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Introduction
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1.1 **Introduction:**

Importance of English as a language for communication in business, industry, education, medicine, fashion sports, travel, hospitality, service sector (as a matter of fact in most aspects of life) has now been established beyond doubt. In fact in everyday life we come in close contact with people from various parts of the world. English may not be the only language but it is clearly the best suited language for communicating with people from different countries and in Indian context from different states. To compete at national and international level, knowledge of correct English gives one an edge. Most of the world learns English as a second language and hence the age at which this learning begins is higher for them than those for whom it is the first language.

For learning of English as second language there are two different objectives or motivations that people typically have.

1. To be able to read and understand English texts and also be able to write in English.

2. To be able to have effective oral communication in English

For effective communication the development of skill level of spoken English as second language is necessary.

In India the first objective has been important for many years but the second objective has recently become more dominant. The extensive use of
English as the only means of communication in business and industry often makes the skill critical for professional success. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and Multi National Companies (MNCS) have made it even more compelling. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and especially the internet have brought the world together as never before. The distances have shrunk dramatically. Knowledge and information can be spread and shared in no time. The world as such is transformed into a Global Village. To underline the importance of English in India a paragraph from National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) report – National Focus Groups, Position- paper is cited below(1).

“English is in India today a symbol of people’s aspiration for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its colonial origin was forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independent India, tailored to higher education (as a ‘library language’, a ‘window on the word’), now felt to be insufficiently inclusive socially and linguistically, the current status of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena.”

In such a scenario English language is looked upon as a language to open the door of opportunities. The opening up of Indian Economy in the 1990s is also a major factor for the increased demand of English learning in our schools. The perception of English language as a window to the world has now changed to “window to the world of success.”
The pressure for early introduction of English in school system in India is mentioned in an NCERT report 2003\(^{(2)}\). It states that English is introduced in Class I or Class III by 26 states or union territories out of 35.

Importance of English in today’s scenario is now established beyond any doubt. The language spoken at home and in the surroundings is mainly the regional language in Gujarat state. However for English language a method based on the principle of alphabetic writing is necessary for the beginner. The alphabetic principle of English spelling is that the letters are used to represent speech sounds i.e., phonemes. A typical class room in India uses text books for teaching English. They are rather deficient in providing any systematic information on phonemes. The beginners are expected to memorise the whole word. Most of the teachers have learnt the English skills the same way.

The teaching methodology of this project is based on the principle of Synthetic Phonics. This method is appropriate when used at the very beginning of learning of English language. At this stage all written words are virtually unfamiliar. This method first teaches the learner to recognize the forty four sounds of the English language before moving onto reading books. This method involves the teaching of phonemic graphemic awareness. This awareness helps the learner to decode words and master the fundamentals of reading.
1.2 **Statement of the Problem:**

In this research project an attempt is made to bring in a method which helps the beginners in the learning of the English language. The method is based on synthetic phonics. This is coupled with a far and wide reaching technology, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The study was restricted to Gujarat State. Hence the statement of problem is formulated as given below.

"A study of effectiveness of ICT Based synthetic Phonics Method on the learning outcomes of first time learners of English language in Gujarat State in the context of certain variables"

1.3 **Definitions of terms:**

a) Phonics: There are many definitions used.

- Method of reading instruction that breaks language down into its simplest components \(^{(3)}\)

- Teaching reading by training beginners to associate letters with their sound values \(^{(4)}\)

- A method of teaching reading that focuses on letter-sound relationships \(^{(5)}\)
b) Synthetic Phonics

- Synthetic Phonics is a method of teaching reading which first teaches the letter sounds and then builds up to blending these sounds together to achieve full pronunciation of whole words. The method relates to English language only.\(^{(6)}\)

- System of teaching children to read by synthesizing sounds from letters.\(^{(7)}\)

c) ICT: Information and Communication Technology

d) Operational Definition of ICT based Synthetic Phonics Method:

- Synthetic phonics method to teach English with the help of computer, multimedia CD, and interactive CD etc.

e) Learning Outcomes:

- Statements indicating the end result for a learner following a learning activity; usually stated in what a person can observe the learner do at the end of a learning activity.\(^{(8)}\)

- Operational Definition of learning outcomes:
The first time learner of English language using ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method will be able to read, write and comprehend English text and speech.

- **Operational Definition of First Time Leaner:**

  Students who are learning English language for the first time. First standard students of English medium school and fifth standard students of Gujarati medium are called first time learners in this project.

1.4 **Objectives of the study:**

The present research study has two main or broad objectives.

The first main objective is to compare the two methods of English language teaching namely ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and traditional Method. These are described in Section I.

The other main objective is to study the effectiveness of ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method in context of certain variables. These are given in Section II.

The details of the objectives in the Section I and in the Section II are stated here.
Section I: Comparison of the two methods: There are five objectives in this section.

1. To compare the total achievement of the first time learners of English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and traditional method.

2 To compare the word recognition ability of the first-time learners taught by the ICT based synthetic phonics method and traditional method.

3 To compare the first-time learner’s spelling ability taught by the ICT based synthetic phonics method and traditional method.

4 To compare the first-time learner’s reading comprehension ability taught by the ICT based synthetic phonics method and traditional method.

5 To compare the first time learner’s listening comprehension ability taught by the ICT Based synthetic phonics method and the traditional method.
Section II: There are six objectives in the section. There are six variables in the context of which the study is carried out.

1. To study the effect of the variable ‘gender’ on the mean achievement scores of first time learner of the English Language taught by ICT based synthetic phonic method.

2. To study the effect of the variable ‘birth-order’ on the mean achievement scores of first time learners of the English Language taught by ICT based synthetic phonic method.

