

Scholars Bulletin

(A Multidisciplinary Bi-weekly Journal)

An Official Publication of "Scholars Middle East Publishers",

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Website: <http://scholarsbulletin.com/>

ISSN 2412-9771 (Print)

ISSN 2412-897X (Online)

A Comparative Study on the Effectiveness of Teaching the Low Achievers in English through Functional Communicative Approach and Traditional Method at Secondary Level

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Abstract: Second Language Teaching in classroom situation is a challenging task for the second language teacher. The teacher has to make hectic effort to generate the four fundamental language skills among the learners in a heterogeneous classroom situation. Traditionally in the Indian situation the teacher is inclined to practice the Grammar Translation Method which is known as the Traditional Method to develop competencies among the learners. But the learners belonging to varied levels of capability cannot be made equally competent through this method that makes use of grammar rules and translation device in teaching English in the classroom situations. On the contrary, if teaching situation is manipulated through Functional Communicative Approach, second language learning happens to be a joyful experience so that the learners get motivated to be associated in the language process. The present Study is an attempt to explore experimentally the comparative effectiveness of the Traditional Method of teaching and teaching with Communicative Approach in the second language classroom situation.

Keywords: Traditional Method, Communicative Approach, Secondary Learners.

INTRODUCTION

Second language teaching is a complex network of activities. In the traditional ESL classroom situation the second language teacher has to make rigorous effort to promote the process of second language acquisition by mere application of the verbal skills with the help of text books without any conscious and consistent application of the learner-centric method. In the domain of target language learning, the second language teacher seeks to generate productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading) among the learners by means of grammar rules and strategy of translation from the second language text to the mother tongue and vice versa. Now it is a persistent question whether this long practiced method is really helpful in making the second language learners proficient in the second language in nature and practice or the much talked about functional communicative approach is more effective than the former in terms of the target language skill development.

Objectives of the Study

Teaching second language through the consistent use of first language as a point of reference is probably the manageable strategy in the context of second language teaching. Conventional teaching is generally conducted inside the classroom situation in a stereotyped way, whereby, the teacher continuously

builds a pattern of classroom discourse adhering to the principles of grammar translation method. But the learners' terminal behaviour in terms of second language acquisition still remains a question since he does not take a notice on the change of their learning behaviour. Keeping this view in mind the investigator undertakes an experimental project to know----

Whether the application of Functional Communicative Approach is more effective in language acquisition process in the rural school than the Traditional Method in generating those skills among the learners.

Whether the application of Functional Communicative Approach enhances the requisite degree of learning behaviour in terms of second language acquisition among the low achievers belonging to the secondary level under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in the district of Birbhum in West Bengal.

Whether the Functional Communicative Approach are more effective in concept attainment than the Traditional Method in teaching English texts.

Whether second language leaning with the Functional Communicative Approach in classroom situation enhances the performances of the low achievers belonging to the rural background in comparison to the

Traditional Method of teaching the same category of learners.

Whether second language leaning with the Functional Communicative Approach in classroom situation enhances the performances of the low achievers belonging to the urban background in comparison to the Traditional Method of teaching the same category of learners.

Whether Functional Communicative approach increases the retention level of the rural low achievers than the Traditional Method with regard to second language skill development.

Whether Functional Communicative Approach increases the retention level of the urban low achievers than the Traditional Method with regard to second language skill development.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

British linguist, Wilkins [7], proposed a functional or communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. Wilkins's contribution was an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express. The Council of Europe incorporated his semantic/communicative analysis into a set of specifications for a first level communicative language syllabus. The threshold level specifications [8] have had a strong impact on the on the design of the communicative language programs and textbooks in Europe. The rapid application of the ideas propagated by the British applied linguists and equally the rapid acceptance of these new principles by British language teaching specialists, curriculum development centres, text book writers and above all the government's initiatives gave communicative Approach that emerging status which helped it expand in globalized scenario. According to Richards & Rodgers [1] Communicative Approach aims to (a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching (b) develop procedures for the teaching of four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. Littlewood [2] states, "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language". Rather than describe the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary, Wilkins [7] attempted to demonstrate the system of meaning that lay behind the communicative use of language. He described two types of meaning: notional categories (concepts such as time sequence, quantity, frequency) and functional categories (requests, denials, offers, complaints). Howatt [3] opines: "The communicative language teaching stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes and attempts to integrate such activities into a

wide program of language teaching". According to this approach, teaching and learning are for communication. It presupposes that language always occurs in a social context, and it should not be divorced from its context when it is being taught.

