

Assessing the Impact of a Pedagogical Intervention on the Development of Communicative English Proficiency among Undergraduate Learners

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of a 60-hour skill-based intervention in building the foundational proficiency of undergraduate students in Communicative English. A one-group pre-test/post-test design has been employed for a sample of first-year undergraduate students from Arts and Science stream. The intervention comprised of 10-day session with 36 hours of theory and 24 hours of practice. The results showed a significant increase in the basic Communicative English skills after the intervention, with a medium to large effect size. The findings of the study indicates that skill-based interventions can significantly assist in enhancing the foundational skills in Communicative English among the undergraduate students.

Keywords: Skill-Based Intervention, Undergraduate Students, Communicative English, Arts and Science, Communicative Skills in English

Introduction

Communicating effectively in English has been a highly demanded skill for a long time as a significant outcome of the British Colonization across the worldwide landscape. Majority of the global population speak English making it the most essential and important literary and communicative skill in the age of globalisation. Communicative English plays a significant role in both academic and professional pursuits of students. However, many students struggle to communicate effectively in English due to weak foundational knowledge and skills in Communicative English. This demands for the comprehensive design of an intervention to enhance the practical use of English language among the students in everyday situations in their academic and professional pursuits.

Communicative English

The term 'Communicative English' refers to the ability of individuals to accurately and effectively communicate and convey information, message, thoughts, ideas and opinions using the English language. English has emerged as the universal language of communication, and prosperity in worldwide business, education, and cross-cultural interactions depends on the ability to communicate effectively in English (Graddol, 2006). Additionally, it promotes worldwide networking, collaboration, and cultural exchange. In both academic and professional settings, it facilitates students' ability to effectively write

reports, participate in discussions, and deliver presentations (Hyland, 2006). In essence, Communicative English encompasses the following key components:

a. Listening Skills:

Listening is the skill that involves understanding spoken English in different contexts. This encompasses paying attention to the speaker and understanding the message of the speaker by grasping the speaker's linguistic and paralinguistic aspects. Essentially, it focuses on comprehending oral English such as a conversation, lectures, audio messages and audio-visuals.

b. Reading Skills:

Reading is the skill that involves decoding written text and understanding its meaning. This encompasses understanding the meaning of words, context and critically interpreting the message and arriving at conclusions. This revolves around comprehending written English such as text, graphical and pictorial information, articles and documents.

c. Speaking Skills:

Speaking is a skill that encompasses effective expression of ideas and information through oral English. This essentially comprises of articulating the message with confidence, clarity and preciseness. This also can include engaging in conversations, posing questions, and responding appropriately. This focuses on expressing oneself clearly in oral English with appropriate vocabulary and paralinguistics.

d. Writing Skills:

Writing is a skill that enables an individual to effectively express one's thoughts and ideas, and any information in written English. This requires appropriate grammatical structure and vocabulary, proper content organization, and easy readability and comprehension. In essence, this skill focuses on expressing the message or information in written English in appropriate structure depending on the audience and purpose.

e. Presentation Skills:

Presentation is the skill that focuses on effectively sharing information with a specific audience. This skill requires clear organization of content with engaging visuals and presentation of content with confidence and clarity, thereby encouraging effective interaction with the audience. This skill focuses on communicating ideas and information effectively to specific audience using appropriate verbal forms and non-verbal cues.

f. Integrated Skills:

Integrated skills combine all the above-mentioned skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and presentation. These skills collectively contribute to effective communication in personal, academic and professional settings. This focuses on combining listening, reading, speaking, writing and presentation skills for problem-solving and creative thinking in authentic situations.

Literature Review

Communicative language teaching, or CLT, places a strong emphasis on how crucial communication is to language acquisition. Its main goal is to improve students' capacity for employing language in authentic contexts (Littlewood, 1981). Communicative English is very crucial in the realms of international communication, business, and education. Especially, for enhancing English based communicative skills among students, using effective teaching strategies like task-based learning (Ellis, 2003; Kamal & Majoka, 2022), meaningful educational transactions using authentic materials (Gilmore, 2007; Azizmohammadi & Talebi, 2022), and providing constructive feedback (Hedge, 2000; Ramesh Kumar & Pramod Kumar Singh, 2022) have significant outcomes. In addition, focusing on designing student-centric instructional interventions for Communicative English facilitates autonomy, creativity, analytical thinking over their learning experiences among the students (Nunan, 2022). The

existing literary works indicate that most interventions are driven based on the perceptions of the instructors without considering the perceptions of the students, especially their real demands or their basic needs that need to be addressed with regard to Communicative English. On conducting a diagnostic assessment, the students have been found to be struggling with basic grammar and important soft skills linked to effectively communicating in English. This placed a big necessity and paved a valuable opportunity to design an intervention in alignment with the perceptions and needs of the students.

