



English as second language classroom communication challenges for Bengali medium Govt.-aided school students

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Abstract: The paper focuses on classroom communication barriers of Bengali medium Higher Secondary students of West Bengal. Three questions guided this investigation: a) What kind of teacher-student relationship is there in classroom situation? b) How is English as Second Language (ESL) communication quality in classroom situation? c) What kind of ESL communication problems students encounter in classroom situation? 55 students, 10 English language and 10 other subject teachers were randomly sampled. A questionnaire, a question paper and an interview schedule were used for data collection. Data analysis showed that teacher-student relationship, motivation, subject interest, attention level, students' listening, reading & writing skills were good, though problems rose during speaking skill and grammatical usage. Many students feared English language. The study found that ESL communication challenges were mostly borne out of cultural influences, students' first-generation learner status and economic backgrounds.

Keywords: - Communication, English as Second Language, teacher-student relationship, classroom situation, First Generation Learners.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Communication is the process of sharing our ideas, thoughts, and feelings with other people and having those ideas, thoughts, and feelings understood by the people we are talking with. When we communicate, we speak, listen, and observe. Even the Latin word '*communicare*' means 'to share with' or 'to discuss together'. People communicate with each other through different ways and education is also a process of communication whose main component is 'Language'. As a result, this research mainly focuses on Classroom communication. Classroom communication is a process of information sharing that consists of verbal and nonverbal transactions between teacher and students, or between and among students, in a classroom setting. In the world of 21st century, the English Language is accepted to be the universal language and the world's number one Lingua Franca. So, Indian government's recent National Education Policy (NEP 2020) also emphasis bilingual (regional language/ mother tongue and English) educational content. Yet in West Bengal, many Govt- aided Bengali medium schools consider English as a Second Language and teach it as a Sequential Bilingualism rather than Simultaneous Bilingualism. Consequently, academic challenges on pedagogy, methods of teaching - learning and practices specific to English language are not yet resolved and it effects teacher – students' classroom communication. Therefore, this research focusing area is ESL classroom communication barriers among teacher and students and provide recommendation which may be effective. The present study has investigated the prevalence, causes, and consequences of apprehension among students in school situations. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of students, this research seeks to provide insights into the complexities of apprehension and identify potential strategies for mitigating its negative effects.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. Classroom Communication: In this present study, the concept of Classroom Communication has been defined as the process of interaction between the teacher and the students in the classroom through verbal, nonverbal and written. It motivates, informs, suggests, warns, orders, changes behaviour and establishes better relationships, to make interaction meaningful and make oneself understood (Pasaragonda, 2021). It has been classified in several ways: Verbal, Non-verbal, Written, Sign, Vertical, Individual and Group communication in classroom.



2. ESL: Second Language (L2) is a language which is not the mother tongue, but which is used by the person in relation to administration, culture, social or national interest. In this context the term second can refer to any language which is learnt after the First Language (Dey, 2020). In India, more specifically in West Bengal, English has been given the status of Second Language.
3. Classroom Communication Problem: In this present study, the concept of ESL Classroom Communication Problem has been defined as the Choice of words, Lack of knowledge of words, Inadequate accent etc.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the present study, ESL classroom verbal communication problems, classroom attention & interest qualities of students of Govt. – aided Bengali Medium Higher Secondary Schools have been observed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Pasaragonda, S. (2021): In his research work, entitled “Theories of Classroom Communication And Functions - Concept, Need And Importance in Indian Secondary School Classrooms”; Pasaragonda has observed that among so many theories, the ‘Information Theory’ for classroom communication in Secondary School has greatly contributed to the process of teaching- learning in terms of the effect of the teacher on the minds of the learners and the process of feedback being provided by both the learners and the teachers helps to improve teaching and effective learning.

Tongper, R.M. (2023): In her research work, entitled “Communication in the Classroom”; Tongper has mainly focused on concept and components of classroom communication and suggested the ways of becoming an Effective Communicator. She advised that an Effective Communicator have to choose words with care, avoid making remarks, be approachable, have a positive approach, be sober, keep to the point, ask for participation etc.

Samifanni, F. (2020): Samifanni has suggested in his research paper, entitled “The Fluency Way: A Functional Method for Oral Communication”, that L2 learning-teaching process will be most effective if the learners enjoy what they are learning. Therefore, teachers’ knowledge & skills and learners’ eagerness are important for L2 learning which can be utilized by Direct Method and the CLT method.

Bhattacharya, A. & Jha, S.K. (2021): Basis on field survey & data collection, Prof. Bhattacharya & Jha explored in their research paper, entitled “Challenges Faced by Linguistic Minority Students in West Bengal in Learning English”; that the students face different types of challenges like low family income make obstacles for educational cost, unable to provide sufficient elements to learn ESL and provided suggestions for overcoming these difficulties.

