

Going Beyond Books and Pens: An Evaluation of Non-Traditional Method of Teaching-Learning English at Intermediate Level

Ghulam Ali Buriro
Aftab Ahmed Charan
Wafa Mansoor Buriro

Abstract

This paper presents research study conducted through a unique four-month TEFL program launched at one of the privately run-and-managed English teaching institute in Hyderabad with the slogan of NO BOOKS NO PENS! It is an interactive program based upon the book free communicative methods of teaching-learning English. This program acknowledges the space for various creative efforts in TEFL emphasizing teachers and learners to think beyond the traditional methods of teaching and shows that even Academic language can be taught without using books and pens. For this paper observational and survey method was used to collect the data. The collected data was qualitatively analyzed to evaluate the success/failure of model.

Introduction

Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)/Second Language (SL) is not a new domain in the academic context of Pakistan. Given the fact that these days, English has gone beyond the need of academics requirements, as a lingua franca it has become a necessary tool for job search and survival and knowledge quest (Education policy 2009, p 19). Hence, for last many decades English is being taught and learnt as the major component of syllabus of college and university.

Over the years, things have been in a constant move and change; but on the contrary hardly any progress is made towards revision of teaching methodologies and strategies. Since a child is enrolled in class one, he or she is being taught English as a major subject of his syllabus up till the degree level. But it is strongly

perceived that the majority of the learners fail to achieve the required proficiency in learning English as a second language.

At present, people are comparatively busier and more concerned on the achievement of their academic objectives. The traditional chalk and talk pattern, in twenty-first century, significantly fails to motivate enough the learners. We, due to the blessings of technology, are emancipated from the dependence of traditional books; they are replaced by e-books and audio books which are more convenient and economical. Therefore, for this program, the efforts were made to avoid the traditional methods of teaching learning English and attempted to teach English through relatively Non-traditional Methods. Through this method, we tried to highlight and address the contrast observed between the students are taught in the schools and the way outside world influence them. Yet this paper at no place attempts to undermine the importance of traditional method; as it has been a common teaching method in Pakistan exercised exceptionally populous class rooms; nor it invites a debate on the effectiveness of Traditional and Non-traditional method of teaching.

Review of the literature

A thorough analysis of our classroom culture and syllables vividly reveals that it has been ignored that technology has crept into our society by being almost everywhere and everything. It is observed that our youth grows under a powerful influence of digital wave. The youth has been normalized by digital technologies it is fully integrated aspect of their lives (Green and Hannon 2007). The recent research exhibits that these technologies are shaping the way we think work and live (Klopfer, Osterweil 2009). In the educational prospectus of Pakistan the educational institutions have been reluctant to adopt technology due to numerous reasons. On the contrary, a critical disconnect is widely realized between the world inside the schools and the world outside. Learners' skill on socialization, meaning making and accomplishment is significantly ruled by technology. Therefore, it necessary to kill that disconnect not just to make these two words more complementing each other but also to take the utmost benefit of these emerging technologies. According to Green and Hannon, these days children are establishing a relationship to knowledge gathering which

is alien to their parents and teachers (2007, p.38). That is why for us it is not strange, if someone may find teaching English without books and pen a little odd!

It is quite clear that language is a skill and like all other skills, it cannot be taught by just using theoretical methods and lectures. According to Hunter (1984) students do not get to think critically, analyze information communicate ideas, make logical arguments work as a part of item and learn on their own their desirable skills unless they are permitted to do things over and over in many contexts. Hence, the practice and performance should be given the higher stage of importance in designing a language program. As learning a language is like learning an art, this program uses the basic learning approaches of individual: imitation and cognitive constructive approach, as proposed in Piagets theory (Ormord 1998) the significance of assimilation and accommodation through experience.