3. To study the effect of the variable ‘school area’ on the mean achievement scores of first time learners of the English Language taught by ICT based synthetic phonic method.

4. To study the effect of the variable ‘use of English at home’, on the mean achievement scores of first time learners of the English Language taught by ICT based synthetic phonic method.

5. To study the effect of the variable ‘parent education’ on the mean achievement scores of first time learners of the English Language taught by ICT based synthetic phonic method.

6. To study the effect of the variable ‘mother tongue’ on the mean achievement scores of first time learners of the English Language taught by ICT based synthetic phonic method.
1.5 Variables of the Study

There are four types of variables in this research work. These are as follows:

Treatment Variables: The two treatment variables in this study are as follows:

- ICT Based synthetic phonics method of teaching English.
- Traditional method of teaching English.

Independent Variables: The effectiveness of ICT based synthetic phonics method is studied in the context of six independent variables. This study forms section II of this research. The independent variables are:

- Gender
- Birth Order
- Level of Parent Education
- Area of the school
- Use of English at Home
- Mother tongue
Dependent Variables: The scores of the Achievement Tests are the dependent variable of this research. These are as follows:

- Total Achievement Scores
- Word recognition Scores
- Spelling Ability Scores
- Reading Comprehension Scores
- Listening Comprehension Scores

Moderate Variables: The research experiments were conducted for two consecutive years. Year is considered as a moderate variable

- Year 2007-2008
- Year 2008-2009

1.6 Importance of the study

Poor attainment of English language communication skills have often caused a lot of despair amongst the student community particularly those going to professional colleges. Many institutions of higher learning have started taking corrective measures to provide some relief to the students by creating language laboratories and introducing language skill courses in their curricula. AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) makes it mandatory for all Engineering
colleges in India to have a language laboratory. However, this is often too little and too late.

The best place to intervene would be in the schools when the instruction has just started. The advent of ICT has opened up new avenues to address this issue. If done in a systematic manner ICT could provide the most cost effective means of imparting instruction in English as the second language. Functionality of the ICT is far more than what just a teacher can provide. It can extend the phonics teaching of English in many different ways. This study is of particular importance in education as quality teacher resources for teaching of English are scarce in most of the world and ICT tools could bring in some additional functionality to the method.

In recent years the synthetics phonics method has proved successful in large trials in some parts of UK and US. It has also been taken up in Austria and Germany. This research project builds on the success of synthetic phonics method adding to it the functionality of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies).

In this project an attempt has been made to teach the four language skills; namely, word recognition, spelling ability, reading comprehension and listening comprehension in more effective ways to the first time learners of English language. The computers, multimedia are added advantage of this method. The learning is more interesting and engaging. It is student-centric in nature. The learning pace is dictated by the capability and achievement
level of the students. To demonstrate this, the samples are chosen from far and wide area. The thesis should lead to a better understanding of issues in the teaching of English.

There are many educational implications of the study. The most important one is that this method will help to overcome the shortage of good quality English language teachers. Gujarat state is no exception to this. In remote areas the shortage is even more acute. The proposed ICT based synthetic phonics method will give much greater confidence to the new teachers. Hence, it can be used in teacher training as well

1.7 Limitations of the study

The study is experimental in nature. It is conducted in two areas that are far apart. One is urban area and the other is a tribal area. Four schools from urban area and two schools from tribal area were selected. Hence the limitation of the study is that it covers only a few schools in Gujarat state.
1.8 **Hypotheses**

The research work is experimental in nature. The experiment was carried out in two consecutive years (2007-08 and 2008-09). As the experiment done in both the years was same, the null hypothesis is same for both the years. In the first section the results of experimental method are compared with traditional method. In the second section effectiveness of ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method is studied in context of certain variables.

**Section I**: There are five null hypotheses in this section.

1. There is no significant difference between the means of the total achievement scores of the first time learners of English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and Traditional Method.

2. There is no significant difference between the Means of Word Recognition Scores of the first time learners of English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and traditional method.

3. There is no significant difference between the Means of Spelling Ability Scores of the first time learners of English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and traditional method.

4. There is no significant difference between the Means of Reading Comprehension Scores of the first time learners of English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and traditional method.
5. There is no significant difference between the Means of Listening Comprehension Scores of the first time learners of English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method and traditional method.

Section II: To study the effectiveness of ICT Based Synthetic Phonics method on learning of English language in context of certain variables:
There are six null hypotheses in this section:

1. There is no significant influence of the variable ‘gender’ on the mean achievement scores of the first time learners of the English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method.

2. There is no significant influence of the variable “birth-order” on the mean achievement scores of the first time learners of the English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method.

3. There is no significant influence of the variable ‘school area’ on the mean achievement scores of the first time learners of the English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method.

4. There is no significant influence of the variable ‘use of English at home’ on the mean achievement scores of the first time learners of the English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method. In context of the variable – use of English at home or absence of use of English at home.
5. There is no significant influence of the variable ‘level of parent education’ on the mean achievement scores of the first time learners of the English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method in context of difference in the level of the parent education.

6. There is no significant influence of the variable ‘mother-tongue’ on the mean achievement scores of the first time learners of the English language taught by ICT Based Synthetic Phonics Method based on different mother-tongue.

1.9 **Scheme of reporting:**

The following scheme of reporting is followed in this research study.

The Methods and Approaches of teaching of English language are discussed in chapter two. The third chapter deals with the study of the research done in this area. The fourth chapter deals with the planning aspect and the research design of the study. The fifth chapter contains the data collection, its analysis and the interpretation by the researcher. The sixth chapter includes summary, conclusions and Suggestions for future work.
Reference:


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