theme/topic for discussion on that day. The language activity should be simple, manageable and achievable for all the learners.

Stepping Into The Context

The language activities should be designed carefully to arouse learners' interest and enthusiasm and assist them to enter into the learning context unconsciously. Hence, the scaffolding should lead to raising brainstorming and warm-up questions that can be completely utilized in order to direct students to the simulated situation which is similar to the real life and arouse their interest.

The brainstorming strategy can help students to activate their prior knowledge to build background for better understanding of the new activity and have proper prior knowledge in making connections.

In this phase, the scaffolding should commence with the personal experiences of students by providing some new words/phrases/expressions which can be used to express/communicate their views/opinions in the discussion.

The instructor should provide various examples of language expressions for practice. Then student would be capable of carrying out the language tasks on their own in the real-life context. The students' prior knowledge would adapt to the new information and their cognitive skills will be developed; thereby promoting students to construct new knowledge on their own. It is an indispensable progression in any language learning context, because language fossilization is a universal event and a gigantic obstacle in the language learning. The instructors' timely and appropriate directions may construct a bridge to activate students' prior knowledge and assist students reduce anxiety and build up their confidence in learning as to overcome some challenges efficiently.

Thinking For Themselves

The instructor should provide adequate time for students to think. Scaffolding chiefly focuses on the significance of supplying students with

indispensable instruments that allows them to steer their learning and also allows students a lot of scope for practice. Teachers should offer ample time to students to complete assigned task as much as they can perform individually. Further teachers should be ready to offer some assistance to individuals whenever they require to stimulate learners' deeper contemplation and to direct them to move forward at the higher levels to make them ready for the next stage.

Collaborative Learning

In this stage, the instructor can make use of group interaction or discussion technique for accomplishing the given task. Later the class can be categorized into different groups, provide them several pictures and direct the learners to talk about these pictures. Under the supervision of the teacher, the students can participate in the activities; students receive timely assistance wherever they require guidance through scaffolding instruction by the teacher. Scaffolding is not only offered by teachers but also by their peers. The teacher has to make all the students to participate in the activities and convey their views/thoughts. All the participants during the activity cooperate and highlight their commitment and possession in the learning process. In the process of learning, students with their peers exhibit innovative and creative ideas/thoughts which take them to next level. While interacting with peers, students will attempt to create the best impression to others and take the activity significantly. Meanwhile, students learn from each other and find solutions to the problems from various perspectives and enhance critical thinking skills.

Evaluation

Evaluation comprises three elements such as teachers' evaluation, peer-evaluation and self evaluation. Among the three, teacher's evaluation plays a vital role in the learning process and it has an insightful influence on the learners. During the activity, the teacher monitors students' performance carefully and provides positive feedback. Further, the instructor encourages

scaffolding so that it boosts students' confidence and develops their curiosity and cognitive ability in the process of learning. However, the feedback can be more effective in small groups than compared to whole class because most of the students do not pay attention. The interaction becomes more personal and direct and more meaningful for students.

Results And Discussion

The students' performance of oral skills before and after integrating scaffolding in class is presented in the following table.

	Score	Rating
Before scaffolding	2.72	Medium
After scaffolding	2.89	Medium

Table: The pre and post scores of students' use of scaffolding instruction.

The data in the table demonstrates that there was an improvement of students' oral skills after scaffolding was used in class. Though the difference between two scores was not big, it implies that scaffolding instruction enhanced oral skills of students.

Students provided significant reasons that the picture description task was fun and interesting, it assisted them to develop conversation with each other, group cooperation was good among members, it helped to develop creativity and imagination to make interesting conversation.

In the present study, it is displayed that majority of the students have improved their performance in speaking skills. It is indicated that the strategy incorporated in the study accomplished positive results. Further, scaffolding strategy gives more prominence to activities and assistance for meaningful task. The four stages of scaffolding assist students to develop their cognitive development and also reduces students' anxiety in learning a new topic. Also, these steps support students to have better understanding and improve self-confidence to do all the activities. The use of picture description is beneficial

for the development of speaking aspects. Thus, it implies that scaffolding technique through picture description can be utilized as one of the strategies that are effective for learning and teaching English, especially to develop speaking ability and fluency.

Conclusion

It is concluded that scaffolding strategy supported students to develop oral skills unconsciously in the real teaching contexts. The incorporated strategy assisted students to make learning more consequential and flourishing. Proper guidance and lucid instructions about scaffolding are essential in the implementation of such activities. The instructor offers the advantages of participating in such activities and then these activities are conducted to improve students' speaking skills. The role of teacher is that of an organizer, an instructor, a facilitator and a guide to provide scaffolding and resolve difficulties at each step and promote internalization of knowledge by the learners.

Scaffolding can be used for teaching any language skills as this strategy is productive when the teacher introduces a new topic that may be challenging to the students. It will be more effective when this strategy is implemented with a small group of students.

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Effectiveness of Pragmatic Module in Enhancing Oral Communication Skills in English among of Students of Diploma in Elementary Education

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Abstract

The paper presented here is an experimental study conducted by the researcher for his professional development out of his tenure as teacher educator for the decade and a-half. The perennial problem, a pertinent question which persists in his reflective mind of the investigator towards the lack of oral communication skills in English among the student teachers urged him to attempt to find the solution for it. The paper reflected on his study of the effectiveness of his self – developed pragmatic module to enhance the Oral Communication Skills of Student Teachers.

Keywords

Student teacher, pragmatic module, MUPPA- Model, Diploma in Elementary Education

Introduction

Language teachers are expected to have proficiency in oral communication skills. It is mandatory for the second language teacher to create a congenial language atmosphere for student-teachers in the classroom which motivates them to acquire language proficiency. Student-teachers in second language classroom must use oral aspects than the other aspects of language because generally a language begins with its oral aspects first. In the multi-lingual Indian context, the use of English in the classroom is the only space for them to acquire proficiency in oral English.

Need

Teachers' use of oral communication in English plays a significant role in the classroom teaching learning processes. The present student-teachers pursuing diploma in teacher education at institutions like District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and Teacher Training Institute (TTI) are the target group of this research study.

The plight of oral communication skills in English among the Elementary Education students is quite critical because practicing teachers in schools themselves are not imparting oral communication skills in English. This has occurred due to the following reasons: 1. The student-teachers have not been trained on these aspects during the teacher training period, 2. The inadequate experience in regard to oral communication skills of the student-teachers at pre-service level prevents them to do justice to students in their real classroom practices at a later stage. Thus, the oral communication skills in English are kept intact and hence student-teachers are not able to create the language atmosphere in their own classroom situation.

Problem

In order to avoid such conditions, the student-teachers could have been trained to lay emphasis on oral communication skills at the early stage of the diploma level itself. The most neglected skills of second language teaching-learning processes in school education should be taught at the teacher education level itself because the In- Service programme for practicing teachers do not percolate into classrooms. The problem remains as vicious circle.

Focus

As an English Teacher, it is the teacher's responsibility to put an end to this perennial problem without blaming the previous learning conditions of student or student-teacher. Here, during the process of Pre-service training, it is the responsibility of the Teacher Educator to take care of his duty to mould the student-teachers sufficiently in oral communication skills development which is the one of the best tools to inculcate the same to the young learners in schools. All the initiatives to impart oral communication skills development

tasks and activities must be ensured. There should be a check to ascertain the fact that all the student teachers possess the skills of creating the oral skills language development activities and tasks. The student teacher is the future classroom teacher and he should possess the art of creating such activities instantaneously in order to enhance the oral expressions in English.

The main focus of English teaching at school level is on meaningful communication. Although the communication objectives have many language componential factors to be imparted, the oral aspects of learning second language cannot be equated with the written aspects. The written aspects mainly focus on examination or product-oriented approach. An extra initiative is needed to impart in the area of oral communication.

The teacher educator in this research tried to venture by using various ways to enhance the student teachers' oral communication skills in English. His experience and interventions in his classroom are presented in this paper.

Teacher, Action Researcher, Researcher and Reflector

Teacher is expected to play multifaceted roles. He should not be contented with his role as an explicator of text. Self-reflection of his classroom teaching and assessing students' language acquisition and learning must be consciously monitored and intervened with various remedial ways to enhance the oral communication skills. Teacher or teacher educator should be a vibrant reflective practitioner of suitable materials which are rightly chosen and carefully constructed with relevant activities and tasks in his/her second language classroom.

English, a Second Language

English is a second language for many people. Dr. Amritavalli, in her article, ascertained the fact that there are three categories of Indians based on their English use. She stated that in some case, English is 'a first language of public discourse', for many, English is 'a second language' and for many others English is 'a foreign language' (Amrithavalli2013: 21). As Indians, we will never become natural English speakers. As a result, learning English is not as natural to us as it is to native English speakers. So, much practice is required

for students' oral skills development than the actual ratio of time available in teaching schedule.

Aims and Objectives of teaching English

The English language has prevailed in India as a second language and is practiced in school contexts for communication purposes with four aims:

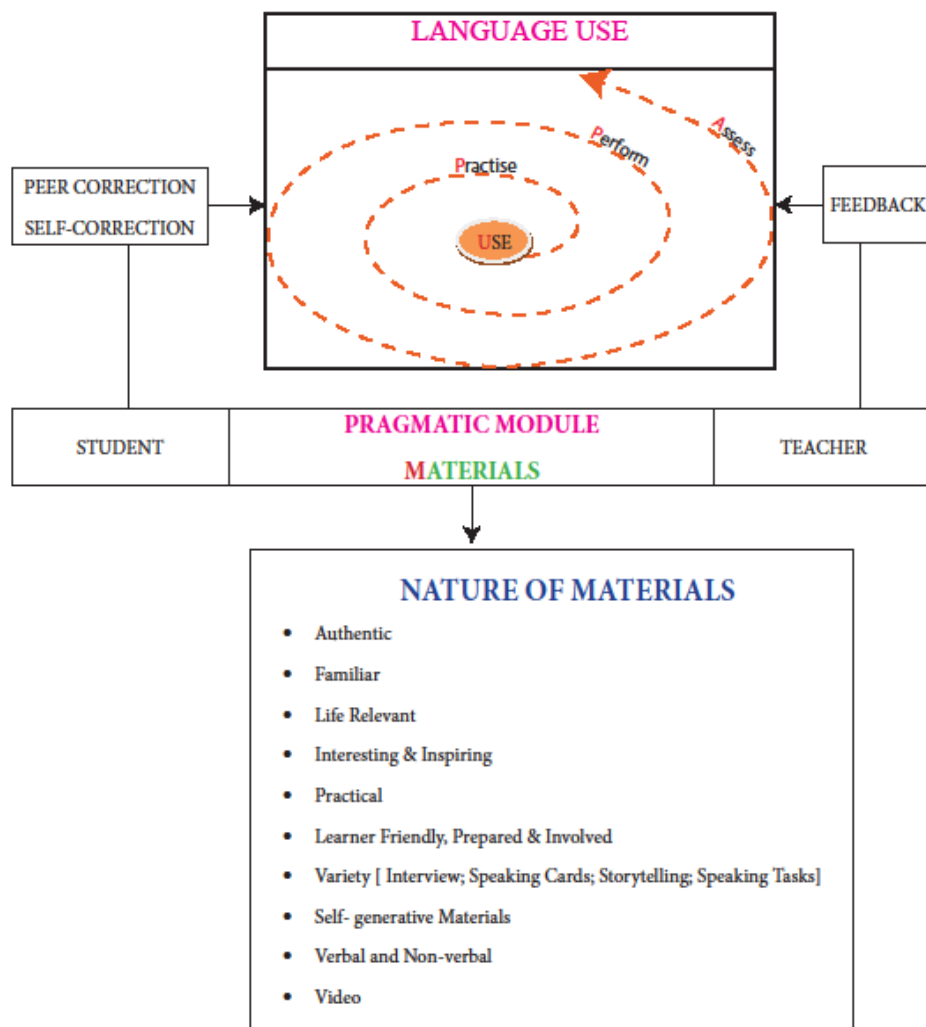
- To understand English when spoken
- To speak English meaningfully
- To read English and comprehend meaning
- To write English legibly and expressively

The gaps prevalent in second language education should be filled in order to attain the above stated goals. The gaps between teacher education institutions and professional preparation of teacher educators and teachers should be (NCERT 1998:309) bridged.

Teachers are the single most important element of the school system, and the country is already facing a severe shortage of qualified and motivated school teachers at different levels. So, the teacher educator used a variety of materials emphasizing on language use in the classroom transaction and designed a Pragmatic Module in his own strategy and evolved it as: MUPPA – Model.

In his Pragmatic Module, the researcher used the pragmatic approach. The pragmatism – practically acquiring language skills versus abstraction or theoretical perception of knowing about language. The knowing of language does not guarantee the operational skills of language. This idea has been strongly advocated by Kumara vadivelu in his innovative work of 'From Method to Post method' where he tries to find out the pattern which connects higher order philosophical, pedagogical, ideological and sociological tenets and norms of language teaching that leads teachers to true understanding, not to false knowledge. The 'true understanding' is possible out of teacher's knowledge over a period of time which enable him to construct his own theory of practice for his classroom concerned (Kumara vadivelu 2006: 180). According to Rod Ellis, 'Pragmatics' is the study of how language is used in communication (Ellis 1994: 23). This study is focused on effectiveness of pragmatic module to enhance Oral Communication Skills in English adopting his own self-developed model – 'MUPPA Model'.

MUPPA – MODEL



Objectives of the Study

- To study the oral communication skills of the student teachers at elementary teacher education course
- To design and administer a Pragmatic Module package for developing oral communication skills among the student-teachers
- To give oral communication practices to the experimental group student teachers and allow self-practice to the Control group student teachers using Pragmatic module
- To investigate the oral communication skills of the student-teachers of control and experimental groups in pre-test.
- To investigate the oral communication skills of the student-teachers of control and experimental groups in post-test
- To investigate the oral communication skills-task wise (descriptive, narrative, instructional, compare & contrast and explaining & predicting tasks) of the student-teachers of control and experimental groups in post-test
- To study the effect of the Pragmatic Module package in enhancing the oral communication skills among the student-teachers of experimental group
- To study the effect of the Pragmatic Module package in enhancing the oral communication skills among the student-teachers in general

The Sample

In this study, the sample size was 120 student-teachers enrolled in Diploma in Elementary Education programme. The sample was collected from Chennai and Kanchipuram districts involving the Diploma in Elementary Education Institutes. Sixty samples of student teachers were chosen from one government and another private teacher education institute in Chennai. And the other sixty samples of student teachers were chosen from one government and a private teacher education institute in Kanchipuram.

The Pragmatic Module

The investigator prepared the Pragmatic Module for Oral Communication in English with the following objectives.

- Make smooth and comfortable communication among the student-teachers
- Take student-teachers beyond the text and classroom
- Help student-teachers to generate their own idea to communicate in English
- Making student-teachers utilize self-constructed activities to boost the communicative skill in English
- To equip student-teachers with practical English exercises to be used in the actual classroom situations
- Help out student-teachers in boosting their confidence so that they can use English in a better way and with confidence
- Train student-teachers to use English for a variety of purposes.

The activities framed in this module are as follows:

1. Descriptive Task
2. Narrative Task
3. Instructional Task
4. Compare and Contrasting Tasks
5. Explaining and Predicting Task

In each task, the investigator identifies the fluency and accuracy of the student-teachers' communication skills. Scoring Procedure used in this study has FIVE Points scale to measure the Student teacher's performance in Fluency and Accuracy.

Statistical Method used

Keeping in view the nature of the hypotheses of the study, the investigator used the following statistical techniques for analyzing the data and testing of hypotheses: 1. Mean; 2. Standard Deviation; and 3. 't' test.

Findings of the Study

- The overall oral communication skill of the student-teachers at elementary level in English language is at **moderate level** in general and also in the tasks such as, descriptive, narrative, instructional, compare & contrast and in explain & predict tasks.
- Similarly, the oral communication skill of the student-teachers of government and private teacher education institutions at elementary level in English language is at **moderate level** in general and also in the tasks, such as, descriptive, narrative, instructional, compare & contract and in explain & predict tasks.
- Also, the oral communication fluency and accuracy skills of the student teachers at elementary level in English language are at **moderate level** in general and also in the tasks, such as, descriptive, narrative, instructional, compare & contract and in explain & predict tasks.

Educational Implications

- The teachers of English language must have the skill of communicating effectively to teach this language to the learners keeping it as simple as possible, to be understood easily by the learner and also to practice in their environment fluently.
- Teacher educators should encourage their student-teachers to handle the English language class in English only, without pointing out the mistakes in their communication in English vehemently.
- Weekly twice the teacher educators may arrange for seminars and quiz programmes related to enhancing oral communication skills in English among the student-teachers.

- Since the pragmatic module prepared by the investigator has positive effect on enhancing the oral communication skill in English among the selected experimental group student teachers, each and every teacher education institution may suggest that this module be followed for the best practices in English teaching.
- The main finding of the study reveals that the selected student-teachers of experimental group had improvement in oral communication skills through proper practices in pragmatic module. So, it is recommended that the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) may direct their teacher educators to do action research to analyse the usability of pragmatic module at elementary school level and the authorities may also plan to organize an in-service training programme on this line.

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Difficulties of Learning English in Rural India and Some Remedies

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Abstract

English is acclaimed as a Global Language because it is a well-known language all around the world. English emblemizes higher intellect, better education, and is helpful for a better future. Getting the work done in effective manner has become more important than having the most knowledge. A number of studies have shown that an advanced proficiency and knowledge of English leads one to higher paying jobs, stronger mobility, and a great deal of social success. It is quite evident that irrespective of the career whether it is engineering, medicine, management or non-technical, the command of English will take us to a great success. The growing priority placed on oral communication skills has been reflected in these two to three decades. For anyone who wants to be successful in this competitive world it depends not just on acquiring knowledge and hard skills, but also on developing effective communication skills. Hence, it is essential that purposeful learning and goal oriented teaching have gained tremendous importance. On one hand the language has gained this status and Indians have proved their worth all over the world, with the help of English language. On the other hand, the rural major population of India finds it very difficult to cope up with it even today.

Keywords

Family background, educational system, language reduced as subject, medium of teaching, shyness in learning, lack of encouragement.

Introduction

In India English is considered as one of the official languages. People belonging to different parts of the world are using English as a link language which links the whole world. Indians are flourishing all around the world because of their mastery over this language. Although Hindi is the other official language of India, majority of the people don't speak or understand it.

However, they understand English. Education has multiplied the role of English language, because universities worldwide often use English as the common code of learning and communication. English is an international language. English is firmly rooted in the soil of India. Different people can communicate with one another with the help of English. It is a language that builds confidence. If you are good with communication skills, it can change you in a good way.

Here we can discuss various reasons to show why rural students lack in learning English.

Family Background

Most of the students of rural area are from the poor families of laborers, farmers, household workers who find no encouragement for education. And the English language seems to be alien to them. Since most of the students are first generation learners, they do not have proper support. In such cases, how can a student get acquainted with the foreign language?

Especially the students who have an urge to study in English medium do not have access to go to cities. Though some students from villages are studying English medium with the help of family members, they are not able to produce even a single sentence without any grammatical error in English. In such cases, the uneducated parents and neighbors get satisfied with the negative thought that primary education is more than enough, and the question for good communication is never raised.

System of Education

In rural students' primary education, as per the government rule of passing all the students till certain class, students are promoted to upper classes without proper subject knowledge. This badly affects the learning process. The examination system is such that it makes students rote learners rather than test their analytical and creative skills. After the exam, what students learnt for the sake of exam will soon be forgotten. Whether it is grammar or lessons, students learn for the purpose of passing only in the tests and examinations and not to face any real-life situations. Most of the time application-oriented advanced grammar is not taught in schools.

Furthermore, instead of giving practice to students to learn a language, it is taught only as a subject. Hence, practical oriented classes to learn English as a language must be given. If not, when students pass the schooling and go for higher education they may face difficulties to speak English.

Subject oriented rather than Language oriented.

In the learning bower, English language is taught and learnt as one of the subjects for examination. As we all know, the examination process of universities is related with the writing skill. The basic intention of this is to get marks to clear the examination and this leads students to focus just for the sake of an exam while even the teachers focus on their subject results rather than focusing on teaching the students to learn the language. Hence students also start losing interest in learning the language.

Teaching Method.

In rural India, English is mostly taught in their mother tongue and students also get addicted to the same with an unwanted confusion of comparing the languages. Even the English teachers are in a state to adopt the bilingual method, which is also essential in many rural areas. According to ELT specialists, this is a wrong methodology.

