

KaTa Model of Learning for English Education at Higher Secondary Level in Kerala: Perspectives of a Teacher, Trainer and Curriculum Developer

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Learning English is compulsory at the higher secondary level in the State of Kerala ever since its inception. As a practising higher secondary school teacher in English, the author is replenished with the first-hand experiences of the problems of learners in classroom while learning English. The various theories of language acquisition have taken into consideration the aspects of cognitive and affective factors, natural instinct, cultural influence, etc. Though English has been compulsorily taught right from the primary level, the standards attained when they reach the higher secondary level are not up to the expectations. The author has postulated the theory of KARATE after an experimental training in Karate. Based on the results derived from this study, the author investigated the benefits of T'ai Chi another martial art, on the psycho linguistic aspects of language teachers. The author established a positive link between this martial art and language teaching. The paper examines the present conditions of English education at higher secondary level within the author's perspective of a teacher, trainer and curriculum developer. The paper presents a KaTa model of language learning and teaching based on the findings of both studies.

Keywords: Karate, T,aichi, higher secondary, affective filter, language learning, language teaching

Introduction

The importance of English language in Kerala context is compelling. In the higher secondary section, English is the compulsory subject termed as First Language. Though English has been compulsorily taught right from the primary level, the standards attained when they reach the higher secondary level are not up to the mark. One after another, diverse transactional methods and pedagogical strategies have been followed to perfect the acquisition levels of the learners.

Cognitive approach, structural approach and communicative approach had been the principles behind the textbook development. The present-day classroom in the State is learner-centered, process oriented and activity based. The themes in the textbook are issue based and different literary pieces on the basis of the issues chosen by the curriculum revisers are identified and arranged in the textbook in a learner friendly manner. Learners construct language through various social interactions and communicative contexts. Learners are encouraged to acquire various skills of language. Consequently, many discourses like debates, panel discussions, group discussions, seminars, surveys, case studies, workshops, projects, symposiums, speeches, report writing, letters, etc. are introduced in today's English textbooks.

As per the Kerala Curriculum Framework 2013, the curriculum has been evolved with its base on social constructivism with a vision to raise the standards of the learners to an international level. When the curriculum envisioned international standards, there should be a readiness on the part of the learners to receive new knowledge and experience. Physically and mentally the learners need to be alert and prepared. Simultaneously, the teachers also should rise up to the international standards. They need to arrange a learning atmosphere in which they can draw out the best from the learners. The teachers thus need to be extremely resourceful switching from one strategy to another to facilitate the teaching learning process.

The experience as a teacher during the past fifteen years, as the trainer who teaches the practicing teachers in the field the transactional strategies inside the classrooms and as the member in the Curriculum

Committee who processes the units in the coursebook in the best manner possible has stimulated the need to devise a technique to empower the learners and teachers to make the task of teaching learning process in English to achieve the desirable level of linguistic competence and performance. Practice of Karate is one such strategy to enhance the receptive capacities of the learners and practice of T'ai Chi is another strategy to tap the potential of the teachers to its maximum.

Studies on the effects of the physical fitness programmes and physical exercising systems on psycho-social aspects have established a positive correlation. But none of the studies had investigated the effects of Martial Arts especially Karate or T'ai Chi on either academic performance on the whole or learning of languages in specific. A careful reading of the literature on physical exercise and Martial Arts taught the research scholar the fact that Karate and T'ai Chi are well-organized and cohesive exercising systems stimulating the whole body and mind into power and action. Therefore, the author investigated the effects of Karate on linguistic skills of L2 learners and effectiveness of T'ai Chi on language teaching. Thus, a new model of language learning and teaching is propounded forming a portmanteau word KaTa Model which are the first letters of Karate and T'ai Chi.

In the previous studies, it was found that personality factors and some form of Martial Art or physical activity had a positive connection. Apart from several other studies, Baxter and Francis (2013) reported relation between T'ai Chi Chuan participation and psycho-social aspects while Jansen and Dahmen (2012), Conant et al. (2008), Roberts et al. (2012) identified that changes in white matter microstructure are connected with the Black belts' punching ability. Ripley (2003) also asserted that children with ADHD improved their academic performance and behaviour.

