

Teaching Basic English Communication Skills to Young Learners through an Actional and Functional Model for Primary School Level

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Abstract: This study aims to examine whether there is a significant difference in young learners' basic English communication skills before and after being taught using the Actional Functional Model. The research employed a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest approach. The population consisted of 20 sixth-grade students from a primary school, with the entire class serving as the sample for the study. The data were collected through a pretest, a treatment phase, and a posttest, to evaluate the learners' progress. To analyze the data, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was utilized in SPSS version 23, as the data were found to be not normally distributed. The analysis revealed a significant improvement in the students' basic English communication skills following the intervention, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a). In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the use of the Actional Functional Model contributes to improved English communication skills among young learners.

Keywords: Basic English Communication Skills, Young Learners, Actional and Functional Model

Introduction

English in Indonesia has been part of the curriculum taught from primary school up to university level. Many efforts were made by the Department of Education to improve English teaching, one of which was by revising the English curriculum regularly. However, the goal of teaching is influenced by many factors. Teaching English at primary school as a local content subject, for instance, here the learners are expected to recognize English and have strong English basics. Furthermore, the role of a teacher is extremely demanding as a motivator, facilitator, educator, etc is most important thing is to apply the effective ways of teaching and various methods suitable for learners. It is the teacher who decides what to teach, who models and presents the new materials, and who selects supporting materials for classroom use (Asher in Richards and Rodgers, 1986). In other words, those should be done to stimulate and facilitate students to learn a foreign language, so that they do not think the process of learning English is a very difficult thing.

It is clearly seen that a qualified English teacher has to be able to look for the most efficient way and must strive to make the class interesting, concerned with motivating, stimulating, as well as facilitating the learners, particularly in teaching children. The method by which students are taught must have some effect on their motivation (Harmer, 1985). Similarly, as noted by Linse (2005) that as teachers, it is significant that learners are provided with the language they can comprehend. Indeed, it is obvious that the teacher is very responsible for

providing learning in order that the learners will feel well motivated and comfortable in learning English, and it will then affect the students' learning process and achievement. Above all, learning a language should be enjoyable. Learners who are relaxed and happy are more responsive to learning and more easily acquire confidence.

Furthermore, an essential consideration for educators, as outlined in the K-6 English Syllabus and Support Document (1994), is the recognition that young learners thrive through active engagement and hands-on experiences. According to this framework, teachers must create a learning environment where students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in the learning process. Additionally, the notion by Harmer (1985) emphasizes that children require frequent changes in activity to maintain engagement, highlighting the need for tasks that are both stimulating and capable of arousing their curiosity. In particular, young learners tend to be less receptive to traditional, passive modes of instruction and are more likely to benefit from dynamic, interactive approaches that encourage movement and involvement (they will usually not sit and listen).

Teaching English through the action and function method (AFM) is one of the teaching methods appropriate to teach children learning a new language by stimulating and involving them to be more active. It focuses on the use of language and body action expressed to give meanings based on the first experience of children learning their mother tongue. It is a method of language teaching whose rational approach is based on a child's experience of acquiring their mother tongue. (Zainil, 2004). Then, as noted that AFM has successfully produced the learner's fluent verbal and non-verbal communication and high motivation through the process from comprehensible input to the learners' comprehensible output. It focuses on Action and Function modeled by the teacher and done by learners. The action is the learner's response to the teacher's actional model, which is taught right from the beginning. The function is the learner's response to the teacher's functional model, which is taught gradually in the process of teaching (Zainil, 2008).

In relation to the use of Actional and Functional Model (AFM), several studies have been conducted across various educational levels and research designs. Notably, Sihombing (2008) carried out a classroom action research design at the Senior High School level, focusing on vocabulary mastery. At the Junior High School level, Purwanti (2024) utilized a similar approach to enhance students' speaking skills, while Yosefa (2021) also explored Actional Functional Model in the context of teaching speaking. Additionally, experimental research designs have been applied by Simanjuntak et al. (2018) to investigate the Actional and Functional Model in speaking instruction. However, it is noteworthy that the majority of studies in this domain have been conducted at the secondary education level, with few studies of its implementation at the primary school level. Therefore, there is a significant need for research focusing on the use of Actional and Functional Model in teaching to young learners, specifically basic English communication skills for the primary school level.

Furthermore, the data obtained from English teachers indicate that primary school learners face considerable difficulties in acquiring basic English communication skills. This challenge underscores the critical importance and timely relevance of the present study. In response, the research seeks to address this issue by focusing on the teaching of basic English communication through the Actional and Functional Model for the primary school level.

Methods

This study utilized a pre-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest model described by Gay and Airasian (2000), in which a single group is assessed before and after the intervention. It was conducted at a primary school in Pekanbaru, one class comprising 20 students served as the sample. Data collection involved administering a basic English communication test appropriate to their grade-level topics, including introductions,

classroom objects, imperative sentences, days of the week, daily routines, and family members. The test consisted of two administrations: a pretest to determine baseline communication skills, followed by the teaching treatment using the Actional and Functional Model, and concluding with a posttest to measure progress.

The Scores of pretest and posttest were classified into level of categories based on the interval scale adapted from Sampelolo (2020): 0–24 (very poor), 25–49 (poor), 50–74 (moderate), 75–84 (good), and 85–100 (excellent). Wilcoxon signed-rank test for a non-parametric test was then performed to compare the pretest and posttest results since the data were not normally distributed. According to Pallant (2020), Wilcoxon signed-rank test is used when participants are measured on two occasions, or under two different conditions. Thus, this statistical procedure provide a valid method for determining the significant difference in young learners' basic English communication skills before and after using the Actional and Functional Model.

Results and Discussion

Result

The aim of this current study was to examine if there is significant difference in Basic English Communication between the students taught using and without Actional and Functional Model. The data were taken from one class consisting of 20 students in this research. To answer the research question, some steps were carried out. First, the students' basic English communication skills were tested for each class before the experiment was conducted, or called a pretest. Second, after the treatment, the test of basic English communication skills were given or called a posttest. Lastly, the results of the pretest and post-test were compared to see the mean difference. Those are described as in the following.

The students' basic English communication skills in the pretest

The students' basic English communication skills before exposure a treatment by implementing the Actional and Functional Model were obtained from the pretest administered. The scores are displayed in the table below:

Table 1. Students' Pretest Score

No	Students' Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category Level
1.	43.33	2	10%	Poor
2.	46.67	3	15%	Poor
3.	50.00	3	15%	Moderate
4.	53.33	6	30%	Moderate
5.	56.67	2	10%	Moderate
6.	66.67	1	5%	Moderate
7.	73.33	2	10%	Moderate
8.	80.00	1	5%	Good
Total		20	100%	

In accordance with table 1 for students' pretest scores above, the findings reveal the frequency of students' scores and their percentage. It can be described that two students got score 43.33 (10%), three students obtained 46.67 (15%), three students gained 50 (15%), six students reached score 53.33 (30%), two students got 56.67 (10%), one student gained 66.67 (5%), two students obtained score 73.33 (10%), and one student got score 80 (5%). It shows that 25% of students' scores are in the poor category level, 70% are in the moderate category level, and 5% are

in the good category level. In short, the biggest percentage was in the moderate category level, and the smallest was in the good category level.

The students' basic English communication skills in the posttest

The students' basic English communication skills after implementing the Actional and Functional Model were obtained from the posttest carried out at the school. The scores are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Students' Posttest Score

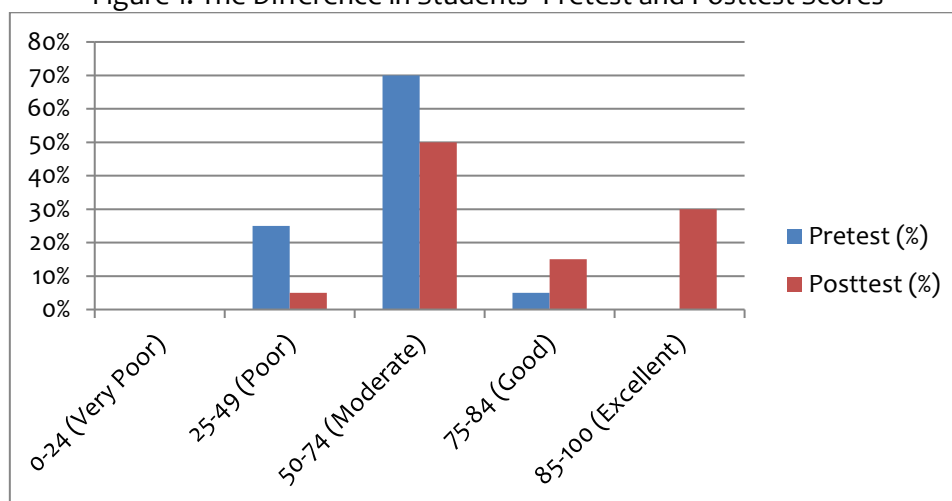
No	Students' Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category Level
1.	46.67	1	5%	Poor
2.	50.00	2	10%	Moderate
3.	53.33	1	5%	Moderate
4.	56.67	1	5%	Moderate
5.	60.00	3	15%	Moderate
6.	60.67	1	5%	Moderate
7.	66.67	1	5%	Moderate
8.	70.00	1	5%	Moderate
9.	76.67	1	5%	Good
10.	80.00	2	10%	Good
11.	86.67	1	5%	Excellent
12.	90.00	3	15%	Excellent
13.	93.33	1	5%	Excellent
14.	96.67	1	5%	Excellent
Total		20	100.0%	

From Table 2 for students' posttest scores above, the findings reveal the frequency of students' scores and their percentages. It can be described that one student got score 46.67 (5%), two students obtained 50 (10%), one student gained 53.33 (5%), one student reached score 56.67 (5%), three students got 60 (15%), one student gained 60.67 (5%), one student obtained score 66.67 (5%), one student got score 70 (5%), one student got 76.67 (5%), 2 students obtained 80 (10%), one student gained 86.67 (5%), three students reached 90 (15%), one student got 93.33 (5%), and one student obtained 96.67 (5%). It clarifies that 5% of students' scores are in the poor category level, 50% are in the moderate category level, 15% are in the good category level, and 30% are in the excellent category level. It means the biggest percentage is still in the moderate category level, and the smallest is in the excellent category level.

The difference between students' basic English communication skills in the pretest and posttest

The present study investigates the differences in students' scores of basic English communication before and after implementing the Actional and Functional Model at a primary school. In order to see the differences in terms of category level of scores, the figure is presented as in the following.

Figure 1. The Difference in Students' Pretest and Posttest Scores



Based on figure 1, it presents that no student got very poor category level both in pretest and posttest, 25% of students in pretest and 5 % of students in posttest obtained poor category level, 70% of students in pretest and 50 % of students in posttest reached moderate category level, 5% of students in pretest and 15 % of students in posttest gained good category level, and 0% of students in pretest and 30 % of students in posttest obtained excellent category level. It reveals the differences between students' scores at the category level in the pretest and posttest.

Next, to examine if there is a significant difference in the students' basic English communication skills before and after being taught by using the Actional and Functional Model, a t-test was used. However, in order to make sure if it uses parametric or non-parametric analysis, it is required to test if the data are normally distributed. The normality test is displayed below.

Table 3. Test of Normality

		Shapiro-Wilk		
	Pretest and Posttest	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Students' Score	Pretest	.842	20	.004
	Posttest	.927	20	.137

In relation to Table 3, the output of the normality test, as presented on the Shapiro-Wilk, shows that sig. is .004. It is smaller than 0.05. The result of the analysis reveals that the data are not normally distributed. Therefore, a nonparametric test, or the Wilcoxon, was employed in

order to examine if there is a significant difference or not. The output of the analysis is displayed as follows:

Table 4. Test Statistics	
	Score - Score
Z	-3.294 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

From Table 4 above, it shows that the value of Asymp, sig. (2-tailed) $0.001 < 0.05$, which indicates there is a significant difference between the mean scores of pretest and posttest of the students' basic English after the treatment given. H_a is accepted because $0.001 < 0.05$. It means that the variance of the population is not identical. From the output above, it can also be seen that Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) value is 0.001. Thus, findings show the significant difference in the students' Basic English before and after being taught using the Actional and Functional Model. It can be concluded that the students' Basic English after exposure to the treatment or implementing the Actional and Functional Model is better than before the treatment.

Discussion

The implementation of the Actional and Functional Model in teaching basic English communication skills has been revealed to enhance learners' outcomes, as evidenced by the improvement in pretest and posttest scores. A comparative analysis of the students' scores in both assessments indicates variations across categories of poor, moderate, good, and excellent levels. Furthermore, statistical analysis confirms a significant difference in students' basic English communication before and after applying the Actional and Functional Model.

The findings of this study align with established theories and previous research. Specifically, they support Zainil's (2008) assertion that the Actional and Functional Model fosters fluency in both verbal and non-verbal communication by enhancing learner motivation through the provision of comprehensible input. The principles of using the Actional and Functional Model are appropriate for the primary level. Likewise, Linse (2005) emphasized the importance of delivering language that learners can comprehend.

Subsequently, the present study corroborates several previous studies that have explored the use of the Actional and Functional Model in English language learning. First, Sihombing (2008) demonstrated that the Actional and Functional model significantly enhanced senior high school students' speaking skills, expanded their vocabulary by over 500 English words related to the given topics, and increased their learning motivation. Second, Simanjuntak et al. (2018) reported a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking abilities following the implementation of the Actional and Functional Model. Similarly, Yosefa (2021) observed notable gains in both the speaking activities and skills of vocational high school students after applying the Actional and Functional model. Furthermore, Purwanti (2024) found that implementing the Actional and Functional Model effectively broadened junior high school students' speaking skills.

Accordingly, implementing the Actional and Functional model not only leads to adult learners but also to young learners in terms of teaching speaking skills, vocabulary mastery, learning participation, and motivation. It can be summed up that this present study differs from the previous research, such as the level of education, the lesson topics, language skills, students' language psychology, such as motivation, interest, confidence, etc.

Conclusion

With reference to the study's results and subsequent discussions, several conclusions can be drawn. The majority of students exhibited a moderate level of proficiency in basic English communication prior to instruction using the Actional and Functional Model, with no learners achieving an excellent level. In contrast, the posttest results indicate that while most students maintained a moderate level of English-speaking ability following instruction with the Actional and Functional Model, there was a significant increase in the distribution of scores across the categories of poor, moderate, good, and excellent.

The analysis reveals that the posttest scores surpass the pretest scores, indicating a marked improvement in young learners' basic English communication skills. This significant difference between pretest and posttest scores underscores the effectiveness of the Actional and Functional Model in enhancing young learners' basic English communication skills. Consequently, it is recommended that English educators implement the Actional and Functional Model in their teaching practices to foster enthusiasm, motivation, and engagement among students in English classes. For further study, it can qualitatively explore the use of Actional and Functional Model in teaching communication skills or other skills for primary up to university levels of Education.

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