

EFFECT OF PROCESS ORIENTED ACTIVITIES ON ENGLISH PRODUCTION SKILLS OF BANGLADESHI EFL LEARNERS: A STUDY ON THE FRESHERS OF GREEN UNIVERSITY OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an investigation into the effects of process oriented activities on the productive skills of the Bangladeshi EFL learners. It chiefly considers the extent learners can improve their speaking and writing proficiency by utilizing process based written and oral activities in the classroom. At the same time, the paper upholds the students' attitudes toward using such approach in learning English. The participants of this study were 60 fresh undergraduate students who are enrolled in EAP 009 in the first semester at Green University of Bangladesh. Data was collected through tests for assessing participants' oral and written proficiency, process based oral activities, process based writing. The study involved qualitative approaches to data analysis. Findings of the study show that by applying process oriented activities the students outperformed in their writing and speaking performance. The findings indicate that these techniques tend to facilitate the learners to undertake writing and oral skills to be developed. The study suggests that an awareness and training of the process oriented oral and written activities can contribute to the overall improvement of the learners' productive skills in English.

Introduction

In the current age of globalization, securing a standard level of proficiency in oral and written communication skills has been a matter of great emphasis for EFL learners. Several approaches and methods of teaching EFL speaking and writing have evolved over the past few decades and researchers in ELT have contributed much to weigh the pros and cons of these approaches. One approach that has had a major impact on the productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing) in English is called the process approach to teaching writing and speaking. In the context of Bangladesh, however, any systematic implementation of the process oriented syllabus or pedagogy is not commonly observed. This study is therefore designed particularly to investigate the effect of the process oriented teaching approach on EFL learners' English productive skills.

Background of the Study:

Curricula in ELT are often viewed in the light of two contrasting approaches: either process or product. The product approach focuses on the end-product or the outputs. The focus is on the completed acts of communication as well as on the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. On the other hand, the process approach focuses on the processes involved in learning a particular skill as well as the procedures of teaching that skill. As a matter of fact, the process oriented syllabuses are developed to overcome the failure of the product oriented syllabuses and to enhance communication language skills.. Such a process brings fresh experience for the learners as writers instead of engaging them in churning out a perfect product through simple imitation.

Statement of the Problem:

One of the big challenges that EFL teachers in Bangladesh face is enhancing the learners' written and oral fluency in real life communication. Up to the higher secondary level, EFL learners are often found to be preoccupied in preparing themselves for the examination. They pay attention to the language items related to various exam questions and often disregard the communication phenomena in which those are used.

Therefore, to enhance learners' productive skills, equal attention should be paid to their learning process as it is traditionally given to the end-product of their learning.

Research Objectives and Questions:

This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of process oriented EFL learning on the spoken and written proficiency of undergraduate EFL learners. It also seeks to identify EFL teachers' and learners' perception of the process oriented oral and written activities. The leading research questions that the study aims to deal with are as follows:

- How much effective is the process oriented approach in improving the learners' productive skills in English?
- What is the effect of process based group conversation and formal speaking practice on the oral proficiency of the learners?

Significance and Limitation of the Study:

In terms of gaining proficiency in English communication skills, learners' cognitive ability in planning, organizing and understanding the overall learning process is undoubtedly very important and the significance of this study lies in the fact that it attempts at investigating such matters. Moreover, most of the previous studies conducted on similar topics mainly focus on the process writing approach but the present study accounts for both of the productive skills. The aim is to show how positively such an approach can impact on learners' ability to speak and write properly. However, the present research is conducted on a limited number of students of a particular EFL course. For time constrain, the researchers considered a selective number of language

activities. Also, individual factors of the learners were not considered. In spite of these limitations, it is assumed that the findings of the study are important to give an insight into effective teaching and learning of spoken and written English in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms.

Process-oriented Approach: A Literature Review:

Various scholars have done serious researches on process-centered teaching. Theoretical Basis of ‘Difficulty-based Teaching Method’ and ‘Task-based Teaching Method’, quoting Gray’s (1990:261-269) distinction of subject-focused teaching and process-focused teaching, point out that process syllabus requires a shift of emphasis from what is to be learnt by learners to how is it to be learnt. Here what is to be learnt actually refers to the product-centered teaching and how it is to be learnt is the process-centered teaching.

As the teacher’s belief determines his/her way of teaching, process-centeredness can be traced back to the teachers’ theoretical foundations. Process-centered teaching can find its base in the process syllabus while product-centered teaching has its source in the content syllabus. The process syllabus proposed by Breen in 1970 (in White, 1991: 99) is influenced by the view that some learners are more efficient than others, and that different learners have different ways to learn. Ronald White (1991: 44-47), in his book *The ELT Curriculum: Design, Innovation and Management*, discusses two teaching syllabi, which he terms as Type A and Type B. Type A, consisting of structural and notional-functional syllabi, is based on the content to be learned, and therefore is called content syllabus. Type B, based on the view of “being either a learner-centered or a learning-centered one” (ibid: 47), is named as process syllabus.

Research Methodology:

The investigation into the impact of process oriented oral activities on the productive skills of EFL learners has been conducted using quantitative approaches. The four sections of this chapter focus on the participants of the present study, the research instruments used for this study, the procedure of collecting data, and finally the methods of data analysis.

