

Effects of Eclectic Learning Approach on Students' Academic Achievement and Retention in English at Elementary Level

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Abstract

The purpose of the research paper was to investigate the effect of eclectic learning approach on the academic achievement and retention of students in English at elementary level. A sample of forty students of 8th grade randomly selected from Government Boys High School Khurram District Karak was used. It was an experimental study and that's why sample subjects were classified into two equal groups on the basis of pre-test scores. For data collection, pre-test post-test equivalent groups designed was used. Descriptive statistics i.e., mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics i.e., t-test were employed for analyzing the data. After analyzing the data, it was come to light that eclectic learning approach has a positive effect on students' academic achievement and retention. Eclectic learning approach was found more productive, effective and successful in teaching of English as compared to traditional learning approach at elementary level. So, eclectic learning approach should be adopted by the teachers for improving students' performance in English at elementary level.

Keywords: Eclectic Learning Approach, Students' Academic Achievement, Retention, Elementary Level

Introduction

It has been generally observed that English has become the medium of all relevant social interactions and the ability to use English effectively is considered an absolute essential for honourable Existence (Khattak, et al, 2011). In the long history of English teaching, people have tries various approaches to facilitate language learning. With the increasing development of economy, people throughout the world get in touch with each other more frequently than ever. As a result, leaning foreign language has become more and more important, especially English which is almost the international language (Li, 2012). In the history of teaching profession, several teaching methods and strategies have been developed by renowned experts and scholars in education (Ajere and Omolua, 2010) which have been proven effective as compared to traditional teaching method (Agboghorom, 2014; Adeyemo and Babajide, 2014; Udo and Udofia, 2014).

The eclectic approach was proposed as a reaction to the profusion of teaching methods in the 1970s and 1980s and the inflexibility often found in the application of these methods. The idea of choosing from different methods to suite for one's teaching purposes and situations is not a new one. For example, Memorandum on the Teaching of Modern Language published in 1929 on the basis of a British study by Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools recommended the eclectic "compromise method" as a solution to the language teaching debate (Stern, 1983). Eclectic method of teaching and learning in an activity, in which teachers can easily adapt to the needs of teaching so that teaching objectives or goals can be achieved (Rabu, 2012).

According to main proponent of the eclectic approach Rivers (1981), an eclectic approach allows language teachers "to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known language-teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate". This is necessary and important because teachers "faced with the daily task of helping students to learn a new language cannot afford the luxury of complete dedication to each new method or approach that comes into vogue." The main criticism of the eclecticism is that "it does not offer any guidance on what basis and by what principles aspects of different methods can be selected and combined" (Stern, 1983).

The term achievement refers to the degree or the level of success attained in some specific school tasks especially scholastic performance and in this sense academic achievement means the attained ability to perform school tasks, which can be general or specific to a given subject matter. Academic achievement could be defined as self-perception and self-evaluation of one's objective academic success (Joshi and Srivastava, 2009). Academic achievement is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important—procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts (Ward, 1996). Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988) regard achievement as a product which can be measured by means of achievement tests and is usually associated with

mental success. Good (1973), has defined, academic achievement as knowledge attitude or skill developed in the school subject usually designed by test scores or by marks assigned by teacher or by both. Consequently, academic achievement could be defined as self-perception and self-evaluation of one's objective success. Awan et al. (2011), academic achievement is defined by examination marks, teachers' given grades and percentiles in academic subjects.

