Using Experiential English Language Teaching Strategies for Young Learners: Perspectives of Indian Teachers Concerning NEP 2020

Amal Tom[a] and Nagendra Kumar[b]

ABSTRACT:

Teachers and educators recognise a pressing need to raise the standard of English language instruction, considering the increasingly diverse student body in schools and universities. This has made them look for ways to help students develop their language abilities in a fun and stimulating setting rather than only emphasising academic success. In his book Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development (1984), David A. Kolb argues that experiential learning is a powerful teaching method that lets students learn without external constraints. He highlights the significance of creating learning strategies based on each student's unique experiences so they can acquire the abilities necessary to deal with whatever challenges the outside world may throw at them. These strategies guarantee that, in contrast to typical Teacher-Centred classrooms focused on student competition, students learn from each other and grow together. Thus, this research paper examines how English language teachers could use these experiential learning methods to provide a language learning experience that is joyful, reflective, and multidisciplinary. It also aims to study the possibilities that Experiential learning strategies could transform English language teaching classes by helping students learn how to use a language just like they learn subjects like mathematics or science. The research paper also includes a survey of English teachers teaching in CBSE-affiliated schools to study their attitude towards experiential learning and understand the possibilities these learning strategies offer young English language learners in schools and colleges. The survey also studied the teachers' perspectives regarding the recommendations of CBSE and NEP 2020 in integrating Experiential teaching strategies in their language classrooms. Thus, this paper will help teachers and scholars identify how integrating experience in English Language teaching and learning could lead to more effective and efficient language acquisition in young students.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Language Acquisition, Young English Language Learners, Task-Based Language Teaching, NEP 2020.

1. Introduction

John Dewey, in his *Experience and Education* (1938), asserted that the traditional mode of teaching is basically "one of imposition from above and from the outside" (5), often structured to impose skills, standards and methods deemed necessary by society. It fails to consider students' mental and cognitive faculties and abilities, forcing them to become passive participants (Dewey 6). Learning meant the acquisition of the ideas and knowledge that were already in the textbooks. Any attempt at creativity was stifled, and the subject matter remained rigid and unchanging. No attempt was made to change with the developments in society. This led to the

introduction of "progressive" schools and colleges, which, in contrast, directed their attention to the development of the individuality and creativity of their students, all the while keeping in mind the needs and challenges of society. These progressive schools also helped in developing the creativity and individuality of students, as Julia Marshall (2014) says, by redirecting "the focus of education from rote learning to grasping concepts and building thinking skills… rethinking… what students learn in school and how they perceive what is worth learning" (2).

David A. Kolbe, in his *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (2015), examines a new mode of learning, developing John Dewey's emphasis on integrating experience in learning. Kolbe's experiential learning method ensures that learners are directly in touch with the realities being studied, allowing them to contribute to their intellectual development. This also helps them cope with any situation society or the world may impose on them. With the growing popularity of progressive modes of teaching in public schools, teachers are increasingly using experiential strategies like art-integrated learning (AIL), sports-integrated learning (SIL), computer-integrated language learning and task-based language teaching (TBLT) in their classrooms. As classrooms become more progressive, English language teachers are adopting methods that help develop creativity in students but also help increase student participation, helping them learn the language effectively and efficiently. With experiential learning strategies like art-integrated learning, task-based language learning, and multi-sensory learning, Chenkai Chi (2017) affirms that language learners are encouraged to explore themselves and their emotions to develop their language skills (15). As students engage with their experiences, English Language learners learn to examine their experiences and develop a deep understanding of the language as they explore and examine the connections between what they learn and their experiences.

