

# Effectiveness of Practice Sheets as a Teaching-Learning Tool in the English Language Classroom

Dr Manish Kumar

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
GLA University, Mathura-281406 (Uttar Pradesh)

**Abstract-** This study investigates the effects of the use of practice sheets in learning and their relevance as a teaching tool in a language classroom. To be precise, in this study the researcher wants to know how practice sheets work as 1) a concentration tool, preventing students from getting indifferent in the teaching-learning process, and 2) a drilling tool, reinforcing learning in the classroom.

The study intends to take the English language class of B. Tech. Semester IV, at GLA University, Mathura. Two classes of 60 students each, having similar levels of proficiency in English are taken for this study. The level of proficiency of the students in the two classes is similar and is based on the diagnostic test conducted by the university. It is decided that one of the classes will be treated as a control group where no practice sheets will be administered whereas the other group will be an experiment group in which practice sheets will be used as a teaching tool.

On the basis of the data collected, conclusions about the effectiveness of practice sheets as a teaching-learning tool will be drawn in light of the two points mentioned above.

**Keywords-** Practice Sheets, Concentration Tool, Reinforcement of Learning

## I. INTRODUCTION

The role of practice in the process of teaching and learning is considered to be very important. It brings differences in students' performance. Practice is often misunderstood as repetition. However it is distinct from simple repetition of a task. Various scholars have shared their opinions in this regard. They came with terms like 'Deliberate practice' and 'Rote repetition'. Gobet & Campitelli (2007) opine, "Deliberate practice consists of activities purposely designed to improve performance.[1]" They further opine (2011), "Deliberate practice involves attention, rehearsal and repetition and leads to new knowledge or skills that can later be developed into more complex knowledge and skills. Although other factors such as intelligence and motivation affect

performance, practice is necessary if not sufficient for acquiring expertise. [2]"

Practice should not be thought of as rote repetition rather a goal-oriented rehearsal paired with problem-solving processes. Repeated opportunities to practice a task help students acquire expertise in subject matter. Anderson (2008) is of the view, "Practice greatly increases the likelihood that students will permanently remember new information. [3]" Brown & Bennett (2002) and Moors &

De Houwer (2006) write, "Practice increases student facility or automaticity. Automaticity is usually only achieved through extensive rehearsal and repetition. [4]" Glover, Ronning, & Bruning (1990) also seem to be advocating for the same when they are found saying, "When students practice solving problems, they increase their ability to transfer practiced skills to new and more complex problems. [5]" Practice sheet may prove to be a useful tool of learning a topic. The aim here is to see what relation it has with concentration and reinforcement of learning.

Concentration is defined as an exclusive attention to one object. Good concentration is said to be an extremely valuable thinking tool. The paper tries to examine how practice sheets in a language classroom help students concentrate, i.e., help them bring all efforts to bear on one particular topic of grammar. It is believed that the use of practice sheets make the learners remain in meta-cognitive state when they are reminded of how they can maximize their concentration on what they want to focus.

Reinforcement improves students' motivation, participation and performance. Sometimes students' productivity is lagging in the classroom and they are less engaged in the classroom learning activity. They need a little extra push to be on track. It can be done by supplying them with APRM (Advanced and Post Reading Material) sheets which basically contain important points to remember related to a topic to be taught along with practice sheets to check how much they could learn.

## II. OBJECTIVE

This study is an attempt to see the impact of practice sheet as a tool of learning in English language classroom. The researcher intends to measure the effectiveness of practice sheets on learners in terms of Memory, Automaticity, Concentration, Reinforcement, Motivation, Participation, and Performance. It is believed that practice sheets can work as a concentration tool, and reinforce learning in the classroom. The result of this study will enable us to measure to what extent the use of APRM and Practice Sheets in an English language classroom reinforce learning. It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide the students and instructors with an additional effective tool for a higher level of achievement in an English language class.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative method approach which involved two groups of respondents. Initially, a total of 120 samples were supposed to be taken from two sections of B. Tech. IV semester at GLA University, Mathura (UP). But later on, for the sake of ease and convenience, it was decided to conduct the experiment in a single section of 60 students dividing them into two groups of 30 each. The groups consist of students with almost similar levels of proficiency in English. The method used to gather data for this research was based on the lecture delivered on the topic of Subject-Verb Agreement. All the students were first introduced with the concept and examples of Subject-Verb Agreement. It was followed by administering APRM and Practice sheet only to the experiment group. The aim was to measure the difference in the level of achievement with and without practice. The practice sheet contained 15 questions which were based on the rules taught in the classroom. At last, both the groups were given a set of questions in the form of questionnaire and 15 minutes were allocated to supply the answers.

