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DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR THE PROFESSIONAL COURSE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a study of the language needs of the Professional students. In particular, the study seeks to examine the significant differences if any in the performance of the students in vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and organization components in English due to variation in Medium of Instruction at Intermediate. Findings of the study also shed light on the specific set of competencies for teachers of English at Engineering colleges in the state of Andhra Pradesh and informs the strategies for the development of writing skills components of the students.

Key Words: Grammatical components, strategies, English Language Teaching, Communication Skills

Introduction

English is one of the most important Global language. Most of the international transactions of recent times were concluded in English. The language has contributed significantly in narrowing the gap between the geographical boundaries. The benefits of learning English can be seen in the economic, social and political life of the people of the country. English in India is used not for communicating with the outside world; but also for inter-state and intrastate communication. Because of the great ethnic and linguistic diversity found within our nation, English acts as an indispensable 'link language. English symbolizes in Indians' minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. English also serves as the communicator among Indians who speak different languages.

Books and articles abound on the place of English in the Indian education system, job competition and culture, and on its socio-linguistics aspects, pronunciation and grammar, its effect on Indian languages and Indian literature in English.

The main objective of the present study is to '*develop writing skills in the context of teaching*

English as a second language for professional course students'. Professionals at JNTU asserted that 'knowledge of the traditional 'grammar form' and 'communicative function' are both necessary ingredients for success in the scientific-technical field'.

The survey was conducted with the following objectives in view:

- To find out the language needs of the Engineering students.
- To develop Diagnostic Tests to identify their skills in different writing components.
- To identify a specific set of competencies for teachers of English at Engineering colleges in the state, based on the needs survey.
- To find out the significant differences if any, in the performance of the students in vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and organization components in English due to variations in their Sex and Community.

The study was conducted in three phases. In phase I Pre-test was conducted, Phase II Post-test was conducted and Phase III questionnaire was used to elicit data from the teachers who were teaching

professional students. Findings of the study helped to shed light on an important facet of developing writing skills in the context of teaching English as a second language for professional course students.

Review: Vivian Zamel (1983) looked at the composing processes of six advanced ESL students. Among the six, there were both skilled and unskilled writers. Zamel found that the least skilled writer in her study, like native-English speaking counterparts, ‘paused so often and between such short chunks of discourse that the overall relationships between ideas seemed to suffer’. She concludes that some composing problems transcend language factors and hence, are shared by both native and non-native English speakers.

Methodology: This section introduces data about the profile of the respondents involved in the research, community of the respondents and the influence of these on the performance of the students in vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and organization components of English.

Sample: The place chosen for research is Joginpally B.R. Engineering college located at Yenkapally, Moinabad . For my research purpose I have taken a sample consisting of 180 students who got registered 60 each in EEE, CSE, IT branches.

Variables: The variable taken into consideration is medium of instruction of students at Intermediate .

The research tool used: The following tools were used to facilitate the research.

Phase I –Pre-test

A Pre-test was conducted to one hundred and eighty students at the beginning of the study who belonged to EEE, CSE, IT branches at B.Tech Iyr level at Joginpally B.R. Engineering College. It consisted of twenty items in the form of Part-A and Part-B separately. Part A consisted of ten questions through which the researcher tried to gain information about the learners and their awareness of writing English. Part B consisted of 50 questions based on grammar components.

Phase II: Post Test

A post test was conducted to the same set of students after a years teaching at the end of the year to test whether there was any improvement in the performance of the students in the grammar

components. Comparison was made between the pre-test and the pre-test.

Phase III: Teachers Questionnaire: This tool was used to get an insight into teacher’s views regarding writing skills.

Interpretation: Frequency distribution of the student’s performance in the Pre-test for total score.