Siddiqui (2012) compared direct, communicative and eclectic approaches in teaching ESL and concluded that eclectic approach is the most effective approach as the teacher enjoys the freedom to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known methods and approaches. Ajere and Omolua (2012) conducted a study to compare the effects of tri-polar eclectic teaching approach on students' academic performance in Social Studies and found that the students taught using Tri-polar Teaching strategy performed better at the higher and middle lowest level than students taught using conventional method. Ubeid (2013) presented a paper on the "Effect of Eclectic Teaching Strategies Utilizing British Poetry in Developing Students' Reading Proficiencies in English Language" in "The European Conference on Education 2013" and found that utilizing eclectic reading strategies via poetry, with its aesthetic values, have developed the students reading proficiencies and the poems' texts have developed students' vocabularies as well. Kaur, Kohli and Devi (2008) conducted a study to investigate the impact of various instructional strategies for enhancing mathematical skills of learning disabled children and concluded that multimedia, cognitive strategy and eclectic approach can be used for enhancing the mathematical skills of learning disabled children. Rekha (2014) conducted a study to find the effect of eclectic method on reading ability among primary school dyslexic children and concluded that eclectic method was superior to traditional method in improving word reading, reading comprehension, spellings, word fluency, reading ability and academic achievement in English of the students.

Statement of the problems

A number of research studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of various teaching methods at each level in various subjects and the findings reveal that the use of various teaching methodologies have positive effects on the academic achievement of students in comparison to conventional teaching method and also proved that conventional teaching method is not effective (Sood, 2013; Agboghrom, 2014; Adeyemo and Babajide, 2014; Udo and Udofia, 2014). Therefore, the researchers made an attempt to investigate the effects of eclectic learning approach on academic achievement and retention of students in English at elementary level. The researchers are hopeful that the findings of the study will be highly beneficial for English teachers as they will be able to improve their teaching outcomes by adopting eclectic approach as a teaching method.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study comparatively the effects of eclectic and traditional learning approaches on the academic achievement of students in English at elementary level.
2. To examine comparatively the effects of eclectic and traditional learning approaches on the retention of students in English at elementary level.

Hypotheses of the Study

To accomplish the above mentioned objectives, the following null hypotheses were tested:

- Ho 1: There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who will be taught through eclectic learning approach and the academic achievement of students who will be taught through traditional learning approach on pre-test.
- Ho 2: There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who were taught through eclectic learning approach and the academic achievement of students who were taught through traditional learning approach on post-test.
- Ho 3: There might be no significant difference in the retention of students who were taught through eclectic learning approach and the retention of students who were taught through traditional learning approach on retention test.

Research Methodology

All the students at elementary level in Karak District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan) constituted the population of the study. Keeping in view the feasibility of infrastructure, facilities, accessibility, and easiness for the researchers, the study was delimited to the students of Grade 08 of Government Boys High School Khurram District Karak. Furthermore, the study was delimited to five units of English i.e., *Gulliver in New World*, *Germes & Diseases*, *The Kaghan Valley*, *The World in the Year of 2100*, and *Cleanness*.

As the research design was experimental and quantitative in nature and subjects were available on the record that's why simple random sampling technique was employed for selecting sample subjects. Forty students of Grade 08 from Government Boys High School Khurram District Karak (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) were

randomly selected for experimentation. Pre-test Post-test Equivalent Groups Design” was applied for data collection. Sample subjects were classified into two equal groups i.e., experimental and control groups on the basis of pre-test scores. Reliability analysis was conducted to confirm the validity and consistency of the items in the given achievement test. Validity of the test was checked through five experts in the field of education having doctorate degrees. Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula was used to calculate the reliability of the test and was found 0.83.

In order to conduct experiment successfully, pre-test was given to find out the existing knowledge of students before the experimental process. The test was consisted of 50 multiple choice questions prepared and finalized with help of experts in the relevant area. Based on the result of the same test, sample subjects were classified into two equal groups i.e., experimental and control groups. There were total 40 students in both the groups. In addition, two instructors having same qualification and experiences were appointed for teaching to both groups i.e., one for experimental group and the other for control group.

