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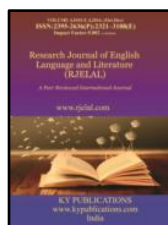
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EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON FORM INSTRUCTION ON LEARNING AUXILIARIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG STANDARD VIII STUDENTS IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

The historical circumstances of India have given the Indians an easy access to master English language and there by innumerable opportunities for advancement in the field of science and technology. But still, unfortunately our students are finding it difficult to construct proper grammatical sentences and this is one of the major reasons of their reluctance to use this language in their communication. At this juncture, the investigators developed techniques using focus on form instruction for constructing auxiliaries in English language. The study includes both survey and experimental phase. First survey was conducted to identify the grammatical errors using grammatical error identification test from 280 secondary school students and another was conducted to identify the causes of errors using a questionnaire from the perception of 38 secondary school English language teachers. Surveys were conducted from three districts of Kerala. The experimental study was conducted to find out the effectiveness of focus on form instruction in comparison with the present method of teaching, discourse oriented pedagogy. Two groups pretest posttest experimental design was used; on a sample of 80 standard VIII students. The result revealed that focus on form instruction is effective in teaching auxiliaries among standard VIII students of Kerala compared to discourse oriented pedagogy.

Key words: Focus on form instruction, Auxiliaries, English language

Introduction

In the world, where over seven thousand languages existed, one language had become dominant. This dominant language is English. English may not be the most spoken language in the world, but it is the official language in a large number of countries. It is estimated that the number of people in the world who use English to communicate on a regular basis is two billion. English is the dominant business language and it has become almost a necessity for people to speak in English to enter a global workforce. Research from all over the world shows that cross-border business communication is most often conducted in English. Its importance in

the global market place therefore cannot be understated. Learning English really can change life. Many of the world's top films, books and music are published and produced in English. Therefore by learning English people will have access to a great wealth of entertainment and will be able to have a greater cultural understanding. Most of the content produced on the internet (50%) is in English. Without English, the world couldn't operate, because there is no any other language that could be understood all over the world and for prper understanding of English language, grammar is an envitable factor. Grammar is important because it is the area that makes it possible to talk about

language. Littlewood (1981) also asserts that if students learn grammar in classes, students can not only use set phrases or insert alternative words into fixed patterns, The type of words and structures that help in the formation of the sentences not only in English but in any language is named as grammar. Everyone can put words together and form sentences; but to learn about the formation of these sentences and word groups is highly important. The structuring and the placing of words for the purpose of making sentences are known as syntax.

Syntax and literature are so important and dependent upon each other that the two cannot be separated. Analysing the role of syntax in literature will not be complete without understanding exactly what syntax is. Syntax actually gives the arrangement of words in a meaningful way. No proper meaning can be conveyed without proper syntax. It will just be like listing certain words on the paper without any sort of meaning. It will be similar to the arrangement of words in the dictionary. In a dictionary all the words may mean something, but they are not aligned together to give a deeper sense of expression or mood.

Need and significance of the study

Present method of teaching grammar in Kerala, Discourse Oriented Pedagogy, was developed to improve students' communicative competence in terms of both fluency and accuracy. Discourse Oriented Pedagogy has been conceived with a view to facilitate language acquisition at the primary and secondary level through experiencing a variety of linguistic discourses. But when analysed from the perception of teachers, discourses are not helping the students to reduce the errors in the construction of grammatical structures in English language, since there is no use of authentic text helpful for grammar teaching in the classroom. Written communication skill is not given much importance by the present method of teaching. More students fail to operate and write English with accuracy and fluency even though students apparently can do the grammar exercises in textbooks correctly. There is an urgent need to overcome this situation, by developing a positive attitude among students to help them construct grammatically correct sentences. Several studies

conducted abroad have undoubtedly established the significance of teaching Syntactic Structures which channelled the investigator to carry out the present study, focussing on Syntactic Structures (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). Thus, the students' observation will help to use the structure in communication automatically. One of the major advantages of teaching grammar is that it helps in preventing fossilization (Celce, Marianne & Diane, 1999).

Methodology

Two intact class divisions from the same school were taken for conducting the experiment. Experimental and control groups were randomly selected through purposive random sampling technique. For the Experimental study the method used is two groups- Pretest - Posttest quasi Experimental design.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify grammatical errors in the written communication of Standard VIII students.
- To identify the causes of errors in learning grammatical structures in English among Standard VIII students in the perception of English Teachers
- To find out the effectiveness of focus on form instruction on learning Auxiliaries in English among standard VIII students.
- To find out the effectiveness of Discourse Oriented Pedagogy on learning Auxiliaries in English among standard VIII students.
- To compare the effectiveness of focus on form instruction and Discourse Oriented Pedagogy on learning Auxiliaries in English among Standard VIII students.

