

A study on English grammar usage during class communication in State-aided schools of West Bengal

¹ Abantika Sengupta, ² Dr. Ghazala Nehal,

¹Teacher-trainee, B.Ed. Dept., Uluberia College, affiliated to University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India

²Assistant Professor, B.Ed. Dept., Uluberia College, affiliated to University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India

Email – ¹abantikasengupta49331@gmail.com, ²khwaish13@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper focuses on problems related to English grammar use by students of West Bengal Govt.-aided schools. The study also looks at how teachers view these problems. An inventory and questionnaire for students and an interview schedule for teachers were used for data collection. 30 Class IX students and 10 English grammar teachers were randomly sampled from 4 State-aided schools. The study found that students faced difficulties in vocabulary, sentence making and use of proper Tense and Prepositions while speaking in English. Teachers shared that students need more support and better classroom activities to improve their English. The study recommends increased classroom communication in English to feel comfortable and confident in the language with gradual grammar corrections.

Keywords: English as Second Language, English Grammar, Grammar corrections, State-aided schools, Classroom Activities.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Grammar accuracy is fundamental to any advanced usage of language, more so when it comes to writing and reading skills. Indian literature on English as a Second Language (ESL) shows students' formulaic learning of grammar that assists in nothing except in rote production of grammar rules during "Do as directed" exercises during exams, class work and homework. Ideally, grammar is taught for users to be able to write and read the language. It is in fact a component of literacy and hence needed less for speaking and listening as the illiterates do not require lexical knowledge to communicate. Grammar knowledge is hence an integral part of school learning. One who has mastered the rules completely would dare to pursue higher education in that language. This is not always the scenario with West Bengal govt.-aided school students who, even with meagre and rote knowledge of English grammar, are seen to pursue Hons. and, later, Masters in English Literature. There are various reasons for it, most of the time it is the career opportunities that a degree in English would bring. It also shows students outlook on ESL as their school subject. It is more a subject to score than a language to learn. The present study has attempted to review school students' problems during English grammar learning, the specific items that pose exclusive challenges during language usage.

1.1 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:

1. School, in the present study, refers to Bengali medium Govt.-aided schools of West Bengal.
2. ESL (English as a Second Language), here, refers to the teaching and learning of English by non-native speakers.
3. English grammar, here, refers to grammar items as taught during ESL classes of Govt.-aided West Bengal schools.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The study investigates into Govt.-aided West Bengal school students' English grammar usage during communication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Santos, J.M. (2023): In his research, Santos has observed student teachers' three-dimensional practicum experiences in ESL classes during the Pandemic. It showed that communication skills are greatly influenced by student-teacher relationship. Constraint relation will cause apprehensions.

Roy, N. (2008): It identifies the factors that affect Second Language learning. Roy observed “A feeling of uneasiness sets in, the moment they hear something in English.” It posed difficulties during teaching English lessons in class in the target language.

Pal, N, Halder, S. & Guha, A. (2016): They observed that problems were not due to teacher but due to other factors of the learning process: “the classroom environment, the curriculum and the students”.

Ndethiu, M. S. (2019): Ndethiu observed how effective communication can act as a tool to create learner-centred classroom and a means to effective classroom management.

Chhetri, R. (2023): The study diagnosed the difficulty in learning English and the area of incompetence as compared to regional dialect and mother tongue. Chhetri showed that, although students were fully aware of English language significance in the outside worlds, they did not put much effort in improving their “writing, reading and communication” skills in English.

2.1 RESAERCH QUESTION:

What problems are students facing with English grammar rules during class communication?

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To find English grammar quality as used by teachers and students in classroom situations.
- To observe the extent to which students are interested in learning English as a second language.
- To study the difficulties faced by students during class communicating in English.

4. RESEARCH METHOD:

A) SAMPLE FRAME: 4 State-aided Schools of West Bengal were sampled for Data Collection:

SAMPLE	SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLING TECHNIQUES	TOOLS
Students, studying in Class IX of State-aided schools	30	Random sample techniques	Inventory (close-ended) & Questionnaire (open ended)
Bengali Medium English Teachers	10		Interview schedule (semi-structured)

B) DATA ANALYSIS:

I. Quantitative analysis of Close-ended Data from Student Inventory

Items along with graphical personation and interpretations of student responses have been presented below:

Item1. I don't feel comfortable to ask my teacher questions in English.

