

EFFECTIVENESS OF READER RESPONSE PEDAGOGY ON COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION IN AN ELT CLASSROOM**Rincy Mol Sebastian****Dr. K.P. Meera****ABSTRACT**

Ability to communicate effectively in English is always a well-established goal in ELT. The obstacle in the process of effective communication is commonly Communication Apprehension (CA). A number of classroom techniques are designed to alternate the fear of communication and to promote and practice communication. The Transactional Reader Response Approach developed by Louise Rosenblatt (1996) is the model most amenable to communicative uses of literature in ELT. The active and communicative nature of reader response would complement the other modern trends in ELT. The aim of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of Reader Response Pedagogy on Communication Apprehension. The sample of the study consisted of 70 higher secondary students and equal number of students are in Experimental and Control group. The Experimental group was taught by using Reader Response Pedagogy and the control group with the Existing method of teaching. A pretest and posttest was administered before and after the completion of the treatment. The data were analyzed using the tests of significance for difference between means scores of the Experimental and Control group. The result revealed that there is significant difference in the mean scores of the Experimental and Control group.

Introduction

An important feature of English Language Teaching (ELT) over recent decades has been the increasing attention not only to the acquisition of information that we expect learning to achieve, but the target language based communicative competence and creative writing skills are to be essential in order for English language learners to participate fully in the target language. Teachers of second language learner can applaud this perspective, which reinforces language

learning as creative, productive and interactive.

“As the communicative movement gained a momentum in the 1980’s, teachers and materials designers faced the challenge of creating conditions for learning in which learner could use the target language in genuine communicative contexts (Hiravela, 1996). ELT classroom is the best place to satisfy the needs of communicative functions of language. So the ability to communicate effectively in English is always a well-established goal in ELT. The obstacle in the process of effective communication is commonly Communication Apprehension (CA). High Communication anxiety can impede an individual’s communication ability and social opportunity. Communication Apprehension or the fear of oral communication can be a problem in every classroom. In foreign languages, especially English as a second language, it can be a catastrophe. A number of classroom techniques are designed to alternate the fear of communication and to promote and practice communication.

Need and Significance of the Study

In the last two decades, a drastic change has taken place in the world due to globalization. The world faces an explosion of knowledge and the world is shrinking into a global village. At this juncture it is the responsibility of the teacher to equip the children to face the challenges in the society. The most pressing need at such situation undoubtedly is communication. Many language teachers, teacher educators and researchers expressed the belief that the primary aim of language acquisition is to enable learners to communicate with people coming from different linguistic and cultural background in this multicultural world. The challenges of the 21st century want a child to be communicatively competent. In our daily life one does not realize the importance of communication to live purposefully. Whether it is conversation, public speaking, group discussion, gestures, a message correctly delivered produces astonishing results. Learning cannot occur without communication.

One of the pressing concerns of those who are in search of communication competence is communication apprehension McCroskey (1978) defines communication Apprehension as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with their real or anticipated communication with another person or persons’. This fear or anxiety limit of the individual in developing interpersonal relationships and succeeding both academically and professionally.

Communication anxiety is an obstacle in the effective conveyance of what one has in mind. No form of apprehension is culminated all on a sudden. One may be apprehensive because of the perceptions of operation of language in the society. Society is craving for perfectionism with respect to language use.

When the ability and desire to participate in discussion are present, but the process of verbalizing is inhibited, shyness or reticence is occurring. Shy students tend to confine their career aspirations to vocations that require little oral communication. Communication anxiety should stand as a villain right from the inculcation of a yearning spirit for the acquisition of social interaction and communicative competence.

A number of classroom techniques can be used to alternate the fear of communication. Students need constant motivation and encouragement from many sources, including their parents, teacher and peers. Teachers should aware of the different dimensions of communication apprehension. Such awareness could help the teachers to understand the dimension of language teaching and learning as a result they could better prepare for the improvement of classroom activities. To reduce learner's communication apprehension teacher can introduce varieties of teaching into ELT. These varieties in the classroom can help the learner become aware of the success of communication and they can focus more on their own communication skill.

It is in this context that the researcher wishes to introduce Reader Response Pedagogy as an effective method in an ELT classroom in order to reduce the communication apprehension of the second language learner.

'The search for more communicatively-oriented materials and learning conditions led, almost inevitably, to literature' (Hiravela, 1996). In order to serve the communicative goals of language teaching, the learner must generate their own discourse in order to express their responses. Reader response approach emphasis the creative role of the reader and recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts 'real existence' (Rosenblatt) to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. They argued that literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates his or her own possibly unique text related

performance. The Transactional Reader Response Approach developed by Louise Rosenblatt is the model most amenable to communicative uses of literature in ELT.

The active and communicative nature of reader response suggests that it would complement the other modern trends in ELT (Carlisle, 2000). Since the reader response assigns central role to a reader or the learner, the approach will be more useful to students in Indian context who are taught literature as a means to facilitate them to acquire competence in the use of English. The student's role according to the Reader Response Approach is to be an active participant in making lessons meaningful and filling the missing pieces of text with a variety of responses. A Reader Response classroom that permits the students to participate in the reading process becomes vibrant with communicative activities. Some researcher (Carter and Long, 1991; Murdoch, 1992; Hiravela, 1996; Carlisla, 2000) have in general terms, acknowledged the potential application of Reader Response Approach to literature in the language classroom and thereby reduce the apprehension of second language learners.

