

# Effect of Hello English Programme of Government of Kerala for Enhancing Communication Skills among Primary School Students

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## Abstract

*Achievements in maintaining the quality of education in Kerala's classrooms are, no doubt, appreciable. The strategies and innovative projects we practiced here are a model for other states and India. All over the country in the field of education, the curriculum and textbooks play an important role in teaching. But when transacting the curriculum, innovative methods should be adopted with new changing life and surroundings. For years, in government and aided schools, the teaching of English has not fully equipped learners to use English accurately in speech and writing. At the primary level, teachers who have not received basic training in teaching the English language are forced to teach English. Most teachers are afraid of teaching English because they are concerned about grammatical errors when speaking. English teaching has aided in the rapid proliferation of private schools that use English as a medium of instruction. English class at the primary level in Kerala is set to undergo a makeover with Hello English. SSA Kerala (in the academic year 2016–17), in collaboration with SCERT and IT@School, devised a program to improve the quality of English instruction in the state. The project is called 'Hello English', and it has two main goals: improving teacher quality and increasing learner proficiency in using English. As a part of this programme, SSA introduced a teacher training module containing activities under three-chapter heads: (1) Initiating communication, (2) Building teacher talk and (3) Presenting stories interactively. Students in the state's primary schools are the beneficiaries of this program.*

**Keywords:** Hello English programme, education, diversification, communication, student interaction

## INTRODUCTION

The standard of English usage among students and teachers in government and aided schools is the main cause of concern. Hello English, is a learning enhancement programme started on 28th October 2016. This program was developed by SSA Kerala with the assistance of SCERT (State Council of Education Research and Training) and IT@School to improve the standard of English learning in the state [1]. It pauses two objectives: improving teacher quality and increasing learner English proficiency.

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Received Date: August 10, 2022  
Accepted Date: September 06, 2022  
Published Date: September 12, 2022

**Citation:** Anupama R. Effect of Hello English Programme of Government of Kerala for Enhancing Communication Skills among Primary School Students. NOLEGEIN Journal of Advertising & Brand Management. 2022; 5(1): 23–30p.

From infancy to adulthood, we learn by expanding our knowledge through experiences generated through play, according to Piaget's role in constructivist teaching, which are required for learning. According to Dewey's concept of influential education, education must engage with and broaden experience, as well as the exploration of thinking and reflection associated with the role of educators [2]. Their ideas are now incorporated into the larger progressive education movement [3]. As a result, children learn best when they are allowed to construct their own personal understanding through experience and reflection. A review of the

Hello English training module reveals that the process is designed to impart interesting and engaging learning strategies that go beyond the textbook and immerse the students in the language, thereby making them proficient in English [4–7]. For instance, the proposed strategy includes the use of interactive learning methods such as narration, role-play, total physical response (TPR), dramatization, mining, and choreography encouraging interaction and self-expression. In this context, the project Hello English gains significance [8–11].

The opportunities provided in the Hello English classrooms help the teachers to overcome their inhibition in using English for various kinds of interactive and communicative purposes in their classrooms [12–14]. The teacher training module aims to develop confidence in using English in various communicative situations, both formal and informal, and oral and written.

Presenting stories captivantly is an effective strategy for language acquisition. In the context of second language, learning stories reduces the anxiety of formal learning and eases many an impediment in this course [15–17]. If used imaginatively, stories have great potential to reach out to the learner's mind, body, and psyche. Stories when presented, transform an otherwise one-sided activity into a new, dynamic and collaborative activity. It is a fact that story telling relates the most innate and important forms of communication.

For years, in government and aided schools, the teaching of English has not fully equipped learners to use English accurately in speech and writing. At the primary level, teachers who have not received basic training in teaching the English language, are forced to teach English [18]. Most teachers are afraid of teaching English because they think there may be grammatical errors while speaking. English class at the primary level in Kerala is set to undergo a makeover with Hello English. So, the investigator has attempted to study Hello English program for teaching English at primary level [19].