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that the dimensions of Memory, Automaticity, Concentration, Reinforcement, Motivation, Participation (Initiations and Response), and Performance could be incorporated and the students' performance after using the APRM and practice sheets could be measured. It contained questions of both-closed ended and open ended- nature. The data collected through the questionnaire were presented in tabular and graphical forms. Quantitative analysis was done by taking the mean value of responses and then presenting them in numeric form followed by their interpretation.

*Interpretation of Received Data*

To analyze the impact of practice sheet on the learning of students, questions were framed keeping in mind the dimensions of Memory, Automaticity, Reinforcement, Participation (Initiations and Response), Performance, Concentration, and Motivation.

To check memory or remembrance of information after lecture delivery, 15 subject-verb agreement rule based questions were given in the questionnaire. Basically the questions were related to the use of appropriate form of verb when

- a. Two singular subjects are coordinated by 'and' or both...and'.
- b. Two subjects are coordinated by 'and'. They appear in a singular form, but have a plural sense.
- c. Two subjects are coordinated by 'and' but with 'each', 'every' or 'many a',
- d. Two subjects are coordinated by 'or'/'either...or', 'nor'/'neither...nor', 'not only...but also'.

Mean value was derived by taking a sum of correct, incorrect and un-attempted questions out of total 15, divided by total number of participants (30) separately. Table 1 shows average of responses in each category. The group which was given sheets to practice performed better. Average percentage of their correct and incorrect responses was 80% and 20% respectively. The group without practice, on the other hand, could perform less than

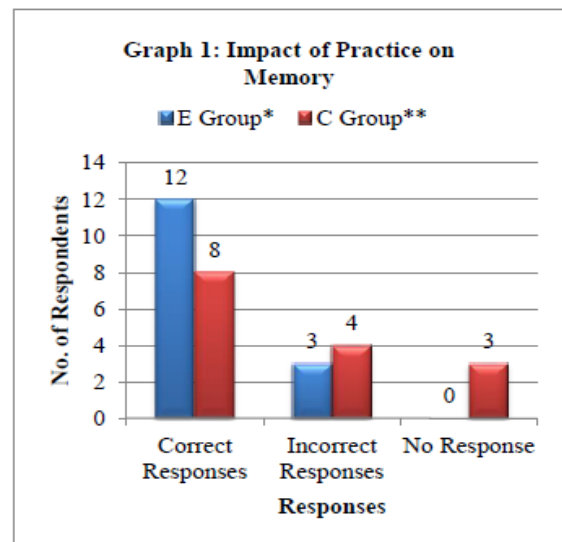
previous group with 53.33% correct and 26.66% incorrect responses. 20% of them did not attempt to answer.

**Table 1. Average of Responses against questions to see the impact on memory**

	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses	No Response
E Group*	12	3	0
C Group**	8	4	3

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group

Dr. Dewey writes, "Automaticity' is the ability to do something without thinking about it. It occurs in virtually all over-learned behavior. Over learned behavior is behavior that has been practiced well beyond the point of 'just barely learning it'. As you execute a skilled behavior again and again, it gradually requires less of your attention.[6]" Automaticity makes learning almost instinctive. Wikipedia describes Automaticity as "the ability to do things without occupying the mind with the low-level details required, allowing it to become an automatic response pattern or habit. It is usually the result of learning, repetition, and practice. [7]"



To observe automaticity in the learning of students, four questions related to grammatical and notional concord were given based on the following rules

- a. Grammatical concord—verb must match its subject in number
  - plural subject—plural verb;
  - singular subject—singular verb form;
  - subject of mass noun-- singular verb form; and
- b. Notional concord—verb sometimes agrees with the subject according to the notion of number rather than the actual presence of the grammatical marker for that notion.