The learning of any language requires constant practice and patience. Most of the rural pupils' feeling that prevails among students is that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery over English language. This kind of a conclusion prevents students from learning new languages. Learning a second language is like acquiring a system of rules, but just as very little is known about these rules, even lesser is known about how such rule systems are acquired. Students find it very difficult to earn a competence in those rules and they have no idea of proper sentence structure. They do not even know proper pronunciation, spellings and grammatical rules. Inwardly, they dislike the English Language and hence the sole objective of the teacher and the learner remain to clear the exams. Hence, the students never realize the importance of learning English as a language. Teacher also translates everything into the mother tongue.

Hesitation

Hesitation in speaking English is another major problem of learners. In rural areas when a few people really try to speak in English, the people around them don't encourage it, instead they start laughing at them. If at all a student is capable of overcoming all these obstacles, there comes fear, hesitation and shyness to block his/her developing interest. To learn a language, encouragement is important. When there is cooperation in learning a language, it becomes easy for quick learning.

At the Graduate Level

The system of teaching and learning in schools and colleges is different. Moreover, students have their own whims and fancies about college life because of the tremendous influence of mass-media like theatres and satellite channels on them. These media project odd perception about colleges. When they watch such things in movies, students take it for granted. The common notion about college students is that college is liberal and also there will not be any punishment like in schools. Actually, at the college level, students have their own thinking capacity to differentiate between what is good and what is bad for life. But many of them do not care for their future. Instead, they just come to college for enjoyment. But those who care about their future do not waste time, they try to utilize every second. A responsible degree student will surely concentrate on his/ her studies by giving more importance to learning English because it has the power of changing one's lifestyle. Most of the degree students are not bothered about language classes because they think it is an easy subject and that they can pass by reading study guides. But they do not know that without the knowledge of English, getting a job in the corporate sector is not an easy task.

Remedies

An awareness about the importance of English among the learners, their parents and the people must be created. When someone starts speaking English in the initial stage, the others must also join with such a person and encourage speaking. In the learning atmosphere the elders or anybody who knows this language must try to converse with others in English.

Teachers in the rural schools and colleges should take it as a challenge and try to work with dedication and have an aim to create a majority of students who can speak in English without hesitation. The English teachers must start teaching English as a language through the activities in schools and colleges so that it creates interest in students to learn easily and enthusiastically.

Conclusion

In schools, colleges or in any learning atmosphere, students must try hard to reach the goal. Because, reaching the goal is not easy until they work with dedication. In another point of view the teachers must morally support students as most of the rural students may not be from a family with an educational background. Considering this, the teachers must act as parents, motivators, friends and caretakers in all aspects of the students' growth. In this advanced era there are modern technologies which available to learn the language, so the students must also utilize them in a proper way to learn the English language.

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One Input- Many Outputs: Capitalizing on Pictures in a Multi Grade English Class

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Abstract

India, including many countries, is not an exception of multi grade classes. Teachers face many challenges in dealing with multi grade classes, especially in teaching English. Teachers rely on different strategies and use variety of teaching learning material in which pictures occupy the first position. Pictures help the teachers and learners a lot. Pictures motivate students to take part in using language in interpersonal communication. They are very handy for the teachers in addressing the challenges of multi-grade classes, especially to teach English. Pictures are suitable for providing tasks in different areas like Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Creative Expression (Oral & Written) for different grades and also for different levels within the same grade. It is the creativity of the teacher to capitalize on the picture. A resourceful picture can be used as a single input and can be targeted to elicit many outputs. Just as picture posters, photos, newspaper clippings, advertisements etc. can also be used as single input to target many outputs. With the teacher's advanced planning and designing tasks, the classroom transaction will become more meaningful, engaging and interesting especially in the second language class. Theme based pictures are used as a single input for designing a variety of tasks to elicit many outputs from the children.

Key Words

Pictures, input, output, multi-grade, tasks, levels, vocabulary, reading comprehension, creative expression, oral, written, meaningful, transaction etc.

Introduction

Multi-grade Teaching has been described as the situation in which a single teacher teaches more than one class at the same time either in the same classroom or in different classrooms. Multi-grade teaching is a common phenomenon in more than half of the countries across the globe. In countries like Austria and Finland, they mainly focus on small schools with fewer than fifty students. In general, small schools are rural primary schools. They usually employ two or three teachers who teach different grades in the same classroom; this is called multi-grade or multi-age teaching.

There are two main reasons for multi-grade teaching in both the countries (Kalaoja & Pietarinen, 2009; Müller et al., 2011)

1. Multi-grade teaching is implemented in order to prevent schools from closing, as it is believed that it enables the stabilization of learning-group sizes in rural areas in which birth rates have declined and migration has increased.
2. Multi-grade classes are also formed on the basis of pedagogical aims or goals, with reference to the concept of multi-age teaching and especially its philosophical foundation: In multi-age classes, students are taught according to their developmental stage.

Grading, as a means of separating groups of students, was probably introduced in the 1800s. It is a well-known fact that not all students perform at the same level. Some students do not perform well and repeat a grade, while others enter the school system at an earlier age. Multi-grade classes are frequently found at schools in every rural or remote community, where populations are scattered. In those areas there are not many teachers or students, so one grade level includes students of different ages. These students are in different classes, and are taught by one teacher. For example, one class may comprise students in grades 1 and 2, or 3 and 4. Such a class is termed as multi grade class.

Benefits of Multi-grade Teaching

Multigrade teaching benefits students in various ways by adding value and improving the learning outcome of children as noted below:

- It emphasises on learning as opposed to teaching.
- It is activity based, rather than textbook based.
- The teacher acts as a facilitator.
- It takes care of the completion of the learning task by all the children – even the last child is covered.
 - It is self - paced learning and also ensures quality learning
 - It creates fearless classrooms; and a feeling of joyful learning.
- The child is not at a fixed place in a classroom throughout the academic year.
- It encourages cooperative learning.
 - There is a sense of achievement in the child.
 - The child's ability is accurately diagnosed and his/her position is fixed on the learning continuum.
 - The child is monitored individually and continuously.
 - This caters to slow learners as much as it does to the fast learners.

Teachers use different strategies and material accordingly in the multi-grade class. Among them pictures also play an important role.

Picture as a single tool to design multiple tasks:

“A picture is worth a thousand words”

According to Sinclair (1987), a picture is defined as a visual representation or image that is painted, drawn, or photographed, and rendered on a flat surface. The main advantage of a picture is its obvious visibility to learners. Using pictures can bring benefits to teaching, as they promote learners’ interest in acquiring a foreign language. Byrne (1980) states that pictures can stimulate students’ discussion and interpretation of the topic. Moreover, students’ imaginations can also be inspired (Moore, 1982). For example, it is assumed that visual aids in general, especially pictures and colorful posters, could add attractiveness to the atmosphere of the classroom.

Furthermore, Wright (1989) argues that pictures can motivate students to take part in speaking activities.

Pictures are considered a visual media that provide textual information. Moreover, they can be used to enhance students' participation and create a positive attitude towards English. Pictures also help to set a context and provide learners with information to use. They represent a guide for students in spoken and written descriptions. Additionally, Wright also proposes that they sponsor, stimulate, and provide information for writing and speaking activities without teacher guidance. Thus, from that point of view, pictures represent an advantage helping teachers in the learning process. They can provide a model to follow and motivate the students. Wright further asserts that using pictures encourages students to use their imaginations. In fact, in real conversation when one tries to understand someone speaking, special attention is paid to the nonverbal language, such as the tone of the voice or the context. When it comes to the technique used, pictures represent the nonverbal sources of information. Therefore, it becomes important for the teacher to prepare students for communication, making use of both verbal and nonverbal sources.

Let's see how a picture is useful by designing different tasks that suit multi-grade classes:



Task: *Observe the Picture. Listen to the following words. Clap once if the word is related to the picture. Clap twice if the word is not related to the picture. (Grades 1&2)*

Note book, eraser, iodine bottle, a puppy, ribbons, first aid box, sitting, stripes shirt, flowers

Task: *Observe the Picture. Listen to the following words. Clap once if the word is related to the picture. Clap twice if the word is not related to the picture. (Grades 3, 4 & 5)*

Note book, eraser, iodine bottle, a puppy, ribbons, first aid, helping, together, sitting, stripes shirt, flowers, cotton, a pair of scissors, bandage, thread

Task: *Observe the Picture. Read the following words. Circle the words that are related to the given picture. (Grades 1 & 2)*

A girl, boys, a puppy, a cow, a cat, a chair, a bat, a ball, a box

Task: *Observe the Picture. Read the following words. Circle the words that are related to the given picture. (Grades 3, 4 & 5)*

Some children, a river, a puppy, first aid box, a scale, a pencil, a bottle, a kitten, a cow

Task: *Observe the Picture. Read the following words. Circle the words that are not related to the given picture. (Grades 6 & 7)*

a puppy, school bag, first aid, market, tincture of iodine, playing, water bottle,

Task: *Observe the Picture given. Say at least 5 sentences. (Grades 3, 4 & 5)*

Task: *Observe the Picture given. Say any 5 sentences about how children spend time with their pets. (Grades 6&7)*

Task: *Observe the Picture given. Here are some words. Circle the words that are related to the given picture. (Grades 3, 4 & 5)*

Some children, a river, a puppy, first aid box, a scale, a pencil, a bottle, a kitten, a cow

Task: Read the following sentences. Assign a relevant number in the bracket.

(Grades 3, 4 & 5)

The puppy is injured. ()

The girl is tying a bandage to the puppy's leg. ()

The tincture of iodine bottle is opened ()

A boy is holding the puppy in his hands. ()

The children brought a first aid box. ()

Task: You have seen a first aid box in the picture. Write any 5 things that are kept in the first aid box. **(Grades 3, 4 & 5)**

Task: You have seen a first aid box. List out any 5 places where first aid boxes are usually seen. **(Grades 3, 4 & 5)**

Task: Observe the picture. Answer the following questions:**(Grades 3, 4 & 5)**

- Where are the children?
- What are they doing?
- Who is injured?
- What is the girl doing?
- What bottle is seen in the picture?
- What box is seen in the picture?
- Have you ever helped anybody?
- **Task:** Observe the picture. Answer the following questions**(Grades 6& 7)**
- Do you have a Pet?
- How are pets taken care of?
- If you have a pet kitten, what would you name it?
- How do you spend time with your pet, if you have one?

Task: Observe the picture. Tick the right option.

(Grades 1& 2)

- The _____ is tying a bandage to the puppy's leg (girl/boy)
- The boy is holding an iodine _____ in his hand. (bag/bottle)
- A first aid _____ is seen in the picture. (bag/box)
- There are _____ children in the picture. (three/four)
- The children are doing first aid to the _____ (puppy/calf)

Task: Observe the picture. Fill the blanks with suitable words. **(Grade 3, 4 & 5)**

- The _____ is tying bandage to the puppy's leg (girl/boy)
- The boy is holding iodine _____ in his hand. (bag/bottle)
- The first aid _____ is seen in the picture. (bag/box)
- There are _____ children in the picture. (three/four)
- The children are doing first aid to the _____ (puppy/calf)

Task: Match the following. Write the relevant letter in the brackets given.

(Grades 3, 4& 5)

- | | | |
|------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. The girl | () | A. Iodine bottle |
| 2. The boy | () | B. First aid |
| 3. The puppy | () | C. Pink ribbons |
| 4. First Aid Box | () | D. stripes shirt |
| 5. The children | () | E. injured |

Task: Observe the picture. Put the following words under the given headings: **(Grades 3, 4 & 5)**

a girl, ribbon, cotton, iodine, boys, first aid kit, a puppy, thread, bandage, a tree, bottle, shirt,

Living Things	Non Living Things

*The above task is an integrated task of English Language and Environmental Sciences.

Task: Observe the picture. Count and write the relevant number in the brackets given. Say it aloud. **(Grades 1 & 2)**

Boys: ()

Girls: ()

Puppy's legs: ()

Children: ()

Box: ()

Bottle: ()

*The above task is an integrated task of English Language and Mathematics.

Task: It is Sunday. Ravi, Mohan & Roja are playing with a small puppy. Suddenly, the puppy is injured while jumping from a tree. They bring a first aid box to give first aid. Ravi shares this with his sister Devi during dinner time. Develop the possible conversation between Ravi & Devi.

(Grades 3, 4 & 5)

Task: It is Sunday. Ravi, Mohan & Roja are playing with a small puppy. Suddenly the puppy is injured while jumping from a tree. They bring a first aid box to give first aid. They want to share this with their friends in the school. Help them share their experience. **(Grades 6 & 7)**

Task: Mohan thought of writing this experience in his diary. Let's help Mohan in his diary entry. **(Grades 6 & 7)**

Conclusion

It is very clear that a picture which depicts a scenery can act as a single input that paves way to many outputs by catering to the needs of a multi-grade English class. In many places, multi-grade classrooms are not treated as the last resort to manage classes in a particular school. To have a child-centric approach, sometimes vertical grouping yields better results than horizontal grouping as it provides more learning opportunities through social interaction of children in different grade groups. However, in order to streamline teaching-learning processes in a multi-grade context, it is suggested that whole-group practices are needed to strengthen the social cohesion of the students and to support the cooperation of students in different grades. Coming to English Language Teaching in countries like ours, pictures are suitable for providing tasks in different areas like Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Creative Expression (Oral & Written) for different grades and also for different levels within the same grade. It is up to the creativity of the teacher to capitalize on the picture. Just as picture posters, photos, newspaper clippings, advertisements etc. can also be used as single input to target many outputs. If the teacher plans and designs the tasks well in advance, the classroom transaction will be more meaningful, engaging and interesting especially in the second language class. The task designing by the teachers is an important thing in their preparation. For this to happen, the teachers' capacity is to be built at regular intervals in designing a variety of tasks to meet the needs of multi-grade English classes. The teachers may make use of theme-based pictures that are available in other subject textbooks also to yield maximum benefit.

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Comprehension of Comprehension Questions: A Reflective Study

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Abstract

A language teacher is enriched through classroom experiences. The teacher here wants to report a simple classroom experiment. The present study deals with the analysis of question papers and classroom-based experiments to know learner's comprehension of comprehension questions. In this study, the teacher reports an experiment carried out to test the reading comprehension skills of the college entrants, i.e., first year BA (FYBA) students. In the FYBA (Optional English) classroom it was seen whether the students are able to understand the comprehension questions given at the end of a unit in the prescribed coursebook. The class XII English question paper has incorporated the sub-skills of reading like skimming and scanning among students. Hence comprehension of questions was one of the challenges faced by these students. The inferences of this study could provide feedback to material writers and paper-setters.

Keywords

Reading comprehension, Class XII, Question papers of English

Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills of language learning. Hence it occupies a significant space in the syllabi of English language at all levels. Reading is enabling a learner to read silently unfamiliar authentic texts at reasonable speed with adequate comprehension (Mohanraj 2007: 34).

Developing reading skills is one of the objectives of language teaching at the tertiary level. Reading skills can be developed in the classroom through different sub-skills (for details see Grellet, 1981). Classroom activities for Indian students have been given by Bellare (1997). Paliwal (2002) provides details of reading comprehension.

The teachers of English work in quite different circumstances than the teachers of other languages or subjects. The major difference is made by the cultural and linguistic aspects and the low motivation of the learners of English. The need to experiment in the classroom emerges from such challenges in the rural and semi-urban areas which contribute in making of a teacher of English. The present study is a classroom experiment to know why students fail to comprehend questions in the examination.

Review of Literature

The studies on developing reading comprehension skills of Indian students date back to the 1970s. There were classroom experiments carried out by teachers of English like Narayanaswami (1973) and George (1977), to name a few. Narayanaswami (1973) tested, through multiple choice type questions (MCQs), reading comprehension of Hindi Arts College students, Hyderabad and found that the initial average reading speed was 138 wpm with 36% comprehension. In the discussion on the contemporary language testing scenario in India, Malik (2017) observes that the questions in examinations to test reading comprehension skills test writing rather than reading skills. These researches have focused on teaching and testing reading comprehension of L2 learners.

Tasildar (2016a) studied reading skills of the undergraduate students. In the study of questions on reading comprehension on sixteen passages (eight seen and eight unseen) in the eight question papers of second year BA (SYBA) Compulsory English during 2000 to 2004 of the University of Pune (now Savitribai Phule Pune University), it was revealed that the questions given below the passage are mainly (60 to 80%) factual in nature and other types of questions (personal response, inferential and on vocabulary and grammar) rarely occur.

In another study of question words in the question papers by Tasildar (2016b), it was found that the words easy for understanding like discuss, explain,

comment occur more frequently than other question words. In order to study comprehension of questions, MA (English) Part I & II students were given exercises in question words. The question paper on 'Understanding Drama' (SYBA) was used for the purpose. They were asked to find out the meanings of the question words. The study revealed that the postgraduate students of English were not aware of the question words and their meanings.

The Present Study

Sangamner is a tehsil (a semi-urban) place in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra State. The students admitted to the college come from mofussil area. Many of these students are first generation learners. Around four hundred students are admitted to the FYBA every year. Amongst them, the students interested or willing to specialize in the study of English language and literature opt for Optional English (General English).

In the present research, the teacher carried out a study of the 'comprehension of comprehension questions' of forty college entrants, i.e. FYBA students of Optional English. The story *The Romance of a Busy Broker* by O. Henry was selected for the purpose. The story was discussed in the classroom. The students were informed that the questions given below the text would be tested. Some students shared their experience that they failed to understand the questions. Then it was decided to test comprehension of all the questions. They were asked to come prepared. The comprehension of the questions given at the end of the unit were mostly wh-questions without question prompts. These questions were tested through MCQs (see Appendix). The alternatives provided below the questions were to test the understanding of questions (and not of the passage as the existing practice goes). The questions from the text book were rearranged into three groups. The first group included four multiple choice-type inferential and personal response questions on the text. The second group was a question on vocabulary where meanings of three words from the question were given in the matching table for the students to identify. The last group on grammar questions was identification of sentence types used in the questions (1 to 4) in the first group.

The helplessness of the students came to fore as the words in these questions were new (if not difficult) to them and their habit (skill) of scanning

was of little or no use. It was observed that the students were unable to comprehend inferential and personal response questions. In the first group of questions the overall incomprehension was above 65%. Out of the forty respondents 67.5% were not able to understand personal response questions, to give an instance. Similarly, in the question on vocabulary, 92.5% and 75% students failed to understand the meanings of words 'derogatory' and 'ambivalence' respectively. Only 43.5% students were able to understand the meaning of the word 'complimentary'. Relatively, the comprehension of students seemed good with respect to questions on types of sentences. Among the 40 students, 77.5%, 72.5% and 70% students were able to identify yes/no type question, compound sentence and simple sentence respectively. Only 32.5% students failed to identify the imperative sentence.

Observations

At present, even though the reading texts include authentic materials like railway time-tables and advertisements, for instance, the sub-skills of reading like skimming and scanning are tested mostly with the help of textual (seen) and non-textual (unseen) literary and informative passages in the class XII question papers of Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (MSBSHSE). Besides, questions on note-making and summarizing test reading skills. The questions given below the seen and unseen passages in class XII question papers are generally factual, inferential, personal response, global and questions on vocabulary and grammar (see MSBSHSE Teacher's Manual, 2007: 60-61). However, emphasis on teaching of skimming and scanning at the secondary and higher secondary levels has led to the development of just a technique of searching answers in the passages with the help of key words in the question. It has helped learners to score the marks required to pass the board examination. Consequently, neither the comprehension of the passage nor of the questions (other than factual) is appropriately tested. In the class XII question papers, answers to factual questions are explicitly stated in the passages used to test comprehension. This may be one of the reasons why students fail to comprehend questions other than factual.

The college entrants face difficulties when they move from higher secondary to tertiary level where questions on seen and unseen passages are replaced by textual questions on prescribed prose and poetry. The number of

multiple-choice type factual questions is decreased and students have to write answers in about 100 to 150 words instead of a word or a phrase (not even in complete sentences) they had practiced in class XII. Here the question paper expects them to read and comprehend prescribed prose and poetry lessons. Perhaps, it becomes difficult for students to do away with their over reliance on the sub-skill of scanning.

Conclusions

The teacher noticed that the students admitted to the FYBA class are unable to understand inferential and global questions. One of the reasons for incomprehension of personal response questions could be the sub-questions. The paper setters should avoid sub-questions in question papers. Besides, they should take care while using comprehension questions given at the end of a unit in the prescribed coursebooks in the question papers. It can be concluded that FYBA students fail to understand questions in question papers as their reading comprehension skills are not developed as per the set objectives.