The mean and standard deviation scores of students are 25.02 and 5.02 respectively. Out of the 147 students selected for the study, 53 students have got their tests scores very close to the mean of the sample. There are 26 students who have scored less than the mean scores of the distribution; where as 68 students have scored more than the mean score of the distribution of the total sample. This indicates that there is difference in the student’s performance.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of Pre-test score for Total Sample:

S. No	CI	MP	F	CF	C Percent
1	10-15	12.5	6	6	4.08
2	15-20	17.5	20	26	17.69
3	20-25	22.5	53	79	53.74
4	25-30	27.5	51	130	88.44
5	30-35	32.5	15	145	98.64
6	35-40	37.5	2	147	100.00

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Post-test for Total Sample:

S. No	CI	MP	F	CF	C Percent
1	20-25	22.5	11	11	7.48
2	25-30	27.5	21	32	21.77
3	30-35	32.5	38	70	47.62
4	35-40	37.5	53	123	83.67
5	40-45	42.5	24	147	100.00

The mean and standard deviation scores of students are 34.95 and 5.85 respectively. Out of the 147 students selected for the study, 38 students have got their tests scores very close to the mean of the sample. There are 32 students who have scored less than the mean scores of the distribution; where

as 77 students have scored more than the mean score of the distribution of the total sample. This

indicates that there is difference in the student's performance.

Table 3: Influence of Medium of instruction in Intermediate on vocabulary, Grammar, Cohesion, Organization and Total.

Components	Type of test	English			Telugu			T value
		N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	
Vocabulary	Pre-test	130	6.215	1.897	17	4.176	1.917	4.129
	Post-test	130	8.369	1.942	17	4.941	2.485	5.474**
Grammar	Pre-test	130	7.131	1.652	17	5.765	1.986	2.716**
	Post-test	130	9.500	1.715	17	7.529	1.649	4.611**
Cohesion	Pre-test	130	2.885	1.181	17	1.765	1.059	4.044**
	Post-test	130	4.131	1.383	17	2.059	1.893	4.362**
Organization	Pre-test	130	9.385	2.160	17	8.765	2.486	0.981@
	Post-test	130	14.015	2.098	17	12.294	2.163	3.096**
Total	Pre-test	130	25.615	4.696	17	20.471	4.995	4.020**
	Post-test	130	36.015	5.050	17	26.824	4.914	7.230**

Table 3 demonstrates the mean and standard deviation scores of students in vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, organization components in English based on their medium of instruction at intermediate level and the calculated T-values in Pre and Post tests.

From the table it is revealed that the obtained t-values for vocabulary (4.129), grammar (2.716) and cohesion (4.044) are more significant at 0.01 levels in Pre test; whereas the medium of instruction at intermediate level has no significant influence on the performance of the students in organization component in Pre-test i.e., (0.981).

It indicates that medium of instruction at intermediate level has significantly influenced the performance of the students in vocabulary, grammar and cohesion in Pre-test.

Further the obtained t-values for vocabulary (5.474), grammar (4.611) cohesion (4.362) and organization (3.096) in Post-test are more significant at 0.01 levels. It indicates that medium of instruction at intermediate level has significantly influenced the performance level of the students in post-test.

It is observed that mean values of English medium students in Pre-test (25.615) and Post-test (35.015) reveal that English medium students performed better than the Telugu medium students which is (20.471) in Pre-test and (26.324) in Post-test. Similarly the obtained t-values state that there

is a tremendous improvement in the performance of the students in Post test in comparison to the Pre-test by (3.210).

Hence, the formulated hypothesis, 'there exists significant difference in vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and organization performance put together by the students due to the variation in their medium of instruction is accepted with regard to vocabulary, grammar and cohesion in Pre-test and vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and organization in Post-test.

From the above, it is concluded that medium of instruction of the students at Intermediate influences their performance level. English medium student's performance is better than the Telugu medium students

Implications of the study: The problem selected for this study was to identify the methods and materials required for training in writing skills for professional students at advanced levels. It was considered essential for counseling the lecturers and plan a suitable schedule for skill development in general and writing in particular.

There was development after one or two sessions of teaching. Drilling of correct sentences to the professional students in their tasks is helpful in developing their writing. Mere writing practice is inadequate and the data has proved that there are interfering factors such as listening ability, general interest in expressing technical details in lay

terminology. Ambition for their career was also a decisive factor

Findings: At the end of the study the following observations have been recorded.

The findings in the present study suggest that more efforts need to be made by the teachers to develop the writing skills of the students. In conclusion it would seem imperative that appropriate measures be taken to improve the linguistic competence. The measures, among others, could be in the form of greater emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and organization as well as remedial language strategies.

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