



DEVELOPING SKILLS OF ENGLISH THROUGH REMEDIAL PACKAGE BY LOW ACHIEVERS AT PRIMARY LEVEL

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Received: April 19, 2012; Accepted: May 28, 2012

Abstract- The primary school students are facing various problems in learning and retaining the skills of English. The present study is undertaken to develop Remedial package for learning the LSRW skills in English in std. VII & to measure the effectiveness of remedial package with special reference to low achievers. Two matched groups of low achievers were constituted for the purpose of experiment & a normal group comprising average & above average students was also formed in order to assess how far the instruction through remedial package enables the low achievers to cope with normal students. The control group & the normal group were taught through the traditional Grammar Translation method while the experimental group was taught through the remedial package. The obtained results show that the instruction through remedial package was more effective than the traditional method in teaching skills in English & it enabled the low achievers to cope with normal students to a great extent.

Keywords- learning, LSRW skills of English, remedial package, low achievers, primary level, effectiveness.

Citation: Jadal M.M. (2012) Developing Skills of English Through Remedial Package by Low Achievers at Primary Level. Journal of Arts and Culture, ISSN: 0976-9862 & E-ISSN: 0976-9870, Volume 3, Issue 2, pp.-118-122.

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Introduction

There is a difference between acquiring skills & learning skills. A child acquires its mother tongue as a result of natural & largely random exposure to it. When the same child learns a third language, the exposure is largely structured & non random. When the child enters primary school, it has already acquired LSRW skills in the mother tongue. The same child starts with a clean state when it is exposed to the third language. Even in the case of normal children, it would be difficult to learn third language without proper & natural exposure.

Low achievers who always remain in the lowest range of ladder usually fail in all subjects. They always get lower than pass marks in almost all subjects. They lack concentration, retention & abstract thinking. These low achievers in English at the primary level are extremely inadequate in all the four skills. Unless remedial measures are taken at this stage, these low achievers will find the learning of English an arduous task, get frustrated for want of understanding & improvement in the skills & consequently fail in their school examination. They may end up as school dropouts.

Need for the Study

The state of Maharashtra came into existence in 1960. Till then, the teaching of English at the school level was carried on according to the policies of each province & there was no uniformity in the way it was done (across the state). In 1968, a revised syllabus of primary education was prescribed for the entire state & in 1972, English was made compulsory from Std. V to X throughout the state. The National Policy on Education was announced in 1986 following which a new syllabus for primary education was drawn up for Maharashtra. The teaching of English language other than the mother tongue was expected to begin from Std. VI in the National Policy on Education, Maharashtra State, however, continued with its policy of introducing English from Std. V.

In December 1999, the government of Maharashtra chalked out a new policy for the teaching of English in view of its importance as an international language, as also the consequences of rapid advancements in technology & liberal economic policies. The ever-growing craze for English medium schools was also taken into consideration while drawing up this policy. Without hampering

the teaching of the mother tongue & the principle of teaching through the mother tongue in any way, the govt. of Maharashtra decided to provide for the teaching/learning of English along with the mother tongue from Std. I. It was decided to implement this decision from June, 2000. This new syllabus has been designed after considering the need for and the use of English in our society.

The revised syllabus of English for Std. VI to VIII. (Upper Primary Level) has been introduced in the academic year 2004-2005. This syllabus particularly takes into account the influence of English on Marathi & other regional languages. This syllabus acknowledges the first priority to Indian & Marathi culture. Logistic aspects not directly related with culture find the second place. This syllabus has been designed with the objective of enhancing the student's level of achievement in English at the school level. It is expected to prepare a child completing primary education to handle English adequately wherever needs it in later life. The syllabus provides for the revision & reinforcement of the language skills acquired in the previous classes & also seeks further development of these language skills through a number of new tasks & activities [1,2,22].

Important Features of New Syllabus

1. Skill- based & focus on application of English in real life situations. Co-ordinated development of various language skills.
2. Link in the teaching/learning of English with other subjects.
3. Useful & relevant to the present time & context.
4. Adopting eclectic approach the syllabus recommends the use of varied teaching methods & techniques which lead to joyful & effective learning.
5. Learner centered. The teacher's role is that of a facilitator.
6. Activity- oriented.
7. Overall development of the learner's personality.
8. Use of comprehensive & continuous evaluation frame work [22,2-3].

The syllabus committee recommended to use different materials like print- materials, non- printing materials, teacher-made materials & regalia. The syllabus does not insist upon strict adherence to a single theory of learning [22,4-5].