This experiment was carried out on a small sample size and was limited to the students who opted General English. It would be interesting to know if similar experiment is carried out on the students who have not opted General English. The inferences could be alarming.

Thus, despite changes in the syllabi, textbooks, approaches to teaching English and the nature of question papers, there is no noticeable improvement in the reading comprehension of the learners of English.

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Appendix

Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha's
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FYBA Optional English – Semester I

Text: *Initiations: Minor Literary Forms and Basics of Phonology* (2019)
Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, p. 24

Comprehension of Questions

Read the following questions on *The Romance of a Busy Broker* by O. Henry and tick (☑) only one correct answer to every question.

1. "The Secretary acted very strangely". Elaborate on the strange behaviour of the Secretary.

Here you have to

- () comment on the strange behaviour of the secretary
- () write more details of the strange behaviour of the secretary
- () note your observation on the strange behaviour of the secretary
- () Any other _____

2. What does the word *romance* mean? Would you call this story romantic? Why? Why not?

Here you have to write the meaning of word *romance* and write the reason for considering this story

- () romantic
- () unromantic
- () romantic or unromantic
- () Any other _____

3. Who is a workaholic? Is Mr. Maxwell absentminded and forgetful or simply impatient to work? How does the author create that impression?

Here you have to answer who is a workaholic and write about the author's method

- () of communicating if Mr. Maxwell is absentminded and forgetful or simply impatient to work
- () of creating an impression if Mr. Maxwell is absentminded, forgetful and a person impatient to work
- () of presenting / projecting Mr. Maxwell as absentminded, forgetful and a person impatient to work
- () Any other _____

4. Think of another title for this story and give a reason for your choice.

Here you have to suggest one more title for this story and write

- () an example to clarify your title
- () a reason for choosing the title
- () a reason to explain your title
- () Any other _____

5. The author describes Mr. Maxwell as a *machine* more than once. Is the comparison derogatory or complimentary? Discuss the ambivalence of this description with reference to Mr. Harvey Maxwell.

Match the words with their meanings.

	Words		Meanings	Answers
		a	praising remark	
1	derogatory	b	disapproving remark	1=
2	complimentary	c	uncertainty	2=
3	ambivalence	d	decisive remark	3=
		e	insulting remark	

6. Identify the type of sentences and tick (☑) the correct answers.

- i) The Secretary acted very strangely.
() Complex sentence
() Simple sentence
- ii) Elaborate on the strange behaviour of the Secretary.
() Declarative sentence
() Imperative sentence
- iii) Would you call this story romantic?
() Wh-question
() Yes-No type question
- iv) Think of another title for this story and give a reason for your choice.
() Compound sentence
() Complex sentence

Date:
student

Signature of the

(PRN:)

Storytelling as a Method to Improve Listening Skills among Indian Ninth-Grade Students from Karaikal, Puducherry - An Action Research

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Abstract

Listening is the most crucial communication ability that children develop in school and in their everyday life. Through storytelling, kids can learn to listen better. Students at a government high school in Karaikal, Puducherry, India, looked into how storytelling affects their listening ability. An experimental design of the study had 40 children aged 13 to 15 who were divided into experimental and control groups of 20 each. The experimental group of students was required to listen to storytelling that included images, visuals, and other interactive elements.

In contrast, the control group had to listen to articles and prose passages without visuals. This experimental investigation ran for 30 days, with daily classes lasting an hour. A quick evaluation process with ten questions of an objective nature would then wrap up each session.

Moreover, the answers were recorded for analysis. On the last day, each group's final analysis was done independently. The findings showed that the experimental group had much better listening and presentational skills than the other. According to the findings, children's listening skills can be improved through storytelling. The results demonstrate that storytelling provides engaging content, supports vocabulary growth, improves language learners' listening skills, familiarizes them with complex grammatical structures, and aids cultural understanding. Participants appreciated short stories and thought they might utilize them to develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities.

Keywords

Storytelling, speaking abilities, second language acquisition, and listening abilities.

Introduction

We receive information through our auditory senses and give it meaning when we listen. A child's capacity for listening is crucial to that child's capacity for reading (Jalongo, 2007). Given these factors, Brown (cited in Körolu, 2020) claimed that practical listening abilities are essential for a child to succeed in the classroom and to gain reading skills. Children who have mastered listening skills can better ponder their identity and talents. Children integrate new information faster when actively listening than when passively listening. According to studies, kids who learn to listen well have higher concentration and recall (Tramel, 2011). Because of their early growth and frequent exposure to listening, young children have the greatest need for listening skills (Roskos, Kathleen, Christie, & Richgels, 2003). When children communicate, they spend most of their time listening (Wolvin, Andrew, & Coakley, 2000; Gilbert, 2004). The development of children includes the acquisition of listening skills and those related to social, cognitive, and survival abilities. (Wolvin, Andrew, & Coakley, 2000). One of the most significant indicators of future academic performance is students' capacity to comprehend what they hear (Brigman, Lane, Switzer, Lane, & Lawrence, 1999). Children are more inclined to be capable of listening attentively if they listen to stories, as evidenced by (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004).

Observing teaching and learning activities in schools suggests that it needs to be given more attention, even though teaching kids to listen to one another has many benefits. The observations of Smith (2003) support the argument that, although being the most commonly utilized skill, listening is not often taught in the classroom. Due to the misconception that listening teaching consists solely of exposing students to the spoken word of the speaker, listening may have gone untaught or needed to be more adequately taught (Call, 1985). Though it might not seem like it initially, illustrations significantly impact how well youngsters listen. Several story-based listening resources foster listening comprehension and literacy for both first- and second-language learners/children. One of the best ways to exchange

thoughts and images has been through storytelling for generations (Mello, 2001). In traditional communities, families would read stories to young children, like grandparents, uncles, and aunts. The sharing of folklore is a very significant aspect of communal living, according to Omoleye (1987). Even though most of this information was not recorded, it was orally transferred across generations without losing its originality. Storytelling is undervalued in classrooms despite its significance for young children's education (Mello, 2001; Phillips, 2000).

Theorists' view on listening

According to Krashen (1985), people learn language by comprehending linguistic data. In other words, obtaining comprehensible input is a significant factor in language acquisition, and understanding input requires strong listening abilities. According to Piaget, between the years 0 and 2, newborns form their basic reflexes and learn language through hearing (Piaget, 1977). According to these views, children listen before speaking and speak after they have finished listening. They listen, then speak, and finally read. Writing comes after reading. This progression can be explained using Piaget's cognitive developmental model from 1977. Lundsteen (1979) asserts that listening is the earliest to develop among the rest of the language skills (Lundsteen, 1979). Just like they would when studying their first language, learners of other languages should listen carefully before speaking (Anderson & Lynch, 2003). It is critical to stress that listening cannot be classified as a passive skill (Anderson & Lynch, 2003; Lindsay & Knight, 2006). The listener uses language and nonlinguistic information to decode a message, comprehend a response, and respond through actions that make up an active skill in intercultural communication. According to Gulec and Durmuş (2015), listeners organize the information by fusing what they've heard with prior knowledge. In contrast to hearing, this is a passive process, listening (Kline, 1996).

Technological Support in Language Classes and Identification of Research Gaps

Furthermore, combining literary texts and handy modern technology in listening exercises might make them better. Literary writings, therefore, capture curiosity, arouse emotions, and pique the interest of language learners with concise stories. Listening to digital short tales also helps students enhance their aesthetic sense and capacity for original thought. Additionally,

the use of digital short stories can be used to motivate students to engage in activities and learn about various cultures through context. Thanks to technology, a wide range of literary stories can now be found and produced. Numerous studies have demonstrated the value of using computers and short stories in second-language instruction, but there is still much room for improvement. This research aims to study how vocabulary, listening, and speaking abilities might be improved in language schools through digital storytelling.

The significance of listening in a language classroom

According to Brown, as cited in EtinKörolu (2020), listening is the most prevalent activity pupils do in school (2020). Language instructors must therefore teach their students to listen well. Teaching listening skills in language classrooms is crucial since they are indispensable for developing other language abilities (Hasan, 2000; Rost, 2011; Wolvin, Andrew, & Coakley, 2000; Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2004). One illustration is that speaking and listening skills must be developed simultaneously if people converse face-to-face (Rost, 2011). Listening comprehension "provides the necessary conditions for language acquisition and the development of other language abilities," claims Hasan (2000).

According to findings from studies on language learners, students believe that one of the most challenging abilities to master is listening (Graham, 2006). Listening involves language awareness and background knowledge to interpret the input at a reasonable pace (Buck, 2001). Researchers have shown that several issues can arise with listening skills. When listening abilities are poor, comprehension issues are frequently observed. The process of listening involves many steps. The listener must be able to hear the words at the beginning. Finding the word pieces comes after identifying the sounds in a word. Thirdly, a word's meaning and sound must be related. The listener must retain each word's meaning in the target language to move on to the fourth phase. Then, the idea of all these phrases together must be understood by the listeners (Mendelsohn, 1994). According to Btisam Ali (2016), listening exercises' most challenging parts revolve around three factors. First, some language learners could find it challenging to understand speech with various accents in everyday situations. It is possible to misinterpret some sounds. Some language learners need help establishing

fundamental listening techniques and skills necessary for gathering knowledge to finish the tasks given to them. Finally, there may be a problem with hearing material based on a cultural background or using words that are difficult to understand. Additionally, during pauses, a person is processing their communication. During a speech, the audience member generates mental messages. False recognition memory, which improperly stores mental messages, is one of the listening skills' most crucial components (Rivers, 1983).

Review of Literature:

Despite the paucity of studies on the effects and applications of storytelling, particularly in developing listening skills, they can be helpful for the improvement of language skills (Cigerci& Gultekin, 2017). According to Cook's (2016) research, memory impairments are just as significant as a learner's proficiency with the target language because listening comprehension relies heavily on the ability to store and process information mentally. Second-language speakers have difficulty paying attention because the information is processed in their native language. Ofsted (2011) found that language learners frequently struggle with verbal segmentation, monitoring their understanding, recognizing foreknowledge in successive clauses, and integrating it with incoming knowledge during the utterance. According to research by Ofsted (2011), language teachers mostly use textbooks to source their listening exercises and other materials. While language teachers have recently employed online listening exercises, materials designed for teaching these skills will be less effective than these methods (Jones, 2013).

In Turkey, Yilmaz conducted research (2015) which was to study the role of short stories in activity-based English language teaching and learning. The study's conclusions demonstrated that employing digital short stories to help language learners' listening abilities can be very helpful. They also aid in developing language learners' reading, writing, and listening skills. As indicated in Koroglu (2020), Hassen conducted a similar investigation in 2016. His study looked into the possibility of podcasts improving EFL students' listening comprehension. To test the idea that podcasts would enhance EFL learners' listening comprehension, a questionnaire was distributed to fifty third-year students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria. The same university interviewed four of its English instructors. Podcasts have been shown to enhance the listening comprehension of EFL students.

Additionally, the study discovered that visual podcasts enhance listening abilities more than audio podcasts. The combination of verbal and visual cues boosted language learners' gist and contextual guessing skills. When audio podcasts and images are merged, students retain information more effectively.

Cigerci and Gultekin researched how listening skills are affected by digital short stories (2017). The study aimed to assess how digital storytelling affected Turkish fourth-graders listening skills (mother tongue). Both qualitative and quantitative evaluations were taken after the 8-week therapeutic process. The experimental and control groups' listening comprehension ratings were considerably different from one another.

The examination of the research data revealed that using digital short tales improved listening skills by making classrooms more motivating and engaging. The impact of digital stories on preschool kids' listening comprehension abilities in the context of foreign language learning was examined by Abidin, Ong, and Kim in 2011. After the trial, researchers saw how digital short stories affected the experimental group but not the control group (Abidin, Ong, & Kim, 2011). Verdugo & Belmonte (2007) conducted a second study on the influence of ICT-enhanced short stories on participants' comprehension of spoken English at the age of 6. The final tests revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. Regardless of age, digital short stories offer more realistic aspects of the target language to capture the interest of language learners. In light of this, multimedia technologies include both linguistics and paralinguistics, such as body language, mimicry, and gestures (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007).

Digital storytelling can help children enhance their listening skills, claims Jimmy's master's thesis from 2013. Participants in the study's treatment phase were shown one digital narrative weekly for eight weeks. Before watching digital short stories, participants took a pre-test using forty images from those stories. They were shown the same photographs again after the video to gauge their performance. Both vocal and written descriptions of the images were requested from the participants. Participants demonstrated enhanced listening skills and provided supportive comments to the study's administration—digital storytelling increases participants' motivation and imagination with the use of sound and pictures. (Cigerci & Gultekin, 2017).

When age was considered, the three-year-old students in Jimmy's study had shorter attention spans. However, the researcher asserted that the digital narrative kept the students interested.

The impacts of digital storytelling on developing listening skills were also studied by Tamjid & Hassanzadeh (2012). Forty female pupils, ages 11 to 14, participated in the study. Twenty students were divided into two groups: a control group (20 students) that received instruction in traditional listening materials and a test group (20 students) that received instruction in digital storytelling. The development of listening skills in both groups was evaluated. In the end, the experimental group outperformed the control group. Text, sounds, and images create a rich, exciting, and authentic learning environment for experimental participant groups. Students also have various choices for hearing, watching, and reading in the target language. According to SARIOBAN & KÜÜKOLU (2011), short stories are the most popular in language courses, and digital versions provide more useful learning chances.

Köröglu of Bayburt University in Turkey studied whether digital short stories may improve language learners' listening abilities using an action research study. Researchers examined future language teachers' feelings about using digital short stories in schools. This study examined whether digital short stories could aid English language learners in improving their listening abilities. According to study results, digital short stories are an efficient teaching tool that helps language learners learn complicated grammatical structures, expand their vocabulary, and become more accustomed to other cultures. Participants also found the digital short stories helpful for honing their listening abilities. (Koroglu, 2020).

Research Questions

The current study uses observations, post-class objective-type exams, and a final evaluation session to examine language learners' perceptions and improvements with this new trend of integrating digital storytelling in language classrooms for strengthening considerable language skills, i.e., listening. Our study's main objectives are these research questions;

1. Does storytelling influence the development of students listening and speaking skills?
2. How do students feel about using stories as speaking and listening drills?

Hypotheses of Research

According to the teacher's observations and evaluation of earlier classes, the ninth-grade students at the high school in Karaikal struggle with listening skills. Researchers have developed digital storytelling to help students improve their critical listening skills based on the importance of this discipline. Language fluency can be improved more effectively through digital storytelling. Investigating how digital storytelling affects students' capacity for critical listening is vital. If the results of this study were used, it would be simpler to decide whether teachers should use this platform.

The premise is as follows:

H1: Regular observations and the findings of follow-up assessments indicate that pupils frequently favor the usage of digital storytelling.

H2: This program aids high school ninth graders develop careful listening skills by enhancing the students' comprehension of stories and spoken responses.

The effects of storytelling in English classes in Puducherry, India

Design

This research was designed as a need-based action research to investigate the attitudes and routines of students studying English. In this study, pupils who participated in digital storytelling are contrasted with other groups who did not. The research examines how high school students in Karaikal, Puducherry region (Southern India), feel about using digital storytelling in English grammar lessons for young kids, how they engage with it, and how they improve.

Adopted Methodology

This is an investigation into action research. As stated by Cohen & Manion in Nunan (1990), action research can address issues, improve working conditions, or educate teachers on new techniques & methods. A more progressive and innovative system can also incorporate higher levels of change and innovation. This research aimed to make language learning for children engaging and rewarding by trimming language pedagogical approaches. (Nunan et al., 1990)

Participants

A random selection of Karaikal high school pupils was made. Forty students aged 13 to 15 participated in this study. The 20 participants in the experimental and control groups were assigned at random. We chose digital stories customized to the learner's age and interests for the experimental group of participants as opposed to non-fiction prose passages for the participants in the controlled group. Students in the controlled and experimental groups underwent periodic continuous cumulative assessments, were reviewed, and their results were combined. A variety of their behaviors, attitudes, and performances were observed and recorded as part of the analysis.

Samples used

Children's digital stories, prose sections, and biographies were the samples used in this study. The pupils in the experimental group viewed and heard digital stories on computers in their school's ICT lab. Additionally, the researcher reads the chosen passages to the control group while using the appropriate pauses, modulations, and intonations. Each session ended with data recording for both groups, and the study also included a post-test evaluation. The purpose of the study is to compare how well digital storytelling teaches language listening skills by asking both groups to complete an objective-type question paper.

Procedure

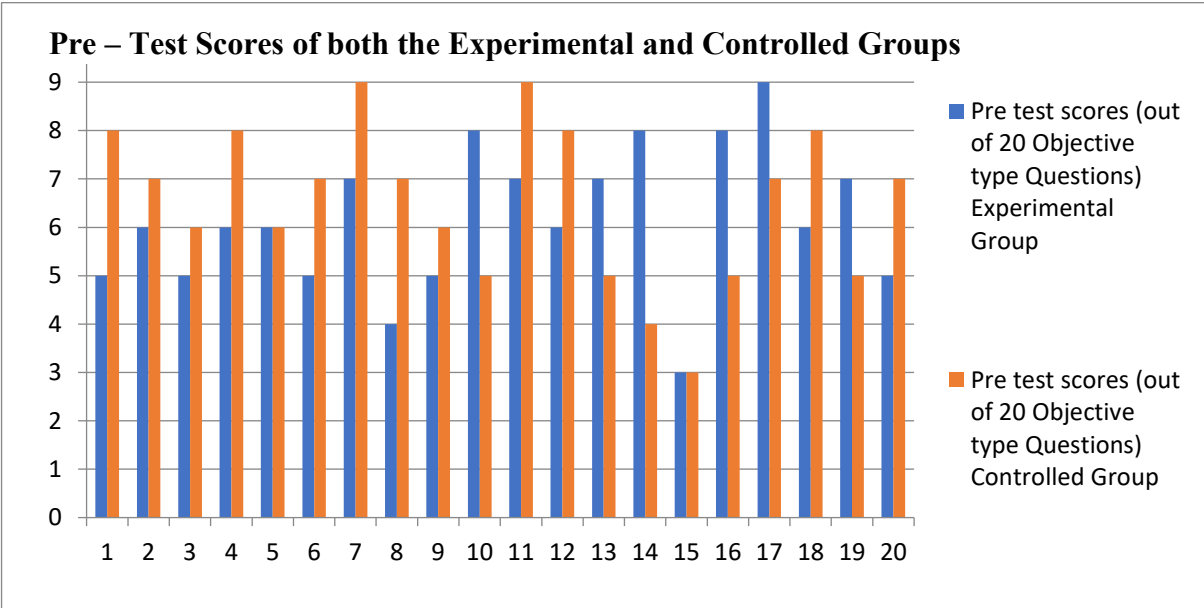
This study consisted of 30 working days of daily one-hour sessions. Each piece of prose or fiction, along with any accompanying exercises and evaluations, would be given a five-day window. The digital stories were shown to the experimental group's students. Final selections included six engaging tales by Lane Tales Ramsey's "The Envious Neighbor," Ruskin Bond's "I cannot climb trees anymore," Isaac Asimov's "The Fun they had," Mark Twain's "The Cat and the Painkiller," Bill Naughton's "The Seventeen Oranges," and Liam O'Flaherty's "His First Flight." The participants in the control group were also required to listen to prose excerpts about Srinivasa Ramanujam (his biography), Empowered Women navigating the World, Tech Bloomers, Sachin Tendulkar, Water- the elixir of Life, and A letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to his

daughter Indira. The TNSCERT Board Textbooks were used to identify these age-appropriate stories and prose pieces for their respective classes.

The experimental and control groups received one tale and one prose work each week for study and exercises linked to it. Each class's ongoing evaluations of listening exercises were videotaped for research. Speaking and writing can be used to assess listening; thus, tests were administered and recorded for analysis.