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the prospects of the teaching strategies used in the Hello English program.
2. To find out the problems of the teaching strategies employed as part of Hello English program.
3. To draw out impressions of teachers with regard to introduction of the Hello English program.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Greetings, ENGLISH-SSA Kerala, with the support of SCERT and IT@School, devised a program to improve the standard of English teaching in the state in 2017–18 [19]. The project is called 'Hello English', and it has two main goals: improving teacher quality and increasing learner proficiency in using English.

## Sample Selected for the Study

Table 1 shows the sample selected for this study.

**Table 1.** Sample for study.

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Total number of teachers | 30  |
| Total number of students | 230 |

## Tools Used for the Study

The selection of suitable and appropriate tools or devices for the experiment and data collection is an important procedure in successful research. The tools to conduct the study are:

1. Observation schedule;
2. Checklist;
3. Unstructured interview schedule; and
4. Hello English Teacher training module.

### Statistical Techniques Used

- Percentage analysis, and
- State.

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study was analytic-cum-survey method. Tools used for this study are an observation Schedule (containing 50 items), Checklist (to check teachers' level of self-confidence), and a Questionnaire (to get the impression of teachers regarding this program). The sample selected for this survey is 30 teachers of primary level who were teaching English at primary school level and trained in Hello English program. Students of rural and urban area schools (6 schools) are also selected as a sample group. Percentage analysis is used to analyse the tools.

### Analysis of Tools Used for this Study

#### *Hello English Teacher Training Module*

This module included three units (Figure 1) (Tables 2–3).

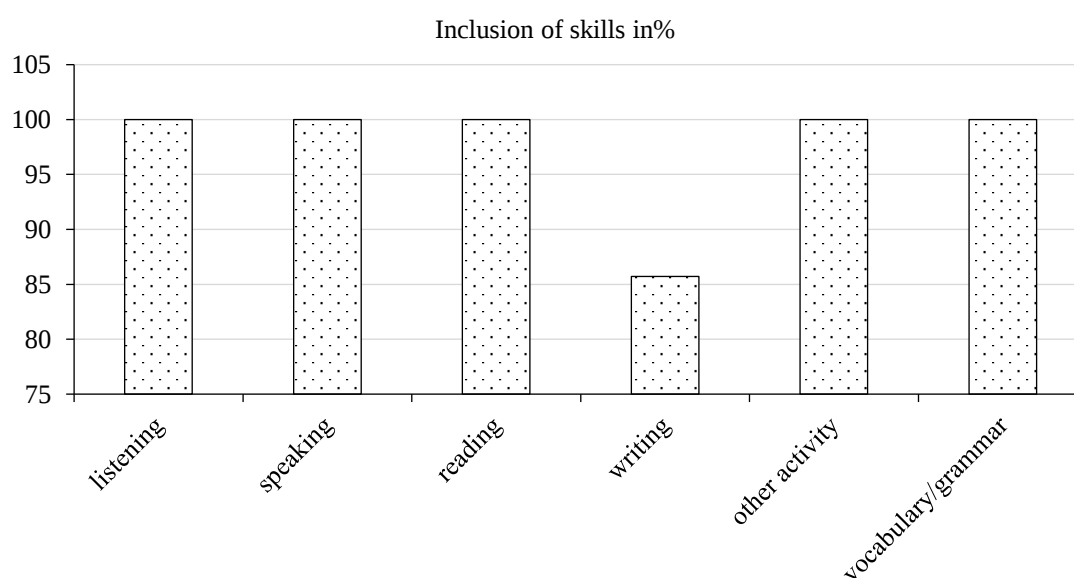
In the above observation schedule, the item number 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 41 are negative questions.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 49 etc. items are positive questions and prove the teachers are handling classes using the strategies employed as part of Hello English programme and show improvement in the English classes.

8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 18, 19, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 37, 45, 46, 48, 49 items show the improvement and participation of students in the English classes when taught through Hello English programme.

