AN OVERVIEW OF SERVICE – LEARNING AS A PROBLEM SOLVER FOR LISTENING DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH CLASSES AMONG BACHELOR OF EDUCATION TRAINEES IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract: This research examines the listening challenges faced by B. Ed trainees in English. A purposive sample of 120 students was selected from the Madurai District for the study. The data were analyzed using Pearson Coefficient Correlation, Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-test. The findings indicate that there is no significant difference in listening abilities between boys and girls; however, a significant difference exists between urban and rural students regarding their listening skills. Additionally, there is no significant difference in listening abilities between married and unmarried students. A notable correlation was found between listening difficulties and achievement scores in English among B. Ed trainees. It is anticipated that a Service-learning approach may effectively address these challenges and enhance learning outcomes.

Keywords: English Literature, English learning, Language classes, Education Trainees

1.0 Introduction:

Effective listening is seldom taught, and like any other skill, it requires both study and practice to master. Regardless of how clearly and amicably one person or group communicates their thoughts and ideas, if the listener is not open to receiving the information, the communication becomes futile. It is important to distinguish between hearing and listening; hearing is a passive activity performed with the ears, while listening demands active engagement and interpretation by the brain. This process is often reflected through non-verbal cues such as nodding and eye movement. There are various reasons why individuals may struggle with listening. Many people are visual learners and may not absorb information as effectively through auditory channels. Some communicators are meticulous in their message delivery and prioritize effective listening. According to Rost (2000), listening is a complex and active interpretative process where listeners strive to comprehend the messages they receive and relate them to their existing knowledge. Some listeners may attempt to memorize every word spoken by a speaker, which can lead to anxiety and tension. Retaining every detail is challenging; as Hasan (2000) suggests, it is more beneficial to focus on grasping the speaker's main ideas rather than trying to recall every single word. When a speaker conveys a message, listeners should avoid being sidetracked by unfamiliar terms and instead concentrate on the overall content of the discussion. Listening and understanding are distinct processes, with listening involving the interpretation and comprehension of the material presented.

Listening comprehension is an interactive process that enables individuals to achieve a comprehensive understanding of spoken text. It involves the selection and interpretation of information derived from both auditory and visual cues, allowing listeners to grasp the intended message more effectively. Unlike mere hearing, listening comprehension empowers individuals to analyze and interpret the information conveyed by speakers. Although language labs and

various listening aids exist to enhance the teaching and learning experience, many first-generation learners face challenges in accessing these resources, as their institutions often lack the necessary facilities to provide such support.

2.0 Reviw of Literature

In the 21st century, the English language has become an integral component of the educational curriculum in numerous countries where it is taught as a second or foreign language (Akbari, 2015). Recognized as a global lingua franca, proficiency in English enhances prospects for employment, travel, higher education, and overall quality of life (Crystal, 1997). Teaching English is often perceived as a formidable challenge, particularly in developing nations, where it is incorporated into the curriculum from early education through to university. Consequently, individuals are compelled to navigate this requirement through various means. English permeates all aspects of human existence, including science and technology, education, health, and entertainment (Harmer, 2001). Most recent technological and scientific advancements are predominantly documented in English. Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of information technology and the internet has necessitated English language acquisition for many (Richards & Renandya, 2002). A significant number of students aspire to learn English to enhance their prospects and improve their quality of life, as they believe that proficiency in the language will lead to better job opportunities (Harmer, 2001). The influence of the English language motivates individuals to travel to and establish themselves in English-speaking countries, seeking improved living conditions and superior educational opportunities (Crystal, 1997). Despite the numerous advantages associated with learning English, learners of the language as a second or foreign language often encounter various challenges.

3.0 Factors Affecting Listening

The interpretation of the message's meaning relies on the listener's personal knowledge and abilities.

a) **Vocabulary:** Effective listening comprehension relies heavily on the listener's familiarity with the vocabulary employed by the speaker. Many words possess multiple meanings that can vary based on context. To enhance listening skills, it is essential to develop a broader vocabulary.

b) **Speech Registers:** Speech registers pertain to the various language styles individuals adopt in different social situations. The choice of speech style may vary based on the participants' perceptions of the context—whether they consider it serious or casual, formal or informal, and the perceived levels of personal risk and power dynamics among those involved (Samuel, 1984).

c) **Background Knowledge:** A listener's ability to analyze speech accurately and instinctively can be hindered by a lack of foundational background knowledge. Familiarity with the subject matter enables the listener to engage more effectively with the speaker's message.