Before the commencement of experimental process, proper permission was sought from the principal of the concerned school regarding conduction of experiment/collection of data. Students of experimental group were taught through eclectic learning approach while students of control group were taught through traditional learning approach for six weeks. After successful completion of the experiment, a post-test was given to the students of the both groups immediately to explore their level of achievement. The test was composed of 50 multiple choice questions having 100 marks in total. Then the same post-test with slight modification in series of the items was given after a week to the students of both groups as retention test. So the responses were gathered, tabulated, organized and analyzed. For statistical analysis, proper descriptive statistical tools i.e., mean, standard deviation and inferential statistical tool i.e., t-test were employed using SPSS version 16.

Analysis and Data Interpretation

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of eclectic and traditional learning approaches on the academic achievement and retention of students in English at elementary level. Due to the experimental nature of the study, pre-test post-test equivalent groups design was used. Raw data was classified, organized, tabulated and analyzed on the basis of descriptive statistics i.e., mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics i.e., t-test. Statistical process for data analysis and interpretation is described as under:

Ho 1: There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who will be taught through eclectic leaning approach and the academic achievement of students who will be taught through traditional leaning approach on pre-test.

Table 1: Showing the Significant Difference in Students’ Academic Achievement of Experimental and Control Groups on Pre-Test

Groups	n	Descriptive Analysis			Inferential Analysis	
		Mean	St. Dev.	SE	t-value	p-value
Control	20	65.12	1.23	0.37	0.296	0.769
Experimental	20	65.01	1.12			
Non-Significant		df = 38			table value of t at 0.05 = 2.02	

Table 1 shows that the computed t value was found to be 0.296 which is considered statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$) because this computed value of t is less than the tabulated value of t at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis “There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who will be taught through eclectic leaning approach and the academic achievement of students who will be taught through traditional leaning approach on pre-test.” was accepted. The descriptive and inferential analysis clearly indicates that there is no remarkable variance between the performance of control ($mean=65.12$, $SD=1.23$) and experimental ($mean=65.01$, $SD=1.12$) groups on pre-test.

Ho 2: There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who were taught through eclectic leaning approach and the academic achievement of students who were taught through traditional leaning approach on post-test.

Table 2: Showing the Significant Difference in Students’ Academic Achievement of Experimental and Control Groups on Post-Test

Groups	n	Descriptive Analysis			Inferential Analysis	
		Mean	St. Dev.	SE	t-value	p-value
Control	20	72.62	1.18	0.36	-35.394*	0.000
Experimental	20	85.28	1.08			
*Significant		df = 38			table value of t at 0.05 = 2.02	

Table 2 depicts that the computed t value was found to be -35.394 which is considered statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) because this computed value of t is greater than the tabulated value of t at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis “There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of

students who were taught through eclectic leaning approach and the academic achievement of students who were taught through traditional leaning approach on post-test” was rejected. Descriptive and inferential analysis unambiguously show that there is considerable difference between the performance of control ($mean=72.62$, $SD=1.18$) and experimental ($mean=85.28$, $SD=1.08$) groups on post-test.

Ho 3: *There might be no significant difference in the retention of students who were taught through eclectic leaning approach and the retention of students who were taught through traditional leaning approach on retention test.*

Table 3: Showing the Significant Difference in Students’ Academic Achievement of Experimental and Control Groups on Retention Test

Groups	n	Descriptive Analysis			Inferential Analysis	
		Mean	St. Dev.	SE	t-value	p-value
Control	20	70.26	1.20	0.37	-38.907*	0.000
Experimental	20	84.72	1.15			

***Significant** **df = 38** **table value of t at 0.05 = 2.02**

Table 3 illustrates that the computed t value was found to be -38.907 which is considered statistically significant ($p>0.05$) because this computed value of t is greater than the tabulated value of t at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis “There might be no significant difference in the retention of students who were taught through eclectic leaning approach and the retention of students who were taught through traditional leaning approach on retention test” was rejected. Descriptive and inferential analysis explicitly indicate that there is significant difference between the performance of control ($mean=70.26$, $SD=1.20$) and experimental ($mean=84.72$, $SD=1.15$) groups on retention test.

