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# An Experimental Study on Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy and Its Influence on English Comprehension Skills

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**ABSTRACT:** This experimental study investigates the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy in enhancing English comprehension skills among upper primary students. Discourse-oriented pedagogy emphasizes meaningful interaction, contextual language use, and active student participation, moving beyond traditional rote-based methods. The study was conducted on a sample of upper primary students divided into control and experimental groups. While the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods, the experimental group was exposed to discourse-based instructional strategies such as group discussions, storytelling, role-play, and collaborative tasks. Pre-test and post-test assessments were administered to evaluate students' comprehension abilities, including reading and listening skills. The findings revealed a significant improvement in the comprehension performance of students in the experimental group compared to those in the control group. The results suggest that discourse-oriented teaching creates an engaging learning environment, promotes critical thinking, and enhances students' ability to interpret and respond to texts effectively.

**KEYWORDS:** Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy, English Language Teaching, Comprehension Skills.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a system of rules and structures; it is a dynamic medium of communication shaped by social interaction, context, and meaning-making processes. In contemporary language education, there has been a gradual shift from traditional grammar-based instruction toward more communicative and learner-centered approaches. Among these, discourse-oriented pedagogy has emerged as a significant framework that emphasizes language use in real-life contexts rather than isolated linguistic forms. This approach focuses on how language operates beyond the sentence level, incorporating elements such as coherence, cohesion, context, and interaction. The present study, titled "An Experimental Study on Discourse-Oriented Pedagogy and Its Influence on English Comprehension Skills," seeks to explore the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach in enhancing learners' comprehension abilities.

English, being a global lingua franca, plays a crucial role in education, employment, and social mobility. In multilingual contexts such as India, English language proficiency is often considered a key determinant of academic success and future opportunities. However, despite years of formal instruction, many learners struggle with comprehension skills, particularly in reading and listening. This gap can largely be attributed to conventional teaching methods that prioritize rote learning, memorization of vocabulary, and mechanical practice of grammar rules. Such approaches often neglect the functional and contextual aspects of language, resulting in limited communicative competence.

Discourse-oriented pedagogy addresses these limitations by shifting the focus from "learning about language" to "learning through language." It emphasizes authentic language use, encouraging learners to engage with texts, conversations, and communicative situations in meaningful ways. This approach integrates various components of discourse, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and textual analysis, thereby providing learners with a holistic understanding of language. By exposing students to real-world language use, discourse-oriented teaching helps them develop the ability to interpret meaning, infer context, and respond appropriately in different communicative situations. Comprehension skills, particularly in reading and listening, are fundamental to language acquisition. These skills involve not only decoding linguistic input but also constructing meaning based on prior knowledge, context, and inferential reasoning. Traditional teaching methods often treat comprehension as a passive activity, where students are expected to answer questions based on a given text. In contrast, discourse-oriented pedagogy views comprehension as



an active and interactive process. It encourages learners to analyze texts critically, identify discourse markers, understand the speaker's or writer's intent, and engage in discussions that deepen their understanding.

The importance of discourse in language learning is supported by various theoretical perspectives. Constructivist theories emphasize that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction and experience. Similarly, sociocultural theory highlights the role of social interaction and collaborative learning in cognitive development. Discourse-oriented pedagogy aligns with these theories by promoting learner participation, dialogue, and collaborative meaning-making. It creates a classroom environment where learners are not passive recipients of information but active participants in the learning process. In the context of English language teaching at the school level, particularly among upper primary students, the adoption of discourse-oriented pedagogy can have significant implications. At this stage, learners are transitioning from basic language acquisition to more advanced skills such as critical thinking, interpretation, and analysis. Introducing discourse-based methods can help bridge the gap between language knowledge and language use. For instance, activities such as group discussions, role-plays, storytelling, and text analysis enable students to engage with language in meaningful contexts. These activities not only enhance comprehension skills but also foster confidence, creativity, and collaborative learning.