2. Experiential English Language Teaching:

As the name suggests, Experiential Learning means "learning through immediate experience" (Kahonen 2). First introduced by John Dewey in his seminal *Experience and Education* (1938) and developed by David A. Kolb, experiential learning strategies are emerging as a relatively new trend in progressive schools and colleges around the world trying to ensure a close connection between the subjects being studied and the world around the learner. David A. Kolb asserts that experiential learning is a process where "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb 49). While traditional modes of teaching "impose" adult subjects and matters on young students who are developing their cognitive abilities (Dewey 5), experiential learning strategies allow students to be active participants in their learning process by helping them build conceptual bridges between the subjects and materials being studied and the world around them.

Traditional approaches to teaching and learning languages, such as grammar-translation, direct, and audio-lingual methods, frequently involve memorisation and rote learning of inflexible language structures and patterns. This approach frequently produces passive learners who lack interest in or motivation to learn the language. When included in English language learning strategies, experiential learning guarantees that language acquisition is enjoyable and pleasurable, in contrast to these teaching methods. These language teaching strategies encourage students to reflect and experiment and, in the process,

develop, as Sonja Knutson (2015) says, an understanding of "what the new learning means to the individual and a conceptualisation of how it can be used in the future" (53). In English Language classes, experiential learning strategies require teachers to be more than just subject experts. These classes flip the traditional teacher-centred learning to a more relaxed and entertaining student-centred system where the teachers act as facilitators. These strategies help students use and manipulate the language based on their experience and the situation they may find themselves in.

As the international standards of language acquisition and the philosophies of learning and teaching evolved, educators and teachers in India clamoured for much-needed changes in Language pedagogy. These changes came in with the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which advocated for an experiential approach to learning and teaching to ensure the Indian education system was on par with international standards. The NEP 2020 document states, "The key overall thrust of curriculum and pedagogy reform across all stages will be to move the education system towards real understanding and learning how to learn- and way from the culture of rote learning as is largely present today" (p. 12). The document advocates a move towards experiential learning strategies that encourage hands-on learning and art-integrated learning strategies to focus more on the holistic development of the students. The document explains that this would help classrooms be fun, creative, and collaborative, unlike the traditional classrooms that increase anxiety in students and hamper their proper psycho-sociological development.

3. Methodology

For this study, a survey was conducted among school and college teachers teaching English in various parts of India. Due to the restrictions imposed by the recent pandemic, the survey was conducted on Google Forms. It included five "Likert style" questions based on five-level responses and descriptive questions. The survey aimed to study the effectiveness of using Experiential learning strategies to teach young English Language learners. The respondents were given the option to choose the most fitting option from five responses: ' strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The responses received were then carefully represented through graphs. The responses to the descriptive questions were qualitatively analysed using the QDA Miner lite 2.0.9 software. The responses were given codes which were categorised within themes. Around 55 teachers participated in the survey. Though the demographic data is not used in the study, the data received is consistent with the aims and the scope of the study.

4.Data Analysis:

This paper intends to understand if experiential learning strategies are effective in teaching English to young students and if teachers feel these strategies could provide better results for those trying to improve their language. It also studied the teachers' perspectives on the recommendations of CBSE and NEP 2020 in integrating experiential teaching strategies in their English language classrooms. Thus, the questionnaire circulated among the teachers teaching in CBSE-affiliated schools aimed to study how they employed experiential learning strategies in their classes and if they felt such methods could be used effectively in teaching English. When analysed using QDA Miner Lite 2.0.9, the responses to the descriptive questions presented two significant themes: **Experiential Strategies Used for ELT** and **Changes**

Needed for Effective Implementation. This qualitative analysis used the methods and the process of thematic analysis, as explained in Braun and Clarke (2006). The codewords identified using the QDA Miner Lite software and their distributions are presented in Figures 5 and 6, following their respective themes and thematic analysis. Table 1 below shows the mean and standard deviation of the Likert-style questions. For ease of analysis, the responses were assigned a numerical value ranging from 1 to 5 based on the positivity of the responses. Therefore, in the statements below, the option "Strongly Agree" was given the value 5, while on the other end, "Strongly Disagree" was assigned the value 1. The standard deviations and the averages of the responses help us understand if the overall sentiment of the teachers towards these statements was positive or negative.

