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EXPLORING THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT OF "DUMMIES IN COMMUNICATION" ON 21st CENTURY LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

"Dummies in Communication" is an innovative teaching and learning resource designed to simplify the understanding of communication skills, particularly for educators and learners in 21st-century classrooms. The book highlights creative strategies to enhance communication competence through interactive and learner-friendly content. The book comprises six engaging chapters: "Chapter 1: Hello! and Goodbye!" introduces basic greetings and parting expressions to set the tone for polite and effective communication; "Chapter 2: Turn-Taking Skills" focuses on how to initiate, maintain and end conversations smoothly; "Chapter 3: Negotiation Skills" teaches strategies to reach mutual understanding in everyday discussions; "Chapter 4: Interjections" explores the use of expressive words that convey emotion and add flavour to speech; "Chapter 5: Expressing Feelings" helps learners articulate emotions clearly and appropriately; and "Chapter 6: Colloquialisms" introduces informal language commonly used in daily conversation for more natural and relatable interactions. A key innovation in this book is the integration of QR codes that allow readers to scan and instantly access real-life recorded conversations. This feature bridges theory and practice, enabling readers to listen, observe and reflect on authentic communication scenarios. By incorporating technology, the book encourages flexible, multimodal learning that supports diverse learning styles. Combining clear explanations, engaging visuals and hands-on activities, Dummies in Communication empowers educators to adopt more interactive, student-centred communication techniques. This timely resource exemplifies how digital tools can transform educational experiences through innovation.

Keywords: *"Dummies in communication", pedagogical impact, 21st century learners*

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is a cornerstone of 21st-century education, essential for academic success, personal development and workplace readiness. Effective communication is essential for fostering student engagement and motivation, as it influences attitudes towards learning. It encompasses both verbal and non-verbal techniques, which are vital for building relationships and ensuring understanding (Addimando, 2024). However, teaching communication skills in classrooms often lacks innovation, interaction and real-life relevance. In response to this challenge, "Dummies in Communication" was developed as a creative and practical teaching resource. Designed for both educators and learners, the book integrates user-friendly language, interactive content and digital tools to enhance communication competence.

The book comprises of six chapters: Chapter 1: Hello! and Goodbye!, Chapter 2: Turn-Taking Skills, Chapter 3: Negotiation Skills, Chapter 4: Interjections, Chapter 5: Expressing Feelings and Chapter 6: Colloquialisms. A standout feature is the integration of QR codes linking to authentic recorded conversations, merging theory with practice and supporting diverse learning styles (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

While the book presents innovative strategies, there is limited empirical evidence on how it impacts teaching and learning communication (Fahroni, 2024). Traditional methods still dominate many classrooms, potentially limiting the effectiveness of such innovations. Further exploration of their practical application is essential for maximising their benefits in educational settings. This study explores experiences of educators and learners using "Dummies in Communication", aiming to understand how the resource influences pedagogical practices and communication outcomes in tertiary education settings.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically semi-structured interviews, to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences with "Dummies in Communication". The qualitative approach is suitable for exploring perceptions, attitudes and real-life applications in educational contexts (Creswell, 2012).

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select 5 participants: 1 English lecturer (i.e., LEC1) from one Institute of Teacher Education and 4 TESL pre-service teachers (i.e., PST1, PST2, PST3 and PST4) who had used the resource in class. Selection criteria included prior use of "Dummies in Communication" for at least 1 week and willingness to participate in recorded interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researchers.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes. Guiding questions explored participants' views on the content structure, engagement level, integration of QR codes and overall effectiveness of "Dummies in Communication" in teaching and learning communication.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview transcripts. Following Braun and Clarke (2023)'s six-phase approach, data were familiarised, coded and organised into emerging themes. Themes were validated through member-checking with selected participants and peer examination with one research colleague.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the interview data yielded four major themes: 1. Engaging Structure and Accessibility, 2. Integration of Technology Enhances Learning, 3. Practical Application and Real-Life Relevance and 4. Empowering Educators and Supporting Student Autonomy. The themes were discussed in details as follows:

Engaging Structure and Accessibility

Both lecturer and pre-service teachers praised the user-friendly format of the book. The lecturer reported that the sequential chapter flow made it easy to design lessons that gradually built communication skills. "I like how Chapter 1 starts with greetings. It's simple, but it sets a positive tone for the rest of the lessons," shared LEC1. Pre-service teachers appreciated the use of clear language and visuals that made the learning process less intimidating. "It doesn't feel like a textbook. It's more like a guide with fun materials," said PST2. This aligns with 21st century principles of learner-centred education, where accessibility and engagement are crucial for motivation and retention. The rise of online education (i.e., e-book of "Dummies in Communication") has made learning more accessible, allowing students from various backgrounds to participate and engage in ways that suit their individual needs (Baron & McNeal, 2019).