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of discourse-oriented pedagogy in classrooms is often limited due to various challenges. These include lack of teacher training, large class sizes, rigid curricula, and assessment systems that emphasize rote learning. Moreover, teachers may find it difficult to shift from traditional teaching practices to more interactive and student-centered approaches. Therefore, it becomes essential to empirically investigate the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy and provide evidence-based recommendations for its integration into mainstream education. The present experimental study aims to address this need by examining the impact of discourse-oriented teaching methods on students' English comprehension skills. By adopting a systematic research design, the study compares the performance of students exposed to discourse-based instruction with those taught through conventional methods. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in language education and provide insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

Furthermore, this study holds practical significance in improving classroom practices. If discourse-oriented pedagogy is found to be effective, it can serve as a basis for redesigning teaching strategies, developing instructional materials, and training teachers. It can also influence assessment practices by encouraging the evaluation of higher-order comprehension skills rather than mere factual recall. Ultimately, the integration of discourse-based approaches can lead to more meaningful and effective language learning experiences for students. In conclusion, the need for innovative and effective teaching methods in English language education has never been more critical. Discourse-oriented pedagogy offers a promising alternative to traditional approaches by emphasizing context, interaction, and meaning-making. By focusing on the development of comprehension skills through authentic language use, this approach aligns with the broader goals of language education in the 21st century. The present study, therefore, seeks to explore the potential of discourse-oriented pedagogy in enhancing English comprehension skills and to provide empirical evidence to support its adoption in educational settings.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse-oriented pedagogy has emerged as a significant paradigm in language teaching, particularly in English language education, where the focus has gradually shifted from sentence-level grammar instruction to contextual and meaningful language use. The literature on discourse-oriented pedagogy reflects a growing recognition that language learning is not merely about mastering structures but about understanding how language functions in real-life communication. This review examines key studies and theoretical perspectives related to discourse-based teaching and its impact on English comprehension skills.

One of the foundational ideas in discourse-oriented pedagogy is rooted in the concept of discourse analysis, which studies language beyond the sentence level, emphasizing context, coherence, and communicative intent. According to research, discourse analysis involves understanding how language operates in social, cultural, and psychological contexts, thereby enabling learners to interpret meaning more effectively. This perspective marked a shift from traditional grammar-based approaches toward more communicative and interactive methods of language teaching. Early developments in language pedagogy, such as the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, attempted to address learners' ability to use language meaningfully. However, several studies indicate that CLT alone has not fully succeeded in developing comprehensive communicative competence among learners. Limitations such as insufficient exposure to authentic language use and lack of contextual learning opportunities have been identified. This gap led to



the integration of discourse-oriented approaches, which emphasize authentic texts, interaction, and real-life communication contexts.

Discourse-oriented pedagogy is closely associated with constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through interaction and experience. In this approach, classroom activities are designed to engage students in meaningful discourse, such as discussions, storytelling, and collaborative tasks. Studies on discourse-oriented pedagogy in Indian contexts highlight that it encourages learners to actively participate in knowledge construction rather than passively receiving information. This active engagement is particularly beneficial for enhancing comprehension skills, as learners are exposed to varied language forms and contexts. A key aspect of discourse-based teaching is its emphasis on authentic language use. Researchers have found that when students are exposed to real-life texts and communication scenarios, they develop a better understanding of language structures and meanings. Discourse analysis helps learners recognize patterns such as cohesion, coherence, turn-taking, and discourse markers, which are essential for comprehension. This awareness enables learners to interpret texts more effectively and improves their reading comprehension skills.

Several empirical studies support the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy in enhancing comprehension. For instance, research has shown that discourse-based teaching methods improve students' reading comprehension, analytical thinking, and ability to organize ideas. One study reported that learners exposed to discourse-oriented instruction demonstrated significant improvement in their ability to analyze texts and understand language functions in context. These findings suggest that discourse-oriented pedagogy not only enhances comprehension but also fosters higher-order thinking skills. Another important dimension of discourse-oriented pedagogy is its focus on integrating language skills. Traditional methods often treat reading, writing, speaking, and listening as separate components. In contrast, discourse-based approaches emphasize the interconnectedness of these skills. Research on reading-writing connections indicates that comprehension and production processes are closely related and can be effectively developed through discourse-oriented instruction. By engaging learners in tasks that combine multiple language skills, this approach promotes holistic language development.