5. Discussion:

5.1 Likert Style Questions:

The first statement in the survey, "I use Experiential Teaching Strategies like Task-Based Language Teaching and Art Integrated Language Teaching in my classroom," tried to identify if English teachers used various Experiential teaching strategies in their English language classrooms, including Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Art Integrated Learning (AIL). Of the 55 responses received, nearly 54.5% of respondents agreed that they used such methods in their classrooms, while 10.9% strongly agreed. Around 23.6% of the respondents chose to remain neutral, while 9.1% disagreed and the rest strongly disagreed. This leads us to believe that as various schools and colleges implement Experiential Learning Strategies, teachers are getting interested and are slowly using them in their classes. Still, many teachers are sceptical of using new teaching methods in their classes. This can be mitigated with workshops and online teacher training programs educating teachers on using these strategies and how they can benefit students. As Table 1 shows, the mean of the responses (3.63) and the standard deviation (0.86) appear to show a moderately positive response to the statement. Though some teachers disagree and strongly disagree with the statement, most of the responses are clustered in the upper half of the scale of responses. This shows the teachers' positive outlook on using Experiential language teaching strategies in teaching the English language in their classrooms.
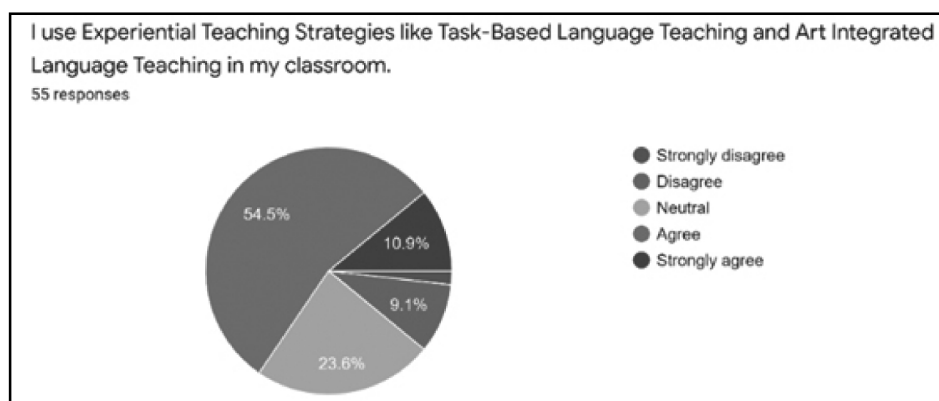

Figure 1: The distribution of the responses to the statement: I use Experiential Teaching Strategies like TBLT and AIL in my classroom.

The following statement tried to understand if "Teaching English Through Experiential strategies allows students to learn in real-life situations". Psychologists like Victor Lowenfeld and John Dewey have long advocated for teaching and learning strategies to ensure that students' curiosity is triggered so that they understand and learn things that may happen around them. Teachers now understand that experiential teaching strategies help students connect to more significant ideas by engaging in critical thinking and analysis, allowing them to learn through experimentation and exploration. Students become more independent and innovative as they engage in a meaning-making process of trial and error. They learn to find connections around themselves and find outlets to showcase their talents. This leads to the creation of skills and abilities much needed in the 21st century. This attitude is seen in the responses given by the surveyed teachers. In the graph below (Figure 3), 49.1% of the respondents agreed, while 43.6% agreed strongly. Only 5.5% chose to disagree strongly, and just one respondent chose to remain neutral. The responses and their mean (4.36) and the standard deviation (0.77) present a positive outlook to the statement, with the responses clustered among the upper half of the responses. Such a distribution of the responses shows that the teachers believe that using Experiential language teaching strategies allows a situational and contextual development of language skills, developing essential skills that can help such students use the target language as and how they need.
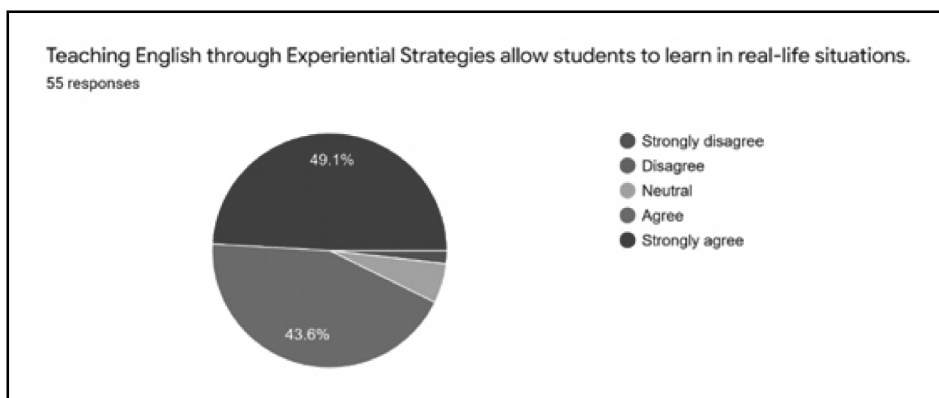

