

Integrated Instructional Strategy in Enhancing the Ability of Student Teachers in English Prose Teaching

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Abstract: *The present Indian context calls for drastic steps to tone up English language teaching in schools and colleges. The prospective teachers have to be trained to be good facilitators who ensure effective English language learning among the students. In this research, an attempt has been made to devise a strategy for the teacher educators to train the prospective teachers of English for teaching a prose lesson. In this experimental study, the experiment group was trained through this integrated instructional strategy for 31 days. Both groups teaching was observed in school class rooms. The prospective teachers of experiment group performed well in the class room teaching compared with that of the control group.*

Keywords: *English education, prose teaching, instructional strategy, reading, vocabulary.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English has now evolved into a highly refined communication medium with the people in almost all the countries of the world increasingly using it for a multitude of purposes. What causes concern, however, is the rapid decline in the standard of English language teaching (ELT) in many educational institutions in the country with both the teachers and the taught not being in a position to use it effectively? Today people from all sections of the society are demanding a more professional and acceptable education course, which would suit the customer demands (students' demands) and meet the requirements of present globalization. This challenging demand of the society can be met only by preparing teachers for the task ahead of them.

A look into the history of language teaching reveals the long way of nourishment of many innovative methods and approaches of teaching a second or foreign language. Hence no one can ascertain that a particular method or approach is novel because it is up to the teacher's intelligence and the learners' requirements and capacity to follow. In Indian scenario, English has been taught more as a second language than as a foreign language. The syllabus of English taught in our educational institutions; be it school or college or university, comprises prose, poetry, grammar, supplementary readers and other language exercises. Among them, the scope of learning the language for the utilitarian purpose is more in learning prose. Hence it is high time to review the method of teaching prose, through which the optimum level of language acquisition occurs.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

In India, there are more than thousand institutions exclusively for teacher education. Along with them, universities have also been offering teacher education programmes both in regular and distance modes. Hundreds of thousands graduates have been trained into teachers. The sorry state of affairs is many of them do not have a clear grasp of the strategy to be followed in teaching subjects. The problem in teaching the second language ie. English is still more in acute stage, since the policy of teaching methodology across the state, the qualification of teachers who teach English, teaching-learning conditions and learners' personal background have a multitude of

variations. Though it is impossible to follow a unique method of teaching English, the teacher educators of teacher education institutes can mould their student teachers so as to tune them as able instructors in second language teaching. The general learning objective of a student on the completion of higher secondary level is to have a reasonable proficiency in the basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. More than the other genres, prose will be the most suitable mode for imparting the basic language skills. "The main aim in a prose lesson" says Dave Singh, "is to enlarge the vocabulary, explain the structure of sentences, and explain the grammatical constructions and to grasp the ideas and arguments of the author" (196)

Report of the Study Group (1967:36) observed "The one important factor which influences the standards in the teaching of English is the preparation of competent teachers of English at all stages in adequate numbers. The teaching of a second language is both a complicated art and science today... that is why the preparation of teachers of English has to be provided for in the most careful manner". Hence, the researcher focused on the prospective teachers of English for her study. Through this study the researcher intended an instructional strategy for training the student-teachers (B.Ed. trainees) who opt for English education as one of their optional subjects. If at the pre-service level itself the student teachers are trained in this model, it would bring a drastic positive change in the teaching-learning process of English in Indian classrooms especially in the schools.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The centers of learning - schools, colleges and universities - should function as visible hub centers of human resource development and up-gradation. Towards this the children would require focused attention on their learning needs as they have a right to a healthy and congenial environment that nurtures their creativity and furthers their learning. The U.S. Educationist Dr. Glenn Doman, Founder of Institute for the Development of Human Potential has worked upon the conviction that learning is a natural instinctive urge in young children often curbed or destroyed either by neglect and lack of exposure or by compulsory teaching. During more than three decades of work with both normal and brain damaged children Doman has shown that exposing the young to interesting sources of information for very brief periods each day stimulates the development of the brain cells. The most important responsibility of the teacher is to create a stress free classroom environment at the same time ensuring a promising atmosphere of better language learning.

At present, teachers of English around the world prefer some form of communicative teaching and learning, rather than the audio-lingual method and its derivatives. However, it should be kept in mind that a successful teacher is not necessarily biased in favor of one method or another. He/she should be first of all competent in and comfortable with the methods she wants to use. She tends to select different teaching strategies from different methods, and blends them to suit the needs of her materials and students. The significant aspect of the approach is the attitude of the teacher, which should be that learning in a form of play, which fosters the blossoming of the child's natural development. Learning should and can be made interesting, enjoyable and entertaining. Prospective English language teachers need to equip themselves with English – a fairly high standard of language competence. Secondly they need what has been called "grass root training". This kind of training, however, has to be modified operationally in order to meet the specific demands made by the Indian situation in general and the individual teacher in particular. Besides, this training will have to be viable on the psycho social front too – it must turn a trainee into a conscious personality and equip him with such techniques of teaching as are most appealing to both the teacher and the taught.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The prospective teachers are trained or educated about the language and the various methods and approached of teaching English. They are informed about the technology and innovations in the field of language teaching. But they are not given any chance to use them in the field. Moreover lecture method alone is followed in many of the teacher education institutions today. The integrated instructional strategy devised through this study will be more useful for the teacher

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educators to equip the student teachers to teach English prose lessons effectively. The other beneficiaries are the student teachers themselves.

5. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

5.1. Integrated Instructional Strategy

Integrated instructional strategy denotes the strategy followed by the teacher educators to the student teachers (B.Ed. trainees). It comprises lecture method, writing a play of the given prose lesson, preparing a PowerPoint for teaching new words, dramatization and other performance oriented techniques, techniques of journal writing and drawing mind maps, reading practice through tape recorders, demonstration of framing a lesson plan, arranging a group discussion and demonstration of a teaching session based on the strategy.

5.2. Student Teachers

Student teachers are the graduates who undergo the degree of Bachelor of Education which is mandatory for becoming a trained teacher.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- Many of the school students especially from the vernacular medium schools are lagging behind their counter parts in English language skills. They are far below the attainment of the learning objectives, even after the completion of their course of study.
- Many of the student teachers do not have a proper knowledge of aims and objectives of second language learning and the ways and means of curriculum transaction of second language teaching.
- The outdated lesson plan methods do not suit the present needs of second language learners. The English language learning atmosphere can be made interesting by an eclectic approach of teaching which is possible through this module.
- Through this integrated instructional strategy the efficiency of student teachers and the teachers in service is bound to be at appreciable level.

7. LIMITATIONS

The study was confined to the B.Ed. student teachers who opted 'English' as one of their optional papers. The strategy was devised only for teaching prose lessons. The sample size is limited as it was an experimental study and for a deeper observation of the teaching performance of the student teachers.

8. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are

- To train the student teachers to prepare the lesson plans following the new methodology.
- To demonstrate the teaching of a prose lesson.
- To assess the teaching efficiency of both the experimental and control groups of student teachers and compare them.

9. HYPOTHESES

- ❖ The experimental group student teachers who are trained through integrated instructional strategy teach better than the control group student teachers.
- ❖ The school students who are taught by the experimental group student teachers attain their learning objectives effectively and easily than their counterparts who are taught by the control group of student teachers.

10. METHODOLOGY

The methodology to be followed is the combination of both the preparation of the integrated instructional strategy and its experimentation. After a wide and in-depth consultation with the language experts and the online resources, the researcher designed this strategy for the student teachers. The researcher herself trained the student teachers of experiment group for 28 days following the integrated instructional strategy.

Table 1 – showing the details of the activities during the treatment period

No. of days	Activity	Method
2	Developing the reading skill of the student teachers (how to read with proper pronunciation by giving pause in appropriate places, following stress and intonation)	Demonstration and using tape recorders and mobile phones
1	Orienting about the aim of learning English and the aims and objectives of teaching a prose lesson	Lecture
1	Practice 'Thinking aloud'	Lecture and Demonstration
2	Writing a script for the given prose lessons. Practice in characterization, creating a plot, dialogue writing, spoken language	Demonstration
9	Training on how to train the school students to enact a play, mono act, mime, and tableau	Demonstration and students' participation
5	Orienting on journal writing, drawing mind maps and using black board	Lecture and Demonstration
3	Preparing a PowerPoint presentation for teaching new words	Demonstration and students' presentations
2	Techniques of arranging a group discussion related to the prose lesson	Lecture and Demonstration
1	Using black board and other teaching aids effectively and appropriately	Lecture and audio visual
2	Demonstration of teaching a prose lesson	Demonstration
3	Orienting about the evaluative techniques	Lecture and Demonstration

This lesson plan has three phases in major; the preparatory phase, the presentation phase and the evaluation phase. In the preparatory phase, the student teachers would select the most appropriate motivational activities for the lesson and modify them to suit the learners' ability. The presentation phase has further more three divisions; the first division is exclusively skill-based (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing), the second division is devoted to the vocabulary presentation, sentence structure analysis, and the inductive teaching of grammar, while the third division deals with the conglomeration of suitable approaches. Finally, the evaluation phase would dictate the formative evaluation of learner-based on the first two divisions of presentation phase (ie) skill improvement and linguistic development. In the experimentation schedule the student teachers' ability of teaching prose was assessed in terms of their fluency and ease in the classroom transaction and the school students' performance in that lesson. Their performance would be then compared with that of control group of student teachers.

11. SAMPLE

The sample taken for this experimental study was 62 in total. Of them 30 student teachers were studying in Sri Raja Rajan College of Education (Co-Educational), Karaikudi comprised the

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experiment group and the other 32 student teachers were from Sri Raja Rajan College of Education for Women, Amaravathipudur who were the control group.

