



ACTIVITY BASED TEACHING PEDAGOGY FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING - FOR LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION; A CASE STUDY OF THE STUDENTS IN BATCH 11 OF THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT IN HORIZON CAMPUS

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Knowledge of the English language has been a primary challenge in the Sri Lankan context. This is due to the existence of Sri Lanka's native language-based teaching (L1) strategy during primary and secondary school education. School education is largely based on mother tongue (L1) for the vast majority. English language was introduced to learners as a link language in Grade 5 with the 1997 Educational reforms (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016). This presents a greater challenge to learners who have come from the context of schools that do not have access to proficient teachers, systems that encourage English language teaching, a societal background that could promote and implement English language-based education (Lloyd, 1998). Activity based learning has been widely discussed in the field of educational learning. The application of Activity based learning has been focused on the aspect of technology adoption (mLearning), problem-based learning (Ali, 2019), collaborative learning, communicative approach (Cook, 2009), use of podcasts (Lee & Heinz, 2016), project-based learning methods (Putri et al, 2017), online vocabulary tools and games (Yip & Kwan, 2006). However, in all of this coverage, though activity-based learning is appreciated, there is no set template or model for an educator to follow. While each teaching practitioner is required to understand the classroom, it is quite important for the teaching pedagogy to improve. The research aims to understand an effective model for building the capability of learners and to create a theoretical model for teaching English to learners from native L1 socio-economic backgrounds. The primary research objectives are to understand the effectiveness of the activity-based learning model on the student's English Language proficiency, determine how activity-based learning can promote the student's motivation to learn English, gauge the efficacy of activity-based learning in imparting knowledge, skills to the learners and recognise challenges and limitations. The research involved an action research study. Observations are recorded by the research author. The skill building capability is accessed by the submission of logbooks. Learner's capability adaptation was evaluated with a series of activities conducted via in-class speech presentation and logbook which records a series of activities. On findings, the research uncovered that a weekly submission of work will improve the student's engagement with the learning activity. Weekly submissions and in-class activities when promoted with positive encouragement will lead to a positive outcome. Stage fright, fear of making mistakes, peer pressure are all considerable challenges that are to be considered by a future trainer. The logbook which records



the weekly progress of students was an immensely positive tool. Peer pressure worked positively as the learners who did not submit felt left out. Therefore, it increased the rates of submission. Further, pinning the assessments to internal grades further disarmed the peer pressure experienced by learners as all learners understood that grades were the outcome of their academic practice.

Keywords: Activity-based learning, English language teaching (L2), teaching English for foreign learners

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1. INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of the English language has been a primary challenge in the Sri Lankan context. This is due to the existence of Sri Lanka's native language-based teaching (L1) strategy during primary and secondary school education. School education is largely based on the mother tongue (L1) for the vast majority. English language was introduced to learners as a link language in Grade 5 with the 1997 educational reforms. (Walisundara & Hettiarachchi, 2016) This presents a greater challenge to learners who have come from the context of schools that do not have access to proficient teachers, systems that encourage English language teaching, a societal background that could promote and implement English language-based education (Lloyd, 1998). Activity-based learning has been widely discussed in the field of educational learning. The application of activity-based learning has been focusing on the aspect of technology adoption (mLearning), problem-based learning (Ali, 2019), collaborative learning, communicative approach (Cook, 2009), use of podcasts (Lee & Heinz, 2016), project-based learning methods (Putri et al, 2017), online vocabulary tools and games (Yip & Kwan, 2006). However, in all of this coverage, though activity-based learning is appreciated, there is no set template or model for an educator to follow. While each teaching practitioner is required to understand or read the classroom, it is quite important for the teaching pedagogy to improve.

1.1 Research objectives

The research aims to understand an effective model for building the capability of learners and to create a theoretical model for Teaching English to learners from native L1 socio-economic backgrounds.

- To understand the effectiveness of the activity-based learning model on the student's English Language proficiency
- To determine how activity-based learning can promote student's motivation to learn English
- To gauge the efficacy of Activity-based learning in imparting knowledge, skills to the learners, to recognise challenges and limitations



METHODOLOGY

The research involved an action research study. Observations are recorded by the researcher. The skill building capability is accessed by the submission of logbooks. Learner's capability adaptation was evaluated by the researcher with a series of activities conducted via (i) in-class speech (ii) presentation and (iii) logbook which records a series of activities. Participant observation methodology is pursued which provides for an understanding of the participants (students) as well as to evaluate the progress achieved as an academia enabling a teaching approach.

