

Multi-disciplinary Approach to Enhance English Language Writing Skills - An Experimental Study.

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Introduction

Educators and researchers in English Language teaching believe that a better understanding of the concepts, notions, themes or subject matter under the study can be achieved by bringing forth the correlations and contributions of various disciplines. This attempt to employ multidisciplinary approach can enhance the instructional delivery in teaching English language to the university students. (Stern, 1983, 143). Linguistic experts and researchers have been working hard in the process of finding out better English language teaching and learning strategies, tracking down the pragmatic methods of testing English language skills. This has become one of the most concentrated issues in the present day linguistic research endeavour. This paper attempts to explore the impact of multidisciplinary collaboration in English language teaching by drawing valuable findings from the experimental study. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the impact of multidisciplinary approach in accelerating English language writing skills among the post graduate gifted students studying in various departments. To answer the research question “Can English language writing skills be accelerated better by Multidisciplinary approach than other two types of approach?” an experimental study was conducted and the impact of three types of approach was evaluated.

The effective pedagogic practice can be reinforced by incorporating the multidisciplinary approach in the field of English language. Introducing the multidisciplinary approach in English language teaching, promotes the skill of English language learners to apply the knowledge gained in learning English language to the acquisition of knowledge in various content domains across the disciplines. Stern argues that the scholarship underlying language teaching and

learning is multi-disciplinary and this approach stands in marked contrast to earlier approaches. In earlier approaches of English language teaching and their modules are designed based only on linguistics. Bronstein (2003) states that multidisciplinary collaboration is an effective interpersonal process; and in this, communication, coordination and partnership play vital roles in the process. In multidisciplinary approach the study, examples, action, themes and tasks are drawn across more than two disciplines to get the desired result in teaching of English language.

The main objectives of this paper are the following:

1. To throw light on the concepts related to the disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches in the content of English language teaching.
2. To substantiate the advantages of multidisciplinary approach in teaching English language.

The disciplinary approach or the subject approach limits its scope to its own boundary and allows only a single academic discipline is taught. This approach also limits facts, methods, concepts and theories to its own boundary.

In multidisciplinary approach, facts, theories, methods, notions and concepts creates conceptual framework underlying the interlinking the basic common factors of more than two disciplines aiming the desired result in the content of English language teaching. In the balanced multidisciplinary approach the tasks, actions and examples are equally drawn than from the involved disciplines to get desired result and balanced the inputs from the disciplines.

In an unbalanced multidisciplinary approach the inputs from different disciplines are not balanced when the instruction materials are constructed.

Aina (1979) argues in form of integration, from another stand point.

Integration can be used within and across disciplines. Language, for instance, can be taught in itself (within) to integrate the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking, as well as across to integrate concepts, themes and ideas from the different subject spectrums. This is an approach favoured by several authors based on the premise that practical experiences of life suggest that solutions to problems of living are not found in the study of separate subjects (Aina, 1979)

This paper reports the outcome of the research borders on three types of macro linguistics namely 1. Psycholinguistics 2. Anthropological linguistics and 3. Socio linguistics. The population sample consists of post graduate final year students and much of their academic course work is linked to the use of English. The pretest and posttest have been administered to all the respondents belonging to both control and experimental groups.

The researcher conducted a training program to 125 post graduate gifted students focusing on higher level writing skills and multidisciplinary approach followed by a test. During the training that spread over three months the following instructions and writing tips assimilated from various sources were being provided to them

1. Advancing a point or thesis statement and supporting that thesis are the most important steps in competent essay writing.
2. Aim to make your own writing equally convincing by providing detailed support.
3. All the details in the essay must cohere or stick together, so that the reader will be able to move smoothly from one bit of supporting information to next.
4. Begin and end an essay with effective introductory and concluding paragraphs.
5. Developing a scratch outline into a well written thesis requires great deal of careful thinking and hard work.
6. In time or chronological order, details are listed as they occur in time.
7. In time or chronological order, phrases or words like first, first of all, next, then and after that are used.
8. Learn the chief ways to organize and connect the supporting information in a paper.
9. Organize and connect specific evidence in the body paragraphs of an essay.
10. Organize and connect supporting details by the use of 1. Common methods of organization, 2. Transitions and 3. Other connecting words.
11. Provide enough specific details and evidences to fully support the point in a body paragraph of an essay.
12. Specific details and evidences excite the reader's interest and explain a writer's points.
13. Start an essay with a suitable introductory paragraph and finish it with a well-rounded concluding paragraph.
14. The best received paragraphs are almost sure to be those with plenty of specific details.