Khalique [4] compares the use of direct, structural and translation methods of teaching and reports that most of them use translation method for language teaching whereas Bose [5] also emphasises the need for a functional approach rather than a structural one for English language teaching. The use of pre-unit activities is also advocated to familiarise learners about the concepts to be learnt at the higher primary levels of education.

The study of Ganguly and Ganguly [6] makes a significant finding. They report to the use of strategies like explaining rules of languages, questioning, paraphrasing, and lessons in their text books, dictating model, answers and pattern drills for teaching English. However, according to their findings, in spite of these strategies learners are not in a position to use language fluently at all. This finding is significant in the Indian context because it brings to the fore the need for using different strategies for first and second language. In the first language, the oral skills are naturally developed.

Austin J Damiani [9] in his article "The Grammar Translation Method of Language Teaching" states "As a teacher, I liked using the grammar translation method because I could assume the intelligence of my students; I could talk to them like the intelligent people that they are, and we could talk about the grammar and vocabulary that I was teaching. In another method, I would have had to use simple language and familiar phrases to communicate in the target language, and even then I could not be sure that my students knew and understand what it was that they were saying".

Statement of the Problem

The problem under the present study is entitled as:

A Comparative Study on the Effectiveness of Teaching the Low Achievers in English through Functional Communicative Approach and Traditional Method at Secondary Level

Terms Definitions

Low Achievers: The specific type of learners who fail to achieve expected level of proficiency in the domain of learning. They lag behind the average level of learners in terms of acquisition of productive and receptive skills of English. This sort of learners is challenging for the teachers.

Traditional Method: The traditional method of teaching implies the strategy of teaching that employs grammar

and translation as prime vehicle for teaching any sort of second language texts. Here, mother tongue is used as a point of reference to translate the meaning of the literary texts or vice versa.

Communicative Approach is a much-talked-teaching-about language teaching paradigm that resulted from a focus on communication as the organising principle for teaching rather than a focus on mere structural mastery as the goal of language teaching. It is based on the assumption that learning a language comes successfully through having the capability to communicate the real meanings with learners getting involved in contextual communication. According to American and British Applied linguists Communicative Approach categorically aims to i) make communicative competence as the goal of language teaching and ii) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. 'Functions' are labelled attached to sentences which embody concepts. The concepts convey categories of meaning called 'notions'. In fact the system of meanings lay behind the communicative uses of language. Notional Categories (concepts such as time, sequence, quantity, location, frequency) and categories of communicative functions (requests, denials, offers, and complaints) constitute the matrix of functional dimensions of communication. In fact the phrase 'Functional Communicative' underlies that communicative language teaching looks at language as a system for the expression of meaning using functions and notions. The 'Functional' connotation primarily points out that the primary functions of a language is interaction and communication. The basic proposition is that 'functions' are the fundamental framework through which forms are taught. Thus 'Functional Communicative' embodies the notion that communicative matrix of language can manifest itself through basic functional categories.

Hypotheses

In order to test the comparative effectiveness of second language teaching with Functional Communicative Approach and Traditional Method the following null hypotheses are formulated:

There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and control group on pre-test (urban school)

There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and control group on post-test. (urban school)

There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of

experimental and control groups on retention-test. (urban school)

There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on previous achievement tests. (Ruralschool)

There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on post-test, (rural school)

There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of experimental and control groups on retention-test. (rural school)

Design of the Study

Keeping in mind the objectives of the present research the researcher has devised the necessary design which comprises the following components:

Method of Study

Population of Study

Sample of the Study

Sources of collection of data

Procedure for investigation and data collection

Data treatment

Method of Study

The present study has been designed under experimental method. It attempts at evaluating the comparative effectiveness of the second language teaching with Functional Communicative Approach and Traditional Method to the low achievers in English at secondary level classroom situation under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in India. For the proper implementation of experimental design two schools, one from the rural backdrop and other from the urban backdrop have been selected. The two schools have been taken from two different blocks of the Birbhum district. Class X has been chosen for the purpose of experimentation of the teaching methods.

Population of the Study

The two schools belonging to two different blocks, namely, Suri I, and Dubrajpur have been selected deliberately selected for the specified purpose of investigation. The school from the urban background is, Benimadhab Institution and The rural school is Jashpur High School. Thus the pupils of the two schools constitute the population of the present study.

Sample of the Study

The 10th class of the two schools have been fixed up for experimentation. On the basis of their previous achievement records sixty students were isolated from the class ten of the rural school. Since their performance level was below the average they may be termed as the low achievers. Again on the basis

of their performance in the pre-achievement tests sixty students who perform poorly and below the average level were regarded as the low achievers of the urban school. Thus taken together total 120 students constitute the sample of the present study.