Figure 2: Distribution of the responses to the statement: Teaching English through Experiential Strategies allows students to learn in real-life situations.

The third statement, "Experiential teaching strategies ensure active student participation in classes", asked teachers if they believed these learning strategies improve student participation in schools. Dewey believed that the traditional mode of imposition of adult standards and subjects on young minds led to a considerable gap between the subjects and the mental capacities of the students (Dewey, 1938). Experiential learning ensures that students engage in a creative process where they learn by 'doing'. The classrooms also become student-centred, and teachers assume the role of facilitators instead of being imposers. The graph below shows how teachers believe these methods can significantly change the classroom environment. For instance, 29.1% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, nearly 56.4% agreed, while around

5.48% chose to remain neutral. Only one person chose to disagree. The mean of the responses to the statement (4.32) and the standard deviation (0.66) shows minimal variances, with most of the responses presenting a positive attitude towards the statement. This presents a consensus among the teachers that using interesting experiential methods improves student engagement, which leads to better retention of needed skills and concepts.
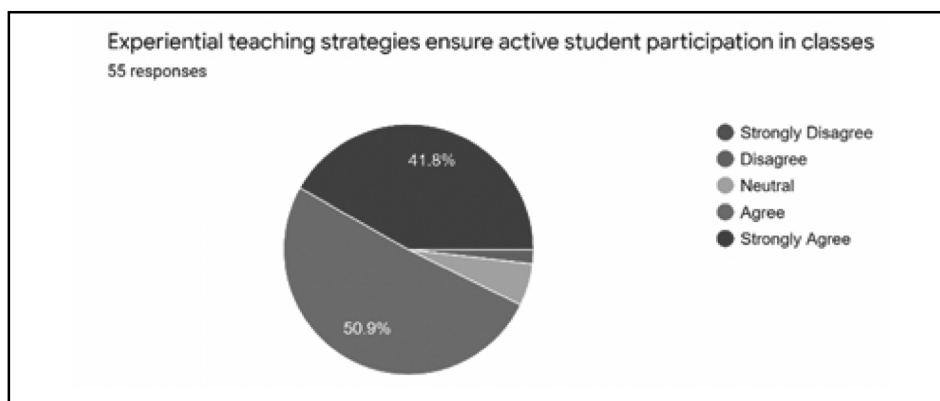

Figure 3: Distribution of the responses to the statement: Experiential Teaching Strategies ensure active student class participation.