Participants

For the purpose of this study, 60 fresh undergraduate students who took the course titled ‘English for Academic Purposes’ (Code: EAP 009) in their first semester in five different departments were selected as the sample group. All these students participated in the pre-assessment and post-assessment.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in collecting data for this study are of the following types:

Tests: The following two tests were conducted to gather data about the participants’ performance level:

- Pre-test
- Post-test

Data Collection Procedure

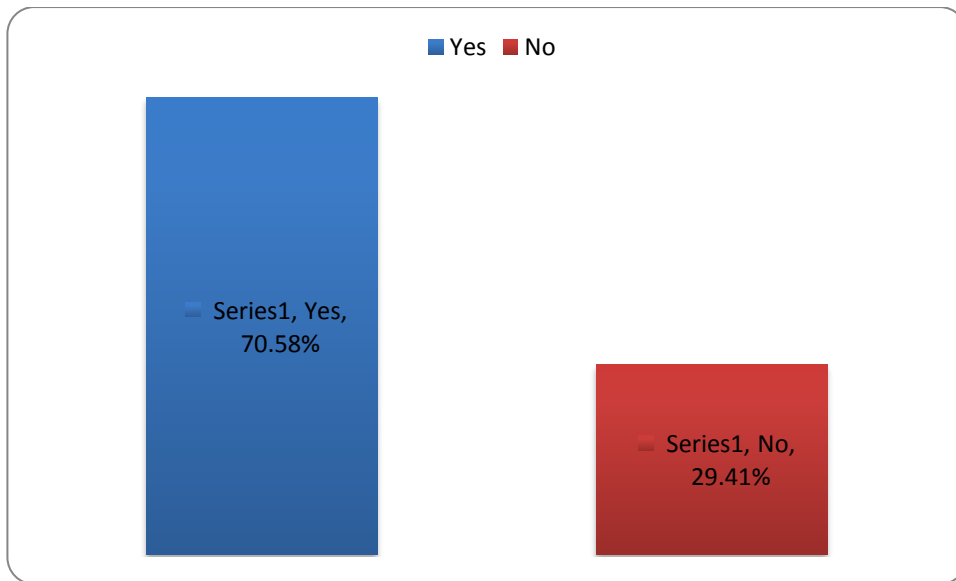
Relevant data was collected through several activities as presented consecutively in the following description:

- A pre-test was administered in the very first class attended by the sample group.
- The researchers conducted 20 classes by applying process oriented approaches for teaching productive skill with the sample group. Each of these classes was designed in the following manner:
- In these classes, a separate feedback form for each of the classroom tasks (i.e. oral presentation, oral conversation and writing) by the researchers.
- A post-test of the sample group was administered after the 20th class on a separate date.
- The post-test of the sample group was followed by a survey.

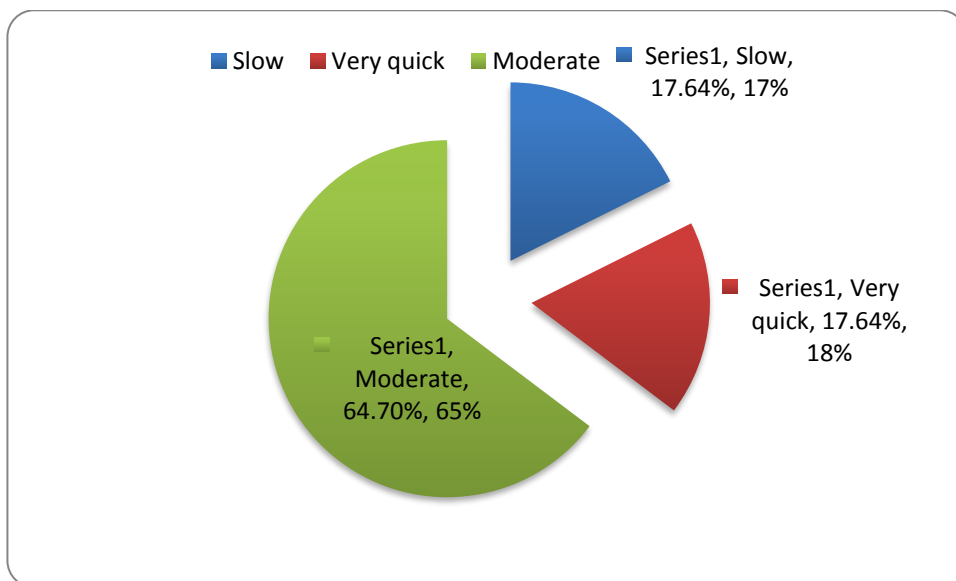
Data analysis and discussion:

Result of Pre Assessment

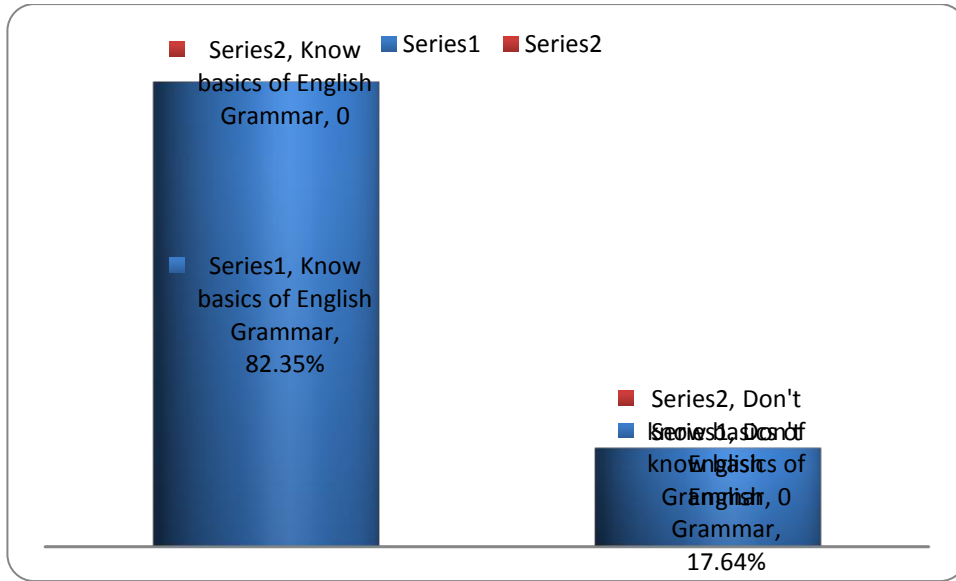
In pre assessment stage students are asked can they write freely in English about any given topic instantly. It is found that 70.58% students can write freely in English about any given topic instantly. Only 29.41% students seem that they can’t write freely in English about any given topic instantly.



