

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FOR POTENTIAL IMMIGRANTS

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the importance of English in India as well as for the potential immigrants going abroad. It also highlights the implications of the prepared materials in the form of an intervention program. The study even recommends that special English program should be arranged for potential immigrants in the form of ESP, so that they may become equipped to perform challenging tasks related to their education or job in an English speaking country.

Key Words

Potential Immigrants: *The term 'Potential immigrants' refers to the people aspiring to visit and/ or settle down in a country other than their own. In case of the present study, the expression refers to all those young people between the age group of 18 and 24 years who aspire to go to English speaking countries for higher studies or for business purposes.*

ESP: *English for Special Purposes*

Proficiency Enhancement: *'Proficiency Enhancement' refers to developing fluency in English language so as to help the participants to communicate in English speaking countries.*

1.1 Introduction

The British Empire conquered and colonized various territories all over the world since about 1600 A.D The British Empire was at its largest territorial expansion after the First World War. At its zenith, it held sway over a population of nearly 500 million people during 1922. The empire covered more than 33,700,000 kms, almost a quarter of the earth's total length. It is striking that when one looks around the world at the most successful countries, many of them have British Colonial roots: Canada, United States, Australia, India, Singapore, and Hong Kong along with various other Caribbean islands. Due to its supremacy, Britain truly ruled over the waves for centuries. However, after 1949, the British Empire was replaced by Commonwealth of Nations, but English continued to be the language spoken as the first or second language in most of the Commonwealth and spread to other areas too.

The Commonwealth is a group of 54 countries, spread all over the globe. Over one and a half billion people (a quarter of the world's population) live here and among them represent nearly every religion, race and political system on the planet, those who use English as a common working language and have similar legal and education systems.

Many regions, especially Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Malaysia, Brunel, Singapore and the Caribbean have developed their native varieties of the language. Even though there are varieties within the spoken language, written English as used in the Commonwealth generally favours British as opposed to American spelling, with some exceptions in Canada where there is a strong influence of the neighbouring American English, as well as in Australia.

Now, in the 21st century all countries depend on others to exist for raw materials. And most of the cross border communication happens in English. It is the opinion of many that English, in a short time, will become the universal language. It is not limited by parallels of latitude, or meridians of longitude. In Asia, people follow the British variety. However, English-speaking countries, the UK, the USA and Australia are disseminating it north, south, east and west over the entire world.

There is an urgent need for adoption of English so that people can cooperate with each other through communication despite many differences in terms of their cultures, races, religions and ideologies. No doubt, communication in English has greatly improved due to widespread adoption of mass media, especially radio, television, computers and mobile telephones. Moreover, internet is quickly emerging as the preferred information highway to meet our daily communication needs as well as for conducting important business transactions. It is now almost impossible for people to fully participate in the global village that we live in, without communicating in English.

1.2 Need for the Study

In India English is important for a number of reasons. First of all, different people speak different languages across the states of India, and it is difficult for a Malayali to understand Hindi and Gujarati and vice versa. In this situation, English creates a bridge. Secondly, a huge store of knowledge in science, technology, medicine is available in English. Thirdly, results of the latest research conducted abroad come to India through English. If we give up English, we will lag behind in higher education research and development. Fourthly, owing to the heritage of the language, a large number of Indians are already very comfortable using the language which gives them an edge in competition with other Asians like the Chinese and the Japanese.

Peeping into the past, it can be noticed that people have been moving from one place to another since the beginning of time. The day when Asians started moving to the monolingual countries, where English was the only language heard in the streets, they realized the importance of learning the language. India is a multi-lingual country, where English is learnt as a second language at school. Most immigrants know exactly how important English is, not only to succeed but even to survive in such countries. Moreover, the situation becomes worse when they realize that the English they have learnt is not much useful to communicate in a foreign country.

Many such aspects lead to the present condition of inadequate proficiency in the use of English. The study on hand aimed at creating opportunities for learners to listen to and speak English in natural situations. The program developed by the researcher aimed to help the people migrating to an English speaking country by enhancing their English language skills, especially developing their oral competence.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

English Proficiency Enhancement Program for Potential Immigrants

1.4 Research Design

This is an experimental study with a single group pre-test post-test design.

1.5 Objectives

The specific objectives of the research were as stated below.