The Reader Response approach reinforces the natural integration of the generation of real meaning and the creation of student's own meaning. The pragmatic theory as Reader Response is aimed at the audience. Teachers and students would need to make significant shift from the reading strategies of literature that is prevalent in our classroom. Reader Response Approach asks teachers to read students work through the lens of the intended reader. If the reading of student text is approached from a reader response perspective, it will help the student to make her text more she intended. Reader Response Approach makes the whole classroom site for interactive process and the teacher does not take a dominant role and student take responsibility of their learning.

"Our primary goal in the English curriculum is not to make literacy scholars of all our students. It is to make them readers and writers, independent and self-reliant thinkers who employ language and literature to enrich their lives (Probst, 1994). Students surely benefit from Reader Response Approach, where there is an integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening because the students are using skills in a complete context. The students feel positively because they are no longer using their energy to guess what the teachers wants them to think; instead, they are spending energy on creating something that they have a stake in" (Mitchell,

1993).

So the teacher should strongly promote participatory activity in the second language classroom. The investigator therefore felt the need for exploring the effectiveness of reader response pedagogy on communication apprehension in English classroom. Moreover the preliminary review of literature revealed that no study is conducted using the strategies of Readers Response pedagogy and its effect on reducing communication apprehension of higher secondary students learning English as their second language. The investigator feels the need to explore the area and hence the present study is entitled as "Effectiveness of Reader Response Pedagogy on Communication Apprehension in ELT Classroom."

Definition of Key Terms

The key terms that need clarification are defined below:

a. Reader Response Pedagogy

The Reader Response Pedagogy moves the focus of reading from the author and text to the reader. It concerns itself with the reader's (students) interaction with the text and they actively make their own meaning they find in literature through interpretation and interaction.

c. Communication Apprehension

McCroskey (1977) defined communication apprehension as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons".

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the present study:

1. To compare the mean pretest scores of Communication Apprehension of the Experimental and Control group.
2. To compare the mean post-test scores of Communication Apprehension of the Experimental and Control group.

3. To compare the mean pre-test and post-test Communication Apprehension scores of Experimental group.
4. To compare the mean pre-test and post-test Communication Apprehension scores of Control group

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is significant difference in the mean pre-test Communication Apprehension scores of the Experimental group and Control group.
2. There is significant difference in the mean post-test Communication Apprehension scores of the Experimental group and Control group.
3. There is significant difference in the mean pre-test and post-test Communication Apprehension scores of Experimental group.
4. There is significant difference in the mean pre-test and post-test Communication Apprehension scores of Experimental group.

Methodology

The present study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test nonequivalent group design to examine whether Reader Response Pedagogy in ELT classroom could reduce students Communication Apprehension.

Variables

a. Independent Variable

1. Reader Response Pedagogy
2. Existing Method of Teaching

b. Dependent Variable

1. Communication Apprehension

Sample

The study was conducted among 70 higher secondary students from Kerala for whom English

is their second language. The participants are between the ages of 15-17 years old. They started learning English for 10 years. The students were assigned to the experimental group (n=35) and control group (n=35). There were 31 females and 39 males. The participants took part in the experiment as intact groups. The researcher herself engaged the experimental and control groups.

Tools /instruments

The tools used for the study are:

1. Reader Response Package (Meera&Rincy2012)

The Reader Response Package contains interactive motivational sessions: dialogue with the text, self, peers and to the entire class, self-directed questions, creative letters to the authors and reading logs.

Communication Apprehension Scale (Meera&Rincy2012)

Communication apprehension scale consists of 42 items and it was used to measure the communication apprehension of secondary school students. Each scale item measures anxiety associated with public speaking, social environment, evaluation by teachers and peers, physical discomforts, meeting group discussion, interpersonal communication and conversation. The students respond to the questions indicating their level of anxiety in a five point Likert type scale. A high score reveals an above average communication apprehension and the low score indicates the respondent experience low communication apprehension. The reliability of the communication apprehension scale was calculated using the test-retest method. The sets of scores thus obtained were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.76. To establish face validity the items in the scale were subjected to expert's evaluation. The content validity of the tool is also established. The expert confirmed that the items were able to measure the communication apprehension of secondary students. It indicates that the communication apprehension scale is valid and reliable tool to measure the communication apprehension of secondary students.

Procedure

This quasi experimental study followed a pre-test post-test nonequivalent group design with a treatment phase lasting 10 weeks. Prior to the experiment the two classes were tested for their level of communication anxiety using communication apprehension scale on the second day of the arrival to the school. The experimental group was taught by using reader response package and the control group taught using the existing method of teaching. Immediately after the completion of the treatment for 10 weeks the two classes were measured for their Communication Apprehension using the same tool. The pretest and posttest scores were compared to see the difference in the level of communication apprehension of the sample.