Dey, A. (2020): Dey has found out in his research work, entitled “Teaching English as a Second Language in West Bengal”; that teaching and learning of ESL has its own importance though it faces so many obstacles like old method of teaching process, low standard of textbooks, condition of classes etc. So, he provided some recommendation to overcome these problems.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To study teacher-student relationship in classroom situation.
- To find English as Second Language (ESL) communication quality in classroom situation.
- To identify students’ ESL communication problems in classroom situation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What kind of teacher-student relationship is there in classroom situation?
- ii. How is the ESL communication quality between teacher and students in classroom situation?
- iii. What kind of ESL communication problems do students encounter in classroom situation?

4. RESEARCH METHOD:

A) SAMPLE FRAME: 7 Government-aided High Schools of West Bengal were sampled for Data Collection:

Sample	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Class XI & XII Students	55	Random Sampling Technique
English Language Teachers	7	
Other Subject Teachers	14	

B) TOOLS

- a) Questionnaire for Students (Close & Open Ended).
- b) Question Paper for Students to evaluate reading & writing skills.



c) Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Teacher.

C) DATA ANALYSIS

I. Quantitative data analysis of Question Paper Scores

25 students were tested with a short question paper on Reading for Comprehension passages (seen & unseen) to evaluate reading & writing skills. Their score ranges have been presented and interpreted below:

Score Range	No. of Students
<40	0
40-59	2
60-79	4
80-89	9
90-95	8
>95	2

Table 1. Score Frequency

A graphical presentation of Table 1 has been made below:

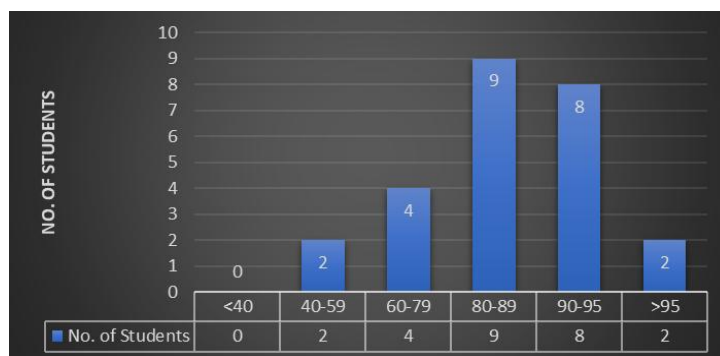


Fig. 1 Graphical Presentation of Table 1.

Researcher's Observation: -

Fig. 1 shows that most students scored between 80 and 89. Only a small number scored below 60 – 70 range and no student failed. But very few scored above 95. It can, hence, be stated that most students performed well with a majority achieving scores above 60 which indicates that students' English reading and writing skills of were quite good.

II. Quantitative data analysis of Close-ended responses to Students' Questionnaire:

Questions along with graphical presentation and data interpretation of student responses have been presented below:

1. I am afraid to speak English in front of others.

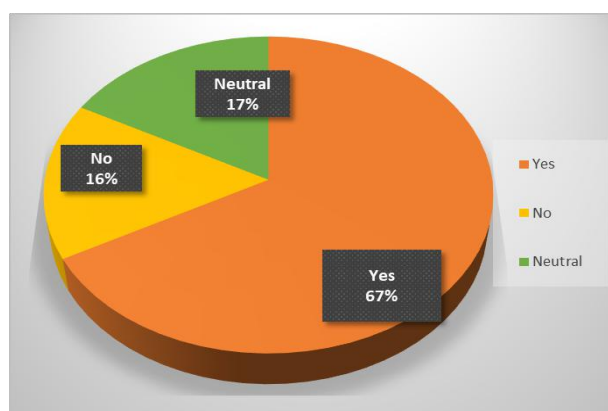


Fig. 2

As per Fig. 2, majority students are afraid to speak in English in front of others.

2. My favourite teacher makes me feel uncomfortable when he teaches in English.

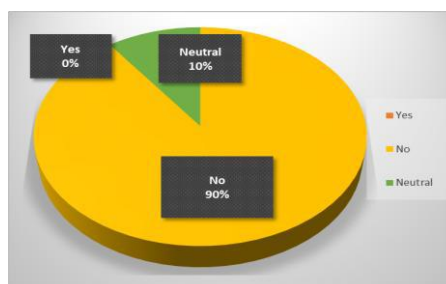


Fig. 3

As per Fig. 3, majority of the students are comfortable when their teachers teach in English.

3. My favourite movie is based on an English book. But I don't like reading English books.

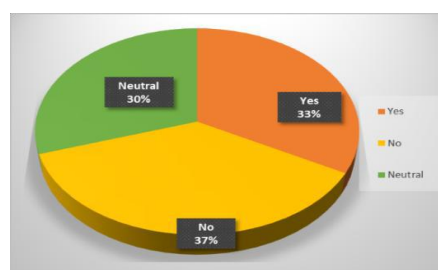


Fig. 4

As per Fig. 4, most students did not like to read English books.

