



Effectiveness of Activity Based Learning in ESL Classroom: A Study

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, with a focus on its benefits over traditional lecture-based teaching methods. ABL is a dynamic approach that encourages active student participation, inspired by the educational philosophies of John Dewey. Dewey's principles of experiential learning, continuity of experience, interaction with the environment, and social construction of knowledge align with the core tenets of ABL. The study identifies why ABL is considered more effective than traditional lecture-based teaching, emphasizing its learner-centered and interactive nature. The objectives of the study are threefold: to assess the effectiveness of ABL in ESL classrooms, to demonstrate its superiority over traditional teaching methods, and to determine whether ABL fosters logical thinking, enriching experiences, and active participation through activities. The study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a questionnaire-based case study to gather insights from ESL teachers at K.S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science.

Keywords: Experiential learning, Social Construction of Knowledge, Learner-Centered, Logical Thinking, Qualitative Methodology.

Introduction

An activity is a state of being active which pushes a person to do particular kind of action or work. It can be done by group or individual and it helps for active participation of the students and fulfills the specific quest or pursue specific work. Unlike traditional lecture-based teaching methods, ABL offers more dynamic and interactive learning space. Activity Based Learning is a learner specific method that interacts, integrates, interrogates, and inculcates the affective, cognitive and social features of a learner. Exploration, expression, and experimentation are important teaching techniques for English as a second language in an ABL classroom. This approach to learning is inspired by the philosophy and psychology of John Dewey.

John Dewey the American philosopher was one of the pioneers of progressive education, who advocated for a more active, experiential, and democratic form of education has advocated principles like principles of learning by doing, principle of continuity of experience, principle of interaction with the environment and the principle of social construction of knowledge. These principles align with the ABL method of learning in several ways. According to Dewey activity-oriented experiences make the classroom a place of work, experimentation and discovery and not merely a place of absorption of second-hand information (Dewey, 61-65). Based on this statement, the article tries to derive the results for the study intended.

Why Activity-Based learning is effective than traditional lecture method?

ABL is an innovative approach to teaching and learning that differs from traditional methods in several ways. One of the key characteristics of ABL is that it uses educational aids to encourage self-learning among students. The aids are designed to suit the different levels of learning abilities and interests of each student, allowing them to learn at their own individual pace and style. Another characteristic of ABL is that it views knowledge as something that is not separate from skills, but rather integrated with them. The knowledge in ABL is not considered as a contrast to skills, instead, the two are closely linked and it is gained only through the actions performed by the learners. On the other hand, traditional lecture-based teaching is more teacher-centered and standardized, which means that it follows a fixed curriculum and method for all learners. Traditional lecture-based teaching is also more passive and boring, which means that it does not capture the attention and enthusiasm of the learners. Traditional lecture-based teaching is also more fragmented and isolated, which means that it does not connect different subjects and domains of knowledge. Therefore, based on these comparisons and contrasts, ABL can be considered as more effective than traditional lecture-based teaching in several ways.

Process of ABL

The Activity-Based learning is a dynamic process that fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It is important to adapt activities to the specific needs and preferences of students while keeping the focus on active participation and meaningful learning experiences. Here's a general process for implementing Activity-Based learning:

Identify Learning Objectives: Determine the specific learning outcomes that you want to achieve with students.

Select Activities: Choose activities that align with your students' learning objectives. These can include experiments, group projects, simulations, role-playing, or problem-solving exercises.

Prepare Materials: Gather the necessary materials and resources for the activities. Ensure that everything is ready and organized.

Introduce the Activity: Provide an overview of the activity to the students. Explain its purpose and how it relates to the learning objectives.

Engage Students: Encourage active participation. Let students work individually or in groups, depending on the activity. Act as a facilitator, guiding them as needed.

Observe and Assess: Monitor students' progress during the activity. Take notes on their participation, collaboration, and understanding of the concepts.