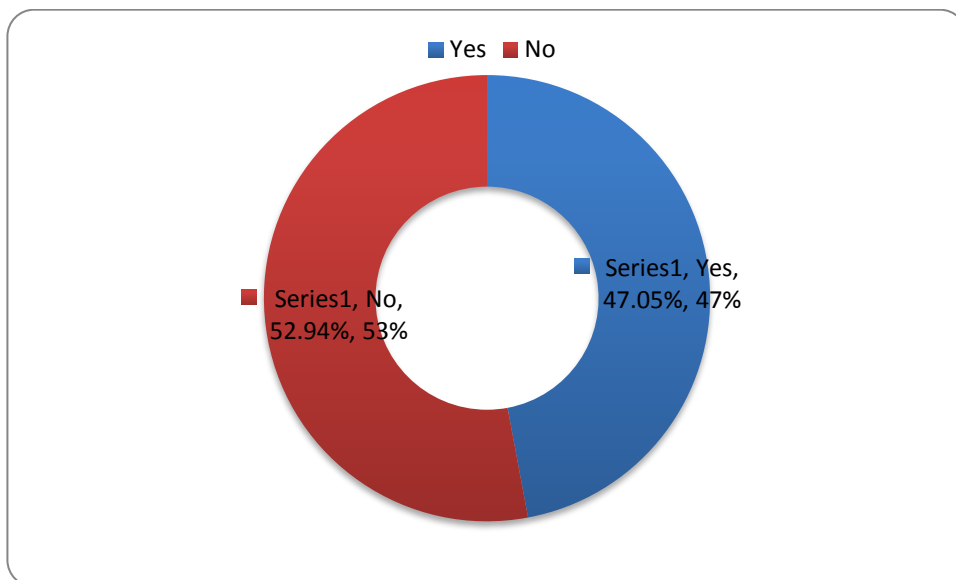
When it is tried to seek how quick they are to write correctly on any topic of their choice. It is noticed that 17.64% students believe that they can write correctly on a topic they choose slowly, 17.64% students believe that they can write correctly on a topic they choose very quickly and a larger part of the students 64.70% believe that they can write correctly on a topic they choose moderately.



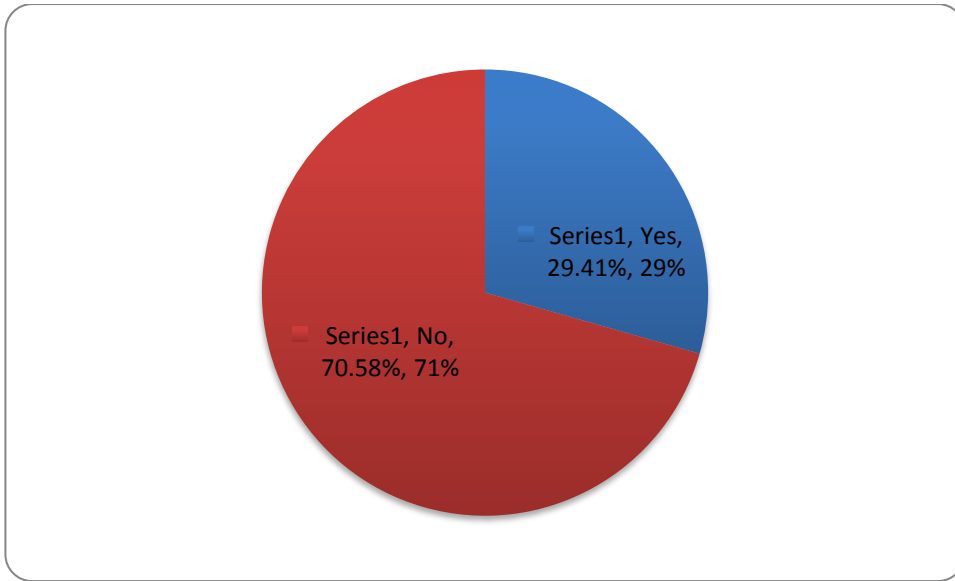
It is found that about 82.35% students believe that they know the basics of English Grammar while other 17.64% students believe that they don't know the basics of English Grammar.



