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Assessment of English Teaching Methodologies at Secondary Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The objective of the project was to assess English teaching methodologies at secondary level in Bangladesh. A number of teachers were included both from rural and urban areas in the sample. For the purpose of data collection, a questionnaire was prepared. Data collection through the questionnaire was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted by applying percentage. Though a number of teaching methods were used at secondary level, the findings showed that the present method named “Communicative Language Teaching” used on the Secondary education in Bangladesh was not suitable for the current text book of English, where interaction between the teachers and the students were lacked of and two skills like reading and writing were applied only. This paper

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also discovered that teachers were not using this method wholeheartedly. Then the current method needed to be improved with adding grammar and literary piece, which could be applied through technological aspects.

Keywords: teacher, teaching methodologies, secondary level, technological.

1. Introduction

Teaching is a complex process which requires proper teaching methodologies, in order to inculcate knowledge in the mind of the students and to transfer knowledge to the next generation. Secondary education is a turning state therefore; effective teaching methodology is to be adopted according to the needs of the students so that proper guidance can be given.

According to Vijayalakshmi (2004), teaching is both an art and a science. Able teachers always find ways and means to improve their teaching techniques. With the change in time the teachers are asked to employ newer methods for teaching their students more effectively so that they must be able to cope with the demand of the age. The latest techniques of teaching are a need of hour. The progress of country depends upon the quality of its teachers. Ranga (2005) has commented on teacher education, ‘the irony of fate, however, is that teaching is the most unattractive profession and teacher no longer occupies honorable position in the society. Teaching can regain its earlier noble status in case the quality of teacher education is improved’.

The term ‘‘Teacher’’ is used for the person who teaches the students, guides the learners and enables them how to read and write. Encyclopedia of education defines teacher education as, ‘‘education and preparation of individuals enabling them become professional teachers.’’

Frank et al. (1987) have emphasized the need for making teacher education dynamic. They suggested that, ‘‘in order to keep pace with- technology changes in society the teacher education programs of all levels in country must be planned in such a way that the teachers produced by these programs, are broadly educated, scientific minded, uncompromising on quality innovative,

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but sympathetic towards students. Aggarwal (1990) has concluded that “teacher education is that knowledge, skills and abilities which is relevant to the life of teachers as teacher.”

It is also important to provide training to the teacher for adopting proper teaching methods. Teacher education is not teaching the teacher how to teach. It is the initiative, to keep it alive, to minimize the evils of the “hit and miss” process: and to save time, energy, money and trouble of the teacher and the taught. The necessity of the teacher to perceive that the course in teacher education would, help him minimize his trouble, and to appreciate that it would save the students from much of the painful process through which he has himself passed. Teacher education is needed for developing a purpose and for formation of a positive attitude for the profession.

2. Bangladesh Situation

According to Shami, et al. (2005) Secondary Education comprises of two stages- secondary and higher secondary. The secondary education is of five years duration in Bangladesh regarding VI-X. There is a secondary schools certificate (SSC) examination at the end of 10th class and it is conducted by the Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education throughout the country. The medium of instruction in most of schools is Bengali, except in English medium schools whereas the higher education grades XI-XII, is imparted at Intermediate Colleges.

The students follow two years program of study at higher secondary level, which leads to the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). The medium of instruction is Bengali in this level. The Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education at the end of 12th class examination for higher secondary certificate.

3. A brief Review of Previous Researches

Yasmin (1984) conducted research study on “a comparative study of the effectiveness of the inquiry and traditional methods for teaching biological sciences in laboratory at the High School Level.” A sample of 400 students was further divided into 8 groups (4 experimental and 4

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control). The findings of the study reveal that the inquiry approach is more effective as compared to traditional methods.

Haass (2002), in his research study titled, “The influence of teaching methods on student achievement on Virginia end of course standards of learning test for Algebra,” suggested that Algebra teachers should emphasize direct instruction, technology aided instruction, and problem-based learning. These three teaching methods categories ranked highest in both analyses.

Jason (2006) conducted a research study titled, “effective teaching methods for large classes” has concluded that the lecture/discussion teaching method was the most preferred among students. Student comments as to their reason for selecting this as the most valuable method seem to suggest that they have a desire to be somewhat active learners, engaging in discussion rather than passively listening to a lecture. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that faculty teaching large classes should attempt to include constructive active teaching methods in their courses whenever possible. Results indicate that most students prefer to be active in their learning process. The active and collaborative teaching methods examined in this study are not only desirable to many students, but they also appear to produce significant improvement in terms of learning outcomes.

