

Impact of Thematic Approach on Communication skills in Preschool

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Abstract: *The study investigated the effects of thematic approach on communication skills for preschool children. The study was a quasi-experimental non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group design whereby 5- 6 year old preschool children (n=49) were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group. The experimental group students were exposed with thematic approach of teaching and the control group with the traditional approach of teaching. Comprehensive Communication Assessment 5-6yr (CCA) was used to measure the communication skill of UKG children. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the data. The results reveal that there was a significant difference between the thematic approach group and the traditional skill approach group students on post test score ($F(1, 46) = 7.959, p < .05$). The findings of this study suggested the importance of thematic approach to improve communication skills in early preschools.*

Key words: *Thematic Approach, Communication Skills, Early Years*

I INTRODUCTION

Kaul (2014), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) plays an important platform for the holistic development of the young child. Preschool is a time of remarkable brain growth, these years laid the foundation for subsequent learning and development. Reardon (2012), firmly believes that early communication, language & literacy, play and learning activities should be fun. As on yearly years teacher the setting should be bursting with opportunities for baby babble, talking, listening, singing, rhyming and storytelling. These help the children to acquire the language quickly and easily. Varun (2014), thematic approach helps the children to build the language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing). Development for FLES programs, which begins with a thematic center and creates a dynamic relationship among the factors that teachers must take into account: language in use, subject content, and culture. Mari Haas (2000), thematic work is depicted as an integration of curricular subjects (two or more), a way of

planning and delivering the curriculum. Brogdon (2010), Teaching thematically helps children make sense of what they are being taught, since content areas are integrated and not made to stand alone. Boris Handal & Janette Bobis (2004) concerning teachers' beliefs and practices in the teaching of mathematics, and broaden understandings of the issues surrounding the implementation of a thematically taught mathematics curriculum. Students are able to retain more information when it is not presented as isolated facts, but rather as part of a whole. Thematic units encourage the involvement of all students through topics relevant to them. Children are able to relate to real-world experiences and build on prior knowledge of a topic. Kon Chon & et.al (2012) thematic approach is one of the teaching strategies that use themes towards creating an active, interesting and meaningful learning. So there is need to study the effectiveness of thematic approach in communication skills. Today's early childhood specialists stress the importance of presenting curriculum in an integrated format, rather than spending short periods of time focusing on separate subject or content areas. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have identified as an indicator of quality early childhood programs the organization of the curriculum around thematic units. The theme approach includes activities in language arts, social studies, creative dramatics, music, art, science, math, or any combination of these. Many teachers and curriculum specialists have developed thematic units that incorporate content and process objectives from several content areas and heavily infuse them with the language arts processes of oral language, listening, reading, and writing. This study examined the effect of theme based approach on communication skills in upper kinder garden children of India

II METHOD

The study employed as a quasi experimental non-equivalent control group design. Two preschools with common defining characteristics were randomly selected from a Mysore district in the state of Karnataka, India. 5-6 year preschool

children (UKG) were selected as a population of the study. Intact sampling method was applied where by one preschool was randomly assigned as an experimental group and another preschool as a control group. Experimental group has undergone three months Thematic Approach way of teaching and control group has undergone traditional approach. The experimental groups (n = 24) and control groups (n = 25) went through preschool curriculum concepts. On the first week, the experimental group and the control group were gone through the pre test of their communication skills. Comprehensive Communication Skill Assessment (CCSA) has used to assess the communication skill. For experimental group themes like *Community helper, Transportation, Fruits & Vegetables and Seasons* were taught through thematic approach. And for control group traditional teaching approach has followed. On the nineteenth week post test of children's communication skill were administered with CCSA for both groups. Two inter raters were used to

collect both the pre and post test data on communication skill. The quantitative data were analyzed with SPSS for means and standard deviation. Further ANCOVA test were carried out to determine the significance of the mean difference between the control and experimental group on the thematic approach for communication skill.