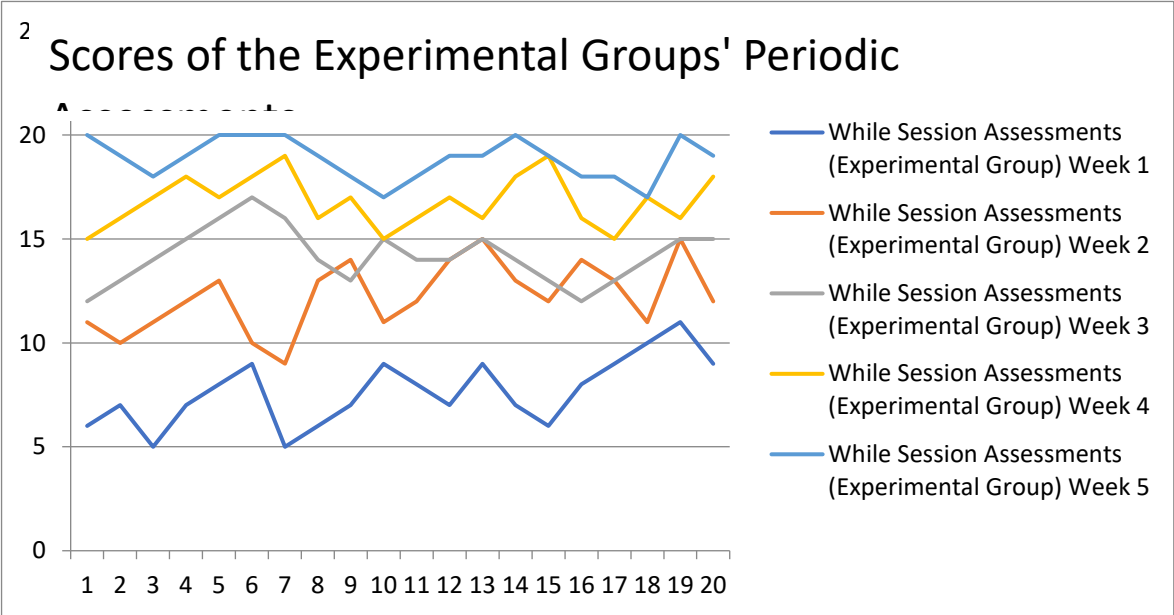
Findings and Analysis

All of the participants' information was collected. The pre-test data, session assessment data for experimental and controlled groups, and post-test data were previously recorded. All the recorded data was tabulated for study and then transformed into a graphical representation for analysis. To assess how successful the digital storytelling process is, the following graphs support it to a great extent.



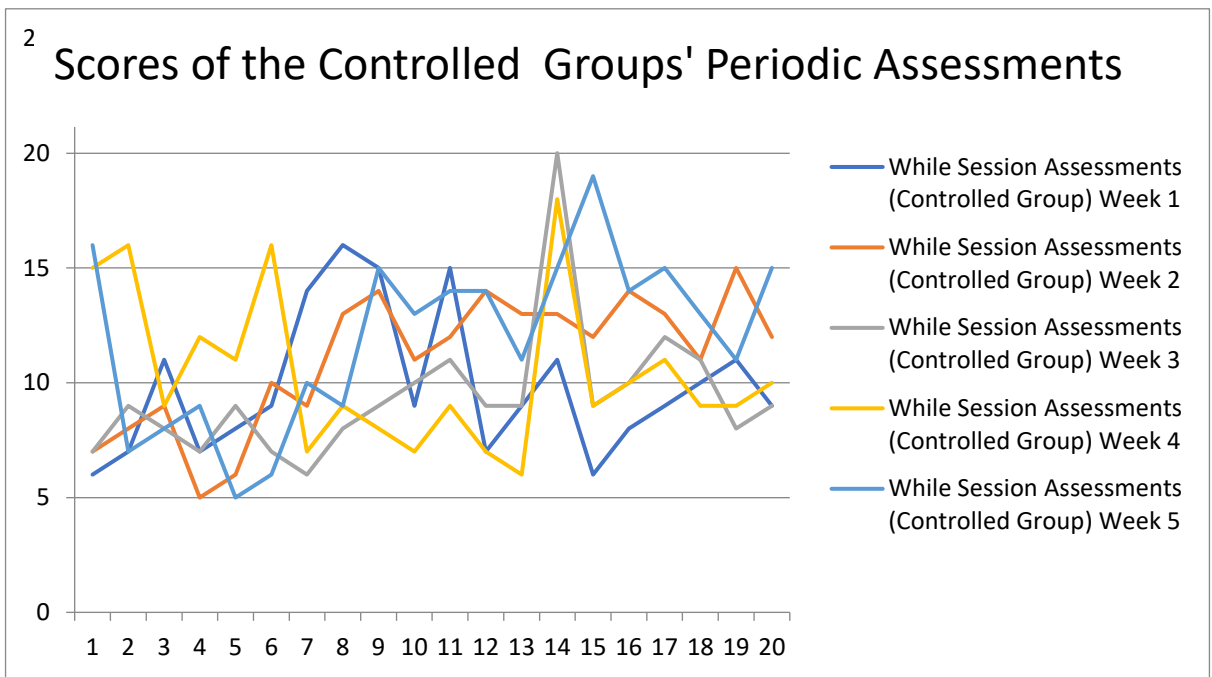
Graph 1: Pre-test scores of both the Experiment and Controlled groups. The results of the experimental and controlled groups' students' diagnostic tests are displayed in Graph 1 together. Their results were graphically depicted and tallied. This demonstrates no discernible difference in performance between the experimental and control groups.

Following this diagnostic exam, the 30-day introductory period of experimental teaching began. Both groups were divided into separate courses and received instruction at various times. Every listening session ended with an evaluation procedure recorded for analysis.



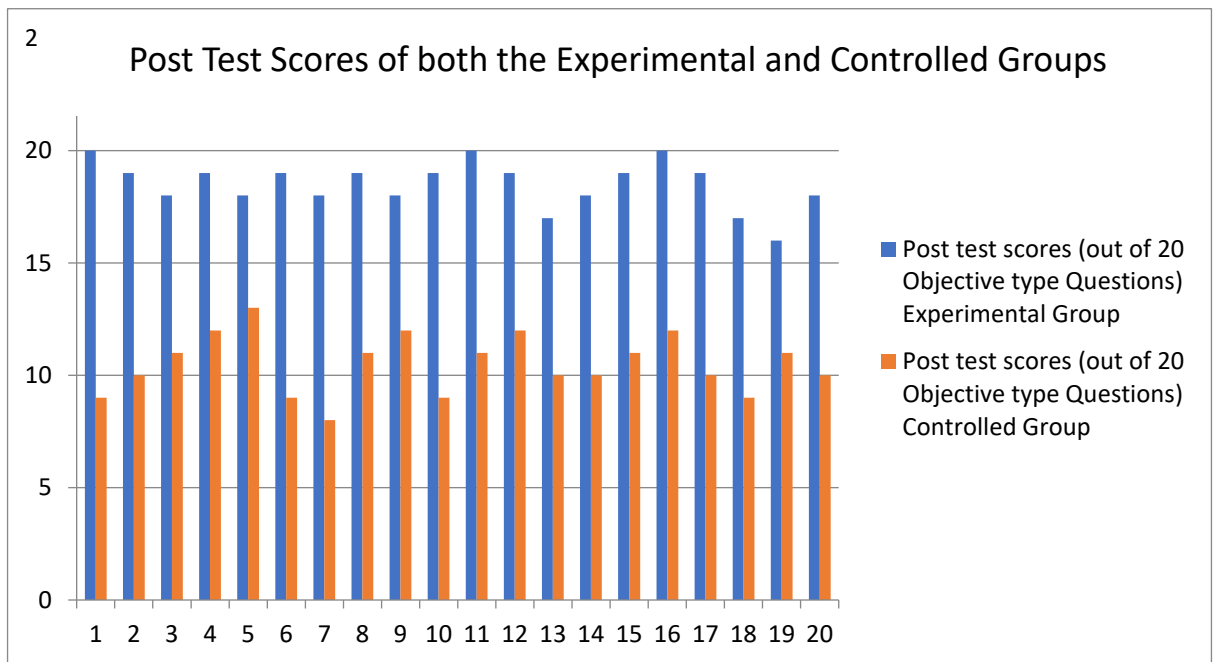
Graph 2: Scores of the periodic assessment of the Experimental group of participants.

The experimental group of participants experienced 30 days of digital storytelling lessons in an experimental English classroom. Each session ended with performance and improvement evaluation activities, and the results were recorded. Graph 2 displays the experimental group participants' weekly progress and performance. This graph shows pupils' performance improved from day 1 through day 30. They demonstrate a noticeable improvement in their performance each week. This demonstrates the digital storytelling approach's success in language skills instruction.



Graph 3: Scores of the periodic assessment of the Controlled group of participants.

In an entirely distinct experimental English classroom setting, the control group of participants was also required to attend lessons for 30 days. Prose-based lessons for listening exercises were offered to pupils along with other educational activities in this setting. Every session concluded with a performance and improvement review, the results of which were documented. The weekly development and performance of the controlled group are shown in graph 3. This graph demonstrates how student performance stayed relatively high from day 1 to day 30. Throughout the study period, they always show a noticeable increase in their performance. This exemplifies the effectiveness of the digital storytelling method for teaching language skills.



Graph 4: Display of Post Test Scores of Experimental and Controlled groups of students.

A post-test using an identical question paper was given to all participants on the final day of the 30-day language course to evaluate their literary ability. The four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—were all covered in this test. The results were analyzed using the scores of all 40 participants. The outcome demonstrates that the experimental group of students outperformed the controlled group of students on the post-test. The data in graph 4 provide support for the study's findings. This study makes it clear that an experimental digital storytelling approach for teaching language skills was practical and significantly increased the performance of the experimental group of students. As a result, we can say that the methodology is a success.

Results and Discussion

According to the findings, the treatment had a significant main effect on the pupils' listening abilities. When listening scores for prose listening and digital storytelling were compared, the digital storytelling groups scored higher. The experimental group's students outperformed the control group in

performance. The pupils' listening abilities were considerably enhanced via digital storytelling. Comparatively speaking, it was more efficient than reading or listening to prose. Digital storytelling enhances children's listening abilities, which lends credence to the claim. (Nicolas, 2007; Isbel et al., 2004) The students in the experimental group (those who participated in digital storytelling) did better than those in the control group (those who listened to prose passages), who could not envision or participate as well. It supports Jalongo's (2008) claim that visuals and activities should accompany listening activities and that youngsters frequently prefer visual and kinesthetic techniques. As a result, the kids' listening and attention span skills significantly improved. Without images, it can be challenging to hold young children's attention and keep them involved in activities because, as explained by Shin (2006), they are fickle and have much physical energy.

Conclusion

Participants in the current study's treatment phase were instructed to value digital short stories by combining a bottom-up and top-down perspective. The creators of new educational materials for these techniques choose a few online short stories. Digital short stories can assist language learners in increasing their listening comprehension, fostering a love of reading, and broadening their cultural awareness. There are several purposes for digital short stories. This program teaches students how to listen by providing relevant courses and content. Gjuzeleva (2015) contends that an expert is optional when employing literature in language schools.

The reading, telling, or translating of a literary work is not intended to be done by one person alone. Language classroom interaction and communication have grown in recent years. Contrary to common assumption, these vibrant texts and their valuable content should serve as a fantastic resource to help students enhance their cultural awareness and knowledge and their ability to communicate in a foreign language (Gjuzeleva, 2015).

In summary, digital short stories should help language learners develop their listening, communication, and cultural awareness skills. This study clarifies how to use digital short stories for this objective by using them to build listening skills using the fundamental methods in this area. Digitalized methodologies can be used in other disciplines besides short story study.

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Error Analysis: L1 Impact and Syllabi Assessment

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Abstract

Analysis and treatment of errors in learners' developmental progress has a long tradition in ESL and EFL language and teaching practice. However, errors are sometimes disregarded and overlooked. In this paper we aim at exploring the importance of learners' errors as indicators of failure and success of teaching-learning specific strategies. By looking at the error in this perspective, we draw conclusions that would enable us to formulate ideas to assess the impact of learners' L1, the learning process of the targeted L2 and the syllabi itself. To do that, we propose a corpus study in which we analysed 128 written samples of Spanish L1 learners of English (Common European Framework Reference for Languages, i.e., CEFR levels B2 and C1). Some of the most significant findings elicit the negative impact that L1 has and how it hinders the adhesion of learners to the descriptors of the targeted level and, thus, the necessity to re-evaluate and re-formulate the syllabi.

Keywords

Error Analysis, Discourse Analysis, English as a Second Language, Writing, Competence.

General Introduction of the Study.

It is often stated that the teaching-learning process of languages is unlike any other teaching-learning processes and must be looked at with special attention and care. On many occasions this is attributed to the learning of second or further languages as those learning already know the rules and basic principles of, at least, one language. Hence, it is essential to take into consideration that students and learners bring with them their already existing languages (L1) into the classroom and cannot separate the learning

process of a second language from the impact of their already existing language.

As a result of the previous understanding, nowadays, instructors and experts are constantly looking for methods and techniques that enable the learners to produce language output without errors, or with least possible amount of L1 interference. Hence, it is essential to consider and ponder the importance of Error Analysis in assessing not only the teaching-learning process, but also the syllabi. Error Analysis can help understand the effectiveness of the syllabi and design strategies to reach the desired objective (Murad, 2018).

Modern Linguistics Theory does not consider errors as synonyms of mistakes, which occur when a learner fails to produce an acceptable output in the target language due to a lack of attention or temporary lapsus, confusions or slips (Novianti, 2013). In fact, in contemporary L2 Studies and Contrastive Linguistics errors are not treated only as deviations from accepted rules in any given language but as a source of important information. The error can reveal what is general and what is language specific about the second language learning process, and it is therefore important both for the understanding of language in general and for the study of the individual languages compared (Hofland & Johansson, 1994).

One of the many fundamental contributions of Error Analysis and Error Treatment to the field of Applied Linguistics is the introduction of the concept of Interlanguage (a hypothesis proved to be very useful and interesting) (Selinker, 1972; Corder, 1982). The introduction of Interlanguage in the L2 Studies helped understand the various natures of the errors committed by the language learners. Interlanguage seeks understanding of why the errors were committed (the nature of the error). Interlanguage can be defined as the combinatory intermediate system of L1 and L2 features, rules and language assumptions produced in the learners' mind (Brown, 1994) and is one of the strongest tools to have been derived from the Error Analysis approach (Montrul, 2014) because it can help understand the teaching-learning process in detail as it helps analyse why the errors were produced (transfer, overgeneralisations, misconceptions, etc).

Errors and their nature, then, constitute a broad area of investigation in Second Language Learning (in this study English as L2) and their analysis should be linked to the assessing of the process (Corder, 1967; Selinker, 2008) and syllabi (Candlin, 1984; Rao, 2018).

In the light of what has already been said, the aim of this paper is to analyse the possibilities that Error Analysis and its various applied perspectives offer to assess the impact of the L1 in the teaching and learning of English as a second language and, also, to offer didactic approaches to overcome L1 transfer and to assess the ESL syllabi. To reach the objective, in the first place, it is essential to explore the status of the discipline. Then, we will present the results of the analysis of 128 written outputs (corpus of this study) of learners of different English levels (CEFR B2 to C1) and question both the nature of errors produced and how those could be overcome in future teaching scenarios.

Literature Review

Error Analysis

Error Analysis was outlined and introduced in modern linguistics by Corder in 1967 with the publication of his essay *The Significance of Learners' Errors*. Since the beginning of the discipline, it has been linked to L2 learning studies. Moreover, some notable contemporary linguists insist Corder's vision of the error as an indicator of the learning language process (as the Interlanguage itself) was quite a silent revolution that changed the focus of the disciplines of Applied Linguistics and L2 Studies (Myles, 2010).

Error Analysis focuses on, precisely, the attentive and close analysis of errors produced during the developmental process of learning a second language (Richard, 2002). This discipline and its many approaches to the various natures of the errors have produced many interesting discussions within Linguistics. However, in this paper we will focus on what has been defined as the L2 Educational Perspective of the Error Analysis - or the role of errors in learning a second language (Hendrickson, 1987: 357).

One of the many essential outcomes of Error Analysis and Interlanguage perspectives of Second Language Learning and Acquisition perspectives (SLL & SAL) is the identification of the various natures of the errors committed by learners in their developmental process. As pointed out by Richards (1971),

these are: (i) Language transfer or interferences of the learners' mother/native tongue, (ii) overgeneralisations of restrictive rules and (iii) misconceptions or false misconceptions of rules of the targeted language. Error, thus, offer a valuable insight to the teaching-learning process that should be accounted in the design of effective syllabi and courses (Khansir, 2008).

Interlanguage hypothesis

Another unarguably substantial contribution to L2 Studies was the introduction of one of the major concepts of the discipline: the Interlanguage. Larry Selinker coined the term in 1972 and defined it as: «a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a target language (TL) norm» (Selinker, 1972; 209). Selinker's definition of Interlanguage was paraphrased by Tarone (2006) incising in the fact that both systems (L1 and L2) seem to be separated yet intertwined as it is viewed as an alternative system to both the native language and the targeted one but linked by rules and grey areas and connected by the approximation of the learners to the targeted language by making mistakes and errors, predominantly due to interferences of the L1.

Murad (2018) states that Interlanguage has much benefitted from the Error Analysis and Error Treatment theoretical backgrounds and links both approaches (second language learning and L2 analysis) to Chomsky's concepts of performance and competence: «Competence is the knowledge of language or an idealized capacity that is located as a psychological or mental property or function, while performance is the errors and false made during utterances or it is the actual utterances» (HajjAkaru& Isa, 2019: 52).

Hence, the main difference between Error Analysis and Interlanguage approaches is that Interlanguage sees the targeted language (L2) as an independent system (it is neither solely based on L1 nor on L2) without denying the developmental interferences produced by the learners' native language (Lennon, 2008).

In more recent studies (Adjémian, 1976; Tarone, 1994 & 2006; Yunus, 2021), Interlanguage has seen fundamental variations to its first definition by

Selinker in 1972. Nowadays Interlanguage is not considered to be an unnatural language produce, quite the opposite, it has been suggested that it should be studied and analysed as a natural language to be completely understood (Adjémian, 1976; Yunus 2021).

Interlanguage phenomena and its learning implications

It is in Selinker (1972) and McLaughlin (1987) that we can learn the main processes that constitute the core phenomena of Interlanguage: language transfer (interferences of the L1), overgeneralization of rules (rules applied incorrectly), fossilisation (errors that do not disappear after effective treatment), and training and learning communicational strategies (enabling the learners to apply knowledge when effectively needed). Although all the phenomena have a clear impact in the learning of a second language, language transfer is the most impactful concept to outline the study presented here. Language transfer has a double nature as pointed out by Arabski (2006), as it can (i) refer to a psychological process which means that learners past behaviours, uncontrolled and subconsciously, determine new responses in the targeted language or (ii) to the process of actively learning a language whereby the learners carry over what they already know about their L1 into the performance of the L2.

The second vision is strongly related to Selinker's (1972) definition as in his definition he understood that language transfer indicates and demonstrates that the Interlanguage rules are based on a combinatory system which links L1 competence and L2 performance. Similarly, other researchers (Ellis, 1997; Corder 1993) defined Language Transfer as a process in which the performance of the L2 is influenced by the mother tongue of the learners. Corder (1993) accentuates this vision and states that it is more likely to be present in the early stages of the learning process: «more incorrect mother-tongue-like features in the learner's performance in the earlier stages than in the later stages» (Corder, 1993: 23).

A very wide-spread categorisation of Language Transfer is that of Positive LT vs Negative LT. It has been much debated in the field of Applied Linguistics; however, it was clearly stated by Nemser (1971) that Positive Transfer facilitates the learning process and helps the learner produce more natural and realistic outputs of the target language and, on the contrary,

Negative Transfer hinders the process and results in the learners committing of errors.