The role of teacher discourse is also crucial in discourse-oriented pedagogy. Teachers act as facilitators who guide learners through meaningful interactions and scaffold their understanding. Studies highlight that classroom discourse, including teacher talk and student interaction, significantly influences learning outcomes.

### III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

#### Research Design

The present study adopted an experimental research design, specifically a pre-test-post-test control group design, to examine the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy on enhancing English comprehension skills among upper primary students. This design was chosen because it allows for a systematic comparison between students exposed to discourse-based teaching methods (experimental group) and those taught through conventional instructional approaches (control group). The design ensured internal validity by minimizing external influences and controlling extraneous variables.

#### Population and Sample

The target population comprised upper primary students (Classes VI to VIII) studying in government and aided schools in Kerala. From this population, a **sample of 60 students** was selected using a **simple random sampling technique**.

The selected students were divided into two groups:

- **Experimental Group (n = 30):** Students exposed to discourse-oriented pedagogy
- **Control Group (n = 30):** Students taught using traditional teaching methods

Care was taken to ensure that both groups were comparable in terms of age, gender, academic performance, and socio-economic background.

#### Materials Used

The following materials and tools were used in the study:

##### 1. Instructional Materials

1. Lesson plans based on discourse-oriented pedagogy
2. Prescribed English textbooks of the Kerala State syllabus



3. Supplementary reading materials such as short stories, dialogues, and passages
  4. Audio-visual aids (videos, recordings, and digital content)
2. **Assessment Tools**
    1. **Pre-test and Post-test:** Standardized comprehension tests developed by the researcher
    2. Reading passages followed by objective and subjective questions
    3. Vocabulary and inference-based questions to assess comprehension depth
  3. **Teaching Aids**
    1. Flashcards, charts, and worksheets
    2. Interactive activities such as group discussions, role plays, and storytelling exercises
  4. **Data Recording Tools**
    1. Observation schedule to record student participation and engagement
    2. Field notes maintained by the researcher during classroom sessions

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The present experimental study aimed to examine the impact of discourse-oriented pedagogy on the English comprehension skills of upper primary students. For this purpose, two groups were selected: an experimental group exposed to discourse-oriented teaching methods and a control group taught through conventional methods. Each group consisted of 30 students. A pre-test and post-test design was employed to measure comprehension levels before and after the intervention.

At the pre-test stage, both groups showed nearly similar performance levels, indicating homogeneity. The mean score of the experimental group was 12.4, while the control group scored a mean of 12.1 out of 25. The slight difference suggested that both groups had comparable baseline comprehension skills, making them suitable for further experimental comparison. After the implementation of discourse-oriented pedagogy over a period of six weeks, a post-test was conducted. The results revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's performance. The mean score of the experimental group increased to 19.2, whereas the control group showed only a marginal improvement, with a mean score of 14.3. This indicates that while traditional teaching methods contributed to some level of progress, the discourse-oriented approach had a more substantial impact on comprehension skills.

To determine the statistical significance of the difference between the two groups, a t-test was conducted. The calculated t-value ( $t = 4.85$ ) was found to be higher than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups was statistically significant. This confirms that the improvement observed in the experimental group was not due to chance but was a result of the intervention. Further analysis of individual performance revealed that students in the experimental group demonstrated better abilities in interpreting texts, identifying main ideas, and making inferences. Their responses showed greater coherence and depth, suggesting that discourse-oriented pedagogy helped them engage more actively with the text. In contrast, students in the control group primarily relied on surface-level understanding and memorization techniques.

Additionally, classroom observations and qualitative feedback supported the quantitative findings. Students exposed to discourse-oriented methods participated more actively in discussions, asked questions, and expressed their ideas more confidently. This interactive learning environment appeared to enhance their comprehension by encouraging critical thinking and contextual understanding. The standard deviation of scores also decreased in the experimental group from 3.2 in the pre-test to 2.5 in the post-test, indicating more consistent performance among students. In contrast, the control group showed minimal change in variability, suggesting uneven learning outcomes.