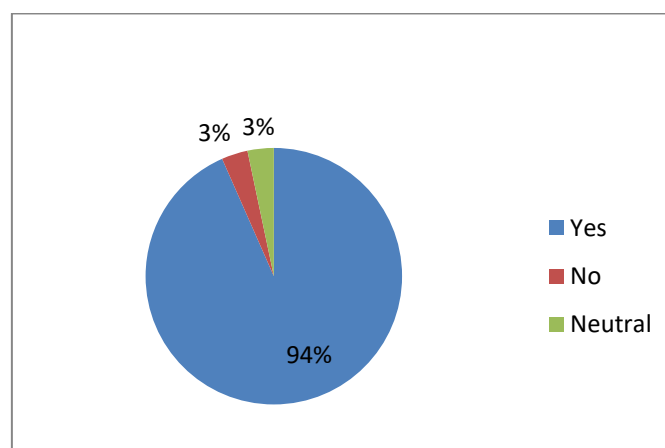


Fig. 1

Fig. 1 shows that majority students felt comfortable, asking questions in English to their teachers.

Item 2. My teachers do not encourage me to use English grammar in class.

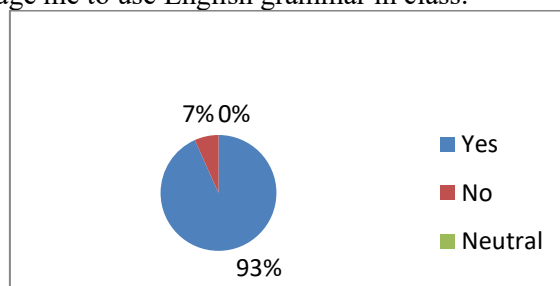


Fig. 2

Fig. 2 shows that majority students said that teachers did encourage them to use English in class.

Item 3. I can't understand my teacher's instructions in English.

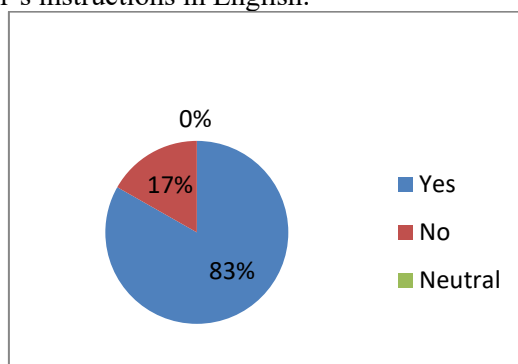


Fig. 3

Fig. 3 shows that most students understood their teacher's instruction in English.

Item 4. I am not interested in learning English grammar.

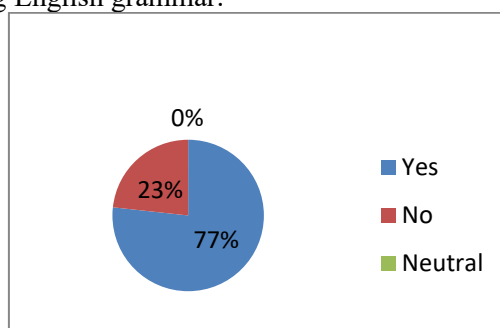


Fig. 4

Fig. 4 shows that most students were interested in learning English grammar.

Item 5. I don't like to watch cartoons or movies in English.

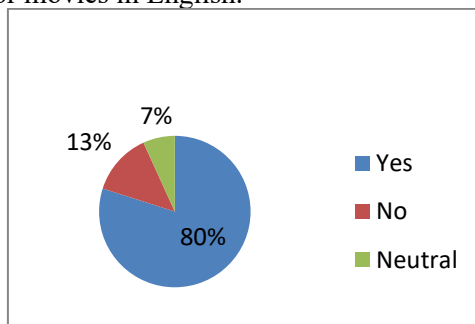


Fig. 5

Fig. 5 shows that majority students did not like to watch cartoons or movies in English.