Statement of the Problem

Undergraduate students often face challenges in developing their Communicative English. The existing English language curriculum in many undergraduate programs may not adequately address the needs of students in developing their foundational skills in Communicative English, leading to inadequate language skills, poor academic performance, limited career opportunities, and decreased competitiveness in the global job market. Furthermore, the lack of effective interventions and support systems deteriorates the achievement gap, limiting opportunities for students to succeed in their academic and professional pursuits. Hence this study has been undertaken to enhance the students' foundational skills in communicative English by way of a carefully designed well-structured intervention and to evaluate its effectiveness in this regard.

Objectives of the Study

This study has been undertaken with the intent of imparting foundational skills in Communicative English for the first-year students pursuing undergraduate program under Arts and Science stream. The study has been carried out by evaluating the entry and exit level of the students in basics of Communicative Skills while offering learning opportunities through a well-designed intervention.

Methodology

This study has been undertaken by using quantitative method of data collection and analysis with the following aspects:

Participants:

A total of 46 female students within the age range of 18 to 22 years and pursuing undergraduate program in Arts and Science stream, have initially enrolled for the intervention designed for the students to enhance their skills in Communicative English. However, only 39 students have undergone the complete 60 hours of intervention.

Research Design:

One-group pre-test/post-test experimental design has been employed in this study to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention designed to enhance the Communicative English skills.

Intervention:

A comprehensive skill-based training program spanning over 60 hours was prudently crafted as an intervention to enhance the Communicative English skills among the undergraduate students through the instructional modules as given in the table below.

Table: Instructional Modules

S. No.	Module	Learning Content	Instructional Activities	Theory	Practice
1	Basic Grammar	Theory: • Parts of Speech • Tense and Aspect • Sentences and Types • Subject-Verb Agreement • Modality and Voice Practice: • Basic Grammar Exercises • Error Correction • Sentence Building • Grammar in Context Reading and Analysis	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	14	6
2	Listening Skills	Theory: • Introduction to Listening and its types • Theoretical Foundations • Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension • Listening Strategies • Assessing Listening Skills Practice: • Listening Comprehension • Identifying Main Ideas & Supporting Details • Following Instructions • Listening for Specific Information • Role-Plays and Discussions	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	3	3
S. No.	Module	Learning Content	Instructional Activities	Theory	Practice

3	Reading Skills	Theory: • Introduction to Reading Skills • Theoretical Foundations • Reading Strategies • Vocabulary Development through Reading • Critical Reading and Analysis Practice: • Skimming and Scanning • Intensive Reading • Extensive Reading • Reading Comprehension • Critical Reading and Analysis	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	3	3
4	Writing Skills	Theory: • Introduction to Writing Skills • The Writing Process • Writing Styles and Conventions • Writing for Different Purposes and Audiences • Common Writing Challenges and Solutions Practice: • Writing Paragraphs and Essays • Writing for Different Purposes and Audiences • Editing and Revising	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	3	3

S. No.	Module	Learning Content	Instructional Activities	Theory	Practice
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5	Speaking Skills	Theory: • Introduction to Speaking Skills • Theoretical Foundations • Speaking Strategies • Discourse Analysis • Common Speaking Challenges and Solutions Practice: • Conversational Practice • Role-Plays • Presentations • Group Discussions • Debates	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	3	3
6	Presentation Skills	Theory: • Introduction to Presentation Skills • Theoretical Foundations • Structuring a Presentation • Visual Aids and Technology • Delivering a Presentation Practice: • Creating a Presentation • Delivering a Presentation • Handling Questions and Feedback • Providing Feedback and Review	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	3	3

S. No.	Module	Learning Content	Instructional Activities	Theory	Practice
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7	Integrated Skills	Theory: • Introduction to Integrated Skills • Theoretical Foundations • Integrated Skills in Real-Life Contexts • Task-Based Learning and Integrated Skills Practice: • Reading-Writing Integration • Listening-Speaking Integration • Reading-Listening-Writing Integration • Presentation-Listening-Speaking Integration	PowerPoint Presentation Discussion Q & A Sessions Practice Activities Assignment Worksheets	3	3
8	Project Work	Document Analysis, Presentation & Discussion	Examination	4	-
TOTAL THEORY AND PRACTICAL HOURS				36	24
NET NOTIONAL LEARNING HOURS				60	

The intervention comprised of two chief parts:

- *Instructor-led Lectures*: The theory sessions spanning 36 hours were handled by knowledgeable instructors by way of lectures and discussion on the fundamental concepts linked to Communicative English.
- *Hands-on Practice Activities*: The practice sessions spanned about 24 hours with extensive active learning components comprising of both individual and group activities.

