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Developing Interest of Learning English Between Elementary Students using Inquiry-Based Approach

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Abstract

Students having interest in learning languages keep the information in their long-term memory. Therefore, sparking interest in learners is considered an important aspect in language teaching. However, the issue of lack of interest in learning English has been the most problematic for Second language learners and teachers of English in developing countries. This study aims to resolve this issue through action research on a small sample. The study follows inquiry-based approach that is considered as an appropriate strategy in teaching second languages. Keeping experimental research design, the researcher implements pre-test and post-test to measure the learners' interest. Finally, the study examines several positive indicators of interest development Between students including paying attention, asking questions, taking notes, and comparing prior and new information. This study suggests that learners' interest can be improved at wider level through inquiry-based learning approach.

Keywords: English language teaching and learning, interest, inquiry-based learning.

Introduction

This paper puts forward the results of action research conducted at elementary level students. The purpose of this research was to develop interest of learning English Between elementary students. To accomplish this objective, the researcher selected inquiry-based learning cycle as a framework to teach students.

The hypothesis of the study was "learning of English language can be enhanced by developing the learners' interest". Based on this, the study conducted an experiment on a small no. of participants. The data was collected by using pre-test and post-test of the same group participants. Then, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Now, the following section discusses the background of English language teaching and learning approaches in Pakistan and the need of this research in Pakistani context.

Literature Review

This section reviews Pakistani English language and teaching culture as well the concept of interest in learners.

English Language Teaching and Learning in Pakistan



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English language has been taught in Pakistan from the time of its establishment. This culture of teaching is connected to the pre-partition scenario. Before the partition of Pakistan, English was used by elite class. They used this language at official level. Then after partition, the same elite class became rulers and got higher political status in Pakistan. Therefore, they asserted on the use of English Language in Pakistan. Several educational policies give importance to English language teaching and learning in Pakistan. Even, they asserted to use English language as the medium of instruction from grade 4. Despite of these policies, there occurred no difference in practice. Manan (2019) and Channa (2017) reviews the English language teaching in Pakistani context. They reviewed all public and private school policies and stated on the ignorance of meaningful teaching and learning in Pakistan.

Manan (2019) proclaimed that English is taught and learnt in Pakistani public school using rote learning strategies. Here teachers teach and learn the language superficially by memorizing and imitation.

Further, teachers and learners mostly focus on the external motivation of learners. Though learners are learning English from their primary level but their learning is based on their instrument mental motivation.

To provide meaningful learning, teachers should develop intrinsic motivation towards their teaching approaches. This review suggests that there is a need of instilling interest that is a form of intrinsic motivation in learning languages.

What is Interest?

The word “interest” has several meanings in different domains. From psychological perspective, it is a hunger or thirst of a learner towards learning. This hunger or thirst is innate in every learner and its stimulation or development in a learner drives him/her towards better performance (Stumm and Hell 2011).

Many researchers consider interest as the most important factor in learning because as it is more important than intelligence. Interest enhances a learners’ performance as well as memory retention (Friedman, 1993). Curiously reading effect on long term memory (Graham and Helen, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to ignite interest in learning.

Many research studies imply inquiry-based learning approaches to stimulate learners’ interest (See Akgul, 2006; Mehmoodzadeh and Khajavay, 2018). This approach is considered suitable not merely in science subjects, but it is also effective and useful in learning languages.

Theoretical Framework

Inquiry based learning is a student-centered approach where students get valuable opportunities to learn. It also nurtures power in students (Karvaski, 2021). It is an inductive process (Prince and Felder, 2006) where students start learning from observation or from real world problems to the discussion, analysis, investigation, and creation. There are different models propose by different theorists. However, this study follows the model of Bruce and Davidson (1996) that consists of five activities. These activities are asking, investigating, creating, discussing, and reflecting. At the beginning of the learning students ask or pose different questions concerning their target learning topic, then they investigate these questions, create their answers, then discuss them with others and finally they reflect on their



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learning. This study follows all these steps in teaching to elementary students.

Research Methodology

This action research was experimental in nature. To maintain internal validity, we selected a small sample of population. Between all elementary students, only the students of class 8 “A” were selected as a target population of the study. Both pre-test and post-test were administered on the same group of students.

