



Enhancing linguistic skills of students through action research

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Abstract

Linguistic skills form the basis of teaching – learning process. The vigor of this skill decides the child's fate not only in languages, rather in all the subject of study. The Action Research is a paradigm which helps the practitioner to improve his own practices, especially in class room environment. This research paper studied the potential of Action Research to enhance the linguistic skills of students. An experimental study is carried out on a sample consisting of 70 subjects/children selected from same grade of all the 4 educational blocks of district Gurugram to test their performance in four standard linguistic skills i.e. listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Hindi being mother tongue and medium of instructions in the context under study is taken as language while issues of conceptual clarity in using the *anuswar* and *anunasika* are taken for performance evaluation. Four purposive interventions are carried out on all the linguistic skills with special focus on chosen issues. The difference based on pre test and post test data are figured as the quantitative out comes. The findings show that Action Research intervention drastically enhances the linguistic skills of subject under study.

Keywords: action research, linguistic skills, learning languages and teaching-learning

1. Introduction

Language is a form and means of communication. It is intimately related to human beings as an exclusive characteristic created from human brain and its vocal apparatus. It is the instrument which gives order and organization to human thinking and helps him to express his feelings and emotions towards others to maintain relationships. It is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group communicates and consists of sounds, structures and vocabulary. Writing is a graphical representation of speech. The language is constantly changing and developing according to the needs of the speaker and particularly a habit forming process. It is a product of a particular society arising out of the common experience. The communication of thoughts from one person to another is the main function of language. The language can be learnt by practice, through speech, as a system and in the context of culture through three important functions - informative, expressive and the directive. Any language can be visualized through four skills enunciated in subsection 1.1.

1.1 Linguistic Skills

In language learning, there is a need to develop certain abilities, often called the skill. While learning a mother tongue, the first skill that a child acquires is the ability to understand the spoken words i.e. the skill of listening without waiting for a reflex action. Thereafter he tries to reproduce these sound sequences to express his own desires and needs followed by acquisition of the speaking skill. For an illiterate person, these two skills constitute his learning ability. The abilities to read and write are the matters of literacy. Language is therefore a complex skill comprising of:

- a. Skill of Listening
- b. Skill of Speaking
- c. Skill of Reading
- d. Skill of Writing

The skills of listening and reading are called Receptive Skills, because these are comparatively passive requiring less exertion on the part of the learner. While listening or reading, a person is at the receiving end of communication channel. Speaking and writing on the other end are Active Skills. Here the person is at the transmitting end of communication channel. So, these two are called Productive Skills: There is one more method for grouping of the four skills. Listening and Speaking, demand the exercise of the auditory speech organs, so they are termed as Aural- Oral Skills. Reading and Writing involve the visual and psychomotor organs, so they are termed as Graphic motor skills. Language is an integrated skill. It cannot be compartmentalized. The methodology for language learning does not involve learning about language but learning the language. Language is never taught but caught from environment. Teaching a language means creating appropriate external conditions for the learning of a language. An effective teacher is able to put Life in the teaching learning process.

1.2 Developing LSRW Skills

In the recent years, the emphasis has shifted from teaching of language as a system to teaching of language as a means of communication system. It has resulted in teaching of language as developing of four skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In the context of first-language acquisition, the four skills are most often acquired in the order of listening first, then speaking, then possibly reading and writing. For this

reason, these capabilities are often called LSRW skills.

▪ **Listening**

Listening is the first language skill we acquire in our native language. Listening is the ability to understand what others speak. The listener understands the message of the speaker and grasps the stress, pause, intonation and the pattern of pronunciation in his speech. Thus, the listener acquires the habit of speaking in the language meaningfully. Listening is a receptive skill, or a passive skill, as it requires us to use our ears and our brains to comprehend language as it is being spoken to us. It is the first of two natural language skills, which are required by all natural spoken languages. The sub-skills associated with the listening skill are-

- Understand the meaning of words, phrase and sentences.
- Follow the directions and commands given by the speaker.
- Understand intonation patterns, stress, pause in speech etc, which provide clues to understand the tone of speaker
- Understand simple descriptions and notations
- Understands questions and responds to them suitably

There is a clear distinction between 'listening' and 'hearing'. We pay conscious attention when we listen. We may hear a sound consciously or unconsciously and may forget it soon. Listening with a purpose, results in better comprehension and retention. There is no communication without listening. Thus listening is the basic skill for perception in the process of learning a language.