A growing body of researches establishes the theory that positive personality traits make the task of language learning easier. These traits range from motivation, self-confidence, self-esteem, low anxiety, and low level of stress and so on. Khorshidi (2013) and Ibrahimoglu et al.

(2013) related to the link between learning strategy in English and personality profile. Krashen's (1987) theories focused on importance of affective factors in language acquisition while Vygotsky (1978) put his theories in the context of social interactions.

The study showing the relationship between clenching fist and memory conducted by Propper et al. (2013) was a path breaking one. Similar finding was received when Schmidt Kassow et al. (2010) conducted their study to examine the relationship between physically active situation and verbal learning. The studies of Sandra et al. (2013) were related to the influence of physical activity on brain structures. The positive results were astonishing. Weiser et al. (1995) revealed that Karate training was helpful in verbal therapy.

Blackburn's study (2009) on the relationship between telomere strength and meditation had empirical evidence. The study by Conant et al. (2008) also suggested the potential benefits of Karate. Both studies employed experimental methods and the time taken for both the studies is not more than three months. The effects were discernible within this short term.

The studies on relationship between psychological variables and second language acquisition show that certain affective factors play a vital role in second language learning. Motivational factors are major among these stimuli in learning a language. Among these studies Krashen's (1987) Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter theory provide a strong base for the present research in the Indian context.

The studies on the relationship between physical training and language acquisition supported the proposition that physical activity can stimulate the parts of brain.

The author accepted the experimental method adopted by Conant et al. (2008). The theories of Krashen (1987) also formed the base to evolve a method for testing the affective factors like stability, adjustment etc. in the beginning and at the end of the experimental package.

The case studies which established a positive link between Karate and language learning and that between T'ai Chi and Language Teaching are detailed below with their focus on objectives, hypotheses, method and design, findings. The case study which asserted the positive influence of Karate on language learning is referred to as Case Study I and the case study which brought to light the positive impact of T'ai Chi on Language Teaching is referred to as Case Study II.

CASE STUDY I :

Establishing the positive correlation between karate and language learning

Objectives

The study is aimed to investigate the effects of Karate on linguistic performance as visible through listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that after thirty hours of Karate training there will be improvement in the linguistic skills of the L2 learners.

Research methodology

The investigator selected experimental method. The design selected was Pre-test Posttest Non-equivalent group design. The treatment is provided only to the experimental group for three months. Prior to the experiment and at the end of the experiment, both the experimental group and the control groups were administered tests as the measure of dependent variable. The difference between means of the tests is found for each group and these mean different scores are compared with the help of a suitable statistical technique.

Population and sample

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of Karate on linguistic performance. In order to serve this purpose, 32 higher secondary girls from Cotton Hill G.G.H.S.S and another 37 higher

secondary boys from Govt. Model Boys H.S.S were selected. They were divided into two groups. Group A, the experimental group underwent Karate training and Group B acted as the control group.

Tools and techniques

The following statistical methods were used for the purpose of analysing the collected data.

- (i) ANOVA for finding significant mean difference in Pre-test and Posttest scores of different groups with respect to each parameter.
- (ii) ANCOVA for finding significant adjusted Posttest mean difference of control and experimental groups with respect to each parameter.
- (iii) Paired t-test for finding significant pre to Posttest mean differences of respective variables in the control and experimental group.

Case study I- results

Finding: I

When the pre to Posttest listening skill scores in control and experimental group were compared, there exist statistically significant differences ($P < 0.01$) in the experimental group. There do not exist any significant difference in the control group. Hence the results show that thirty hours of Karate training substantially influences the higher secondary students to improve their listening skill.

Finding: II

When the pre to Posttest speaking skill scores in control and experimental group were compared, there exist statistically significant differences ($P < 0.01$) in both the groups. But percentage of gain by the control group is 68 while that of experimental group is 161. Hence the results show that thirty hours of Karate training substantially influences the higher secondary students to improve their speaking skill.

Finding: III

When the pre to Posttest reading skill scores in control and experimental group were compared, there exist statistically significant differences ($P < 0.01$) in the experimental group. There do not exist statistically significant difference in the control group. Hence the results show that thirty hours of Karate training substantially influences the higher secondary students to improve their reading skill.