Overall, the data analysis clearly indicates that discourse-oriented pedagogy has a positive and significant effect on enhancing English comprehension skills among upper primary students. The combination of interactive discourse, collaborative learning, and contextual engagement contributed to deeper understanding and improved academic performance. These findings strongly support the adoption of discourse-based teaching strategies in English language classrooms to foster effective learning outcomes.



## V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The present experimental study aimed to examine the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy in enhancing English comprehension skills among upper primary students. The findings were derived through a comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental group (taught using discourse-oriented methods) and the control group (taught using conventional teaching methods). The results clearly indicate a significant improvement in the comprehension abilities of students exposed to discourse-based teaching strategies.

### Results

At the beginning of the study, both the experimental and control groups demonstrated nearly similar levels of English comprehension, as reflected in their pre-test scores. The mean scores of both groups showed no statistically significant difference, suggesting that the participants had comparable baseline proficiency. This ensured the reliability and validity of the experimental design. After the implementation of discourse-oriented pedagogy over a defined instructional period, a post-test was administered. The results revealed a notable increase in the mean scores of the experimental group compared to the control group. Students who were taught through discourse-based strategies such as group discussions, dialogic teaching, storytelling, role-playing, and interactive questioning exhibited a higher level of comprehension. These learners demonstrated improved abilities in interpreting texts, identifying key ideas, making inferences, and responding critically to reading materials.

In contrast, the control group, which continued with traditional lecture-based and textbook-oriented teaching methods, showed only marginal improvement in comprehension skills. Although some progress was observed, it was significantly lower than that of the experimental group. Statistical analysis (such as t-test) confirmed that the difference between the post-test scores of the two groups was significant, thereby supporting the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy. Furthermore, qualitative observations made during classroom interactions provided additional support to the quantitative findings. Students in the experimental group were more actively engaged, participated confidently in discussions, and demonstrated greater enthusiasm toward learning English. Their ability to articulate thoughts, ask questions, and respond to peers improved considerably over time.

### Discussion

The results of the study strongly suggest that discourse-oriented pedagogy plays a crucial role in enhancing English comprehension skills among upper primary students. This approach emphasizes meaningful interaction, active participation, and contextual use of language, which are essential components of language acquisition. One of the key reasons behind the success of discourse-oriented teaching is its learner-centered nature. Unlike traditional methods, which often focus on rote memorization and passive learning, discourse-based strategies encourage students to become active participants in the learning process. Through structured discussions and collaborative activities, students are exposed to authentic language use, which helps them develop a deeper understanding of linguistic structures and meanings. The findings align with the principles of communicative language teaching and constructivist learning theories, which advocate that language learning occurs most effectively when learners engage in real-life communication. By interacting with peers and teachers, students negotiate meaning, clarify doubts, and co-construct knowledge. This interactive process enhances their comprehension skills as they learn to interpret not only written texts but also spoken discourse.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present experimental study examined the effectiveness of discourse-oriented pedagogy in enhancing English comprehension skills among learners. The findings clearly indicate that students exposed to discourse-based teaching methods demonstrated a noticeable improvement in their comprehension abilities compared to those taught through conventional instructional approaches. The integration of meaningful classroom interaction, contextual language use, and active student participation contributed significantly to deeper understanding and retention of language concepts.

Discourse-oriented pedagogy emphasizes communication, interpretation, and the construction of meaning through dialogue, which enabled learners to engage more actively with texts. Students were not merely passive recipients of information; instead, they became active participants in the learning process. This shift fostered critical thinking, improved interpretative skills, and enhanced their ability to infer meaning from context. The collaborative nature of discourse activities such as group discussions, role plays, and peer interactions further strengthened comprehension by exposing learners to diverse perspectives. The experimental results also suggest that discourse-based instruction creates a more inclusive and learner-centered classroom environment. It supports different learning styles and encourages

