

COMMUNICATIVE CLASSROOM ENGLISH OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract

Classroom language shapes the way teachers communicate/ interact in the classroom. Based on medium of Instruction the teacher has to be aware of the language phrases and expressions appropriate for the classroom situations. The NCF National Curriculum Framework (2005, 2009) of India mentioned the need of classroom English for teachers. The importance of classroom communication is highlighted in the B.ED. syllabuses prepared by the NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) and SCERTs (State Council of Educational Research and Training). The present study considers the need for classroom English for pre-service teachers before they enter the profession. Previous research studies included testing of the classroom English language proficiency of in-service teachers of English subject. In addition to that, current study focuses on pre-service teachers of all subjects and their awareness of classroom English. For this purpose an online test was conducted with 36 pre-service teachers from different B.Ed. Institutions, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, India. The results indicate that pre-service teachers should be given training to raise their awareness of Communicative English language phrases and expressions used for different classroom situations such as classroom management, content delivery, and feedback. The study has got implications for verbal and non-verbal classroom communication, and use of L2 (Second language) for classroom purposes.

Keywords: *English classroom, pre-service teachers, communication classroom*

INTRODUCTION

Students require English language skills to understand information available through various sources or for various study purposes till secondary level, and for employability at higher education level. Students can slowly build their communication skills with peers and teachers when they move from one level to another level of education. Their language skills also play a major role in this process. Whereas teachers require English language skills to communicate with students, to equip students with different strategies and

skills, to raise their self-efficacy levels in L2 at primary and secondary levels, and also to support students' employability at higher education level.

There are different proficiency tests to measure the language proficiency of teachers or students in English. Some of them are- ACTFL TEP Test of English proficiency, tests based on individual CEFR levels (A2 key, B1 preliminary, B2 First, C1 Advanced), TOEFL, IELTS, and PTE. Each of the above mentioned tests has a specific purpose to fulfil. In Indian context, the awareness of these proficiency tests is less or negligible. Instead, the language learning levels of students are assessed through Summative assessment (more) and formative assessment (less). With regard to teachers in India, there is a need to assess their language skills/ proficiency especially for classroom purposes.

The main source of language exposure for a student inside the classroom for a student is his/her teacher. Whether it is L1 or L2, students learn phrases and expressions from their teachers. Teachers need to be trained in using language required for classroom situations. Even if the teachers are delivering content-rich lessons, they still require the language which directs learners towards their goals and set a routine for classroom which will help the teachers to conduct the sessions effectively (Ghonsooly et al., 2012). As per (Research & (India), 2005), 'All teachers should have the skills to teach English in ways appropriate to their situation and levels based on some knowledge of how languages are learnt'. This statement has got a deeper meaning that language learning processes should be known to teachers in order to impart the knowledge to learners in a practical way. So, using language in a communicative way is one of the essential qualities that pre-service teachers need to focus upon irrespective of their subject domain (Fu & Wang, 2021).

In (NCTE, 2009) the importance of language proficiency is given as a teacher talks, explains, narrates, asks questions, illustrates, translates, guides, instructs, cautions, motivates, encourages and plays various other roles. All of these imply an appropriate and context-specific use of language. Concepts, constructs, examples are the building blocks of knowledge and all these are language-based. This makes the teacher's language proficiency and communication skills critical factors in school education, apart from a sound knowledge-base, pedagogical and other professional capacities'. It further highlights the importance of providing a practical course to improve the context-specific language of teachers.

Communication classroom related to classroom transactions are mentioned in the B.ED. syllabus prepared by NCERT and SCERTs under the section 'classroom discourse'. The lesson plan format mentioned by the National Council for Educational Research and Training, India is based on the Herbartian method. The lesson plan can include the following processes- preparation, presentation, association, generalization, and application. At every step teaching and learning process include asking questions, responding to the

questions and giving instructions related to the activities that learners need to perform. It is important to impart in pre-service teachers' practicum the classroom language required to prepare learners to get involved in different stages of lesson planning.

Lesson planning stages	Required Instructional language
Preparation, presentation	Managing the classroom
Association, Generalization, Application	Understanding, communicating lesson content, assessing students and giving feedback

Communicative English classroom:

A teacher cannot just simply give the instructions but has to communicate it well, so that the teaching goals and learning goals are met properly. This is where even the high levels of proficiency of teachers may not be sufficient. The need arises for a communicative classroom English. This idea was developed by Donald Freeman. Freeman et al., (2013) presents the report of ELTeach programme conducted in 10 countries with 4333 English language teachers. The programme covers Functional English and professional knowledge in ELT (English Language Teaching). Considering functional English, the programme focuses on 'preview, learn, practice, reflect' steps through which teachers identify the areas to improve regarding classroom English, improve on their exposure through course inputs, participate in activities and also try to connect this learning to their own classroom situations. The assessment of the TEFT (Test of English-for-Teaching) includes various tasks developed on the basis of classroom situations. The test contains two parts and 140 questions which include multiple-choice questions. The assessment is classified around three areas: classroom management, content delivery and feedback. Burns (2017) reports the experiences of 4,353 teachers of Vietnam who took the English-for-teaching course (EFT course) from 2013 to 2016. The author further suggests that the course outcomes from Vietnamese teachers can be generalised to south Asian countries where English language is required as part of teacher training and English language programmes are included in the Teacher Education curriculum.

