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**Topic: English Language Skills Development for Non-English Medium Schools: A Study of a Special Language Program**

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### Summary

Given the relevance and centrality of English, one major concern that arises pertains to the development of English language skills among those learners who study in non-English, vernacular-medium schools. They learn it as a second language and this training is totally inadequate in helping them transcend the barriers of poor English language skills. An experimental program was introduced for non-English medium learners at the secondary level. This after-school program was an endeavour to hone communicative competence of learners by changing the formalized, structured pattern of conventional classroom teaching. This program succeeded to an extent due to its task-based, interactive approach, and, therefore, its pedagogies of teaching and learning formed the crux of this study. The findings of this study also point towards reforms and practices of English language teaching in the future.

### **Objectives:**

- To study and analyse how learner motivation is sustained throughout the Access English Language Program.
- To examine the teaching methodology implemented in Access English Language Programme classrooms
- To study the instructional materials and teaching aids used in these classes
- To analyze the factors which facilitate or hamper active participation on part of the learners in Access classrooms
- To study the challenges (if any) teachers face to make classrooms interactive and how teachers deal with it.

**Methodology:** The following methodology was followed to carry out the research for this study:

**Sample** - This was done through purposive sampling technique.

Table:1 **Sample of the Study**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Name of the School</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b>1</b>	Jamia School	5	87
<b>2</b>	Aga Khan	3	116
<b>3</b>	Learning Link	2	97
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>300</b>

**Research Tools for Data Collection** - This particular research study combined a variety of data collection methods mentioned below:

- Interviews with teachers
- Focus group discussions with learners
- Classroom observations
- Rubric for the evaluation of instructional materials and teaching aids

**Analysis of Data:** A qualitative approach was followed to analyze the data.

**Delimitations;** This study was limited to only those secondary school students and teachers who were the part of the Access English Language Program in Delhi.

**Findings of the Study:** The findings of this study are presented in the context of the five objectives - Motivation, Teaching Methodology, Instructional Materials, Active Learner Participation and Teacher Preparedness to face the Challenges.

**Motivation:** A major motivating factor was found to be the relaxed, unthreatening learning environment where learners felt at ease to freely speak their mind and share their thoughts with the peer group and teacher. At the same time, the afternoon timing of the lesson is a major de-motivating factor as it is after school and most students want to go home to tuition classes or to do homework.

**Teaching Methodology:** Teaching methodology was crucial in deciding the success of this particular after-school programme. Collaborative work promoted learners' language development and increased language opportunities for learners, thus motivating them to participate actively. Students were also monitored unobtrusively during these activities, after which they received constructive feedback. Although, it was noted that these techniques were not used as regularly by all the teachers as they should have.

**Instructional Materials:** The course book used for the programme was structured logically and promoted integrated skill development as all the units focused on reading, speaking, reading, and writing. The presentation of content and use of images was visually appealing which engaged learners. However, a major drawback was that some of the content was from a different cultural context which learners sometimes lost interest in. The supplementary material was customized to the learners' needs and took into account their proficiency level as well as interests. Use of realia by teachers supported communicative activities successfully and brought the real world into the language classroom, besides making learning interesting.

**Active Learner Participation:** In the context of vernacular-medium learners in the present study, engaging in small-group discussions was a confidence boosting exercise. Learners received feedback not only from the teacher, but also from peers. This in turn promoted sharing and application of knowledge.

**Teacher Preparedness to Face the Challenges:** Teacher training and motivating teachers towards professional development must be stressed as it equips teachers to handle classroom issues effectively. Motivating learners to speak in English outside class is another challenge that must be dealt with by imparting English language skills useful in the real world.

**Conclusion:** To conclude, the process of acquiring the second/foreign language can be effective when both the learner and the teacher are involved in the process and derive fun out of it. This is the only way to keep the motivation and interest levels high. When this is achieved all the problems of teaching and learning get resolved and better results are attained. In the experience and observation of the researcher, these new-age techniques and methodology worked successfully in the special after-school program, and thus there is no reason they will not work in traditional classrooms. There is a strong need to impart positive attitude in teachers and to motivate them to continue professional development. Teachers are agents of change and carriers of new methodology, and therefore time-to-time training for their capacity building is of utmost importance to achieve positive results in the classroom. The English language teaching landscape in India can only be reformed when the teaching community, parents, and school management discard old practices and open their arms and minds to fresh approaches that lead to effective learning.