Sources of Collection of Data

In order to achieve necessary results of the present study the following tools were employed for collection of data:

- Pre-test of the students of the urban school
- The previous achievement records of the pupils of the rural school
- The post-tests of the low achievers of both the schools
- The retention tests of the low achievers both the schools
- The following scores will constitute the data for the present experiment
- The scores of the pre-test of the 10th class students under urban schools
- The scores of the previous achievement records of the 10th class students belonging to rural school
- The scores of the post-test of the 10th class low achievers of the rural school
- The scores of the post-test of the 10th class low achievers of the urban school
- The scores of the retention-test of the 10th class low achievers of the rural school
- The scores of the retention-test of the 10th class low achiever of the urban school

Procedure for Investigation and Data Collection

As mentioned earlier, sixty students 10th class of an urban school and 60 students of the 10th class of a rural school are the target groups for the present experimental research. A pre-test of the 10th class students of the urban school is taken. On the basis of the scores of the pre-test of the pupils of the said class of the urban school the pupils are segmented as the low achievers and they are divided into Experimental and Control group by using pair random sampling technique. 60 Low achievers of the rural school are also divided into Experimental and Control group on the basis of the previous achievement test by using the same pair random sampling technique. It is to be mentioned at the outset that the number of pupils under each group is 30. The Solomon Four Group Design is selected as the proper design for the present research. The design is as follows:

- Pupils are randomly assigned to four Groups (R)
- Two groups will receive Experimental treatment (X)
- Two groups will receive Control treatment (C)
- One Experimental Group will receive a Pre-test (O₁)
- One Control Group will receive a Pre-test (O₂)
- All the four groups will receive Post-tests (O₃O₄O₅O₆)

Experimentation

After careful observation of the teaching learning situation of the Birbhum district two schools from two different blocks are selected. The rural school, namely, Jashpur High School, belong to Dubrajpur Block, whereas, Benimadhab Institution is the urban school belonging to Suri I block. Two English teachers, one belonging to rural school and one from urban school, having equal qualification are selected to teach the Experimental group and the Control group. The teachers were provided with necessary orientation regarding the following points on the use Functional Communicative Approach:

- There is a consistent focus throughout on learning English in order to develop practical and functional skills.
- Students are engaged in practical tasks that relate to real world uses of English.
- Realistic and communicative uses of language are given priority.
- Maximum use is made of pair work and group work activities in which students complete tasks in a collaborate manner.
- There is an appropriate balance between accuracy-focused and fluency-focused activities.
- Teachers serve as facilitators of learning rather than as presenters of information.
- Assessment procedures reflect and support a communicative and skill-based orientation to teaching and learning.

The following prose texts of the Learning English text book for class X are selected to teach the students. 1) Engine Trouble, 2) A Great National Hero 3) The Refugee 4) Most Beautiful 5) Gifts of the Wise

The Experimental group is taught with the techniques and strategies based on the tenets of functional communicative approach to help them gather concepts on the above mentioned texts. Mostly and basically the teachers followed a learner-centred approach to motivate the students to be engaged in the language learning process. To develop the language skills individually the teachers consistently and rigorously followed the principles of the communicative approach and encouraged the pair work and group work techniques so that the learners can gather skills through the process of peer learning. The teachers triggered the interaction process so that the pupils can share and exchange their views in a mutual manner and develop the basic skills with the minimum help but active supervision of the teachers. Here the teachers did not take the initiatives to teach but become instrumental to creating the conditions for self learning and group learning. The teachers were tolerant enough not to over criticize the errors committed by the learners but helping them find out their areas of linguistic deviations and at last providing them necessary clarifications so

that concepts formations become possible among the learners.

The Control Group, on the other hand, is taught with rigorous application of the teacher-centric method. The teacher takes the upper hand to manipulate the second language learning situations in an absolute manner and always taking initiatives to rectify the learners' mistakes in a corrective manner. Basically the teacher followed the traditional strategy of teaching by translating the texts into Bengali and followed the principle of Grammar Translation Method. While teaching the target language texts they explained the rules of English grammar in a deductive manner encouraging the learners to memorize the rules with the assumption in mind that they will be able to use the rules for the purpose of constructing English structures. They also assumed that the learners will be able to use the rules to form their speech habits. The pupils are taught in a passive manner.

Test Construction

After the experimentation of teaching comprising two weeks duration is over, a teacher-made post-test is taken to compare the effectiveness of the experimental method and that of the traditional method. The investigator constructed both the pre-test and post-test after a thorough of the techniques of the principles of test construction relevant sections of selected prose units. In addition, the consent of the class teachers and teaching experts were also weighed in the construction of the tests. Each test comprises 50 multiple choice types items based on the selected prose units of 10th class. While constructing the texts the dimensions of the language and structures are taken into consideration.