12. RESEARCH TOOLS

The integrated instructional strategy was developed by the researcher and was validated by the language experts. The observation schedule for observing the teaching efficiency of teachers was developed by Dr.P.Prema (1986). A few modifications were made to make it suit to the teachers of English. The achievement tests conducted by the student teachers in their respective practice teaching schools were taken for showing the learning attainment of the school students.

13. PROCEDURE

The researcher devised the strategy after consulting the experts and online resources. After selecting the sample she conducted a pre-test to evaluate the student teachers' entry behavior and language proficiency. Assuring the equivalence among the student teachers, they were divided into two groups viz. experiment group and control group. She herself trained the experiment group for 31 days while the student teachers of control group were trained by the concerned teacher educator following his own methodology. The student teachers were observed and evaluated in the high and higher secondary schools where they were undergoing intensive teaching practice. The performances of the school students taught by the prospective teachers were also analyzed. The collected data were compared and analyzed later.

14. DATA ANALYSIS

As far as the experimental phase is considered the researcher followed the Pre test - Post test - Equivalent-Groups Design. In this design, a pretest was administered to both control and experimental groups, and the post test at the end of the treatment period. In the pre test the student teachers' attitude towards teaching profession, knowledge about the aims and objectives of teaching English as a second language and their language proficiency were assessed. The post test comprises the qualitative assessment of student teachers' prose teaching by the language teachers and the learning attainment of school students in English who were taught by the sample.

15. RESEARCH FINDINGS

- On the whole, the prospective teachers of experiment group performed well in the class room teaching compared with that of the control group.
- The students of the experiment group were more confident in their class room transaction than the control group. The former group felt ascertain about the aims and objectives of teaching English prose lesson than the latter group.
- The students of the experiment group could read well the prose lesson with proper pronunciation and other phonetic elements than the control group.
- The students of the experiment group taught the new words in the lesson with the use of PowerPoint presentation which appealed every student and apart from that the school students rapidly construct their own sentences using the new words; thereby they attained the aim of learning a new word.
- The students of the experiment group excelled in drawing mind maps and developing the prose lesson appropriately with well-established rapport with the students whereas the classroom interaction between the teacher and the students were not at the satisfactory level in the control group.
- The techniques of group discussion, dramatization and other stage shows like mono-act, mime and tableau were effectively handled by the students of the experiment group and they were missing in the class rooms of the control group teachers.
- As they were instructed the students of the experiment group wrote the journals which helped them to reflect their own teaching and helped them to modify and improve in the next class. But the student teachers of the control group never tried like that. They didn't register their class room experience in black and white.

- The students of the experiment group conducted formative evaluation regularly regarding the content of the lesson and apart from that they focused on developing and honing up the language skills of the students by conducting various language games. Hence the school students evinced enormous interest in learning the language which was noticed by their involuntary involvement in the class room transaction and frequent responses of the students. The class rooms were highly interactive and students centered. The class rooms of the prospective teachers of control group were as normal as other subjects and the students remained passive except the bright learners. The student teachers didn't pose many questions to the students and they were teacher centered.
- The average score of the achievement test scores of the school students taught by the experiment group was higher (78.8%) than their counterparts taught by the control group (68.4%).

16. DELIMITATIONS

The researcher could train the students for 31 days alone as they have to concentrate on theory papers too. The prospective teachers' performances were observed and registered by the respective mentors from the same schools where they undergo practice teaching. The researcher visited and observed all of them once or twice.

17. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is implied that the teacher education programme has to undergo a great change to suit the needs of the present society. The prospective teachers have to be trained well to teach a foreign language ie. English, knowing the aims and objectives of it. This strategy will be of great use to the teacher educators to train the student teachers. The student teachers can not consider teaching a language as equal to teaching a subject like science or mathematics. The main observation the researcher found was the necessity of prospective teachers' good command over English language. They must be ready to adapt new methodology and be familiarized with the advancements in their field. It was also recommended that the foreign language teachers need not completely depend upon the textbook. They should conduct many activities to develop the language skills of the students. Apart from teaching about the language, the prospective teachers must be encouraged to make their pupils to use the language.

18. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

Similar strategies can be devised for teaching poetry and other language elements.

Comparative studies on teaching English between any two common wealth countries may be conducted.

19. CONCLUSION

The training of English teachers assumes great importance today because, (i) the rapid increase in school and college enrolments and (ii) the deteriorating standards of teaching English. Prospective English language teachers need to equip themselves with English – a fairly high standard of language competence. Secondly they need what has been called “grass root training”. This kind of training, however, has to be modified operationally in order to meet the specific demands made by the Indian situation in general and the individual teacher in particular. Besides, this training will have to be viable on the psycho social front too – it must turn a trainee into a conscious personality and equip him with such techniques of teaching as are most appealing to both the teacher and the taught.

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