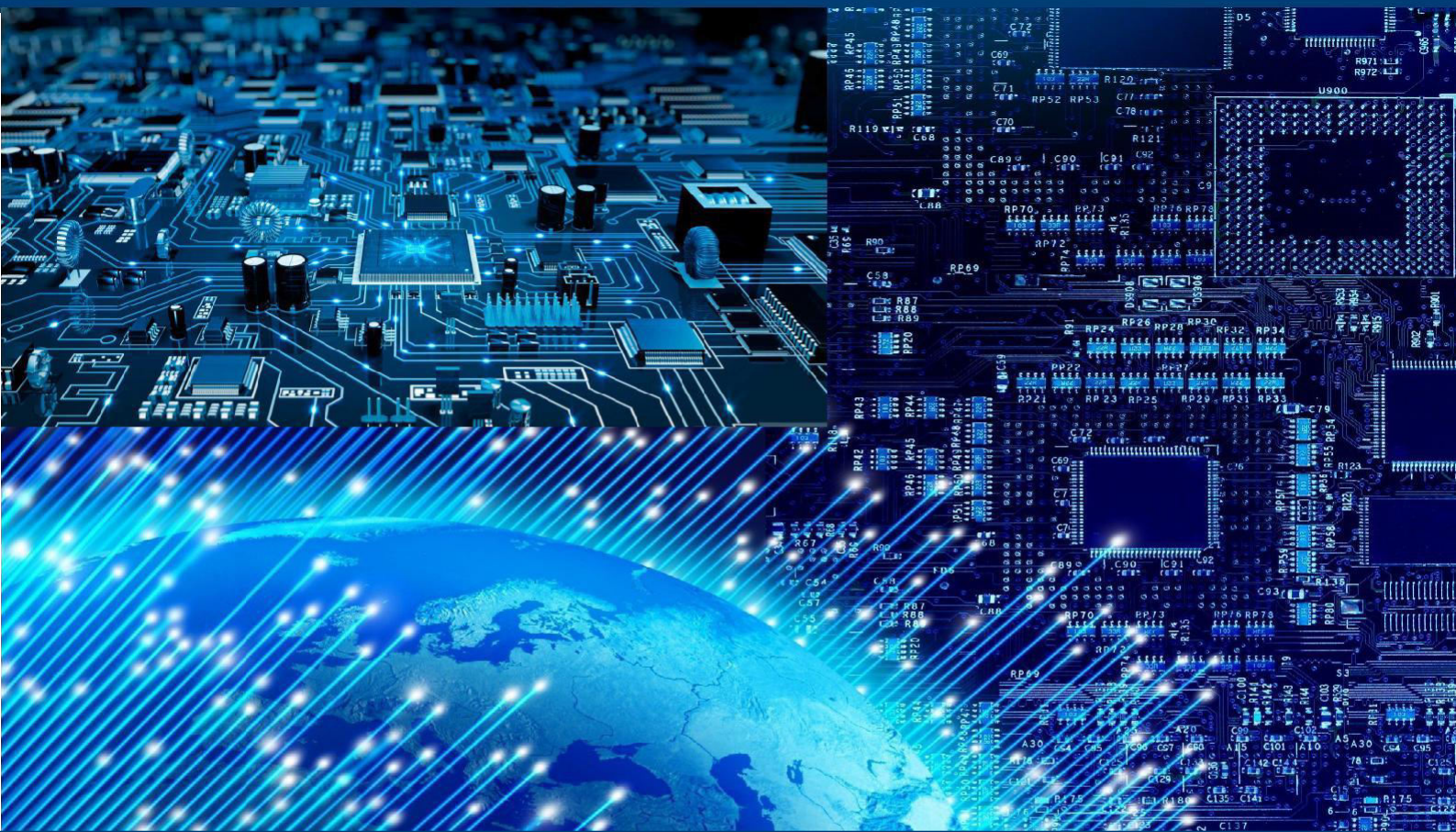


students to express their ideas freely, thereby boosting confidence and motivation. In contrast, traditional methods, which often focus on rote learning and teacher-centered instruction, were less effective in developing higher-order comprehension skills.

In conclusion, the study confirms that discourse-oriented pedagogy is a powerful and effective approach for improving English comprehension skills. It not only enhances linguistic competence but also promotes cognitive and social development among learners. Therefore, educators are encouraged to incorporate discourse-based strategies into their teaching practices. Future research may further explore its long-term impact and applicability across different educational contexts and learner groups.

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