d) **Language Proficiency:** The capacity to segment and analyze speech into appropriate units is crucial for effective listening in spoken language accurately and automatically. For instance, when attempting to comprehend a foreign language, individuals often expend significant effort identifying words and phrases, which can lead to a loss of the overall message and meaning. The extent of information retention during listening is contingent upon an individual's processing capabilities. Various cognitive tasks must be integrated to grasp the intended message. Two key elements of listening are attention and interest. To maximize attention—given its limited nature—it is advisable to minimize the focus allocated to different cognitive tasks. Samuels (1984) proposed that if segmentation occurs automatically and accurately, the listener's limited attention capacity is not excessively taxed. Consequently, any remaining attention after completing segmentation can be directed towards other essential tasks for understanding the message.

e) **Cognitive Ability** Listening comprehension can be significantly affected by an individual's level of intelligence. Those with lower intelligence may struggle more with understanding a speaker's message, while individuals with higher intelligence are likely to grasp the intended meaning more effectively. Cognitive factors play a role in the ability to recognize relationships among discourse elements and to maintain focus on the discourse while disregarding environmental distractions (Dunkel, 1991).

4.0 Objctives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To create a diagnostic assessment for recognizing B. Ed Teacher Trainees who experience challenges in listening to English.
2. To examine whether there are significant differences in listening difficulties among B. Ed teacher trainees based on specific demographic factors, including gender, locality, and marital status.

5.0 Hypothesis

1. The achievement scores related to listening difficulties in English among B. Ed teacher trainees vary significantly based on gender.
2. There exists a notable difference in the achievement scores concerning listening difficulties in English among B. Ed teacher trainees when considering their locality.
3. A significant disparity is observed in the achievement scores for listening difficulties in English among B. Ed teacher trainees in relation to their marital status.
4. A significant correlation can be identified between listening difficulties and the achievement scores of B. Ed teacher trainees.

6. 0 Methodology and Data Analysis

The current study employed a survey method, selecting a sample of 120 B. Ed students from Madurai district using a purposive sampling technique.

a) **Description of tools:** The investigator has created a diagnostic test specifically designed to assess listening difficulties in English. This assessment consists of 50 items, with each item valued at 1 mark, resulting in a maximum score of 50 marks. Students who score below 25 marks are chosen for further evaluation of their listening challenges.

7.0 Results and Discussions

a) There is no significant difference in listening skills between male and female students.
b) A notable difference exists in listening abilities between urban and rural students.
c) Listening skills do not show a significant difference between married and unmarried students.
d) A significant relationship is observed between listening challenges and achievement scores in English among B. Ed trainees.
e) The idea of practicing during the learning process can be beneficial for enhancement.

8.0 Educational Implimentations

The research suggested that the educational institution should investigate the occurrence of listening disorders among B. Ed students. It is essential for these students to recognize the factors that hinder their listening abilities and to engage in appropriate practices to improve. The responsibility of shaping future generations lies with them, enabling them to become responsible citizens. Given the lack of language labs and other listening resources in the teaching and learning environment, along with the fact that many students are first-generation learners, adopting a service-learning approach could effectively address these challenges and enhance learning outcomes.

9.0 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that service-learning significantly enhances the exposure and authentic experiences of pre-service teachers. It is essential for teacher training programs to adopt effective training methods and strategies to adequately prepare pre-service teachers with the skills and knowledge they need. This necessity arises from persistent issues such as a lack of preparedness and difficulty in adapting to new situations. Many pre-service teachers appear unready for the realities of teaching. Therefore, it is crucial to provide comprehensive training to address these challenges. Service-learning stands out as one of the most impactful methods that can be integrated into teacher training programs. The objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of TESL pre-service teachers regarding service-learning and its role in providing authentic experiences. The findings suggest that service-learning is an effective means of preparing teachers prior to their entry into schools. Early exposure to potential outcomes and challenges in educational settings is vital, as it helps pre-service teachers avoid the surprises that can arise in traditional classroom environments. Additionally, this approach fosters more independent and meaningful learning experiences.

19 | P a g e

Dr. Gayatri G:- An Overview of Service – Learning as A Problem Solver For Listening Difficulties In English Classes Among Bachelor Of Education Trainees in Indian Education System

Service-learning offers a level of authenticity in education that is often absent in conventional lecture settings. The study also posits that service-learning facilitates interaction with students, as it emphasizes active participation in educational activities. Engaging in hands-on experiences is essential, as conducting activities tends to leave a lasting impression on memory. Furthermore, the study indicates that service-learning enables students to apply their classroom knowledge in real-world contexts. The application of pedagogical theories and educational principles in practical situations significantly enhances understanding of the subject matter. Future educators and educational institutions are expected to gain valuable insights into the advantages and impacts of service-learning within teacher training programs. The integration of service-learning is vital in these programs, as it has demonstrated significant positive effects on the attitudes and behaviors of pre-service teachers. Additionally, service-learning enhances essential soft skills, including communication and leadership abilities, among pre-service teachers. Therefore, it is imperative to incorporate service-learning into the curriculum of teacher training courses. Future studies could explore the challenges and additional benefits associated with service-learning in teacher training programs.

10.0 References

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