Mentoring Teachers for English Language Acquisition through LSRW
Insights from Literature Review

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Abstract

The English language enjoys the status of the Lingua Franca, the international language, the language of technology, which clearly indicates its importance in every sphere all over the world. As 'LSRW' skills, i.e., 'Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing', are one of the basic skills for English language acquisition, it is essential for learners belonging to various disciplines to master them for achieving success in the 21st century. NEP 2020 emphasises the enhancement of soft skills of learners and communication is one of them, hence LSRW skills are important. Even in crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system revived its status with the help of digital technologies, innovative pedagogical interventions, modern digital methods and approaches of teaching and learning LSRW skills worked for effective English Language acquisition. This paper recognises the role and importance of teacher quality to address the enhancement of LSRW skills. It equally explores the use of mentoring as a professional development strategy in future English teachers and in the continuous professional development of currently practising teachers through a literature review of researches published

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between 2018–2022 in peer review journals. The findings are reported in four major themes: understanding LSRW, LSRW needs of learners, teachers' competency for transacting LSRW and mentoring for teachers' professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Our growth and development depend on how we are communicating our ideas and thoughts with one another, across institutions, workplaces and globally (Arputhamalar, 2019). In the age of globalisation, due to innovations in science and technology, the knowledge domains have seen unprecedented growth (Praveen, 2022). In this scenario, English as a communicative language has dominated across nations (Sreerekha, 2018).

Worldwide, English has been accepted and learnt as a second language (ESL) (Menaka and Sankar, 2019) or as a foreign (EFL), language or as a native language (ENL) (Khan and Mansoor, 2020). The English language is sought after in current workplaces in different organisations and companies (Sreerekha, 2018). It has been the medium for personal and professional growth, for social interactions, relationship building, learning and many more (Khan and Mansoor, 2020). In short, it is the ticket to one's growth and prosperity which we cannot ignore. From K-12 (Albahrey, 2021) to higher education, efforts to enhance the English language acquisition through basic approaches like L (Listening), S (Speaking), R (Reading) and W (Writing) has been critical as an instructional intervention by educators (Aravind and Rajasekaran, 2022).

The role of educators takes the centre stage in the acquisition of essential LSRW skills. Besides, learning English concepts at various levels, it is significant to pay attention to the development of LSRW skills. In this context, teachers paying attention to tracking the progression of LSRW skills of their learners bring meaningful differences (Mudiraj, 2022). The need to have quality teachers have been highlighted in the NEP 2020 and its role to enhance the LSRW skills cannot be ignored. NEP 2020 equally emphasise the need to support and invest in teachers, to be able to enhance the learning outcomes and experiences of their learners.

Existing literature on mentoring has contributed worldwide to the professional development of educators, right from the initial teacher education programme, through their induction (Aarts et al., 2020; Weimer, 2021) and their continuous professional development as practising teachers (Moorhouse and Harfitt, 2021). Considering, the existing LSRW skill divide between urban and rural learners and between tribal and rural learners and between genders needs to be seriously considered. The scope of preparing the future teachers during their university theory course and their practical experiences through the school internship needs to be closely

looked into (Stanulis et al., 2019). Alongside, the existing practising teachers need to engage in their continuous professional development in enhancing their learners' skill development in terms of LSRW needs to be on priority.

Based on current literature reviews, the researchers are guided by the following research questions.

i. What are the skills required for effective English language acquisition?

ii. What are the teaching methods, techniques and pedagogy for teaching and learning LSRW skills?

iii. During the COVID-19 crisis, how teachers have addressed the LSRW skill acquisition?

iv. What is the scope of mentoring English teachers (pre-service and practising) to upgrade their competencies in enhancing the LSRW skills of their learners?

UNDERSTANDING LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING AND WRITING (LSRW) SKILLS

The current paper is based on literature reviews of research articles published in peer-reviewed journals and books between 2018-2022. These articles are only related to English language skills, emphasising more on the Indian context. In order to understand the English Language acquisition through LSRW skills, the keywords used to search the relevant articles in Google Scholar were English Language acquisition, LSRW Skill, Mentoring, India, 2018, and 2022. For the analysis of the contents of the articles considered in this study, different coding schemes were used. Different dimensions of the coding consist of General Information, English Language Acquisition, English Language Communication, Learning English Language as, Framework for Learning LSRW Skills, Instructional Strategies and Learning Material.