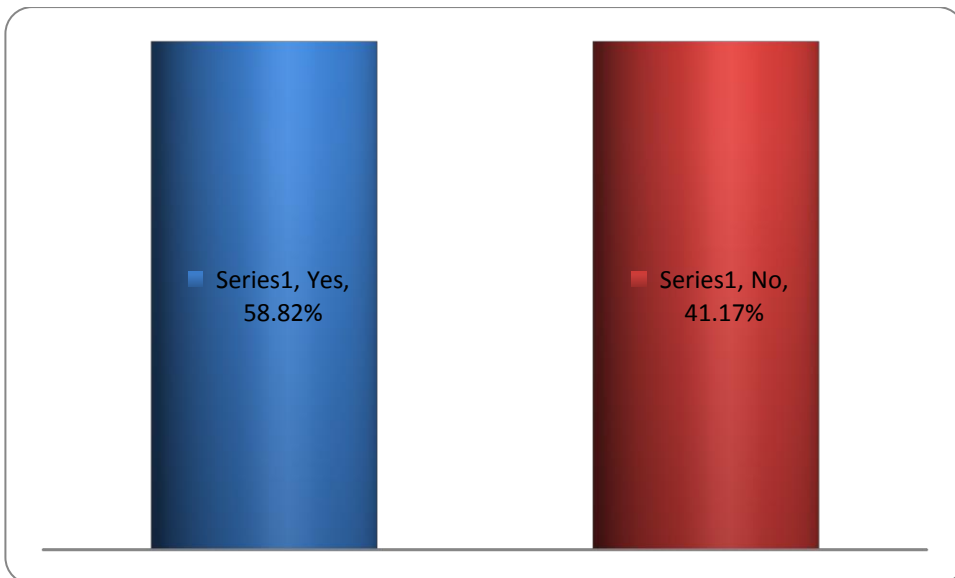
Students find it difficult to write according to the rules of English Grammar. About 47.05% students find their difficulties while writing very quickly and 52.94% students don't find their difficulties while writing something according to the rules of English Grammar.



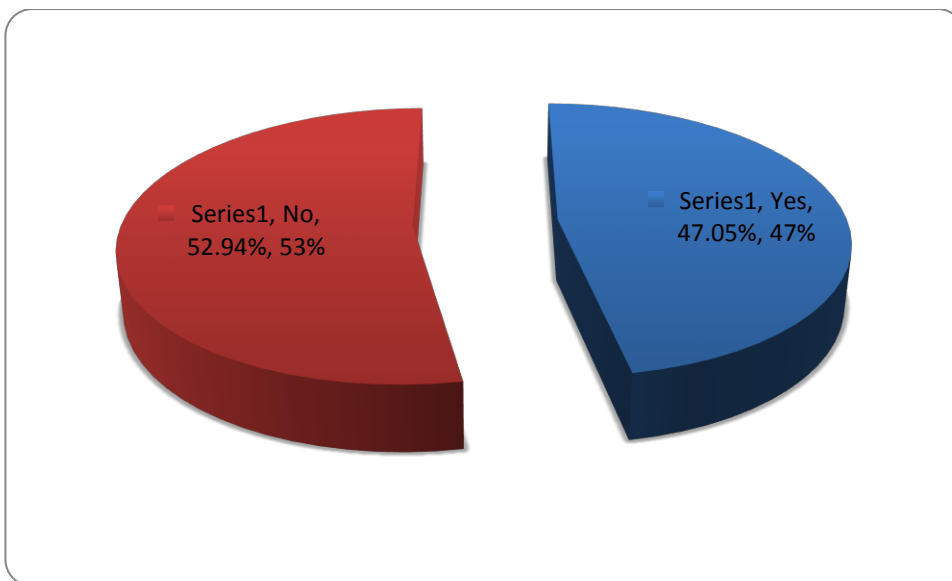
When students are asked do they think that they are good at spoken English? It is noticed that 29.41% students seem that they are good at spoken English while 70.58% seem that they are not good at spoken English.



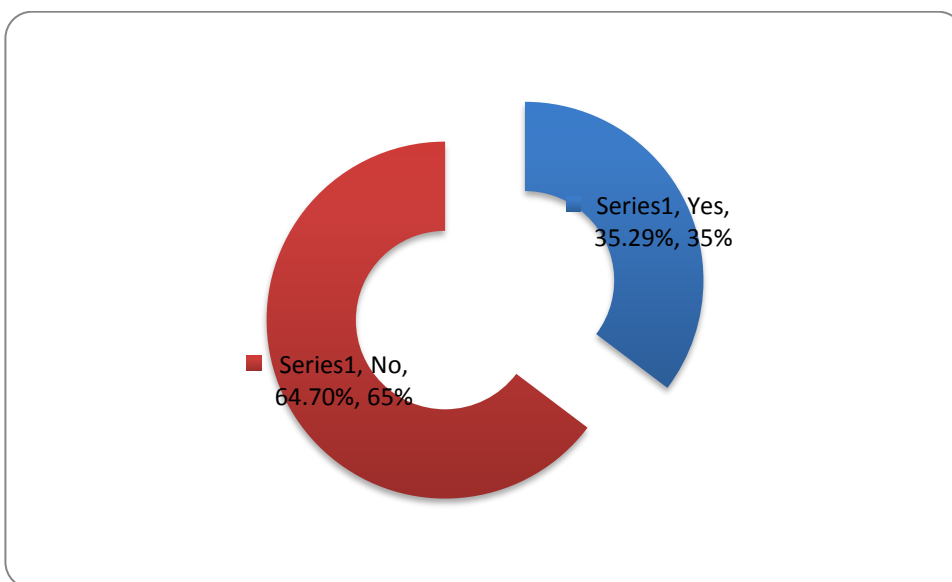
The students who are good at spoken English can speak in English on a given topic and their ratio is 58.82% while those who are not good at spoken English, can't speak English on a given topic and their ration is 41.17%.