4. Statement of the Problem

The present research was designed to investigate the assessment of English teaching methodologies at secondary level in Bangladesh.

5. Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the assessment of teaching English methodologies at secondary level.

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2. Explore advantages and disadvantages of various methods.
3. To identify the use of teaching method (which is used more) effectively.

6. Significance of the Study

This study has great importance for the teachers in general and for secondary school teachers in particular, as this study has collected a lot of information about teaching methods, their effectiveness and appropriateness about various schools at secondary level. Furthermore, study will guide the English teachers in exploring proper methodologies for teaching. The significance of the study will also be for the planners and education managers in policy formulation or revision of teacher education programs at secondary level in the country. It will also help the teachers gaining perfect idea about English teaching methods especially at secondary level in Bangladesh.

7. Introducing English Teaching Methods

There are many methods in secondary level for English teaching. Among them Grammar-translation method, Direct method, Audio-lingual method and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are very essential for English teaching. These methods can be sum up in the following ways—

7.1 Grammar Translation Method

Grammar Translation Method was first introduced in Germany especially in Prussia. Hence it was also called Prussian Method. This method is the oldest method of foreign language teaching, having existed for more than 2000 years which dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s and is being modified and used in different countries of the world today. This method was introduced for the teaching of English language in Bangladesh during the colonial period which is being used till today. It is a very traditional method which does not have any theoretical framework.

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Richards et al. (1986) states, “It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it that attempts to relate it to issue in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory”. Howatt (1984) depicts in his article that the high priority attached to meticulous students of accuracy which, as well as having an intrinsic moral value, was a prerequisite for passing the increasing number of formal written examinations that grew up during the century.

This method is still common in many countries, even popular. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be scored through this method. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations and rote exercises”.

The principal characteristics of this method are:

It is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language.

1. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.
2. Classes are continued through mother tongue with a little use of the target language.
3. A number of vocabularies are taught in the lists of isolated words
4. Long hair-explanting explanation of grammar is presented and illustrated.
5. Reading of difficult classical text is started early.
6. Very little attention is paid to the context of text rather than focus on the grammatical issues of text.
7. Reading and writing is emphasized than speaking and listening.

6.2 Direct Method

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Direct Method, alternatively called “The Natural Method” begun in 1923 focusing on the foreign language that could be taught without translation or the use of the learner’s native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action (Richards et al., 2002). According to teaching quality improvement in secondary education project (Ministry of Education, 2008) this method became popular about 100 years ago. It has been said that this method was developed as a reaction to the grammar translation method. In this method, the learners are interested in a flow of examples of the L2, at the same time getting them engaged in conversations or questions/answers aiming at establishing “a direct bond between experiences and expressions.” It emphasizes direct contact with the target language in meaningful sentences. The idea was to teach the language ‘directly’ and naturally with plenty of oral exercises and active demonstration of the words being used through visual aids, dramatization, etc. Grammar is taught implicitly, not explicitly.

The key features of this method are as follows:

1. No use of any language except the target language
2. No use of explicit grammar
3. Use of visual aids
4. Use of dramatization (i.e. acting, mime)
5. Use of special gestures, to convey meaning

6.3 Audio-lingual Method

Americans needed to become orally proficient in the languages of their allies and enemies alike at the time of World War II, especially when they entered into the field of World War II. Coleman (1929) recommended this approach to foreign language teaching for using in American schools and colleges which emphasized teaching the comprehension of text which persuaded foreign teachers to focus on the reading text more than the teaching of oral skills. This method was based on linguistic and psychological theory and its main premises was the scientific descriptive analysis of a wide assessment of languages. On other hand, conditioning and habit-formation models of

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learning put forward by behaviouristic psychologists were firmly related with the pattern practice of the Audio-lingual Method that Brown (1995) would like to say “firmly-grounded in linguistic and psychological theory”. Fries (1945) takes Brown’s comment one step forward mentioning that it is a linguistic and psychological theory.

The characteristics of this method can be drawn up in the following manner.

1. Vocabulary can be limited and applied in context
2. Some issues can be used like tapes, language labs and visual aids.
3. New materials are used through dialogue form
4. There will be made a tendency of memorization of vocabularies and phrases.
5. Pronunciation is very important.
6. Structures are sequenced by means of contrastive analysis and taught one at a time.
7. There is little or no grammatical explanation is seen.
8. A little use of mother tongue is permitted by the teachers.
9. Error-free utterances are seen.
10. Successful responses are come out.

6.4 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to the teaching of second and foreign languages that emphasizes communication, as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. The origins of it are to be found in the changes of the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s. Wilkins (1972) in his book titled “Notional Syllabus” played a significant role for the development of CLT and its greater application between the teachers and learners simultaneously.