Table 1
Coding Scheme for Analysis

Coding Scheme	Dimensions
General Information	Under this scheme information like year of publication, countries, and research population were collected.
English Language Acquisition	In this review, English Language Acquisition at pre-school, K-12, and higher education were observed.
English Language Communication	English Language Communication is being broadly divided into the following categories: 1. Basic Communication Skills 2. Advanced Communication Skills

Learning English Language as	• ESL (English as Second Language) • EFL (English as Foreign Language)
Framework for learning LSRW Skills	Reviewed articles included different frameworks like: • TELL and CALL, MI, IOT, BWM, ICLA and multidisciplinary pedagogical approaches, narrative approach using different tools used both in offline and online mode.
Instructional Strategies	Articles reviewed instructional strategies: • Discourse based strategies • Age-appropriate, student-centric, contextually relevant activities • Directed thinking activity
Learning Material	• Digital interactive material • Language games • Mass media (includes newspapers, books, internet, radio, magazines, movies, and television)

The findings are reported thematically. In English Language Teaching (ELT) Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW), have a prominent place with regard to communication skills. The key requirement for assimilating these skills, is to provide applicable pedagogy for effective LSRW skills in ELT. LSRW skills pedagogy need to be standardised at the universal level, as it will help learners to assess their level and will also help them to decide on their future learning plan. Globally various contemporary multidisciplinary pedagogical approaches are used for the integration of basic language LSRW skills in the English classrooms.

Communication can be divided into two categories. First is basic communication which includes the four language skills, viz listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). Second, comes advanced communication skills (language functions) which consist of discussing, opinions and views, sharing ideas, negotiating, persuading, agreeing and/or disagreeing with others' views (Pasupathi, 2021). One of the crucial components of social skills is procurement of language skills through which a proper education system can be gained (Sylvia, 2019). Thus, the education system should provide the learners minimum levels of mastery on Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) in company with their social application in general and creative purposes (Mudiraj, 2022).

Effective LSRW skills lead to an attractive personality and also installs a foundation of trust between leaders and team members through healthy communication (Sylvia, 2019). The concept of LSRW is reformulated here as follows:

1. Listening triggers an individual's learning process.

2. Speaking, even on the fundamental level, is the step for correcting mistakes and incorporating the received language.

3. Reading strengthens the standards of language and improves it.

4. Writing is the transcendent channel for nailing down and personalising the levels of language obtained.

Out of all the four skills (LSRW), listening is the hardest skill for fostering second language acquisition, also considered as the core skill for speaking and requires continuous practice, hard work and attention for becoming a professional in listening skills. They further suggested that flexibility should be provided regarding curriculum coverage and examination score, integration of various LSRW activities along with suitable digital material and technology can make the learning experience for the learners.

Language is an exceptional capability granted to human beings. The sub-skills of language comprise LSRW. In the academic sphere, specifically at the primary level (mother tongue as medium of instruction), listening is considered as the most ignored skill despite its first place in LSRW skills (Kannan, 2019).

Speaking skill is key in one's personal and professional life for social interaction and in other situation-based needs. Hearing someone speak, subconsciously the listener makes perceptions and understanding about the speaker's personality, their attitude and other characteristics. This further guides the listener to take the next appropriate move.

For learning and understanding authentic materials, reading plays a key role amidst the LSRW skills (Albahrey, 2021). In an Indonesian study conducted with 30, Grade VIII students, using DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity), the authors reported this technique having a significant impact on improving reading comprehension.

During the pandemic time, when intensive English writing courses were conducted for the first time on an online platform, 42 participants have responded positively both for new platform usage by the teacher as well as for writing skill outcomes (Sheerah et al., 2022). A reading activity like poetry has shown results in influencing the writing skills through increased vocabulary, sentence formation, syntax, fluency and creative skills (Deepa and Ilankumaran, 2018).

Need and Importance of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) Skill

The current literature on LSRW has been explored at all levels of education. Indian students come from diverse geographical and socio-economic backgrounds as a result of which the teacher must understand their diverse needs, styles of learning, etc. By using English mobile application (EMA), e-learning platforms, ICT, various modern approaches, English language Teacher's Interaction Forum (ELTIF), teachers can cater to the learner's needs (Albahrey, 2021).

At the higher education level, various LSRW strategies have helped to improvise the LSRW skills, for example, use of technology, task-based assignment (firm editing), speaking based activities, language games, using grammar and poetry, narration and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) (Siddiqui, 2020).

