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FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERCEPTIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH DISCOURSE-ORIENTED PEDAGOGY

Dr. T. Sharon Raju¹ and T. Ramesh²

¹Associate Professor & Head; Chairman, BOS in Education (UG)
Department of Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam-530003, A.P., India

²Research Scholar, Department of Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam-530003
Andhra Pradesh, India.

ABSTRACT

Education is the process of facilitating learning. It is the most powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of national goals. It is an effective means of social reconstruction. It helps in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs and habits necessary for the human living. It helps to increase the productivity, achieve national and emotional integration; and accelerate the process of modernization. Curriculum and Pedagogy play a significant role in the teaching learning process at secondary level. The curriculum should be transacted applying suitable pedagogy in order to make the student understand what the teacher explains in the classroom. During the ancient period, the education was teacher-centered and the teacher used to dominate the entire class. But today, the emphasis in the teaching learning process has been shifted from teacher-centered education to child-centered learning. In this process, the emphasis is on 'Activity-Oriented Education', wherein the children involve themselves in a good number of activities in the classroom; and have an exposure to 'Experiential learning'. English Language Education is a concept relating to the pedagogy of English Language Teaching (ELT); and the development of various skills relating to English language learning. When these skills are developed by the teachers in his pupils with the help of discourses, his/her teaching may be called 'Discourse-Oriented Teaching' or 'Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy'. A discourse is a mode of communicating certain ideas meaningfully in a particular context. The present study is an attempt to explore the factors that affect the perceptions of secondary school teachers towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy. The researchers used a well prepared and standardized questionnaire as the

tool for collection of data from a sample of 500 teachers (200 Headmasters and 300 School Assistants in English) selected from 200 secondary schools located in the three north coastal districts, viz., Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. Mean score values, standard deviations and independent t-tests were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that the demographic variables – Gender, Designation, Location of the school and the medium of instruction offered by the school have no influence on their perceptions towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.

Key words: *Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy, perceptions, secondary school teachers, teaching-learning process, activity-oriented education, experiential learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of facilitating learning. It is the most powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of national goals. It is an effective means of social reconstruction. It helps in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs and habits necessary for the human living. It is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It helps to increase the productivity, achieve national and emotional integration and accelerate the process of modernization. It cultivates social, moral and spiritual values among people.

Curriculum and Pedagogy play a significant role in the teaching learning process at secondary level. The curriculum should be transacted applying suitable pedagogy in order to make the student understand what the teacher explains in the classroom. During the ancient period, the education was teacher-centered and the teacher used to dominate the entire class. But today, the emphasis in the teaching learning process has been shifted from teacher-centered education to child-centered learning. In this process, the emphasis is on ‘Activity-Oriented Education’, wherein the children involve themselves in a good number of activities in the classroom; and have an exposure to ‘Experiential learning’. English Language Education is a concept relating to the pedagogy of English Language Teaching (ELT); and the development of various skills relating to English language learning. When these skills are developed by the teachers in his pupils with the help of discourses, his/her teaching may be called ‘Discourse-Oriented Teaching’ or ‘Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy’. A discourse is a mode of communicating certain ideas meaningfully in a particular context (Prasad, G., 2014).

CONCEPT OF ‘DISCOURSE-ORIENTED PEDAGOGY’

‘Discourse’ literally means spoken or written form of communication. A discourse can be understood as connected language in speech or writing. Discourse helps a student to make him/her understandable to others. It also enables him/her to enhance his/her own knowledge and understanding. A discourse enables a student to speak or to write more than a single sentence. Discourse involves the study of both the form and the function in a group of sentences. The ‘form’ in a discourse helps the written aspect; whereas the ‘function’ helps the spoken aspect. The written text contains a theme and the sentences in it are interwoven; whereas the spoken language focuses on theme along with the opening, developing and closing sentences. Language exists in different forms – songs, dialogues, poems, descriptions, plays, stories, letters etc. These are used normally in situations or discourses.

A discourse is a mode of communicating certain ideas meaningfully in a particular context. Generally, context plays vital role in language learning. No sentence conveys its full meaning in isolation. Hence the context is very important. The context will be a part of discourse mode. Therefore, discourse level of processing of learning experiences is necessary in language learning. This helps the learner to read the lines, between the lines and beyond the lines. Discourse level processing holds good to all basic language skills (Anandan, K.N., 2006).

A discourse encourages students to take practice in learning the four language skills, viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing in an integrated manner. It nurtures learners’ curiosity to learn the language in a more natural way; and supports co-operative and collaborative learning. It minimizes the gap between the good and poor performers of language. Classroom learning is encouraged through activities, wherein students involve themselves actively in understanding different tasks. In the process, the teacher remains a facilitator, guide and motivator; and encourages learners to become responsible and independent. He encourages learners to ask insightful questions, add or suggest a piece of information, develop arguments or ask a few questions to check comprehension. (Venkanna, K., 2017). A discourse can be a primary resource which can initiate the learner to use the language. The language teachers should bring about an awareness of discourses among their students; and thereby improve the communicative competence of the students.