Listening and Speaking are regarded as the key skills for communication and comprehension (Shah 2007). But quite unfortunately, these two pivotal components are highly ignored in the syllabi from class one to intermediate. In recent times, English has modified its introduction from a Language to *Lingua Franca*. Its universal currency in the domain of worldwide communication is unquestionable set and acknowledged. Eventually, urging the curricula designers to reconstruct the objectives of English Language teaching across the country. Keeping the above facts in view, this program targets these skills through Direct Instructional method and “Communicative Approach” as termed by (Wilkins 1974).

Rationale

Finding a departure out from the traditional monotonous method is not a new attempt. It has gradually evolved. The traditional methods having generally being found as monotonous boring and usually unproductive. Technology has become an inevitable part of our lives; CALL has become a popular concept in the academic planning of the developed world. Although there are plenty of demotivating factors in raising obstacles against running creative programs in teaching, among them resources being at the top. In order to stimulate the learners’ interest the instructor needs various types of resources such as multi

media/video screen, Personal Computer, sound system, flash cards, language learning toys, pictures charts, appropriate video and audio clips, camera to record the students' learning response etc. Frequent power break down, dearth of appropriate language tools, insufficient guidelines and research, huge diversity in learners' identity are the key challenges hovering and threatening over the fate of such programs. Thus, before launching this idea the instructor(s) and management had to sit together for creating remedies and alternatives to minimize the interruptions. This program runs through a series of activities distinguished as controlled, guide and free. All activities are executed with the spirit of "challenge to achieve". The feeling of "do someone else down must be avoided as it is considered immoral and counterproductive (Wright, Bettridge, Buckby p.6)

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to critically evaluate the success of Non-traditional methods used in teaching-learning English. Technology is not just effective; it is inevitable. On the contrary, it is not yet applied with an effective spirit in our academic circles. Therefore, we thought hard and long about it and eventually concluded to conduct a thorough research on the efficacy of this model. Many activities discussed in this model might have been tried already in different teaching contexts. But this model was applied on the population which is still found distant from such experience. We launch this research to find the pros and cons of the model. The recommendations framed under the light of data analysis will stand as set guidelines to continue with the model or to drop it altogether.

Key words

The following words/terms have frequently been referred to in this research paper, and they mean as under:

Non-traditional model: this term is strictly used in the context of Pakistan. It denotes the concept of all those activities and strategies which are not commonly used in teaching English. However, many activities discussed in this paper, may be a regular part of teaching English in certain countries; eventually in such context, many not be considered Non-traditional.

TEFL: Teaching of English as a Second Language

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning

DI: Direct Instructional method.

ESL: English as a Second Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

METHODOLOGY

The survey method was used, Quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied to analyze the data. As the research was conducted on the innovative methods used in teaching English as a foreign/second Language therefore, the research findings are descriptive and statistical in nature.

The population of the study was the enrolled students of this program. As the program does not have any age limit; therefore there were students of various age groups, different academic and professional backgrounds. However, a placement test was designed and conducted to determine their current language proficiency. Subsequently, those who successfully qualified for the intermediate level were allowed to seek enrollment in this class. It was also fully assured that all the students were fully aware of the unified purpose of the class: develop English listening and speaking skills. An open ended questionnaire was prepared to collect opinion of the teachers; and students feedback was collected on a scale of three options.

Procedure

i. Determining Program Objectives

The instructor must carefully select clear objectives for his each class. These individual objectives vertically progress in a spiral design covering the required language skills. At initial stage the objectives are broken into brief clear segments, later arranged in an order so that they may complement each other. The instructor and the learners plainly know the objective at the outset of each class. Chiefly the program aims at the Listening and Speaking skills, hence every lesson should possessive a clear objective contributing directly towards the targeted skills. The former skill is certain times subsided in language classes. But in this program it serves the role of backbone. Each lesson must be

incorporated with quality listening aids. The objectives can be set targeting the following areas:

Stage I (Duration two months)

- ◆ Be understood
- ◆ Vocabulary
- ◆ Basic grammar
- ◆ Functional English
- ◆ Pronunciation
- ◆ Fluency