Instructional Strategies for LSRW Skills

The researcher has come across the following instructional strategies for effective teaching and learning of LSRW skills:

Digital Interactive Tools for LSRW skills

Digital interaction tools are growing in popularity especially in education because they enhance learning through interaction which is one of the effective ways of imparting LSRW skills among learners. Digital interactive tools help learners develop both their lateral thinking and language skills (Pasupathi, 2021).

LSRW Skills Development through English Literature

English literature could be considered one of the finest teaching strategies that might encourage students to actively participate and meet language learning objectives. By studying English literature, one can increase their vocabulary with the Internet of Things (IoT) (Aravind and Rajasekaran, 2022). In ELT classrooms, and Literature serves as a vital tool for enhancing LSRW skills (Rao, 2018). When English as a second language (ESL) students feel comfortable with their learning task/ activity as their vocabulary level rises. It is the responsibility of the teachers to help students expand their vocabulary, since understanding will increase once they have the necessary language to express their ideas. IoT activities help people in learning a variety of knowledge and facts about a specific word. Thus, the curriculum should include task-based exercises and activities for evaluation.

Language Games for LSRW Skills

Teaching and learning English as a second language can be effectively accomplished through playing language games (Sankar, 2019).

LSRW Skills through Grammar Rules

The development of LSRW skills through grammatical rules improves communication skills. This lack of skill is observed in the majority of people around the world which could not be filled directly by using traditional methods. The only method to reach a large audience is through ODL'S dissemination of high-quality instruction. According to Kaliappan and Vivekaanandhan (2021), if the right material and methods are used, teaching grammar may be a fun exercise that blends several language skills. Grammar instruction should focus more on improving conversational skills than on teaching grammar rules.

M-learning for LSRW skills

M-learning is an effective method to improve LSRW skills using mobile devices (Venugopal et al., 2020). The idea of self-study is crucial while studying a second language like English. It is also one of the best ways to overcome geographical and temporal constraints to language learning.

Digital news platforms

The development of graduate students' English language skills depends heavily on digital news platforms (Arputhamalar, 2019). It has developed into a crucial method for several corporate operations all over the planet. Activity based on mass media allows students to enhance their LSRW skills, increase their desire to express themselves in English and also demonstrate their literary creativity (Ramani, 2018).

ICT for LSRW skills

The use of ICT in English as a foreign Language (EFL) can work as a wonder for inculcating LSRW skills among learners. The use of technology in the foreign language (FL) classroom increases student engagement, fosters intentional and meaningful interactions, and promotes passive and active learning (Vijayakumar, 2022). Technology-based virtual English language instruction improves both individual and group learning as well as classroom management. The traditional approach to teaching and learning English language skills are ineffective, boring, uninspiring and lacking innovation. ICT has a lot to offer teachers and students who want to expand their vocabulary and enhance their English language skills.

Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)

Teaching reading comprehension to students using the Direct Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) technique is beneficial. Tamba (2022) in his study, stressed the significant effect of using the DRTA technique in teaching reading comprehension to learners.

Constructivist curriculum for imparting LSRW skills

The effectiveness of English language instruction is carried out using a constructivist curriculum that is process-oriented, learner-centred and activity-based, with a strong emphasis on "Discourse-based Pedagogy" relying on student involvement and desire to use the language (Praveen, 2022).

Development of LSRW skills through teaching poetry

Students' language skills can be improved through teaching poetry (Deepa and Ilankumaran, 2018). Poetry aids in language learning and cultural comprehension. The readers enjoy it because it provides them with fresh role models to imitate. Reading poetry helps learners develop their fluency, sentence structure, vocabulary, syntax and creative abilities.

Activity-based Teaching and Learning for LSRW skills

It is the need and duty of teachers to look into ways to make reading passages more activity-based for developing various skills of communication, grammar, vocabulary, and subskills of reading among the learners (Kalpana et al., 2018).

Narrative approach using digital short stories

The narrative approach using digital short stories has improved the LSRS skills of the learners (Vedadri and Rengaraj, 2020). It helps the students to master grammar without the use of tedious exercises of grammar. In addition, it helps one become fluent in expressions easily, exactly like when someone masters their native dialects which improves LSRW skills.

English publications and books

Srivastava (2018) in his study reveals that most English learners fear to speaking publicly in English and struggle with choice of words when writing in English. He further emphasised that greater encouragement is needed to read English publications and books to overcome those problems.