▪ **Speaking**

Speaking is the second language skill we acquire in our native language. It is what is known as a productive skill, or an active skill, as it requires us to use our vocal tract and our brains to correctly produce language through sound. It is the second of two natural language skills. It is very necessary to have a proper training in the speaking of a language. It is an important part of the personality of an individual. It adds to the impression caused by a personality. The more a person is efficient in speaking and conversation, the more he shall be able to attract others. By words, we can access the knowledge of a person and his thinking. Through conversation we are able to have the knowledge of the philosophy of a person and his social and cultural standards. The requisite elements of a good speech are-

- Naturalness
- Clarity
- Fluency
- Audibility
- Comprehensibility
- Effectiveness

▪ **Reading**

Reading is the third language skill we may acquire in our native language. As with listening, it is a receptive, or passive skill, as it requires us to use our eyes and our brains to comprehend the written equivalent of spoken language. It is one of the two artificial language skills, as not all natural spoken languages have a writing system.

The reading skill implies reading with comprehension. It

involves understanding the meaning of content, vocabulary, structures, concepts and relationships of ideas. It is a decoding process involving many physical, intellectual and emotional reactions. It involves the ability to recognize graphic symbols and their corresponding vocal sounds. Reading is the process of looking at written or printed symbols and translating them into appropriate sound components. So, the important elements of reading are symbols, sound and sense.

▪ **Writing**

Writing is the fourth language skill we may acquire in our native language. As with speaking, it is a productive, or active skill, as it requires us to use our hands and our brains to produce the written symbols that represent our spoken language. Along with reading, it is one of the two artificial language skills, as not all natural spoken languages have a writing system. Still, if we talk about language learning, writing becomes important as it serves as the medium through which we communicate our ideas thoughts or feelings to other people who are at a distance from us. Language learning is said to be incomplete without developing the skill of writing. It aims at clear and effective communication. The sub- skills associated with the skill of writing are-

- Visual Perception- Spelling, pronunciation and spacing
- Syntax- word order, sentence structure
- Organization- organizing ideas into paragraphs
- Grammar

1.3 Action Research

Action Research is an important paradigm in teaching-learning process. It facilitates the teacher with ability to improve his own teaching practices through repetitive and cyclic improvement. The Action Research does not require any formal research set up and work without affecting the natural class room environment.

The four skills Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are important in language learning. This research work is an attempt test the scope Action Research as a tool to enhance linguistic skills through understanding, analyzing and improving the competencies of students of grade 5 students in Government Primary Schools of Gurugram district, with respect to these skills in learning Hindi language and complex tempo of *anuswar* and *anunasika*.

2. Objectives of the study

The present study focuses on the development of linguistic skills of students in Hindi language. The major objectives of the study are-

- To improve the listening skills of students
- To improve the speaking skills of students
- To improve the reading skills of students
- To improve the writing skills of students

3. Methodology

For the present study, four primary schools from all the four blocks of Gurugram district were selected on random basis. In order to gauge existing competencies the pre test were designated for all subject in their own class rooms. After that an intervention specifically targeted to focused skills was provided. In order to find quantitative outcomes the post tests

are administered in similar context as that of pre test.

3.1 Sample

The following four primary schools were selected, one from each block of the Gurugram district-

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. GPS Jatauli-3 | Block- Pataudi |
| 2. GPS Faridpur | Block- Farrukhnagar |
| 3. GPS Tighra | Block- Gurugram |
| 4. GPS Badshahpur | Block- Sohna |

The students of grade 5 in all these primary students are selected as a subject of the study. A total of 70 students were sampled for the study. The whole study is conducted by two researchers during 20-28 March 2018. Every school was visited for four consecutive days.

3.2 Tool Development

The target specific tests for listening, speaking, reading and writing were prepared. After conducting a test on the first day, various activities were also devised to improve these skills.

Activities for developing listening skills

For developing the listening skills, listening to stories, conversations, telephone calls etc followed by questioning on the topic of discussion were conducted daily. The aim was to improve the concentration level of students so that they can answer the questions after listening to an audio clip.

Activities for speaking skills

First of all, the students were asked to introduce themselves describing about their families, friends, hobbies etc. After assessing their present level, daily activities promoting communication skills of students were conducted. The activities included conversation with other students and teachers, participation in morning assembly, group discussion, extempore speech etc. On the fourth day of visit, the students were given tasks to express them verbally.

Activities for reading skills

To improve reading, emphasis was given on correct pronunciation of words. The correct pronunciation of *matras*, *anuswar*, *anunasik* and *Sanyukt varn* was explained using the rules of Hindi grammar. For improving reading skills, the students were moved from words, paragraphs to stories. Regular reading practice was done along with the explanation of grammatical rules.