Reflect and Discuss: After the activity, hold a debriefing session. Ask students to share their experiences, insights, and what they've learned. Connect the activity to the learning objectives.

Provide Feedback: Offer constructive feedback to students, acknowledging their efforts and highlighting areas for improvement.

Reinforce Learning: Connect the activity to the broader curriculum. Help students see how the knowledge or skills gained can be applied in real-life situations.

Assess Learning: Use various assessment methods, such as quizzes, presentations, or projects, to evaluate how well students have met the learning objectives.

Iterate and Improve: Use feedback from students and your own observations to refine the activity for future use.

Repeat: Incorporate Activity-Based learning regularly into your teaching methods to enhance student engagement and understanding.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the effectiveness of Activity based learning in ESL classroom.
- To show that Activity Based Learning is effective than the traditional lecture way of teaching.
- To determine whether Activity Based Learning fosters students with logical thinking, experience and participation through activities.

Methodology

The methodology used for the research is qualitative method where the author used questionnaire-based case study method to investigate the effectiveness of ABL in ESL classroom. As Baxter and Jack, 2008, mentioned, the case study method is easier to gather data from a variety of resources and converge the data to illuminate the case. The questionnaire aims to assess teachers' views on ABL, its impact on student engagement, and its suitability in the ESL classroom. Additionally, it seeks opinions on promoting ABL and its potential benefits for students' speaking skills and real-world application. The questionnaire is derived based on the Likert scale principles which records responses in the scale that has positive to negative parameters.

Further, the author has categorized the questions based on three criteria which will ultimately project the levels of effectiveness and the agreeableness of the respondents. To have a better outcome, the author has set criteria and segregated questions based on three parameters.

Criteria	Statements
Effective learning experience	1,2,3,4,5
Impact and Implementation	6, 7,8,9,10
Challenges and Recommendations	11,12,13,14,15

Table: 1: (Criteria for the questions)

The Study: This study focusses on finding the effectiveness of ABL in ESL classroom and it involves responses of ESL teachers from K.S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science, Tiruchengode, Namakkal District.

Population: The population selected for implementing ABC is students of K.S Rangasamy College of Arts and Science.

Sample: A sample size of 200 students comprising of I year UG of ESL classroom of K.S Rangasamy College of Arts and Science.

Research instruments: The questionnaire was designed and chosen by the author as the instrument for data collection. Closed-ended questions were used in the questionnaire's design with five options from the range of Strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Data Collection and Analysis: A questionnaire was given to the teachers to get quantitative data. After gathering the data, the analysis was done in descriptively using graphs and tables and charts.

Findings:

ELT activity was given in the classroom where a proper lesson plan was designed with the teacher and the researcher. After the activity was given, presentation was done by the learners. The teachers along with the author accessed the activities with various parameters such as Design, Vocabulary, Accuracy, Comprehensibility. After accessing the questions were designed by the author along with the teacher.

S.no	STATEMENT	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT IN %				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Activity-Based Learning (ABL) is an effective method for promoting meaningful learning experiences in ESL classroom.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
2	ABL encourages students to actively participate in the construction of their own knowledge through activity during the class.	80%	10%	10%	0%	0%
3	Traditional lecture-based teaching methods are less effective than ABL.	80%	0%	20%	0%	0%
4	ABL plays a significant contribution to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in ESL classroom.	70%	30%	0%	0%	0%
5	ABL enhances the physical engagement of students in ESL classroom	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
6	I have personally witnessed the implementation of ABL in ESL classroom	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%
7	ABL has a positive impact on students' engagement and enthusiasm for learning.	80%	10%	10%	0%	0%
8	ABL is an inclusive approach that caters to the diverse learning needs of students.	70%	10%	20%	0%	0%
9	Teachers play a significant role in effectively facilitating ABL in ESL classroom.	90%	0%	10%	0%	0%
10	I believe ABL, if implemented it would be widely helpful in promoting speaking skills through activities.	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
11	ABL is an approach that can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application in ESL classroom.	80%	10%	10%	0%	0%
12	ABL is well-suited for addressing the unique challenges faced in the ESL classroom.	90%	10%	0%	0%	0%
13	ABL is a sustainable approach that can adapt to the diversity of ESL classroom.	90%	0%	10%	0%	0%
14	ABL needs more promotion in the ESL classrooms.	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
15	It will be better if the government and educational institutions in India should prioritize the implementation of ABL as a standard teaching method.	70%	0%	30%	0%	0%