Analysis and Interpretation

To examine the effectiveness of Reader Response Pedagogy to reduce the communication apprehension of ELT students, the investigator analysed the collected data. The investigator used 't' test for analyzing the data.

Hypothesis 1

There is significant difference in the mean pre-test Communication Apprehension scores of the Experimental group and Control group.

Comparison of pretest scores made in between the experimental and control group are discussed in this section.

Table1

Data and Result of the t-test for the mean pre-test scores of the experimental and control group.

Group Variable	Experimental Group			Control Group			't' value	Level
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD		
Pre-test score	35	152.05	43.64	35	150.74	45.91	0.90	Ns

The Table 1 shows the obtained t-value 0.90 which is not significant. The result indicates that

Experimental and Control Group does not differ significantly in their mean pre-test score. This indicates that the pre experimental status of the subjects in the Experimental and Control Group is found to be the same

Comparison of Post Test Score after the Treatment

Hypothesis 2

There is significant difference in the mean post test scores of Experimental group and Control group.

The following comparison between the mean scores of communication apprehension has been made to find out the effect of Reader Response Pedagogy to reduce the communication apprehension of ELT students.

Table2

Data and Result of the t-test for the mean post-test scores of the experimental and control group.

Group Variable	Experimental Group			Control Group			't' value	Level
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD		
Post-test score	35	102.2	26.73	35	150.5	47.4 3	5.24	0.01

The analysis by test of significance of difference in means yielded a critical ratio of 5.24 for the mean difference between posttest scores of communication apprehension of Experimental and Control Group. This is much greater than the t-value at 0.01 level of significance that is 2.48. This indicates that the mean post-test scores of communication apprehension of Experimental and Control Group show significant difference. This reveals that a true difference exists between communication apprehension scores of Experimental and Control Group after the experimentation. That means the treatment given to the experimental group has

a significant effect on reducing the communication apprehension level of the sample selected. So the hypothesis is accepted.

Comparison of the mean pretest and post test scores of Communication Apprehension of the Experimental group.

Table 3

Data and Result of the difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group.

Experimental group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	level
Pretest	35	152.05	43.64	12.08	0.01
post test	35	102.74	26.73		

The above analysis shows a critical ratio of 12.08 for the mean difference between the pre-test and posttest scores of Communication Apprehension of Experimental Group. This is greater than the t-value at 0.01 level of significance that is 2.48. This indicates that the mean pre- test and post test scores of Communication Apprehension of Experimental Group show significant difference. That means the treatment given to the experimental group has a significant effect on reducing the Communication Apprehension level of the sample selected. So the hypothesis is accepted.

Comparison of the mean pretest and post test scores of Communication Apprehension of the Control group.

Table 3

Data and Result of the difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the Control group.

Control group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	level
Pretest	35	150.74	45.91	0.140	ns
post test	35	150.57	47.43		

The above analysis shows a critical ratio of 0.140 for the mean difference between the pre-test and posttest scores of Communication Apprehension of Control Group. This is less than the t-value at 0.01 level of significance (2.48). This indicates that the mean pre-test and post test scores of Communication Apprehension of Control Group show no significant difference. That means the existing method of teaching is not sufficient to reduce the communication apprehension of the ELT students. So the hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

The findings revealed that the comparison between the Communication Apprehension scores in the pre-test and post-test for the Experimental group showed lower score after the treatment period. It shows that as a result of the reader response strategy employed in the Experimental group the Communication Apprehension level has decreased substantially.

The findings suggests that employing Reader Response Package as treatment for the students who are learning English had a positive effect on reducing Communication Apprehension of higher secondary school students.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the socio educational scenario, children are subjected to extreme competitive pressure in order to equip them to the demanding world and should be excellent in the environment of tough competition. Communication affects every aspects of one's life from work and education to society and leisure. There is very little we can do without communication. Undoubtedly English has become a world language and becomes an inseparable branch in Indian Education System. Mastery of communicative competence in English is highly essential for the successful performance in higher education and in any professional education. Communication apprehension in English language can inhibit many students severely on their success. Higher rate of CA has impact on a person's behaviour, relationships, and the perceptions of other, occupational choice, employment opportunities and education. So it is the primary concern of every second language teachers to make the student competent communicators and should provide free and relaxed environment. Teacher should make them competent by applying variety of techniques and approaches in the classroom in order to reduce the communication

apprehension of second language learners. Therefore the investigator concentrated on a new approach in teaching literature, namely Reader Response approach and thereby reduces the communication apprehension of second language learners.

The study has certain limitations too. The sample of the study was confined to a small sample of 2 intact class of Standard X1 and the investigator selected only Communication Apprehension as the dependent variable. Further studies can be conducted to use various strategies to reduce the level of communication apprehension of students.

Language teaching programmes must be oriented towards catering to the needs of the learner. Studies conducted on Communication Apprehension looked at the types of English language activities preferred by the students. Zumusni et.al (2010) found that the students have a comparatively high level of apprehension and they preferred group discussion as a way of reducing their Communication Apprehension. Reader Response Pedagogy is such a learner centered approach where they get enough room for interaction and group discussion.

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