In India, after the recommendations of National Curriculum Framework (NCF) - 2005, as a part of the curriculum renewal process, the new textbooks have been designed and introduced in the combined state of Andhra Pradesh at all levels of school education. It has been argued that Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy and the introduction of a single English textbook would cater to the needs of the English language learners of both the English medium and Telugu medium schools. All the units of the new English textbooks are theme-based in their pedagogy; and have been prepared following the guiding principles of National Curriculum Framework-2005, A.P. State Curriculum Framework-2011 and Right to Education Act-2009. These textbooks have been prepared in such a manner that the language material provided therein is in the form of discourses. These discourses, when transacted properly by the teacher in the classroom, would certainly help the students learn English language easily and comfortably.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

The existing methods and techniques of teaching English provide a lacuna in the system, which totally ignores the innate system of the child that helps him acquire the language. These methods are based on the behaviorist assumption namely that the mind of the child is an empty vessel and everything comes from outside. Another striking flaw in the present model is that it neglects discourse level transaction with structure consciousness in language acquisition. This can be achieved only through meaningful and need based linguistic discourses ensuring the recurrence of language items at the phonological, morphological and syntactic level, thus providing a continuum of language experience.

The investigators felt that the gap can be bridged through various discourses in the relevant contexts provided by the teachers in the English classroom. It is thought that the teachers of English should develop a kind of positive attitude towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy. The investigators felt that the perceptions of teachers towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy play a significant role in transacting English language curriculum in secondary schools effectively and efficiently. The present investigation is an attempt in this direction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to find out the perceptions of secondary school teachers towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.

The study also aims at finding out the influence of certain demographic variables such as Gender, Designation, Location of the school; and the Medium of instruction offered by the school on the perceptions of teachers towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

- (i) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female teachers working in secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Headmasters and School Assistants (English) towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.
- (iii) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers working in rural and urban secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.
- (iv) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers working in English and Telugu medium secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the influence of four demographic variables, viz., gender, designation, location of the school and the medium of instruction offered by the school on the perceptions of teachers working in the secondary schools located in the three north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, viz., Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam.

METHODOLOGY

- (a) **Sample:** The sample of the study consists of 500 teachers (200 Headmasters and 300 School Assistants in English) has been selected from 200 secondary schools located in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique.
- (b) **Research Tool:** The researchers used a well prepared questionnaire consisting of 40 items as the tool of research for the present investigation. The tool was initially administered to 50 teachers (10 Headmasters and 40 School Assistants in English) under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been established. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. The final tool consisting of 34 items has been administered to 500 teachers (200 Headmasters and 300 School Assistants in English) working in the Secondary Schools of the three north coastal districts, viz., Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

STATISTICAL INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data collected has been analyzed using different statistical techniques such as Mean score values, Standard Deviations and t-ratios; and are presented in the following table.

Table showing t-values of different variables relating to the attitude of teachers working in Secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy

| S. No. | Variable | | N | Mean | S.D. | t-ratio | Result |
|--------|------------------------|--------------------|-----|--------|-------|---------|--|
| 1 | Gender | Male | 110 | 113.41 | 30.25 | 1.34* | *Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels |
| | | Female | 390 | 109.06 | 29.53 | | |
| 2 | Designation | Headmaster | 200 | 112.90 | 30.83 | 1.29* | *Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels |
| | | School Asst.(Eng.) | 300 | 109.44 | 27.21 | | |
| 3 | Location of the school | Rural | 280 | 110.29 | 28.61 | 0.86* | *Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels |
| | | Urban | 220 | 112.59 | 30.29 | | |
| 4 | Medium of Instruction | English medium | 80 | 110.75 | 31.06 | 0.24* | *Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels |
| | | Telugu medium | 420 | 111.64 | 29.03 | | |

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the researchers have arrived at the following findings and drawn the conclusions.

1. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female teachers working in secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.
2. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Headmasters and School Assistants (English) towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.
3. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers working in rural and urban secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.
4. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers working in English and Telugu medium secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that gender, designation, location of the institution and medium of instruction offered by the school have no influence on the perceptions of teachers working in secondary schools towards teaching English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- (i) The study would help the teachers identify the difficulties faced by their students in secondary schools in learning English through Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy; and find out remedial measures to overcome the difficulties.
- (ii) The present study helps the teachers to bring about the necessary changes in the Pedagogy with regard to the implementation of Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy in teaching English.
- (iii) The study would certainly help the teachers to select suitable discourses for their students in developing different skills of English language learning.
- (iv) The study would help to enhance the participatory skills of students in the teaching-learning process.

(v) The study would help the Academic Organizations like SCERTs, IASEs and the State Department of Education to take necessary steps for the effective implementation of Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy in schools.

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