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Experiential learning-its impact on communication skills in class six students of Bilaspur district

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Abstract

**“Communication is one of the most important skills you require for a successful life”
-Catherine Pulsifer**

The students who had limited or no exposure to English medium of instruction not only struggled in their communication at the primary level of education but also in their middle school level. The rural children were destined to suffer due to the lack of exposure to English and the lack of exposure to modern methods of teaching and learning. But the best possible learning method would be to train learners to make them capable of meeting the demands of the modern world and this learning method should involve the knowing about the process of learning itself. A learner should always be open to experiences and should be ready to involve himself in the never ending process of change which takes all around him. In this context the present study was chosen to find out whether the students from a rural background in Middle School would improve in their communication skills. Among the methods used for effective learning, experiential learning method was adopted as it was more relevant to involve the slow learners with tasks set in familiar contexts. 60 students from class six were chosen for the research. All the students were from M.L.B. Govt. Middle School, Bilaspur, and Chhattisgarh, India. The students studied English as one of the subjects. They had communication problem in English language and had very little knowledge of English grammar structures. Ten different tasks to impart various language skills were implemented in a phased manner for about 60 sessions in a semester. Pre and post tasks evaluations and questionnaires were used to assess the performance of students. SPSS package was used for statistical analysis of the complete data. The findings showed that there was a positive difference between pre task and post task speaking and writing, and it was due to the implementation of experiential learning method. This was proved by the use of paired sample T test. Through frequency analysis it was found that there was a positive impact of experiential learning method. The study proved that experiential learning in language classroom helped the L2 little learners improve their communication skills where the research scholar brought out interaction in the students thus resulting in improving their communication skills in English.

Keywords: Experiential learning method, communication skills, students, interaction

1. Introduction

“Communication skill that you can learn. It’s like riding a bicycle or typing. If you’re willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life”

- Brain Tracy

Experiential learning requires self-initiative, an ‘intention to learn’ and an ‘active phase of learning’. Kolb's cycle of experiential learning can be used as a framework for considering the different stages involved. English language skills are also important given its widespread status across the globe as a lingua franca. English for specific purposes focuses the learner’s attention on the particular terminology and communication skills required in the international professional field. The development of Communication skills is discussed in this paper, with examples given of different methods of teaching and assessment. The impacts on communication skills development include various elements, including gender equality. A lack of sufficient communication skills serves only to undermine the image of a student, but this can be tackled by engaging features of emotional intelligence (EQ) in education. EQ offers various components that can improve communication skills and emphasises a more experiential approach to learning, but the modern student must also be able to communicate

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effectively in a shared tongue. This is especially important given that projects are now planned and implemented across national and cultural borders. English has become the ascendant language internationally, being the most widespread. This will influence the language of communication between professionals internationally. In this age of globalisation, the number of international projects is increasing, and cross-cultural communication and collaboration is on the rise, this is particularly so for the now international practice of students.

As a second language, it is also very widespread. The distinction here lies between the most widespread versus the most widely spoken. However, the number of people who speak English with at least some degree of proficiency exceeds any other language, and it's phenomenal advance around this planet is unparalleled in the history of language. English is cited as the major language of international business, diplomacy, and science and the professions. English is the prime means for communication. Confucius said, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand". The first sentence may be more accurately translated as "I hear, I know"- but the meaning is better understood in the more common version. This is the heart of learning. You can see it in children learning, whether physical skills or social roles, it is always the practising and the acting-out of roles and skills that gives the quickest results, especially through games. They learn through practising the analytical and decision-making skills. The teacher, particularly in experiential learning, is really the only person who allows the students to learn. That skill in itself is very valuable. And one of the kindest comments for teachers comes from Lee Iacocca, one of the iconic businessmen of the 20th century: "In a completely rational society, the best of us would be teachers and the rest of us would have to settle for something less, because passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honour and the highest responsibility anyone could have". Purpose Effective communication skills are recognised as crucial for the successful future career of all students. The purpose of this study was to examine the communication skills in students and explore the ideas how experiential learning class offers students work opportunities outside the classroom in addition to the classroom lectures in English and how it could help improving students' communication skills.

Students require an ever-increasing range of skills to maintain relevance with the global environment of the new millennium. Communication skills are a vital component of this, recognised by academia and industry alike. In this research study the research scholar makes an attempt to prove that through experiential learning students can develop their communication skills in English. Class six students were chosen and experimented upon for this purpose. The scholar uses the play-way method because we all know that play allows all people not just children to assess their interest in various activities without investing their whole lives in them. It lets them broaden their experiences and their understanding, and find what is most appealing. Confucius also said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life". Through experiential learning the scholar brought out interaction in the students thus resulting in improving their communication skills in English.

Method

The 20-minute surveys were distributed to the students who were learning through the experimental learning method. These students of class six plan to pursue something different. The survey was composed of 30 statements asking about their feeling of speaking in public (e.g. enjoy, good at, terrified, tense, etc.) at 3 types of communication events (one on-one, small group, large group-speaking in public). In addition, these students were asked to have a 10-minute face to-face interview conducted by the research scholar at the end of the study. At the face-to-face interview, the students were asked what activities were the most effective to improve their communication skills through Experiential Learning class, and what made students gain confidence at public speaking. Data were analysed with descriptive and multiple liner regression.

Result

60 students of class six answered the survey both at the beginning and the end of the semester and 25 students volunteered to have the face-to-face interview. At the beginning of the semester, 44% of students (n=10) reported high degree of anxiety who were terrified of speaking in public, and 52% of students (n=19) reported moderate degree of anxiety, who avoided speaking in public, if possible in public speaking. At the end of the semester, number of students who had moderate degree of anxiety in public speaking decreased significantly (49%, n=13, p<0.05), but the numbers of students who had high degree of anxiety did not change. Also, at the end of the semester none of the students reported high degree of anxiety in a small group speaking. In the face-to-face interviews the students who had high and medium degree of anxiety reported the Experiential Learning course provided opportunities and helped to improve their talking and meeting new people, but they wanted more feedbacks or instructions how to improve their communication skills.

Conclusion

"Intelligence, knowledge or experience are important and might get you a job, but strong communication skills are what will get you promoted".

Mireille Guiliano

The Experiential learning course in is an effective way to improve communication skills in students. The results of this study will further contribute to develop teaching materials for students who have high and medium degrees of anxiety in public speaking. The research scholar encouraged her students to have fun while learning English. Communicative activities are designed to be lively, interactive, and fun. When the students are comfortable they learn more. An active, cooperative class is a class where a great deal of learning- social, cultural, and linguistic is evident. This was the output of this research study. Communicative activities provided opportunities for the learners to use the language with one another and with people in the community. Students will get opportunities to face English more confidently on a larger canvas of life. Moreover, there is always more than one solution for a problem in the real world. Students will have a better chance to learn a better lesson when they get to interact with real life experiences.

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