

Developing English Communication Skills in ESL Learners: Pedagogical Approaches and Classroom Strategies

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Abstract: English Language proficiency is a requisite to academic performance, international competitiveness in the job market and integration in the social-cultural environment particularly to learners whose first language is not English. Nevertheless, linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical obstacles usually deprive ESL learners of a possibility to develop effective communication skills. The paper explores the process of learning English communication in ESL students as one of the hybrid methodologies that blend both classroom observations, feedback analysis, and class pedagogy. The study is conducted in the three Indian educational establishments having many learners with ESL. It used a mixed-methodology as it targeted both quantitative feedback through questionnaires and qualitative interviews with the ESL instructors and students. Micronizing of the data was triangulated by classroom-based activity records and performance evaluation to investigate the effectiveness of different learning pedagogies like task-based learning, communicative language teaching (CLT), and flipped classrooms. The findings show that interactive methods are of strong influence to the oral fluency and that contextual learning is good in retailing vocabulary and pragmatic competency. Culturally relevant, peer work and feedback loop came in handy to nullify the resistant and anxious attitude of the learners. The results contribute to the creation of dynamic ESL instructional framework which focuses on flexibility, involvement of learners and interventions which are dependent on skills.

Keywords: ESL learners, English communication skills, pedagogical strategies, communicative competence, classroom engagement, task-based learning, CLT, feedback loops

I. INTRODUCTION

With the world going into a greater state of globalization, effective communication in English no longer remains a mere linguistic skill but it is a socio-economic requirement. Into the aspects of education, international business, science, and diplomacy, English is utilized as a bridge language. Millions of learners across the globe do not speak English as their first language but as a second or other language (ESL). This implies that learning the English language in terms of reading, writing, listening, and more importantly speaking is an absolute must in their personal, academic, and professional growth. However, in the case of ESL learners, the acquisition of the said skills poses peculiar issues as well, including grammatical complexity and word restrictions, but also stress and cultural conflict. They are usually exacerbated by poor methodologies of teaching, minimum interaction in the classroom as well as lack of learner-centred methods. Within the educational system in such countries as India, the Philippines, and Bangladesh, as well as other countries in Africa and the Middle East, English may be taught in a multilingual environment with students having different backgrounds, in terms of language and culture, entering the classroom. The conventional practice of teaching in these settings mostly focuses on repetition and grammar-based learning that is not always a viable approach towards developing effective communication stage fluency. High test results in grammar and vocabulary, however, do not necessarily imply that ESL learners in classrooms can be really competent at communicating in the real world, and

communication in spontaneous speech, pronunciation, pragmatic speech use, and intercultural communication are especially weak in these learners. This mismatch motivates a transition in terms of pedagogical orientation, moving away from strictly structural, towards more communicative, task-oriented as well as learner-specific solutions. The most serious issue in the ESL classrooms is the so called communication gap between the linguistic knowledge and the knowledge in time. This mismatch is caused by different internal and external factors. In the inside, learners can be affected with performance anxiety, lack of belief in oneself, and demotivation. On the outside, strict curricula, oversized classes, and teacher incompetency are the factors that make the learning environment inadequate in developing communication skills. This is further aggravated by the fact that there is little to no communication innovations in pedagogy like flip classrooms, gamified learning, or digital collaborative services that would otherwise be able to stoke the idea of active learning and linguistic immersion. Moreover, social-economic factors tend to restrict the availability of extra English-speaking resources, multimedia tools and communication with native speakers or people speaking fluent English. Instructional methods are the key to narrowing this disparity. There is emerging evidence on the use of communication language teaching (CLT), task based learning (TLT), content and language integrated learning (CLIL) to enable meaningful acquisition of language. These practices focus on authentic communication, cooperative solving of problems, and connection of language and content that altogether leads to increased motivation and interest on the part of the students. Simultaneously, constructivist approaches of learning in which learners acquire knowledge by experience have been found to potentialize oral and written communication abilities in ESL students. Moreover, requirements of using digital tools, such as Google Classroom, Padlet, or Duolingo, and Zoom in teaching ESL, particularly during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, have created new opportunities of pedagogical experimentation and a feedback system on an individual level. During the past years, a paradigm shift in language learning was experienced with a shift in the focus of teaching, emphasizing on teacher-centered learning lessons to learner-centered settings. Such a change falls within the framework of the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, according to which language acquisition is also a social process, the most efficient development of which happens through the communication among peers and teacher-shelping, as well as through the usage of a familiar context. Feedback, including peer feedback and the feedback provided by the instructor, has also been discussed as the element of paramount importance in the elaboration of expressive opportunities of learners and the correction of the most typical errors. Besides, cultural competence has become one of the most important aspects in ESL communication, particularly in the multicultural classrooms where students have to negotiate not merely language but also culture. This creates the need to have a pedagogy that does not simply impart the knowledge of the right form of English grammar but develops the skill of adaptability, respect, and effectiveness in the communication. Nevertheless, regardless of the rising awareness of such needs, a lot of ESL classrooms are still fixed on the traditional types of instruction that are more focused on preparing students to pass exams than focusing on practicing communication. As a result, graduates have no adequate communicative skills in real life. The consequences of such a rift between instructional training and practical language skills are staggering beyond the primary application of employability and mobility of students to the grander scheme of inclusive and equitable education being brandished by United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4). Thus, it is not only an academic need but a socio-economic necessity to work upon this communication gap. The study aims to explore some of the pedagogical approaches and classroom practices that can be efficiently used to address communication skills in English among a group of ESL students. The emphasis is put on answering the, what, who, and where questions. As part of this study, three typical ESL-oriented education organizations are picked in India, with a heterogeneous student base and varied institutional capability. Combining observations of the classroom, learner surveys, and teacher interviews, the research will provide an evidence-based assessment of the existing practices and suggest the dynamic framework to consider in the future interventions. Leveraging of the qualitative perspectives together with quantitative performance information leads to deep learning on the experiences of the learner. Finally, the paper produces new contributions to the developing dialogue around the subject of ESL education due to its ability to integrate classroom-based knowledge with a theory of teaching. It says that to make ESL students to be good effective communicators, there should be a deliberate move of contextual, inclusive and participatory teaching styles. These strategies should be non-memorization and non-book related with interaction, feedback, learnability and independence. As such, they are able to enhance the performance

