Puppetry Power:

Enhancing Conversation Framing Skills in Fifth-Grade Students through Innovative Language Learning Strategies

AUP School in Thenjippalam, Kerala

Introduction

This study conducted at AUP School in Thenjippalam, Kerala, sought to address a perceived deficit in conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students. Recognizing the importance of effective communication in the learning process, the Student Research Group (SRG) identified a specific concern within the fifth-grade cohort, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

To gauge the extent of the issue, a pretest was administered to all 116 fifth-grade students. This test involved the creation of dialogues based on curricular contexts, providing a baseline for assessing students' initial conversation framing skills. The results revealed an average score of 20 out of 50 across all three divisions, indicating a significant room for improvement.

In response to these findings, the research team embarked on a multi-step intervention plan. Initially, a thorough analysis of the pretest results informed the subsequent steps of the project. Recognizing the potential of the puppet theater group existing within the school, the decision was made to incorporate puppet drama as an innovative and engaging learning tool to enhance conversation framing skills.

The intervention process commenced with a workshop designed to immerse students in the world of puppet theatre. This included the presentation of a captivating play prepared and performed in English, aiming to captivate the students' interest and set the stage for active participation. The students were then divided into six groups, each tasked with crafting and practicing dialogues within the context of puppetry. Additionally, the workshop provided hands-on experience in puppet making, further enriching the students' understanding of this creative form of expression.

Each group was challenged to collaborate and present a puppet play, incorporating the dialogues they had prepared during the workshop. This not only encouraged teamwork but also provided a platform for students to showcase their newfound conversation framing skills.

Building on the workshop experience, the intervention extended to English classes, where students were assigned the task of preparing and presenting dialogues within a constrained timeframe of five minutes. This approach aimed to reinforce the skills acquired during the workshop, allowing students to develop and refine their conversation framing abilities over the course of six months.

The post-test, conducted six months after the initial assessment, served as the concluding measure of the project's effectiveness. The results indicated a significant improvement, with the average score increasing from 20 to 38 out of 50. This demonstrated the positive impact of integrating puppet drama into the educational curriculum at AUP School in addressing the identified deficiency in conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students.

This study underscores the significance of innovative and experiential teaching methods in fostering essential communication skills, emphasizing the transformative potential of puppet drama as a means to enhance students' abilities in framing meaningful and contextually appropriate conversations.

Objectives:

1. Assessment of Conversation Framing Skills:

• Conduct a pretest to evaluate the baseline conversation framing skills of fifth-grade students at AUP School, Thenjippalam, using contextual cues from the curricular textbook.

2. Identification of Deficiencies:

• Analyse the pretest results to identify specific areas of weakness in conversation framing skills among students, focusing on both individual and collective performance across different divisions.

3. Implementation of Puppet Drama Workshop:

• Integrate a puppet theatre workshop into the school curriculum, aiming to enhance conversation framing skills by immersing students in activities such as dialogue creation, puppet making, and collaborative puppet play performances.

4. Classroom Integration and Application:

• Extend the acquired skills beyond the workshop by assigning English classes the task of preparing and presenting dialogues using puppetry, encouraging continuous practice and application of conversation framing techniques.

5. Post-Intervention Evaluation:

• Conduct a post-test after six months to measure the effectiveness of the puppet drama intervention, assessing the improvement in conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students based on the comparison of post-test results with the initial pretest scores.

Methodology:

The methodology employed in this project at AUP School, Thenjippalam, Kerala, revolves around a systematic and multi-step approach to address the identified deficiency in conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students. The research methodology encompasses various stages, including assessment, intervention, and evaluation, with a particular focus on the integration of puppet drama as an innovative teaching tool.

1. Assessment Phase:

The project begins with a comprehensive assessment of the conversation framing skills of fifth-grade students. A pretest is administered to all 116 students, involving the

creation of dialogues based on contextual cues from the curricular textbook. This initial step serves as a baseline to gauge the students' proficiency in framing meaningful conversations. The test aims to capture individual and collective abilities, providing a holistic understanding of the existing skill set among the students.

2. Identification of Deficiencies:

Following the administration of the pretest, a meticulous analysis of the results is conducted. The average scores and performance across different divisions are examined to identify specific areas of weakness in conversation framing skills. This stage is crucial for tailoring the subsequent intervention strategies to address the identified deficiencies effectively. The goal is to pinpoint individual and collective challenges, enabling a targeted and nuanced approach in the intervention phase.

3. Intervention - Puppet Drama Workshop:

Recognizing the potential of the puppet theatre group within the school, the intervention phase involves the integration of a puppet drama workshop. This workshop is designed to immerse students in a creative and interactive learning environment, leveraging puppetry as a means to enhance conversation framing skills.

The workshop consists of various components:

Presentation of a Prepared Play:

The students are exposed to a puppet play performed in English. This component aims to captivate their interest, providing a real-world example of puppetry in action.

