

Improving english speaking practices in kg class



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Chitral is one of the remote districts of North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The district lies between 35-12o to 36-50o degree North Latitude and 17-12o to 73-53o Longitude covering approximately 14850 Sq. Km.

Government Education Department and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are active in providing education to the students of Chitral. With the result literacy rate in Chitral is quite high both among girls and boys as compared to other districts of NWFP. Moreover, Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan (AKES, P) is shouldering the efforts of Government Education Department to provide access as well as quality education to females of Chitral. Talking of quality education English has become one of the indicators of quality education and need of the modern age. For this purpose Aga Khan Education Services Pakistan (AKES, P) introduced different trainings and courses such as LEAP (Learning Enhancement Achievement Program), SKIP (Short Course Implementation Program) and so on for content development, and methodology of teaching and learning language improvement. It has started English medium classes in all its schools. Therefore, being a demand of modern society the teacher should pay more attention to develop of learners' competences in English. When I was a student of primary school I remember that Urdu was the demand of community but we didn't get the opportunity to speak Urdu due to discouragement by teachers and class fellows. Where there was any training or other discussions in other languages rather than khowar (my mother tongue) I used to sit quietly even though I had to express. I believe that it was due to unfriendly language learning environment in the school where I was studying. If the teacher would have encouraged me at that time I might be able to improve my

speaking skill. Such types of issues occur with almost all English teachers and particularly with students. Therefore, through this research study I want to explore some of the English teaching and learning issues in the classroom and help teachers to overcome those issues.

As a Teacher Educator I observed that English is not spoken during the teaching learning process in the ECD classrooms. As a result students cannot express themselves in English. Through different meetings with Parents and communities I understood that the parents are not satisfied with the existing teaching practices as teachers are not speaking in English with students.

Rationale:

The research will tend to identify some of the issues faced by the teacher for not communicating English in their class. Through this study I will help the teacher to overcome these issues through different strategies; lesson planning, reflections on daily plans, different classroom activities and so on. The findings of the research would further help us to improve English language speaking skills. After completing this research we will be able to share the best practices with other stakeholders (head teachers, ECD teachers, SMC members, parents) and they may be applied it in their respective schools. It would be a good learning experience for me, as a novice researcher.

Research question:

“ How can I help a KG class teacher to speak English during her teaching practice?”

Subsidiary question:

What problems a teacher faces while speaking simple sentences?

What teaching strategies a teacher can use to speak in English during teaching time?

What resources can be used by a teacher to speak English during her teaching time?

What types of activities can be designed by a teacher to improve her speaking skills?

Literature review:**Importance of the English Language**

Manivannan. G (2006) says that a language is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. It is the code we all use to express ourselves and communicate to others. It is a communication by word of mouth. It is the mental faculty or power of vocal communication. It is a system for communicating ideas and feelings using sounds, gestures, signs or marks. Any means of communicating ideas, specifically, human speech, the expression of ideas by the voice and sounds articulated by the organs of the throat and mouth is a language. This is a system for communication. A language is the written and spoken methods of combining words to create meaning used by a particular group of people.

Language, so far as we know, is something specific to humans, that is to say it is the basic capacity that distinguishes humans from all other living beings.

Language therefore remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes.

A set of linguists who based their assumptions of language on psychology made claims that language is nothing but 'habit formation'. According to them, language is learnt through use, through practice. In their view, 'the more one is exposed to the use of language, the better one learns'.

Written languages use symbols (characters) to build words. The entire set of words is the language's vocabulary. The ways in which the words can be meaningfully combined is defined by the language's syntax and grammar. The actual meaning of words and combinations of words is defined by the language's semantics.

The latest and the most advanced discoveries and inventions in science and technology are being made in the universities located in the United States of America where English language is the means of scientific discourse.

The historical circumstances of India (having been ruled by the British for over two centuries) have given the Indians an easy access to mastering English language, and innumerable opportunities for advancement in the field of science and technology. Many Indians have become so skilled in English language and have won many international awards for creative and comparative literatures during the last few years. Sometime ago, an Indian author, Arundhati Roy, won the prestigious booker prize for her book "The God of Small Things". Her book sold lakhs of copies all over the globe.

