ADULT SPEED LITERACY USING TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

While many countries are working on their generations to acquire the 21st century skills to help effectively compete with the fast growing world, Pakistan, in contrast, still struggles for the basic needs to live; 39 percent of the population is living in multidimensional poverty, with no or less access to clean water, food, shelter and electricity. Their troubles and adverse conditions have led them to physical and mental oppressions.

This research is extension of the previous research done on Paulo Freire theory which was a success. In this research, the same theory will be implemented but with help of technology. Using technology in this pilot study we can easily explore the effectiveness of technological pedagogies for Paulo Freire theory and then later on we can scale this project in order to empower the masses.

The participants of this study are 8 janitors employed at a private university, with their monthly income being barely beyond the lowest wage line of Pakistan, Rupees 11,000. They are either illiterate or have attended primary school education. They have only been exposed to Urdu (national language), and have no knowledge of English being their second language. Their primary school’s education was Urdu oriented, and they cannot read or write in English.

Initiating adult speed literacy for English as second language through an effective technological pedagogy is looked forward to help educate, as well as gain self-confidence, to the oppressed population of the county.

Keyword: Adult Speed Literacy, Freirian Approach, socio-economically marginalized, English as second language.

1 INTRODUCTION

The struggling and less privileged class of any society further suffers if they are unemployed, inflated and illiterate. Pakistan, initially being created to harbor people to peacefully practice their religion, is now under the attack of fundamentalist divisions and religious extremists, who target people’s peaceful religious practices through activities that result in deaths and fear of religion. Despite the policies and laws to protect the rights of minorities and otherwise, a push force is needed to move forward this less-fortunate society emotionally, morally and socially.

This research is facilitating the marginalized group of mostly uneducated adults that are employed, and are less privileged socio-economically. The economical marginalization is due to their low wage that barely meets the minimum wage line, while their social siding is on the basis of their job nature, that is, janitorial duties.

This research is implemented in order to help the adults with their literacy skills in English (being their second language). As this research is second phase of Adult Speed Literacy Program, the execution of this phase involves technology.

The results of this research compares the proficiency in language with and without the use of technology. Also, the influence of technology compliant adult speed literacy is explored in contrast to conventional learning methods.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Proclaims that most of the efforts to develop or increase literacy skills have been focused on children and adolescents (Abadzi 1994). Paulo Friere an educator and philosopher from Brazil is the major name when we discuss adult literacy, particularly adult speed literacy focusing on oppressed classes (Cruz and Gleason 2010). Conception of his work is fascinating, challenging and transformative, these traits have motivated many educational efforts. (Beckett 2012) Freirean approach revolves around the
learner, their personal and cultural experiences, which make it a learner-centered approach that involves learner in the whole learning process and that makes it participatory approach (Jurmo, 1987). (Anorve, 1989) Freirean approach is divided into three stages namely, Study of Context, Selection of words from discovered vocabulary, and the Actual Process of Literacy Training. First stage is about collecting data through informal interviews of participants where they are asked to tell us about their daily life, problems and all the stuff related (Ojokheta 2007). Second stage involves the selection of words, which are common for them and also hold significant meaning to the participants (Ojokheta 2007). All the words selected are generative in nature because they will generate some other words for the participants (Freire 1969). Third stage also has three further stages motivational sessions, the development of teaching materials, and literacy training (Ojokheta 2007).

Freirean approach is usually used without integration of any digital technology therefore this area (incorporation of technology) is less explored. Digital videos have great pedagogical importance and they motivate learner and help them to master learning at their own pace and ease of time. Digital videos are more engaging, intriguing, and provide a source for authentic learning.

3 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted as the phase two (2) of the previous study titled “Adult Speed Literacy Project for the Socio-Economically Marginalized” (Qurashi et al. 2015). Phase one focused on improving the English literacy skills of adults working in NUST through different pedagogical approaches, while this study focused on the same cause except utilization of technology. To observe the effectiveness and role of technology in enhancement of English literacy skills, the mixed method paradigm was adopted. Regarding the technology utilized, short video clips were developed using hand drawn animation software, composed of words the participants were familiar with.