The intervention design has been crafted and well-structured so as to fit the needs and the entry level of the students, thus ensuring intense experiential experiences for the students.

Instrumentation

The Standardized Communicative English Assessment was employed as the data collection instrument to measure the communicative English proficiency of the participants. The instrument was administered twice: first as a pre-test prior to the implementation of the intervention and subsequently as a post-test following the completion of the intervention.

The assessment comprised 20 multiple-choice items, with each item providing four response alternatives, of which only one was correct. Each correct response was awarded one mark, while incorrect responses received zero marks. Consequently, the total score for the instrument ranged from 0 to 20, with higher scores indicating a higher level of communicative English proficiency.

The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of .85, indicating high internal consistency reliability. According to commonly accepted guidelines, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80 or above is considered indicative of good reliability, suggesting that the instrument is appropriate for assessing communicative English proficiency among the study participants.

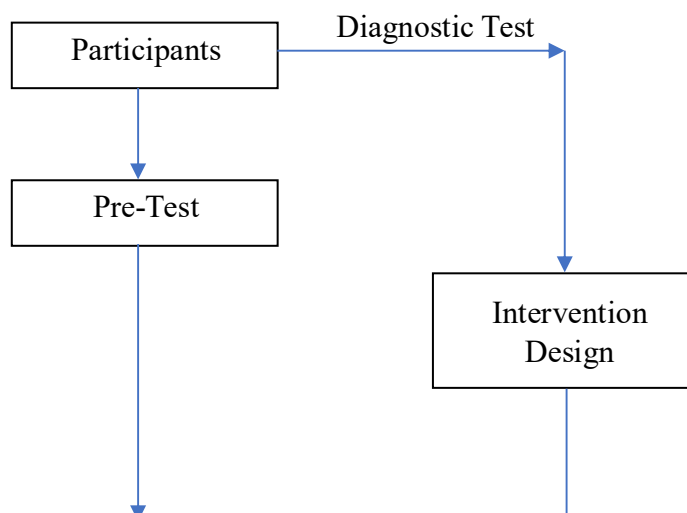
Procedure

As given in the figure below, the study has been conducted by employing the following procedure:

- *Administration of Diagnostic Test*: Initially a diagnostic test was administered to evaluate the entry level knowledge and skill level in Communicative English and its results gave insights towards designing the customized intervention for the participants.
- *Formulation of the Intervention Design*: The diagnostic test findings served as the foundation for the intervention design. The instructional curriculum has been meticulously planned and structured along with validation of the instructional content by subject matter experts so as to address the specific needs of the participants. The intervention covered the foundational learning content and skills in Communicative English.
- *Administration of the Pre-test*: Before the commencement of the intervention, the participants were given the pre-test to establish the baseline measurement of their entry level knowledge and skill in Communicative English. This test has been used as the reference point for evaluating their progress and the effectiveness of the intervention.
- *Treatment*: The participants were then subjected to the 60-hour comprehensive intervention carefully designed to enhance the Communicative English skills of the participants. Participants were offered highly thought-provoking and stimulating educational experiences by way of 36 hours of instructor-led theory sessions and 24 hours of practice sessions.

- *Administration of the Post-test:* The participants were subjected to the post-test immediately after the completion of the intervention. This test was conducted to evaluate their learning attained through the intervention. The scores of the pre-test and the post-test were used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

Figure: One Group Pre-Test/Post-Test Experimental Design



Data Analysis

The effectiveness of the intervention program was evaluated based on the pre-test and post-test performance of 35 students, after excluding the identified outliers from the analysis. Prior to conducting the paired-samples t-test, the assumptions underlying the statistical analysis were examined. The normality of the distribution of the pre-test and post-test scores was assessed using Normal Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) plots. The Q-Q plots were visually inspected to determine whether the observed data closely followed the expected normal distribution and to identify the presence of potential outliers. The visual inspection revealed four potential outliers, which were excluded from the subsequent analysis. Consequently, the final sample comprised 35 students. Examination of the Q-Q plots further indicated that the distributions of the pre-test and post-test scores approximated normality, thereby satisfying the normality assumption required for parametric analysis. Accordingly, paired-samples t-tests were employed to compare the pre-test and post-test scores and to determine the effectiveness of the intervention program. In addition to testing for statistical significance, the magnitude of the intervention effect was assessed by calculating Cohen's d, which provided an estimate of the practical significance of the observed differences.

