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EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DIRECT AND THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The problem of method in teaching to Indian school pupils is best understood by special difficulties and conditions, which have to be faced squarely before the question of procedure can be taken up for consideration. It is when these special circumstances do not receive the consideration they deserve, that method of teaching English proves ineffective. English in India is a modern foreign language differing more from any vernacular familiar to pupil than English differs from French or German.... This furnishes the chief reason for a special method appropriate to the teaching of English in India, and it is repeatedly overlooked in the standards expected of the pupil, in the distribution of emphasis upon the different attainments that are associated with language study, in the selection of books for study and the methods adopted in teaching (Thompson and Wyatt).

There appears to be little appreciation of the difference in teaching a language, teaching about a language and teaching through a language. In the dominant monolingual model of the West, the same tendency of dominance of the majority language is sought to be grouped in different linguistic states in the country. Since English, the language of colonial inheritance, still dominates the educational world, the debate about regional language as medium of education clouds many significant issues such as above. Therefore, any methodological innovation based on this distinction is not available. (D.P. Pattanayak in the Third Survey of Research in Education, 1978-1983, NCERT)

As a matter of fact studies in the field of teaching of English are not lacking. What lacks is studies helpful in evolution and evaluation of a methodology. A comparative empirical study in methodological evaluation, particularly in English is largely unexplored. The present study is intended to examine the comparative efficacy of two dominant but characteristically different methods of teaching English, namely the Direct and the Traditional method, inclusive of variables that affect the efficacy largely and definitely.
INTRODUCTION

"An armory of human mind", as Coleridge defines it, language as "an instrument of symbolic comprehension, expression and communication" is the most reliable companion in Man's constant exploration - opening new vistas, new dimensions – for the advancement of civilization. Each language is deeply rooted in a particular culture. Acquaintance with a language implies acquaintance with the culture it comes from. The indispensable value of language acquisition in such wider perspective is explicit.

Explicit also is the value of teaching a language. It is both an art and a science. In spite of its grammatical regulations, language is not mathematics. It differs characteristically in its imitative and associative process. It is a system of systems. Moreover, by virtue of using systematic vocal symbols each language differs both in system and in the symbols for the concepts represented by them. It is for these reasons that teaching a language (especially a second language or a foreign language) and that too a foreign language as a second language, as is the case with English in India, needs a closer and deeper insight into the complex mechanism of language learning.

A systematic analysis of this 'system within system' may reveal some facts helpful in formulating a more adequate mechanism that may facilitate some control over the complex and often frustrating phenomenon - methodology of teaching English. Method means the way to reach a definite goal. Method teaching (methodology) consists, in a wider sense, selection of aims and objectives in a definite and exclusive way, the proposing and planning of curricula, the designing of teaching materials (textbooks etc.) and procedure and techniques or devices (this includes testing also) taken by the teacher in order to make teaching and learning effective. "A complete and ideal language method has a four-fold objective and this is to enable the student, in the shortest possible time and with the least effort, so as to assimilate the materials of which the foreign language is composed that he is thereby enabled to understand what he hears and reads, and also to express himself correctly, both by oral and written mediums." (Palmer, F.R.)

Taking functionality as the keynote, the task ahead is to examine in the light of above description, the characteristic and the salient features of two distinctively different methods of teaching English – the Direct method and the Traditional method

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To comprehend and appreciate the means and ends of teaching English in India, such genuine inquiries are to be responded as:

Why English? i.e. if English is to be taught, with what aims and objectives?

Why a method? i.e. the importance of a method in general and particularly when the 'ecology' is changed.

Which method? i.e. if a method is to be adapted, which one?

: 25:

REFERRED JOURNAL
The answer must bear a rationale inclusive of the analysis that lays bare the fundamentals of method— in comparison and in its own.

An estimate of the present status of English in India would serve as the prelude to the investigation for the aforesaid questions. And the estimate converges on the following problematic situation in secondary schools:

1. Poor achievement in English in secondary schools examinations.
2. English becoming a bug-bear for most of the students, even if they might have a positive attitude towards the subject.
3. The strategy of learning and teaching English suffers from the drawbacks in the sense that they are mere imitations of the strategy adopted in the West without any consideration of the characteristically different situations of the Indian learners.
4. The students coming from the lower (at least educationally) socio-economic background constitute a large section of the school population, varied in linguistic standards, attitude, aptitude and needs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the present study can be appreciated if its appeal and usefulness be related to the following aspects of English:

1. English is an extensively used language. So, it is essential to know this language up to a basic level i.e. the acquisition of four skills, for functional purpose at least.
2. India is a multilingual country. Though Hindi is the national language, in most states people use English as the language of communication.
3. English is an international language and in this age of rapid scientific and technological changes and consequent faster communication a progressive individual has to keep abreast of international affairs either actively or passively. Knowledge of English is an asset and the indispensable resource for the ambitious.
4. After completion of secondary education those who wish to join higher education have to depend on books and other resources that are largely available in English.