Walsh & Li (2013) states the importance of combining teaching goals and the language skills to make learners' learning more effective. Richards (2017) mentions that 'during teaching' phase a teacher require 'discourse skills' such as giving instructions, using language required to set daily classroom procedures, assigning activities, modelling and so on. Indeed the 'during teaching' phase is a complex one which need a lot of teacher preparation.

METHODS

Pre-service teachers from different B.Ed. colleges participated in the 'Communicative classroom English' test. The number of respondents is 36. Convenience sampling technique is used to select the participants. The respondents are pursuing B.Ed. course in different subjects. They have experienced teaching practice as well. The test comprises of 10 questions- 8 multiple-choice questions and 2 subjective questions. The test was evaluated for 25 marks. For 8 questions out of 10 questions, options are provided and the respondents should choose correct option or options. Each correct option carries one mark. For remaining two questions, respondents need to write an instruction appropriate for the situation. The responses should be communicative in nature, clear, simple, use appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Each correct answer carries 3 marks. The test is prepared based on the content provided in English-for-Teaching handbook (ELTeach 3.0) written by Donald Freeman, Anne Katz and Anne Burns. Along with the test demographic details of the respondents were also collected.

FINDINGS

The demographic details of the participants are served here. Participants are from first and second year of B.Ed. course. Participants are from different methodologies- physics (n=10), social sciences (n=8), biology (n=10) and English (8). Participants are from two B.Ed. institutions (Andhra Pradesh), two B.Ed. Institutions (Telangana). Participants are from both rural (n=20) urban (n=16).

The test consists of questions related to the language used in different situations such as classroom management, content delivery, and providing feedback. The responses of the pre-service teachers are given. Topics-wise mean and SD scores of all the 36 participants is given below.

Table 1: Topic-wise mean and SD scores

S.no.	Topic	Mean scores	SD Scores
1.	Managing the classroom (4 Q) 9 marks	3.41	2.04
2.	Communicating classroom content (4Q) 7 marks	3.16	1.76
3.	Giving feedback (2Q) 9 marks	3.19	2.14
	TOTAL (10Q)	9.75	4.99

The table given below shows the mean and SD scores of participants (N=36) for each question given in the test.

Table 2: Question-Wise Mean and SD Scores of Participants N=36

Question	Mean scores	SD scores
1. You want to make some important announcements to students regarding their time table. What instructions can you give?	1.02	0.73
2. Write an instruction for the following situation- students have to attend classes regularly	0.97	1.25
3. Student: can you read the instructions again Teacher: -----	0.55	0.50
4. Complete the sentence using the key words: any/questions Teacher:----- Student: No, I don't have any questions	0.86	0.35
5. You want students to repeat. You say-----	0.72	0.45
6. Who-----remembers what we talked about in the last class?	0.66	0.47
7. Which of the following sentences communicate goals/objectives of teaching?	0.77	0.63
8. Write an instruction for the following situation- students have to check the meaning of the words in dictionary.	1	1.24
9. One of your students has not performed well in the test. What do you say to that student? What instructions will you provide?	1.41	0.93
10. Which of the following phrases are used to motivate students?	3.18	1.39

The following table shows the distribution of scores for each topic along with the range (Low, medium, high).

Table 3: Distribution of Scores for All the Three Topics

Range	Managing the classroom (9m)	Communicating classroom content (7m)	Giving feedback (9m)	Total (25 marks)
Low	0-3	0-2	0-3	0-8
Medium	4-6	3-5	4-6	9-16
High	7-9	6-7	7-9	19-25

The following table shows the number of participants falling under each range (Low, Medium, High).

Table 4: Distribution of Participants for Each Range

Range	Managing the classroom(9m)	Communicating lesson content (7m)	Giving feedback (9m)	Total M+C+G(25 marks)
Low	20	16	27	17
Medium	13	16	05	15
High	02	04	03	04

Total scores of individual participants are provided in the table below:

Table 5: Participants' Total Scores

Participants	Scores
1	4
2	13
3	10
4	6
5	11
6	6
7	7
8	5
9	13
10	3
11	5
12	7
13	4
14	5
15	5
16	4
17	9
18	6
19	15
20	12
21	12
22	10
23	5
24	8
25	17
26	13
27	23
28	13

Participants	Scores
29	5
30	13
31	18
32	16
33	18
34	5
35	12
36	13

DISCUSSION

Table 4 shows that pre-service teachers scored lowest in the topic 'giving feedback' followed by 'managing the classroom', and 'communicating lesson content'. The high score range is shown in 'communicating lesson content' area followed by 'giving feedback' and 'managing the classroom'. Taken the total scores of all the participants, about 17 participants have low score ranges in all three areas. Contrastingly only 4 participants have shown high performance in all three areas. Table 5 shows that only one teacher trainee scored the highest mark that is 23, and the lowest score is 3 marks.

As the data reveals, pre-service teachers have low levels of awareness with regard to classroom English. Out of 36, only 4 participants had shown higher levels of awareness in all three aspects of classroom English. A total of 15 participants had shown medium levels of awareness and 17 participants had shown lower levels of awareness in all three aspects of classroom English. Only one participant scored 23 out of 25 in the test.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The test results revealed that pre-service teachers require language support. It will be helpful to them if they are trained in language phrases and expressions needed for classroom contexts through role-plays and presentations. The study suggests that along with verbal aspects, non-verbal aspects of the communication such as tone, voice, pronunciation should be given emphasis. This will improve the confidence levels of trainee teachers in handling classroom sessions.

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