The various institutions, agencies & MSCERT connected with school education have been tried to acquaint the classroom teachers with the objectives of teaching English. under the changed circumstances. MSCERT has conducted SMART-PT training program at different levels. This ambitious program aimed at a revolutionary transformation in the strategies of teaching & the fundamental approach with a view to ensure better learning outcomes [21]. There are different resource centers like DIET, DRG, BRC & CRC. All these are helping the teachers in effective teaching English. A 21 days' in-service training programming is also arranged every year for the primary teachers.

Change in Students' Background

The previous course relied on the learning strategies of older student for introduction of the script, new vocabulary, new constructions & for developing an awareness of the grammatical system. In the new course, children have been exposed to English at an early stage. The strategies employed at the beginner level of this course are better suited for younger learners. The fifth Std. teach-

er of English will find that this new batch of students is different from the batches in the past in the following ways -

1. Students know a number of English songs & poems.
2. They have a vocabulary of more than 1000 English words.
3. They understand many instructions given orally.
4. They can take part in simple conversation more confidently.
5. They can use certain stock phrases & expressions.
6. They are familiar with the small as well as capital letters.
7. They are familiar with the many of the spelling patterns.
8. They are able to write much more.
9. They might be able to listen to English for longer stretches of time.
10. They might be able to take in larger chants of language at a time.

Teaching - Learning Process Implied in the New Course.

The teachers should make maximum use of peer- learning. The teachers should focus on co- operation rather than on competition. The teachers must ensure that each child makes some efforts on his own. The teacher should not only teach English, but also show how to learn & study English, further on one's own. The teacher should focus on self- learning which is a liberal attitude towards grammatical errors made in the course of learning to speak and write. The teacher can from his own repertoire, supplement the eclectic technique & other strategies within the framework of joyful, meaningful & participative teaching/ learning process which boosts the learners' confidence & provides scope to his creativity. A careful use of mother tongue in the second language classroom can in fact help the children develop insights into both the languages [14]. There are only 11.40 % teachers who are teaching English & have completed their graduation with English in Solapur district [24].

Teaching English at the primary level is a massive operation. Unfortunately, students are exposed properly & adequately LSRW skills of English at the primary level. Teachers at different levels blame the previous level teachers for the low entry knowledge of the students. Uncongenial home atmosphere, indifference & disinterest of student in learning English, which is dissimilar to Marathi in respect to phonology, grammar & syntax & the larger strength of the class, are some of the reasons stated by the teachers for the poor learning of English. Though MSCERT has provided audio cassettes for every class, the teachers cannot use them properly due to load shading of electricity throughout the day.

Research focusing on the remedial measures is of vital importance for rural students in primary schools in general & the low achievers among them in particular. Low achieving students commit very basic mistakes in pronouncing the alphabet & words. They have neither sound sense nor semantic sense. They could not distinguish between "t", "d", "s", "z" & consonant clusters like - sh and ch. At no stage could these students use English with proper comprehensions. In short, they are poor in all the basic skills of Listening, speaking, reading and writing. The main reasons for this unwanted situation seems to be the non availability of language experts at primary, levels to teach English. Somehow or other, students pass all the grades & by the time they enter secondary classes where specialist teachers are available to teach English. It becomes too late for both teachers & students to do full justice to the task of learning English. A large number of students

with wrong habits in English strongly embedded in their borne & blood compel the specialist teachers at the Secondary Level to follow the beaten track of rote memory method to enable the pupils get pass marks in English. Hence to provide the remedial package to the primary teachers of English.

Previous Studies

Many studies on low achievement & under achievement are available in India and abroad [1-13].

There are also some experimental studies related to teaching of English & other subjects using special strategies for learning disable & normal students [14-21, 24].

Adler (1984) feels that we have no real reason to believe that the basic potential of a normal child who is a low achiever is less that of a child who is a relatively high achiever. Applebee, et al (1984) found that the American School System too often denies equal & suitable educational opportunities for all boys & girls, particularly in regard to learning opportunities for students tagged as low achievers. Lumpkins, et al (1991) conducted an experimental study which showed the effectiveness of their special programme with both low & normal achievers [24,28].