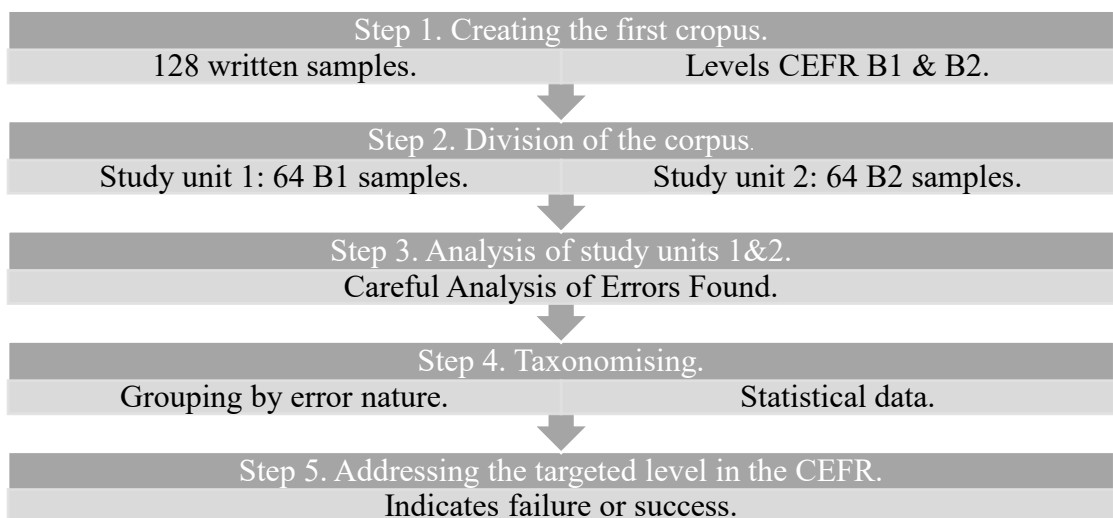
Methodology of the study: a deviation from Corpus Linguistics.

The main objective of this paper is to explore the possibilities that Error Analysis (following Error Treatment in Corder 1967 & 1993) and Interlanguage Core Phenomena (Selinker, 1972; Ellis 1997) perspectives offer in assessing the impact of the Spanish L1 Negative Transfer in the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Also, in this paper we aim at offering some didactic approaches to overcome Spanish L1 negative transfer (NT), which eventually can help assess the ESL syllabi.

To reach that objective we present the results of the analysis of the most frequent errors and their nature found in 128 written outputs (or corpus of this study) of learners of levels ranging from CEFR B2 to C1. By doing that, we aim at obtaining a methodology that could be transferred to other similar studies and to the reality of everyday teaching in the classroom of ESL. Thus, finding this transferrable methodology can contribute to a better feedback process by which we could enhance the writing competence of learners of ESL and enable them to overcome the impact of L1 NT (Weir, 2005: 45).

This method consists of the following: Analysis and discussion of the error; and feedback to the learners. It can be summarised as follows:

Image 1. Methodology of the study.



Note: Original list of processes that compound the methodology employed in this study.

Discussion and analysis of the results.

Errors in the CEFL B2 level:

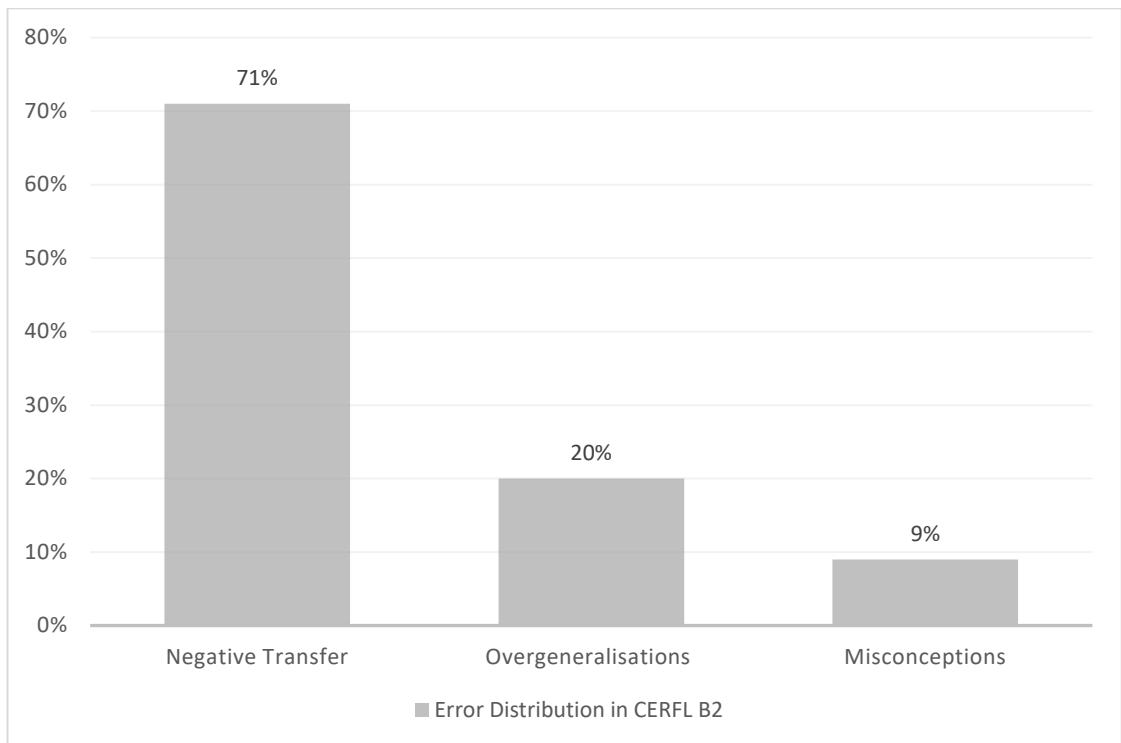
As the learning of a second language progresses to this level, the learners enter what the CEFR considers as an Independent User (they can understand and be understood by native speakers without difficulties). To be independent, learners need to be intelligible and produce more realistic outputs (Saito, S. Webb, et al. 2016). To be able to produce more realistic outputs they need a wider range of options, strategies, processes, and routines (Hakim & Hakim, 2018) which according to some researchers (Wegner, Minniaert & Strehlke, 2013; Yunus, 2021) must be found in the context where the learning of a second language takes place (in this case, the classroom of ESL). Learners, hence, require efficient strategies to overcome errors and to prevent the fossilisation of misconceptions, which hinders the process of L2 learning.

The learners also need that the teaching strategies are systematised and designed specifically to help them overcome their difficulties during the teaching-learning process (Sani & Ismail, 2021).

In the case presented here we can see that B2 learners continue to show a great difficulty in overcoming the impact of language transfer, which continues to constitute the greatest source of errors. For this reason, it is essential that, to overcome that impact, the errors are elicited, analysed, confronted, and included as a vital part of the syllabus. Since negative transfer constitutes the greatest source of errors, it must be taken into consideration by teachers and instructors in the syllabi design and can be an indicator of success and failure of the mentioned teaching-learning strategies (Sani & Ismail, 2021).

However, we can also see that the learners do show a better command of rules and are more aware of limitations and restrictions in the usage of certain grammar and vocabulary units as overgeneralisation (of rules and uses) and misconceptions (in rules and uses) tend to be more infrequent in the written outputs. This is shown in graph 2:

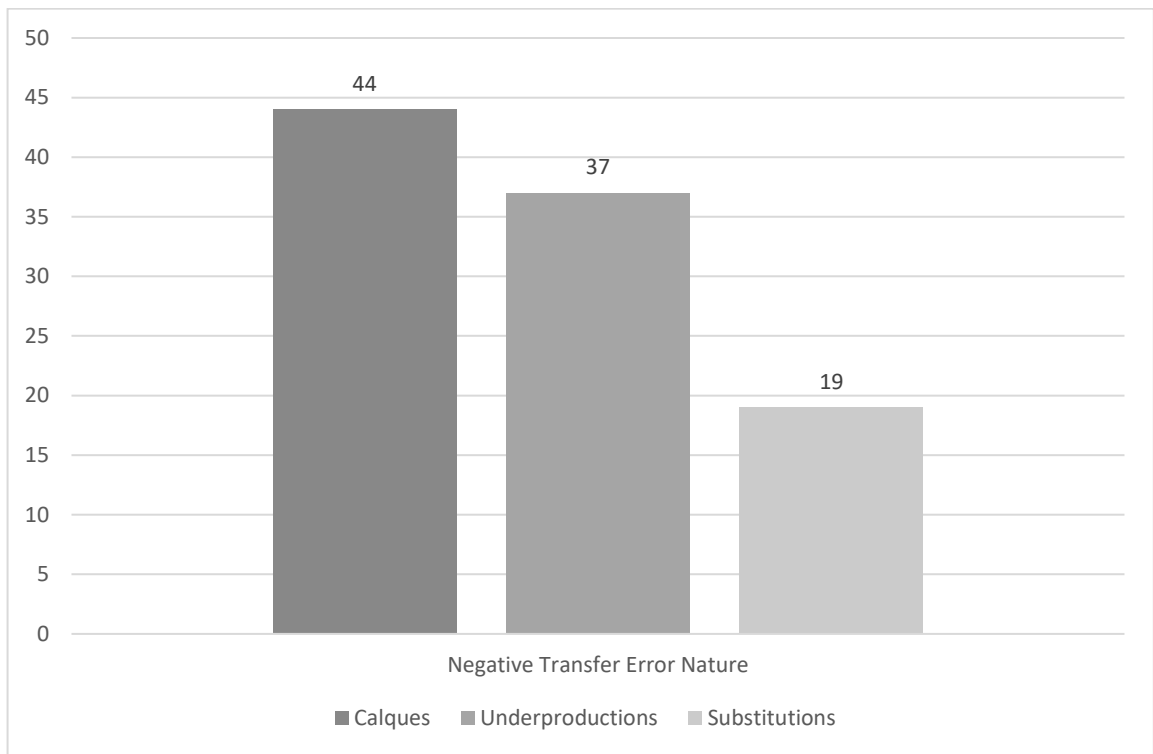
Graph1. *Natures of the errors in the level B2.*



Note: This original graph elicits the different natures of the common errors in the CEFR B2.

In the following graph (graph 2) we present the most significant types of Negative Transfer identified in the written samples analysed. We have structured the information regarding negative transfer errors around three main concepts: (i) underproductions or avoiding complex structures, (ii) calques errors that mirror the structure of the learners' L1 and (iii) substitutions uses of L1 in L2 productions (following Celaya, 1992; Oldin, 1993; Cenoz, 2001; Visen, 2017; Rodríguez & Knospe, 2019).

Graph2. *Impact of the Negative L1 Transfer in the B2 level.*



Note: This original graph shows the distribution of Negative Transfer natures in the samples analysed.

Errors in the C1 level:

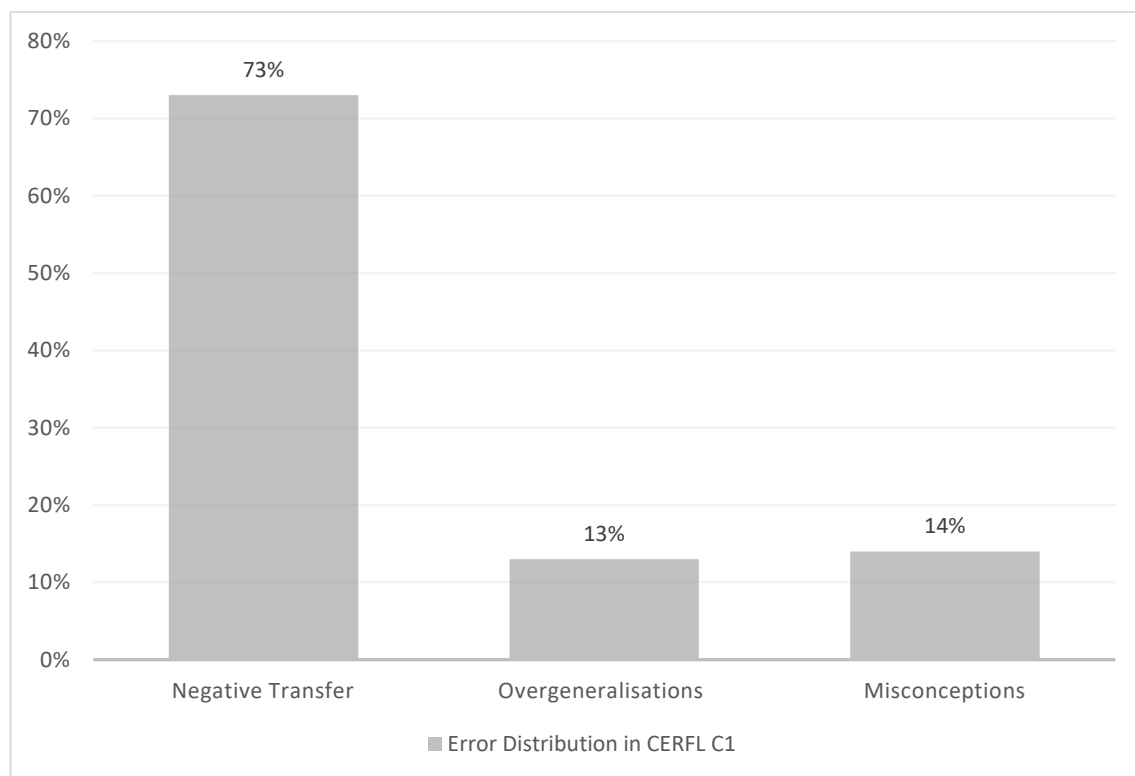
Learners of the C1 level are usually regarded as advanced learners of any given language (ESL in this case). These learners should be able to understand mostly any text, independent of its length or difficulty; they must show capacity to express themselves fluently and spontaneously; learners can also use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional reasons and they must be able to produce natural-like texts: organised, structured and coherent.

If we confront the CEFR description above to the data shown in the chart below (graph 3), we can understand that: (i) although the class-oriented linguistics features do enable a better communication and better adequation to the descriptors of the level in the CEFR, (ii) the impact of negative transfer hinders the performance of these learners and (iii) prevents them from producing totally comprehensible outputs (in this case written outputs).

Thus, the insertion of strategies to overcome the impact of language transfer continues to be an essential necessity in the ESL syllabi if those were to be completely successful and enable learners to adequate their outputs to the descriptors of the CEFR and avoid some key factors in the teaching and learning of a second language: frustration and burn-out syndrome (Nayernia, 2019; Goker, 2021).

The nature of the errors found in the presented analysis can be seen in the following graph (graph 3):

Graph3. *Natures of the errors in the level C1.*

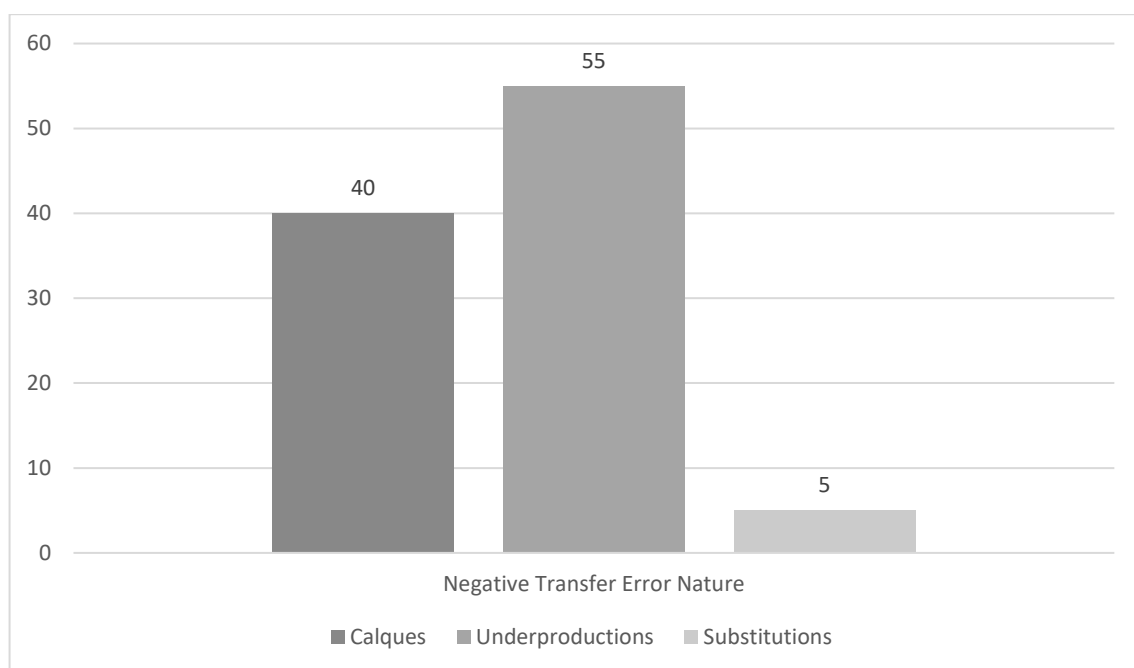


Note: This original graph shows the most prevalent natures of CEFR C1 common errors.

As we already did in the sub-section dedicated to discussing errors in the level CEFR B1, in the following graph (graph 4) we present the statistical data regarding the various natures and typologies of Negative Language

Transfer in the level here analysed (CEFR B2). When we confront the findings in both groups, the most significant data is revealed by the exponential growth of the overproductions. This situation indicates that learners at this stage of their learning process do not produce and do not target complex structures because those may be quite different from the mirroring structure in their native languages. This situation should be carefully analysed in future studies and if confirmed via a second contrastive analysis, measures should be taken to ensure a teaching-learning process free of underproductive hindrances.

Graph 4. *Impact of the Negative L1 Transfer in the C1 level.*



Note. This original graph presents the different types of Negative Language Transfer found in the CEFR B2 samples analysed.

Conclusions.

One of the most significant findings that this study reveals is the need to include and address the ever-present reality of the L1 in the teaching-learning process of English as a Second and Foreign Language. The native tongues have an impact in the learning of second languages that hinders and hinders the process, especially towards the most advanced levels (i.e., C1

in this study). Based on the statistical data presented, it is evident that language transfer hinders the progression of the teaching-learning process as it constitutes the greatest source of errors in all the written sample outputs analysed. In other words, the interferences with their L1 (Spanish in this case) hinders a total adequation to the descriptors of the CEFR and, therefore, serves as an indicator of failure (and success) of the ESL syllabi and the teaching strategies and methodologies used during the course and the lessons.

Prior research work has emphasised the necessity of creating effective and efficient teaching and learning process, methodologies, and routines to enable a successful learning process (Wegner, Minniaert & Strehlke, 2013; Yunus, 2021). However, in this study we want to emphasise that Negative Language Transfer should be taken into consideration in the ESL syllabi by teachers and instructors in order to enable the learners to fully adequate to descriptors of the various levels and ensure success in the ESL learning and teaching. This study suggests a possible method to do it:

1. Step 1: Teachers and learners must perform an analysis of the frequent and common errors; keeping a record of the most frequently repeated errors and revising them in class and at home can be very beneficial. An error list and an error solution list can help prevent error fossilisation.
2. Step 2: Teachers need to create solutions and materials to meet the learners needs. This should be done by trying to reconstruct the ineffective output into a successful one and, also, by reinforcing the broken language rules. This objective can be met via Contrastive Analysis as it effectively enables the teachers presenting the reality in the students' or learners' L1 in opposition to the targeted language.
3. Step 3: Errors should be taken into consideration seriously and teachers should make them part of their syllabi design; this should enable the learners to overcome them and prevent error fossilisation. By doing this, teachers can assess and reassess their production and work, as it will show the reality of the teaching-learning process in an objective way.

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The Most Effective Test Formats for Activating Students' Vocabulary

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Abstract

Numerous studies have demonstrated a connection between a student's language proficiency and the number of words they know in a foreign language. Therefore, teachers would be able to estimate their students' overall proficiency in the foreign language by knowing the number of words that their pupils are familiar with. The purpose of this study was to find out why we should test vocabulary of the learners, the effectiveness of testing and to recommend the best time for testing.

For the purpose of the current study, 15 participants of the Grade 7 at the secondary school № 54 in Davlatobod district, Namangan participated in the study and were asked to take 3 vocabulary tests at different times. During the process observational data was collected from other English teachers. Some of the assessment mechanisms and creative ways of testing vocabulary were used to incorporate some creative options to evaluate student performance. The results suggested that while evaluating vocabulary knowledge, testers should take test format into account. They should also employ a variety of test kinds. C-test was applied to evaluate and develop the vocabulary skills of pupils.

Keywords

Teaching, vocabulary, testing, assessment, C-test

Introduction

Why test anything? Without testing there is no reliable means of knowing how effective a teaching sequence has been. Testing provides a form of feedback both for learners and teachers. Moreover testing has useful

backwash effect: if learners know they are going to be tested on their vocabulary learning, they may take vocabulary learning more seriously.

It may appear at first look that evaluating a second language learner's vocabulary knowledge is both important and comprehensible. It is important because words serve as the fundamental units of meaning from which larger language structures like sentences, paragraphs, and entire texts are constructed. For native speakers, vocabulary knowledge continues to naturally expand in adulthood in response to new experiences, inventions, concepts, social trends, and learning opportunities, even if the most rapid growth happens in childhood. On the other hand, learning new words is usually a more demanding and deliberate process for learners. Learners are aware of limitations in their second language (or L₂) word knowledge even at an advanced level. Lexical gaps affect them, i.e., they read words that they don't fully grasp or can't fully express in their second language as they could in their first (or L₁).