of individual learners as well as establish classrooms that are lively, participatory, and amenable to real-life communication.

II. RELEATED WORKS

English communication proficiency among ESL students has been a widely researched matter in terms of linguistic, educational, and sociocultural situations. Researchers have been stressing on the fact that the communication competence cannot merely be conceived of as a mastery of matters related to the grammar but also entails pragmatic, intercultural and strategic competence [1]. The theoretical framework of communicative competence presented by Canale and Swain created a rationale in the integration of fluency, discourse strategies and appropriacy to the teaching of a second language [2]. This was further narrowed down by more recent models who added digital literacy and intercultural sensitivity as essential to the 21 st century ESL learning [3]. The movement of the traditional grammar-translation pedagogy to communicative and task-based is one of the major themes in ESL pedagogy. Research has supported that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) creates more participation among learners, enhanced fluency, and enhanced retention of vocabulary and structures as compared to memory work or one-by-one grammar practice [4], [5]. Moreover, the TBLT model has been admired in advancing the notion of authentic language use and meaningful interaction with the help of problem-solving activities, simulations, and peer discussions [6]. There has been an upsurge in the integration of digital platforms in the ESL learning. The effectiveness of such tools as Zoom, Google Meet, and Padlet in encouraging communication by providing synchronous and asynchronous tasks [7] is revealed. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has also become the possible alternative, as application-based learning, such as Duolingo or HelloTalk, allow real-time corrections, add vocabulary, and pronunciation support necessary to communicate orally as well [8]. These online affordances have multisensory yet enable flexibility in learning pace and style requirements. The two frequently analyzed psychological variables in ESL communication development include motivation and anxiety. The disabling effect of the anxiety in a foreign language classroom on the majority of linguistic production was emphasized in works by Horwitz et al., whereas the socio-educational model, developed by Gardner, produced the connection between the integrative motivation and the heightened levels of language acquisition achievements [9], [10]. It has been suggested that cooperative learning, peer scaffolding and project-based assignments should be implemented as a pedagogical means of reducing the affective barriers and enhancing self-confidence [11]. Cultural and contextual relevance in the teaching of ESL is another area which has been the subject of interest. When the classroom materials to what the learners speak about in their culture, interests, and aspirations, learners learn more effectively [12]. The postmethod pedagogy proposed by Kumaravadivelu emphasizes the context-specific ways of teaching which enable teachers to adjust the method according to the needs of the local learners instead of using the universal approach [13]. Another point of concern is formative feedback, namely its influence on the development of communication in the learners. Timely feedback, according to Shute, is what strongly promotes writing and speaking skills especially when it involves self rectification and reflection [14]. Self-assessment and peer feedback, when conducted in a guided format, offers learner autonomy and metacognition awareness resulting in better outcome of communication production [15]. Although there are established benefits of student-centered approaches, research also identifies a number of issues that are involved in their implementation. Teachers are neither prepared nor institutionally supported on how to perform CLT or use digital tools, particularly in low-resourced schools [16]. In a number of ESL situations, there are no opportunities to learn interactively or by experience since emphasis is put on exam-oriented learning [17]. This has resulted in the increasing interest in teacher professional development and in curriculum reform which is communicatively oriented. The flipped classroom approaches have become well-known when it comes to the externalization of communicative practice outside the classroom. A study by Hung and colleagues revealed that communicative fluency of students increased considerably after the students were computerized to use video lectures or language activities in the context of their studies at home and practice the same in their classroom in the form of conversations and role plays [18]. Likewise, project-based learning (PBL) had showed positive influences with respect to group communication, research skills and critical thinking when it was used in the context of ESL group learning [19]. An important role is also played by language policy and planning in educational planning. In multilingual countries such as India, both English and regional languages give rise to a complicated situation in a classroom. Investigations by Mohanty et al. confirm the presence of linguistic patterns in the mother tongue transferred into communication in