Stage II (Duration two months)

- ◆ Syntax
- ◆ Accent
- ◆ Diction
- ◆ Fluency
- ◆ Accuracy
- ◆ Expression

Table 1. Demographical data

Items	Description
• Number of teachers	2
• Number of students	80
• Duration of class	90 minutes
• Duration of program	4 months
• Equipment used	PC, Multimedia, audio system, charts, flash cards, toys

ii. Teaching aids: Preparation

Students are strictly forbidden to bring anything to read and write, consequently the program solely depends upon the teaching aids used by the instructor. Aids are to be prepared in advance, should be handy and carefully selected. The instructor can use any thing as a teaching aid which he finds deem for his class objectives.

iii. Teaching aids: Selection

There are two main areas demanding extreme caution while selecting the learning resources. First of all, the classroom aids and topics must

be selected keeping the learning target in view. Certain aids are interesting and the learners may enjoy them in the class. However this may not yield the required result to the teacher. This will make the instructor a *lieze fare* yet an ineffective instructor. That is why; the achievement of learning objective must be prioritized while selecting the teaching aids. Secondly the instructor must critically consider the social and religious culture of learners therefore; all aids must be screened thoroughly to avoid any socio, religious or ethnic offence. Many interested for some students may be irritating for and offensive for others no matter how helpful they are but they can consequently lead demotivation the learners.

iii. Classroom

This program is completely an activity based one, therefore the class size and setting must be of an accommodative design. The setting arrangement should be in a way so that each participant may have a clear view of the class. As the traditional class setting usually provides a tranquil corner to the back sitters and comparatively the perform less than the others. Moreover it has been observed that the traditional classroom with immovable chairs offer more practice to the teacher than to the students (Fleck 1999). Therefore, a circular or round table class provides an ideal seating arrangement; as this facilitates teachers with flexibility to determine the structure and timing of in-class programming activities (Horn and Jacob). The class should have proper sound system suitably audible and may not cause any inconvenience to the neighbouring environment. The video screen or Multimedia screen must be displayed in a clearly visible position. Classroom should have proper sound system and should be place on convenient position.

Planning and execution

For a successful execution of this program every day should be taken as a D-day. It should be assured that all the equipment are intact and in a working order. There is an appropriate arrangement of power substitute. The class objectives are clearly set and the related aids are

available and accessible. All activities have been arranged in a logical and motivating sequence and class will finally end with successful achievements of set goals.

Teachers' feedback

The respective teachers were approached through an open ended questionnaire for their analytical feedback pertinent to this teaching method.

They recorded a significant positive response in the class. At the evaluation tests, a feeling for learn-more and do better was evidently expressed. This innovative method of teaching-learning English successfully motivated the typical classroom-haters who do not wish to sit with a book in their lap. There was a persisting air of excitement in the class due to its interactive nature. They received learners from various age groups and academic back grounds. The diversity of learners was found extremely helpful and productive during different activities and discussions. The only sustaining challenge in front of this program was the availability and feasibility of Language Learning activities. The instructor had to greatly improvise the suggested activities due to the variable needs of class. Therefore, the success of this program, so far highly depends upon the teachers professional reflective skills and his sound knowledge on the modern teachings aids like CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning).

Learners' feedback

The students enrolled in this program were approached through a questionnaire for their analytical feedback pertinent to this teaching method. For questionnaire Likert scale with the range of 1-3 was exploited.