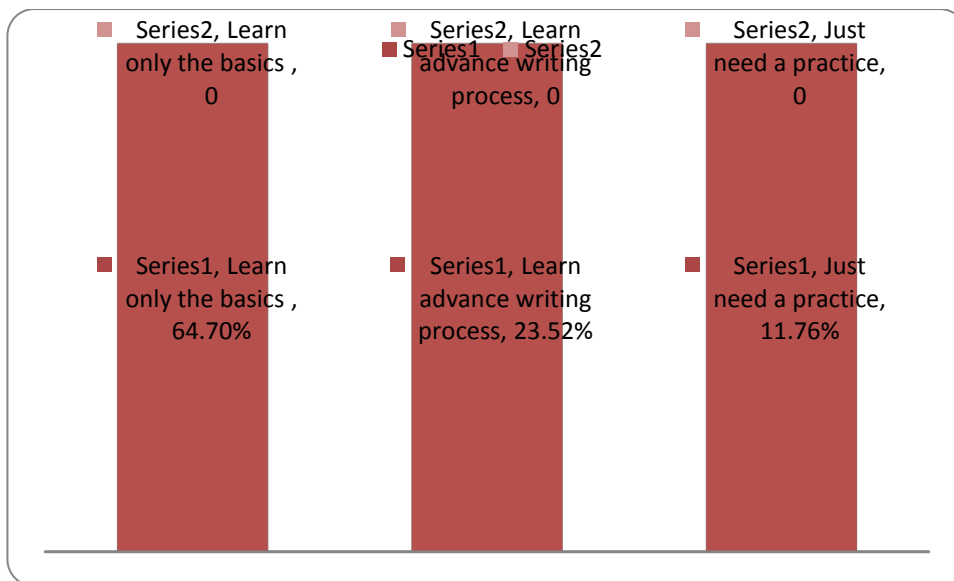
It is noticed that 47.05% students speak in English with their family members and friends to enhance their proficiency, accuracy and mastery on English. On the other hand 52.94% students don't speak in English with their family members and friends.



It is found that about 35.29% students become able to handle the questions asked by the smart speakers. On the other hand 64.70% students cannot handle the questions asked by the smart speakers.



Lastly while students are asked what kind of expectation do they have from the course? It is found that 64.70% students want to learn only the basics because they seem they are weak in English still while 23.52% students want advance writing process because they believe that they know the basic of English well and 11.76% students just need a practice.



Result of the Post Assessment

The report of post assessment of experimental group students is described based on two distinct questionnaires where one questionnaire is similar to the pre assessment questionnaire and other is different from that which is analyzed by five scales named

- 1= Strongly Agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly Disagree

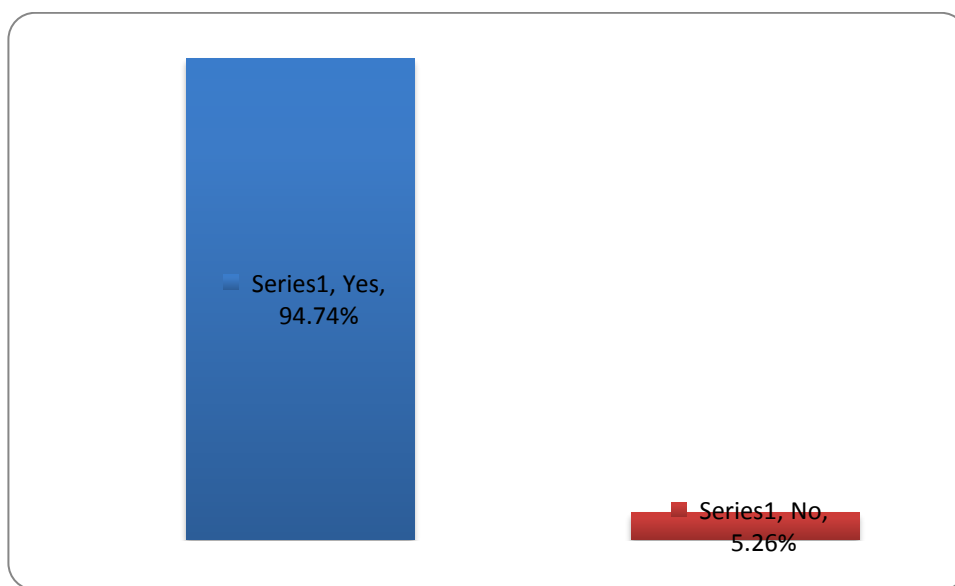
SL	Areas of assessment	1	2	3	4	5
1	I know the basic concepts of Tense	44.44%	55.55%	0%	0%	0%
2	I have some problems regarding the actual uses of Tense	11.11%	44.44%	22.22%	22.22%	0%
3	I am confused about the proper usage of punctuation	0%	66.66%	33.33%	0%	0%
4	I know the differences among the degree	33.33%	44.44%	11.11%	0%	0%
5	I know the usage of modals	11.11%	33.33%	33.33%	0%	0%
6	I know how to write a topic sentence	44.44%	55.55%	0%	0%	0%
7	I know how to arrange the brainstormed ideas in paragraph	66.66%	11.11%	11.11%	0%	0%

8	I am already acquainted with according paragraph	22.22%	66.66%	11.11%	0%	0%
9	I need to clear many confusions to make myself confident	22.22%	33.33%	33.33%	0%	0%
10	I need EAP009 for upholding my academic background	0%	88.88%	0%	0%	11.11%