Item 6. I don't like to read English story books.

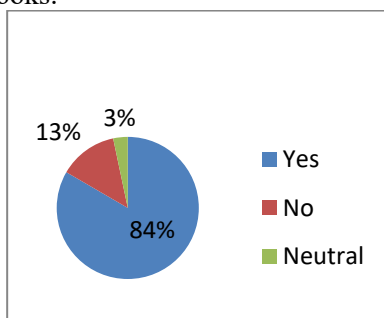


Fig. 6

Fig. 6 shows that maximum students did not like to read any kind of English story books.

Item 7. I feel anxious while speaking in English in class.

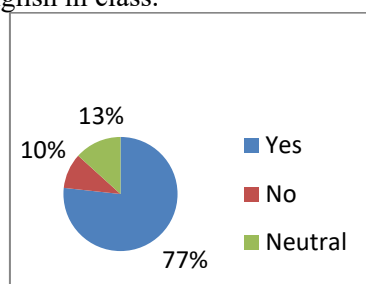


Fig. 7

Fig. 7 shows that most students (77%) felt anxious to speak English in front of others.

Item 8. I have difficulty in remembering English grammar rules.

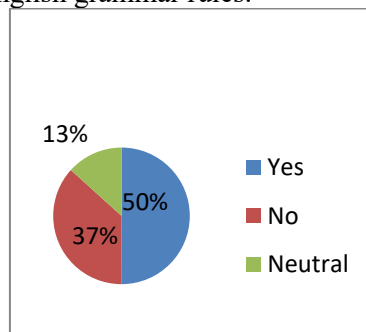


Fig. 8

Fig. 8 shows that 50% students have difficulty in understanding the English grammar rules. 37% students had no difficulty.

Item 9. I often make grammatical mistakes while speaking or writing in English.

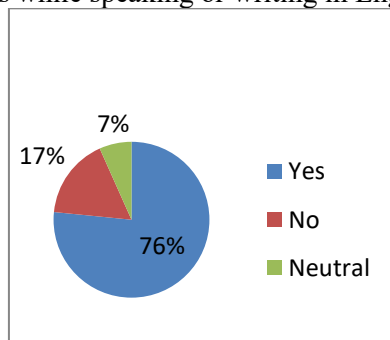


Fig. 9

Fig. 9 shows that majority of students made grammatical errors while speaking or writing in English .

Item 10. I find it difficult to write essays or letters in English.

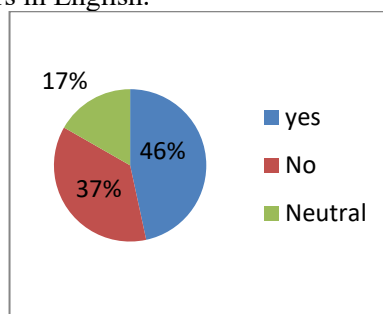


Figure-10

Fig. 10 shows that most students found it difficult to write essays or letters in English. 37% students were, however, comfortable with English creative writing.

II. Qualitative analysis (Data Coding) of Open-ended Data from Student Questionnaire:

Magnitude Coding was used to find out the frequency of certain words in the given set of students responses. Set questions, respective codes and corresponding frequencies have been presented and interpreted below:

Q1. Write any two English story books' names that you read:

Code A – Fairy tale story book: 7 students

Code B – Detective story book: 3 students

Majority (20 out of 30 students) said they don't read English story books. A few students mentioned fairy tale and detective story book names.

Q2. Write any two major difficulties that you face when communicating in English:

Code A – Nervousness / Fear: 15 students

Code B – Vocabulary Problem: 12 students

Most students reported facing fear and vocabulary issues during English communication.

Q3. Why don't you feel motivated to learn English?

Code A – Difficulty to understand: 8 students

Code B – Fear of mistakes: 9 students.

Most students said difficulty in understanding and fear of mistakes demotivate them.

Q4. How would you explain the overall quality of English grammar communication with your teacher?