- To prepare a program for potential immigrants to enhance their oral competence in English
- To implement the program
- To measure the level of effectiveness of the program

1.6 Sample of the Study

It was a convenient sample wherein those who had joined the classes between 1st June 2013 and 31st July 2013 were included for the study.

1.7 Hypothesis

The study was conducted with the following major null hypothesis in view.

- There will be no significant difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group.

1.8 Population of the Study

All potential immigrants of the Kheda district form the population.

2.1 Tools

2.1.1 Tools for Data Collection

- Diagnostic test: Pre-test
- Achievement Test: Post-test
- Learners' Feedback
- Researcher's Observations

2.1.2 Tools for Data Analysis

The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The descriptive statistics such as 't' value and level of significance of pre and post test were used for data analysis.

2.2 Teaching Learning Materials

The teaching learning materials were prepared from newspapers, magazines, etc. the materials were developed on the basis of the Principles of Tomlinson (1998).

- i. Materials should achieve impact.
- ii. Materials should help learners to feel at ease.
- iii. Materials should help learners to develop confidence.
- iv. What is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and useful.
- v. Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment.
- vi. Learners must be ready to acquire the points being taught.
- vii. Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use.
- viii. The learners' attention should be drawn to linguistic features of the input.
- ix. Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes.
- x. Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback.

2.3 The Intervention

2.3.1 Duration

The intervention program had 25 units spread over 50 sessions of 2 hours each. Thus, the program had 100 hours of teaching.

2.3.2 Procedure

After the selection of the group of participants, a pre-test was administered. Further the participants were given training through the intervention program. Then there was a post-test, which gave the difference of marks between the two tests.

2.3.3 Researcher's Role

In each session the researcher took the participants' feedback for their improvement. Simultaneously, the researcher also noted down his observations about the sessions. These (participants' feedback and researcher's observations) were analysed through content analysis. Finally, on the basis of the analysis, interpretations were arrived at.

2.3.4 Participants' Response

The participants felt that they had started to improve their grammatical competence by solving grammar exercises. The researcher used to check their work and help them learn the correct forms. They liked the activities more where they worked in groups. For example, they liked the activities like simulation, role-play, etc. Being adult learners, they also seemed to enjoy the activities that demanded use of their thinking ability.

2.4 Analysis and Interpretation

Numerical data of the fifty participants were collected through pre-test and post-test and were converted into percentages. Thereafter, they were compared and interpreted. The mean (X), standard deviation (SD), coefficient of correlation (r), mean difference, 't' value and the level of significance had included.

Statistical evaluation of Pre-test and Post-test of the Participants

Marks	N	Mean	SD	r	Mean Difference	't' value	Level of significance
Pre Test	50	24.49	7.01	0.94	6.96	19.08	0.05%
Post Test	50	31.45	6.79				

The mean difference and the 't' value provided evidence to the fact that the participants performed better after going through the program as the level of significance was 0.05%. Thus, the major **Null Hypothesis** 'There will be no significant difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group' is rejected.

All the participants agreed that their thinking ability in English has improved. 95% of them accepted that the teaching materials tried in the class have helped them a lot to accelerate the learning process. All the participants would like to recommend this program to others. This proves the success of the program.

2.5 Findings

- i. Going by the analysis of the statistical data, the main null hypothesis has been rejected. Further, all the six supporting hypotheses have been rejected.
- ii. It is found that the program developed and tried out for potential immigrants was helpful in improving their proficiency in English and developing considerable amount of confidence among the participants.
- iii. The feedback received from the participants is evidence that the participants enjoyed learning in groups and pairs.
- iv. The participants belonging to science and commerce stream learnt faster through visual aids, charts, tables, graphs etc.

2.6 Conclusion

Firstly, this paper has discussed English as a language in the present era and its need. Secondly, it even presents the research design and tools used for the program. Thirdly, the pattern for the preparation of the materials is mentioned and the intervention program followed by analysis and interpretation. Finally, the findings of the researcher are mentioned.

To conclude, it can be said that students face problems in their education as well as career because of English. With a view to addressing this problem, a program was designed by the researcher. It provided plenty of opportunities to the learners to listen to the language in a wide range of contexts, and use it independently and confidently. Going by the numerical data collected through test results as well as descriptive views in the form of feedback from the participants and observations by the researcher, the response was positive. To conclude, in such a customised program for immigrants, the language teacher has to shoulder the responsibilities of a resource generator, creator of a learning-rich, tension-free classroom climate wherein 'language learning is made to happen'.

Bibliography

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