Table: 2: (Participants' percentage of responses for the questions)

Responses from the Questionnaire

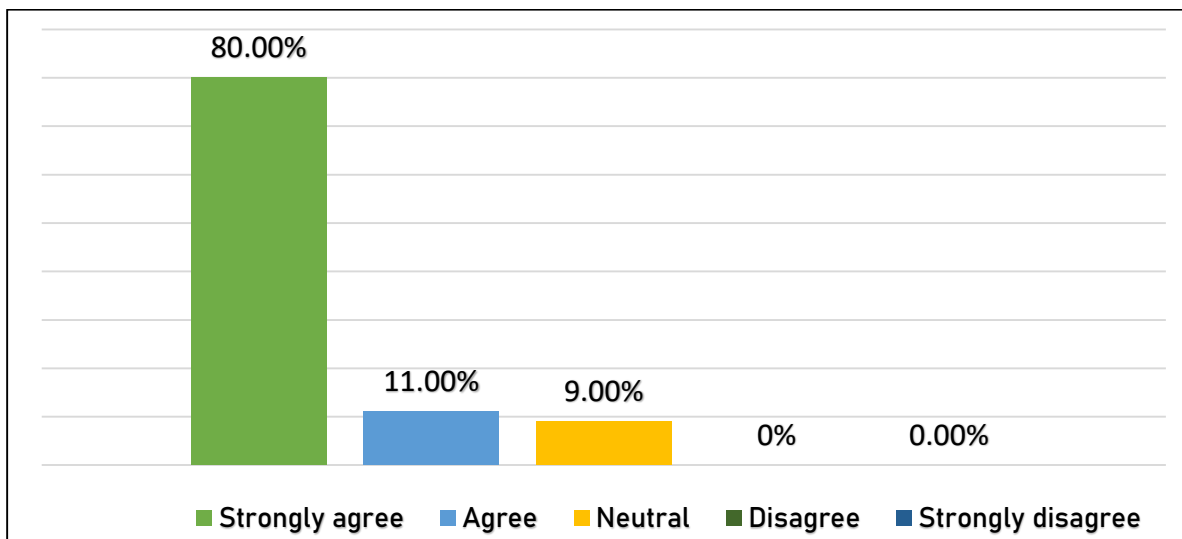


Fig: 1: (Graphical representation of participants’ percentage of responses for the questions)