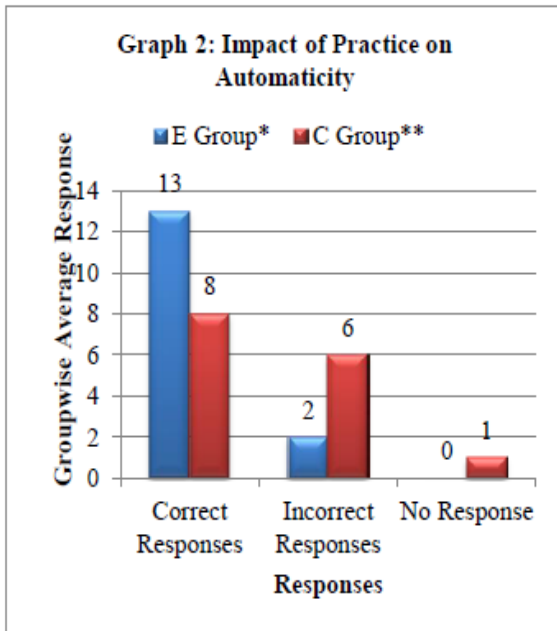
It was recorded that those who were not given practice exercises, performed less than those who practiced such exercise before attempting to answer the questions. An average number of correct, incorrect and un-attempted

responses of the experiment group were 13, 2 and 0 whereas the control group performed with 8 correct, 6 incorrect and 1 un-attempted questions taken as an average.

**Table 2. Average of Responses against questions to see the impact on automaticity**

	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses	No Response
E Group*	13	2	0
C Group**	8	6	1

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group



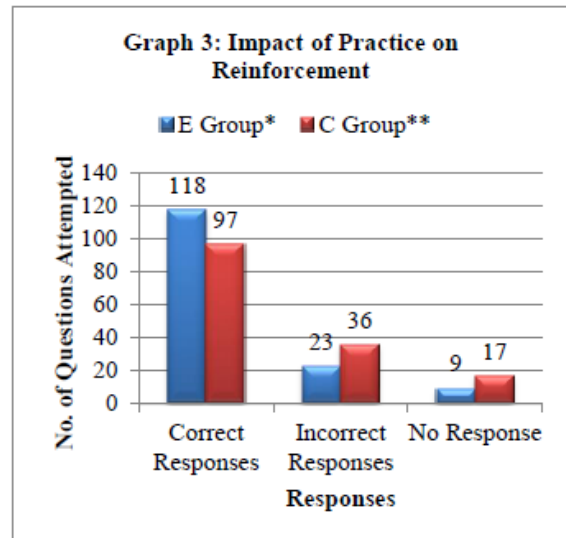
Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, (2005, p.1276) defines that reinforcement is “the act of making something stronger, especially a feeling or an idea. [8]” As per psychological studies, reinforcement is of two types of reinforcement- positive and negative. The concern of the researcher in this study is to measure positive reinforcement as a result of use of practice sheets in the classroom, i.e., obtaining desirable effects or consequences by citing the questions in practice sheets as stimulus.

The students were provided with 5 sentences and were asked to reproduce one similarly structured sentences of their own. It was observed that the students of experiment group could produce sentences from real life situation in abundance. It was perhaps due to practice they had undergone. Out of expected 150 sentences to be written by the experiment group, 118 were correct, 23 were incorrect and 9 were left. The responses of control group were noted as 97 correct, 36 incorrect and 17 un-attempted.

**Table 3. Average of Responses against questions in order to see the impact on Reinforcement**

	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses	No Response
E Group*	118	23	9
C Group**	97	36	17

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group

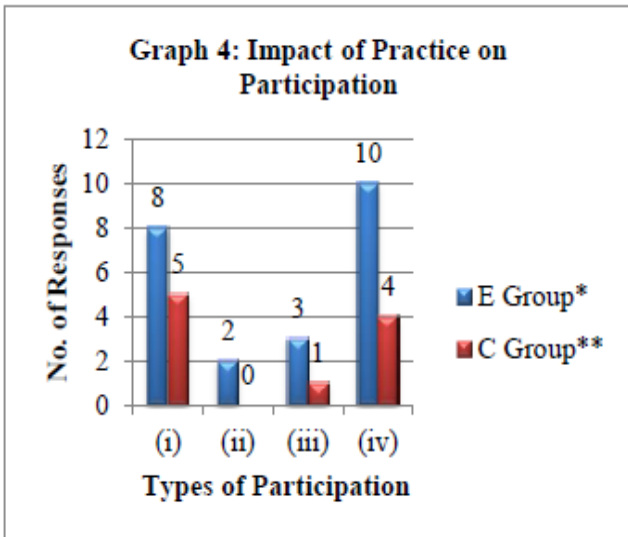


To observe the effect of the use of practice sheets on students’ participation, the researcher thought of maintaining field diary. Initiation and response were taken as parameters to record it. The researcher kept on observing and taking a note of any questions asked, elicitations drawn or participation offered for an innovative activity by learners. The frequency of responses to questions asked was noted. It was interesting for the researcher to note that the students of experiment group were participating more actively. Out of 30 students of this group, questions were asked 8 times, elicitations were drawn times, 3 of them offered their participation in similar activities and 10 of them responded correctly. However, the students of the control group were less active. 5 of them asked questions, nobody came up with any elicitation, 1 offered his participation and only 4 students responded to questions asked to them.