Results

Table 1: Paired Samples Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	p-value
Pre-Test	35	9.57	4.203	4.406	0.000
Post-Test	35	11.74	3.791		

@99% Level of Significance

The average score has increased from 9.57 (before taking the intervention) to 11.74 (after taking the intervention). The Paired Samples Statistics has revealed a significant improvement in the basic skills in Communicative English among the participants from pre-test to post-test ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). The test statistics ($t = 4.406$) with 34 degrees of freedom indicates a medium increase in scores. Also, the data analysis has revealed a Cohen's d value

to be 0.52, falling within the medium to large range ($0.5 \leq d \leq 0.8$), demonstrating a significant effect size.

Findings

The results indicate a substantial enhancement in student performance, with scores demonstrating a statistically significant increase from pre-intervention to post-intervention. Also, the intervention showed a medium to large effect size indicating a significant impact on the student learning.

Discussion

The present study examined the effectiveness of a 60-hour skill-based pedagogical intervention in enhancing the foundational Communicative English proficiency of first-year undergraduate students. The findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' performance from the pre-test ($M = 9.57$, $SD = 4.20$) to the post-test ($M = 11.74$, $SD = 3.79$), with a paired-samples t-test indicating that the observed improvement was statistically significant ($t(34) = 4.406$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the intervention produced a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.52$), suggesting that the improvement was not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful.

The positive gains observed among the participants may be attributed to the comprehensive and learner-centred nature of the intervention. Unlike conventional English language instruction, which often emphasizes theoretical knowledge, the present intervention integrated grammar, listening, reading, writing, speaking, presentation, and integrated communication skills through a balanced combination of instructor-led sessions and intensive practice activities. Such experiential learning opportunities enabled students to apply their language knowledge in authentic communicative contexts, thereby facilitating meaningful language acquisition. The diagnostic assessment conducted prior to the intervention also allowed the instructional content to be tailored to the actual learning needs of the participants, thereby increasing the relevance and effectiveness of the programme.

The findings of the present study are consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) proposed by Littlewood (1981), which emphasize the development of communicative competence through meaningful interaction rather than memorization of grammatical rules. Similarly, the results corroborate the work of Ellis (2003), who highlighted the effectiveness of task-based language learning in improving learners' communicative competence through authentic language use. The practical sessions incorporated into the intervention, including role plays, discussions, presentations, collaborative tasks, and project work, closely align with the pedagogical principles advocated by these scholars.

The improvement observed in the present study also supports previous research emphasizing the role of authentic learning experiences in Communicative English instruction. Gilmore (2007) argued that authentic instructional materials enhance learners' motivation and communicative competence by exposing them to real-life language situations. Likewise, Azizmohammadi and Talebi (2022) reported that authentic learning materials significantly improve students' communicative abilities. The integration of contextualized activities, practice exercises, and learner interaction in the present intervention appears to have contributed substantially to the observed improvement in communicative proficiency.

Another important finding of the study is the medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.52$). Although the intervention produced statistically significant gains, the effect size indicates that further improvements are possible through prolonged exposure and continuous reinforcement. Since language acquisition is a gradual developmental process, a 60-hour intervention is sufficient to establish foundational competence but may not be adequate for attaining advanced communicative proficiency. Continuous practice, sustained exposure to authentic communication, and integration of communicative activities into the regular curriculum are likely to produce even greater learning gains over time.

The present findings also reinforce the importance of conducting needs-based instructional interventions. The intervention was developed based on the diagnostic assessment of students' existing deficiencies in grammar and communication skills rather than adopting a uniform instructional approach. This learner-centred strategy is consistent with the recommendations of Nunan (2022), who emphasized that effective language instruction should address learners' actual needs, encourage learner autonomy, and provide meaningful opportunities for interaction. The positive outcomes observed in this study suggest that interventions designed from learners' identified needs can substantially improve foundational communicative competence.

Limitations of the study

Despite these encouraging findings, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study employed a one-group pre-test–post-test experimental design without a control group, limiting the ability to attribute all observed improvements exclusively to the intervention. In addition, the final sample consisted of 35 undergraduate students from a single institution and single-gender (girls only) after excluding four outliers, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies may employ randomized controlled trials involving larger and more diverse samples across multiple institutions to establish stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of skill-based Communicative English interventions.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings provide empirical evidence that a structured, learner-centred, and practice-oriented pedagogical intervention can significantly enhance the foundational Communicative English proficiency of undergraduate students. The results further suggest that integrating such interventions into undergraduate curricula can effectively bridge existing language competency gaps and better prepare students for academic success, employability, and professional communication in increasingly globalized contexts.

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