

Developing Transformative Competencies in English: A Study at Higher Secondary Level of BSEB Schools

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Abstract:

Transformative competencies in English refer the knowledge of four fundamental skills of English language- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) and being able to use them in everyday life. It helps the learners to fulfill their needs to communicate and collaborate with others, having critical understanding of national and global issues, to succeed in employment market, to have economic competence, to become a part of multicultural working place etc. For this interconnectedness, pedagogy, syllabi and learners' learning outcomes need to be measured because these variables make the learning process challenging for the ESL learners and they often feel scared or unenthusiastic to acquire these skills. In this regard, this paper, critically reviews some important issues related to English syllabus and textbook at higher secondary level of Bihar School Education Board and investigates learners' learning outcomes through a diagnostic test so that educators can engage the students in developing transformative competencies.

Keywords: English Language, Transformative Competence, BSEB School, Pedagogy, Syllabi, Quality Education.

Introduction

Competencies are understood as combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that a person need for successful learning, living and working. Transformative competencies in English refer the knowledge of four fundamental skills of English language: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) and being able to use them in everyday life. The knowledge of these four core skills of English language not only enables the students to communicate and collaborate with others but also they can have global understanding and interfere in global employment market (Helin, 2021; Transformative Competencies, 2023).

As English becomes the common tongue of this global village and it provides economic growth, progress and better future, it becomes the key to connect to the people and business beyond the borders. For being connected to the outer world and having influence on various sectors of life 'technology is the vehicle and English would be the fuel' (Salma,

2023: 06). In many nations people think that if their children are proficient in English, they will have access to better future economic prospects. For example, country like Philippines proposed to ban Filipino for dubbing English-language films and TV shows to strengthen English competency (TOI, 2025). But, presently nationals like India lacking quality education which leads to having unskilled or less skilled man power. While the country has achieved some milestones like, maximum enrolment, stipend/scholarship, increasing passing rates etc. but we are still lag far behind from the quality education. In India, among different stages of education (from elementary to higher education), the secondary and higher secondary level play an essential role in shaping the next generation of the country. As higher secondary level is the terminal stage and it bridges the gap between elementary level and higher education, quality becomes necessary at this level (Adhikari, 2019 & Islam, 2020). Quality education in English refers to learn the basic skills of language and to be proficient in language for using it in daily needs. But the state like Bihar in India, the quality education in English has seen as ‘complex, tangential but always deserving closer examination’. The reflection of rural Bihar demonstrate that school pass-outs are having little control over English language proficiency and the learners hardly have any chance to exercise their linguistic competence specially at higher secondary level as traditional methods of teaching is commonly used; shortage of teachers, high student-teacher ratio and insufficient pre- and in-service teaching program, even the cause English is not being a compulsory subject at secondary level (10th standard) in the schools affiliated to BSEB having a pathetic result on quality education (British council). Another cause is that beside English, Hindi and Urdu are other official languages in Bihar and many more local languages such as Maithili, Bhojpuri, Maghi are spoken widely across the state. Besides, the state has rapid growth in number of English medium schools, private institutions which affect the quality education in the schools which are affiliated to BSEB. In this context, syllabi and learners’ learning outcomes need to be assessed to develop learners’ language competencies (Pal and Kumar, 2020; <https://testbook.com/bihar-gk/languages-of-bihar>)

Objectives

1. To critically review the issues related to English syllabus and prescribed textbook at higher secondary level of Bihar School Education Board.
2. To investigate the students’ learning outcomes and locate the challenging areas and provide some recommendations for developing transformative competencies.

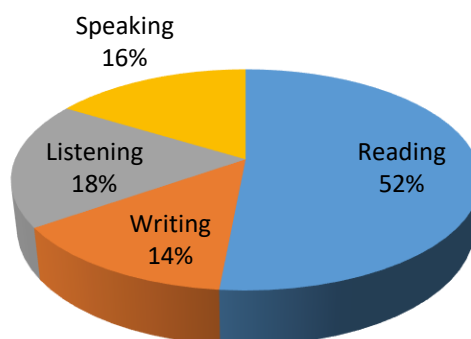
Methodology

1. A diagnostic test was prepared for the students, based on four basic skills of English language i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW).
2. A critical analysis of textbook had been done.