Finding: IV

When the pre to Posttest writing skill scores in control and experimental group were compared, there exist statistically significant differences ($P < 0.01$). But percentage of gain by the control group is 213 while that of experimental group is 309. Hence the results show that thirty hours of Karate training substantially influences the higher secondary students to improve their writing skill.

Case study I - theory proposed

Karate, the ancient system of martial art acted as reinforcement while teaching English. Hence, the author proposed her theory of KARATE. The theory states that, "If adolescent learners are taught English along with Karate lessons in proper sequential order, the latter shall act as reinforcement, modifying their personality factors and learning strategies and subsequently producing desirable learning outcomes especially the basic linguistic skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing". (Shukkoor 2017)

CASE STUDY: II

Establishing the positive correlation between t'ai chi and language teaching

The result of the Case Study-I prompted the author to go ahead with another case study seeking a link between another martial art T'ai Chi and language teaching.

Objectives

The study is aimed to investigate the effectiveness of T'ai Chi on language teaching.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that after six weeks of T'ai Chi training there will be improvement in the linguistic competency and teaching effectiveness of the teachers.

Samples

Twenty language teachers in the higher secondary section across the state of Kerala participated in the study. These participants were aged between 30 and 50. They taught either English, Hindi or Malayalam in their respective schools.

Method and design

The researcher developed a questionnaire with the help of the mentor in order to test whether the Martial Art T'ai Chi is effective in improving the linguistic performance of Language Teachers. In the beginning, a pilot study was conducted among ten higher secondary language teachers in Kerala. The questionnaires were made reliable and valid after this pilot study. The researcher followed Pre-test treatment Posttest design. A pre-test was conducted using the questionnaire and then these twenty participants were given training in T'ai Chi for thirty hours. When the training sessions were concluded a Posttest was conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of T'ai Chi on the participants. The same questionnaires were used to administer the Posttest among the samples. SPSS software was used in the analysis of data. Descriptive statistics was used to find out mean and standard deviation.

Result and discussion

Finding I

Based on self-rating scale by language teachers, 25 percent of the teachers opined that before the T'ai Chi training their linguistic competency was medium and 70 percent of the teachers said that it was high. After the T'ai Chi training 80 percent of the teachers opined that their linguistic competency was high and 20 percent of the teachers opined that after the T'ai Chi training the linguistic competency of teachers was medium. While 5 % opined that before the training their linguistic competence was low, none of the teachers opined that after the T'ai Chi training their linguistic competency was low. The self-evaluation done by the teachers proves that the training helps them to improve their linguistic competency in a positive way.

Based on the peer-rating scale it was noticed that 75 percent of the colleagues opined that before the T'ai Chi training the linguistic competence of language teachers was medium while 25 percent of the colleagues were of the opinion that language teachers had a high linguistic competency. After the T'ai Chi training, 20 percent of the colleagues opined that the linguistic competency of language teachers was medium. 80 percent of the colleagues opined that after the training the linguistic competence of language teachers was high. The variation of opinion differs from 25 percent to 80 percent for "high" and 75 to 20 for medium.

Based on student rating scale it was observed that 80 percent of the students opined that before the T'ai Chi training the linguistic competence of language teachers was medium. While 5 percent of the students said that before the T'ai Chi training the linguistic competence of language teachers was low, 15 percent of the students were of the opinion that language teachers had a high linguistic competency before the T'ai Chi training. After the T'ai Chi training 70 percent of the students opined that the linguistic competence of language teachers was high. While 30 percent of the students opined that after the training the linguistic competence of language teachers was medium, none of the

students were of the opinion that after the T'ai Chi training the professional competency of language teachers was low. The analysis of the data provided by the students about the linguistic competence of their language teachers before and after T'ai Chi training proves that the training was useful to the teachers in linguistic competency of language teachers. The variation of opinion differs from 15 percent to 70 percent for "high" and 80 to 30 for medium.

It is observed that in all the three scales namely Self Rating Scale, Peer Rating Scale and Student Rating Scale the linguistic competency of the language teachers improved after the T'ai Chi training.