Hypotheses of the Study

- No significant difference exists in the mean Pretest scores between experimental and control groups.
- There is significant difference in the mean Posttest scores between experimental and control groups.
- There is significant difference in the mean Pretest and mean Posttest scores of the Control Group.
- There is significant difference in the mean Pretest and mean Posttest scores of the

Experimental Group

Statistical Techniques Used in the Study

- Percentage Analysis
- Test of significance of difference between the means of two independent groups
- Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA)
- Bonferroni test of post hoc comparison

Sample Selected for the Study

- 280 Standard VIII students were selected randomly from the Government and Aided Schools of the districts of Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Thrissur in Kerala, to identify grammatical errors in the written communication of Standard VIII students.
- 38 Secondary School English teachers were selected randomly from Malappuram, Kozhikode and Thrissur districts in Kerala, for identifying the causes of errors in learning grammatical structures in English among Standard VIII students.
- 80 Standard VIII students, 40 in Experimental Group and 40 in Control Group, were selected for conducting the experiment.

Research Tools Used for the Study

For the purpose of the present study, the investigator employed the following research tools.

- Grammatical Error Identification Test
- Questionnaire
- Test on syntactic structures
- Lesson Transcripts based on Focus on Form Instruction
- Lesson Transcripts based on Discourse Oriented Pedagogy

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of the response of Grammatical Error Identification Test

The investigator found it essential to find out the grammatical errors from the written communication of students. In order to find this, a Grammatical Error Identification Test was administered on a sample of 280 Standard VIII students. Grammatical Error Identification Test to identify the grammatical errors in English among Standard VIII students was implemented and analysis was carried out using the technique of error analysis. The investigator classified the syntactic

errors based on the system modified from Kroll (1990). The investigator classified each error and tabulated the count of errors using the guidelines.

Table 1 : **Result of Grammatical Error Identification Test**

S.No	Areas of syntactic errors	Frequency	Percentage
1	Concord in using Auxiliaries	876	15
2	Errors in using SVO Pattern	784	13.4
3	Errors in using Articles	732	12.5
4	Errors in using correct form of Tenses	722	12.4
5	Errors in using preposition	540	9.2
6	Errors in using conjunctions	538	9.2
7	Lexicon-syntactic errors	508	8.6
8	Wrong use of plural morpheme	432	7.4
9	Order change in questions	430	7.3
10	Incomplete sentences	284	4.8

Total = 5846

When the investigator analysed the grammatical errors in the written communication of Standard VIII students through the Grammatical Error Identification Test, it was found that more errors were made by the Standard VIII students while constructing Syntactic Structures in English. More errors were in using Auxiliaries in the sentences and the least errors were in framing complete sentences. It was found that 15 percentages of the total errors is made while constructing concord in modal and primary Auxiliaries. 13.4 and 12.5 percentage of errors were in using the SVO pattern and using of Articles respectively. 12.4 percentages of the total

errors were in using correct form of Tenses as revealed from the error analysis. Errors were there in using prepositions and conjunctions which comprised 9.2 percentages of the total errors. Lexicon syntactic errors comprised 8.6 percentage and wrong use of plural morpheme 7.4 percentages of the total errors. Error analysis also revealed that students made errors (7.3 percentage) while framing questions, and incomplete sentences (4.8 percentage) in their written communication.

Perception of teachers on the causes of syntactic errors

The investigator analysed the causes of errors while constructing the grammatical structures in English using a Questionnaire. The data was analysed using the technique of percentage analysis. The computed percentage are listed in the tabular form in table 2

Table 2 : Result of the Causes of Syntactic Errors in the Perception of Teachers

Sl: No	Major causes	Percentage
1	Attitude of students	97
2	Interlingual interference	96
3	Present method of teaching	91
4	Intralingual interference	80
5	Inadequate exposure to English Language	75
6	Teacher factor	59
7	Lack of planning to remediate problem	51

Attitude of students is the highest causal factor and lack of planning to remediate problem is the least causal factor in the perception of teachers. 97 percentage of teachers reported that attitude of students is the major cause of grammatical errors. Interlingual interference and present method of teaching is also leading to the causes of syntactic errors as perceived by 96 and 91 percentage of teachers. Intra lingual interference is one among the major causes in the perception of 80 percentages of teachers. Inadequate exposure to English language is also hindering the students from the proper learning of grammatical structures in the perception of 75 percentages of teachers. Teacher factor and lack of planning to remediate problem were the least contributing factor to the causes of errors while constructing grammatical Structures in English as it is reported by 59 and 51 percentage of

teachers.

Testing the pre Experimental status of experimental and control groups

Table 3 :Comparison of the mean Pretest scores between experimental and control groups

Area	Nature of test	Group	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Auxiliaries	Pre test	Experimental	40	3.05	2.18	0.33 ^{NS}
		Control	40	2.87	1.91	

*NS not significant

As per the table it is revealed that significant difference did not exist in the mean scores of the Pretest scores of the Control and Experimental Groups on construction of Auxiliaries. The 't' value obtained was 0.33. The t- value is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance.