A diagnostic test has been conducted in 10 schools of Darbhanga district for 100 students’ samples to determine the areas of strengths and weaknesses of English language. The test paper was prepared on the basis of four transformative skills of English language i.e. LSRW. Percentile is adopted as data analysis technique. An analysis of prescribed textbook is done to assess the quality of the course program and its organization and content.

Result and Discussion**I. Students' Performance in Diagnostic Test**

In **listening skills**, dictation was used as an exercise in which the pupils' performance is only 18% (Fig.). Spelling mistakes, punctuation are the common errors in their answer sheets. They are also lacking knowledge of capital and small letters. In **speaking skills**, students were instructed to 'say few lines about your school' in which the students' performance is only 16% (Fig.). While speaking, some of the students producing incorrect sentences and majority were not able to form a single sentence. The percentage of students' performance in **reading skills** is 52% (Fig.) which represents their better performance than other skills. The comprehension passage for scanning and skimming was chosen from their prescribed textbook where in scanning they perform well while in skimming their performance were not good. In **writing skills**, the students' performance is only 14% in which they were asked to write a letter but majority of them failed to write a single, correct and meaningful sentence.

Percentage of Students' Performance in Language Skills**II. Textbook Analysis**

English textbook of class XII, *Rainbow*, prescribed by Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) has been taken for analysis to find out which skills are taught to the students and whether it is fulfilling the four basic skills of English language or not. The textbook contains both poetry and prose and at the end of each lesson, exercises are given in which reading skills get main focus and few exercises on writing skills are also there, but the sample activities are less in number in the textbook. Listening and speaking skills are not emphasized in the textbook, not even they practice any activity on these skills in the classroom.

Findings:

The result of diagnostic test and textbook analysis demonstrate some prominent issues regarding teaching and learning English language in the schools affiliated to BSEB:

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1. Among four transformative skills, in productive skills (writing and speaking) the students perform very poorly. There are less activities for writing skills and no exercise for speaking skills is there in the textbook.
 2. Reading skills get main focus in the textbook and every lesson follows by some comprehensive tasks. In diagnostic test performance of the students is better in reading skills than others.
 3. The methods of study analyses that neither there is any activity on listening skill in the textbook nor do they practice it in the classroom.
 4. Commonly, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is in practice in the classroom. The teachers used to translate the textbook in Hindi to make the students understand the lesson.
 5. Some other aspects have been found out by casual conversation with the teachers, such as English is not mandatory subject at secondary level that makes students' weak foundation of the language; student-teacher ratio i.e. number of students is far more than the number of teachers; evaluation pattern i.e. examination is based on writing only.

Limitation

1. Regional demarcation is the main limitation of this study. This research paper has covered only few selected schools (affiliated to BSEB) of Darbhanga district of Bihar.
2. Data from diverse category stakeholders need to be incorporated.

Conclusion

The findings of the data represent that the students' performance is mainly dependent on rote learning. The learners of the schools (affiliated to BSEB) do not get opportunity to learn functional aspects of English language. Textbook is the manifestation of syllabus, but there is no coordination between the two because of a few prominent drawbacks which are discussed in result and discussion. The functional aspects of language are neither taught in the classrooms nor highlighted.

Lack of proper planning and emphasis on language skills, teacher's inadequate knowledge in recent trends in teaching methodology, poor study and teaching conditions, type of evaluation pattern, maintaining other local languages affect classroom performances. The syllabus is very ambitious but it needs attention for the attainment of its objectives (Gupta, 1993; Banerjee, 2016). As the use of English language is shifted from educational and occupational to everyday need; the experts, policy makers, academicians and professional bodies need to look after the increasing demands of English language and consider the issues regarding teaching and learning the language to make a correlation among syllabus, textbook, teaching-learning condition and learning outcomes in order that the learners of these schools can have quality education and develop their competencies in English language.

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