Over the years, English language has become one of our principal assets in getting a global leadership for books written by Indian authors and for films made by Indians in English language. A famous Indian movie maker Shekhar Kapoor's film " Elizabeth" has got several nominations for Oscar Awards. It does not require any further argument to establish the advantage English language has brought to us at the international level.

English language comes to our aid in our commercial transactions throughout the globe. English is the language of the latest business management in the world and Indian proficiency in English has brought laurels to many Indian business managers. English is a means not only for international commerce; it has become increasingly essential for inter-state commerce and communication.

In India, people going from North to South for education or business mostly communicate in English, which has become a link language. Keeping this in mind, the Parliament has also recognized English as an official language in addition to Hindi. All the facts of history and developments in present day India underline the continued importance of learning English in addition to vernaculars.

Some of the states of India are witnessing popular increase in public demand for teaching of English language from the primary classes. Realizing the importance, recently, the Minister of Indian Railways, Laloo Prasad Yadav, demands teaching of English language in schools. The great demand for admission in English medium schools throughout the country is a testimony to the attraction of English to the people of India. Many of the leaders, who

denounce English, send their own children to English medium schools. Many of the schools in the country have English as the sole or additional medium of instruction.

A language attracts people because of the wealth of literature and knowledge enshrined in it. English poses no danger to Indian languages. The Indian languages are vibrant and are developing by the contributions of great minds using them as their vehicle of expression. English is available to us as a historical heritage in addition to our own language. We must make the best use of English to develop ourselves culturally and materially so that we can compete with the best in the world of mind and matter. English language is our window to the world.

English language is one tool to establish our viewpoint. We can learn from others experience. We can check the theories of foreigners against our experience. We can reject the untenable and accept the tenable. We can also propagate our theories among the international audience and readers.

[www. UsingEnglish. com](http://www.UsingEnglish.com)

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Methodology:

The study will be conducted in a CBS School of district Chitral. It will be an action research where I will work with a teacher in planning, teaching and reflecting the actions and observation in order to bring improvement in the

area of concern. A cyclic approach of action research will be used in the intervention stage. In the first cycle I will do the following tasks;

Entry negotiations will be done with the research participants and the related educational system.

Few lessons of research participant will be observed to identify issues and challenges.

Formal and informal Interviews will also be held with the participant in order to know about her perception about teaching English in ECD classes.

Plan for 2nd cycle.

Data collection tools:

Reflective journals of both the researcher and the research participant will be the main tools of data collection. Both the researcher and the research participant will maintain reflective journals throughout the research period.

Data will also be collected using classroom observation checklist and conducting formal and informal interviews of research participant.

Data analysis:

Data analysis will be on going process right from the beginning of the intervention stage. A cyclic approach of data analysis will be used for planning, teaching, reflecting and re-planning.

Ethical consideration:

In order to avoid any confusion during the study, consent letters will be signed before the study starts. Furthermore, the information collected from

the research participant will be kept confidential in respect of participant's professional integrity. The researcher will respect the school and teaching routine and negotiate activities ahead of time. The name of the school and the participant will also be kept confidential if they wish.

Time line:

No#

Activity

Timeline

1

Situation analysis

August (09)

2

Submission of research proposal

September(09)

3

First cycle

October(09)

4

First cycle review session

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November(09)

5

Second cycle

December 09

6

Writing first cycle report

January 2010—February 2010

7

Submission of first cycle report

March 2010

8

Second cycle review session

April 2010

9

Writing second cycle report and submission

May 2010

10

Final report writing

June 2010

11

Final report submission

July 2010

Background of the school:

Ibne Batota Community Model School Kosht is situated in the lower side of Kosht. It has been established in 2002 with the help of community and two foreigners Wendy and Jurgen. The main purpose of its establishment was to introduce an English Medium school in this area. Although there were other Govt Schools in the area which were giving education to the students but all were in Urdu medium. This school started its teaching learning process in a unique style. All the teacher were bound to use direct method of teaching for any content and the teachers and students were bound to speak English in the premises of the school. Due to some contextual realities the stake holders of the school changed some of the rules and regulation because the local teachers were not able to meet the rules as their academic backgrounds were Urdu medium. Now in this situation in the premises of the school the teachers and students are not so much bound to speak English as they were in the beginning of its establishment. The direct method of teaching is being used in the classroom to some extent.

