

“ELT Classroom Dynamics: Insights from Teachers on Methods and the Road Ahead”

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Citation: Kapila Parashar, (2024) “ELT Classroom Dynamics: Insights from Teachers on Methods and the Road Ahead”, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(3), 2997-3001, Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i3.8871

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study examines the methodologies, strategies, and challenges associated with teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in secondary schools across Delhi. Its objective is to analyze the instructional techniques employed by ESL teachers, evaluate their effectiveness in achieving language learning goals, and uncover the challenges encountered by educators. Using a qualitative research approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions involving 45 ESL teachers at the secondary level. A thematic analysis identified key aspects such as instructional methods, classroom strategies, and management techniques. The findings highlight a reliance on traditional methods like lecture-based instruction and the grammar-translation approach, alongside a growing adoption of interactive and communicative teaching practices. Despite this progress, educators face considerable challenges, including managing diverse student needs and limited resources. The study recommends improving ESL teaching by integrating technology and adopting competency-based frameworks. Its implications contribute to shaping future pedagogical advancements in ESL education.

Keywords: - ESL teaching, Teaching Strategies, Communicative Approach, Linguistic Proficiency, Pedagogical Strategies.

Introduction

The role of English Language Teaching (ELT) has become increasingly critical in today's interconnected world, where English serves as a global lingua franca across various domains such as business, education, science, and technology. ELT classrooms, as dynamic spaces of linguistic and cultural exchange, require innovative methods and strategies to cater to the diverse needs of learners. However, the success of these teaching methodologies largely depends on the perceptions, experiences, and adaptability of teachers who navigate the complexities of classroom instruction. This study explores teacher perceptions of the methods and strategies employed in ELT classrooms, highlighting the challenges they face, the opportunities they leverage, and the potential pathways for future innovation in English language pedagogy.

Understanding teacher perceptions is vital for bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical classroom realities. By examining their insights, this research seeks to uncover the interplay between challenges and opportunities in ELT classrooms and to identify strategies that align with contemporary educational demands. Moreover, it aims to provide actionable recommendations for refining teaching practices, enhancing teacher training programs, and influencing policy-making in the field of English language education.

Teacher Perspectives on ELT

Teaching English extends beyond knowledge transmission; it requires fostering communication skills essential for global interaction (Crystal, 2003). Effective teaching entails developing learners' vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension abilities. Teachers serve multiple roles, including instructor, facilitator, prompter, and organizer, each essential for managing classrooms and ensuring student engagement (Sue, 2013). They must strike a balance between fulfilling curriculum objectives and addressing the diverse needs of their students, encouraging autonomy, and inspiring curiosity (Harmer, 2007). Teachers' expertise in managing time and resources is critical for achieving effective learning outcomes.

Despite their central role, ESL teachers encounter significant challenges that impede their effectiveness. Professional development is critical for equipping teachers with updated methodologies and improving their ability to manage classrooms effectively. Experienced teachers demonstrate higher competence in engaging students and addressing diverse needs, underscoring the importance of ongoing training (Van Veen et al.,

2012). However, difficulties with students, such as varying proficiency levels and a lack of engagement, complicate teaching. Effective learning requires collaborative spaces, whether virtual or physical, designed to facilitate task completion and problem-solving (Wang et al., 2023). Furthermore, outdated or culturally irrelevant textbooks fail to capture student interest or support self-learning (Khankar, 2001). These systemic issues emphasize the need for reforms that enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Research underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by English teachers globally. In Nigeria, Aloysius (2015) highlighted the interplay between teacher self-development, resources, and classroom dynamics, while Mahmoud (2003) emphasized the role of qualifications and training in Iraq. Similar challenges in other regions point to the need for targeted professional development, improved resources, and supportive supervision. Addressing these issues is essential for empowering teachers, fostering student engagement, and enhancing the quality of ESL education worldwide.

Problem Statement

Secondary school English teachers face challenges in adopting effective teaching methods due to diverse student needs, resource constraints, and curriculum demands. While traditional practices dominate, their relevance in achieving language learning outcomes in evolving classrooms remains uncertain. Additionally, the integration of innovative approaches such as technology and collaborative learning is inconsistent, with limited exploration of their effectiveness. There is also a lack of comprehensive understanding of how differentiated instruction can address the linguistic and cognitive diversity of students. This study addresses these gaps by examining teaching methods, analysing teacher perceptions, and identifying barriers and opportunities to enhance ELT practices.