Discussion

The purpose of the research paper was to investigate the comparative effectiveness of eclectic and traditional learning approaches on the academic achievement and retention of students in the subject of English at elementary level. Due to the experimental nature of the study, pre-test post-test equivalent groups designed was employed for data collection. A sample of forty students of Grade 08 was drawn through simple random sampling technique. Then sample students were classified in two equal groups i.e., control and experimental groups based on pre-test scores in the existing knowledge in English.

Before commencement of experiment, proper permission was sought from the principal of the concerned school. Students of experimental group were taught via eclectic learning approach while students of control group were taught via traditional teaching method for six weeks. After successful completion of experimental process, a post-test was managed among the students of the both groups immediately to examine their level of achievement in the given achievement test. Then the same post-test with slight modifications in the order of the questions was given after a week to the students of both groups as retention test. So the data was collected, classified, organized, tabulated and analyzed.

Descriptive and inferential analysis of pre-test mentioned in table 1 shows that the calculated t value was found to be 0.296 which is statistically non-significant ($p>0.05$) because this calculated t value is less than the tabulated t value at 0.05 level of confidence. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who will be taught through eclectic leaning approach and the academic achievement of students who will be taught through traditional leaning approach on pre-test.” was accepted. The mean values undoubtedly indicate that students of control ($mean=65.12$, $SD=1.23$) and experimental ($mean=65.01$, $SD=1.12$) groups showed similar performance on pre-test. It means that the achievement of the both groups was same before experimental process.

To explore the effects of eclectic method on students’ academic achievement, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed and the results of table 2 show that the computed t value was found to be -35.394 which is statistically significant ($p<0.05$) because this computed value of t is greater than the tabulated value of t at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis “There might be no significant difference in the academic achievement of students who were taught through eclectic leaning approach and the academic achievement of students who were taught through traditional leaning approach on post-test” was rejected. The mean values clearly show that there is significant difference between the performance of control ($mean=72.62$, $SD=1.18$) and experimental ($mean=85.28$, $SD=1.08$) groups on post-test. It revealed that eclectic learning approach was found more effective on students’ achievement as compared to traditional learning approach post-test. Monika (2014) found that eclectic method significantly higher than those belonging to group taught by traditional method in word reading, reading comprehension, reading fluency, spellings and reading ability. Similarly, Siddiqui (2012) concluded that eclectic approach is the most effective approach as the teacher enjoys the freedom to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known methods and approaches.

To investigate the effects of eclectic method on students’ retention, analysis was done and the descriptive and inferential statistics reveal that the calculated t value was found to be -38.907 which is

considered statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) as this computed value of t is greater than the tabulated value of t at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence, the null hypothesis “There might be no significant difference in the retention of students who were taught through eclectic leaning approach and the retention of students who were taught through traditional leaning approach on retention test” was rejected. The mean values explicitly depict that there is significant difference between the performance of control ($mean=70.26$, $SD=1.20$) and experimental ($mean=84.72$, $SD=1.15$) groups on retention test. The findings show that eclectic learning approach was found more effective on student’s retention as compared to traditional learning approach.

Conclusions

The findings revealed that eclectic learning approach has a positive effect on students’ academic achievement and retention in English at elementary level. Eclectic approach was found more rewarding, effective and productive in teaching English as compared to traditional learning approach at elementary level as the teachers modify their teaching style according to the situation and need of students in eclectic learning approach.

Recommendations

Based on findings and conclusions, it is strongly recommended that elementary school teachers should adopt eclectic learning approach for teaching English as it is more effective, flexible and useful as compared to traditional learning approach. They should be trained for effective teaching methodologies such as eclectic learning approach to ensure effective and successful instructional process. Proper teaching aids and other relevant technologies should be used effectively to make teaching learning process more effective, successful and rewarding. They should have subject mastery as well as extraordinary knowledge of teaching methodologies. Furthermore, this type study should be conducted at secondary, higher secondary and tertiary level as well as in other academic subjects.

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