	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
E Group*	8	2	3	10
C Group**	5	0	1	4

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group, (i) Questions Asked, (ii) Elicitations, (iii)

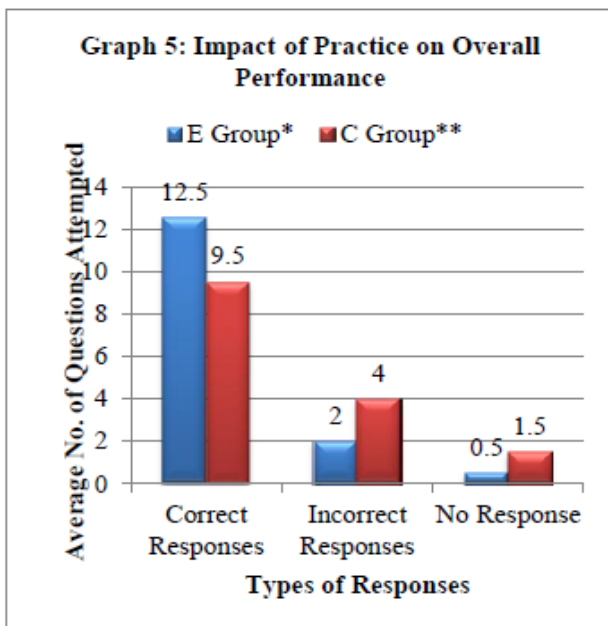
Participation offered, (iv) Responses to Questions Asked



The performance of students with and without practice sheet was evaluated on the basis of correctness of answer to the questions given to them in the post-test. The results of students with practice sheet show that the average correct response out of 15 was 12.5, average incorrect response was 2 and average of un-attempted questions was 0.5. When, compared with the results of students without practice sheet, there are differences of +3, -2 and -1 respectively in each category. The result suggests that the overall performance of students receives a positive effect by administering practice sheets in the class.

	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses	No Response
E Group*	12.5	2	0.5
C Group**	9.5	4	1.5

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group

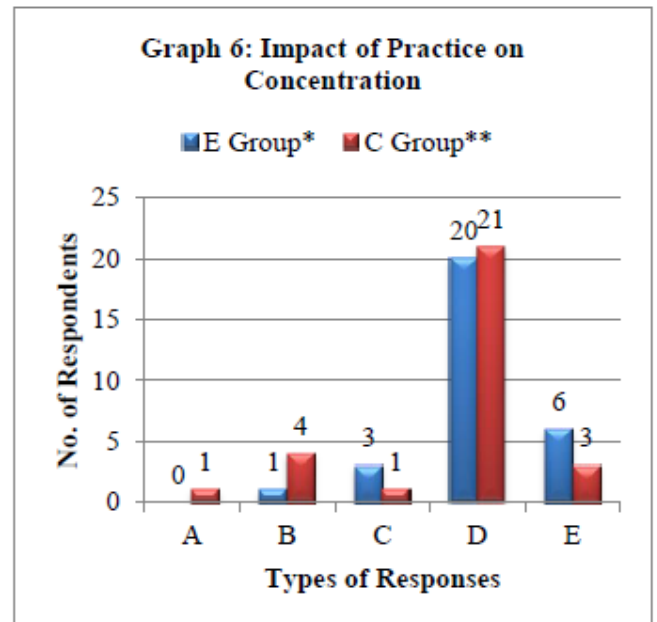


Concentration in language learning stands for power of focusing all one's attention. It is a psychological state of mind when one effortlessly ignores distractions. As a positive attitude, it makes learning refreshingly stimulating. No point to point observation of concentration level of learners was possible within the given time frame and limited resources. So, it was assessed as per responses of participants against what level of concentration in learning they could observe in themselves after using practice sheet while solving questions in the post-test. The table given below shows that a majority of them admit that practice sheets help them concentrate in learning.