III. RESULT

The effects of thematic approach on communication skills were analyzed using the ANCOVA analysis. An ANCOVA analysis statistic was conducted after all the ANCOVA assumptions were met to evaluate the effects of the thematic approach and traditional teaching approach on communication skill outcome. The results of ANCOVA analysis are presented in Table 1. The estimated marginal means were presented in table 2.

Table 1 ANALYSIS OF COVARIANT SUMMARY

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	8673.617	1	8673.617	1.788	.188
Group	38609.340	1	38609.340	7.959	.007
Error	223153.181	46	4851.156		

** p<.05

Table 2 EASTIMATED MARGINAL MEAN OF THEMATIC APPROACH ON COMMUNICATION SKILL

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	180.266 ^a	14.358	151.364	209.168
Experimental	239.890 ^a	14.672	210.356	269.424

The results in table 1 reveal that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in communication skills on the post test total score ($F(1, 46) = 7.959, p < .05$). This result indicated that the experimental group with thematic approach has significant effects on communication skill outcome compared to the traditional approach. Table 2, reported that the overall mean of children with thematic approach (Adjusted mean $M = 239.890$) was significantly better than students with traditional skill approach (Adjusted mean $M = 180.266$).

IV. DISCUSSION

The study reported there were significant differences in the thematic approach on

communication skills compared to children who taught through traditional approach. By using thematic approach children shows better performances in ability to receive the information and ability to comprehend. Children's progressively were able to interact more with peers, teachers and investigator. Through thematic approach preschool children are busy in talking, exploring and playing. All of these activities are helps them for their growth and development and provides the opportunities learning and acquiring communication skills. Connie Hine (2011) found through environments that offer a variety of stimulating, hands-on materials that children individually select, and by creating learning centers that provide natural opportunities to move, be active, and fully engaged in either solo or small

group experiences which better serves and meets the need of children. Teaching Strategies for Early Childhood Education (TSECEC) has examined the effectiveness of The Creative Curriculum for Preschool on children's cognitive development when their teachers used the curriculum for one and/or two years. Results imply that The Creative Curriculum is in fact effective and that it promotes children's cognitive achievement. Eleni Karatzia & et.al (2007) suggests careful planning, some alternative teaching models were experimented in the preschool classrooms such as a) the implementation of educational projects and other programmes under the joint-responsibility of two teachers, b) simultaneous joint-teaching in two classes, c) the division of teaching lessons between two teachers, d) in-class student support, e) running an introductory class, f) running an integration class, providing supportive teaching. The implementation innovative curriculum has benefited for the student and teachers with new pedagogical tools. Adams, (2001) Strickland & Schickedanz, (2004) found children develop a sense of the sound structure of language by converse with peers, saying rhymes, singing, reciting finger plays, and clapping the syllables to chanted words through creative curriculum. Morrow, (2005) retelling stories helps children develop a sense of story structure and other understandings about language that contribute to their comprehension of text. Mean while, teaching strategies' curricular resources provide teachers with multiple ways to encourage story retelling through dramatic play, props, and drawing pictures. Dickinson & Tabors, (2001) Children acquire vocabulary, other language skills, and background knowledge about many topics by participating in frequent, meaningful conversations with responsive adults; such conversations contribute to early reading success. Teachers are encouraged to engage the children back-and-forth exchanges to expand their thinking, build on concepts, and increase vocabulary. Teachers talk about topics that are of interest to children to encourage conversation. All aspects of the daily plans utilize times for social engagement and conversation

V. CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the effects of thematic approach on communication skill in early years. By applying the thematic way of teaching, the result of the study revealed that preschool children's has significant communication skills. The findings of the study showed that thematic approach provides opportunities to learn through more contextualized learning. It also observed the deep understanding of thematic approach helps the teachers to make thematic teaching planning more easier. Kon Chon

& et.al (2012) thematic approach will bring a positive implication to students especially to create a creative, critical and innovative thinking around the students when they are involved in ILS projects. It is important to increase the integrated living skills understanding and practices towards thematic approach in daily teaching and learning process in the classroom.

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