English as a consequence of which special attention should be paid to such a pedagogical strategy that is reactionary to code-switching and translanguaging [20]. In addition, the development of the AI and natural language processing (NLP) opens new possibilities in the realm of ESL learning. The technologies that can be applied to the teaching of different speaking skills through the use of speech recognition technologies, chatbots, and AI tutors provide real-time practice and feedback on pronunciation and conversations, boosting speaking skills that would be impossible using traditional teaching methods [21]. Lastly, the research also focused on the issue of an ESL communication acquisition based on the socio-economic position. Students with rural or disadvantaged backgrounds may not have any exposure to good English; and depend completely on exposure in the classroom. In so doing, input-poor teaching environment necessitates inclusive pedagogical strategies to make up the difference [22]. Collectively, the body of knowledge empowers a multidimensional, learner-centered and technologically-integrated design of developing English language communication skills in ESL environments. These patterns should accommodate the cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural aspects of learning along with the ability to apply the acquired knowledge in the real world situation.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method, classroom-based design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The primary aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of specific pedagogical interventions in enhancing English communication skills among ESL learners. Data were collected through student performance assessments, classroom observations, teacher interviews, and learner surveys [21]. A triangulated methodology allowed for cross-validation of data and provided a comprehensive understanding of the communication challenges and solutions implemented across three institutions.

3.2 Study Context and Participants

The research was conducted in three Indian ESL-focused institutions representing urban, semi-urban, and rural settings [19]. These schools were selected based on their demographic diversity, medium of instruction, and willingness to pilot communication-enhancing strategies. A total of 180 students participated, divided equally across the three sites. Each group received a six-week intervention involving task-based learning, communicative practice, and digital tool usage.

Table 1: Study Site Characteristics

Institution Code	Location Type	Class Size	English Instruction Mode	Resource Level
INST-A	Urban	40	English Medium	High (Smart boards, Wi-Fi)
INST-B	Semi-Urban	30	Bilingual	Moderate (Computer lab access)
INST-C	Rural	30	Vernacular + English	Low (Printed materials only)

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The following tools were used to gather data:

- **Learner Communication Assessment:** Pre- and post-tests focusing on speaking, listening, reading, and writing tasks graded on a rubric aligned with CEFR standards.
- **Classroom Observation Logs:** Weekly structured observation of engagement, participation, and fluency [25].
- **Instructor Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with English teachers to understand pedagogical choices and classroom challenges.
- **Student Surveys:** Likert-scale feedback collected to gauge student perception of the strategies used and their own confidence in communication [20].

3.4 Pedagogical Interventions

Each institution implemented a combination of the following techniques:

- **Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT):** Role plays, debates, interviews, and problem-solving tasks were introduced in pairs or groups.
- **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT):** Focused on meaningful exchanges, story-building activities, and interactive games.
- **Digital Tools:** At INST-A and INST-B, learners used platforms such as Duolingo (for vocabulary), Google Classroom (for discussion forums), and Flipgrid (for oral presentations).

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Instructors used peer feedback sessions and self-assessment journals to promote reflection.

Table 2: Intervention Techniques by Site

Pedagogical Strategy	INST-A	INST-B	INST-C
TBLT Activities	✓	✓	✓
CLT-Based Interaction	✓	✓	✓
Digital Platforms (Duolingo, Flipgrid)	✓	✓	✗
Peer Feedback Journals	✓	✓	✓

3.5 Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria were used to evaluate outcomes:

- **Fluency:** Measured by uninterrupted speech and coherence during oral tasks.
- **Pronunciation Accuracy:** Evaluated using a standard rubric and teacher evaluation.
- **Engagement:** Frequency of participation in classroom interactions.
- **Learner Confidence:** Self-rated before and after the intervention.