Research Objectives

Objectives of the study are listed below

1. To investigate the methods and strategies employed by English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals in classrooms to identify prevalent trends and variations.
2. To explore the challenges faced by teachers in implementing innovative and traditional ELT methods, including resource constraints, curriculum demands, and student diversity.
3. To assess opportunities for enhancing ELT practices through technology integration, collaborative learning, and differentiated instruction.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design to explore secondary school teachers' perceptions of ELT classroom methods and strategies. Participants included 45 secondary school English teachers of from Delhi, selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse range of teaching experiences and perspectives. All participants had a minimum of five years of teaching experience in secondary English classrooms, which ensured that they had substantial exposure to the subject and classroom dynamics.

Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews provided individual insights into teachers' experiences. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and included open-ended questions to capture detailed responses. Focus group discussions facilitated collaborative exploration of common themes among teachers, with groups of 5 to 7 participants engaging in discussions lasting approximately 90 minutes. The data were analysed thematically to identify key patterns and insights. The transcript content was examined to explore the themes that emerged during the survey. These themes highlighted the instructional choices and classroom practices adopted by teachers. Ethical considerations were integral to the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Data were securely stored and used exclusively for research purposes.

Following areas were identified for the thematic analysis:

- ✓ Methods for teaching English as a second language
- ✓ Teaching strategies adopted by Teachers
- ✓ Challenges in teaching of English
- ✓ Future of ESL Teaching

This structured process ensured a nuanced understanding of the teaching methodologies employed in ESL classrooms, offering insights into their application, effectiveness, and contextual relevance.

Analysis and Result

The thematic analysis of ESL teaching practices provides a comprehensive understanding of the diverse methods and strategies employed in classrooms. Key themes include methodologies, essential components of teaching, and effective classroom strategies. Challenges such as managing varying proficiency levels and resource constraints are explored alongside the role of parents, required language skills, and future changes in ESL teaching. Together, these themes offer valuable insights into improving ESL education.

Methods for teaching English as a second language

Most of the teachers follow the traditional methods of teaching in their classes such as the lecture method and grammar and translation method. For teaching grammar, they use deductive method wherein they teach the rules first and then they give examples and provide practice questions to students. Many teachers explain the textbook chapters in Hindi and they think that they use bilingual method. Some teachers use phonetic approach for teaching reading to the students wherein they try to teach blending and segmenting of the letters. Very few teachers teach progressive methods in approaches for teaching English in their classes such as the story telling method and the communicative approach. Most of the methods and strategies used by the teachers are guided by the examination system which is focused on reading and writing. The focus on reading and writing causes teachers to select methods and approaches which provide students with the rules of grammar reading and writing and which involve a lot of demonstration drill and practice for students in English language classrooms.

Teaching strategies adopted by Teachers

Most effective teaching strategies encompass a wide range of approaches aimed at enhancing student understanding and engagement. Re-teaching topics that students struggle with (frequency of 13) and explaining chapters in detail (frequency of 5) are among the most common practices, indicating a strong focus on reinforcement and clarity. Techniques such as providing one-on-one interaction (frequency of 1), individual attention (frequency of 1), and group work (frequency of 2) highlight a balanced approach to both individualized and collaborative learning. Strategies such as highlighting important points for exams (frequency of 2) and getting answers marked in textbooks (frequency of 2) suggest a focus on exam preparation, helping students to prioritize key information. Additional methods include mind maps and timelines (frequency of 2) for visual organization, translating responses into English (frequency of 2) to support bilingual learning, and explaining lessons in Hindi (frequency of 2), all of which indicate flexibility in teaching style to accommodate students' diverse learning needs. The variety of general pedagogical strategies reflects teachers' efforts to provide tailored support and encourage engagement through a mix of individual, group, and multimedia-based learning methods.

Challenges in teaching of English

Teachers of English face many challenges when they teach English as a second language. The most common challenge is that many of the students are first generation learners so they don't have any exposure of English language around them and their parents and other people around them cannot help them to learn English. Students don't have any motivation to learn English. Many of the students belong to the lower socioeconomic strata of the society and they suffer from malnutrition which becomes a cause of their irregularity in school apart from the reason for taking care of their younger siblings. Many of the students have weak foundational skills in English language therefore they find the text books and examination difficult for their level and teachers are also in a confusion whether to teach them foundation skills or whether to complete syllabus. As a result of this situation, the teachers resort to encouraging rote memorization and spoon feeding the answers and writing pieces to the students. The syllabus is also a major challenge for the teachers because it is quite vast, it is difficult and some of the chapters are boring for students.