The sample for the research was considered from an intake of one hundred and twelve (112) learners. The sampling process could be identified to be non-probability, judgemental sampling. The sample for the research was handed out to the researcher as a cohort that had to be delivered Business Communication lessons. They had to be delivered over a period of twenty-two (22) weeks. A total of eighteen assessments were provided. The micro assessments involved a comprehensive logbook with activities documented. A refractory process was expected. The in-class activities involved a series of presentations - group presentation and individual.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research uncovers that a weekly submission of work will improve the student's engagement with the learning activity. Weekly submissions and in-class activities when promoted with positive encouragement will lead to a positive outcome. Stage fright, fear of making mistakes and peer pressure are all considerable challenges that are to be considered by a future trainer. The logbook which records the weekly progress of the students was an immensely positive tool. Peer pressure worked positively as the learners who did not submit felt left out. Therefore, the rates of submission were increased. Further, pinning the assessments to internal grades further disarmed the peer pressure experienced by learners as all learners understood that grades were the outcome of their academic practice.

- ***Objective 1: To understand the effectiveness of activity-based learning model on the student's English language proficiency.***

96% of the students were from out of Colombo. Learners have held various leadership roles such as prefectship, council membership and society membership. Often branded as a studious batch, the students often strived to deliver. However, English language skills were limited due to the available support system.

Business communication, the subject which it was labelled for, did not gain the right set of attention from the students due to lack of motivation and exam pressure attached to it. Rather, priority was given to quantitative modules. Ability to speak and convey and communicate had to be emphasised with multiple aspects.

Participation limited by "Stage fright"



The series of activities laid out to the participants were useful in bringing structure to the lessons and the series of activities that had to be done. However, the students often faced “stage fright”. In order to improve the participation of the students in impromptu speech activity, the researcher ensured that the students came to the forefront to participate.

Logbook creates peer pressure

Logbook creates peer pressure as it is to be signed weekly. As many students take part in the logbook process, the ones who do not show the logbook records felt left out. As such, there were results that were gathered from the process.

Leverage WhatsApp technology

Some of the learners were passive and had stage fright which was harder to overcome. 20 mini activities were provided which allowed the students to come to the forefront and practice their skills. Students were able to participate in language skills.

- *Objective 2: To determine how activity-based learning can promote the student’s motivation to learn English*

An activity-oriented learning system will have to provide the right set of results, apart from Knowledge acquisition, to impart the right set of skills. It could be identified that the practice that was implemented allows the individuals to further improve their satisfaction with the course and better results. Only 40% of the class was actively engaged in the system. Another 60% were passive; however, they attempted nearly 60% of the tasks provided. Results were gathered, and they showed a promising group of students who had the capability to converse and manage conversations equivalent to IELTS 5.0 scale.

- *Objective 3: To gauge the efficacy of activity-based learning in imparting knowledge to the learner, to recognise challenges and limitations*

The activity-based learning system is a theatre that requires the participation of both the student and teacher. The motivation of both these parties is required for a successful implementation. A professional teacher will have to deploy several strategies to compete; (1) against other subjects (perception of language skills acquisition is at the lowest of priority scale) (2) ability to gain the students to walk into classes where the attendance policy is not a priority. The process leads to several challenges for a practitioner to follow through with.

Nevertheless, compared to a learning session with a theory orientation, Business Communication subject could be further imparted with more engagement and learner application.



CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, activity-based learning offers immense potential to a learner to explore and engage with the learners. Learners have immense participation in the process. Currently, the word “learning partners” is widely used as the activity-based learning, not only promotes the self-participation but also encourages the learners to participate with other members, contribute to the learning experience and engage in an effective manner.

Recommendation 1: Involve in a proper scheduled set of activities, amend according to learner capability and needs that are seen

Involve a proper scheduled set of activities. Preplanning is required by the lecturers/staff members involved. In the same way, impromptu changes to schedules have to be made in order to accommodate the learners to participate. If participation in the activities drops, a clear assessment has to be taken up in the ability to manage and allow positive steps to be taken.

Recommendation 2: Attach grades to the activity completion. Motivate achievers more. Celebrate success with clapping, examples shown in class

Celebration of success in a mini-acceptable manner focused on decorum will motivate learners to participate in lessons. Grading being attached to the final GPA will motivate the students to participate. There is fairness in grades assigned, as more students who have participated in the lesson get a higher grade than those who have practiced answering past papers and gained more scores. A clear reflection of skills is appreciated over the ones looking for loopholes.

To sum up, the research identified the opportunities and challenges with the implementation of the activity-based learning process.

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