There were 80 students enrolled in this program so far and all the students were invited to present their feedback. Their response was recorded on a scale of three points: YES, NO and NOT SURE. Keeping in view the importance of their feedback, the students were explained the questionnaire by their teacher in the class. However, they were dually encouraged to express their feelings independently. The recorded response along with the questions is given as under:

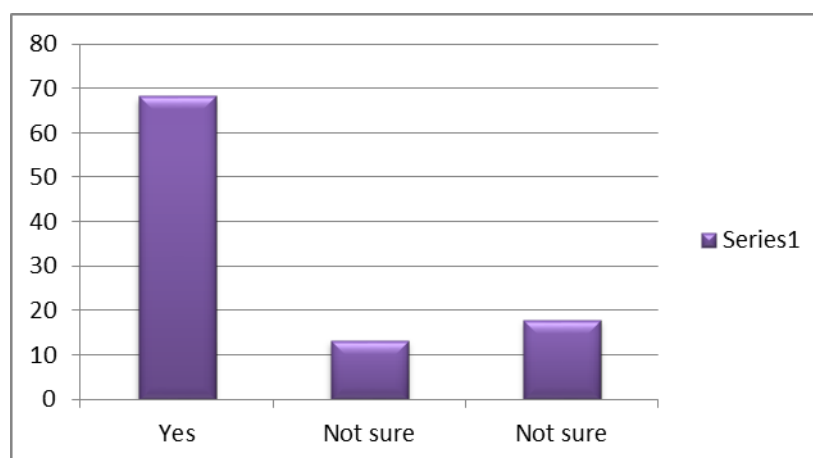
**STUDENTS' FEEDBACK FORM FOR NTM
(NON-TRADITIONAL METHOD)**

S #	ITEM	Y		N		N.S	
01	I felt comfortable with NTM.	50	62.5%	5	6.25%	25	31.5%
02	I enjoyed being the part of NTM.	52	65%	7	8.75%	21	26.25%
03	As compare to TM, I found NTM as a far quicker means of improving speaking skills.	55	68.75%	15	18.75%	10	12.5%
04	I often felt accelerated by being a part of NTM classroom activities.	40	50%	10	12.5%	30	37.5%
05	I noted that NTM, in classroom, exercises more native like in contrast to TM.	45	56.25%	16	20%	19	23.75%
06	I discovered that I was the center of classroom activities throughout the course.	40	50%	30	37.5%	10	12.5%
07	The course and classroom activities were so designed that I got plenty of time for speaking.	65	81.25%	4	5%	11	13.75%

08	I was able to do away with initial shyness and anxiety to speak English.	54	67.50	16	20%	10	12.5%
09	I was able to significantly improve my speaking skills.	62	77.5	10	12.5%	8	10%
10	I found zero usage of books and the efficient use of CALL highly productive.	70	87.5%	5	6.25%	5	6.25%
11	I rate the course as highly successful.	60	75%	7	8.75%	13	19.5%
12	There was least learner's passivity in the class	69	86.25%	2	2.5%	9	11.25%
		662	68.95%	127	13.22%	171	17.81%

The data analysis of students' feedback shows that 68.95% students express a positive response to this NTM. They consider it as an engaging and result oriented method of teaching English. They believe that in this format the students significantly remained active and found ample opportunities to learn and practice the language. Whereas 13.22 students find this method less effective and mostly cast doubts to see how this method can handle a huge diversity in learners' identity. They were also concerned about the successful execution of activities involving electronic equipment due to fear of frequent power breakdowns. On the other hand, 11.25% students remained undecided about this program.

Students Feedback Graph



Conclusion

Students expressed an exalted response to the program. They are comparatively taking more interest and show excitement in the class. As each class was bound to have an audio /video clip setting the learning objectives; consequently it provides learners with an opportunity to learn through native speakers. Secondly the interactive nature and a higher level of students-role in the class enabled students to mark one another's language learning strengths and weaknesses. They were found to make an informal note of their peers and tried to learn through their performances in the class. In the feedback from they recorded they hardly had opportunities to listen their class as most of the time it was dominated by the teachers. Apart from this a less turn of the students was recorded in the program there was a significant willingness to continue; whereas in other language classes often a higher turnout was recorded.