4. English teacher is telling a story in the classroom. My friend is sitting next to me and talking. I enjoy my friend's words more.

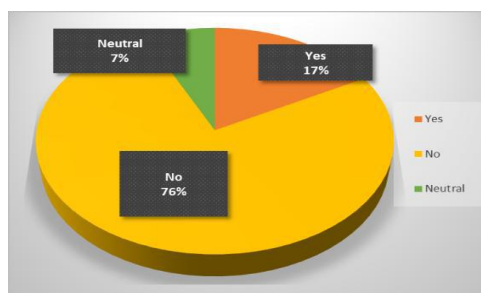


Fig. 5

As per Fig. 5, most students enjoyed listening to English stories in class.

5. I don't like English grammar.

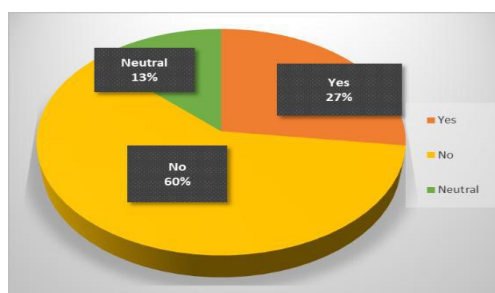


Fig. 6

As per Fig. 6, majority of the students are uncomfortable with English grammar.

6. I feel happy if the teacher speaks in Bengali instead of English in classroom.

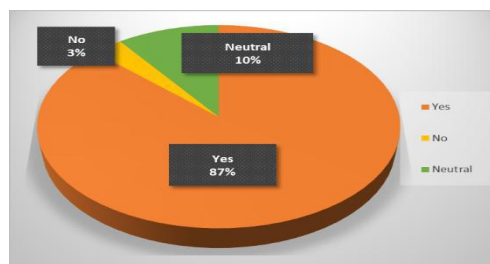


Fig. 7

As per Fig. 7, majority of the students prefer Bengali Language as the medium of instruction.

7. I prefer speaking in Bengali with my friends than in English.

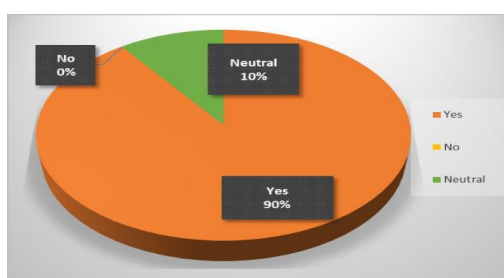


Fig. 8

As per Fig. 8, majority of the students preferred informal communications in Bengali.

8. I don't like my teacher's English pronunciation.

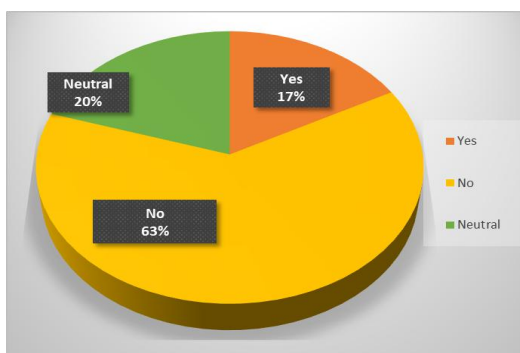


Fig. 9

As per Fig. 9, majority students clearly understood their English teachers' speaking in English in class.

9. I like it when my English teacher does not ask me questions.

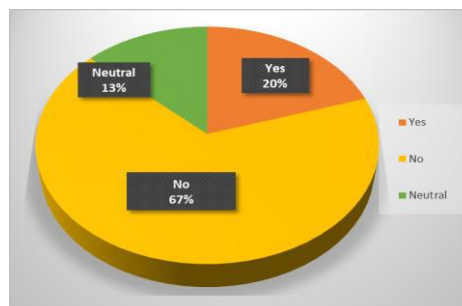


Fig. 10

As per Fig. 10, majority of the students have subject interest and feel demotivation if teachers don't ask them questions.



10. Rabindranath Tagore didn't go to school and was, yet a world-famous author. So, I love to study at home, and I think it would be better if I study at home.

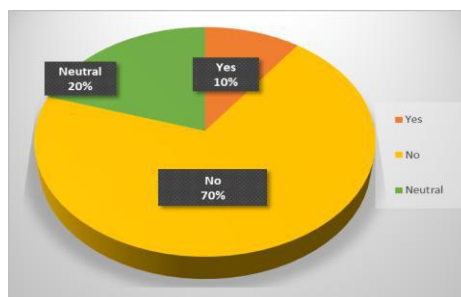


Fig. 11

As per Fig. 11, majority of the students liked to go to school and would not want to be drop out.