OBJECTIVES

The study was conducted for fulfillment of following objectives.

1. To prepare teaching material for teaching English.
2. To prepare the test materials according to the teaching material (Achievement Test)
3. To find out the effectiveness of the Direct and the Traditional methods of teaching English.
4. To find out the effectiveness of the two methods in case of boys of Govt. and Missionary schools.
5. To find out the effectiveness of the two methods in case of girls of Govt. and Missionary schools.
6. To find out the effectiveness of the two methods in case of boys and girls of Govt. schools.
7. To find out the effectiveness of the two methods in case of boys and girls of Missionary schools.
8. To find out the effectiveness of the Traditional method in case of boys of Missionary schools and girls of Govt. schools.
9. To find out the effectiveness of the Direct method in case of boys of Govt. schools and girls of Missionary schools.

ASSUMPTIONS

The study is based on the following assumptions.

1. English can be taught both by the Direct and the Traditional methods.
2. Effectiveness of a teaching method in terms of pupils’ acquired behavioural change can be measured by Achievement test.
3. By teaching through these methods the objective of teaching English will be fulfilled to greater extent than at the beginning of the experiment.
4. Homogeneity of groups can be judged statistically.

VARIABLES CONSIDERED

After careful analysis of the problem and review of related literature, the variables which direct impact on teaching methods were identified.

Independent Variables

i. School environment
ii. Gender
iii. Age
iv. Teacher
v. Length of treatment (No. of Periods)
vi. Content
Methods of teaching (Experimental Variables)

Social environment

Size of the class

Dependent Variables

In the study scholastic achievement (post-test achievement) of the students was the dependent variable.

Measures to control the variables

The following measures were taken to control the variables:

i. Physical manipulation
ii. Selective manipulation
iii. Statistical manipulation

The variables those were not amenable to physical or selective manipulation were controlled by statistical techniques. The variables namely, school environment, social environment can not be controlled for the purpose of this study.

The variables controlled by physical manipulation were

i. Length of treatment (No. periods)
ii. Content
iii. Size of the class

No. of periods were pre-fixed for all the groups. Equal no. of periods with equal length of time were allotted for all the groups.

By using the same content this variable was controlled.

But to control the size of the class, all students were included in the grc. Ip.

The variables controlled by selective manipulation:

i. Gender
ii. Age
iii. Teacher

To control the gender variable, two different types of schools were taken for the study and two homogeneous groups were formed by randomization. Variation in age of students was
approximately six months to one year. The variation was not of much importance hence neglected.

The investigator himself taught the students of all the groups.

Statistical Control:

Physical control and other controls are not fully possible. In order to overcome this limitation Analysis of Co-variance was done for statistical control of errors. F-test was done to ensure homogeneity of groups.

HYPOTHESES

H1. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on students’ learning will be significantly different.

H2. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the boys of the Govt. school and the Missionary schools will be significantly different.

H3. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the girls of the Govt. school and the Missionary schools will be significantly different.

H4. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the boys and girls of the Govt. school will be significantly different.

H5. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the boys and girls of the Missionary schools will be significantly different.

H6. The effects of the Traditional method on the boys of Missionary schools and girls of Govt. schools will be significantly different.

H7. The effects of the Direct method on the boys of Govt. schools and girls of Missionary schools will be significantly different.

NULL HYPOTHESES

H01. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on students’ learning will not be significantly different.

H02. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the boys of the Govt. school and the Missionary schools will be significantly different.
H3. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the girls of the Govt. school and the Missionary schools will not be significantly different.

H04. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the boys and girls of the Govt. school will not be significantly different.

H05. The effects of the Direct and the Traditional methods on the boys and girls of the Missionary school will not be significantly different.

H06. The effects of the Traditional method on the boys of Missionary schools and girls of Govt. schools will not be significantly different.

H07. The effects of the Direct method on the boys of Govt. schools and girls of Missionary schools will not be significantly different.

POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

Population: All the students of class VIII of all the Secondary schools of Jharkhand.

Sample: All the students of Class VIII of four Secondary schools in Dumka

Sampling: Following steps were followed for sampling.

1. The technique of purposive sampling was adopted for area selection.
   Dumka was selected purposively.

2. All the secondary schools of Dumka were stratified in two stages
   a. Administration - Govt., Missionary and Project schools
   b. Gender - Boys, Girls and Co-education

3. After stratification 4(four) secondary schools were selected.
   a. One Govt. boys’ school
   b. One Govt. girls’ school
   c. One Missionary boys’ school
   d. One Missionary girls’ school
TOOLS:
Two types of tools were constructed
1. Measuring tools i.e. Achievement tests for pre-test and post-test scores. Contents were selected and the achievement tests were prepared with the help of experts.
2. Instructional tools along with instructions for teachers for teaching the selected contents, evaluation etc.
3. Content Analysis was done for the contents selected for teaching

COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA
Collection of Data
Pre-test scores:
An entry level behavior test based on previous English language ability was constructed and was administered on selected samples. Test forms were evaluated according to the pre-fixed answer-key and scoring-key.