Group Activities:

Students are divided into six groups, each tasked with crafting and practicing dialogues within the context of puppetry. This collaborative approach encourages teamwork and allows students to experiment with dialogue creation in a supportive environment.

Puppet Making:

Hands-on experience in puppet making is incorporated into the workshop. This not only adds a practical dimension to the learning process but also enhances the students' understanding of the art form.

Group Puppet Play Performances:

 The workshop culminates in each group presenting a puppet play, incorporating the dialogues they have prepared. This live performance aspect encourages creativity, teamwork, and the application of conversation framing skills in a dynamic setting.

4. Classroom Integration and Application:

Building on the skills acquired during the workshop, the intervention extends to regular English classes. Students are assigned the task of preparing and presenting dialogues using puppetry within a limited timeframe of 0.5 minutes. This classroom integration ensures a seamless transition from the workshop to the broader academic context, allowing students to continually practice and apply conversation framing techniques.

5. Post-Intervention Evaluation:

The final stage involves a post-test conducted six months after the initial assessment. This evaluation serves as a conclusive measure of the project's effectiveness. By comparing the post-test results with the baseline pretest scores, the research team can quantitatively assess the improvement in conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students. The goal is to validate the impact of the puppet drama intervention and identify any sustained enhancements in the targeted skills.

This methodology encompasses a holistic and iterative process, starting with assessment, followed by targeted intervention, integration into regular classroom activities, and concluding with a comprehensive post-intervention evaluation. The utilization of puppet drama as a central teaching tool adds a dynamic and creative dimension to the learning process, fostering an engaging environment for students to develop and refine their conversation framing skills.

Results and Analysis:

Enhancing Conversation Framing Skills through Puppet Drama

The implementation of the puppet drama workshop at AUP School, Thenjippalam, Kerala, yielded promising results in enhancing conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students. The project's success is evaluated through a thorough analysis of pretest and post-test results, considering both individual and collective performance across different divisions.

1. Pretest Results: Establishing the Baseline

The initial pretest involved all 116 fifth-grade students and focused on assessing their conversation framing skills. The task required students to create dialogues based on contextual cues from the curricular textbook. The average score across the three divisions was found to be 20 out of 50. This baseline score served as a crucial reference point for evaluating the effectiveness of the subsequent intervention. The pretest results indicated a notable gap in conversation framing skills among the students, emphasizing the need for targeted and innovative interventions. The analysis of individual performances highlighted specific areas of weakness, guiding the design of the puppet drama workshop to address these deficiencies.

2. Post-Intervention Workshop: Hands-On Learning and Collaboration

The puppet drama workshop, a central component of the intervention, aimed to immerse students in a dynamic and creative learning environment. The workshop comprised various elements, including the presentation of a poorly prepared play, group activities for dialogue creation, hands-on puppet making, and culminated in group puppet play performances.

2.1 Presentation of the Prepared Play:

The presentation of a puppet play in English not only captivated students' interest but also provided a tangible example of how puppetry could be utilized as a medium for communication. This segment aimed to inspire creativity and showcase the potential for using puppet drama in framing dialogues effectively.

2.2 Group Activities and Dialogue Creation:

Divided into six groups, students engaged in collaborative activities to create dialogues within the context of puppetry. This hands-on approach encouraged teamwork and allowed students to experiment with dialogue creation, fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment. The group activities aimed to build on individual strengths while addressing specific weaknesses identified in the pretest analysis.

2.3 Hands-On Puppet Making:

The inclusion of puppet making as a workshop component provided students with practical experience in crafting their own puppets. This hands-on activity not only added a creative dimension to the learning process but also deepened students' understanding of the art form. The combination of dialogue creation and puppet making aimed to reinforce the connection between language expression and visual representation.

2.4 Group Puppet Play Performances:

The workshop's culmination involved each group presenting a puppet play, incorporating the dialogues they had prepared. This live performance aspect emphasized the practical application of conversation framing skills in a dynamic setting. It encouraged creativity, expression, and effective communication within a collaborative context.

3. Classroom Integration: Applying Skills in Academic Context

Following the workshop, the intervention seamlessly extended into regular English classes. Students were tasked with preparing and presenting dialogues using puppetry within a constrained timeframe of 5 minutes. This phase aimed to ensure the continuous application and reinforcement of conversation framing techniques in a broader academic context.

4. Post-Intervention Evaluation: Assessing Improvement

The conclusive post-test, conducted six months after the initial pretest, served as the primary measure of the project's success. The post-test aimed to evaluate the sustained impact of the puppet drama intervention on conversation framing skills. The results were analysed by comparing individual and collective scores with the baseline pretest scores. The post-test results demonstrated a significant improvement in conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students. The average score increased from 20 to 38 out of 50. This quantitative enhancement validated the effectiveness of the puppet drama workshop in addressing the initially identified deficiencies.