Finding II

Based on self-rating scale by language teachers, 70 percent of the teachers opined that before the T'ai Chi training their teaching effectiveness was medium and 25 percent of the teachers said that it was high. After the T'ai Chi training 85 percent of the teachers opined that their teaching effectiveness was high and 15 percent of the teachers opined that after the T'ai Chi training the teaching effectiveness of teachers was medium. While 5 % opined that before the training their teaching effectiveness was low, none of the teachers opined that after the T'ai Chi training their teaching effectiveness was low. The self-evaluation done by the teachers proves that the training helps them to improve their teaching effectiveness in a positive way.

Based on the peer-rating scale it was noticed that 65 percent of the colleagues opined that before the T'ai Chi training the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was medium while 35 percent of the colleagues were of the opinion that language teachers had a high teaching effectiveness. After the T'ai Chi training, 30 percent of the colleagues opined that the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was medium. 70 percent of the colleagues opined that after the training the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was high. The variation of opinion differs from 35 percent to 70 percent for "high" and 65 to 30 for medium.

Based on student rating scale it was observed that 70 percent of the students opined that before the T'ai Chi training the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was medium. While 10 percent of the students said that before the T'ai Chi training the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was low, 20 percent of the students were of the opinion that language teachers had a high teaching effectiveness before the T'ai Chi training. After the T'ai Chi training 75 percent of the students opined that the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was high. While 25 percent of the students opined that after the training the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was medium, none of the students were of the opinion that after the T'ai Chi training the teaching effectiveness of language teachers was low. The analysis of the data provided by the students about the teaching effectiveness of their language teachers before and after T'ai Chi training proves that the training was useful to the teachers in teaching effectiveness of language teachers. The variation of opinion differs from 20 percent to 75 percent for "high".

It is observed that in all the three scales namely Self Rating Scale, Peer Rating Scale and Student Rating Scale the teaching effectiveness of the language teachers improved after the T'ai Chi training. The details of both the case studies can be listed in a table as follows.

Table 1: The details of the Case Study I and Case Study II in a Nutshell.

	Case Study I	Case Study II
Objectives	Link between Karate and Language Learning	Link between T'ai Chi and Language Teaching
Hypotheses	30 Hrs of Karate Training can improve LSRW	6 weeks of T'ai Chi Training can improve Linguistic Competency and Teaching effectiveness
Method	Experimental Study	Experimental Study
Design	Pre-test Posttest Non-Equivalent Group Design	One group Pre-test Posttest Group Design
Tools	Achievement Tests	Questionnaires

Techniques	ANOVA, ANCOVA, Paired t Test	Simple Percentage Analysis
Findings	Improvement of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills of the ESL learners	Improvement of Linguistic Competency and Teaching Effectiveness

Conclusion

As a result of the two case studies undertaken to investigate the positive influence of martial arts on language learning and language teaching there established a positive correlation between Karate and language learning and T'ai Chi and language teaching. Thus, the author proposed a new model of language learning and teaching which is termed as KaTa model of language learning and teaching. KaTa is a portmanteau word formed from the first two letters of Karate and T'ai Chi. Karate training helped the students lose their inertia and maladjustment problem. They started using their visual faculties in learning. They could attain a mental state free of fear and anxiety, too. Fear blocks any knowledge to enter into mind. The forty-five minutes of Karate sessions freed off the learners from mental stress and strain. That was why the experimental group could give expression orally and in written language far better than their counterparts in the control group. While administering the achievement test of speaking skill, the judges noted that these students have become more self-confident and more expressive. When students become more self-confident, they become more willing to accept the input. Krashen's Input hypothesis theory and Affective Filter theory establish this fact. If a teacher desires to put a comprehensible input into his student's brain, first of all the teacher has to provide it in a low anxiety situation. T'ai Chi aids the teacher to become more confident and resourceful thus boosting up their potential. The practice of T'ai Chi can be instrumental in tapping the resources of a teacher in its fullest. Better self-confidence and self-esteem help the teachers as well as students to put more efforts in the ventures and both the teachers and students tend to become more successful in life. Hence, *KaTa model of language learning and*

teaching is envisaged as a fruitful model for making the teaching learning process in language effective to its maximum.

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