5, 6, 13, 16, 28, 30, 36 items indicate that students and teachers together performance leads to a fruitful class.

Item number 22 can answer Yes, No or Sometimes, because it depends upon the classroom situation. 50th item can be practiced in necessary situations.



**Figure 1.** Skills included in module.

**Table 2.** Analysis of observation schedule.

| Statements                                                                                              | Yes  | No   | Sometimes |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-----------|
| 1. Teacher used appropriate teaching aids based on the needs of students                                | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 2. Teacher was able to identify the appropriate strategy to use for providing practice                  | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 3. Teacher was able to speak fearlessly                                                                 | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 4. Teacher used simple language in the classroom                                                        | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 5. Teacher encouraged students to communicate                                                           | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 6. Teacher ensured active participation of students to provide TPR (Total Physical Response)            | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 7. Teacher introduced new activities relevant to new situations                                         | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 8. Students spoke fearlessly                                                                            | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 9. Students acted according to teacher's command                                                        | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 10. Students were active participants in the Hello English classroom                                    | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 11. Students appeared to like English when learning through Hello English                               | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 12. Teacher appeared more confident when teaching using Hello English materials.                        | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 13. English classes become more active when practice was provided through Hello English                 | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 14. Teachers were able to overcome their inhibition in using English                                    | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 15. Teacher gave importance for oral presentation by students                                           | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 16. Teacher practiced writing through interesting ways                                                  | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 17. Teacher narrated stories with proper action and voice modulation                                    | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 18. Students were able to comment about stories in simple sentences                                     | 75   | 12.5 | 12.5      |
| 19. Teacher was able to assess the improvement along with classroom activities                          | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 20. Teacher denied students the opportunity to talk                                                     | 0    | 100  | 0         |
| 21. Teacher talk appeared mechanical                                                                    | 0    | 87.5 | 12.5      |
| 22. Teacher purposefully talked in the classroom                                                        | 25   | 0    | 75        |
| 23. Teacher talk appeared to be linear                                                                  | 12.5 | 87.5 | 0         |
| 24. Teacher talk appeared monotonous                                                                    | 0    | 0    | 100       |
| 25. Teacher talked more and failed to elicit response from children                                     | 25   | 62.5 | 12.5      |
| 26. Teacher faced difficulty in giving comprehensible teacher talk appropriate to the level of learners | 12.5 | 62.5 | 25        |
| 27. Teacher gave practice in choral singing                                                             | 87.5 | 12.5 | 0         |
| 28. Skit, role play, mime etc. provided, could enhance pupil's interest                                 | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 29. Teacher elicited rhythmic lines from students                                                       | 87.5 | 12.5 | 0         |
| 30. Teacher asks pupils to draw according to the teacher's command                                      | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 31. Pupil are capable of presenting the theme in discourses                                             | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 32. Students actively participated in games                                                             | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 33. Teacher displayed the content attractively                                                          | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 34. Teacher used models                                                                                 | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 35. Teacher led discussions                                                                             | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 36. Mother tongue was used in appropriate situations                                                    | 25   | 37.5 | 37.5      |
| 37. Children could identify the main characters in the discourse after the presentation of teacher      | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 38. Teacher helped the students to identify anchors or models based on the criteria                     | 85.7 | 0    | 14.3      |
| 39. Teacher provided feedback to students focused on the learning targets or criteria                   | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 40. Teacher links other subjects to English                                                             | 50   | 12.5 | 37.5      |
| 41. Teacher approached English as that of subjects                                                      | 0    | 100  | 0         |
| 42. Teacher used certain formats to record students' achievements                                       | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 43. Teacher wrote the responses of students and remedies in the teaching manual                         | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 44. Teacher exhibited student's work on the wall                                                        | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 45. Teacher compiled evidence in the portfolio                                                          | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 46. Teacher appreciated students to motivate them                                                       | 100  | 0    | 0         |
| 47. Teacher appears to enjoy teaching                                                                   | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 48. Children appeared to like English classes than before                                               | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 49. Collaborative learning was promoted in the class                                                    | 87.5 | 0    | 12.5      |
| 50. Team teaching was more effective in the English class                                               | 37.5 | 0    | 62.5      |

**Table 3.** Consolidation of the responses to the items of Observation Schedule.

| Name of teacher   | Class | Strength | Rural/urban | Positive responses (%) | Negative responses (%) | Other responses (%) |
|-------------------|-------|----------|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Ms. Deepa CK.     | 3     | 10       | urban       | 78                     | 4                      | 18                  |
| Mr. Sandeep       | 1     | 35       | urban       | 88                     | 6                      | 6                   |
| Ms. Nisharani     | 4     | 25       | rural       | 84                     | 6                      | 10                  |
| Ms Sreevidya MK.  | 1     | 25       | rural       | 92                     | 2                      | 6                   |
| A.V. Jayachandran | 6     | 28       | rural       | 84                     | 0                      | 16                  |
| Ms. Vasanthi T.   | 7     | 45       | rural       | 90                     | 2                      | 8                   |
| Ms. Karuna K.     | 2     | 32       | rural       | 94                     | 2                      | 4                   |
| Ms. Saranya Dev   | 3     | 30       | rural       | 94                     | 1                      | 5                   |
|                   |       |          |             | 88%                    | 2.9%                   | 9.1%                |

### FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF HELLO ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING MODULE

1. Practice using the module helps to reduce inhibition of teachers and improve their ability to speak English effectively and with confidence.
2. Much importance is given to improvement of basic skills along with other activities like role play, storytelling, choral singing and Total Physical Response.
3. It helps teachers to develop their own strategies and to design activities and games according to the content.
4. The training gave importance to encouraging teachers in the use of textbooks and other resources more creatively.
5. In each unit, the reflection page in the Teaching Manual based on the experiences provided, helps teachers to assess and identify their own strengths and weakness in using English.
6. Try-out classes conducted as part of course made the group of teachers more powerful and confident than before.

### Findings from the Analysis of Observation Schedule

1. Teachers are making use of teaching aids based on the needs of the student.
2. Teachers use different strategies like storytelling, skits, role play and miming.
3. Teachers conduct games regularly.
4. Hello English teachers are capable of changing strategies and adopting appropriate ones for providing practice.
5. There was emphasis on teacher talk.
6. Teacher's gestures made use and of action.
7. A differently abled (deaf and dumb) student was found to closely follow the lip movement of a teacher in its attempt to speak.
8. There was emphasis on use of TLM prepared by the teachers.
9. Teachers were found to use English throughout the class.
10. TPR is an essential part of content presentation which enables the children to participate as a team.
11. Learners were found to show interest to the TPR.
12. TPR connects all language elements so that the children who have talent in Arts and games get more nourished, besides achieving many other aspects.
13. Oral presentation, practice writing, narration of stories, choral singing etc. can be practiced through interesting ways.
14. In the earlier classes like First Standard and Second Standard, mother tongue is also used to transact the content.
15. Children can act according to the teacher's commands.
16. Practicing daily was found to aid in attainment of efficiency.
17. Different subject classes were found to be linked with English.
18. The approach to English changed from that of subject to language.