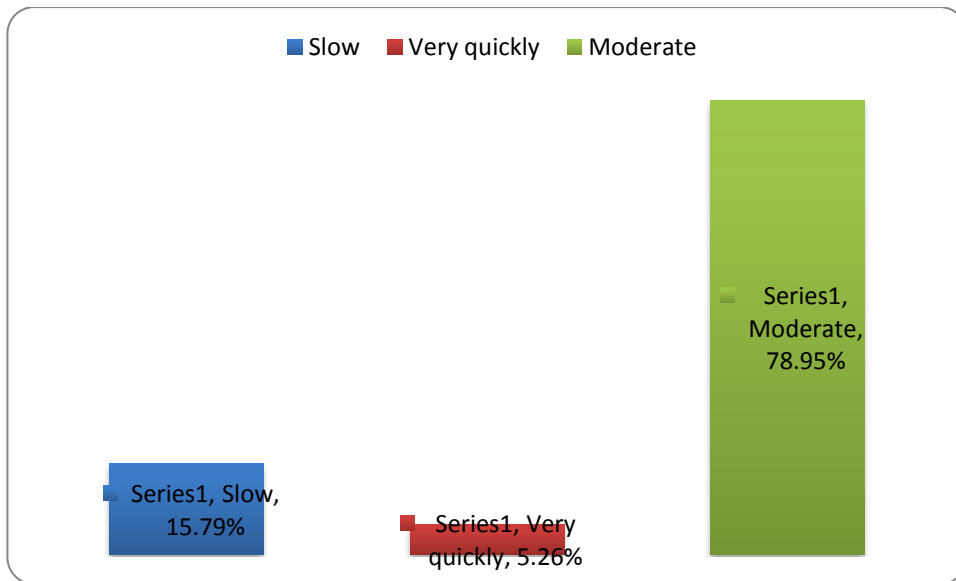
Post Assessment of students was based on the same questionnaire of pre assessment. At the very beginning of post assessment of students are asked to write a paragraph of about 100 words on the topic “Your Expectations from Green University”. A remarkable change is noticed in the writings of the students. In the pre assessment it was seen that students made mistakes in using punctuation, capitalization, and sentence construction but in their post assessment they become able to reduce in making such types of mistakes again.

A questionnaire containing 10 separate questions is given to put a circle around their answer to judge their capability of writing and speaking in English and to evaluate their standard while using English.

Students are asked can they write freely in English about any given topic instantly. It is found that 94.74% students can write freely in English about any given topic instantly. Only 5.26% students seem that they can't write freely in English about any given topic instantly.

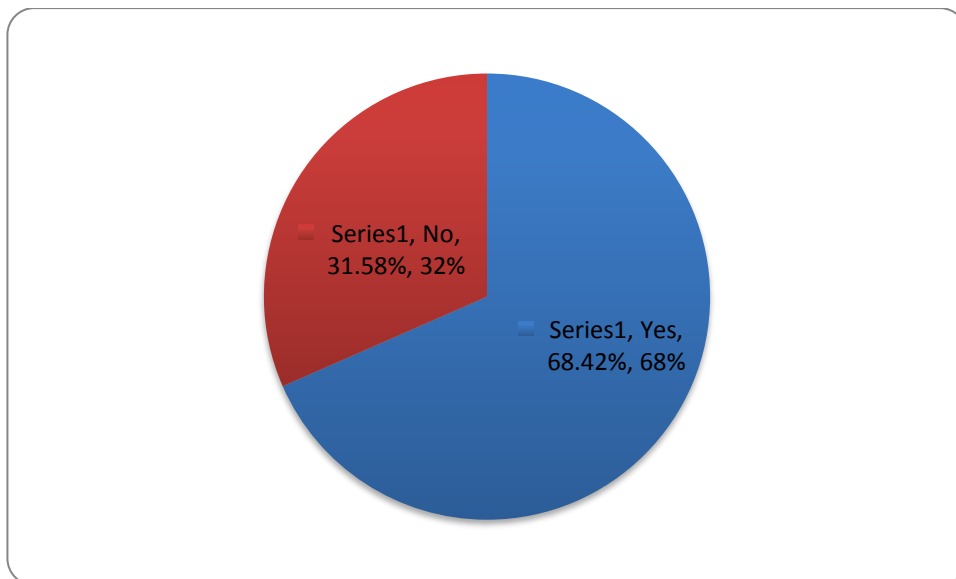


When it is tried to seek how quick they are to write correctly on any topic of their choice. It is noticed that 15.79% students believe that they can write correctly on a topic they choose slowly, 5.26% students believe that they can write correctly on a topic they choose very quickly and a larger part of the students 78.95% believe that they can write correctly on a topic they choose moderately.

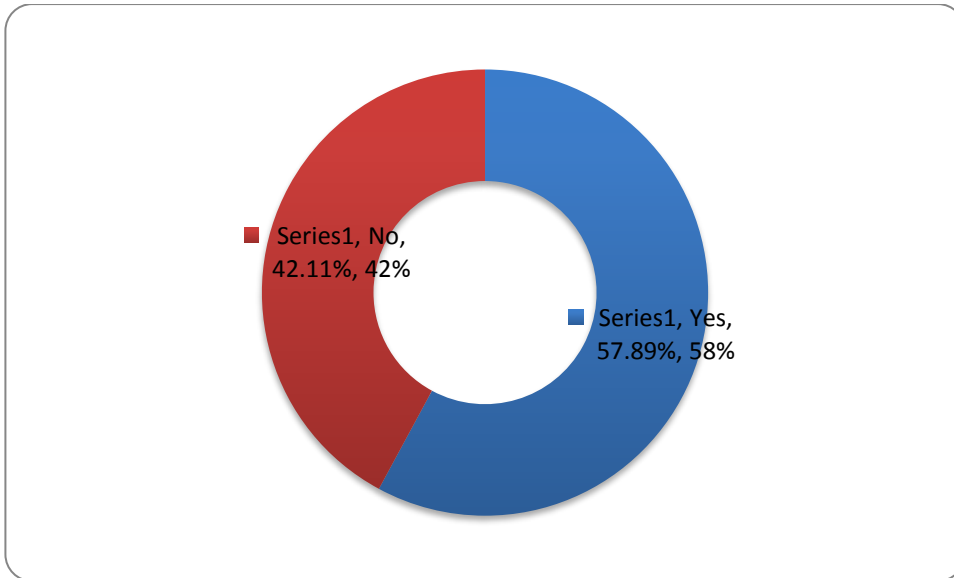


To evaluate student's standard in using English it becomes necessary to know do they know the basics of English Grammar. It is found that about all the students believe that they know the basics of English Grammar. But in pre assessment the result was different.