Improvement was measured as percentage gains between pre- and post-tests and thematic shifts in self-reported feedback [24].

3.6 Data Analysis and Validation

- Quantitative data from tests and surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean score improvement, standard deviation).
- Qualitative responses from interviews and open-ended surveys were coded thematically using NVivo.
- A Pearson correlation test was applied to examine relationships between teaching strategies and communication improvement.
- Classroom observation logs were coded for frequency of participation and task completion consistency.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from both students and teachers. All identities were anonymized. Participation was voluntary and feedback did not impact academic grades. The study also adhered to institutional ethical clearance procedures and ensured that no psychological stress was placed on learners [22][23].

3.8 Limitations and Assumptions

- The duration of the study (six weeks) may not fully reflect long-term impacts on communication development.
- Digital interventions were not uniformly applied across sites due to infrastructure limitations.
- Cultural factors affecting communication behavior (such as hesitation to speak in class) may have influenced outcomes despite pedagogical support.

IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview of Communication Skill Improvement

The pre- and post-assessment scores across all three institutions revealed a measurable improvement in ESL learners' communication skills. The most significant gains were observed in speaking and listening tasks, especially in INST-A and INST-B, where digital tools supplemented traditional classroom activities. INST-C also showed moderate improvement, largely attributed to peer-led feedback and group activities.

Table 3: Mean Score Improvement in Communication Components

Skill Area	INST-A (Urban)	INST-B (Semi-Urban)	INST-C (Rural)
Speaking	+31.2%	+27.5%	+18.6%
Listening	+28.9%	+24.2%	+16.7%
Reading	+21.3%	+19.5%	+13.8%
Writing	+17.6%	+14.2%	+9.5%

The highest improvement was noted in oral communication, suggesting the positive impact of task-based and interactive strategies. Learners at INST-A showed higher gains, owing to real-time oral exercises through Flipgrid and Zoom breakout sessions.

4.2 Learner Engagement and Participation

Classroom observation logs revealed a notable increase in active participation. Students began initiating conversations, responding more freely in group tasks, and using English outside structured activities.

INST-B recorded the highest increase in voluntary participation, attributed to contextualized group tasks and moderated peer feedback.

Table 4: Weekly Participation Frequency per Student

Week	INST-A	INST-B	INST-C
Week 1	1.2	1.0	0.8
Week 3	2.7	2.4	1.9
Week 6	4.1	3.8	2.7

By Week 6, learners across all sites had at least tripled their participation frequency. Visual observation also noted reduced hesitation and increased self-initiated dialogue in both peer and teacher interactions.

4.3 Feedback Effectiveness

Learners reported that receiving structured peer feedback and instructor comments enhanced their understanding of errors, particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary usage. In INST-A and INST-B, the use of digital voice recordings allowed students to listen to themselves and self-correct with reference models. Self-assessment journals further reinforced reflection-based learning.

Key themes from survey responses included:

- “I never realized I paused so much while speaking before this class.”
- “Hearing myself helped me fix pronunciation mistakes I didn't know I had.”



Figure 1: ESL Instructional Approach [17]

4.4 Correlation Between Pedagogical Strategy and Outcome

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between teaching interventions and test score improvements. Strong correlations were noted between:

- TBLT frequency and speaking improvement ($r = 0.78$)
- Feedback loop participation and writing gains ($r = 0.66$)
- Digital tool use and listening comprehension ($r = 0.71$)

These findings reinforce the effectiveness of student-centered, interactive strategies in enhancing ESL communication abilities.

4.5 Comparative Reflections from Instructors

Teachers highlighted key differences across contexts. At INST-A, the challenge was maintaining engagement beyond the digital screen, while at INST-C, limited exposure to English outside class hindered progress. All instructors agreed that communicative activities and feedback loops outperformed traditional grammar drills in promoting skill acquisition.



Figure 2: Types of teaching methods [18]

Sample instructor quotes:

- “When students role-play real-life scenarios, they become more confident and natural in their expression.”
- “Digital tools added fun to the process. Students felt less afraid of making mistakes.”