Mackay (1995), on his learning of Latin through conversation rather than through the customary method of formal analysis and translation, says, “Without methods, without a book, without grammar or rules, without a ship, and without tears, I had learned a Latin as proper as that at my

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school master”. Though this method is fully related to language learning and teaching, it is difficult to synthesize all of the various definitions that have been offered.

The goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence. It means what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community which adjacent with a number of functions as: instrumental, regulatory, inter-act ional, personal, and heuristic, imaginative and representational. Though this method was started in England in the early 19th century but it was introduced for teaching English at secondary education in Bangladesh in 2001 and is being continued till today.

According to Rodgers (2001), there are four characteristics of the communicative view of language:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of function and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

7. Application of Methods in Bangladesh

The above mentioned methods are used in many countries of the world in different situations but these methods are not well-used in Bangladeshi teaching program like secondary level education. Among the above mentioned methods the grammar translation method is being used in Bangladesh before 1971 and even today at all stages of educational program including secondary and higher-secondary level education. But at present Communicative language teaching has been included with it and this method is developed by the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP).

The purpose of using this method in Bangladesh was to update the English language teaching at the Secondary education in Bangladesh meaningfully. ELTIP started working since July 1997. The

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project is sponsored by the ministry of education. This project has been working to promote teaching learning of English in the Secondary level education in Bangladesh and introduced the communicative language teaching approach in the English curriculum of the country for the first time. It's now necessary to assess the suitability of CLT in context to Bangladesh.

8. Proving the Superiority of a Method over Another

Early assessments took place on the basis of theories employed: from the 1960s a range of language program evaluation sought to establish the superiority of a given language learning theory. Towell, et al. (1999) provided a 10-year longitudinal account of French as a foreign language program in a British university. They illustrate the importance of a sustained positive view of the Classroom experience. This is an aspect of evaluation which is widely implemented: Breen et al. (2001) developed the notion of 'teaching principles': 'reasons teachers give for particular techniques that they adopted during language lessons which revealed a set of guiding principles that appeared to be shared across the group' (p. 472). Their analysis showed that lessons do not have either an exclusive content (i.e. language) or student focus, but rather a dynamic balancing of these two dimensions of the teaching task. This study analyses the work of Woods (1996) and Kiely (2001) which showed that teachers' methodological decision making – how to teach – is shaped by the unfolding classroom interaction.

Richards (2006) explored one way in which such decision-making can be understood through an identity-oriented analysis of classroom interaction. Indeed, since the late 1980s, a small cadre of language program assessment has provided cogent and critical insights into the ways in which evaluation can serve internal as well as external interests, can inform formative as well as summative purposes, can empower language teachers and learners as well as ensure adherence to standards or outcomes, can draw upon multiple methodologies ('qualitative' as well as 'quantitative'), and can transform the value as well as the effectiveness of language education .

At the same time, it has possibly increased the demands of assessment in the contemporary educational landscape – that language educators in a variety of settings are becoming sufficiently

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tuned in to the necessity of evaluation as a path towards program improvement, educational effectiveness, and perhaps survival of the language teaching profession (Norris, 2006).

Language education must be an increase in public discourse about evaluation and the sharing of meaningful practices and models in venues available to language teaching researchers and practitioners (Foreign Language Program Evaluation Project, 2008).

Historically, these and related challenges have likely contributed to a perception of program evaluation as something that is apart from language education, largely external to the doing of effective language teaching, exclusively measurement-driven, highly summative and judgmental in oriented teaching and primarily equated with accountability and managerial models of education (Beretta, 1992).

In language program evaluation as well, periodic contributions over the years have emphasized such characteristics in an attempt to enhance evaluation's utility for language teaching (Mackay, 1988 and Mackay, 1994).

Hence, in order for evaluation to contribute maximally to the understanding and improvement of language education, it seems that evaluators are called upon to engage proactively in the design and implementation of methods that can respond to the actual intended uses and users of evaluation information within language programs (Norris, 2008). In the USA, public schools are under pressure to demonstrate significant increases in student achievement under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

Kiely et al. (2005) explain that, 'for a range of reasons, some proper, others less so, evaluation processes and findings remain either insufficiently documented or unpublished' (p. 6). Those program evaluations that do exist are often conducted by publishers or only infrequently provide information about the conditions under which the programs were implemented or explanations for the programs' effectiveness or lack thereof. This lack of high-quality research prompted the Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences, U.S.A. to create the What Works

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Clearinghouse, a project designed to review studies of instructional intervention effectiveness based on strict criteria for what constitutes scientifically based research in education. In fact, ‘not a single product has more than one study fully meeting WWC research standards’ (Oppenheimer, 2007).

