

STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN KERALA

1. Introduction

Government of Kerala, as a part of the General Education Protection Mission, has taken steps to enhance the academic standards in the schools in the state. A serious effort has been made to make the system more pragmatic and more sensitive to the requirements of modern day. English is the global language used universally in the field of commerce, employment etc. The importance of English language competency increases as more and more people want to learn this language. The State government has brought in English as the educational medium and as a second language all through the Indian territory predominantly. Hence there is a dire need for English language competency. At the school level, the learners of English are not aware of the real purpose behind learning this language for the future. When the learners come to the University for Graduation they realise the purpose of the English language learning. The learners are required to perform independently in English both in the university as well as in their career to scale heights. It would be difficult to master a language, without living in its proper natural environment. Even after adopting different modern learning strategies in the classroom, there are limitations to set up proper social language environment because the focus is more on academic language. It is encountered that a context-embedded interactive language programme is needed for social language acquisition on English. This will eventually help the learner to go deep into other cognitive academic skills such as literary comprehension, appreciation, inference, interpretation, evaluation and the like. In this context, a programme was devised under the auspices of SCERT Kerala, titled '*Development of a Strategy for Improving the Communicative Competency of English Language Among Secondary School Children in Kerala*' to enhance English proficiency among school children. Ten schools in the state from north, central, and south zones were selected considering criteria of urban, rural, government, aided from different socio-cultural background for the implementation of the pilot programme. This pilot programme was introduced as a carnival of multifaceted performance based activities and creative works to use English language in real life situations. It was designed as a thirty days' programme in which various activities were scheduled to enrich the basic skills of language usage. It adopts concepts and methods in the classroom for recognizing and managing the communicative English needs of the learners.

2. Objectives of the study

- * To develop the learners to use English as strong basic interpersonal communicative means.
- * To enable the learners to enhance language skills through various creative activities.
- * To enhance the comprehension level of the learners in English through performance based activities.
- * To enable the learners to use English language in real life situations.
- * To impress the cognitive academic language proficiency of learners.

3. Methodology

3.1 Method

In the present study, Sample Survey cum experimental method is used

3.2 Sample

The samples comprised of 400 students representing from North, Central and South zones of Kerala are studied.

3.3 Tools

The tools used are Questionnaire and Module

- Questionnaire for the teachers:
It is used to analyse the current scenario in English language teaching and learning
- Relish English Module (Module used for the study package):

It is a child centred teaching process that keeps the students active in the classroom. It adopts concepts, techniques and methods in the classroom for recognising and managing the communicative needs of the English language learners.

The activities include those to reinforce the text and the role of the teacher is that of a facilitator. The school as a whole celebrates an event and the event management is done entirely by the students in four stages – Planning, Campaigning, Implementing and Engla- The event. At each stage, the activities ensure the use of language and thereby the students acquire the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading & writing) through a non conscious process.

Highlights of the module

The activities include:

- i. **Film Fest** – Five short films are screened. The worksheets given to students to fill and prepare a film review.
 - ii. **JAM (Just A Minute Speech)** – Students speak for just a minute to improve their fluency.
 - iii. **Story Re- Telling** – Students tell the story of Nightingale and the Rose from the perspective of lizard, boy, oak tree, and rose tree
 - iv. **Listening Tasks** – Teachers supply number of listening tasks. The students play and conduct quiz for each task.
 - v. **Character Sketch** – Videos of famous characters played in the class. The students were supplied with ample vocabulary to prepare character sketch.
 - vi. **Listening to Songs and Singing** – Songs are played in the class. The students sing along with and without the audio.
 - vii. **Today's Take- off** – It includes theme song of RELISH, word of the day, vivid past, thought for the day, news headlines, and pledge in English.
 - viii. **Skit**
 - ix. **Dubbing**
 - x. **Flash mob**
 - xi. **Seminar**
 - xii. **Engala** (Culmination of Relish English): It is an analyzing tool, which is the final event in which the students showcase their talents acquired during the course of the one month of activity-oriented programmes. The entire programme was planned, campaigned and implemented by the learners themselves. Thereby attracting attention inside as well as outside the school campus. Eminent personalities from the political and educational arena ranging from MP's and MLA's, faculties of SCERT, DIET, SSK, Faculties from the various colleges throughout the state and a number of other well-wishers witnessed the celebration of **Relish English Engala**.
- Rating scale:

It was administered to the Target Group learners, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Project
 - Package appraisal for teachers:

It is to evaluate the effectiveness of the project in enhancing language learning and in creating language learning environment

Statistical Techniques Used: The collected data was analyzed by using frequency distribution and percentages

4. Findings of the study

- The English learning atmosphere of Kerala was not excellent. It is only satisfactory and below the level of expectation.
- All the responses of learners towards the programme 'RELISH' are good or above
- All the responses of teachers towards programme 'RELISH' are good or above
- All the teachers unanimously agreed that this programme 'RELISH' triggered creativity in learners.
- Engala, the experimented performance based activity, has removed the inhibition of students in English.
- A neo constructivist strategy based on critical pedagogy and connectivism will promote rapid language acquisition

Suggestions for further research

This study suggests certain areas of further research

- A similar study can be attempted among students at Higher Secondary School level.
- Experimental studies to enhance the reading and writing skills of secondary school students in language acquisition are advisable.