Majority of students didn't give any answer.

III. Qualitative analysis of Teacher responses to questions in the Interview Schedule:

Teacher responses to questions in the Interview Schedule have been paraphrased below:

Q1. Do your student show any kind of interest to learn English grammar?

Most teachers agreed that, although students struggled with English grammar, they interest peaked if something is being played in English. However, the attention span for engaging with spoken English is too short for students to truly use verbal means to develop their own English.

Q2. Does your student communicate with you in English?

Teachers unanimously agreed that students only occasionally communicated in English.

Q3. In your view, what is the biggest problem faced by the students of your class to learn English Grammar?

Though most teachers shared that difference in grammar structure between English and Bengali (students' mother tongue) made the former's grammar and sentence structures difficult, over that lack of application reduced practical understanding of the rules. Few teachers pointed out how, among grammar items, *Types of Sentences – Simple, Complex and Compound* perplexed the students most. As for other items like Tense, Adjective, Narration, Voices – students were able to at least do grammar exercises on these items, But *Preposition, Clauses and Changing Sentences from Simple to Complex, etc.* were real grammar challenges for students. Some opined that this could be because they don't have exact counterpart in Bengali language

5. FINDINGS:

The following findings, listed as per respective research objectives:

- a) To find English grammar quality as used by teachers and students in classroom situations.

Since teachers barely could use English language, hence grammar was all that students saw on board during grammar classes or while attempting grammar exercises. As a result students acutely struggled with vocabulary, tenses and prepositions while ESL communication.

- b) To observe the extent to which students are interested in learning English as a second language.

Most students understand the importance of English in the modern world and show interest in learning. However, fear, lack of reading habits, and limited exposure decreased motivation towards grammar use.

- c) To study the difficulties faced by students during class communicating in English.

Students lack vocabulary and struggle to express themselves in English. They face difficulties with grammar, sentence structuring, and speaking. Lack of practice and inadequate support at home are major barriers. Many are first-generation learners and are often afraid or hesitant to learn English.

6. DISCUSSION:

The study shows that most students in the ESL (English as Second Language) classroom face difficulties while communicating in English. And it was mostly due to rote learning of English grammar. The collected data from 30 students revealed how students acutely struggled with vocabulary, sentence structure, and fluency. Some students were nervous and shy due to peer pressure. These issues create barriers to effective classroom communication. The responses to the questionnaire indicated that while students understood the importance of English, they did not get enough spoke to put their grammar knowledge to use. Many students said that they mostly use Bengali in the classroom and felt uncomfortable using English. Lack of confidence is a major factor behind this hesitation. Teachers, in their interviews, also mentioned that it was a real challenge to get students to speak in English. Although they had tried to encourage communication through different activities, but still, students either stay quiet or prefer to use their mother tongue for requests, answering and queries. The study, thus, clearly points out the gap between learning English as a subject and using it as a tool for real communication. To improve ESL communication, both students and teachers must hence, work together mostly on their English grammar learning and practical use.

7. RECOMMENDATION:

1. Teachers should be careful about their own grammar use during English communication for instruction and/ otherwise both inside and outside classroom, curriculum and school.
2. Students should develop habits of reading newspaper, story books apart from their own text books.
3. Students should have the habit of using English dictionary for vocabulary increase.
4. English communication workshop both for teachers and students can be arranged in school.

8. CONCLUSION:

The present study focused on the communication challenges faced by Class IX students in an ESL classroom of a Bengali-medium government school. The findings reveal that many students have difficulties with vocabulary, sentence formation, and fluency in English. A lack of confidence and a fear of making mistakes often make them feel shy and hesitant to use English during classroom interactions. As a result, students rely more on their mother tongue. Teachers also expressed that encouraging students to speak in English is a challenging task, even when speaking activities are included in lessons. This reflects a clear gap between learning English as a subject and using it in real-life communication. The study highlights the importance of improving classroom communication to develop English grammar skills. A supportive classroom environment, with regular speaking practice, group work, and interactive activities, can help students become more confident and gradually improve their English communication abilities.

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