A two-year evaluation of the Waterford Early Reading Program (hereafter the Waterford program) was implemented in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in Los Angeles, California.

Klapper et al. (2003) compared the impact of teaching in a university on German foreign language program. The previous studies worked on kindergarten, high school and university level but the present study worked on the secondary education in Bangladesh. However, recent study demonstrates how the research dimension of assessment still shapes views of improving English teaching Methods of secondary education in Bangladesh.

9. Successful Teaching

Mursell (1954) describes successful teaching as, “it has revealed a number of specific aspects or emphases in the total pattern of meaningful learning, which make the general orientation more definite.

Learning is essentially purposive. It is meaningful in the sense that it “matters” to the learner.

1. The basic process of learning is one of exploration and discovery: not of routine repetition.
2. The outcome or result achieved by learning is always the emergence of insight, or understanding or intelligible response.
3. The result is not tied to the situation in which it was achieved but, can be used also in other situations.”

Ibrahim ((1990) has also described effective teaching as: Main objective of teacher education program has always been to prepare effective teachers, such teachers should be capable of bringing desired behavioral changes in their students to an optimal level in relation to the infant in terms of human energy and material resources expended in the process. Teachers while teaching Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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in a class room will have to meet their challenges also to pass through various processes, such as communication of the content style of presentation, use of audio visual aids.

In brief, teacher effectiveness is to be assessed in an area which is concerned with relationship between the characteristics of teachers, teaching acts and their effects on the educational outcomes of classroom teaching. It is evident that the teacher has always to adopt variety of teaching methods and teaching strategies in teaching his subjects in classroom situation to make teaching more effective and result oriented.

10. Methodology

10.1. Sampling procedures

The population of this project was secondary level teachers. A total of 100 teachers were selected as the sample for this project. The respondents were from the different schools in three districts. The sample was selected through a random sampling method. A total of 100 English teachers were selected as respondents to whom the questionnaire was administered to collect data for this project.

10.2. Instrumentation

This project is descriptive and non- experimental. The project was based on primary data. The data were collected via the survey approach through a self- administrated questionnaire. The questionnaire survey method was preferred because the researcher investigated informant's use of English language teaching Method at secondary education. This method was chosen because

- (i) this method is suitable for empirical research;
- (ii) the data collected through this method is easily quantifiable;
- (iii) this method gives informants enough time to provide well thought out answers.

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In preparing the questionnaire, caution was exercised to ensure the standard and quality of the questions. The researcher was concerned about the validity, reliability, clarity, practicality, administrability of the instruments. In order to ensure that the instruments have been designed adequately and appropriately, the instruments were checked by the researcher himself. A pilot survey was conducted to study the feasibility of the instruments. The feedback from this pilot survey on the appropriateness of the questionnaire was then incorporated into the questionnaire.

10.3. Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative method was used to collect the data. The data was collected through a survey in the form of a questionnaire. Data collection took place from 10 October to 18 November 2010. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher himself. The questionnaires were distributed to the English teachers of the secondary level and requested them to return the completed questionnaires after answering.

10.4. Data analysis procedure:

Upon completion of the correction of data, the data was edited, coded classified and tabulated for computation and analysis. The analysis was done using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) software. This software was used to examine and investigate about teachers' choice of answer through which the percentage values were obtained.

Conclusion

The report of this project assessed English Teaching Methods (ETM) of the Secondary education in Bangladesh and showed the utilization-focused approach. Though the objectives of this project were to know the present English teaching methods used at the Secondary education in Bangladesh and identify the merits and demerits of the existing methods by which assessment of Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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English teaching methods could be made successful. This study was able to know the present method named “Communicative Language Teaching” used on the Secondary education in Bangladesh and it was not suitable for the current text book of English where interaction between the teachers and the students were lacked of and two skills like reading and writing were applied only.

This project on the methods used in Secondary education, not only evaluated the English teaching methods meaningfully, but the methods were actually put to use in developing and improving as intended. This study also discovered that teachers were not using the ETM wholeheartedly. Then the current method needed to be improved through following recommendations.

Recommendations

Following recommendations were made on the basis of conclusions:

1. Teachers should use literary piece to involve the students in learning process in the classroom with their text.
2. Teachers should select the method of teaching in the light of topic and learners need and level.
3. Audio- Visual aids should be used more frequently by the teachers to make their teaching effective.
4. Teacher should also use grammar which could be applied through technological aspects in the classroom.

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