Activities for writing skills

With the objective to improve the writing skills of students, practice of *matras*, *anuswar*, *anunasik* and *Sanyukt varn* was made every day. The simultaneous work on pronunciation and writing becomes effective in developing conceptual clarity about the use of *matras*, *anuswar*, *anunasik* and *Sanyukt varn*.

4. Findings

The test scores of students for all the four skills were recorded daily. The variation of scores for all the four skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing are discussed

below:

4.1 Listening

The variation of average score of students of grade 5 among all the schools is shown below:

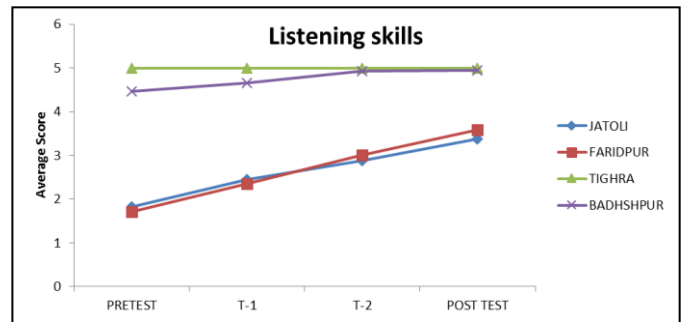


Fig 1

The scores show improvement in all the schools. The students of GPS Tighra have shown good listening skills.

4.2 Speaking

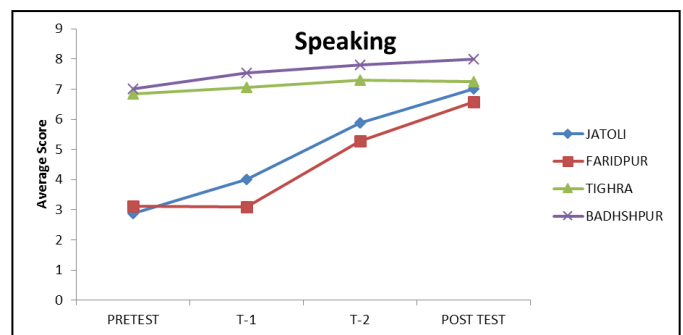


Fig 2

Improvement is observed in speaking skills in all the four schools.

4.3 Reading

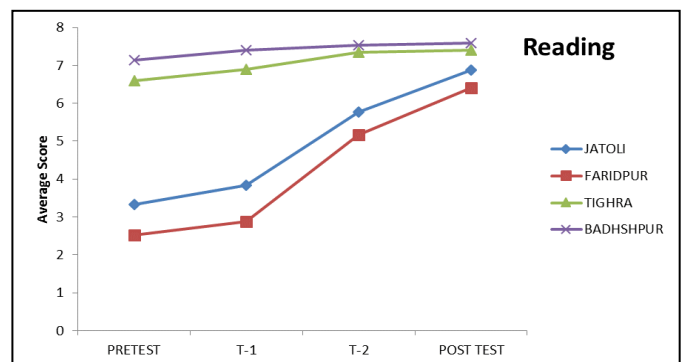


Fig 3

The students of GPS Badshahpur have shown best performance.

4.4 Writing

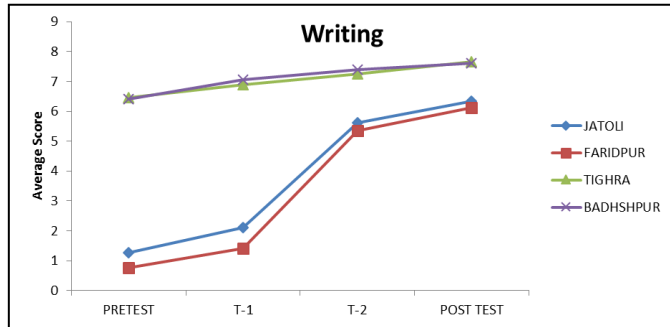


Fig 4

All the schools have shown improvement.

5. Conclusion

It was observed during the study that most of the students are not concept clear about the use of *anuswar* and *anunasika*. The variation in the test scores show that the Action Research based interventions have led to an improvement in all the four linguistic skills which reveals that a cyclic and consistent effort is required for improvement the linguistic skills. Since it is a sample study and has yield the desired results to enhance linguistic skills of students at particular grade and in more generalised form it may be applied to enhance the same skills in similar contexts.

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