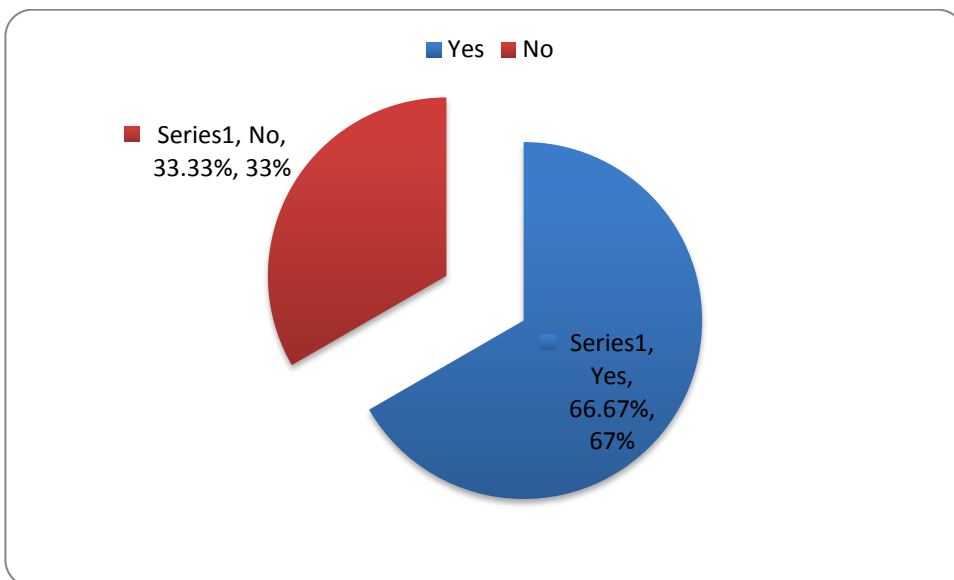
Students find it difficult to write according to the rules of English Grammar. About 68.42% students find their difficulties while writing very quickly and 31.58% students don't find their difficulties while writing something according to the rules of English Grammar.



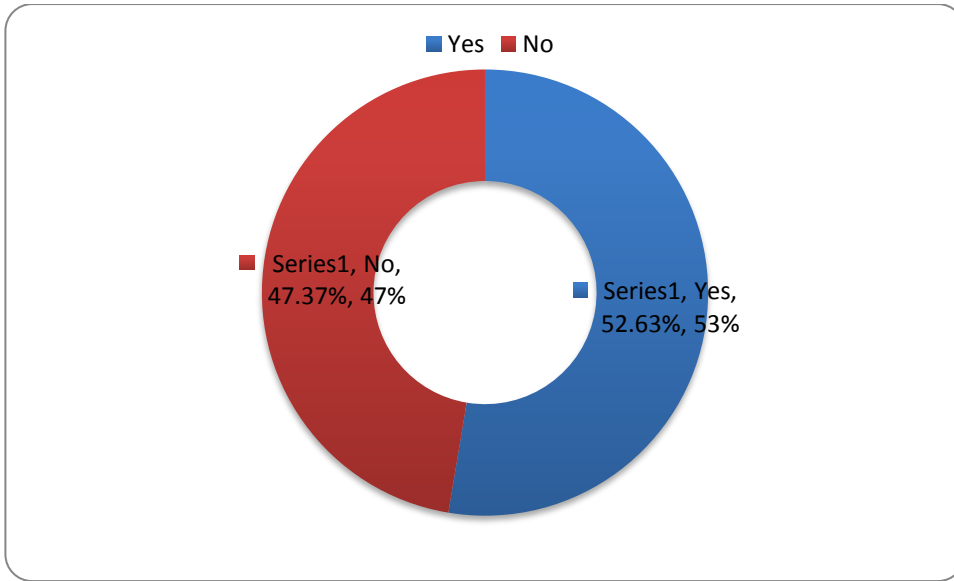
When students are asked do they think that they are good at spoken English? It is noticed that 42.11% students seem that they are good at spoken English while 57.89% seem that they are not good at spoken English.



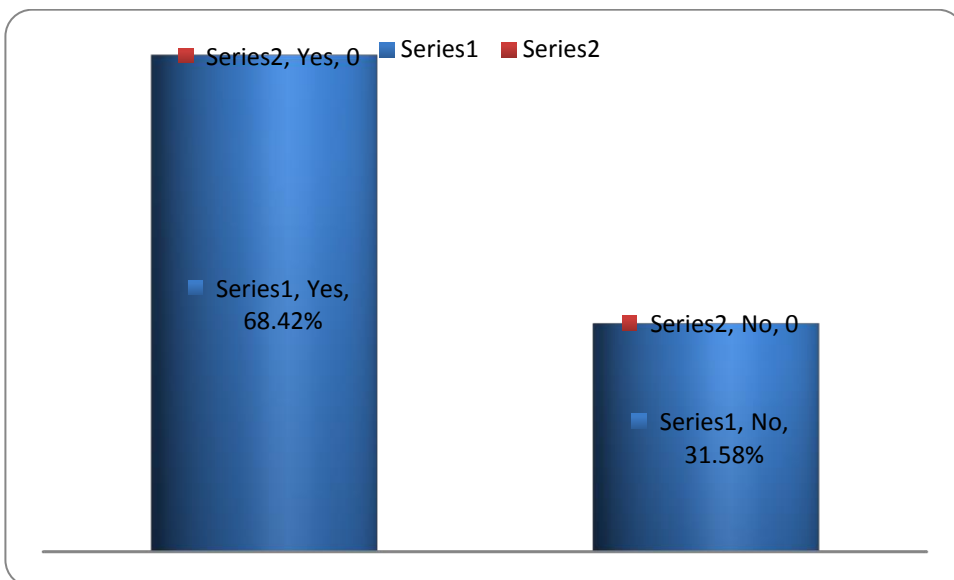
The students who are good at spoken English can speak in English on a given topic and their ratio is 66.67% while those who are not good at spoken English, can't speak English on a given topic and their ration is 33.33%.