The content in the clip was bilingual with audio translation of each English word followed by its usage in a sentence. The other component of the same video was introduction of a new word which was formed from the bigger word displayed in the previous part, this new word was also presented with its proper Urdu translation and sentence formation. The Paulo Freirean approach, which was followed in phase one, was adopted in this study as well. The sample size consisted of 8 participants while the intervention was carried out for 72 hours divided into a period of two weeks. A pre-test was conducted before the intervention to understand the current level of literacy skill the participants possess. The interview was designed consisting of new words extracted from their existing vocabulary.

Three levels were defined, with level A representing the lowest level in which the participant is only familiar with the word. Situated above level A is B which indicates that the participant isn’t only familiar but also knows the meaning of that word and lastly the level C representing the highest of all in which the participant knows how to use that word in a sentence. After this interview, the intervention was carried out by providing the videos in their cell phones of the new words asked in the interview where support was provided as per the need of the participant and queries raised by the participants were handled accordingly. The intervention was concluded with post-test that consisted of same questions as the pre-test determine the impact of provided technology in enhancement of their literacy skills.

3.1 Demographics of Participants

3.1.1 Economic

The selected participants belonged to the socio-economically marginalized community, who earned monthly income slightly above the lowest wage of Rs.11000 per month (Pakistan 2014). They were employed as janitors in NUST working five days a week from 9 am to 5 pm with an hour-long lunch break.

3.1.2 Age and Gender

The participants were belonged to the age group of 20-30 years and were classified as “adults” according to UNICEF (15+) (UNICEF n.d.). Furthermore, all the selected participants were male.

3.1.3 Education

Three of the participants had studied till high school (Matric) while two of them had been to school till primary level. Out of the remaining three, one had never been to school while the other two had been
kindergarten level (Urdu medium). Furthermore, none of them had received any formal education on English.

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### Educational qualifications of participants

![Educational qualifications of participants](image)

**Figure 1 Percentages of participants' academic qualifications.**

*3.1.4 Religion*

The participants belonged to different religious groups. Four of them belonged to the Christian faith; three of them were Muslims while the remaining one participant was member of the Hindu community.

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### Religious diversity of participants

![Religious diversity of participants](image)

**Figure 2 Percentages of participants' religious beliefs.**
3.1.5 Technology
As all of the Participants possessed a cell phone, were able to identify and read the numbers and letters on the dial pad, hence the videos were transferred to their phones.

3.1.6 Developing Video
These words were used to build a video, which had bilingual instructions to help the participants understand better. The video involved the right pronunciation of the word, their meaning, and sentences. All the instructions were verbal, displaying the words visually.

These videos were shared with the participants, and they were not restrained to time or place to watch them.

3.2 Phases
This research has two main phases; both the phases are influenced by Paulo Freire's guidance for Adult Speed Literacy, from 1960 in Brazil (Freire 1969). This execution was designed to expand the participants’ English Language vocabulary in both the phases. The participants of both the phases had same social and economic backgrounds.

3.2.1 Phase 1
Phase 1 was carried out through conventional pedagogy of teacher to student flow of knowledge. It spanned over four weeks. The participants were engaged into purposeful dialogues, aiming to increase their awareness for their rights and national issues. For literacy training, participants were asked to spell words, using their prior knowledge of phonics. They were then corrected to their mistakes, with appreciation. Formation of new short words from long words was also part of this study. (Qurashi et al. 2015)

3.2.2 Phase 2
Phase 2 was an extension to Phase 1. The participants were taught new English Language words, through technology.

3.2.3 Informal Interviews and Vocabulary Extraction
Initially, we interviewed them in their native language, Urdu, and extracted English Language words they were familiar with. The list of the common words in all the participants were then compiled. These words were then transformed into new small words, for example, Department and Depart.

3.2.4 Developing Video
These words were used to build a video, which had bilingual instructions to help the participants understand better. The video involved the right pronunciation of the word, their meaning, and sentences. All the instructions were verbal, displaying the words visually.

These videos were shared with the participants, without restriction in terms of time and place applied.

4 DATA ANALYSIS
We conducted a test after our intervention and the results were amazing. 7 out of 8 participants remembered all (100%) words and they can also use these words in the sentences and know the meaning of each word. Only one participant struggled to remember some words. Overall improvement was above 80% with comparison to the pre-test.

5 CONCLUSION
This report shows the results and improvements of incorporating technology in Freirean approach we can achieve better results. Technology involvement increased the engagement and retention of the participants. It was easier for participants to learn in their spare time which they find really helpful. There was significant boost in the confidence of participants.
REFERENCES


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