: 31 : REFERRED JOURNAL
Post-test scores:

After classification into two treatment groups, students were treated through different methods. After completion of lessons a common achievement test was administered on both the treatment groups. Test forms were evaluated according to the pre-fixed answer-key and scoring-key.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of Pre-test scores:
Homogeneity of variance test was done. Both the groups were found to be homogeneous.
Analysis of Post-test Scores:
A. For testing Hypothesis H1
   I. Analysis of Co-variance was done.
   II. Analysis of Variance was done taking X and Y scores separately.
   III. Correlation and Regression were calculated
   IV. t-test was done

HYPOTHESIS - WISE DISCUSSION AND INFERENCES

1. Hypothesis H1:
   ‘t’ was found significant at .05 level (followed by F). So the null hypothesis H01 was rejected and hypothesis H1 was accepted. It means that there was a significant difference between the achievement scores of two groups treated through two different methods.
   The gain was in favour of Group 2, treated through the Traditional method. So, we can infer that the Traditional method is more effective than the Direct method.

2. Hypothesis H2:
   ‘t’ was found significant at .05 level (followed by F). So the null hypothesis H02 was rejected and hypothesis H2 was accepted. It means that the effects of the two teaching methods on the boys of Govt. school and the Missionary school are significantly different.
   The gain was in favour of boys of the Missionary School, treated through the Traditional method, So, we can infer that the Traditional method is more effective in case of boys of the Missionary school than the boys of the Govt. school.

3. Hypothesis H3:
   ‘t’ was found significant at .05 level (followed by F). So, the null hypothesis H03 was rejected and hypothesis H3 was accepted. We can say that the effect of the two teaching methods on the girls of the Govt. school and the Missionary school is significantly different.
However, the gain is in favour of girls of the Missionary school treated though the direct method. So, we can infer that the Direct method is more effective in case of girls of the Missionary school.

4. Hypothesis H4:
   ‘t’ was found significant at .05 level (followed by F). So, the null hypothesis H04 was rejected and hypothesis H4 was accepted. We can say that the effect of the two teaching methods on the boys and girls of the Govt. school is significantly different. Moreover, the gain is in favour of girls of the Govt. school treated through the Traditional method. So, we can infer that the Traditional method is more effective in case of girls of Govt. school.

5. Hypothesis H5:
   ‘t’ was not significant at .05 level. However F-test showed that the two groups were heterogeneous. So, the null hypothesis H05 is accepted and the hypothesis H5 is rejected. It means that the effects of the two teaching methods on boys and girls of Missionary are not significantly different. We can infer that the effects of the two teaching methods on the boys and girls of missionary schools are similar.

6. Hypothesis H6:
   ‘t’ was found significant at .05 level (followed by F). So, the null hypothesis H06 was rejected and hypothesis H6 was accepted. It means that the effect of the Traditional method on the boys of the Missionary school and girls of the Govt. school is significantly different. The gain is in favour of boys of the Missionary school. So, we can infer that the Traditional method is more effective in case of boys of the Missionary school.

7. Hypothesis H7:
   ‘t’ was not significant at .05 level. However F-test showed that the two groups were heterogeneous. So, the null hypothesis H07 is accepted and the hypothesis H7 is rejected. We can say that the effects of the direct method on the boys of the Govt. school and girls of the Missionary school are not significantly different. We can infer that the effects of the Direct method on the boys of the Govt. school and girls of the Missionary school are similar.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
1. Sample was not so large as to deduce any general conclusion from the study.
2. Tools were validated with the help of experts. It was not possible to apply other techniques of validity.
3. Tools were reliable by expert judgment. No statistical technique was used to judge its reliability.

4. Only a short period of exposure was given during the teaching of contents selected.

5. The teaching was focused mainly on the behavioural objectives. For a better judgment all the other objectives should have been taken into consideration.

6. It was not possible to control all the variables up to the level best. For an intensive study it is most important. However, the investigation has been given sufficient care to control the variables within the limited facilities.

**DISCUSSION**

The study reveals, under all its limitations and constraints, the superiority of the Traditional method over the Direct method, empirically. Yet, an analysis, in the light of the revelation, of the functionality of the ambivalent basic principal constituents in the composition of the methods namely—use of mother-tongue, grammar and oral work— with varying emphasis, would make the revelation more meaningful.

It is not to make the Direct method a null and void and the Traditional method all sufficient. What is intended to show is that in a matter of selection 'one's lapse is other's gain'. And by such, the Traditional method has come to be superior to the Direct method, with more advantages. But whether it is superior to all methods and approaches and also under all circumstances?—will be an investigation much more extensive than the present one. A search for a 'complete method'.

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: 34: