

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE MODE OF TARGET
LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH STRUCTURAL
FUNCTIONAL METHOD AND CONVENTIONAL METHOD
AT SECONDARY LEVEL OF RURAL BACKDROP**

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Abstract

English language learning in the Indian classroom situation is a serious concern for the teacher. The ESL teacher makes experimental effort to produce the four basic language skills among the pupils who possess varied levels of language acquisition power in the class. So there is consistent and directed drive on the part of the ESL teachers to adopt some specific methodological paradigms to develop the receptive and productive skills among the learners. Some practitioners of Conventional Method think that language learning should accompany specific mode of application of the grammar rules and translation usages during second language teaching inside the classroom situation. Some teachers tend to be experimental in exercising the Structural Functional Method with a view to generating the language proficiency among the learners by providing them awareness on structural pattern of language and their functional implication. The present study is an attempt to explore experimentally the comparative effectiveness of the Conventional Method of teaching and teaching with Structural Functional Method in the second language classroom situation.

Key Words: Structural Functional Method, Conventional Method, Secondary Learners

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1. Introduction

Second language teaching is a complex network of activities. In the conventional ESL classroom situation the target language teacher has to make hectic effort to accelerate the process of second language acquisition by the mere application of the verbal skills with the help of text books. The second language teacher aims to develop four fundamental language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing among the learners by means of giving extensive verbal exposure of the second language in the conventional method. But the skill development may be made more fruitful if second language learning situation is manipulated with insightful application of specific methodological paradigms relating to some second language teaching approach and tenets. Conventional Method is based on the principles of grammar and translation related to the purposes of translating a mother tongue passage into target language or vice versa. Again Structural Functional Method aims to adopt a more scientific view to make ESL teaching situation more active with the simultaneous application of structural procedures of second language acquisition and functional strategies to develop English proficiency among the pupils.

2. Rationale of the Study

English language teaching through the frequent application of mother tongue as a point of reference is possibly the manageable technique in the domain of second language teaching. Conventional teaching is generally attempted inside the classroom situation in a trite manner, whereby, the teacher consistently builds a pattern of connected discourse following the conventional principles of grammar translation method. But he seems to be least concerned to know how much the learners get benefitted in terms of second language skill development. Keeping this problematic view in mind the investigator undertakes an experimental project to know----

- 1) Which between Structural Functional Method and Conventional Method is more effective in generating second language skills among the rural learners
- 2) Whether the application of specific methodological paradigms increases the requisite level of second language acquisition among the low achievers and the high achievers belonging to the secondary level under W.B.B.S.E. in the district of Birbhum

- 3) Whether the Conventional Method is more effective in concept attainment than Structural Functional Method of teaching English texts
- 4) Whether the Structural Functional Method is more effective in concept attainment than Conventional Method of teaching English texts
- 5) Whether second language learning with the Conventional Method in classroom situation enhances the performances of the low achievers belonging to the rural background in comparison to the Structural Functional Method of teaching the same category of learners or vice versa
- 6) Whether the high achievers in the rural background school may expose more proficiency when they are taught through Structural Functional Method than their being taught through the Conventional Method or vice versa

3. Review of Related literature

In 1939, Charles Fries, director of Michigan Universities specialised in structural linguistics applied the principles of structural linguistics to language teaching. For Fries, grammar or structures was the starting point. The language was taught by systematic attention to pronunciation and by intensive oral drilling of its basic structures. Hockett (1959) says, that the basic patterns constitute the learners' task; they require drill, drill, and more drill and enough vocabulary to make such drills possible.

According to Rivers (1964), language learning is perceived in the following way:

- Learning a language is basically a process of mechanical habit formation.
- Good habits are formed by giving correct responses rather than by making mistakes.
- Language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learnt are presented in a spoken form before they are seen in a written form.
- An analogy provides a better foundation for language learning than analysis.

The functional account of language by Halliday (1973) complements Hyme's view of communicative competence and specifies seven basic functions performed by language, which form a significant part in patterning CLT strategies:

- i. **Instrumental Function:** Using language to get things
- ii. **Regulatory function:** Using language to control the behaviour of others
- iii. **Interactional Function:** Using language to interact with others

- iv. **Personal Function:** Using language to express personal feelings and meanings
- v. **Heuristic function:** Using language to learn and discover
- vi. **Imaginative function:** using language to imagine things
- vii. **Representational function:** Using language to represent and communicate information

There are several proposals and models for what a syllabus might look like in Communicative Language Teaching. Yalden (1983) describes the major current communicative approaches. Yalden's modified versions of Communicative types are summarised below:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Reference</i>
❖ Structures plus functions	Wilkins (1976)
❖ Functional spiral around a structural core	Brumfit(1980)
❖ Structural functional instrumental	Allen(1980)
❖ Interactional	Widdowson(1979)
❖ Task-based	Prabhu(1983)

4. Statement of the Problem

The problem under the present study is entitled as:

An Investigation into the Mode of Target Language Teaching through Structural Functional Method and Conventional Method at Secondary Level of Rural Backdrop

5. Terms Definitions

5.1 Structural Functional Method

As propagated by Wilkins (1976) and Brumfit (1980) structural functional method is a perfect amalgamation of the structural dimension and functional connotation of the language. Structural Functional is a linguistic or structure-based approach to language teaching. The starting point is a linguistic syllabus, which contains the key items of phonology, morphology and syntax. These might have been derived in part from a contrastive analysis of the differences between the native language and the target language. The language was taught by systematic attention to pronunciation and by intensive oral drilling of its basic structures. Hockett (1959) says that it is these basic patterns that constitute the learners' task. They require drill, drill, and more drill and enough vocabulary to make such drills possible. But there is an appropriate balance between

structural pattern and the functional implication of the usages. Here attempts are made to make the learners learn the structures from functional point of views.

Traditional Method: The traditional method of teaching implies the strategy of teaching that employs grammar and translation as prime vehicle for teaching any sort of second language text. Here, mother tongue is used as a point of reference to translate the meaning of the literary texts or vice versa. Acquisition of grammar rules by the learners is tested by their proficiency in translating a second language text into mother tongue or vice versa.

6. Hypotheses

In order to test the relative effectiveness of second language teaching with Structural Functional Method and the Conventional Method some null hypotheses are formulated. The null hypotheses state that there exists no significant difference between the achievements levels of two groups of pupils upon whom the two types of instructional strategies have been applied experimentally in exclusive manner. The following null hypotheses are formulated:

- I. There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test.
- II. There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test.
- III. There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and control group on pre-test.
- IV. There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on post-test.
- V. There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental and control group on post-tests.
- VI. There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and control group on post-test.

7. Design of the Study

Keeping in mind the objectives of the present research the researcher has devised the necessary design which comprises the following components:

- ❖ Method of Study
- ❖ Population of Study
- ❖ Sample of the Study
- ❖ Sources of collection of data
- ❖ Procedure for investigation and data collection
- ❖ Data treatment

7.1 Method of Study

The present study is an experimental one. It aims at comparing the effectiveness of the second language teaching with Structural Functional Method and Conventional Method at upper primary level classroom situation under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. For the proper implementation of experimental design a school from the rural backdrop has been selected. Class VII has been chosen for the purpose of experimentation of the teaching methods.

7.2 Population of the Study

The one school has been deliberately selected for the specified purpose of investigation. The school from the rural background is B.K.G. High School situated under the jurisdiction of Suri Block-I of Birbhum District. Thus the pupils of the school constitute the population of the present study.

7.3 Sample of the Study

The 7th class of the rural school, namely, B.K.G. High School, has been fixed up for experimentation. Two sections of the 7th class of each school comprising 30 students have been taken up for present study. Thus taken together total 60 students constitute the sample of the present study.

7.4 Sources of Collection of Data

In order to achieve the objective of the present study the following **tools** were employed for collection of data:

- i. Pre-test of the 7th class students of B.K.G. High School,
- ii. The post-tests of the same students of B.K.G. High School,

The following scores will constitute the **data** for the present experiment

- The scores of the pre-test of the 7th class students of B.K.G. High School,
- The scores of the post-test of the 7th class students of B.K.G. High School,

7.5 Investigation Procedure and Data Collection

As mentioned earlier, two sections of the 7th class of B.K.G. High School, are definite backdrop for the present experimental research. A pre-test of the 7th class students of the B.K.G. High School, is taken. On the basis of the scores of the pre-test of the pupils of the said class of the school the pupils are equalized and they are divided into Experimental and Control group by using *pair random sampling technique*. Pupils of the Experimental and Control groups were also divided into high achievers and low achievers on the basis of the scores obtained in the pre-test. It is to be mentioned at the outset that the number of pupils under each group is 30. The *Randomized Groups, Pre-test Post-test Design* is adopted as the experimental design. In this design:

- One group will receive Experimental treatment (X)
- One group will receive Control treatment (C)
- The Experimental Group will receive a Pre-test (O₁)
- The Control Group will receive a Pre-test (O₂)
- All the groups will receive Post-tests (O₃O₄)

7.6 Experimentation

After careful observation of the teaching learning situation of the Birbhum district, one rural school is selected as the experimental backdrop. The rural school, namely, B.K.G. High School, belongs to Suri-I block. One English teacher, belonging to the school is selected to teach the Experimental group and the Control group. The teacher was provided with necessary orientation regarding the following points on the use of Structural Functional Method:

- There is a consistent focus throughout on learning English in order to develop oral and structural skills.
- Students are engaged in practical tasks that relate to the selection and gradation of structures of English.

- There is an appropriate balance between function-focused and structure-focused activities.
- Assessment procedures reflect and support a structural and skill-based orientation to teaching and learning.
- Structures that reflect the numerous and multiple functions of languages are specifically selected for practice
- Students develop an awareness of the learning process and their own styles, strategies and weakness.

The following prose texts of the Learning English book for class VII is selected to teach the students. 1) **The Book of Nature**, 2) **The Riddle** 3) **The Beauty and the Beast** 4) **Uncle Podger Hangs A Pictures**. The Experimental group was taught with the techniques and strategies based on the tenets of Structural Functional Method and to help them gather concepts on the above mentioned texts. To develop the language skills individually the teacher consistently and rigorously followed the principles of the Structural Functional Method and encouraged the techniques of drill and repetition to develop the structural competence among the learners. The teacher triggered the interaction process so that the pupils can share and exchange their views in a mutual manner and develop the basic skills with the minimum help but active supervision of the teacher. Here the teacher took the initiatives to become instrumental to creating the conditions for habit formation by bringing their awareness to basic structures of morphemes and syntax. The teacher were tolerant enough not to over criticize the errors committed by the learners but helping them find out their areas of linguistic deviations and at last providing them necessary clarifications so that concepts formations become possible among the learners.

The Control Group, on the other hand, is taught with rigorous application of the teacher-centric method. He takes the upper hand to manipulate the second language learning situations in an absolute manner and always taking initiatives to rectify the learners' mistakes in a corrective manner. Basically he followed the traditional strategy of teaching by translating the texts into Bengali and followed *the principles of grammar translation method*. While teaching the target language texts he explained the rules of English grammar in a deductive manner encouraging the

learners to memorize the rules with the assumption in mind that they will be able to use the rules for the purpose of constructing English structures. He also assumed that the learners will be able to use the rules to form their speech habits. The pupils are taught in a passive manner.

7.7 Test Construction

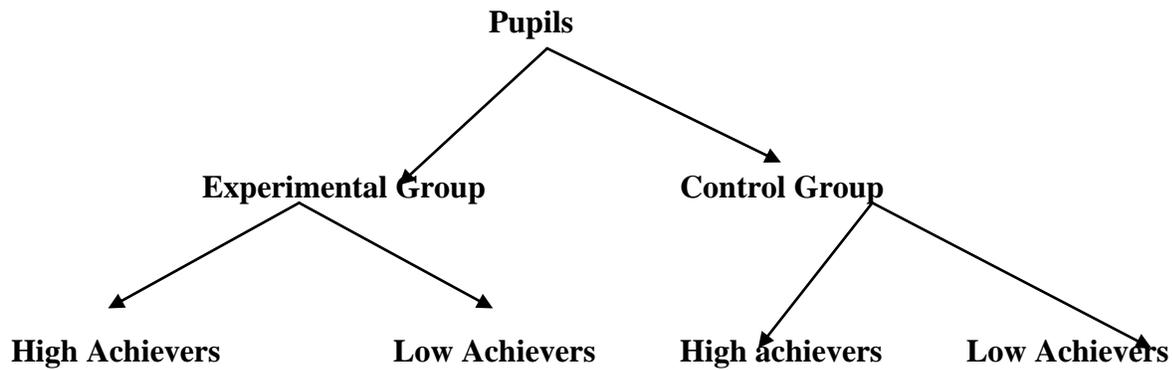
After the experimentation of teaching comprising two weeks duration is over, a teacher-made post-test is taken to compare the effectiveness of the experimental method. The investigator constructed both the pre-test and post-test after a thorough review of the techniques of the principles of test construction on relevant sections of selected prose units. In addition, the consent of the class teacher and teaching experts were also weighed in the construction of the tests. Each test comprises 50 multiple choice type items based on the selected prose units of 7th class. While constructing the texts the dimensions of the language and structures are taken into consideration.

