

Enhancing English oracy at Delwita Maha Vidyalaya with a community-centric approach using 'playhouse strategy' and visual communications

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Abstract – This study explores a community-centric approach to enhancing English oracy skills among primary students at Delwita Maha Vidyalaya through a 'Playhouse Strategy' integrated with visual communication methods. With a focus on early language development, this approach combines participatory teaching techniques with locally relevant content to foster an engaging learning environment. Traditional methods often fail to engage students effectively, which leads to limited oracy development. To address this, the 'Playhouse Strategy' was developed as an interactive framework, centring on community-based play and storytelling to make language learning a shared cultural activity. This framework emphasises active student engagement through games, role-play, and visual aids tailored to the local context. The study justifies the selection of a community-centric model by highlighting the strong ties between students' learning experiences and their social environment. This approach positions English learning not merely as an academic subject but as a vital communication skill that connects learners to their community. By embedding language learning in culturally relevant scenarios, students are better able to relate to and apply the language in everyday situations. The Playhouse Strategy's use of visual communication, such as local stories, illustrated prompts, and context-specific imagery, further enhances student comprehension and retention. The pedagogical framework incorporates several targeted game dynamics: Appointment, Status, Progression, and Communal Discovery. Appointment fosters one-on-one interaction among peers, helping students practise conversational skills. Status involves role-play to enable students to assume various community roles, enhancing their understanding of social interactions in English. Progression allows for structured language development through incremental tasks, supporting gradual improvement in speaking and listening skills. Finally, Communal Discovery encourages collective participation in problem-solving activities, aligning individual learning with group dynamics. These game elements environments. The educator's observations, student feedback, and the recorded

progress serve as qualitative evidence of the strategy's effectiveness, which led him to be recognized as the best English teacher in Sri Lanka in 2016 for the creative approach of communal learning. The strategy was not widespread but limited to a certain rural area where the knowledge did not get exposed to the other areas. This study contributes to the broader discourse on community-driven language education, particularly in rural settings where traditional teaching methods may not be as effective. The findings suggest that embedding language learning within culturally relevant, interactive frameworks can significantly enhance students' oracy skills and their confidence in using English in real-life contexts.

Keywords: English oracy, playhouse strategy, visual communication, rural schools, community-centric approach

Figure 1

Playhouses made by children in the Sri Lankan context with weaved coconut leaves



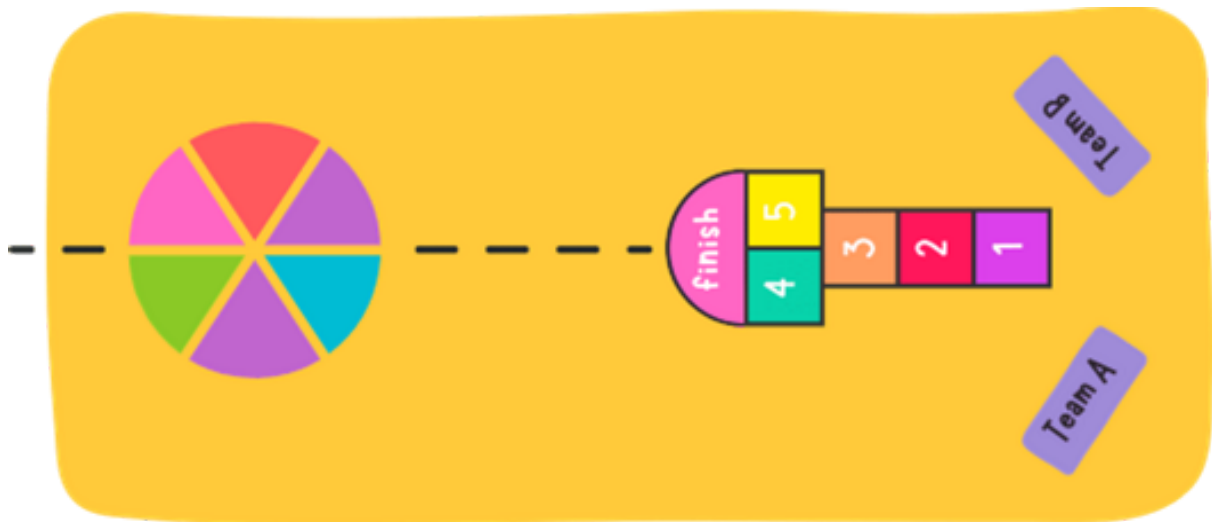
Figure 2

Playhouses made by kids around the world from different materials like foam boards and cushions



Figure 3

Experimental game layout ideated to enhance the playhouse strategy at Delwita Maha Vidyalaya



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