Here are my research questions which should be answered at the process of the project.

1. What to test in assessing vocabulary of learners?
2. How do test formats affect to assess vocabulary knowledge of students effectively?

When compared to other language skills and components, L₂ vocabulary assessment poses a challenging task for language teachers due to several reasons (Shen, 2003). One is that the form, technique, or task of assessment used in an assessment practice can have a positive or negative impact on a learner's performance. Another reason is that preparing items suitable for different lexical assessment formats requires knowledge and experience, as each has some strengths and weaknesses. One of the major issues for learners regarding L₂ vocabulary is producing the words in addition to recognizing it (qt. in FeritKilickaya (43)3.2019,) (McCarthy, O'Keeffe, & Walsh, 2010). While recognizing words includes differentiating words from others and recalling the meaning, producing the words might pose serious issues since it includes not only forming and writing words but also recalling the meaning. In order to overcome these issues, in teacher education programs and in-service

language programs, teachers are presented, taught and asked to practice several formats or techniques to assess vocabulary receptively and productively (Ur, 2012). Moreover, in-service training programs also include these formats or techniques to keep the in-service teachers up to date with vocabulary assessment. Of these, multiple-choice (MC), matching, gap-fill and word formation (WF) formats (Heaton, 1990; Hughes, 2003; Brown, 2005; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Bailey & Curtis, 2015) are among the most commonly used items in the language classrooms, in the nation-wide and worldwide conducted exams such as Cambridge English: First (FCE).

Methodology

The survey consisted of 6 multiple-choice questions measured on percentage. The goal was to collect survey responses from other English teachers (respondents) in order to find out better vocabulary test format for assessing learners' vocabulary. Participants were given one week to fill in the survey anonymously in order to apply the questions to the lessons and then give their answer. In total, 20 respondents responded. According to the survey among respondents these results have come out.

50% (10) respondents play word games to develop their learners vocabulary while 15% (3) use flashcards and 35% (7) practice using new words in conversation.

50% (10) respondents consider that it is important to measure how many words students know while 10% (2) think that it is not important at all. Only 40% (8) respondents suggest that it can be assessed with reading comprehension.

While choosing test formats which are effective, 5% (1) respondents prefer defining the word in multiple choice, 30% (6) use yes no tests, 5% (1) points identify synonym or antonym, 60% (12) a,b,c. 60% (12) respondents take into account the age of learners when they choose vocabulary test format. 35% (7) suggest that the age doesn't matter, the level is important, 5% (1) respondents have no idea.

Only 10% (2) of respondents use C-test extensively, 90% (18) respondents know what C-test is. 10% (2) respondents suggest that reading

and writing vocabulary are essential while other 20% (4) prefer listening and speaking vocabulary .70% (14) respondents consider both a and b. Based on the survey it was realized that there is a need for deeper knowledge about assessing the vocabulary of learners.

When the vocabulary is assessed the following can be tested:

- the word's form-both spoken and written
- the words's meaning (or meanings)
- any connotations the word might have
- whether the word is specific to a certain register or style
- the word's grammatical characteristics-e.g. part of speech
- the word's common collocations
- the word's derivations
- the word's relative frequency

Choosing appropriate test format depends on what exactly is going to be tested and what the purpose is. Whether to test with or without a context, or to test for recognition or for production, are issues that are best resolved by taking into account the purpose of the test and also its likely effect on teaching. Scott Thornbury(2002) suggests that if the purpose of the test is to predict the learner's reading ability, for example, then a receptive test will be sufficient. But it should also be a contextualised text, because reading involves using context clues to help work out word meaning. A de-contextualized word test might not be a valid test of reading ability. Moreover , it has been argued that de-contextualized tests encourage learners simply to learn long list of words. On the plus side, de-contextualized tests are usually easy to compile and mark, so they are therefore very practicable.

According to Scott Thornbury (2002) there is bound to be a trade-off between issues of validity (does the test assess what I want it to assess?), of practicality (is it easy to administer?), and of backwash (will the test have positive effect on learning?). Also at issue is the question of the test's reliability. There are some types of vocabulary tests that are widely used by teachers. Multiple choice tests are one of the most popular ways of testing. They are easy to score and to design. But this kind of tests have been criticised because learners may choose the answer by a process of elimination, which hardly constitutes 'knowing' right answer or depending on the number of possible answers there is a one-in-three chance of getting the answer right.

Another popular way of testing of vocabulary is yes/no test formats. Yes/No tests have been frequently reported in a number of studies as being practical, reliable and valid measures of the breadth of vocabulary knowledge (e.g. Harrington and Carey 2009; Milton 2009; Mochida and Harrington 2006; read 2000). The usefulness of these measures is that they allow for a large sampling of test items, and are easy and economical to administer and score (Masrai and Milton 2017).

Recent data, however, shows doubts on the Yes/No vocabulary test's effectiveness as a measure of receptive vocabulary size. Some researches have showed the drawbacks of this test format.

The Yes/No format itself is not clearly defined. The name suggests a format with an explicit distinction in choosing Yes or No, as was the case in Meara (1992). The test does not perform well with low-level learners, who respond unpredictably to the pseudowords. Certain learners obtain very low scores as a result of their overwillingness to claim knowledge of the pseudowords (Meara, 1996). The other test format of evaluating the vocabulary is C-test. The C-test is an adaptation of the cloze technique that has been developed by Christine Klein-Braley and Ulrich Raatz in 1982. Weir (1990:49) claims that C-test is based on the same theoretical rationale as cloze. In C-test, "the rule of two" has been applied: the second half of every second word has been deleted, beginning with the second word of the second sentence; the first and last sentences are left intact.

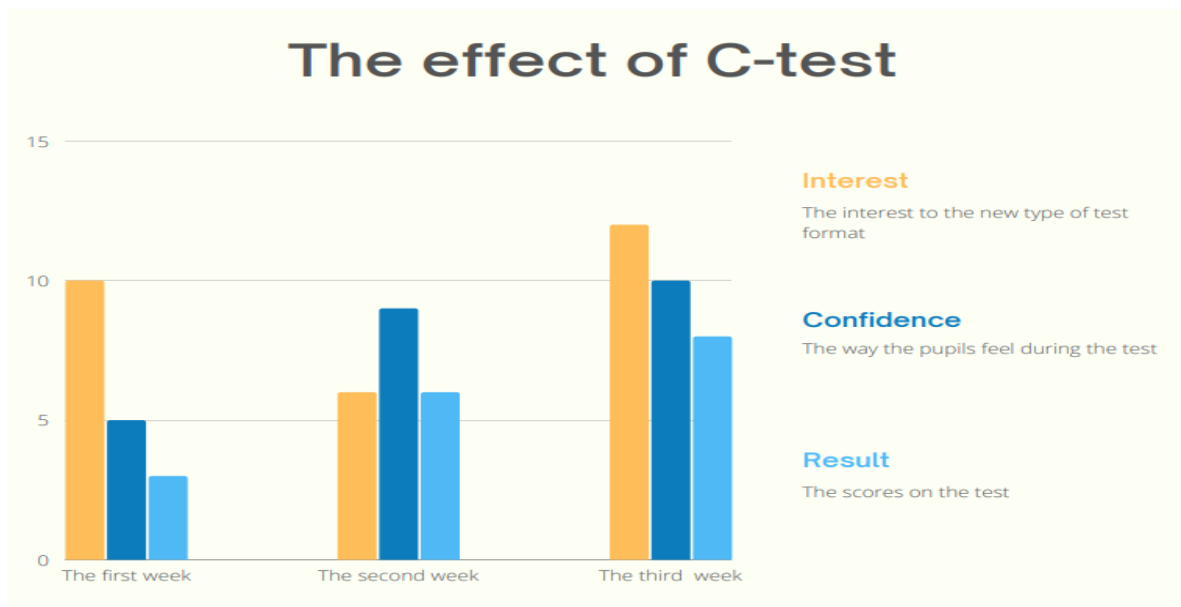
The current study calls into question whether the C-test can be used to evaluate vocabulary. Is there a chance that C-test might use vocabulary knowledge? Can it provide information on a foreign language learner's vocabulary? How do test takers fare on C-tests with various lexical richness levels? These are the inquiries that this study makes an effort to address. In doing so, we look into how the lexical diversity of the C-test texts impacts test-takers' performance.

For the purpose of investigating the C-test's value in assessing vocabulary. C-tests based on different topics from the textbook were taken from the pupils of 7th grade during 3 weeks. Each week one new topic was taught and at the end of the unit C-test based on the topic was given to the learners.

The first week.

Sport is probably as old as the humanity itself. All over the world people of different ages are very fond of sports and games. Firstly, sports helps people to become strong and to develop physically. Secondly, it makes them more organized and better disciplined in their daily activities. Among the sports popular in our country are football, basketball, swimming, volleyball, ice hockey, tennis, gymnastics, figure skating. A person can choose sports and games for any season, for any taste.

As the C-test was given like an experiment the test takers encountered challenges in the first week. Although the learners had high interest in the test, they didn't feel confident and the results were low. In the second week the learners did not have so much interest as in the previous one but they were more confident at that time. As they had experimented this test once, they didn't need much time to do the second test. During the third week learners had the experience of this kind of C-test and at this time they did well on the test. The results raised a little as they took the test more seriously than before.



Advantages of C-test

- In C-test, a variety of texts are recommended. A short text can be formed from a large numbers of items.
- The correction of the task can be objectively scored as it is rare to have more than one answer.
- The results are encouraging in terms of reliability and validity.

Disadvantages of C-Test

- The face validity is low because there are many blanks.

If the isolated words are difficult, the test takers concentrate their mind in guessing the vocabulary instead of comprehending the text.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to find out the best test formats for assessing vocabulary. The first research question seeks the answers to what to test in assessing vocabulary of learners. The results of the observation and questionnaire showed that there are many options for testing based on specifically what should be tested. It depends on the topic and the plan of the teacher.

The second research question of this study aims to find out the effectiveness of the test formats for assessing vocabulary knowledge of students effectively According to the analysis and observation, test format should have several issues such as validity, practicality, backwash and reliability.

To conclude within the answers to the research questions I reached a number of results. I searched a number of resources to learn deeply about C-Test.C-tests are reliable and efficient assessment tools that assess not only vocabulary but they can be used to assess foreign language proficiency in general.

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Implementing TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching): The Need for a Standardized Framework in the Vernacular Medium Schools of Assam

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Abstract

English has emerged as the "language of survival" in the modern world. Assam's government and non-government vernacular language schools currently prioritize reading and writing abilities over the other two skills, listening and speaking, which appears to be a complete disregard. As a result, this article attempts to examine how English is taught in these vernacular-medium schools, using the corpus of existing research. The research makes the assumption that there is no adequate framework in these schools to improve students' communicative abilities, which causes students to feel uneasy while speaking English and to struggle greatly to tackle higher education, which is only offered in the English language. The current research will shed light on how TBLT can be beneficial and can aid students in achieving a particular competency level required for effective communication. Additionally, the research will look for ways to utilize TBLT's opportunities and challenges. In order to improve students' conversational skills, it is necessary to build a standardized framework, so the researcher will also try to provide some effective methods. Language instruction, in the words of Dave and Willis, "aims to enable learners to use the language they have learnt in school or college to communicate successfully with other users of English in the world outside." This study will therefore be useful in creating a more "equitable" educational system.

Keywords

Task-Based Language Teaching, Vernacular medium, Standard Framework.

Introduction

There is no denying that English has a position of prestige not only in our society but also throughout the entire world. A language is a tool through which one learns to communicate ideas and concepts. English was acknowledged as the workable solution to the multitude of languages in India due to the varied cultures and people here, and it is one of the three languages included in the language formulas chosen by the government of the nation. It is troubling that, despite these benefits of the English language, the majority of vernacular educated students from diverse linguistic origins are unable to speak English fluently or lack the necessary skills. When it comes to higher education, which is delivered in English, they experience significant challenges as they shift from their native tongue to the second language. Despite having English as a subject from Class I, they are reluctant to speak it.

Assamese medium students, as well as the students from different communities who are enrolled in these state government schools, where the medium of instruction is Assamese, do not feel at ease when they move out for higher education as it is imparted in English only. These minority languages are not given importance in schools as well as colleges; therefore, students feel neglected and are not motivated enough to learn new languages. English becomes third language for them and most of them develop a phobia towards English. For various socioeconomic reasons, most of them even leave school without even having basic education. Again, although a limited number of students from these communities, including Assamese students, get satisfactory marks in the examination, they cannot use English in their practical life. Observing these, it is assumed that the standard of teaching and learning English has some hurdles. Although there have been recurring reforms in the policy of the Indian government towards the teaching and learning of English and currently English is taught as a compulsory subject in all schools (Unnisa, 2012), students from vernacular-medium schools mostly feel left out or disconnected in the English-speaking environments and the school curriculum also does not encourage them to speak the language; it is also important to mention that the proper exposure to acquiring language is missing in Assamese Rural areas, the school environment is failing miserably to provide an appropriate environment for acquisition of a Second Language. However, the demands in India for better teaching and learning of English are not being met meaningfully in vernacular-medium schools (Gupta, 2012;

Javalgekar, 2013; Kumaran, 2011; Ramanathan, 2007). Students in vernacular medium schools in India mostly leave school, speaking a language that would not be recognized in the job market (Pathan & Shaikh, 2012). This paper is a review of related literature to suggest a reconsideration of English language teaching in vernacular-medium schools in India with an emphasis on Task-Based Language Teaching, which can help the students from these schools cope with the present world.

Task-based language teaching referred to as TBLT that mainly focuses on the use of authentic language in the classroom environment to facilitate the communicative aspect of a language. It encourages students to do useful tasks that are very natural in day-to-day life using the target language to develop the basic competence for use in day-to-day life.

Objectives of the paper

The basic objectives of this paper are:

- to discuss the problems of learning the English language by Assamese medium students based on secondary sources
- to throw insight into the opportunities for implementation of TBLT as a methodology for teaching-learning of English in Vernacular medium schools.
- to attempt to suggest some effective measures as there is an urgent need to design a standardized framework to enhance students' communicative skills.

Methodology

The issues with learning the English language are analyzed and presented in this paper using a qualitative methodology. It discusses the indicated topic using journal articles, online articles, research papers, books, dissertations, reports, etc.

Review of Related Studies

Though no research study on implementing TBLT in the ELT context in Assam is reported or known to have been done, numerous research studies

have been conducted around the globe that have examined the viability, feasibility, and constraints associated with the implementation of TBLT in various ELT contexts.

The term 'task-based language teaching' (TBLT), which refers to creating process-oriented syllabi and creating communicative tasks to encourage learners' actual language use, became widely used in the field of second language acquisition with the introduction of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in the early 1980s and much emphasis on learners' communicative abilities over the following two decades. The implementation of task-based language teaching has been the subject of numerous studies, such as "Implementing Task-based Language Teaching" by D. Bugler and A. Hunt, "Implementing Task-Based Learning with Young Learners" by D. Carless, *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching* by R. Ellis, "The Task-Based Approach: Some Questions and Suggestions" by W. Littlewood, "Task-Based Learning: the Interaction Between Tasks and Learners" by J. Murphy, *Task-Based Language Teaching* by D. Nunan and *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* by J. Richards & T. Rodgers, etc.

In his study titled "The impact of English as a Global Language on Educational Policies and Practices in the Asia Pacific Region" D. Nunan reports that TBLT emerged as a key idea from a study of curriculum guidelines and syllabi in the Asia-Pacific countries including Japan, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Malaysia. This study is based on interviews with teachers, teacher educators, and ministry officials. In-Jae Jeon and D. Carless concluded that TBLT has not yet been thoroughly explored or proven empirically in terms of its classroom practise in school foreign language learning environments, despite its pedagogical benefits around the participatory learning culture.

R. Ellis demonstrates how the task-based approach to language teaching has developed in response to some limitations of the conventional P-P-P approach, represented by the process of presentation, practise, and performance. This approach is based on the constructivist theory of learning and communicative language teaching methodology. As a result, it has the significant implication that language learning is a developmental process that fosters communication and social interaction rather than a product acquired

by practising language items and that learners pick up the target language more quickly when they are exposed to engaging task-based activities in their everyday lives. In the 1980s, researchers like M. P. Breen, C.N. Candlin, D. Murphy, D. Nunan, and N. S. Prabhu proposed various task-based approaches, which later evolved into a detailed practical framework for the communicative classroom in which learners engage in task-based activities via cycles of pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task feedback using language focus (Skehan, A Framework 189-206; Willis, Doing TBT 22-29). According to R. Ellis' book *Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning*, TBLT has recently been re-examined from a variety of angles, including oral performance, written performance, and performance assessment.

In the setting of Korean secondary schools, Jeon and Jung investigated how EFL teachers perceived TBLT. 228 instructors from 38 middle and high schools in Korea completed questionnaires to provide the researchers with the data for their study. The overall conclusions of their study showed that many Korean EFL teachers still have some reluctance to use TBLT as an educational strategy due to perceived disciplinary issues with classroom practise, even though they have a greater comprehension of its fundamentals. They came to the conclusion that teachers had their own motivations for using or forgoing TBLT.

In conclusion, the research results demonstrate that TBLT presents a chance for real-world learning in the classroom. Additionally, TBLT takes into account learning the form in addition to emphasizing meaning over form. Furthermore, TBLT is intrinsically motivating and could work well with an educational ethos that places a focus on the needs of the student. It also provides for teacher input and guidance at the same time. Finally, it can be employed in conjunction with more conventional processes and caters to the growth of communicative ease while paying close attention to accuracy.

Discussion

According to some, English is the most significant language in the world and has both communicative and educational value. It is regarded as the "Lingua Franca" of the world and is one of the most widely spoken languages in use today. It is undeniable that English has replaced most other languages

as the primary language used around the world, particularly in commerce, education, the internet, politics, science, aviation, and the entertainment industry. Despite the fact that language issues are frequently regarded as being ignored, they are actually quite important because language is both an instrument of expression and a tool for communication. It is crucial to note that the majority of students experience language barriers as they transition from their vernacular medium schools to higher education. Despite the Constitution's adoption of the three-language formula and the Kothari Commission's suggestions in 1966, it was not effective. At the primary level students are instructed in the local official language of their states in the government schools; the English language is not given that prominence but is instead taught just as a subject. These regional languages can limit one's ability to travel and so limit his/her employment options. However, all resources and higher education are offered in English only; as a result, our pupils will never be able to gain greater information or opportunities if they do not speak English. However, we cannot deny the importance of mother tongue in learning a second language, but considering the progression of the world and opportunities, learning English has become necessary. Additionally, the English language has the potential to be a catalyst for integration. English is a global language. As a result, the government and decision-makers should prioritise resolving this linguistic barrier that prevents our youth from finding employment. English is a crucial skill that can significantly improve the young of India's employability. Making English proficiency a priority since childhood can have a significant positive impact on society and its economy.

In a study conducted by Nazrul Islam on the Learning of English by the 12th Standard Assamese Medium Students of Barpeta District, Assam, India, he finds that no respondent among the two hundred sample students agreed to his question on their full understanding of the English lessons taught by their teachers in the classroom. Only 14.5 percent of the pupils concurred. Instead, the majority of pupils gave contradictory responses. Among the students, 69% were in disagreement. Therefore, it is clear from this where these kids stand in relation to the intensifying global rivalry. The English language skills of these students must be given great weight in this situation, starting at the school level itself. Only 6.5 percent of the students in his study believed that their teachers occasionally used these tasks to make the classroom communicatively oriented, and the percentage of communicative

activities arranged in the classroom is negligible on a daily basis. According to 84% of the pupils, their teachers never planned any kind of expressive activity.

In his paper “Language Policy and ELT Programme in Assam”, Mohd. Mahibur Rahman discusses how everywhere this need for English proficiency is realized. He quotes the Editor of *The Assam Tribune*, who asserts that students' inability to communicate effectively in that language and their lack of proficiency in it have made it difficult for them to obtain good jobs. He writes, "The few who have done well in their examinations also fail to obtain good jobs as lack of knowledge of English or lack of the skill of communication through English stands as the main obstacle on their way." This has led to an increase in the number of young people without jobs. The world of today is moving quickly in terms of science, technology, computer science, and other specialized fields of study, thus being able to communicate effectively in English has become essential (Bordoloi,2001).

