

Inducting Phonetic Script/Symbols for Teaching Pronunciation

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Abstract

E. Stanley Jones says, “Conscious mind determines the actions and the unconscious mind determines the reactions and the reactions are just as important as actions”. Human beings’ reactions reflect their nature, attitude, character and identity. Reactions either build or demolish personal relationship, social relationship, organizational relationship and even nation’s relationship. Candidates’ reactions in the interview decide his/her destiny. Students’ reactions in the exams paper show their level of understanding on the particular subject. Reaction of a person who touches the fire, reply of a candidate to the interviewer and answer of a student to the teacher’s questions are the actions and symbols supplied as reactions by the unconscious mind registered in the subconscious mind through repeated attempts of conscious mind. The success and failure of a teacher’s transformation of the concepts depends on how many opportunities he or she has created for the students for rewinding or reminding the concepts, besides his or her efficient teaching skills. A student, who receives, recollects and revises a point consciously can reproduce it in oral and written form with clarity and even can develop his/her understanding further from the point he received. Keeping this in view, an attempt was made to teach pronunciation. This paper discusses the results and analysis of the trifold induction method applied to teach pronunciation to the first year Engineering Students.

Keywords: Phonetic symbols, Inductive Method, Chalk Board Method, Language Lab, Pronunciation, Intonation, Assessment, Analysis

Introduction

70 percent of the first-year engineering students learning English as second language encounters various problems in learning English writing, speaking and comprehensive skills. They are struggling to be acquainted with the rules of functional grammar such as tenses, transformation of sentences, preposition, concord, voices, degrees of comparison, vocabulary, paragraph construction, comprehension, etc. Even the students who are studious are afraid of attempting an oral presentation in English in front of their friends. The students, who are nervous and hesitance, never take the task of doing an oral presentation. These problems that the students are encountering to acquire English as a second language increase the responsibility of the English teachers and trainers.

Hypotheses

I was worried about teaching phonetic symbols, intonation patterns, and syllabification to the first engineering students (2017-18 batch) of my university. When I checked the pre-requisite knowledge of the students on these topics I found that many of the students did not even hear these terms. While I was thinking about what method I can adopt for my delivery, I assumed that inculcating inductive method would help me to complete the task. However, my consciousness was not satisfied with the method alone. It was searching for more. At last I got an answer, when I observed my children responding to the questions asked by Dora in a program called 'Dora Bujji'.

Dora the Explorer is an American [educational animated TV series](#) created by [Chris Gifford](#), et al. in 2000. My children Jedyn of six years and Cyrus of three years were enjoying the program. Jedyn knows little English as she was having the Kindergarten education and Cyrus was a stranger to English as he did not start his schooling. At home, we use to talk in our mother tongue, Tamil. One thing which amazed me was the response given by my son. He responded correctly when the character gave a space for the answer. I was just wondering about the method that made my son to respond. Keeping the intention to identify the method I started watching the animated movie along with them. I had my own intention in joining with them. Later, I understood that they used inductive method which according to Trochim (2006) is moving from the specific to the general. In the animated movie, they introduced the main character asking a question leading to specific place and answering how to reach it from the starting point. They used symbols and visuals so that the children can understand the nouns and verbs. Mostly they used nouns. The main character would repeat the answer two times and in the third time, it would create a space for the spectators to answer. Children enthusiastically fill the gaps orally and loudly.

Methods

I decided to experiment this method for the present task that is to teaching pronunciation to my engineering students. I would adopt inductive method and use chalk board, power points and language lab to deliver contents related phonetic symbols, intonation and syllabification. Two batches as representative samples from two sections were taken. Each batch would consist of 15 students covering 5 above average students 5 average students and 5 below average students from each section. Considering their first semester marks students were categorized as below average, average and above average categories. The procedures followed to analyze Batch A and Batch B are given below.

Procedures	Batch A	Batch B
Pre-requisite Skill Testing	No	Yes
Method of Teaching	Direct Method	Inductive Method
Using PPT	Yes	Yes
Mid Test	No	Yes
Using Lab	No	Yes
Post Test	Yes	Yes

The time taken for delivering the contents for both batch was same. But, for Batch A, there were no pre-requisite skills test and mid test, and the contents were delivered directly using PPTs at a stretch. Post test was conducted for them. For Batch B, there were pre-requisite skills test, mid test and post-test. The contents were delivered for them in the class through PPTs and in the lab also. Inductive method is used for Batch B. For example,

1. Firstly, Phonetic transcription of the words was displayed, and students were asked to guess the vowel and consonant sounds. (Eg. Instead of Rat, the transcription /ræt / was displayed)
2. Secondly, a few words (which have the same number of syllables and same vowel/diphthong) sound were displayed and the students were asked to do the phonetic transcription. For example, the words like mat, bat, sat, cat were displayed. In the same way, sample words containing pure vowels and diphthongs are displayed and students are asked to do the same process.
3. Thirdly, a few phonetic symbols were displayed, and students were asked to guess the sound and were asked to give example words based on phonetic symbols.
4. Fourthly, students were introduced all the 44 sounds of English. In the same way, the contents related to syllabification and intonation pattern were also processed.
5. After this process, a mid-test is conducted for Batch B and Post-test is conducted for Batch A. The question paper was common for both Batch A and B.
6. Additionally, Batch B students were taken to Language Lab where they were instructed to listen and workout the pronunciation symbols, intonation pattern, syllable divisions through online software, Globarena.
7. Finally, Post test was conducted. And the results were analyzed and discussed below.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 reflects the post test result of Batch A and mid test result of Batch B. It shows that the mean average of the Batch A is 77.00 and Batch B is 74.00 out 150. It proves that the Batch A students performed better than Batch B.