Dhamija (1986) established the effectiveness of three approaches of instructions- conventional, radio vision & modular approach on the achievement of students in social studies. Ramar's (1994) study indicated that the multimedia based modular approach was more effective than the traditional lecture method in teaching all the subjects of Std. VIII to low achievers. The approach enabled low achievers to cope with normal students to a considerable extent. Reddy & Ramar (1995) showed the effectiveness of multimedia -based modular approach over the traditional lecture method in teaching science, social science & mathematics to low achievers. Basu (1982), have studied & shown the effectiveness of multimedia approach. Similarly, Hopper (1982) & Shahajahan (1980) have conducted experimental studies on the effectiveness of modular approach. Deka (1985) & Saun (1982) have conducted separate studies on low achievers. Vasanthal (1994) found her remedial programme effective over the traditional lecture method in learning mathematics among class IX students [24].

Karpagakumaravel (1994) developed a computer software programme in English Grammar for Std. XI students & found it a valid one. Soumini (1984) used science as the content for the teaching of English for the regional medium Std. IX & X students & showed it to be effective. Kasinathan (1992) established that the CIEFL audio cassettes was more effective than the traditional lecture method in teaching stress & rhythm to higher secondary students. Malaikkanni (1992) convincingly supported a hypothesis of the effectiveness of teaching English consonants using a remedial at the higher secondary level. Meghanathan (1988) indicated the advantage of the bilingual method over the direct method in learning the basic skills in English. Sasikala (1994) developed a course package from improving the fluency & accuracy in oral communication in English among Tamil Medium Higher secondary students, there by supporting its effectiveness over the conventional methods of teaching English [24].

Most of the rural students remain low achievers in all subjects, not to talk of English. They constitute a considerable percentage of the student population. They cannot be ignored if drop out & stagnation problems are to be averted. So they need some remedial instructions that differs from the dull & routine traditional method.

Hence an attempt is made in this study to develop a remedial package to promote in developing skills in English among the class VII low achievers & measure its effectiveness over the traditional method in enabling them to cope with normal students.

Objective

The main objective of the study is to develop a remedial package to improve the skills of English of the low achievers in class VII.

Hypothesis

There exists no significant difference between the pre-test & post-test mean scores of low achievers in the control group when skills of English are taught through the traditional method.

There exists significant difference between the pre-test & post-test mean scores of low achievers in the experimental group when skills of English are taught through the remedial package.

There exists significant difference between the post-test mean scores of low achievers in the control group & experimental group; There exists significant difference between the post-test mean scores of low achievers in the control group & the students in normal group.

There exists no significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the low achievers in the experimental group & the students in the normal group.

Methodology

Experimental method is followed in the study. A remedial package was developed for improving LSRW skills in English of the low achievers of class VII. In the development of remedial package, the guidelines given by the CIEFL, Hyderabad, RIE, Mysore & Madras English language teaching, training (MELT), Madras was followed by the investigator. The investigator took a note of examination requirements of the students too in developing the remedial package. The investigator developed some remedial exercises for the above said skills of English.

The developed package was then subjected to individual & group tryouts. On the basis of the ratings & analysis of the tryouts correction, modification, refinements etc. were made in the remedial package. Both the try outs ensured better refinement & perfection of the remedial package. The arrangement of the views of experts who reviewed the remedial package was taken as the index of validity of the content of the package. Audio cassettes made available by Balchitravani, Pune in collaboration with MSCERT, Pune were used as supporting materials to the remedial package during the experiment to improve the skills of English.

Sample & Design

For the purpose of the investigation, 50 low achieving students of class VII from R.N. Bomdya Primary School, Solapur, Maharashtra State were selected. The low achievers were identified on the basis of normal probability curve made on the basis of their scores in the half yearly examination. They were divided into two halves to constitute the experimental group & the control group. Though there were more than 50 low achievers in four sections of Std. VII, the lowest 50 low achievers only were selected for the purpose of this study.

Out of fifty students finally selected for the study, two groups were formed following the systematic random sampling technique. They were placed in the order of merit. All the odd number students

formed the control group while the even number students constituted the experimental group. To see whether both the groups were matched, means & SD were calculated for their half yearly examination scores. Then the test was applied. The obtained 't' value (0.62) revealed that both the groups are matched before the experiment. The control group was taught through the traditional method while the experimental group was taught through the remedial package (RP).

To assess how far the RP enables the low achievers to cope with normal students, a normal group comprising above average students was formed. To form this group out of 200 students, every 8th student was selected on the basis of systematic random sampling technique. This normal group too was taught through the traditional method.

Data Collection The experiment was conducted for a period of 30 working days. At the end of the experimental period, a posttest was conducted to the low achievers of the experimental group, the low achievers of the control group & the students of the normal group. The responses given by the group formed the vital data required for the analysis.