5. Individual and Collective Improvement:

An in-depth analysis of individual performances revealed that a majority of students exhibited notable progress in their conversation framing abilities. The workshop's emphasis on hands-on learning, collaboration, and practical application translated into a comprehensive enhancement of both individual and collective skills.

6. Impact on Confidence and Creativity:

Beyond the numerical improvement, qualitative observations indicated a positive impact on students' confidence and creativity. Engaging in puppetry and live performances not only improved their ability to frame dialogues but also fostered a sense of self-assurance in expressing ideas. The creative aspect of the workshop contributed to unleashing students' imaginative potential.

7. Sustainability and Future Implications:

The success of the project raises considerations for the sustainability of such interventions and their integration into the broader curriculum. The puppet drama workshop showcased the potential for innovative teaching methods to enhance essential skills, suggesting that similar approaches could be employed in addressing various aspects of language and communication development. In conclusion, the results and analysis of this project at AUP School demonstrate the positive impact of integrating puppet drama into the educational framework.

The significant improvement in conversation framing skills, coupled with qualitative enhancements in confidence and creativity, underscores the efficacy of hands-on, collaborative, and creative learning methodologies. This project not only addresses immediate academic needs but also highlights the potential for sustained and holistic skill development among students.

Positive Outcomes:

1. Improved Conversation Framing Skills:

The primary positive outcome is a substantial improvement in students' ability to frame meaningful and contextually appropriate dialogues, enhancing their communication skills.

2. Enhanced Creative Expression:

The integration of puppet drama fosters creative expression, allowing students to explore and express ideas in a dynamic and imaginative manner, contributing to overall language development.

3. Increased Confidence in Communication:

Engaging in live puppet play performances and presenting dialogues in class contributes to increased confidence, empowering students to express themselves more effectively in various academic and social settings.

4. Effective Collaboration and Teamwork:

   - Group activities during the puppet drama workshop promote collaborative learning, enhancing teamwork and communication among students as they work together to create and perform puppet plays.

5. Hands-On Learning Experience:

The hands-on puppet making and practical application of dialogue creation provide a tangible, experiential learning experience, reinforcing theoretical concepts and making the learning process more engaging.

6. Application of Language Skills in a Real-World Context:

The project facilitates the application of language skills in a real-world context, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical use, thereby reinforcing language acquisition.

7. Increased Interest in English Language Learning:

The innovative approach of using puppetry in English language education captures students' interest, making the learning process more enjoyable and fostering a positive attitude towards language learning.

8. Cultural Appreciation and Exposure:

Puppet drama, with its cultural and artistic elements, provides students with exposure to different forms of expression, promoting cultural appreciation and broadening their understanding of diverse communication methods.

9. Long-Term Skill Retention:

The sustained improvement observed in the post-test results suggests that the skills acquired during the project have the potential for long-term retention, contributing to the students' overall language development.

10. Transferable Skills Beyond Language Learning:

Beyond language enhancement, the project instils transferable skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability, which are valuable in various aspects of academic and personal development.

These positive outcomes of this project extend beyond the immediate improvement in conversation framing skills, encompassing a holistic enhancement of language proficiency, creativity, collaboration, and overall positive attitudes towards learning.

Conclusion:

The implementation of the puppet drama project at AUP School in Thenjippalam, Kerala, has proven to be a transformative and effective intervention for enhancing conversation framing skills among fifth-grade students. The comprehensive methodology, involving pretests, a puppet drama workshop, classroom integration, and post-tests, has yielded positive and multifaceted outcomes, contributing to the overall educational experience of the students.

The project's success is underscored by the significant improvement observed in conversation framing skills. The initial pretest results, indicating an average score of 20 out of 50, served as a crucial baseline for assessing the impact of the intervention. The subsequent post-test revealed a remarkable increase, with the average score soaring to 38 out of 50. This quantitative enhancement substantiates the efficacy of incorporating

puppet drama as a pedagogical tool to address the identified deficiency in conversation framing skills.

Beyond the numerical improvements, the study unveiled a spectrum of positive outcomes. Students engaged in hands-on learning experiences, from crafting puppets to creating dialogues, fostering a dynamic and interactive educational environment. The puppet drama workshop not only enhanced communication skills but also nurtured creativity, self-expression, and teamwork. The live performances and classroom presentations empowered students with increased confidence, providing them with a platform to showcase their newly acquired skills.

The sustained improvement observed in the post-test results suggests that the benefits of the puppet drama intervention have the potential for long-term retention. This hints at the enduring impact of innovative teaching methods in nurturing essential skills that extend beyond immediate academic assessments.

As we reflect on this study, it becomes evident that integrating creative and cultural elements into the curriculum can yield substantial benefits for students. The puppet drama project at AUP School exemplifies the potential of experiential learning, not only in language development but also in fostering a positive attitude towards learning, collaboration, and creative expression.

This study encourages educators to explore diverse and engaging teaching methodologies that cater to the multifaceted needs of students, ultimately enriching their educational journey and preparing them for a dynamic and communicative future.