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Evaluation of the effectiveness of English language teaching in English language institutes in Mardan

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Abstract

The scope of English language is widening day by day. There are various English language institutes working in Mardan city. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the course content, class activities and adopted teaching methods in these language institutes. For this purpose, we distributed questionnaires among 76 students of different language institutes seeking their perception regarding the courses. We came to know that the courses were least effective due to the teachers' ineptness, their focusing more on the content than on the students' needs, and because of the unavailability of the proper resources for effective language practices at the institutes. However, some of the students at these institutes were found quite satisfied with their improvement in accent and pronunciation. As a whole, the language institutes in Mardan need to do a thorough overhauling of their practices to help students' achieve their language goals satisfactorily.

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1. Introduction / Statement of the Problem

Importance of communication in English language is increasing day by day. Across the non-English world, a large number of people take interest in knowing how to write and speak English, because English is the need of the modern time. It is almost believed in by them that without English they cannot make progress in any field of life. However, it is also becoming one of the generalised facts that even in our local (Pakistani) academic settings; we hardly come across students of English language and literature who can speak English very well despite that they are made to learn it in a qualified milieu. Unlike them, we may find some common people who can speak English very well and that too with proper accent and pronunciation in order to communicate with their friends and colleagues. The people of Mardan, one of the big cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan), have the opportunity of joining the local language institutes to improve their speaking skills. In order to examine the quality of these language institutes, the researchers tried to evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching methods and course contents being used in these language institutes of Mardan.

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2. Objectives of the Study:

Following were the two overarching objectives of the study:

- i. To evaluate the English language teaching methods in English language institutes in Mardan.
- ii. To evaluate the course contents being used in English language institutes in Mardan.

3. Literature Review:

It has been generally observed that English has become the medium of all relevant social interactions and the ability to use English effectively is considered an absolute essential for honourable Existence. Methodology in language teaching has been characterized in a variety of ways. According to Rodgers, (2001), a more or less classical formulation suggests that methodology is that which links theory and practice. Theory statements would include theories of what language is and how language is learned or, more specifically, theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Such theories are linked to various design features of language instruction. These design features might include stated objectives, syllabus specifications, and types of activities, roles of teachers, learners, materials, and so forth. Design features in turn are linked to actual teaching and learning practices as observed in the environments where language teaching and learning take place. This whole complex of elements defines language teaching methodology (ibid.).

Many teachers in the United States are faced with the challenge of teaching children to read and write in English when the students have a heritage language that is not English and they are not yet proficient in English. The teachers are not receiving adequate professional development in effective strategies to address the English learners' literacy development. Similarly, literary instruction in Pakistan has not received the same attention, perhaps because English is not the first language of the majority. There are studies that compare and contrast educational practices in Pakistan to those in the United States with respect to the goals that teachers have for student learning, the way teachers approach the curriculum and the textbook, the way knowledge is communicated to students, and the way teachers interact verbally with their students (Clark, 2001; Alexander, 2000).

Language teaching came into its own as a profession in the last century (Rodgers, 2001). Central to this phenomenon was the emergence of the concept of *methods* of language teaching. The method concept in language teaching (i.e. the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and Language learning) is a powerful one and the quest for better methods was a preoccupation of teachers and applied linguists throughout the 20th century. Hewitt's (1984) overview documents the history of changes of practice in language teaching throughout history, bringing the chronology up through the Direct Method in the 20th century. One of the most lasting legacies of the Direct Method has been the notion of "method" itself.

The dimension of effectiveness of English language teaching methods and course content of language institutes is an area which has not been worked upon intensively in Pakistan. This study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of English language teaching methods and course contents used in local institutes in Mardan.

4. Research Methodology:

Since the basic aim of the present study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the course content, class activities and adopted teaching methods in these language institutes, we distributed questionnaires among 76 students of different language institutes seeking their perception regarding the courses. Because of the lack of time and financial resources for the study it was very difficult for us to study the whole Mardan District. Hence we delimited our study to Mardan city. Here too we had several different English language institutes, which were using different language methods and course contents. We further delimited the study to three of these institutes PELICS, FVO and Bright Future.