4.6 Thematic Synthesis from Student Feedback

Learner feedback surveys (N=180) showed that:

- 83% reported greater confidence in speaking
- 77% found peer feedback helpful
- 65% desired more digital activities
- 89% favored group work over solo drills

This reinforces the hypothesis that collaborative and interactive approaches foster a more comfortable and motivating learning environment for ESL students.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of the present study provide a very important indication of the significance of strategically constructed pedagogical interventions in enhancing English communication skills in ESL learners. In a multilingual nation such as India where English is commonly learnt as a second or third language in a resource poor environment, acquisition of oral and written proficiency can never be covered by textbook based learning. It can be concluded that student-centered instructional strategies (task-based learning, communicative language teaching (CLT), and the use of technology) have the potential to considerably increase the engagement, motivation, and the technology-measuring aspects of the skill acquisition process in learners. The study provides support that, despite the differences in the levels of exposure and infrastructure, ESL students could develop better communication skills, given the proper support of relevant and participatory classroom approaches. The biggest advances related to the speaking and listening areas, which tend to be the most ignored in the traditional ESL curricula that focus on developing grammar and memorizing passive vocabulary. Students in the city school (INST-A) had a great advantage of the digital resource such as Flipgrid and Duolingo that helped them to train pronunciation, record feedback, and get real-time feedback. These students had not only shown based on the greatest percentage gains in the tests but also shown in improved confidence in participating in classroom activities and interacting with their peers. At the semi-urban location (INST-B), the same patterns were detected through well-organized group practices, discussions, and reflective journals being helpful in the steady progression in communicative competence. On the contrary, the rural institution (INST-C) in which digital tools were not utilized demonstrated positive results proving that low-tech elements such as peer feedback, storytelling, and role-playing may also show substantial improvements when implemented on a regular basis. Among the most significant findings of this research, it can be noted that pedagogical feedback, no matter if it comes in the form of teacher feedback, peer feedback or self-evaluation feedback, fully fills the role of helping learners master the language by improving and correcting it in the process. Most of the students stated that listening to their own voice recording as well as to the comments given by their peers helped them to be more conscious of pronunciation mistakes, grammar mistakes, and fillers. This aspect of retrospection and renewal with increased planned support by teachers was a factor that helped significantly in building their skills. Teachers also focused on the change in the classroom interactions, saying that the students who were hard to engage in the classroom with their timidity became the ones initiating the conversation and engaging in discussions. Such change in behavior indicates that linguistic confidence alongside with competence increases when learners are not coded as readers and listeners only but as the learners who are the participants in meaning-making. But the research shows that there still exists the inequality in access to language-learning resources. Although there is no doubt that digital tools achieved higher results in the less disadvantaged context, the rural classroom showed that adherence to effective pedagogy helped close the digital divide somewhat. However, in order to have equity in English education, it is highly necessary that the system be taught in the following manner by investing systematically in body factors; digital literacy education among instructors, and revising the curriculum in order to ensure that communication rather than grammar memorization is the primary focus. The authentic communicative input is still a major challenge to the learners in vernacular-medium schools especially in regions where English is not a local language. There is nothing that can be done on the pedagogical level to fill this gap, as it necessitates consideration on the policy level, including teacher training, classroom size, and the availability of technology. Moreover, the correlation analysis in the study proves the strong relation between the frequency of interactive, task-based activities and increase in the

proficiency of speaking and listening. It supports the point that oral practice and collaborative learning cannot be considered additional factors of ESL instruction but a key to its success. The positive results of the accumulated learner responses to the questions on group work, peer review, and the project-based activities highlight the importance of creating the culture of a communicative, cooperative and iterative feedback in the classroom. These approaches are in line with constructivist learning theories which promote social interaction and experiential learning as the main factors in language learning. In future, the study suggests a flexible model of ESL education incorporating the digital tools where possible, the orientation of teaching styles to the reality of the place of work, and supporting both teacher and student output through training, independence, and evaluation. Institutions are advised to take chances by investing in teacher development activities not only in the area of content knowledge, but also in facilitation capabilities, emotional intelligence and classroom innovations. Further, testing of learners should be adjusted so that all tests should not be written, but the results should be formative assessments measured in fluency, clarity, and pronunciation, as well as responsiveness on real-time tasks. To sum it up, the process of developing the communication skills in ESL learners cannot be described as linear interaction of factors like pedagogy, context, psychology of the learner, and the resources available. As seen in this study, even relatively small-scale interventions can open the door to the communicative potential of learners, in case they are prudently designed. Adjusting to the constant feedback, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative learning being the focal points of teaching, the ESL classrooms could be turned into engaging and interactive environments that would benefit not only language skills but also confidence and ability to adjust to lifelong communication in a global society.

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