Finally, the last statement, "Experiential teaching makes learning English a pleasurable experience", aimed to understand what changes Experiential learning brings to the English Language process. As schools and colleges are becoming increasingly diverse, with students from different backgrounds and intellectual capabilities, the focus is now on such educational institutes to provide an inclusive and anxiety-free environment for students to develop and learn. Experiential learning methods help teachers help students learn and acquire the English language regardless of their mental abilities. Teachers also now understand that experiential teaching strategies provide a relaxed environment to teach English while taking care of the needs of each student and the barriers they face effectively and efficiently in acquiring the target language. Around 34.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 52.7% agreed with the statement. Only 12.7% remained neutral. The mean (4.21) and the standard deviation (0.65) present a significantly positive outlook towards the given statement, with most responses clustered in the upper half of the scale. This shows that the teachers understand that experiential methods and strategies ensure a pleasurable learning environment in the classrooms, focusing on developing the skills not through rote learning but through innovative and experiential methods, which tend to reduce students' anxiety in traditional classrooms. Ensuring a student-centred approach to learning, where students are encouraged to explore and create meaning while interacting with the world around them, ensures that language is acquired and skills are developed in a happy and exciting environment.
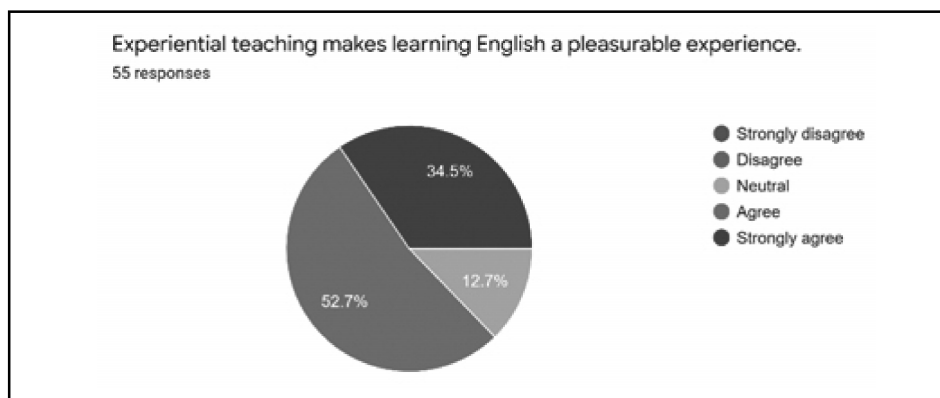
Experiential teaching makes learning English a pleasurable experience.
55 responses

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

34.5%
12.7%
52.7%

Figure 4: The Distribution of the responses to the statement: Experiential Teaching Makes Learning English a Pleasurable Experience

Table 1 below shows the variance in the teachers' responses for each statement, the means of the responses and the standard deviations for each statement.

S.No.	Statement	Responses					Mean	Standard Deviation
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	1.	1	5	13	30	6	3.63	0.86
2.	2.	0	3	1	24	27	4.36	0.77
3.	3.	0	1	3	28	23	4.32	0.66
4.	4.	0	0	7	29	19	4.21	0.65

Table 1: The Distribution of the Responses to each Statement, the Means of the Responses, and their Standard Deviations.

5.2. Thematic Analysis using QDA Miner Lite 2.0.9:

5.2.1: Theme 1: Experiential Strategies Used For ELT:

CBSE (India), in its circulars dated July 1, 2020, and February 18, 2021, instructed its schools to introduce experiential strategies in their teaching practices to make learning "multidisciplinary, more joyful and … reduce rote learning" (CBSE 1). Thus, in the next set of questions, teachers were asked about the experiential learning/teaching strategies they have introduced in their classes. The responses were given two different codewords, namely- "Holistic Learning Strategies" and "Art and ICT integrated Teaching", which were grouped under the theme "Experiential Strategies Used for ELT". The code "Holistic Learning Strategies" appears in fifty-two out of fifty-five cases. This reflects the vision of prominent theorists who aimed to "develop a dynamic, holistic model of the process of learning from experience" (Kolb and Kolb 3). This focus on the individual's holistic development in experiential learning can be seen in teachers' responses using such experiential teaching strategies in teaching English to young students. For instance, a teacher explains,

Experiential teaching strategies have been effective for all sorts of problems while teaching.