BENCHMARKING CHECKLIST TO evaluate E-APPS FOR LSRW SKILLS

Best-Worst Method (BWM) and The Technique for Order of Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS)

Multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) methods like BWM and TOPSIS could be used for effective evaluation of E-apps used for teaching and learning LSRW skills. Pasupathi (2021) in his study for young English learners suggested an evaluation and benchmarking decision matrix (DM) which is based on multicriteria decision-making (MCDM). The study reveals that for criterion weighting, BWM is appropriate and for benchmarking and ranking E-apps, TOPSIS is appropriate.

DECISION MATRIX

Decision matrix for analysing and evaluating students' English mobile applications (EMAs) (Zhao et al., 2021) will help the teacher in selecting the best and most effective mobile application out of various mobile applications available for teaching and learning LSRW skills.

FRAMEWORK FOR LSRW SKILLS

Multiple Intelligence Theory

Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory could be very helpful in enhancing online teaching and learning (Arokiaraj and Eusobia, 2022). By highlighting the individual differences of students throughout the online learning phase, this pedagogical offer will energise L2 students and teachers to create an effective web.

COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Priya and Prasantha (2021) in their study outlined that Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) will act as a foundational framework for teachers who are recently required to enrol in online learning courses. CALL provides students access to a variety of learning opportunities through multimedia systems. The use of engaging tactics like animation helps the students comprehend ideas effectively.

INTEGRATED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING APPROACH (ICLA)

As a multidisciplinary method, Khan and Mansoor (2020) in their study combined two approaches (ITA and CLA) to create the Integrated Collaborative Learning Approach (ICLA). Since both these approaches are extensively used in various disciplines around the globe thus, they are not restricted to teaching and learning of basic language skills (LSRW) but can be effectively used in various disciplines outside of ESL/EFL classrooms.

TEACHERS' COMPETENCY FOR TRANSACTING LSRW SKILLS

Having understood the importance and need for the betterment of LSRW skills of learners, the role of teachers and their competencies, become critical to understand (Menaka and Sankar, 2019). This has implications in the professional development of teachers (Khan and Mansoor, 2020) right from the teacher preparation stage, induction and in their continuous professional development as teachers. It also applies to educators at the university level, dealing with students' LSRW skills (Kannan, 2019; Srivastava, 2018).

Research findings have indicated, though teaching and learning English language concepts are important, greater emphasis has been put on developing the LSRW skills (Mudiraj, 2022). Multiple researchers across the world have experimented with various approaches that have shown encouraging results (Sheerah et al., 2022). Researchers equally have documented the traditional English language teaching methods as

unmotivated, boring and ineffective to address the LSRW skills (Sheerah et al., 2022). On the other hand, modern approaches have shown evidence of tremendous enhancement of LSRW skills by integrating the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) tools (Menaka and Sankar, 2019). Now, even activities based on NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programme) are used in the classroom to get the desired results (Siddiqui, 2020).

TEACHERS DURING COVID 19 SITUATION

While dealing with students, it is important for the teacher to base their pedagogical interventions which are activity-based, learner-centered, process-oriented curriculum and guided by the constructivist paradigm (Praveen, 2022). The COVID 19 Pandemic situation brought a challenge in the teaching-learning processes (Vijayakumar, 2022). During this time, schools were shut down. However, teachers and other stakeholders kept the learning happening to their learners (Arokiaraj and Eusobia, 2022; Jayakumar et al., 2022).

This stressful situation brought an alternative medium to approach teaching-learning. Teachers focussed on developing their digital competencies to manoeuvre in the digital platforms and learnt to use the digital educational application to cater to the learning needs of their students. Research is now available to even predict the best and worst mobile applications used for LSRW skill enhancement where Montessori application being the best and FunWithFlupe being the worst application (Albahrey, 2021). Various other studies exploring the usage, methods and effectivity in the online medium are now available like LSRW evaluation methods and mobile learning applications (Vedadri and Rengaraj, 2020).