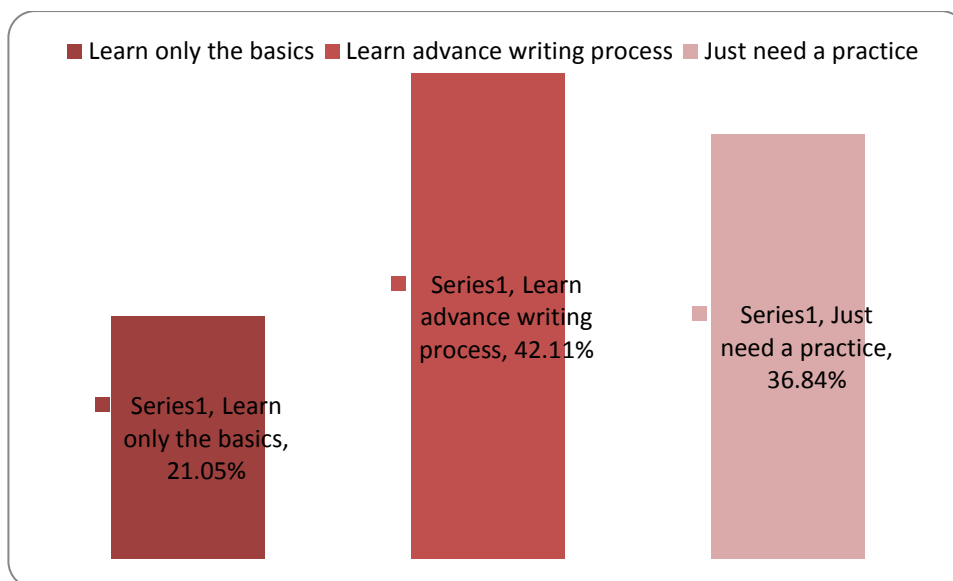
It is noticed that 52.63% students speak in English with their family members and friends to enhance their proficiency, accuracy and mastery on English. On the other hand 47.37% students don't speak in English with their family members and friends. Most of the students who don't speak in English with their family members and friends said that they can't run their conversation accurately and don't find appropriate vocabulary in time, some said that they are criticized and insulted by their friends while speaking with them in English and that's why they don't speak in English with their family members and friends but they feel it's necessity to improve their command in English.



It is found that about 68.42% students become able to handle the questions asked by the smart speakers. On the other hand 31.58% students cannot handle the questions asked by the smart speakers.



Lastly while students are asked what kind of expectation do they have from the course, it is found that 21.05% students want to learn only the basics because they seem they are weak in English still while 42.11% students want advance writing process because they believe that they know the basic of English well and 36.84% students just need a practice.



Based on the collected data of post assessment, the following conclusions could be initiated:
About all the students know the basic concepts about Tense.

About 55.55% students have some problems regarding the actual uses of Tense. So, they need to practice tense a lot again and again. Other 44.45% students think that they don't have problems regarding the actual uses of Tense.

66.66% students confused about the proper usage of pronunciation while only 33.33 students don't confuse about the proper usage of pronunciation. So they need to practice pronunciation.

55.45% students know the usage of modals while writing or speaking English. Rest of the students believes that they need to know about the usage of modals because they don't know how to use the modal appropriately and in a standard way.

About all the students don't have any problem to write a topic sentence correctly.

At last 88.88% students believe that they need EAP009 for upholding their academic background and that's why they want to have EAP009 course again and again to become them accurate, perfect and spontaneous while using English in both written and spoken.

Conclusion & Recommendation:

The study reveals the effect of applying a process approach on the English productive skills of the learners on the basis of their participation and performance in three language activities- formal presentation, group conversation and writing.

On the basis of this study the following recommendations can be made with regard to the process oriented approach to teaching spoken and written English in Bangladeshi EFL context:

- By using process writing approach, teachers can help students recognize the steps they go through to create a written text and lead to less stressful and motivated writing.
- To improve the learners' oral fluency, formal presentation as well as group conversation can be practiced by employing a process oriented approach since it allows the learners to have a motivating and encouraging experience through discussing, assessing and analyzing their own spoken products.
- Learners should have enough training and knowledge of the process approach to utilize the oral and written activities for improving their proficiency of the productive skills.

To conclude, the present study sheds some lights on the state of using process writing and speaking approach in Bangladeshi EFL context and its purpose is to contribute to the ongoing EFL research of the country. Though the study involves a small-scale investigation, it is able to detect the approach and technique the learners can utilize to improve their writing and speaking. In general, it can be said that an awareness of the process based approach to enhancing production skills is necessary to bring out the maximum benefit for the learners.

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