Lectures, discussions, and instructions are not always helpful for young students. The capacity to remember and learn increases with the involvement of the students in the process and students learn better when they are challenged and think even more deeply when they act. Experiential teaching helps instruct and guide, reflect on what worked and did not work for the students, and plan the remedial strategies by connecting the dots while deciding on further actions.

This statement clearly shows that the importance of such holistic strategies cannot be understated. The second keyword, i.e., "Art and ICT Integrated Teaching", appears in ten cases. This is significant as teachers increasingly rely on ICT tools while integrating art into their classes. ICT tools, as explained earlier, make teaching easier and give more agency to the students. ICT tools decentralise the teaching process, taking it out of the four walls of the classrooms. They allow students to learn wherever they are, whenever they want. As explained by a teacher, "ICT tools like language labs and computer labs with increased use of VR and AR tools can help students to learn how to interact with the world, reduce anxiety and develop communication skills". The distribution and the frequency of these codes can be seen in the graph (Figure 5) below.
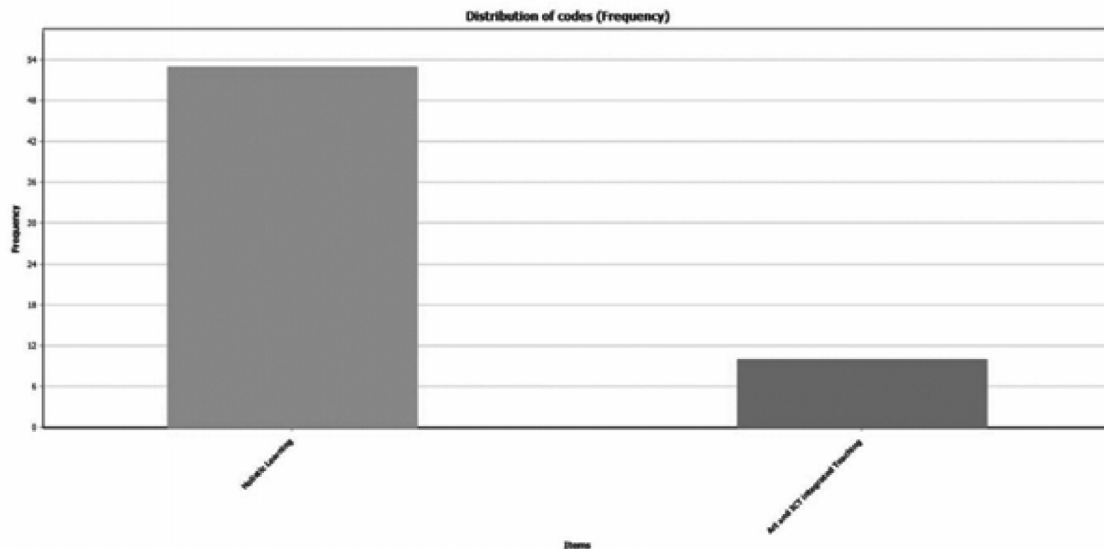

Figure 5: Distribution of codes for the Theme: Experiential Strategies Used For ELT

5.2.3. Theme 2: Changes Needed for Effective Implementation:

The final set of questions asked the respondents about the much-needed changes they would like to see made in the traditional education systems. A qualitative analysis of the responses presented three codewords, namely- "Proper Analysis of the Needs of Students", "Proper Training for Teachers", and "Curriculum Updates and Changes". The keyword "Proper analysis of the needs of students" appears in eleven cases out of fifty-five. Teachers must strive to understand each student's abilities, limitations and needs to ensure that the classes are effective. This allows teachers to design and develop teaching materials that stay true to students' cognitive abilities, ensuring their active class participation. This also helps students acquire their language skills more