The goal of task-based language instruction is to give students a natural setting in which to use the language. There are several opportunities for interaction as students attempt to finish an assignment. It is believed that these interactions help people acquire languages more easily since they require people to communicate and comprehend one another (Larsen Freeman, 2000). With TBLT, students can learn the fundamentals of the language as well as its structure, patterns, and many forms. In contrast to decisions made by the teacher or the coursebook, TBLT prepares assignments based on the needs of the student and those very specific fields of language that are addressed in the course. With the help of the TBLT, pupils can communicate for extended periods of time. The traditional approach of presentation, practice, and production appears to be particularly teacher-focused. TBLT is suitable for learners and is inspiring. As TBLT aims to create an atmosphere where language use is practical, this method or approach can aid students in becoming proficient in English or at the very least assist them to become aware of the fundamental communicative abilities needed to live in the modern world.

English is thought to be quite popular in Assam. To provide their children with education parents frequently choose English-medium or convent schools. English is taught in government schools beginning with the first standard. However, a lot of pupils have major difficulties speaking,

writing, and reading English. English is frequently regarded as a topic of failure since students are typically quite hesitant to speak in class despite knowing how important it is for job interviews. Due to their inability to communicate with people outside of their own culture fluently in English, their poor self-esteem, shyness, and reluctance, as well as the fact that they have a medium level of education in the vernacular, these students frequently experience anxiety. Teachers need to be aware of the unique variances present in the classroom, be able to pinpoint the causes of language learning anxiety, and assist the students in overcoming such issues. Teachers must make an effort to comprehend the backgrounds of their students and guide them in the right direction.

Examples of some tasks and activities for improving English fluency in vernacular schools

There are so many innovative tasks and activities that we can utilize to improve our English proficiency. Some of those tasks are the vocabulary game, the spelling game, describe the picture game, tell me about your day game, where's the cat game, etc. There are other ways through which we can engage the learners in the classroom. The teacher needs to play a very important role, as they should prompt the students to use the target language in classroom conversations and urge them to focus on the use of their target language. They should provide an environment that is learner-controlled and based on their real lives so that learners can self-monitor themselves. The following tasks can be utilized for fostering speaking skills in primary classrooms of vernacular medium schools:

Task 1: Describe the picture

Aim(s)

- to foster their knowledge of colors and shapes.
- to describe the same by using the target language.

Practice and Presentation

1. Show a picture chart of fruits, flowers, cars, or any other daily object.

2. Ask each one of them to describe the shape and color of any object. For instance, what colour is orange? What do you see in the first picture? Do you have this flower in your garden? etc.)

Follow-up activity

1. We can also use ICT, such as YouTube videos, to show them photos, videos, or the sounds of an animal or the color of a fruit; or to make it more interesting, we can ask them to bring one fruit or flower available in their home garden.
2. We can also tell them to ask questions to their partners by forming pairs.

Task 2: Vocabulary Game

Aim (s)

- to improve the knowledge about the vocabulary of daily use
- to let them learn spelling and pronunciation of the words.

Practice and Presentation

1. Make the class into several groups and draw a chart of ranks against their group name. Give 5 marks for the correct word and 5 for the correct spelling.
2. Ask one student from one group to come and use the blackboard. Write one word and spell it. Complete the same process with a twist, where we can ask them to write the next word using the last letter of the previous word written by the previous group.

Task 3: Spelling Games

Aim

- to make them learn the syllables and how to pronounce some long words.

Practice and Presentation

1. Write some words on the board such as Adventure, Illustration, Psychology, etc.

2. Make some groups (2 members in each)
3. Ask them to pronounce
4. Give 10 marks for correct pronunciation
5. Help them how to break the syllables to pronounce a longer word easily, such as:
Ad-ven-ture, psy-cho-lo-gy, en-vi-ron-ment, back-ground, il-lus-tra-tion etc.

Task 4: **Preparation of a bi-lingual word chart**

Aim

The goal is to teach them words in their native language as well as English.

Practice and Presentation

1. The teacher can ask their students to create one bi-lingual poster or glossary chart as homework or a project and present it to the class.
2. For eg: Hello (greetings in English), Namaskar (greetings in Assamese).

Task 5: **Tell me about your day**

Aim (s)

- To make them articulate longer sentences.
- To make them learn how to share personal thoughts and communicate with their peers.

Practice and Presentation

1. Ask students to stand up and describe their daily routines and hobbies.
2. In case they hesitate to do so, we can ask them to tell them in their mother tongue and later ask them to translate the same in the target language for the beginning.

Benefits

This task or activity will build confidence in them to speak up and share their knowledge in their target language.

As listening and speaking activities go hand in hand, a classroom should also provide some listening activities in the target language to the students because, without listening, it becomes tough for them to gain the required knowledge in their language. Careful listening also provides inputs for the target language that helps in the acquisition of the language. After explicit listening, one can develop their knowledge of the target language. So, this paper will also focus on the need for both listening and speaking activities for classroom applications.

Conclusion

This TBLT framework can significantly improve students' conversational skills in a place like Assam where English is predominantly taught as a second language. Both curriculum designers and policymakers should place a high priority on how to create a classroom that is welcoming to kids so that they can have access to all the tools necessary for their overall development. To make TBLT more applicable and efficient, additional research is required on how to build it based on the socioeconomic context in Assam. Teachers should be given the opportunity to learn about task-based learning techniques (TBLT) connected to planning, implementing, and assessing since it is also evident that they lack practical application knowledge of these approaches or techniques. To this end, it is recommended that teacher education programmes, which seek to provide in-depth training about language teaching approaches, correctly address both the advantages and disadvantages of TBLT as a teaching strategy, ranging from fundamental concepts to specific techniques.

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The Interpersonal Dimensions of Respectful Conversations

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Abstract

Teaching students to communicate with respect and courtesy should become vital components of their interpersonal communication competence. The ability to communicate clearly, effectively, and ethically is an indispensable need for all human beings. However, there is a need to ensure that clarity in speaking is coupled with respect, tolerance, and politeness towards others. This should become a primordial requisite. Many times, we often assume we are being clear and direct in all our interactions. In this process, we neglect intentionally or unintentionally all norms of decency and respect. Speaking with arrogance and demeaning others are detrimental to interpersonal communication relations. The author of this paper argues that students should be trained to become responsible communicators and interpersonal communication norms of politeness and courtesy must be inculcated in them in all their interpersonal interactions with others. Today's engineering students will eventually become tomorrow's employees or employers. We need to ensure that a vicious climate of disrespect and rudeness does not become the norm of organisations. Hence, rules of respect, courtesy, empathy, and tolerance pertaining to interpersonal communication competence ought to be inculcated in the students.

Keywords

Communication competence, interpersonal skills, effectiveness, appropriateness, ethics, respect, norms.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To emphasize the significance of teaching students of cultivating respectful communication behaviours in their interpersonal interactions.

2. To discuss the humongous relevance of the benefits of implementing respectful behaviours in their personal and professional lives.
3. To sensitize students to implement these respectful behaviours in their future workplaces.
4. To help students use respectful expressions in their interpersonal interactional contexts.

Introduction

Respectful communication is a concept that is taken for granted. Wobegon effect states that individuals think they are better communicators than others. They further believe that they do not need to improve their communication skills since they have adequate competence. The ugly reality is that people who think they actually are competent communicators may not be so. This is because they overestimate their own competence and abilities. It is the sincere angst of the author of this research paper that respectful and courteous communication based on civility decides the destiny of the individuals and organisations. An individual may have enormous technical knowledge and intelligence quotient; however, if he/she is arrogant, condescending, and has an overly assertive communicative style, can people work with him/her? What is at the crux of all human communication is the need to be effective, appropriate, and ethical in all our interpersonal communication interactions. Respectful conversations are the building blocks of all interpersonal communication. When disrespectful conversations are the norm in institutions, communication between co-workers, between subordinates and superiors goes berserk, and no worthwhile progress can ever take place. Employees in an organisation may be highly technically competent; however, if interpersonal communication among them is characterised by doubt, suspicion, blaming, rancour, 'we-versus-they-mentality', no meaningful progress takes place at the departmental level or organisational level. So, one of the most viable and tangible solutions to end bitterness in our interpersonal communication interactions is to cultivate respectful interpersonal communication.

Methodology

The author of this paper has always been interested in the abiding importance of teaching respectful conversations marked by honesty and altruism in his entire teaching career. In his classes, he has given role plays, conducted discussions, debates, public speaking sessions, thereby, encouraging students to express and share their views following the rules and norms of respectful interpersonal communication. It is ardently believed that in the absence of respectful communication, communication in personal and professional lives can lead to chaos and misery for self and others. To drive home the importance of respectful interpersonal communication, various activities were conducted to help students understand the significance of respectful interpersonal communication. Some of them are as follows:

Activity--Group Discussion

In one study, the author conducted group discussion in his class. So, to inculcate respectful interpersonal communication, a group discussion topic was given. The topic was titled, "Addiction to social media is increasing day by day." As was wont, some students had strong views on the benefits of social media, whereas some other students had strong views on the drawbacks of social media. However, a group discussion, it must be noted, is a platform where strong views should be expressed in a polite and persuasive manner. A group discussion is not a debate. So, sticking to one's stand obstinately spells doom to self and destroys the very purpose of a group discussion. A group discussion is different from a debate. It is obviously the antithesis of a debate. Though students were given the dos and don'ts of a group discussion, yet in a real time group discussion, students become emotional and lose emotional self-control and express their views 'too assertively'. After the group discussion was done, the teacher asked the remaining students who watched the proceedings to express their views non-judgementally. So, they came up with their views on how the group discussion proceeded, and how some members became very 'personal' in their views, and how such views could be avoided. After this, the students were asked what kind of respectful language could have been used by the students who became too emotional in the group discussion. The class was divided into groups of 5 members each, and they were given some time to come up with language expressions that should invariably be used in all interpersonal interactions. Students themselves came

up with so many polite language expressions that could be used in disagreements. Here, the teacher largely played the role of a facilitator.

Activity: Role-Play Situation

Another task was given to elicit the respectful expressions people could use in role plays. One such role play task was as follows: You and your friend are discussing a recent debate on TV. There are experts debating this issue. You like one expert's views. Your friend likes views expressed by another expert. You both disagree. You find that that your friend is using demeaning language against your favourite expert. So, how will you let him know that it is not right on his part to demean your favourite expert? How will you let him know that disagreements can be expressed respectfully?

The plot of the role play was known only to these two students. After taking some time, they finally went on to the dais and act out the role play. The remaining 58 students in the class watched the role play with interest. The two students finished the role play. Now, a discussion followed. The remaining students were asked what had happened, what went wrong and right, how views were expressed, and how ethical, respectful, or disrespectful views were expressed. Here, students were requested to use English only both in the role play and also for class room discussion post role play. It was seen that the class had a fruitful language time expressing their views about current topics and eminent speakers. In addition, they also spoke about how one of their classmates spoke disparagingly about their favourite experts. Now, the students were told that difference of views and opinions were always welcome in life, but how one should disagree respectfully assumes critical importance. The students themselves came up with various expressions on how to disagree respectfully with others.

Some common expressions given by students were as follows:

1. I am sorry to say this...
2. I respectfully disagree with you on this point...
3. Allow me to please disagree with you on this issue...
4. Honestly speaking, if you ask my views, I feel that....
5. Well, if you ask my opinion on this topic...
6. I do agree with you up to a point; however...
7. You may be right in saying that.....but then,...

Interestingly, students themselves came up with the above expressions. Some time, of course, was given to the students, to discuss and come up with respectful communication expressions. The teacher, here, played the role of a facilitator. A lot of meaningful and real-time discussion took place in the class, with students themselves playing active and enthusiastic role in the language learning process. In fact, students wanted more such language activities in the class.

Till now, what has been painstakingly been discussed here is that in all our interpersonal interactions, there is an indispensable need to speak respectfully, ethically, and courteously. These are the hall marks of competent interpersonal communication. Students must be inculcated with the importance of respectful interpersonal communication.

In this way, the teacher explained to the students the dos and don'ts of respectful interpersonal communication. The students were further exposed to the tenets of respectful interpersonal communication as espoused by communication scholars (Beebe, Beebe, and Redmond, 2006; Spitzberg and Cupach, 2011; Josina Macau; Mark L Knapp, 2011; Joseph De Vito, 2010).

The students were taught the abiding rules of respectful interpersonal communication. So, what does competent interpersonal communication competence, viz-a-viz, respect involve, and what do competent interpersonal communicators do in all their interpersonal interactions? They do the following:

1. Interpersonally competent communicators achieve their goals, but not at others' cost.
2. Interpersonally competent communicators seek to establish trust.
3. Interpersonally competent communicators try best to reduce interpersonal barriers between themselves and others.
4. Interpersonally competent communicators do not degrade others.
5. Interpersonally competent communicators believe in the power of a dialogue.
6. Interpersonally competent communicators are non-judgemental while listening.
7. Interpersonally competent communicators are sensitive to the needs of others.

8. Interpersonally competent communicators do not coerce their ideas on others.
9. Interpersonally competent communicators do not assume what others need.
10. Interpersonally competent communicators give people choices to decide for themselves.
11. Interpersonally competent communicators ask and enquire what others need.
12. Interpersonally competent communicators do not manipulate others in conversations.

Interpersonally competent communicators balance self-interest and other-interest.

Findings

It was found in this teacher's research that once the importance of respectful interpersonal communication was frequently driven home to the students, the frequency of using respectful language with their classmates increased, and they refined their language use in all their subsequent group discussions, debates, and role plays in the class room throughout the academic year. In fact, students who initially were blunt, direct, and confrontational, toned down significantly, and took part in polite and respectful interpersonal communication.

Conclusions

It is concluded in this paper that respectful interpersonal communication is the *sine quo non* of all interpersonal interactions. It is an index of how civil and polite we are towards others. Respectful interpersonal interactions teach civility, empathy, and tolerance towards others. They promote more dialogue, non-judgemental listening, and tolerance of diverse views which have a humongous importance and are pivotal criteria that students must be cognizant of and cultivate throughout their lives.

Future researchers who would like to do more research in respectful interpersonal communication competence could consider the following statements and adapt to their specific research needs for their research on respectful interpersonal communication. They can administer this scale to

their students and elicit their views on respectful interpersonal communication. The following is the scale:

1. I have respectful conversations with my classmates.
2. People think they speak respectfully but they do not.
3. I have experienced incivility in conversations with others.
4. I have sometimes used hurtful language with my classmates and friends.
5. It does not matter how you speak as long as your goals are met.
6. It is normal to be aggressive in situations which have high stakes.
7. Dos and donts of respectful communication must be incorporated in the English language syllabus.
8. I cannot work with disrespectful people even if they are brilliant and intelligent in their technical subjects.
9. Even in conflict situations, people have no right to speak disrespectfully with others.
10. When people speak respectfully to me, I feel empowered and happy.
11. When people speak with respect to me, I feel like contributing more to the conversation.
12. Some people speak disrespectfully intentionally because they think they are more intelligent and have more knowledge than me.
13. Teaching the art of respectful conversations should be part of English language curriculum.
14. Through training, people can learn to communicate respectfully with others

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Changing the Scenario of Teaching during the Pandemic to Meet the 21st Century Skills through Synchronous Learning

“A Miniature to The transformation from Traditional Learning to Online and Digital Learning”.

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Abstract

In view of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, there have been no live classes all over the world. Instead of wasting time this academic year, as teachers we focused on strengthening various skills among the students.

Thus, we teachers voluntarily took up a project which was titled “The Connecting Classrooms”. The whole project was scheduled and guided by Mr. Vinayadhar Raju, SA English, ZPHS Jangapally, Ganneruvaram, Karimnagar District. This is a USEFI (The United States- Educational Foundation in India) project in collaboration with Swechha foundation. As part of this project, we were connected with other teachers and their classrooms. We shared our thoughts and ideas with them. We worked in a low technology environment. Students from rural backgrounds, different IQ levels and various cultures met on this platform and worked hard. We worked in collaboration and brought about the desired change in our students. Though we faced many challenges on this project, we overcame all those obstacles successfully. It was a great experience to work with other teachers as well as students. Here are our experiences and perceptions about the project how we CONNECTED to the teachers and students of different places during the period of pandemic.

Finally, after 8 weeks (two months), students from all the schools (different districts) presented their reports through a ZOOM meeting. All the students presented and performed effectively and impressively by

overcoming the technical glitches and connectivity problems. The work put in by the students is available for viewing by all and is of appreciable quality. Every week we had one or two Zoom meetings to give suggestions to the students.

Keywords

Connected classrooms, Covid-19, Miasma, Moral values, Cartoons, Collaboration, 21st-century skills, Technology.

Literature Review

In the article, “ Preparatory course _ A Must for Rural students_ before taking E-Learning course or online test for Development of language - A Study’_ by Dr. V Vijayababu, visiting faculty, Department of English, stated that, “Nowadays, the advancement of technology has imposed tremendous changes in almost all the fields, of all options that the advancement of technology has provided E-learning, which is a modern, efficient and flexible alternative to traditional learning, has been in the moonlight.”

As mentioned earlier it is pleasant to know how the technology fascinates the rural students and the way they are benefitted by E-learning. It is time that E-learning is an alternative to the traditional learning, but E-learning is not the one and only way to education. He has stated that E-learning is useful in the learning process and developing the English language skills. He rightly said that the students enter the UG colleges with a poor command over the English language. Factors like illiteracy, lack of awareness, poor economic conditions etc. are the drawbacks for such a situation. He has talked about the rural students but such students cannot afford a smart phone/PC/ Laptop. So, E-learning is possible to those students who have one of these devices.

Technology cannot replace a human teacher, but it has its own significance and students can do wonders, if they use the technology in a proper way. They will become aware of various virtual platforms such as Zoom, Padlet, Canva for poster making, WhatsApp, a social networking

app for daily follow up, Google meet, Google docs for collaborative documentation.

The Project

We teach 6th to 10th standard students. About 20 teachers participated in this project. We were paired with other districts' teachers by using the tool 'Random Student Generator'. Under Mr. Vinayadhar Raju's mentorship, a group of English teachers from Telangana (India) state started the project of "CONNECTING CLASSROOMS". Our topics were: Moral values, social issues, and Gender equity respectively.

We learned many things and gained knowledge and confidence by working with other teachers through online. We were paired up with other teachers from other places. To carry out the project, we 3 teachers were grouped from 3 districts and all our students were from rural background. The primary purpose of our project is to improve the critical and creative thinking skills of students and enable them to use technology. In one sentence, we can say that 21st century skills were focussed fully in this project. Every week we conducted Zoom meetings to clarify the doubts/queries of the students.

Objectives

- To improve language skills and Presentation skills
- To become critical thinkers and Independent learners
- To learn collaboratively
- To make use of Technology

The Timeline

Actually, the project was expected to start in the month of June, but due to pandemic, it was postponed to September 28th. We were going to schools on alternate days. No Face-to-face classes, but only digital video lessons were telecast on Television. Without any direct interaction with the students we started our adventurous journey, depending completely on Technology like smartphones, PC/laptop etc.

The project's time line was for 8 weeks in which we did all the following activities.

Week-1- Self- introduction

Week-2- Interacting with each other

Week-3- Reading Moral value stories

Week-4- Analysing

Week-5- Discussion on moral value stories, covid-19 and cartoons

Week-6- Gathering stories

Week-7- Report preparation

Week-8- Presentations



Weeks 1 and 2: We used the Padlet to upload the works and performances of our students. Students from every school had given their self-introductions and responded to other students' introductions on all three Padlets. They had read other's posts and uploaded their own. Some Students used the Voki App for Self-Introductions. They interacted with each other and had a detailed discussion about their families, schools, facilities in the schools,

tastes, hobbies, habits, ambitions etc. The students felt very happy to communicate with children from other schools.

Weeks 3 and 4: We supplied them with many links to the YouTube and some Google search engines to read and understand the moral stories. Students have gone through the Moral stories which were sent by us. They have written the stories with pictures which were uploaded on the Padlet. Some students narrated the moral stories.

Weeks 5 and 6: Students collected information from stories related to degradation of Moral values in the textbook. Some students narrated real life incidents which took place in their surroundings. Students read the lessons from 7th class and 8th class textbooks titled: “The Tattered Blanket”, “The Dead Rat” and “Puru the Brave” etc. Some students collected stories from the internet with the help of the links provided by us.