Integration of Technology Enhances Learning

A key innovation in "Dummies in Communication" was the use of QR codes and it was consistently identified as a highlight. Pre-service teachers noted that scanning codes to access real-life conversations allowed them to observe authentic language use in context. "The QR codes make a big difference. I become more aware of how expressions are used naturally," explained PST1. Other pre-service teachers echoed similar sentiments. PST4 shared how listening to recorded conversations helped with pronunciation and tone recognition: "I didn't just read what to say. I could hear how to say it, and that helped a lot." According to Sakulprasertsri (2020), this multimodal feature supported auditory learners and demonstrated how digital resources can enrich traditional language instruction by making it dynamic and reflective of real-life communication.

Practical Application and Real-Life Relevance

Another common theme was the practicality of content. The lecturer found the negotiation, interjection and turn-taking chapters particularly useful for classroom role-plays and simulations. "I used the turn-taking chapter to run mock dialogues. It encouraged pre-service teachers to speak up, wait their turn and not interrupt. It was a good behavioural learning moment," noted LEC1. Pre-service teachers appreciated the focus on emotions and informal language, which they found relatable and immediately usable in their daily interactions. "The colloquialisms helped me talk like how my friends actually talk," remarked PST3. This reflects the increasing need for communication instruction to extend beyond formal speech to include emotional literacy, social appropriateness and authentic voice (Jones et al., 2014).

Empowering Educators and Supporting Student Autonomy

The lecturer found "Dummies in Communication" empowering in shifting from lecturer-led to learner-centred approaches. Several noted how the activities in the book encouraged pair work, self-reflection and peer feedback. "I used the expressing feelings chapter to get pre-service teachers to journal, then discuss in pairs. It created a safe space for emotional expression," reported LEC1. All pre-service teachers (i.e., PST1, PST2, PST3 and PST4), on the other hand, said they felt more confident and independent using the book: "I could do the activities on my own or with friends. Even without the lecturer, I knew what to do." This theme illustrates how the book supports autonomy, a key component of 21st-century learning frameworks and aligns with constructivist principles where learners actively build knowledge through interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

These emerging themes of engaging structure, integration of technology, practical relevance and learner empowerment are summarised in a thematic map that follows (see Figure 1), providing a visual overview of how "Dummies in Communication" supports 21st century communication skills education.

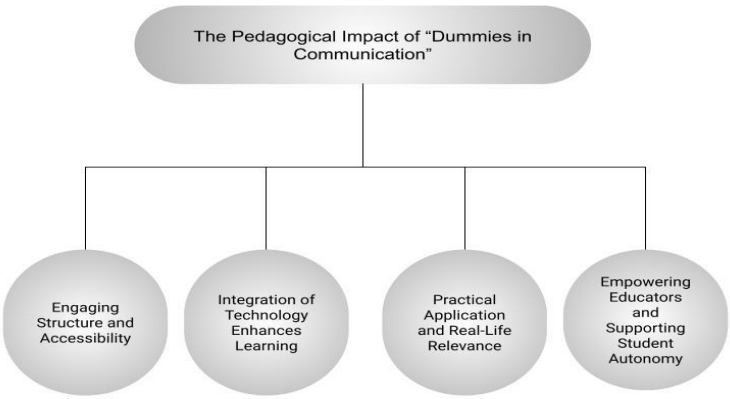

Figure 1.: Emerging Themes of The Pedagogical Impact of "Dummies in Communication"

CONCLUSION

This qualitative study investigated the pedagogical impact of "Dummies in Communication" as a resource for enhancing communication skills in educational settings. Findings suggest that the book effectively bridges theoretical and practical aspects of communication through its accessible content, innovative QR code integration and emphasis on real-life language use. The lecturer found it adaptable for classroom teaching, while pre-service teachers experienced increased motivation, confidence and engagement. The study highlights the value of digital, multimodal resources in fostering communication competence among 21st century learners. It also emphasises the importance of creativity and technology in redesigning traditional language education to suit diverse learner needs. Future research could include a larger sample across different regions or employ a mixed-method design to further validate the findings. Ultimately, "Dummies in Communication" represents a significant step towards more inclusive, interactive and effective language teaching.

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