7.7.1 Reliability of the Test

Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula is used to determine the reliability of the pre-test and post-test. Here the reliability is estimated by comparing the halves of the pre-test and post-tests. In this way the reliability co-efficient is found to be 0.72.

7.7.2 Analysis of Data

Raw scores obtained from pre-tests and post-test were presented in a tabular form for the purpose of interpretation. For the manipulation of data the means, standard deviations, and differences of means were calculated for each group. Significances of difference between the mean scores of both the experimental and control groups on the variables of pre-test scores, school record scores and post-tests scores was tested at 0.05 level by applying *t-tests*. The *Randomized Groups, Pre-test Post-test Design* is employed for the treatment of the data. The symbolic representation of the group division is as follows:



H₀1: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test.

Table-1: Significance of difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups on pre-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	61.85	15.22	3.94	0.33
Control	30	58.97	15.52		

df =58

Table 1 indicates that the difference of mean scores of the Experimental and Control Group is not significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted so that both the groups could be treated as equal on the variable of pre-test.

H₀2: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test.

Table 2: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental and control groups on pre-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	15	73.85	4.26	1.72	0.53
Control	15	73.67	4.91		

df = 28

Table 2 reflects that the obtained *t-value* is 0.53 which is less than the statistical table value i.e. 2.05 at 0.05 level. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted so that we can safely state that there exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers experimental and the control group on pre-test. Thus both the groups could be treated as equal.

H₀3: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental group and control group on pre-test.

Table 3: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and control groups on pre-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	15	45.78	6.14	2.26	0.65
Control	15	45.19	6.19		

df = 28

Table 3 reflects that the obtained *t-value* is 0.65 which is less than the statistical table value i.e. 2.05 at 0.05 level. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted so that we can safely state that there exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and the control group on pre-test. Thus the low achievers of both the groups could be treated as equal.

H₀4: There exists no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on post-test.

Table-4: Significance of difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups on post-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	30	75.46	9.58	2.63	8.87
Control	30	52.74	10.21		

df = 58

The table 4 exhibits that the obtained *t-value* is 8.87 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.76 at 0.01 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control group on post-test. So the null hypothesis is rejected and we can say that the students of the experimental group have performed better since they were taught by the Structural Functional Method.

H₀₅: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental and control group on post-test.

Table-5: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental and control groups on post-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	15	82.96	5.32	2.47	9.12
Control	15	59.47	8.68		

df = 28

The table 5 exhibits that the obtained *t-value* is 9.12 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.76 at 0.01 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the high achievers of the experimental and the control group on post-test. So the null hypothesis is rejected and we can say that the high achieving students of the experimental group of the rural backdrop have performed better since they were taught by the Structural Functional Method.

H₀₆: There exists no significant difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and control group on post-test.

Table 6: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the low achievers of the experimental and control groups on post-test

Group	N	M	SD	SE _D	T-value
Experimental	15	67.87	5.37	2.29	9.37
Control	15	47.87	7.38		

df = 28

The table 6 exhibits that the obtained *t-value* is 9.37 which is greater than the statistical table value which is 2.76 at 0.01 level. So we can assert that that there exists significant difference between the mean scores of the Low Achievers of the experimental and the control group on post-test. So the null hypothesis is rejected and we can say that the low achieving students of the

experimental group of the rural backdrop has performed better since they were taught by the Structural Functional Method.

7.8 Results & Discussion

After systematic analysis of data 6 hypotheses were experimentally verified and necessary results were drawn. The **H₀₁**, **H₀₂** and **H₀₃** exhibit that there exists no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on pre-test. This implies that experimentation could be safely administered on the groups since they belonged to almost same capability level. The hypothesis test of **H₀₄** states that there exists significant difference between the experimental and the control group on post test. So the application of the Structural Functional Method brought about significant skill development among the experimental group than the control group who were taught by the conventional method. The testing of **H₀₅** states there is significant difference between the level of the high achievers of the experimental and control group on post test. So the high achievers of the experimental group performed better since they were taught with the Structural Functional Method. From the testing of **H₀₆** it is evident that the low achievers of the experimental group also performed better than the low achievers of the control group. So from the experimental treatment we can gather the general notion that the application of the Structural Functional Method in case of the English language teaching at the upper primary level might yield better result than the application of the conventional method on students belonging to rural educational backdrop.

7.9 Abbreviations

- ESL: English as a Second Language
- ELT: English Language Teaching

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