When RCC program started in this school in 2007 the principal of the school Wendy pleased very much and welcomed this program. She wanted to

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achieve her old desire of English speaking environment in the classroom through this program. Her support remained very positive all the time for English speaking improvement whenever needed. She provided all the resources to ECD teachers which were in the school for the improvement of English speaking.

When I got a chance to do action research through RCC program in RCC project school I prioritized this school. The reasons are as under:

The school Head and the other staff highlighted the issue already and want to work on it.

The ECD classrooms are separate and it will help me to work better.

Every class has one teacher and one separate classroom and it will help me to work with the teacher comfortably.

The school has its own library and computer lab and we will get help from the library and computer lab.

The teacher is motivated and wants to improve her speaking skill.

First cycle:

1st step:

Session on Action Research:

A session on Action Research was conducted in Gilgit. In this session the following points discussed;

What is Action research?

Why reflection is important in Action research?

How do we develop plan for action research?

Plan submitted for the first cycle.

2nd step:

Situation analysis:

In my first cycle I identified the issues which the teacher was facing in her teaching learning process through situation analyzes. For this purpose I did these of the actions;

Action 1:

A meeting was conducted with the management of the school and these of the things shared with them;

Purpose of the Action Research explained

Name of the research participants and their responsibilities regarding research shared with them

Consent letters signed by the Head teacher and KG teacher.

Action 2:

A questionnaire was made before the informal interview (appendix I). The purpose of this informal interview was to explore the teacher's views about the importance of speaking English in teaching learning process in KG class.

With the result of this it came to understand that the teacher has great desire to speak English during teaching learning process and in her daily life

but she believes that it is not possible to speak English without attending any language training. However she is eager to learn the strategies and wants to start English speaking practice in the classroom. The teacher knows the importance of speaking English in KG class but she is with the view that the teacher should be expert in speaking English first and then the children will learn. It shows teacher lacks confidence as well. Through informal interview I got some of teacher's ideas about speaking practices and its importance in the classroom and it seemed to me that the teacher can do the practices if she gets some supports.

Action 3:

As the informal interview was not enough to identify the issues so I wanted to observe the teacher in actual classroom situation, so with her permission I observed three lessons of the teacher.

Classroom observation:

The main purpose of the observation was to identify the issues which the teachers and children are facing while speaking English in the classroom. I sat at one side of the room and observed the teacher teaching learning process for forty minutes. This was planned observation and I observed her class using the tool (appendix ii) which I developed for the observation.

According this tool I focused these of the points which are as under:

Teacher's language

Teacher's instructions

Students responses

Resources and their uses

“ It is concept time and the teacher is sitting in circle. She is explaining the concept of subtraction with the help of different materials. She is explaining the concept of subtraction from 1-5. Some samples of cars, blocks and books are lying in front of the teacher and the children are looking at them and try to answer to the question asking by teacher. Teacher is using totally khowar (mother tongue). The children are also responding her in khowar. Now she is asking the numbers and the children are telling the numbers in English.

Teacher is asking to open the textbook on page 22. This instruction is given in khowar also. The teacher is trying to involve all the children in textbook and asking every one to look at her. All the instructions are given in khowar. She is using different sentences such as “ ee lolur”, “ phuk achi ro dior”, “ hay hai no lolur”. Children are doing their work according the instructions of the teacher. The teacher is supporting them. The children are showing their work to the teacher and the teacher is encouraging them by different words like; shabash, good, bo jam. Now the teacher is writing some of the sums on the green board and asking the children to write the answers on the board. Children are writing the correct answers and it is clear that they understood the concept but they are explaining their answers in khowar.”

