

A STUDY ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS ENHANCEMENT

Nisha Napoleon, Research Scholar, Dept of English, Monad University, Hapur

Dr Kavita Rani, Associate Professor, Dept of English, Monad University, Hapur

ABSTRACT

Language is a tool that enables individuals to express their emotions, thoughts, and concepts, facilitating communication. Accessing global knowledge is also beneficial. Aggarwal (2003) defines language as a system of symbols utilized consistently by multiple individuals to facilitate communication. Language serves as a vessel for one's thoughts and ideas, enabling them to be expressed. While language may have several functions, it is primarily the most effective tool for communication. Proficiency in communication in a language is determined by mastery of fundamental linguistic abilities. The fundamental skills are Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Language skills are crucial for achieving success in the modern world. Proficiency in fundamental language abilities in any language is advantageous for an individual. However, this is more advantageous in the context of the English language. According to a prominent newspaper, those with exceptional English communication skills achieve remarkable achievement. Individuals proficient in English earn up to 34% more than those who are not, highlighting the connection between English proficiency and job prospects.

KEY WORDS: English, Language Skills, Enhancing, Primary Student, Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

English language instruction in elementary and upper primary classes primarily on developing familiarity with the language and constructing language structures. By the time students reach secondary school, they have a strong grasp of the language and its fundamental skills. Therefore, it is important to focus on refining their listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) skills in English at this stage. Colombo and Furbush (2009) state that older pupils and adults can achieve advanced competency in second languages. Adolescents possess advanced abilities in memory, pattern recognition, induction, categorization, generalization, and inference.

English serves as the primary language of instruction in numerous schools throughout India. The onset of independence from colonial rule led to numerous changes in the education sector. The education changes focused on enhancing pupils' English language proficiency at the secondary level. It is anticipated that upon completing

their education, students will develop into independent learners, with proficiency in language playing a crucial part. Yet, this expectation can mostly be fulfilled by providing the learner with an environment that helps them develop the necessary skills in the target language. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) suggested that teachers should be capable of designing a curriculum that provides pupils with diverse and abundant chances for self-expression through speech, writing, collective reading, etc., fostering holistic growth in individuals.

LANGUAGE AND ITS FUNCTIONS

Language has been an integral component of human civilization. Humans possess a unique edge over all other living organisms due to their ability to communicate using language. Other living beings lack a sophisticated and organized language system for communication, unlike humans. According to Fromkin (2010), language is the primary trait that sets humans apart from other animals. Language serves several important roles in people's lives.

The connection between language and cognition has been a topic of extensive debate and investigation. Research in this discipline acknowledges that language processing is a cognitive function. According to Lenneberg (1969), language is closely linked to cognition. Language aids in both expressing thoughts and fostering cognitive development. Dua (2008) suggests that language is crucial in shaping the mind, cognitive processes, and knowledge acquisition. Language is intricately connected to the advancement of human civilization. Internalizing language structure enhances the intellect and promotes its development, whereas externalizing language through social interaction not only facilitates communication but also fosters the creation of knowledge and discourse. Language is thought to enhance cognitive processes, foster logical thinking, and facilitate cultural practices such as literacy.

The fundamental characteristic of human language is its communication purpose. Language's capacity for information acquisition has been crucial in the advancement of human civilization. According to Richards (1985), language is necessary for communication through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Language's primary purpose is communication. Communication can be expressed through both spoken language and gestures. Language is an influential tool for communication that cannot be denied. Language facilitates social interaction. Language functions as a means of expressing thoughts, whether through speech or writing. Manivannan (2006) defines language as the method of conveying ideas through human speaking using voice and sounds produced by the throat and mouth.

Education is a fundamental component of human society. Education fosters the creation of proficient human capital, contributing to the advancement of individuals and society in succession. Language is vital in any curriculum and is necessary for providing instruction. Dua (2008) asserts that language education is a crucial component of any education system and serves as its cornerstone. Language plays a crucial role in education, as students' learning outcomes are influenced by their proficiency in the language used as the primary medium of teaching. Francis (1977) highlighted that language plays a crucial role in the teaching-learning process by guiding and facilitating learning. English, as a medium of instruction in Indian educational institutions, has a considerable impact on the teaching and learning process.

GLOBAL STRIDE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Language is most effectively utilized for expression when it is not confined by geographical limitations. English is a widely spoken language worldwide. The transition of English from a regional language to a global lingua franca has a rich and complex history. The swift advancement of worldwide communication has led to the remarkable globalization of the English language. English has become generally recognized as a worldwide language and has experienced significant expansion.

History clearly shows the language's evolution to reach its current widely accepted form. English has seen significant changes throughout the ages and continues to evolve, incorporating new vocabulary and experiencing subtle shifts in syntax, usage, and mechanics. After centuries of evolution and progress originating from Britain, the English language eventually became widespread worldwide. The global expansion of this language has led to a rise in its usage among individuals as a primary, secondary, and non-native language. Kachru (1985) attempted to explain the global expansion of the English language using the concept of three concentric circles.

Kachru states that the Inner circle comprises countries where English is the first or native language (ENL). The countries in the outer circle have English as a second language (ESL). The outermost circle consists of countries where English is considered a foreign language (EFL). English is the most frequently spoken language globally, making it a global language.

Crystal (2003) elucidates why the English language is acknowledged as a global language. He notes that English holds a unique global significance because of the specific functions it fulfills. English serves as the primary language for a significant population in countries including Australia, Canada, South Africa, the UK, the USA, and many Caribbean nations. English serves as the official language in over seventy nations, including India and

Sri Lanka. English serves as a foreign language in over a hundred nations, such as China, Russia, and Japan. When considering the overall English-speaking population worldwide, they outweigh speakers of any other language. Crystal (2003) states that 1.5 billion individuals utilize English as either their first, second, or foreign language.

The significant growth in research, technology, and communication worldwide after World War II created a demand for a global language, which was fulfilled by English. People are now interested in learning English not for enjoyment or status, but to connect with the world for diverse purposes.

English's dominance today is largely due to two significant events: the British colonization of many nations, which led to the widespread use of English for communication and trade, and the emergence of the United States as a major economic force.

Proficiency in the LSRW skills of the English language is beneficial for everyone due to its widespread use. In India, it facilitates connections with individuals from various linguistic backgrounds within the country and outside.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study's sample consisted of students. It was a purposeful sampling because the college administration agreed to allow the researcher to utilize and apply the produced modules for the indicated research.

VARIABLES

The independent variable is developed modules designed to improve primary student-teachers' English language ability, whereas the dependent variable is student-teachers' academic accomplishment in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills as measured by a researcher-made Pre and Post exam.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Academic achievement was measured using the Pretest-Posttest method. The relevant data was gathered using an opinion questionnaire and attitude measures. The details of the tools and techniques used to serve the aims of this study are described below.

DATA ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analyses will all be used to evaluate the quantitative data from the language proficiency testing and cognitive development evaluation. This study will shed light on the connection between primary school children' English language proficiency and cognitive development.

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Thematic analysis will be used to examine the qualitative information from the educator interviews. To find recurrent themes and patterns relating to the contribution of learning the English language to increasing cognitive development, the transcripts of the interviews will be rigorously coded and categorised.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All 34 primary student-teachers agreed on Statement 20, 'Reading practice at the end of each lesson was praiseworthy' (Intensity Index: 6.00). This was due to the researcher guiding the reading practice provided by the courses in the modules. Tucker's (2009) CD provided proper stress, diction, intonation pattern, and voice practice, which helped them improve their reading skills.

Statement 'On the whole, I enjoyed the orderly presentation of the modules' All 34 primary student-teachers expressed complete agreement (Intensity Index: 6.00). The lessons were well-ordered, planned, and structured, with an eclectic approach to teaching English.

Of the six claims, primary student-teachers expressed very high appreciation for statements 1, 2, 3, 20, and 30, however 23.53% had reservations about statement 5, "Grammar lessons were taxing." It is understandable that not everyone will enjoy grammar lectures because they are hard considering the backgrounds of the primary student teachers. It is also worth noting that the majority of them (70.59%) enjoyed the grammatical lectures. The aggregate result of all 6 statements demonstrates a very high rating for the first component, 'Appreciation expressed towards the modules'.

Analysis for the Component – Activity-oriented teaching in language learning

Table: 1

Sr No.	Statement	Agree	Cannot Decide	Disagree	Intensity Index
1.	I liked action songs.	34 (100%)	00	00	3.00
2.	Use of 'Flash Cards' made learning vocabularies faster.	34 (100%)	00	00	3.00
3.	'Spelling Bee' game helped a lot.	32 (94.11%)	02 (05.88%)	00	2.94
4.	Singing English songs enriched me.	34 (100%)	00	00	3.00
5.	Story Charts helped me in constructing sentences correctly.	34 (100%)	00	00	3.00
6.	The technique of story-telling made me more effective.	30 (88.24%)	04 (11.77%)	00	2.88
7.	Declamation instilled in me the power of speech-making.	20 (58.82%)	02 (05.88%)	12 (35.30%)	2.24
8.	Tongue-twisters were amusing.	34 (100%)	00	00	3.00
9.	Reading from the newspapers, advertisements, articles, post-cards was constructive.	34 (100%)	00	00	3.00
10	Debate exercises helped speaking and listening skills and targets critical thinking skills.	30 (88.24%)	04 (11.77%)	00	5.76
11	Describing a picture that was shown was interesting.	34 (100%)	00	00	6.00

12	Spinning Yarns competition was hilarious.	30 (88.24%)	02	00	5.76
13	The game of detecting miscommunication due to poor listening skills was enjoyable.	34 (100%)	00	00	6.00
Total					75.64
Total Statements 13 ÷ 75.64 =					5.81

CONCLUSION

Language facilitates social interaction among humans. Language's interactive character facilitates social connections. Language facilitates social contact and contributes to fostering integration. Effective social connections among individuals necessitate communication in a widely understood language.

Written language is essential for creating a diverse range of information that contributes to making knowledge available to everyone. According to Baron (2003), language is the primary means via which we may communicate our cognitive processes to others and receive similar information from them. A common language is necessary to make global knowledge widely accessible and beneficial for overall development. Global information sharing enhances knowledge and promotes progress.

A suitable mix of approaches, methods, and strategies employed in teaching English to student-teachers through the use of modules resulted in a paradigm change in how they viewed the English language. Following a discussion with the student-teachers, it was discovered that they did not have a decent English teacher in their previous schools. More frequently than not, the translation method was used, in which the teacher translated the words and sentences of the English text into the mother tongue. They had to go through the motions of learning English with little enthusiasm. It was a drab and uninteresting affair, with no teaching approaches or methods used. The teachers were not well-versed or conversant in English, therefore they were unable to encourage their students. For the first time, these primary student-teachers experienced actual English through the use of modules that were a carefully curated blend of various approaches, methods, and tactics. The main student-teachers actively participated and were interested in the activities, games, and group projects. They expressed a strong

desire to learn English and used to wait for the courses to begin. This explains the positive attitude change regarding the English language.

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