Appendices I

Open ended questionnaire eliciting teachers' feedback

1. How would you compare Non-traditional Method of teaching of English with Traditional Method?

2. What specific differences you were able to note while using Non-traditional Method of teaching English to intermediate students?
3. Did you notice any exclusive advantages in teaching through Non-traditional Method?
4. What in your opinion was the learners' response towards Non-traditional Method?
5. Did you encounter any particular differences?
6. What similarities or dissimilarities you would draw between Traditional and Non-traditional Method of teaching English.
7. Do you consider the Non-traditional Method as a sustainable method of teaching English?
8. Do you think that this method should be applied by other language teachers/institutes?
9. In your opinion how much is the success rate of this program in terms of percentage?
10. Any other remark as a teacher particularly engaged in teaching English through this method?

Appendices II

Sample lesson plan

- **Task** : Introduction
- **Skills** : Listening and Speaking
- **Organization** : Pair/ Individual
- **Level** : Beginners
- **Time** : 60 minutes
- **Grammar Unit** : is/am/are

Objectives: At the end of the unit students will be able to independently introduce themselves in English.

PREPARATION:

- 1.1 The T greets the students
- 1.2 The T asks questions like: *How are you? What is your name?* etc.

PRESENTATION:

- 2.1 The T plays the selected audio/video clips showing two individuals introducing each other.
- 2.2 The T replays the clips and writes the key words on board.
- 2.3 The teacher invites one volunteer from the class and demonstrates the introduction.
- 2.4 The T invites two volunteer students from the class to introduce themselves.

PRACTICE:

- 3.1 Students in pairs introduce each other.
- 3.2 Students change partners and repeat the procedure.

PRODUCTION:

- 4.1 Each student presents his introduction and his/her response is recorded.

FEEDBACK:

- 5.1 The T randomly invites the learners to introduce and asks questions to evaluate the learners' outcome.
- 5.2 The T plays the recording of learners' speeches and invites them to identify the mistakes.

FOLLOW UP:

- 6.1 Select any three friends/relatives at home and introduce yourself.

RESOURCES: Audio clip from ... video clip from ..., board marker, white/black board.

References:

1. Brumfit, C.J. & Johnson, K. (eds) (1979) *The Communicative Approach To Language Teaching*. Oxford: OUP. Retrieved November 25, 2006 from: <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Rabbini-Syllabus.html>;
2. Classroom Management *Foreign Language Teaching Method* Retrieved from <http://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/modules/classroom/06/>
3. Fleck, C. (1999). *Understanding cheating in Nepal*. Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education, 2 (1), Para 26-28.
4. Green, H and Hannon, C, 2007, Their Space: Education for a digital generation, online version, accessed September 4 2007, Retrieved from <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Their%20space%20-%20web.pdf>
5. Hunter, M. 1984. Knowing Teaching and Supervising. In P. Hosford (Ed.), *Using What we Know about Teaching. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, Alexandria, USA. pp.78-82.
6. Horn, Micheal S. Jacob, Robert J.K. *Designing Tangible Programming Languages for Classroom Use* www.cs.tufts.edu/~jacob/papers/tei07.horn
7. Ormrod, J.E., (1998), *Educational Psychology*. Merrill, New Jersey. Pp.350,400
8. Shah, S. Tajmmal H. (2007) *Constructive approach to development of criteria for selection of content for teaching English in Secondary Schools*.
9. Singapore to launch Speak-good-English campaign– Agency France Press in Singapore, 30 August 1999. Retrieved 18 November 2010 Retrieved from <http://www.eastern.edu/publications/emme/2000spring/fleck.html?>
10. Wilkins, D.A. (1974) *A communicative approach to syllabus construction in adult Language learning* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
11. Wriight, A., Bettridge, D. and Buckby, M. *Games for Language Learning* Cambridge University Press p.6
12. Eric Kloper, Scot Osterweil, Jennifer Groff, Jason Hass (2009) *Using the technology of today, in the classroom today* Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Retrieved from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>