Reflection:

The teacher was teaching “ subtraction” in mathematics. She was teaching in khowar (mother tongue). All the process of teaching learning was in khowar and the children were also answering in khowar. In the end I observed that the concept was cleared because when the teacher was asking the children to solve the sums on board they all did well but the

children didn't get any chance to speak English. The materials which the teacher was using were related for concept clarification as she was using samples of cars, blocks, pens and so on and it was not difficult for her to use simple English sentences with the help of the materials for conceptual understanding of " subtraction" but she couldn't make it.

Through this observation it seemed that the teacher is not confident to use English sentences in the class room. May be my presence in the classroom made her uncomfortable because it was not difficult to her to speak some simple sentences but she didn't try to speak a single sentence in English. For example sit down, look at the board, look at me and give me this book and so on but she did not try to use.

Step 2:

Plan:

Although I observed the class but I was not satisfied with my observation because it seemed to me that the teacher was not teaching according her daily routine so I decided to visit the school again with a developed tools for observation (appendix iii). The things which were in planned as under:

Classroom observation from the very large circle to snack time.

To note down all the sentences which the teacher is using in the class with students.

To note down the sentences which students are using in the class

To note down the instructional sentences for different activities

To give feed back to the teacher

Action:

Classroom teaching:

According to my plan I visited the school and this visit gave me chance to interact with children and collect data for my further plan. The teacher was absent and I got the opportunity to take the class for 50 minutes.

My focused activities were as under:

1. In large group circle I showed some pictures through a big book and asked some questions about each pictures and tried to involve every one. The questions were in English and I pleased to see that they children were trying to tell the answers in English. Questions were simple and were in short form. For example;

What do you see in this picture?

What color is it?

How many things are their in this picture?

After this activity I realized that if we engage the children in such activities we can improve their speaking practice day by day.

The children were divided into groups and asked to make pictures by themselves and present their work. They worked and tried to present it in English but with hesitation. I encouraged them for their English sentences.

Reflection:

Through this action I realized that the children are very active and try to response in English. In every activity they tried to involve themselves to speak English but with a little bit hesitation. Here I noticed that the children need to encouragement. If they encouraged for their simple sentences they may be able to speak English confidently. It is fact that in one class we have different types of children. Every child his/her own style of learning. The teacher should have the ability to deal his/her children according their level.

Step 3:**Re-plan:**

As my second plan remained incomplete due to teacher absent so I re-planned again to observe the lesson of the teacher intending to have in depth understanding of the issues. The teacher also wanted to observe her lesson from the very beginning of her class to snack time.

Action:**Classroom observation:**

“ The teacher is sitting in a circle with the students. She is asking questions in English and the students is trying to understand her questions and also trying to answer these questions. She is asking about different colors and using different materials such as pieces of clothes, blocks, beads and thread and so on. The questions are:

What color it has? What color is it? Who can tell me the color of this?

Students are giving the answers but not in full sentences. They are answering in one word like red, black, yellow, blue etc. Now the teacher is telling some of the color name and asking the students to find the colors from different corners. The students are in the corners and trying to find the things to related colors. They are bringing the things to the teacher and telling the colors. The teacher is asking questions like this; “ it is red color?”

Now the teacher is dividing the class into groups according the colors name. All the students are busy in group work. The teacher is going to groups and supporting the students while completing their tasks. The instructions which the teacher is doing are mostly in English but she is using Urdu also.

Students completed their work and now they are coming for presenting the work. They are presenting their work and the teacher is asking about their work in Urdu. Only one question was asked in English which is “ what did you do?” She is asking questions like this “ Tree ka naqsha bana kar kaisa color dia?” “ Apple ka color kaisa ha?” “ English main iss ko kia kehte hain?” the questions are being asked in Urdu but the names of the colors are being told in English. Now the students are going for outside game.”

Reflection:

Through this observation I realized that the teacher is trying to improve her speaking skill because now she asked questions in English for example “ dear children look at me and tell me what this is? What do you see in my hand? What color it has?