Week 7: Students prepared a report from Data analysis through Google slides and posters using Canva. They prepared posters of some basic and important moral values and how they are deteriorated.

Week 8: Through Zoom meeting, SIM Group students’ presentations were given in the presence of 70-83 participants along with teachers and students. Some technical issues surfaced but students didn’t give up and they succeeded in their presentations.

Technological Tools Used:

- WhatsApp- for daily follow up
- Zoom- to conduct meetings
- Padlet- to upload student’s performances
- Voki- for self-introduction
- Canva- to prepare posters
- Google Docs
- Google slides and
- Google meet etc.

Improved the Language Skills: During the complete lockdown due to corona virus which caused an irreparable damage to the student community around the globe, we were working in rural and remote areas where we could not expect a computer or laptop. We selected those students who had smart phones. The students who participated in this project were fully focused. They improved not only InTechnology skills but in their language skills as well. For this WhatsApp played a major role to clarify their doubts and to rectify the errors written or spoken by them. I told them to listen to stories from you-tube and some other sites for listening practice. And after that I asked them to read the stories and record them. Regarding speaking skill, some students told stories and short speeches. Lastly, their writing skill was improved and even their drawings were nice. They are uploaded on Padlet.

Reflections of my Colleagues: My colleagues opined that they were very happy to see their school children's participation in this project. Some other teachers said that the students were using technology and their presentations were effective and the language skills had improved.

Reflections of Connected Classrooms Teachers: Teachers from other schools expressed that learning through reflecting upon the experiences happened through this project.

My own Reflections: I'm pleased to work with like-minded people. They helped and guided in every aspect, since I'm novice to this project. I was over joyed with the performances of my students and felt very happy to see a remarkable change in the students. For the first time, students used technology for gaining knowledge. I was in touch with them every day through WhatsApp. They called me even after 8.00 in the night. Working on this project has given me a wonderful opportunity to enhance my teaching through online mode and helped me in my professional growth. Our group was named, "SIM Group".

Challenges Faced: As Teachers we have to face the consequences of every situation. Here, while working on the project, we faced many challenges and eventually overcame all the obstacles successfully. Everything was done through mobile. There were some conditions which

were beyond our control, like signal problems, low net connectivity, etc. Technical glitches were there during the final presentations, but the children didn't give up and they performed the given task confidently. Finally, after two months, the students from all over the districts prepared posters, slides, power point presentations and presented their work on Zoom platform. All the students presented effectively and impressively and presentations were given before an audience of 79-81 participants (Teachers and students).

Conclusion

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there was a break in the traditional face-to-face teaching learning process. The pandemic forced the teacher community to motivate and adapt themselves to using technology. They have enhanced their traits of teaching by taking up various relevant on-line courses like MOOCS on Canva, OPEN Courses, attending webinars, conferences, live stream programs conducted by RELO, India, on the Facebook network.

All the programmes brought the faculty into limelight. Eventually, online teaching process has become inevitable and mandatory in connecting with the Universe. Most of the teachers and learners were enlightened and this paved the way to the online platforms overlooking the malevolent damage caused by the miasma for over a year.



Here are some takeaways from the project

1. This is a very good platform to share our ideas and get many views/opinions of other teachers.
 2. Students from different schools worked and gathered interestingly and responded in a positive manner.
 3. Due to COVID - 19, face-to-face classes with interaction had to be cancelled. Despite this, they participated actively in the entire project.
 4. Students overcame some problems like unavailability of smart phones or laptop/ computer and presented well.
 5. Students have learnt collaboratively and used technology effectively.
- Finally, all the 21st century skills viz., Critical thinking skills, Creative thinking skills and Presentation skills; and all the four language skills were introduced. Students gained in abundance from them. Teachers were satisfied with the performance of the students thinking that, “Online teaching has become a brightening lamp in the darkness”.

Links Uploaded The shreds of evidence of our work are:

Lesson plan <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11Frv-bG RFCyB0kyvtl bWMxB7m1vh g/view?usp=drivesdk>

Lesson plan PPT:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CvNILLKInU9jiKyV4knyfciB_s6CFBLd/view?usp=drivesdk

Mamatha's

padlet:

<https://padlet.com/mamathasadu12/Shraddhavanlabhathevidya>

Sangeetha's padlet: <https://padlet.com/gsv09061983/dxgf0u81qww51mm6>

Irshad's padlet: <https://padlet.com/irshadali1707/zacbkwsyrhkpvtal>

Student Vishnu: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/kAc3LqDa6fVyAMLDA>

Student Sriveni: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/HgkKnT958RyWtbbLA>

Student Prasanna: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/2tzqy2rtKaKioav89>

Student Jashwanth: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/1uC4DLaZ7tR8Msnv8>

Final Dissemination:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1PblucKepEPjkelArDoGd8Zq6o9USWojc9PKh5lcPV5M/edit?usp=drivesdk>

“GREAT TEACHERS FOCUS NOT ON COMPLIANCE, BUT ON CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS”- P J CAPOSY in Education Week Teacher

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Leveraging Chat box Posts for Learning- A Study

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Abstract

Experienced educators know that the brick-and-mortar classroom is not always a conducive environment for learning. The presence of the teacher can often turn out to be an inhibiting factor for learning for some type of learners. For still others, the fear of making mistakes and the likely ridicule and lowering of self-esteem are potential causes for withdrawal from active learning.

The investigator-cum-teacher educator assigned to teach a batch of English Optional trainees of the Bachelor of Education (BEd) course during 2020 had to transact curriculum in the Online mode following the social distancing norm and compelled shift to Online pedagogy. Then, to continue education, the investigator identified the affordable social media tool, WhatsApp for engaging sessions for two months. The chat mode was the predominant virtual space for interaction between the teacher educator and the teacher trainee and also among the trainees themselves.

It is commonly understood that to gain mastery in using a language, one has to regularly use it. Classroom interaction in a second language like English under teacher monitoring and guidance is one way of acquiring the ability to use English for communication with confidence. An analysis of the kind of interaction on the WhatsApp chat space by the investigator revealed that it has several pedagogical advantages. This study lists down the merits of the interactive WhatsApp chat space.

The study found that the virtual chat space made possible uninhibited interaction, scope for self-correction and an opportunity for developing fluency. From a content learning perspective, crowd sourcing of questions and responses were found to be particularly useful as a learning resource especially by those students who miss the synchronous sessions.

The paper attempts to explore this unexplored avenue for learning through interaction in the virtual space. The topic assumes significance as the spread of the Corona virus pandemic is likely to result in a prolonged

closure of educational institutions leading to a continuation of teaching in the online mode.

Keywords

Interaction, Language learning, Online chat, Second Language, WhatsApp

Leveraging Chat box Posts for Learning- A Study

“...I believe that chat will emerge as an accepted component to other forms of interaction online, such as educational games or simulations with online participants from remote locations.”

- Vance Stevens, Editor, TESL-EJ

Introduction

Experienced teachers know that the traditional face to face instruction classroom is not always the best space for learning. One reason being that the bigger the number of students the more difficult it is for a teacher to provide individual attention. In language teaching, the small number of hours allotted each week and the difficulty to provide pair work and group work in crowded classes often result in a reduction in quality of instruction. While teachers were struggling to address the limitations of face to face learning, the growth of Information and Communication Technology offered several solutions. Initially teachers and learners commenced using email for sharing of resources and in many instances it became a common mode of communication between the teacher and the learner and between learners. Before long, educational institutions began setting up Learning Management Systems (LMS). Then, the Discussion Board threw open an opportunity for engaging in online discussion (Kitsantas & Chow, 2007). But it may be noted that in the new environment not all learners are forthcoming in seeking clarifications.

Background

The closure of educational institutions was one immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Then, many decided to shift from traditional classrooms to digital platforms which in several places led to a

widening of the digital divide. So, finding affordable ways of continuing education was a top priority for teachers.

Following the spread of the COVID pandemic, restriction in movement and social distancing norm was implemented. This resulted in the abrupt reduction in teacher-student and student-student interaction in the traditional face-to-face mode. While affordable platforms like Google Meet permitted synchronous learning in the online mode, the possibility of teacher-student or even peer to peer interaction during the time allotted for online learning was extremely limited.

The problem

For colleges of teacher education, the shift to online pedagogy had several problems to address. For instance, more than mere transmission of knowledge, transaction of knowledge between teacher trainees and the pupil in the classroom and the transformation of the teacher trainee with regard to knowledge, skill and attitude had to be addressed in the online mode under the supervision and guidance of the teacher educator. Further, the transmission oriented teaching which involves a top-down approach which presents best practices for teacher trainees to imitate in their teaching had to be delivered in the online mode. Above all, the prospective teacher undergoing the teacher training programme was expected to develop and refine his/her competence in productive skills like speaking and writing. Addressing all this in the online mode became a big challenge.

Further, in any learning situation, in an interactive mode, students clear doubts, seek clarification or engage in discussion with teachers (Lodge, 2010). And students pursuing higher studies in colleges, are expected by teachers to be self-regulated learners who regularly seek help of their teachers which is perceived as a sign of activation of metacognitive skills (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). But the limited scope for seeking help from teachers in the virtual learning environment created a hurdle to seamless learning, particularly for self-regulated learners.

Rationale for the study

When Online pedagogy became the norm, even in colleges of teacher education, accessibility of internet connection, affordability issues related to purchase of laptops or getting an internet connection with good bandwidth at home, began to affect seamless delivery of instruction.

Quoting research Consultores (2020) pointed out that with regard to supporting communication and collaboration both inside and outside the classroom, WhatsApp is a promising tool. Reporting on a study on the use of WhatsApp for language teaching and learning, Meyers & Martins (2020) found that it promotes, cooperation, collaboration and is ideal for motivating and stimulating students.

The investigator had for many years been exploring ways of using WhatsApp for pedagogic purposes. (Praveen, 2015, 2020). But very few studies are available regarding the possibility of exploiting the chat mode in social media tools for learning. This study proposes to fill the research gap.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of the interaction on WhatsApp between teacher educator and student teachers during synchronous teaching?
2. What is the nature of the interaction on WhatsApp between student teachers during collaborative learning?
3. What are the uses of the material available on WhatsApp after synchronous teaching?

Method used

The main tool used to elicit data was informal interviews with the teacher trainees regarding difficulties faced if any. Observation and review of student posts on WhatsApp and monitoring of student performance by the investigator cum teacher educator as part of informal assessment also helped in ascertaining the usefulness of the chat mode for learning.

The population comprised teacher trainees pursuing the Bachelor of Education (BEd) in a college affiliated to the University of Kerala who were forced to continue education with limited internet facility in the Online mode.

Definition of terms used in the study

Chat:The synchronous exchange of remarks on a computer network with one or more people (The Free Dictionary). It is a two way form of computer mediated communication made possible in real time as we keyboard or speak our words. (Almeida d'Eca,2002)

Crowd sourcing: It refers to collection of information from a large group of people via social media and apps. It brings together communities around a cause that is common.(Investopedia). From a language learning perspective, Crowd sourcing activities will include the compilation of practical experiences, exchange of complementary knowledge and feedback for learners. (Jiang, Schlagwein and Benatallah 2018: 11)

Brief review of studies

Studies have affirmed the need for teachers to learn and grasp technological and pedagogical knowledge before engaging in mobile learning. (Tai et al., 2015) Practicing teachers know that immediate clarification of learner doubts help sustain interest in learning. Delayed clarification of doubts has been found to result in disjointed or stilted conversations. (Koc& Liu, 2016).

A review of 59 studies on live chat users (Matteson et al. (2011 found that it lends scope for rich conversation. Recently, Mitchell Robinson of Michigan State University found that in the chat box the students were “sharing their raw and deeply personal takes on the day’s discussion prompts”.

Ta’amneh (2017) found that integrating WhatsApp in teaching English language can improve the ability of university students particularly with regard to their vocabulary knowledge.

Studies have found that the use of instant messaging by teachers can result in an increase in the number of student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions (Mtshali et al., 2015) and provide high level of student satisfaction.(Robles et al. 2019)

Annamalai (2019) explored the use of the chat group facility of WhatsApp in a blended learning class of undergraduates in Malaysia and found students showing a strong preference for WhatsApp.

Almeida d'Eca, Teresa discussing the Use of Chat in EFL/ESL with regard to Yahoo Messenger, a popular chat platform for educational purposes pointed out the very special element in the use of voice with its human empathetic qualities which adds life and realism to the interaction. Further, the facility for automatically saving all text chats allows teachers and students to go back to the chat and carry out different activities. Even students who were unable to follow, can revise the topic or ask for clarifications and the teacher can evaluate student participation.

A recent post in the 'Learning Lessons From TEFL' observed that Chat box is "the perfect channel for student-teacher dialogue" as they are "away from the potentially judgemental ears of other class members". A major advantage in using the chat box is that, it can stop the laborious and time consuming one-student-at-a-time feedback, and also highlight individual ability. The ten ways to use the Chat box for language production listed is worth checking out.

Findings

The nature of interactions between teacher educator and student teachers during synchronous teaching

i) Unlike physical classroom, it was found that there was less inhibition among student teachers to interact on WhatsApp chat.

ii) Student teachers who were found to be passive and quiet learners in the brick and mortar class room were found to be active by posting responses in the synchronous class.

iii) In the traditional face to face class, when questions are posed by the teacher educator after having taught a content, hardly one or two student teachers used to respond. But in the chat mode several responses became the norm.

iv) The 24x7 connectivity with peers and the teacher helped build bonds even though the students were separated by distance and restriction in movement had prevented them from meeting face-to-face owing to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

v) Teacher assessment of learner response in the chat mode compared to the response given in the face-to-face mode was difficult. This was more so because if the teacher spent more time for assessing individual student response by seeking clarification, it would invariably result in a gross reduction in the available whole class engagement time.

The nature of interaction on WhatsApp between student teachers during collaborative learning

i) The added advantage of WhatsApp to even post audio messages besides visuals and short video as answers to questions posed, makes the chat content an indispensable resource.

ii) Unlike physical classrooms, online chat spaces have greater chances of eliciting student responses especially during collaborative learning.

iii) Infographics and images posted by the teacher and peers in the chat can serve as image-based texts for review prior to the examination.

iv) Open ended chat was found to be effective only when the audio mode was employed rather than type-chat mode.

v) The quickness with which the teacher trainees received an immediate feedback or response to a doubt regarding topic taught or related to an assignment that is shortly due, was a huge advantage. This in fact, helped reduce rise of stress commonly found among students forced to learn online without any prior experience.

vi)The possibility to continue the flow of learning even after the scheduled one hour synchronous learning each day in the 24X7 mode through connection with the teacher and peers was perceived as one great advantage of the chat mode.

Use of materials on WhatsApp after synchronous teaching

i)Student teachers who missed the synchronous sessions could rely on the content posted in the chat to gain an understanding of the thread of thought. The questions posed and the answers with different perspectives typed and stored in the chat box served as excellent content for crowdsourcing for later use for learning. Such crowd sourced materials unlike textual content make use of a descriptive or narrative mode with illustrative examples making it easy to comprehend and also interesting. However, for getting maximum benefit, such content has to be discreetly culled out.

Discussion

i)By hindsight it becomes clear that physical spaces are not always conducive environments for learning to happen.

ii)When teachers engage in chat or respond to answers typed by ‘smart students’ on the chat box, the weak learner gets an opportunity to self-correct and learn. More importantly, the entire text gets documented and everyone including the student who posted the message can come and review the response given which will include the teacher’s comment and feed back for refining one’s perspective at any time until the learner decides to delete it from one’s own system.

iii)The chat mode on WhatsApp is definitely less expensive, unlike the one available through Internet connectivity on a computer which consumes more data and power. This turned out to be advantageous, for teachers from an economic point of view particularly at a time when the digital divide and the loss of jobs of parents of some of the students had resulted in a financial crunch in many families.

iv) Given the constraints in time which limits the scope for providing individual attention, teachers can explore the multitude of personalized learning options made possible through online learning. For instance one can open a single student teacher and teacher educator group to engage in conversation either by typing or even using the video call facility available on WhatsApp.

v) The teacher typing questions on the chat box during synchronous teaching using WhatsApp drastically prevented the chatbox learning space from posting a mishmash of random thoughts. Instead each post was thoughtful and measured to match the learning objective of each teaching learning encounter. This is well in tune with the findings of Hranovska (2020) that performance indicators of students can be affected significantly owing to lack of proper teacher control during distance learning.

vi) Each time the teacher poses a question and when a learner responds, the other students in the group get an opportunity to compare their own abilities to provide a potential response. This can have both negative and positive consequences. While learning from others is a possibility, a feeling of inferiority is also likely to arise in the case of learners with weaker ability. Hence regular monitoring of student progress and motivating those learners who are likely to withdraw is imperative on the part of the teacher who uses chat box as an instructional tool.

vii) The opportunity for teacher trainees to participate in online learning and the firsthand experience gained regarding the pitfalls in online pedagogy, can certainly help prospective teachers to adapt their own teaching styles to suit the virtual environment when they become full-fledged teachers.

The scope for teaching using the chat mode: Lesson from hindsight Language use

Very often teacher trainees get an opportunity to interact and learn from peer as most tasks they perform in the course are invariably collaborative in nature. It has often been found that teacher trainees in the initial days of the training programme show a profound inhibition to interact with peers who are smarter than them for fear of ridicule. But in instances

where a sense of comradeship is consciously established by the teacher educator, teacher trainees come out of their imagined shell and commence to participate in the learning activities. Here not only do they get an opportunity to learn from their peers, they can self correct and develop the confidence to communicate in English making fewer mistakes.

Learning content/Revision

WhatsApp has great scope for sharing and exchanging different types of input. These include images, infographics, animations, audio clips and video clips. When these are employed for teaching, the teacher educator can post questions related to the content that is shared in different formats. While the variety of content helps sustain interest of the learner, the responses which the trainees post for the questions posed becomes great stuff for learning. For a single question, teachers can generate a variety of responses and each gets recorded and documented, which a trainee who misses a class can come back and review. Moreover, those who found it difficult to immediately grasp a concept can pose a question to the teacher for clarification or after having read additional related content can come back and read the material. The recurring chat mode besides helping in knowledge construction in a constructivist mode also help develop the communication skills of teacher trainees.

Crowd sourcing

Compiling content that are well illustrated, and made available in small chunks unlike material running to several pages in Word files or PDF can be used for the following academic year for instruction. Such tiny chunks, when they are culled out and made available in a Blog by practicing teachers can become excellent crowd sourced resources.

Limitations

An obvious limitation of the study is that the sample size is small and only the perspective of students pursuing a teacher training course have been considered. Further, the usefulness of the chat mode during covid-19 compelled online learning was studied and not in situations where hybrid

learning (face-to-face and online learning) was happening. Hence, drawing conclusions on the effectiveness of the mode is not likely to be conclusive. More significantly, the difficulties trainees with learning difficulty such as visual/auditory impairment have not been looked into in the study.

Implications

i) It becomes clear that AI powered chatbox have the unique advantage of avoiding students from becoming embarrassed by asking additional help in front of their peers.

ii) Institutions can get programmers to prepare AI powered virtual assistants to answer in the chat mode, the repetitive questions which student teachers particularly ask about the course especially in the first semester.

iii) In the online learning environment seeking help directly from teachers are extremely limited. Hence, teachers need to explore the scope for engaging in chat with students to help reduce a likely academic challenge in learners.

Future research

The attempt to adapt teaching to foster online learning particularly during the spread of Covid-19 has made it imperative to find appropriate tools and strategies to foster language learning. Since it is commonly accepted that language can best be learned only through interaction, studies that explore the use of affordable tools and involve learners in the virtual environment may be conducted. The findings of such studies can then be disseminated to benefit teachers struggling to continue online instruction.

Research ethics

In order to ensure the anonymity of students and to prevent misuse of data shared, the teacher trainees were strictly forbidden to share the chat content with any one outside the group or forward posts to other groups.

Conclusion

This paper has suggested a way of addressing an impasse in learning through a profuse use of the chat mode available in tools such as WhatsApp. Whatever its advantages, the Chat mode can in no way replicate the experience students gain in the face-to-face mode. Though the write up has tried to share the investigator's positive experiences related to the use of the chat mode for own instructional purposes during Covid-19, it must be admitted that it was not a first time plunge in using WhatsApp but experiences gained since 2015 in one's own teacher education setting. It is hoped that the pragmatic pedagogic solutions proposed for continuing education will benefit teachers teaching in Arts and Science colleges too.

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