5. Data Analysis:

After data collection, we used SPSS software to gauge the effectiveness of the teaching methods and course content being adopted there in the three delimited language institutes. We analyzed the data descriptively in terms of frequencies and percentages.

5.1 Main Findings:

The following main findings were formulated from the analysis of the data:

- i. The data analysis shows that 64.4% students (both male and female) did not feel any substantial improvement in their English language skills after passing two months in their institute. But 30% students felt some improvement and 5.6% remained undecided about their improvement after joining the institute.
- ii. The data analysis shows that 54.4% students (both male and female) could not feel happy about the course content that these institutes were using. On the other hand, 45.6% students considered the courses to be quite effective and according to their needs. It means that the courses of these institutes are helpful for the students.
- iii. The data shows that only 44.8 % felt that they improved their speaking and listening skills after joining the institute. But 20.6% of them did not feel happy as they said their experience of language learning at institutes did not bring any improvement in their speaking and listening skills and 34.6% remained undecided. It means that mostly the students did not improve their speaking and listening skills in these institutes.
- iv. The data shows that only 53.8 % felt that they improved their writing and reading skills after joining the institute. But 39.6% of them did not feel happy as they said their experience of language learning at institutes did not bring any improvement in their writing and reading skills and 6.6% remained undecided. It means that mostly the students did not improve their writing and reading skills in these institutes.
- v. The data shows that class duration of these institutes was invariably between two to three hours a day. The students felt happy about the length of classes and were of the view that in this short of time most of the students could improve their language skills. This clearly indicates that class duration is enough for any sort of activities.
- vi. The data analysis indicates that 56.8% students (both male and female) of these institutes were using English as communication tool in the institute. But 43.2% students were not able to speak or feeling reluctant when they speak English.
- vii. The data analysis indicates that 66.6% students (both male and female) of these institutes did not feel any sort of unwillingness or lack of motivation on their part when they first joined the institute, whereas 33.4% of them faced this problem prominently.
- viii. The data analysis indicates that 36.6% students (both male and female) of these institutes did not feel any sort of language anxiety in the classrooms, whereas but 63.4% of them faced this problem severely.
- ix. It was found from the data analysis that only 49.5% students (both male and female) declared their classrooms activities to be interesting. On the other hand 40.5% did not take any interest in class activities and 10% remained undecided about the statement that they should have expressed their mind clearly. It

shows either the ineffectiveness of the courses or then it may expose the students' indifferent reaction to the questionnaire.

- x. The data analysis reveals that different types of activities were being done in the classrooms. 28.9% students (both male and female) found improving their communication skills through different topics and 71.1% found the use of different activities to be quite effective. These included grammar class activities, vocabulary games, displaying pictures and class conversation etc.
- xi. It was found from the data analysis that 52.6% students (male and female) felt happy at watching English movies, 42.1% did not like watching these and 5.3% students yet again remained indifferent about a question of showing interest. It means that mostly the students used to watch English movies for their improvement of language skills.
- xii. It was found from the data analysis that 39.2% students (male and female) felt confident in following native speaker in English movies, 50.0% students could not understand them, and 10.8% students kept themselves quite at this.
- xiii. The data analysis indicates that 37.4% students (both male and female) of these institutes did not feel happy at reading any kind of English material whenever they would find it whereas 62.6% of them would take more interest in reading with interest English newspapers and magazines. This shows that perhaps majority of them felt hesitant about speaking.
- xiv. The data analysis shows that only 44.8% students (both male and female) kept practicing English language outside the institutes with their friends and family members, 52.6% students did not practice English language and 2.6% did not bother answering to this question.

6. Conclusion

From the above findings, we came to know that the courses were least effective perhaps due to the teachers' ineptness, their focusing more on the content than on the students' needs, and also perhaps because of the unavailability of the proper resources for effective language practices at the institutes. However, some of the students at these institutes were found quite satisfied with their improvement in accent and pronunciation as they were exposed to appropriate material such as English movies. As a whole, the language institutes in Mardan need to do a thorough overhauling of their practices to help students' achieve their language goals satisfactorily.

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