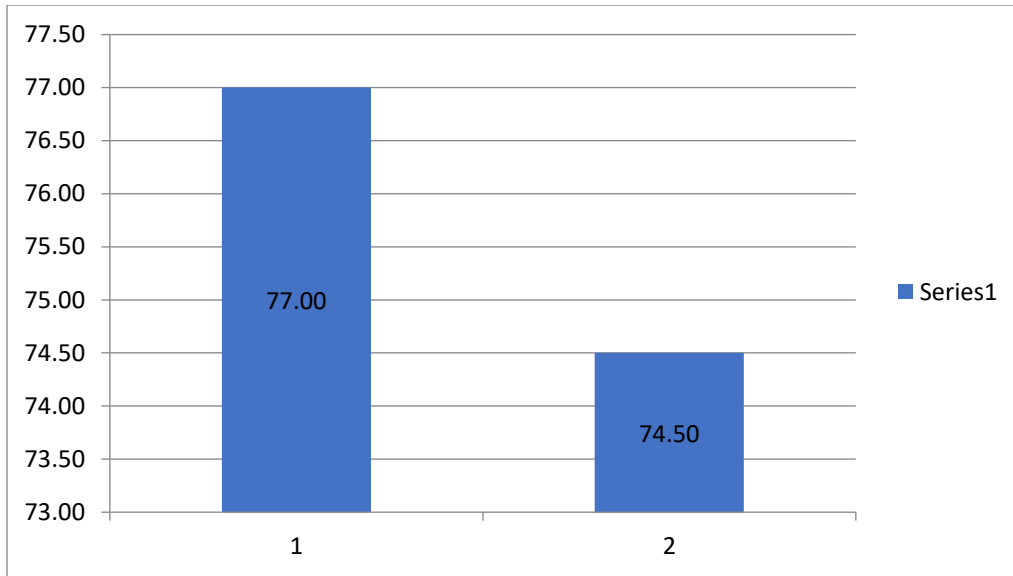


Figure 1. Mid Test (Batch A) and Post Test (Batch B)

Figure 2 reflects the post test result of Batch A, mid test result of Batch B and post test results of Batch B. It shows that the mean average of the Batch A is 77.00 and for Batch B, it is 74.00 in the mid test, and 101 in the post test out of 150. It proves that the performance of the Batch B students whose mean average was below than batch A increased tremendously because of the initiation taken a step further.

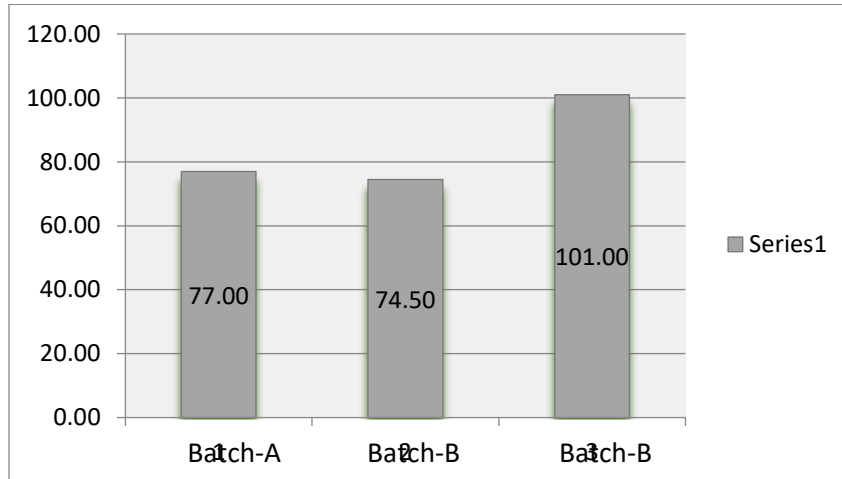


Figure 2. Post Test (Batch A) Mid Test (Batch B) Post Test (Batch B)

Figure 3 reflects the analysis of least marks of Batch A in post-test, least marks of Batch B in the mid test and the least marks of Batch B in post-test. It shows that the least mark of Batch A in the post test was 3.5, the least mark of Batch B in the mid test was 3.0 and the least mark of

Batch B in the post test was 6.0. It proves that the trifold method adopted for teaching helped increasing the performance of the below average students to the level of average students.

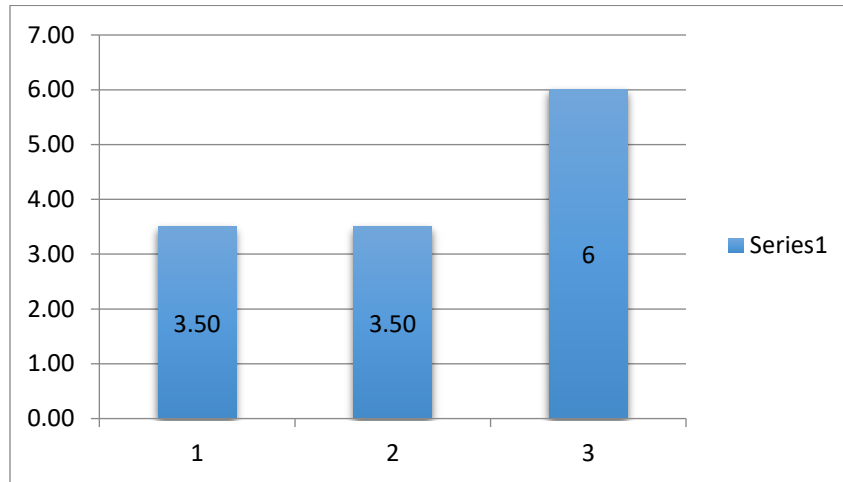


Figure 3. Least Mark (Batch A – Post Test) Least Mark (Batch B – Mid Test) Least Mark (Batch B Post Test)

Figure 4 reflects the analysis of average marks of Batch A in post-test, average marks of Batch B in the mid test and the average marks of Batch B in post-test. It shows that the average mark of Batch A in the post test was 5.50, the average mark of Batch B in the mid test was 5.32 and the average mark of Batch B in the post test was 7.21. It proves that the trifold method adopted for teaching helped increasing the performance of the average students to the level of above average students.

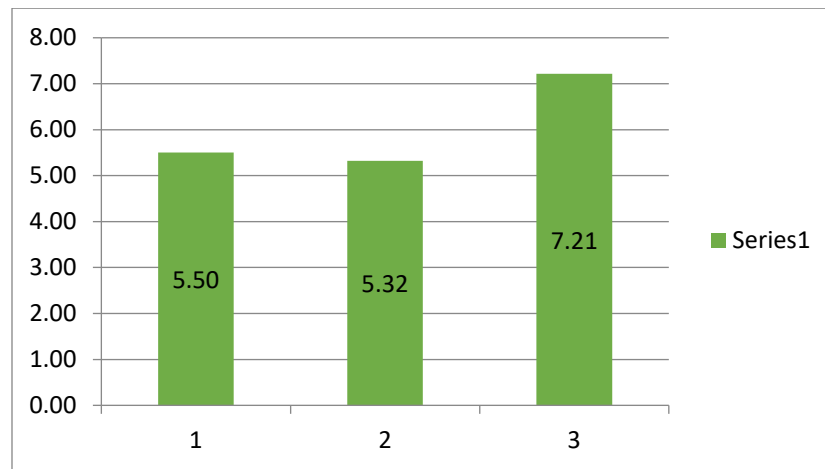


Figure 5. Average Mark (Batch A – Post Test) Average Mark (Batch B – Mid Test) Average Mark (Batch B Post Test)

Figure 5 reflects the analysis of highest marks of Batch A in post-test, highest marks of Batch B in the mid test and the highest marks of Batch B in post-test. It shows that the highest mark of Batch A in the post test was 7.50, the highest mark of Batch B in the mid test was 7.50 and the highest mark of Batch B in the post test was 9.0. It proves that the trifold method adopted for teaching helped increasing the performance of the students who scored the highest mark to the outstanding level.

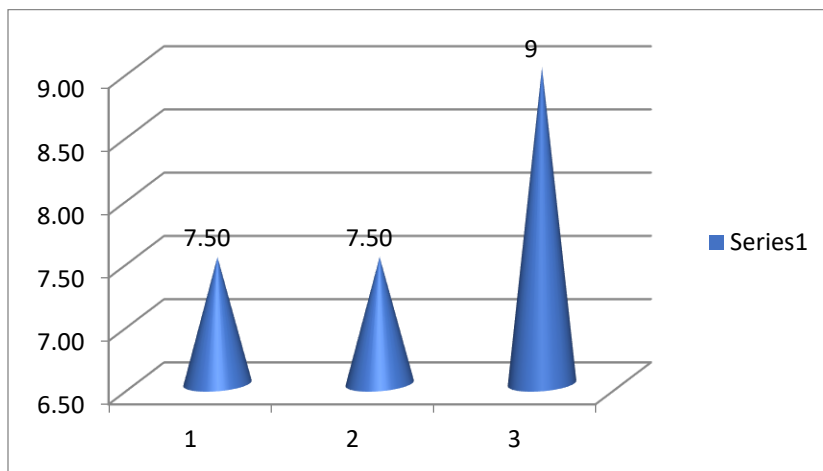


Figure 6. Highest Mark (Batch A – Post Test) Highest Mark (Batch B – Mid Test)
Highest Mark (Batch B Post Test)

Conclusion

This analysis proves that the combination of chalkboard, technology and lab based method of induction resulted in improving the understanding and performance of below average students, average students and above average students. It also would lead to the scope of blooms taxonomy model of learning.

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