ABSTRACT

Developing Essay Writing Skills of ESL Learners Using Task Based Language Teaching Approach in AP

English is no more a language of the elite people but also of the common man. With the changing winds and shifting sands, the importance of English from the olden days to the present days has also been changed. In today’s global world, English occupies a prominent place among all the languages in the world and it is widely spoken across the world. Though English is also used by laypersons in the society, still the students in the regional medium contexts are not able to enjoy the fruits of English as they lack proficiency in all four skills of the language. While the students in English medium schools are benefiting to the core by gaining proficiency in English, it is still an unfulfilled dream for the students in regional medium contexts. Various factors impact the learning of these learners. To be able to express their thoughts and ideas in a written form is vital in an academic learning context. Writing skill is a power tool for communication through which ideas, thoughts, and reflections can be expressed. Writing is skill is a key factor to academic success. Without being good at writing, it is difficult to convey the knowledge we want to share with others. Without good writing skills the learners in regional medium contexts might feel challenged. Learning to write is a complex and time taking process so, learners are preoccupied with the thoughts of fear and anxiety. Learning or teaching writing skills is inevitable for both learners and teachers in an academic context.
Among the learners who would feel inferior in writing performance are likely be
the ones from the regional medium schools and they form the majority. There are many
reasons for not being able to write properly, and some of the reasons include inadequate
teaching methods and materials, lack of commitment towards teaching, lack of suitable
teaching aids and many other factors. The classes are teacher-centered and learners do not
get any opportunities to perform and practice the skill they receive from the teachers.
Traditional teaching methods are inadequate to cater to the problems faced by the
learners in the second language classes. They do not provide enough exposure to learn
the second language instead rote learning is observed in the regional medium context. In
such a scenario, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach was thought to be a
remedy.

The objective of this study was to observe the impact of the TBLT approach on the
learning of students to improve their essay writing skills. The effectiveness of TBLT in
impacting on the writing of ESL learners positively was the primary purpose. The
experiment was carried out with a group of 55 learners from class VIII. They came from
the regional medium background in Andhra Pradesh. The learners of this context were
not able to write essays with a proper format; introduction, body and conclusion. For
examination purpose, they memorize the content and reproduce the essays by imitation.
In the real time learning context, they were unable to write anything. Prior to the main
study, the researcher had to conduct a pre-test to know the problems of learners and to
evaluate their performance. Based on the performance of the subjects in the pre-test, the
researcher designed the current research study. Research question included in the study
is: Does the task-cycle have any positive impact on students’ essay writing? ? How does
it impact the essay writing of ESL learners? To assist them in writing their essays, the researcher had to use several tasks and the task-cycle (suggested by Willis for TBLT framework) to aid them in writing narrative and descriptive essays.

The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One discusses the context along with the need for the study. It unfolds how the research question was formulated in anticipation of the improvement that might take place after using the TBLT approach. It also deals with the rationale for using TBLT approach for developing essay writing skills of ESL learners. Further, it discloses the research design and significance of the study. In addition to the above mentioned details, the chapter also gives glimpses into geographical conditions of India along with emphasis on the importance of English language. It mentions how the hypothesis of the study and the research question were formulated. It also mentions the objectives of the study.

Chapter Two reviews the literature referring to many research studies, articles and books. It unpacks the relevant literature with a focus on the research study. This chapter while citing and reviewing related literature also presents theoretical underpinnings of the current study.

Chapter Three deals with the research design of the study. As the study was experimental in nature, it comprises pre-tests, intervention study and also post-tests. The chapter also discusses the tools administered in the study questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observation. Further, the research design clearly describes the four phases of the study: 1) pre-test phase, 2) intervention, 3) post-test and 4) the administration of tools: questionnaires, classroom observation and interviews. Further, it
discusses the two phases of the research study: Phase I and Phase II. A detailed description of the research study is also discussed in chapter Three.

Chapter Four discusses the analysis of the data. The chapter presents the data which was collected from various tools. The data which was drawn from primary and secondary sources was analyzed and interpreted in this chapter. The data is presented in a tabular and a graphical form for a clear interpretation of the data analysis.

Chapter Five is the final and the concluding chapter. It examines the findings of the study in the light of the research question and the hypothesis. It also discusses how the implications of the study along with the recommendations would be applicable to the language teachers, especially the teachers in the regional medium context, policy makers and material designers. It concludes with the findings, implications and recommendations. The chapter also mentions a few pragmatic and pedagogical contributions made to policy makers, language teachers and material developers. It ends with the limitations of the study.