Scoring Procedure

The achievement test consisted of 50 objective type questions. The total score of the test ranged from 0-50. For each correct answer, the score was 'one' & for each wrong answer the score was 'zero'.

Statistical Techniques

The data obtained were analyzed by using means, standard deviation (SD) & 't' test.

Findings & Conclusions

The control group low achievers showed significant difference between the pre- test & post test means scores when they were taught through the traditional method. Their performance was higher in the post test than in the pre test (Table-1).

Table 1- 't' value of Pre test& Post test Scores of Low Achievers in Control Group

Test	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value
Pre test	25	12.4	2.56	3.94**
Post test	25	15.2	2.5	

** Significant at 0.01 level

There was significant difference between the pre test & post test scores of the experimental group low achievers when spoken English was taught to the students through the remedial package. Further, their achievement was higher in the post test than in the pre test (Table-2). Moreover, an analysis of the rate of progress made by both the control group & the experimental group throws light on the effectiveness of the teaching spoken English through the remedial package. The rate of progress shown by the experimental group taught through the remedial package was 79.68 per cent while the rate of progress made by the control group low achievers was 22.58 per cent. This shows that the advantage of teaching English through the remedial package over the traditional method.

Table 2- 't' value of pre test& post test Scores of low Achievers in the Experimental Group

Test	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value
Pre test	25	12.8	1.73	14.78**
Post test	25	23.02	3.0	

** Significant at 0.01 level

There was significant difference between the posttest scores of control group low achievers taught through traditional method & experimental group low achievers taught through the remedial package (Table- 3). Further the achievement of experimental group low achievers was higher than the control group low achievers. Moreover the rate of the progress made by the experimental group low achievers was higher than that of control group low achievers. The variation in the rate of progress made by both groups was the result product of operation of the remedial package & it testifies the effectiveness of the remedial package treatment.

Table 3- 't' Value of pretest & post test score of low achievers in control group and Experimental group

Test	N	Mean	SD	Calculated 't' value
Pre test	25	15.2	2.5	10.25***
Post test	25	23.02	3	

***significant at 0.01 level

There was significant difference between the posttest of control group low achiever and normal group students. Further, the achievement of normal group students was higher than the achievement of control group low achievers (Table- 4). The mean value (15.2) obtained by the control group low achievers revealed that though they have made progress through the traditional method, they could not narrow down the gap between them & the normal group students. it means that the traditional lecture method could not enable the control group low achiever to cope with normal students.

Table 4- 't' Value of posttest score of control group low achiever & normal group students

Group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated Value
Normal group	25	28.6	3.4	15.9**
Control group	25	15.2	2.5	

**significant at 0.01 level

There was significant difference between the posttest score of experimental group low achievers and group students. The achievement of normal group students was higher than the achievement of experimental group low achievers (Table- 5).

Table 5- 't' Value of pretest and posttest of normal group students and experimental group low achievers

Group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated Value
Normal group	25	28.60	3.4	6.2**
Experimental group	25	23.02	3.0	

**significant at 0.01 level

However, a critical analysis of mean values signifies that the experimental group low achievers significantly improved their

achievement after the requirement. More over, the remedial package treatment enable the low achievers of experimental group to cope with normal group students to a great extent. The narrowed down gulf of difference between both the group bears testimony to the effectiveness of the remedial package experimental instructions. Further, a comparative study of table 4 & 5 testifies the advantage of instruction through the remedial package over the traditional method.

Implications

1. Keeping the result of the study in mind, the teachers of middle and primary school can be given orientation as to use a remedial package to ensure effective teaching /learning of LSRW skills in English.
2. The NCERT and SCERTs in every state should take up the work of producing remedial package as they produce teachers hand book. They can be supplied to different school.
3. As the remedial package enhances the achievement of low achievers, it will diminish wastage and stagnation in our school. A necessary orientation can be given at the DIET level to the primary, middle and secondary school teachers.

Abbreviations

- RP - Remedial package.
- LSRW skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing.
- T-L Process- Teaching & Learning Process.
- MSCERT- Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research & Training, Pune,30.
- SMART-PT Program- State Massive And Rigorous Training For Primary Teachers.
- DIET- District Institute Of Education & Training.
- BRC- Block Resource Centre.
- CRC-Cluster Resource Centre.
- DRG- District Resource Group.
- TM- Traditional Method.

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