effectively. The next codeword, "Proper Training for Teachers", appears in fifteen out of fifty-five cases. Teachers generally understand that effective implementation of experiential learning is possible only when proper training is given to the teachers. Often, teachers without experience using these strategies find implementing them in their classes challenging. English language teachers must understand the flexibility these strategies offer and that these strategies allow students to develop their language skills by letting them interact with the world around them. The third codeword, "Curriculum Updates and Changes", appears in thirty-five cases out of the fifty-five cases analysed. This is significant as we see many teachers showing dissatisfaction with the curriculum that is in place. Teachers understand that it is essential that the curriculum is updated to the changing times. This could mean integrating new techniques and technologies. For instance, a teacher states,

There should be a focus on the holistic development of students rather than on their academic performance. The curriculum must be devised keeping in mind the needs and limitations of students. Teachers and institutions must try to integrate technology into their classes to make learning a pleasant experience.

Teachers also believe in integrating holistic teaching strategies and focussing on learner outcomes, which must be prioritised instead of forcing students to learn by rote. Thus, the curriculum must be updated to use new and effective learning strategies like art-integrated learning, sports-integrated learning, and computer-assisted language learning in schools to ensure students are well-equipped for the 21st-century world. The distribution of these codes can be seen in the graph (Figure 6) given below.
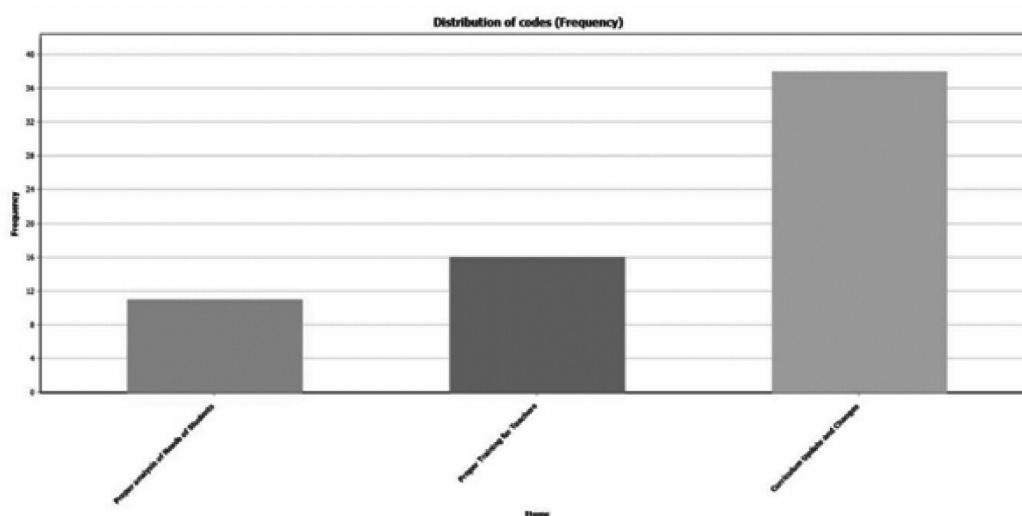

Figure 6: Distribution of Codes for the Theme: Changes Needed for Effective Implementation

6. Results:

The survey among 55 English teachers from various parts of India tried to study and understand how experiential teaching strategies change the classroom structure and environment. Teachers are increasingly using these methods in their classrooms as they now understand that they allow them to focus on the needs of every student regardless of their intellectual background. Moreover, as the traditional teaching materials and syllabi remain primarily static, experiential strategies allow students to develop their horizons to understand and cope with any situation the world may impose on them. Finally, these methods allow students to take control of their learning process and, in the process, reduce anxiety that could have dire consequences on their intellectual development. Through these graphs, this survey shows that teachers understand that these experiential methods can provide students with an enjoyable, reflective, innovative, and imaginative English learning experience.