Comparing the effectiveness of Focus on Form Instruction and Discourse Oriented Pedagogy

Table 4: Comparison of the mean Posttest scores between experimental and control groups

Area	Nature of test	Group	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Auxiliaries	Post test	Experimental	40	17.17	5.17	6.93 ^{**}
		Control	40	9.7	4.53	

** significant

As per the table it is revealed that significant difference exist in the mean scores of the Posttest scores of the Control and Experimental Groups in the construction of Auxiliaries. The 't' value obtained is 6.93. The t- value is greater than table value at 0.01 level of significance.

Testing the effectiveness of Discourse Oriented Pedagogy

Table 5: Comparison of the mean Pretest and mean Posttest scores in the Control Group

Area	Nature of group	Test	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Auxiliaries	Control group	Pre test	40	2.87	1.91	10.29 ^{**}
		Post test	40	9.7	4.53	

** significant

As per the table it is revealed that significant difference exist in the mean scores of the Pretest and Posttest in the control Group on constructing Auxiliaries. The 't' value obtained is 10.29. The value is found to be greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance.

Testing the effectiveness of Focus on Form Instruction**Table 6 :Comparison of the mean Pretest and mean Posttest scores in the Experimental Group**

Area	Nature of group	Test	N	Mean	SD	't' value
Auxiliaries	experimental	Pre test	40	3.03	2.18	19.27**
		Post test	40	17.18	5.1	

**** significant**

As per the table it is revealed that significant difference exist in the mean scores of the Pretest and Posttest scores in the Experimental Group on constructing, Auxiliaries. The 't' value obtained is 19.27. All these values are found to be greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance.

Comparison of mean gain scores between experimental and control groups

The means and standard deviations of the gain scores of Experimental Group and Control Groups were subjected to mean difference analysis. The consolidated results of the test of significance of difference in mean gain scores between the experimental and control groups is given in table.

Table 7 : Result of Test of Significance of Difference in Mean Gain Scores Between Experimental and Control Groups

Area	Experimental group			Control group			N	Mean	SD	't' value
Auxiliaries	N1	M1	SD1	N2	M2	SD2	40	3.03	2.18	19.27**
	40	14.2	4.64	40	6.83	4.19	40	17.18	5.1	

**** significant**

Table 7 shows that the obtained t- value is greater than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Hence it is clear that there is significant difference in the mean gain scores between the experimental and control groups. The mean gain score of Experimental Group is significantly greater than the mean gain score of Control Group for learning Auxiliaries in English. This clearly proves that Focus on Form Instruction is more effective in constructing Auxiliaries among standard VIII students.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for Test on Syntactic Structures– Pretest scores as covariate

This part of analysis was done to examine whether significant changes exist in the mean Posttest scores when Pretest scores was taken as covariate.

Table 8: Result of ANCOVA of the Pretest and Posttest Scores

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
Group	1074.192	1	1074.192		
Error	1525.769	77	19.815	54.21	P<.01

As per the table the obtained F (1,77) = 54.21 for the effect of Focus on Form Instruction on Auxiliaries is found beyond the table value for .01 level of significance. The results of the F-test support the effectiveness of Focus on Form Instruction on Auxiliaries of standard VIII students after controlling Pretest score, F (1,77)= 54.21, P<.01.

Post hoc comparison of adjusted means between Experimental Group and Control Groups

To find out of the two groups which received two different treatments, that is, Experimental Group taught through Focus on Form Instruction and Control Group using Discourse Oriented Pedagogy, which one differ in the adjusted mean Posttest scores of Test on Syntactic Structures test of significance of difference between adjusted means was applied. The data and results of the post hoc comparison of the adjusted mean Posttest scores of Test on Syntactic Structures is presented in table 9.

Table 9: The Data and Result of test of Significance of Difference Between Adjusted Mean Posttest Scores of Test on Syntactic Structures for – Pretest Scores as Covariate

Dependent variable	Adjusted mean		Std. Error	t- value	Level of significance
	Experimen	Control			
Learning of Auxiliaries	17.1	9.77	0.996	7.36**	0.01

The obtained t- value as per the table regarding the test of significance of difference between adjusted mean Posttest scores of experimental and control groups is found significant at .01 level as the obtained t- value is greater than 2.58, the table value of 't' at .01 level. It is noted that high mean is associated with Experimental Group taught Auxiliaries using Focus on Form Instruction, suggesting the advantage of Focus on Form Instruction on Discourse Oriented Pedagogy in teaching Auxiliaries.

Conclusion

Focus on Form Instruction fosters acquisition of grammatical structures. The present study also revealed that Focus on Form Instruction is fostering the acquisition of the grammatical

structures presented in sequential order in the sense that it fosters the second language communication to engage the learners in real life situation. In addition, such methods focus on the prescribed L2 grammatical forms that the teacher can transmit to his/her students; in this way, they are teacher-centered. Focus on Form Instruction, in contrast, is learner-centered due to its aim of responding to learners' perceived needs in a spontaneous manner.

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