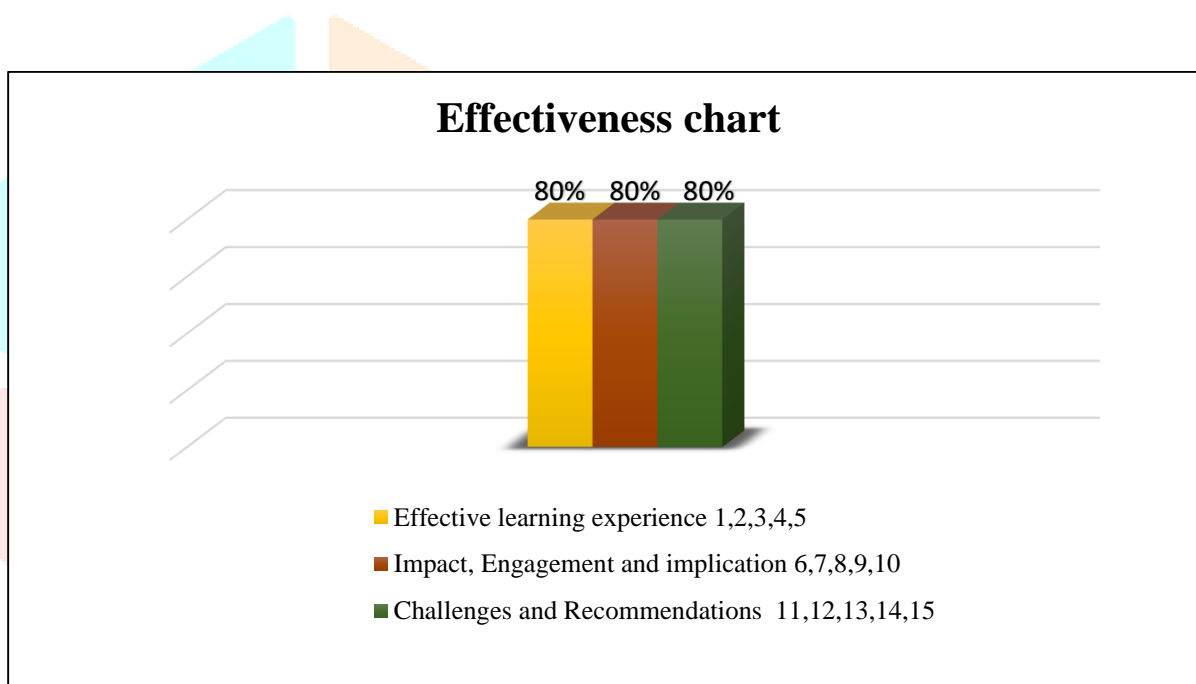


Fig: 2: (Graphical representation of effectiveness rating of ABL based on predefined criteria)

According to the data analysis results, 80% of the survey respondents strongly agreed that implementing ABL in the ESL classroom at tertiary level is effective and 11% agreed that the ABL will be effective in an ESL classroom and 9% of the respondents have neutral stand. The level of agreement with the questionnaire is higher than the levels of disagreement which stands at zero. Thus, the high effectiveness of the ABL in the ESL classroom is evident through study. However, it also highlights the need for promoting ABL within ESL classroom, as indicated by the high percentage of strong agreement (80%). The statement that 80% of people agreed with (The second most strongly agreed statement) shows that ABL helps the learners apply their second language in real-life situations. The 80% agreement that the ABL serves as a bridge to theatrical knowledge and real-life application adds further emphasis on its effectiveness. Statements 1,3,4,5,10,12 &14 have a tally of 100% positive response which again shows that ABL effectively enhances physical engagement, enthusiasm and speaking skills of the learners while also being well suited for addressing the unique challenges faced in the ESL classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the adoption of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in ESL classrooms has proven to be a positive and effective approach, as supported by the findings and ideas presented in this article. The key characteristics of ABL, such as encouraging self-learning, fostering critical thinking, and promoting active participation, have distinguished it from traditional lecture-based teaching methods. These characteristics align with the belief that education is not merely about the absorption of second-hand information but an active process of exploration, expression, and experimentation, as advocated by educational philosophers like John Dewey. The research conducted among ESL teachers from K.S. Rangasamy College of Arts and Science has shown strong support for ABL. The majority of participants agreed that ABL is effective in promoting meaningful learning experiences and encourages active student participation. Moreover, it was considered more effective than traditional lecture-based teaching methods, supporting the idea that ABL offers a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

Leads

The levels of agreement from the participants of the survey regarding the effectiveness of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in ESL classrooms are high and it provides several promising leads for further exploration and action. First, there is a clear call to promote ABL within ESL classrooms which is supported by an 80% agreement. Second, 70% of respondents believe ABL helps learners apply their second language in real-life situations, this paves way for further research. Third, curriculum designers can tailor lesson plans which are focused on ABL to enhance physical engagement, enthusiasm, and speaking skills among the learners. Finally, ABL is undoubtedly an effective method in ESL classroom, still the government need to advocate policies to prioritize this method as a standard teaching method.

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