MENTORING FOR TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Looking into the host of skills and competency demands on teachers, both at the face-to-face level and on a digital platform, the support and professional development need is undeniable. Worldwide, mentoring has been utilised as a professional development strategy in different disciplines like medical (Farlow et al., 2022), business (Owhoeke and Kemmer, 2021), industries (Bae et al., 2022). Mentoring has been growingly used in educational settings to support both learners at various levels and educator fraternities. Especially in the context of education, mentoring has been maximised in teacher preparation programmes (Gurl, 2019), where the university course focusses on the theoretical aspect of teaching and learning and the school internship programme of 20 weeks in India (Tripathi, 2020), emphasises in gaining the professional experiences to gain confidence for being school ready, to teach in real classrooms (Jita and

Munje, 2021). In this situation, the pre-service teacher act as a mentee and the cooperating teacher in the placement school act as a mentor (Karathanos-Aguilar and Ervin-Kassab, 2022). This professional collaboration and interaction mutually benefit both the mentor and the mentee. Mentoring in its simplest way can be understood as what a mentor does (Lynn and Nguyen, 2020). Therefore, the mentor's perspective, belief, methods used in operationalising the mentoring process hold key, to professionally equipping the teacher in making (Orland-Barak and Wang, 2020).

Mentoring has been defined in multiple ways by different researchers. Till now, there has been no consensus on the agreed definition of mentoring, since mentoring has been practised in varied contexts, cultures (Pattisson, 2020) and levels. However, what is commonly understood from the existing literature on mentoring is, a mentor is someone who is experienced with professional knowledge and expertise and a mentee is someone, who is seeking to learn the professional knowledge and practices from the experienced mentor (Lunsmann et al., 2019). Therefore, mentoring can be explored to see how the English pre-service teachers are professionally equipped to address the learning needs of the teacher candidate to teach LSRW skills and as teachers to improve the LSRW skills of their learners in the classroom situation (Flores, 2019).

Studies have also evidenced the use of mentoring of practising teachers in their continuous professional development, through peer-mentoring, group mentoring and using the School-Based Mentoring Program (SBMP) dealing with pre-service teachers (Gallchóir et al., 2019). In India, mentoring has been integrated in NEP 2020 to support both students and teachers. The draft bluebook on National Mentoring Mission (NMM) by National Council for Teacher Education (2021) is in sync with the NEP 2020, is currently open for public comments for its finalisation. The NMM focuses to institutionalise mentoring as guided by NEP 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic times, mentoring too went digital and e-mentoring became reality very prominently (Erdoğan et al., 2022)

Conclusion

The current literature on English language acquisition through LSRW skills between the time period of 2018–2022, emphasise the need and relevance of focusing on the development of learner's skills, since this is the key to one's future growth and prosperity. For effective communication, learning to communicate in English is important due to its global appeal, occupational demands and greater scope for personal and professional development. Basic skills like LSRW are the key to strengthening the English

communicative competencies. The role and quality of English language teachers are crucial to achieving better LSRW skill enhancement of learners at various levels right from K-12 to higher education. Teachers' resilience and willingness to respond to a crisis on demand brought by the COVID-19 pandemic is encouraging since schools were closed but learning continued to happen in an alternative digital platform.

Looking at the limitations of the traditional teaching and learning methods/approaches and the challenges brought by the COVID 19 pandemic situation has accelerated the process of integrating technology and digital tools to address the learning needs of the students. Various studies focussing the effective strategies to increase the LSRW skills have been identified. At this junction what remains relevant is, how the teacher carves out their role to increase the LSRW skills of students in face-to-face mode and in the digital medium also. Irrespective of the medium used by the teachers, what remains the key aspect is the pedagogical interventions, teaching and methods approach, strategies used across the schools to higher education level.

The digital integration and use of ICT in enhancing the four LSRW skills is massive and growing. Teachers' ease and competencies to make better decisions, to choose the right digital educational applications, engaging students for better LRSW skills both offline and online mode needs to take priority by all educational stakeholders. Teachers were quick to learn and upgrade, by using digital tools and integrating technology in their teaching-learning processes and especially catering to the development of LSRW skills through different applications.

Mentoring worldwide has been used to maximise the potential of teachers right from the teacher preparatory stage to making learning happen to students in classrooms. Mentoring has been explored to professional support in the preparation of future teachers alongside contributing to the continuous professional development of existing teachers. During the pandemic times, mentoring also became digital. There is huge scope to harness the potential of using mentoring as a professional development strategy of teachers in India. India's National Education Policy 2020 and the draft National Mentoring Mission (NMM) are also aligned to provided guidelines towards the learning needs and directions to all stakeholders for a better and enhanced learnings experience of the students. Through this policy initiative, commitment to address the need to better prepare the current learners, equipped with the 21st century skills are spelt out.

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