	A	B	C	D	E
E Group*	0	1	3	20	6
C Group**	1	4	1	21	3

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group, A = Strongly Disagree, B = Disagree, C =

Neither Agree Nor Disagree, D = Agree, E = Strongly Agree

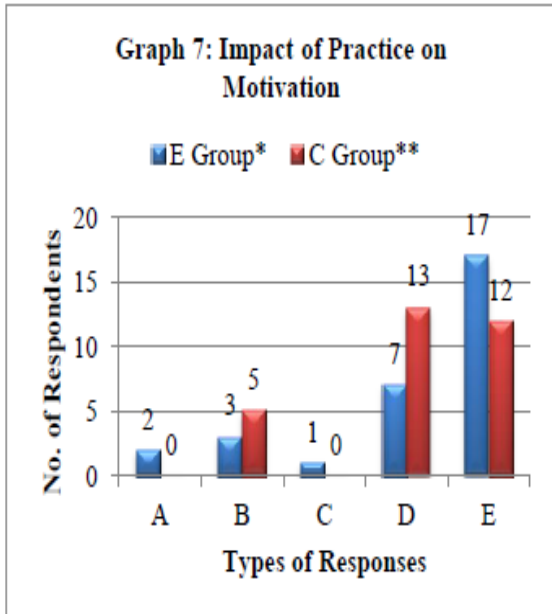


Motivation influences the learning of a second/foreign language to a great extent. It acts as a driving force in the learning process. Richards (2002) defines motivation as “the process of starting, directing, and maintaining physical and psychological activities” [9]. It was easy for the researcher to observe if the learners were motivated to learn with the help of practice sheets or not. But, to maintain a record of it in form of quantitative data was not feasible. So, it was decided that the motivation factor would be measured on the basis of learners’ responses on 5-scales ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The received data cannot be authentic as the researcher felt that majority of students had tried to present an ideal outcome. Still, the responses show that the majority agree that they are more motivated when given to practice.

	A	B	C	D	E
E Group*	2	3	1	7	17
C Group**	0	5	-	13	12

\*Experiment Group, \*\*Control Group, A = Strongly Disagree, B = Disagree, C =

Neither Agree Nor Disagree, D = Agree, E = Strongly Agree



IV. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that APRM and practice sheets have helped the students learn and understand better. The integration of this tool in learning English grammar has made the teaching-learning process student-centered learning environment and motivates them to learn better by active engagement in the process. With the use of practice sheets, students are found to be more motivated. The APRM and practice sheets used in this study are believed to create a learning environment that stimulates the students’ attention in learning English grammar. In addition, it aroused students’ enthusiasm and attention for study; improved their attitude and abilities. The researcher believes that personal motivation will be increased when relevant content fulfill the students’ individual needs and subsequently enhance their performance. Therefore, with the freedom to access anytime at their own pace without time limit, the students are willing to spend more time and engage in the learning. In this study, the tool has significantly provided a more flexible self-study and self-assessment environment to the students and boosts their confidence in using it. The findings of this study indicated that the students were motivated to study the material and satisfied with the exercises provided and felt suitable to be used in their learning. The students felt comfortable and easier to use.

V. CONCLUSION

Practice sheets offer an ideal environment for the students to improve their English language. Through the use of it, the students can repeatedly practice their English grammar without time restriction and embarrassment. Findings in the study suggest that it not only improved students’ motivation, but also their active participation and performance in learning English grammar. It is suggested that a well designed and developed practice sheet can be used as an instructional tool in an English language classroom.

REFERENCES

- [1] Gobet, F., & Campitelli, G. (2007). The role of domain-specific practice, handedness, and starting age in chess. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(1), 159-172. Dx.doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.43.1.159
- [2] Campitelli, G., & Gobet, F. (2011). Deliberate Practice: Necessary but not sufficient. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20,5, 280-285. doi: 10.1177/096372141142922
- [3] Anderson, J. R. (2008). *Learning and memory: An integrated approach*, 2nd Ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 978-0-471-24925-2
- [4] Brown, S.W. & Bennett, E. (2002). The role of practice and automaticity in temporal and nontemporal dual-task performance. *Psychological Research*, 66(1), 80-9. doi: 101007/S004260100076
- [5] Glover, J. A., Ronning, R. R., and Bruning, R. J. (1990). *Cognitive psychology for teachers*. New York: Macmillan. ISBN-13:978-0023441332
- [6] Russell A. Dewey, “Psychology: An Introduction,” [Online]. Available:[http://www.intropsych.com/ch07\\_cognition/automaticity.html](http://www.intropsych.com/ch07_cognition/automaticity.html)
- [7] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automaticity>
- [8] *Oxford Advanced Learner s Dictionary (7 th ed.)*. (2005),Oxford University Press, UK.
- [9] Gerrig, Richard J. & Philip G. Zimbardo. *Psychology And Life*, 16/e Published by Allyn and Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright (c) 2002 by Pearson Education. <http://www.apa.org/research/action/glossary.aspx#b>