7. Limitations of the study:

This study was conducted online using Google Forms and was analysed using the QDA Miner 2.0.9. software. Since the study did not involve any physical interaction with the respondents and was conducted online, it does not consider many subtle factors that may have been present during physical interactions. Furthermore, as said earlier, this study does not consider the respondents' demographic details and only tries to study how they use Experiential learning strategies as implemented by C.B.S.E. in its affiliated schools. Though these demographic details are not considered, the results and findings of the study are consistent with its scope and aims.

8. Conclusion:

Psychologists have studied that as students engage with their experiences and environment, they learn to express themselves in new ways. Experiential learning allows them to learn English in an exciting and stress-free environment. Chenkai Chi (2017) says that experiential methods like Art Integrated Learning (A.I.L.) and Task-Based Language Teaching (T.B.L.T.) offer students the possibility to work in a positive environment free from apprehensions. They discover and learn by interacting and understanding the world around them. They learn to appreciate their peers and develop deep knowledge by applying what they learn (Chi 29). The relaxed environment in such classes allows such students to be open-minded and expressive. The classes become experiential as students learn from their experiences. Experiential learning allows English Language Learners to express their ideas effectively and efficiently, allowing them to engage with their inner and outer worlds. Experiential learning improves and develops the cognitive and creative abilities of students. It lets them transcend the confines of disciplines and makes learning truly interdisciplinary and efficient. Schools and colleges must encourage teachers to use these progressive methods and strategies confidently in their classes. This ensures the development of necessary skills and abilities that help properly acquire English Language Skills and develop critical skills essential to learning other subjects.

9. Works Cited:

Beard, Colin, and John P. Wilson. *Experiential Learning: A Handbook for Education, Training and Coaching*. Kogan Page, 2013.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Chi, Chenkai. *Integrating the Arts into English Learning: A Case Study of EFL Learners in a Canadian University*. 2017, https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd.

C.B.S.E. *Experiential Learning: A Story by Padhkar Kumar and Karkar Kumari*. C.B.S.E., 2019.

C.B.S.E. *Launching of Online Teacher Training Course on Experiential Learning on DIKSHA*. C.B.S.E., 2020. https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_matrials/Circulars/2020/45_Circular_2020.pdf

C.B.S.E. *Free Online Training Courses on Experiential Learning and Competency-Based Education Available on DIKSHA Platform*. C.B.S.E., 2021. https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/circulars/2021/16_Circulars_2021.pdf

Cell, Edward. *Learning to Learn from Experience*. State University of New York. 1984.

Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. Kappa Delta Pi, 1938.

Knutson, Sonja. "Experiential Learning in Second-Language Classrooms." *TESL Canada Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2003, p. 52, https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v20i2.948.

Kohonen, Viljo. "Learning to Learn through Reflection–an Experiential Learning Perspective." *Preparing Teachers to Use the European Language Portfolio–Arguments, Materials and Resources*, 2007, pp. 1–10, http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/Elp_tt/Results/DM_layout/00_10/05/Supplementary text E.pdf.

Kolb, Alice Y., and David A. Kolb. "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education." *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2005, pp. 193–212, https://doi.org/10.5465/AMLE.2005.17268566.

Kolb, David A. "Experiential Learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development." *Prentice Hall, Inc.*, no. 1984, 1984, pp. 20–38, https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-7506-7223-8.50017-4.

Marshall, Julia. "A Systems View: The Role of Art in Education." *Art Education*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2016, pp. 12–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2016.1158587.

—. "Transforming Education through Art Centered Integrated Learning." *Visual Inquiry: Learning and Teaching Art*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2014, pp. 1–14.

Tom, Amal, et al. "Novel Experiential Teaching Approaches for School Teachers Teaching English to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities." *An Insight on English Language Teaching*, edited by DB Gupta, Vinod Bhatt and Jeton Kelmendi, Biblioteka 2023, pp. 51–67.

Mr. Amal Tom, Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, India; Email: amal_t@hs.iitr.ac.in

Prof. Nagendra Kumar, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, India; Email: nagendra.kumar@hs.iitr.ac.in