15. The following activities will sharpen your understanding of how to support a thesis effectively. 1. Providing specific evidences and details. 2. Identifying adequate supporting evidences and 3. Adding details to complete an essay.
16. The following are the series of activities on developing a thesis statement. 1. Identifying the parts of an essay. 2. Evaluating thesis statements. 3. Completing thesis statements. 4. Writing a thesis statement and 5. Limiting a topic and writing a thesis.
17. Time order and emphatic order are the two common methods to organize the supporting material in the essay.

A test instrument after modifying a Canadian language test instrument, has been designed, developed and used by the researcher to measure higher level wring skills among 3 groups comprising at least 35 post graduate final year gifted students each. The qualities of test usefulness just as construct validity, content validity, contact validity, reliability, authenticity, interactiveness, predictability and impact are examined. The tests have been designed by keeping in mind the following features

1. The distinctive characteristics of the Target language use task types.
2. The definition of the construct to be measured
3. The resources that are available to develop the tests and use them and
4. The purpose of the test.

The tests have been designed after developing the plan that consists of the task specifications and the characteristics of the test structure function on the qualities of usefulness. The test tasks have been incorporated in the tests keeping in mind the following elements

1. Topical knowledge
2. Affective scheme
3. Language ability
4. Language knowledge
5. Organizational knowledge
6. Grammatical knowledge
7. Technical knowledge
8. Pragmatic knowledge
9. Functional knowledge and

10. Sociolinguistic knowledge

The tests were administered to them for evaluating the effect of multidisciplinary approach in term of the following learning outcomes of the training program given to them earlier.

1. understanding the differences and similarities between academic writing and journalistic writing.
2. ability to write an effective topic sentence.
3. ability to write an effective thesis statement.
4. ability to write a five paragraph essay exhibiting an attractive introduction, well developed body and effective conclusion with coherence and unity throughout the essay.and
5. ability to write complex formal texts for academic purpose in demanding context, demonstrating an excellent range of idiomatic language with complete control of variations and subtleties of grammar, structure, tone and style.

Though overall performance of the students is excellent, the following findings exhibit distinct unique facts.

1. 85 percentage of the students scored at least 46 marks out of 50 marks from organisation scoring and content scoring sections.
2. Students from multidisciplinary approach group better performed than those of other groups. and
3. 11 percentage of students scored less than 10 marks out of 15 from language use scoring section.

The following are the advantages of Multidisciplinary approach in teaching English language to the university students.

- 1) As in this approach key concepts and ideas from various disciplines are incorporated natural way of learning is promoted.
- 2) As it empowers the learners to construct better integrated system of knowledge and information, they can solve problematic situations in the real world in the context of English language teaching and learning.
- 3) It enhances comprehensive learning at any situation.
- 4) It makes learning English language experience amusing and thought provoking.
- 5) This approach gets all the students learning English language to get the desired results.

- 6) It promotes holistic way of learning.
- 7) As it is in line with the idea of Gestalt's theory that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, it enhances the probability of desired results.
- 8) It fosters the professional efficiency of English language teachers.
- 9) Multidisciplinary instruction optimizes English language learning ability to understand contrasting concepts and perspectives, apply critical thinking upon the information learned and re-examine the facts that were taken for granted.
- 10) The integrated approach in English language teaching provides an opportunity to the learners to examine the central themes and concepts under the study.
- 11) This approach encourages continued learning
- 12) As this approach demands the multiple inputs, it facilitates knowledge sharing among students and
- 13) As this approach involves the understanding of inputs from experts, it helps construction of better syllabus, better developed task.

Conclusion

In spite of the following challenges in English language teaching, multidisciplinary approach should be encouraged by all the stock holders of English language teaching for its pedagogical impact.

- 1) Lack of Time availability
- 2) Long working process
- 3) Unfavourable evaluation of articles about multidisciplinary approach products. and
- 4) Lack of full commitment.

The following demands to encourage multi-disciplinary approach in English language teaching are recommended

- 1) Official recognition of collaborative approach.
- 2) Rewards
- 3) On-campus administrative support
- 4) Institutions collaboration and
- 5) setting common goals among the stock holders

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