19. Teachers got a clear idea about the planning and regular writing of Teaching Manual. It helped them not only in planning but also in reflection of their own work to improve themselves also.
20. Changes, remedies, follow up activities etc. were found to be systematically recorded in the Teaching Manual.
21. Portfolio files revealed the performance of the student in English which in turn helped the child's parent to recognize the progress.
22. Team teaching and collaborative learning is practiced.
23. Teachers were found to collect ideas to present in CPTA meeting.
24. Teachers were found to compile evidences of achievements of students in their portfolio.
25. Teachers elicited responses using objects.
26. Teachers made use of Wordle for recalling and in making sentences and rhymes.
27. Teachers attempted effectively to transform classes into theatre.
28. Teachers ensured participation of all students.
29. Teachers made use of ICT.
30. Students were found to speak simple English with confidence. They could answer questions about the content of stories.
31. Children are active participants in the English class. They acted according to teacher's commands and participated in role-play, skits, mimes and choral singing.
32. All children are equally considered. Teacher gave special attention to the slow learners and differently abled students and assisted them in participating in group activities and other classroom work.
33. Differently abled children were also found to grasp through TPR (Total Physical Response). TPR provides audio visual experience along with activity-oriented presentations.
34. Attractive models and teaching aids were found to evoke interest in studies.
35. The magic wall exhibited in classroom showed that teacher connected other subjects with English.
36. Basic concepts in Mathematics can be taught easily through this strategy. Rhymes easily helped them in counting, calculating, grouping, drawing and writing.
37. Participation can be ensured through role-plays.
38. Learners were found to practice properly LSRW without burden and through play way method.
39. Learning happens unknowingly. Beyond classroom walls, students were found to like playing. Games are essential parts of Hello English method. The games designed for this strategy helped the students to learn unknowingly.
40. The students were found to conduct English assembly.
41. English club became active under Hello English programme.
42. Writing and reading became clearer.
43. Learners were found to show interest in using English.
44. Learners were given English diary writing tasks.

### Findings from the Analysis of Checklist

Teachers are confident in working with peers.

1. Teachers began to participate actively in group discussions of training sessions.
2. Without bothering about the topic, many of the teachers can express their ideas and thoughts after getting trained with Hello English.
3. Discomfort, inferiority complex, in security, anxiety etc. were reduced while interacting with peers, students, colleagues and parents.
4. Some teachers still believe that others have better English than they do.
5. Nervousness in replying to other's questions, gradually reduced with Hello English.
6. The repertoire of vocabulary improved.
7. Hello English programme helped practicing teachers to overcome the limitations as an English teacher.

### **Findings from the Interview Schedule Response of Hello English Teachers**

1. Teachers became more confident about the English classes than before. So, they were ready to handle any sort of lessons without any inhibitions.
2. After introducing Hello English programme, teachers got a concrete idea about writing English Teaching Manual, which helped them not only in transacting the content but in adding more works according to the difficulty level. Writing reflection notes helped teachers in their own development.
3. Hello English programme established a triangular relationship between student, teacher and parents. Parents are more satisfied with government and aided schools.
4. Students were found to use English throughout the day. English Club and English Corner became live through this programme. Daily assembly and day celebration conducted in English gave an impression of English medium schools.
5. Teachers got chance to communicate only in English.
6. Learning became interesting both to teachers and students than before.
7. Initial level planning takes more time. A lot of hard work is to be done to actualize Hello English programme.
8. More time is needed to prepare TLM, TM and scripts for drama, role-play etc.
9. Hello English programme was intended to sharpen the skills LSRW. And it takes place mainly through fearless and enjoyable activities like games, TPR, role play, skits, storytelling, choral singing, drawing and drama. For actualizing these activities, students have to utilize classroom as a stage and this leads scope for improving their spatial intelligence and multiple intelligence.
10. More fund is needed to bring raw materials to make TLM.
11. Teachers like team teaching in some situations.

### **CONCLUSION**

The present study has been an immensely rewarding process and it has helped the researcher to find answers to the doubts that occurred to a great extent. In addition to practicing basic skills, LSRW through other activities, students become dynamic, and teachers become fearless through Hello English programme. This programme can be practiced in all classes with the help of Resource teachers. Enough fund should be provided to schools and time bound monitoring and support is to be provided for making this programme more effective. A few other things that need to be addressed include increasing training sessions, giving training to all teachers, Allowing more financial assistance, Setting up of smart class rooms, Providing TLM with the help of artists, Conducting TLM making workshops, Providing books of short stories, rhymes games etc. to schools, Performance appraisal of teachers.

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