Based on this observation it came to understand that due to lack of English speaking environment some minor issues effect on teacher teaching learning

process and create issues in speaking practices. Some instructional sentences which the teacher was using were not clear to her and this was due to lack of speaking practice inside the classroom. The teacher focused only the concept and not trying to integrate it with language. In time correction of the sentences is very necessary for the children but here the teacher did not try to correct it in time. This also seems a factor which occurs in English speaking practice development. Here it comes to understanding that the teacher is feeling comfortable in using materials in her teaching learning process. The need which identified by this observation is that materials should be in variety and the teacher should be aware to use them in the classroom teaching. Some instructional sentences should be in written form with the teacher so that she will use these instructions during her class teaching and used to with them. As this is fact that in the ECD classes children get bore soon. So the activities should be in innovative way. The teacher needs to study different activity books and other things which make her class active and fruitful.

Conclusion of first cycle:

As a result of interview with the teacher, working with children and observing the teacher in actual classroom activities I was able to identify the following list of issues that could be addressed during 2nd cycle.

Teacher feels hesitation to speak English in the class

Children need to encourage for simple English sentences

Lesson plans are not integrated with language skills

Instructional sentences are not clear to the teacher

Teacher need to use different activities and strategies for language development

Teacher need to study some literature about language skill development

Based on the identified issues I am now planning to help the teacher in the classroom activities to improve children English speaking skills.

Plan for second cycle

After first cycle implementation I have planned to work on these of the areas for the second cycle.

Months

Activities

December 09

Meeting with the teacher and discuss these points

Lesson plan and its importance

Motivate her to maintain reflective journal for daily activities

Develop lesson plan with her.

January 2010

Literature review

February2010

Literature review

March 2010

Class observation and feed back to the teacher

Demo lesson by AR

Design activities for speaking development

Develop resources for the activities

April2010

Class observation

Feed back to the teacher

May 2010

Report writing on 2nd cycle

Step 1:

Plan:

These are the points which are in plan for the 1st step:

Meeting with the teacher and discuss these things

Reflective journal and its importance

Teacher's lesson plan

2. To develop lesson plan with teacher focusing language

Action:

A meeting conducted with the teacher and these points discussed in detail;

Reflective Journal

Integrated lesson plan

Reflective Journal:

In a meeting with the teacher reflective journal and its importance discussed in detail. The teacher has been given suggestion to maintain reflective Journal. At the beginning she hesitated by saying that how it can be maintained. When I told her about the ways to write reflections and the benefits to maintain it for her improvement she showed her interest and decided to maintain reflective dairy in her teaching learning process. The main points about the writing reflections were discussed with the teacher are as under:

What was the lesson about?

What was interesting in the lesson and why?

What was challenging and what should be the solution for future?

The points discussed with the teacher and she noted the things with her and promised to write reflections on daily basis.

Integrated lesson plan:

The teacher lesson plan (appendix IV) and its steps discussed in detail. In the last it was decided to add a portion for teacher language.

Developed new lesson plan:

A new lesson plan developed with the teacher by adding separate session for teacher language. (Appendix v)

Reflection:

In the meeting with the teacher I observed that the task which is given to the teacher should be explained clearly. When I asked the teacher to write reflection on daily bases she hesitated and confused but when I told the reasons than she showed interest and prepared to write it on daily basis. Here I noticed one thing that if a written reflection shared to her it would be easier to explain about reflection. However she agreed to maintain reflective dairy.

In a discussion with teacher she expressed her views about her existing practice of lesson plan. “ It is good and easy for us. It has been taught during our ECD training but I want a separate portion for language practice. It is good for concept clarification. I don’t want to change this plan but I want to add a separate portion for teacher language so that I would be able to write the sentences in this portion which I want to practice during teaching learning process.”

For this purpose we sat together and made a plan by using separate portion for some sentences which are being used in the classroom by teacher. The teacher made it and seemed cleared but she suggested for a demo lesson and I agreed and decided to do a demo lesson by using the new lesson plan:

Step 2:

Plan:

As it was teacher suggestion for a demo lesson with the new lesson plan. I planed these things for the lesson;

Lesson plan with new format

Resources for the lesson

Action: