

EFFECTIVENESS OF FUNCTIONAL APPROACH IN TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN EIGHTH STANDARD

Research
Paper

INTRODUCTION

There are many languages spoken in different countries of the world but English has acquired a prominent place in meeting the communicational needs of the people. It is now more than ever that English has become a language of opportunity and advancement.

The United Nations Organisation has given English the status of official language. F.G. French's (1972) statement seems quite apt: "No language ancient or modern can be compared with English in the number of geographical distributions of the homes, factories and offices in which the language is spoken, written or read". These days, every country is mutually dependent on other countries in political, social, economical and cultural matters. Here, again, English serves as an important link language.

FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Functional/ Communicative language teaching is an approach that focuses on all the components of the communicative competence of the learner and is not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence. In this approach, 'form' is not primary, but 'functions' are primary. It holds the view that 'function' is the framework through which 'forms' are taught.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study undertaken by the investigator is significant in many aspects. The Government of Gujarat is going all out to promote big time business ventures. The lacuna which the State faces is with regard to personnel proficient in the English language. Gujarat has been known for years for being an 'English Shy' State. The Government in making English compulsory in the tenth standard and introducing the Functional Approach in the teaching of English in schools is making its intentions clear.

This study will help to find out the progress being made in the use of Functional Approach. It will also help the teachers of English to optimize the potentialities of the Functional Approach in the teaching of English in the classroom situation.

Further, the research findings of the investigator will shed light on the actual problems being faced, the deficiency of the system in place, the adequacies of the teaching-learning situations and the mind-set of the learners of English at the high school level. With the help of these findings, appropriate measures can be taken to plug the loopholes and tie up the loose ends so as to make the teaching learning process in the schools meaningful and fruitful. The scope of this study, therefore, will be boundless.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To find out whether there is any significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of control group students with regard to the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills in their performance in English.
- 2) To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the performance in English and the attitude of the control group students towards English.
- 3) To find out whether there is any significant difference between pre-test and post test scores of the experimental group students with regard to the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills in their performance in English.

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4) To find out whether there is any significant relationship between the performance in English and the attitude of the experimental group students towards English.

5) To find out whether there is any significant difference between control and experimental group students in their gain scores with regard to the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills in English.

METHOD ADOPTED

The investigator has adopted experimental method to study the problem at hand. Further, the equivalent group design is followed.

SAMPLE USED

The investigator has randomly selected 60 students studying English in St. Xavier's High School at Deesa in Banaskantha district of Gujarat State to serve as control and experimental groups respectively. There were thirty students in each group taken from the Eight Standard.

FORMING TWO EQUIVALENT GROUPS

The investigator has selected 60 students studying in Standard Eight at St. Xavier's High School, Deesa. These students were formed into two equivalent groups on the basis of their achievement in English as per the marks obtained in the First Quarterly Examinations held in the school. With the help of the obtained marks, the students were placed randomly in two groups. Then the mean differences in achievement of these groups were found and it was not significant. Thus the two equivalent groups were formed.

DESIGN MODULE

TABLE 1

Experimental Group	Control Group
1. Pre - test	1. Pre - test
2. Attitude test	2. Attitude test
3. Experimental treatment	3. No treatment
4. Post - test	4. Post - test
5. Attitude Towards English Scale	5. Attitude Towards English scale
6. Comparison of gain scores	

In an experimental method, two or more groups of subjects equivalent in all significant aspects are selected. One of the equivalent groups serves as control group and the experimental factors are applied to the other groups, one by one for a specific period. The difference observed at the end of the period between the control group and the experimental group have been gathered and analysed. One group served as control group and was taught by employing the traditional method. The other group was the experimental group and was taught according to the functional approach in English.

TOOLS USED

The following tools were used for collecting the data:

- Achievement tests in English (Pre-test and Post-test) which were developed by the investigator.
- A scale for Attitude towards English which was developed by the brain-child of the investigator.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUE USED

The study adopted the statistical techniques like pre-test and product moment correlation.

DATA ANALYSIS

CONTROL GROUP

TABLE 2

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE-TEST AND POST - TEST SCORES OF CONTROL GROUP STUDENTS

Dimensions	Pre - Test		Post-Test		t Value	Remarks at 5% Level
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.		
Listening	1.97	1.74	5.83	2.54	6.87	Significant
Speaking	4.53	1.78	5.67	1.9	2.38	Significant
Reading	3.7	1.29	5.5	1.52	4.93	Significant
Writing	4.53	2.45	8.7	2.98	5.92	Significant
Performance	14.73	6.85	25.7	8.33	5.57	Significant

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 't' is 1.96)

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AND THE ATTITUDE OF CONTROL GROUP STUDENTS

Group (N=30)	Σx	Σy	Σx^2	Σy^2	Σxy	Calculated 'r' value	Remark 5% Level
Control Group	329	930	3959	29350	10347	0.346	Not significant

(For 28 df at 5% level of significance the table value of 'r' is 2.56)

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

TABLE 4

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS

Dimensions	Pre - Test		Post-Test		't' Value	Remark at 5% Level
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.		
Listening	1.9	1.87	4.7	2.88	4.47	Significant
Speaking	5	1.67	8.5	2.66	6.11	Significant
Reading	4.67	1.07	6.13	0.99	5.49	Significant
Writing	4.63	2.21	8.43	3.12	5.52	Significant
Performance	16.2	6.29	27.77	9.12	5.72	Significant

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 't' is 1.96)

TABLE 5

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH AND THE ATTITUDE OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS

Group (N=30)	Σx	Σy	Σx^2	Σy^2	Σxy	Calculated 'r' value	Remark 5% Level
Experimental Group	347	942	4509	29904	10964	0.17	Not significant

(For 28 df at 5% level of significance, the table value of 'r' is 0.361)

CONTROLAND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS



TABLE 6

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTROLAND EXPERIMENTAL GROUP STUDENTS IN THEIR GAIN SCORES

Dimensions	Pre - Test		Post-Test		't' Value	Remark at 5%
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.		
Listening	3.87	1.61	2.8	1.56	2.61	Significant
Speaking	1.13	0.88	3.5	1.28	8.31	Significant
Reading	1.8	0.7	1.47	0.5	2.12	Significant
Writing	4.17	1.67	0.8	2.18	0.73	Not Significant
Performance	10.97	1.42	11.57	4.06	0.62	Not Significant

(At 5% level of significance, the table value of 't' is 1.96)

FINDINGS

1. There is significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of control group students with regard to the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills in their performance in English.
2. There is no significant relationship between performance in English and attitude of the control group students.
3. There is significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group students with regard to the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills in their performance in English.
4. There is no significant relationship between performance in English and attitude of the experimental group students.

5. There is significant difference between control group students and experimental group students in listening, Speaking and Reading skills but there is no significant difference in Writing skill and overall performance in English.

INTERPRETATIONS

The 't' test results show that the students of the experimental group are better than the control group students with regard to the skill of Speaking while the latter are better than the former in the skills of Listening and Reading but there is no difference in the skill of Writing and Overall Performance in English. This may be due to the fact that the Functional Approach adheres more to the spoken aspect of a language while the traditional method being teacher-centred, the skills of listening and reading have an upper hand. In the case of written skill and overall performance in English there is no significant difference between the two groups. This can be attributed to the fact that 'outside influence' on the students is more.

To pin-point the outside influence is not so difficult given the fact that the students are from Gujarati medium and Gujarati being the L1 medium, it may be difficult for the students to get attuned to the functional approach in just four months with 6 periods a week of 35 minutes duration for English. Also outside the classroom and in the home surrounding, there is absolutely no environment of English. English is merely one of the subjects that the students have to grapple with in the school and that too with a different approach altogether. When the students can as well communicate in their mother tongue, there is no genuine desire in them to talk in English and take part in elaborate group discussions in English. To add to the problem, the teacher finds it absolutely difficult to follow the functional approach in a large class of 63 students. The same idea is echoed by Mowla et al (2005) "Our overcrowded classrooms and unwieldy benches make group work and face-to face discussion very difficult to organize".

The time period of 10 days is too short a time to bring in any significant result. To be precise, a longer duration treatment is necessary to bring about the desired result. All the same, it can be safely concluded that Functional Approach is the best in the communicative use of language as is proved by the result of this investigation which is also corroborated with the experiments conducted by Jesa (2005) "Communicative approach had maximum effectiveness in the skills of speaking communication".

REFERENCES

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Knowledge is not something to be packed away in some corner of our brain but what enters into our being colours our emotions, haunts our soul and is as close to us as life itself. It is the over – mastering power which, through the intellect, moulds the whole personality, trains the emotions and disciplines the will.

– Dr. Radhakrishnan

Every person has two education, one which he receives from others and one more important, which he gives himself.

– Gibbon