III. Qualitative data analysis (Coding) of Open-ended responses to Students' Questionnaire:

Questions along with codes and code interpretation of student responses have been presented below:

- a) Write the names of two writers who have written English stories.

Code – A: Sugata Bose – 12 students

Code – B: Oscar Wilde – 10 students

Code – C: Manoj Das – 8 students

Code – D: Neutral – 2 students

As per the above codes, majority of the students are familiar with Indian writers.

- b) What are the problems do you face when using English as a medium of communication in the classroom?

Code – A: Speaking – 15 students

Code – B: Grammatical problems – 14 students

Code – C: Neutral – 7 students

As per the above codes, majority of the students feel lack of confidence while speaking in English in front of others and do grammatical mistakes.

- c) What kind of advice do your teachers give if you have any problems using English as a medium of communication?

Code – A: Books reading – 13 students

Code – B: Use of mass media – 10 students

Code – C: Neutral – 7 students

As per the above codes, Students get advice from their teachers on how to learn English easily though many times it remains neutral and they receive no advice.

- d) 'Rupa have two pen'. Is there any mistake in the sentence? If yes, then rewrite it correctly.

Code – A: Yes – right answer – 21

Code – B: Yes – wrong answer – 4

Code – C: No – 5

As per the above codes, majority of the students knows English well although many of them make simple grammatical mistakes.

- e) There are two teachers. One writes on the board. The other teaches by showing pictures on the computer. Who would you prefer and why? Write briefly.

Code - A: Board Work - 15

Code – B: Computer - 7

Code - C: Both – 6

Code - D: Neutral - 2



As per the above codes, majority of the students preferred Board work because it is helpful to remember and as there is no facility of smart classroom in Govt.-aided school, students avoided the matter.

5. FINDINGS

Findings have been listed as per research questions:

- a) What kind of teacher-student relationship is there in classroom situation?
 - Teacher-student relationship is good.
 - There is sometimes an exceptional lack of connection between teachers and students.
- b) How is the ESL communication quality between teacher and students in classroom situation?
 - Students are happier when teachers speak Bengali in the classroom.
 - Students encounter lack of focus, attention, and interest from time to time.
 - There is a lack of interest among teachers in teaching English in new ways.
- c) What kind of ESL communication problems do students encounter in classroom situation?
 - Students fear to speak in English in front of others due to lack of confidence.
 - Students' English words vocabulary level is low.
 - Many Students often make grammatical mistakes.
 - Majority of Students pronounce incorrectly.
 - Very few students read books outside the curriculum.

6. DISCUSSION :

According to various mass medium, the quality of education in Govt.-aided Bengali medium schools has been decreased. Though we can't completely deny this perspective, however statistics based on survey present multiple interpretations. In the light of the collected data, it can be stated that the environment of the Govt.-aided Bengali medium schools is good. There is a good relationship between the teachers and the students. Quantitative and qualitative data interpretations showed that the students enjoyed attending school. They paid more attention to the teacher's words than to their friends'. Classroom attention and interest towards English language were moderate.

However, the study found a significant gap between the theoretical learning of English and its practical application in classrooms. A recurring theme, emerging from the collected data, was the persistent difficulty students faced during verbal communication. Core linguistic challenges such as limited vocabulary, inadequate grasp of sentence structure and lack of fluency severely hindered students' ability to articulate thoughts in English and they become more depended on their mother tongue, Bengali, within classroom settings. Interviews with teachers corroborated students' accounts and revealed a deeper, systemic issue within the classroom dynamic: the absence of a truly communicative and supportive learning atmosphere. In this scenario, we still hope a better effective communication in ESL classroom. If teachers, students, parents, and community could work together, we would be able to overcome the ESL communication challenges and can take a step forward into the path of creating a communication apprehension-free society.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the data, the following recommendations would be effective to overcome the ESL communication problem.

- To develop English vocabulary through Story Building with word cards, Word Bingo, Word puzzle, etc.
- To eliminate grammatical problems students can use language learning apps like Duolingo, Quizlet from school's computer in free time.
- To build confidence in ESL communication, real-life scenarios can be used, like teacher can divide the class in groups and create a mock shopping activity where students role play as customers and shopkeepers.
- To improve writing skill, teacher can ask students to write weekly diaries and present it to the class every Friday.
- To develop overall English as a second language skill, Sequential Bilingualism teaching process is needed and government must take an initiative planning for this.

8. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, breaking barriers in ESL classrooms requires a shift from teacher – centred to learner-centred instruction and it is essential to build a world of interconnectedness among students. Teachers must serve as facilitators and role models, while students must be empowered to embrace mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. Only through a synergistic and empathetic classroom environment can the ESL learning experience evolve from silent memorization to dynamic communication.



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