The data was collected through an adapted interest questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four indicators of interest including paying attention, taking notes, asking, and comparing. These four indicators contain twelve measuring items wherein every indicator was measured by three items. The following table (No.1) clarifies the distribution of indicators and their measuring items.

Table No.1

S.No.	Indicators	Items	Code
1	Paying Attention	Students pay attention to teacher	A1
		They pay attention to other students	A2
		They pay attention to assignments	A3
2	Taking Notes	Students record teacher’ given material.	B1
		They record information given by other students	B2
		They work on notebooks	B3
3	Asking Question	Students ask questions to teacher	C1
		They ask questions to teacher while discovering new information	C2
		They ask questions to other students	C3
4.	Comparing	Students compare new and previous information	D1
		They use new information	D2
		They compare their works with other students.	D3

The data was analyzed by using SPSS software. The following section is going to discuss the analysis of the data.

Discussion and Analysis

The section discusses the descriptive data analyzed through SPSS. This study aims to develop interest in learning English. For this purpose, the study follows inquiry-based learning cycle as a strategy to excite the learners’ interest. Before following the strategy, the study first conducted pre-test of the target population. The results of the pre-test were analyzed through SPSS. The following table shows the frequency and percentages of different factors of interest found in pre-test.

Table No. 2. Pre-Test Result

Indicators of Interest	Frequency	Percentages
Pay Attention to teachers	11	55%
Ask Questions to teachers	03	15%
Record material given by teachers	14	60%

The above-mentioned table shows the results of only those items that were



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responded by the students. The table clarifies that students were only dependent to teachers in every aspect. Only 55% percent students paid attention to their teachers, 15% students asked question to the teacher and 16% recorded the material that was given by the teacher. Students were unaware of the other items, so they gave no responses to them.

After pre-test, the researchers gave treatment to the students. They used inquiry-based learning cycle to teach English to the target learners. After treatment, the study conducted post-test and administered the same questionnaire of interest that was used in pre-test. The data was analyzed through SPSS. The following table No. 3 shows the result of the first indicator of the interest.

Table No. 3

Indicator1	Frequency	Percentage
Paying Attention		
Attention to teacher	18	90%,
Attention towards other students	17	85%,
Attention to assignments	16	80%

This table shows that students are not only paying attention to their teachers while they have become attentive to the responses of other students as well as their assignments. Then, the study measured the second indicator of interest. The results are mentioned in Table No. 4.

Table No.4

Asking Question	Frequency	Percentages
Question to teacher	19	95%
Question while searching	17	85%
Question to other students	16	80%

This table shows the interest of learners towards the asking questions. Almost 95% students asked questions to teacher, while 85% and 80% percent students asked questions to themselves during searching and to other students simultaneously. Now, the next table shows the results of the third indicator of interest.

Table No. 5, Indicator No. 3

Taking Notes	Frequency	Percentage
Record material	17	80%
Record new information	17	80%
Complete notebook	19	95%

This table shows the interest of learners towards note-taking. 80% students recorded material provided by the teacher, 80% recorded information shared by students, and 95% students completed their notebooks as well. Then, the study measured the fourth indicator. The following table shows the results of this indicator of interest.

Comparison	Frequency	Percentage
Prior Knowledge with new knowledge	19	95%
Students' opinion with other	19	95%



opinion

Compare other resources

16

70%

95% students compared their prior knowledge with new knowledge, 95% students compared their opinions with the opinions of their class-fellows. Further, 70% students compared other resources as well. Now, the following section discusses findings of the study.

Findings

The results of pre-test (see table No. 2) show the low level of interest of learners towards learning English. While the results of post-test proclaim high level of learning of students towards English. Herein, the study found all the four indicators of interest in learners. They showed interest through paying attention, asking question, taking notes, and comparing their knowledge and work with other resources. This study finds that inquiry-based approach has enhanced the interest of learners.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to develop interest in learners. To achieve the aim, the study selected inquiry-based approach as an appropriate strategy for learners. Then, following experimental action research, the scholars first conducted their pre-test to check their level of interest and then, post-test was conducted after giving the treatment to the learners. The result of post-test shows the positive responses of the learners. Their interest towards learning was increased. Finally, the study recommends that other scholars may also follow this approach for other learners to enhance their interest.

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