Future of ESL Teaching

Teachers suggested many changes in the future of English language teaching. The biggest change that teachers want to see in the future of English language education is the curricular change which according to them should involve a shift from the rote memorization of textbook lessons question answers and writing pieces to developing communicative competence and moving towards competency-based education which will develop the all four language skills judiciously. All these changes can come when the assessment system is ready for changes which the teachers think can involve reducing the weightage of the writing section and making the assessment system more comprehensive and inclusive - including all the four language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing and also including communication. Teachers also suggested that the current curriculum is more focused on literature and they want the literature aspect to be reduced in the curriculum. The thematic analysis highlights proposed adjustments in Pedagogical Changes, Assessment, Curricular Changes, and Time Table Related Adjustments within the education system to enhance language learning outcomes. Each sub-theme reflects a shift towards a more holistic, competency-based approach that emphasizes communication skills, engagement, and practical language applications.

Pedagogical changes

The Pedagogical Changes focus on creating a more interactive and practical language-learning environment. Dialogic interactions with students (frequency of 2) aim to engage learners in discussions that promote critical thinking and language use in authentic contexts. Increased exposure to English listening activities (frequency of 2) helps students familiarize themselves with various accents, vocabulary, and pronunciation patterns.

Additionally, encouraging speaking English in a variety of situations (frequency of 2) is intended to build students' confidence and adaptability in using English beyond the classroom.

Assessment

Changes in Assessment methods reflect a shift from traditional testing toward more comprehensive evaluation. By reducing the weightage of writing (frequency of 3), assessments can focus more on other language skills, such as listening and speaking, which are essential for communication but often overlooked. The goal of a more comprehensive examination system (frequency of 2) that encompasses all language skills, rather than just writing, highlights the need for assessments that better reflect real-world language demands.

Curricular changes

Curricular Changes reflect a strong movement toward competency-based language learning and communication skills over rote memorization. A primary shift is the increased emphasis on listening, speaking, and reading (frequency of 3), which are vital for language fluency. Moving from textbook-centred to competency-based language learning (frequency of 2) supports practical skill development that will serve students in future educational and professional environments. The curriculum aims to enhance communication skills (frequency of 2) and integrate technology and digital literacy (frequency of 7), such as artificial intelligence, to prepare students for modern language use. By promoting spoken English (frequency of 2) in classroom teaching, the curriculum seeks to normalize conversational English rather than reserving it for competitions.

alone.

Further changes include a reduction in literature content (frequency of 5) and dependence on textbooks (frequency of 2), aiming to replace traditional literary appreciation with a more practical, communicative approach. Teachers are encouraged to provide learning content based on students' levels and interests (frequency of 2) and emphasize self-expression (frequency of 4) in both formal and informal settings. Supporting reading for pleasure (frequency of 2) and extensive reading (frequency of 6) fosters a natural, enjoyable relationship with language, while the focus on comprehension skills (frequency of 2) ensures that students not only read but understand and critically engage with texts.

Time Table related adjustments

The Time Table Related Adjustments propose the integration of language activities into the weekly schedule, emphasizing listening and speaking activities (frequency of 2) to regularly practice oral skills. Club activities (frequency of 1), moving beyond traditional debates to innovative language-based tasks, provide students with diverse opportunities to use English interactively. Library activities like book reviews, book analysis, and discussions on book covers (frequency of 2) aim to cultivate a culture of reading, analysis, and verbal expression, creating an environment that encourages a deeper connection with language and literature. These proposed changes prioritize a competency-based approach, where language learning extends beyond rote tasks and literary study to incorporate practical communication, technology integration, and regular practice of all language skills. The aim is to cultivate well-rounded communicative competence that prepares students for diverse language use in personal, educational, and professional contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of ESL teaching practices, highlighting the emphasis on foundational literacy skills such as reading, writing, and grammar. It underscores the varied teaching strategies employed to foster a balanced approach to language acquisition, incorporating both traditional methods and innovative techniques like group work, multimedia resources, and bilingual instruction. The analysis also brings attention to the challenges faced by teachers, ranging from student-related issues to infrastructure constraints, suggesting the need for a more supportive and effective learning environment. Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of parental involvement in language development and the proposed adjustments in pedagogy, assessment, and curriculum to enhance overall language learning outcomes. By focusing on a competency-based approach that integrates practical communication and consistent practice across all language skills, the study advocates for a more holistic and adaptive framework in ESL education.

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