Reliability of the Test

Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula is used to determine the reliability of the pre-test and post-test. Here the reliability is estimated by comparing the halves of the pre-test and post-tests. In this way the reliability co-efficient is found to be 0.75.

Analysis of Data

Raw scores obtained from pre-tests, school record, and post-tests and retention tests were presented in a tabular form for the purpose of interpretation. For the manipulation of data the means, standard deviations, and differences of means were calculated for each group. Significances of difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups on the variables of pre-test scores, school record scores and post-tests and retention tests scores was tested at 0.05 level by applying *t-tests*.

H₀₁: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test.(urban school)

Table-1: Significance of difference between the mean scores of Experimental and Control groups on pre-test.

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	61.32	15.16	3.99	0.28
Control	30	60.19	15.51		

df = 58

Table 1 indicates that the difference of mean scores of the low achievers of the Experimental and Control Group is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted so that both the groups could be treated as equal on the variable of pre-test.

H₀₂: There exists no significant difference between the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on post-test. (urban school)

Table-2: Significance of difference between the mean scores of Experimental and Control groups on post-test.

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	76.22	9.43	2.53	9.02
Control	30	53.21	10.31		

df = 58

The table 2 exhibits that the obtained *t-value* is 9.02 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.04 at 0.05 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group on post-test. So the null hypothesis is rejected and we can say that the low achievers of the experimental group have performed better since they were taught by the communicative approach.

H₀₃: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control group on retention-tests. (urban school)

Table-3: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the Experimental and Control group on retention-test (urban school)

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	73.1	9.21	2.42	8.95
Control	30	50.1	10.08		

df = 28

The table 3 exhibits the obtained *t-value* is 8.95 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.04 at 0.05 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and the control group on retention-test. So the null hypothesis

“There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and control group on retention-tests” (urban school), is rejected and we can say that the low achievers of the experimental group of the urban backdrop have performed better and have developed the ability to retain the learning experiences more than those of the control group since they were taught by Functional Communicative Approach.

H₀₄: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on previous achievement tests. (rural school)

Table-4: Significance of difference between the mean scores of Experimental and Control groups on previous achievement test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	58.1	15.62	4.06	0.18
Control	30	57.55	15.33		

df = 58

Table 4 indicates that the difference of mean scores of the Experimental and Control Group of the rural backdrop is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted so that both the groups could be treated as equal on the variable of previous achievement test.

H₀₅: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on post-test. (rural school)

Table-5: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the Experimental and Control groups on post-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	72.35	9.67	2.64	5.58
Control	30	57.21	11.03		

df = 58

The table 5 exhibits that the obtained *t-value* is 5.58 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.04 at 0.05 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group on post-test. So the null hypothesis is rejected and we can say that the students of the experimental group have performed better since they were taught by the communicative approach.

H₀₆: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on retention-test. (rural school)

Table-6: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the Experimental and Control groups on retention test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	71.44	9.23	2.69	5.26
Control	30	56.32	10.97		

df = 58

The table 6 exhibits that the obtained *t-value* is 5.26 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.04 at 0.05 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group on post-test. So the null hypothesis is rejected and we can say that the students of the experimental group have performed better since they were taught by the communicative approach.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

After systematic analysis of data six hypotheses were experimentally verified and necessary results were drawn. The H₀₁ exhibits that there exists no significant difference between the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test. H₀₁ indicates that the low achievers of the Experimental and the Control group of the urban school can be treated as equal on the basis of I.Q. level. The hypothesis test of H₀₂ states that there exists significant difference between the experimental and the control group on post-tests. The testing of H₀₃ states that there is significant difference between the level of the low achievers of the experimental and control group on retention test taken in the urban school. The H₀₄ exhibits that there exists no significant difference between the low achievers of the experimental group and the control group of low achievers on pre-test in the rural school. H₀₄ indicates that the low achievers of the Experimental and the Control group of the rural school can be treated as equal on the basis of I.Q. level. Again the H₀₅ upholds that there is significant difference between the experimental and the control group on post-test at the rural school. The testing of H₀₆ states there is significant difference between the level of the low achievers of the experimental and control group on retention test taken in the rural school. The experimental study conducted at both the rural and the urban school exhibit that the second language skills of the low achievers at both rural and urban level can be developed considerably if they are taught with Functional Communicative Approach. The traditional Method on the other hand is least effective in terms of second language skill development of the learners.

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