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**STORIES THAT SPEAK, THEMES THAT TEACH: THEMED TIME  
AS A PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION IN INCLUSIVE ESL AND EFL  
CLASSROOMS**

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**Abstract**

In the contemporary educational landscape, fostering inclusive classrooms has emerged as a critical priority to ensure equitable learning environments that embrace diversity and promote holistic development. This study introduces a pedagogical innovation titled “Themed Time”, designed to integrate inclusivity and language development through a structured, theme-based daily practice. The strategy involves dedicating the first 15 minutes of each academic day to the themes such as gender equality, societal hierarchy, linguistic diversity, disability awareness, and cultural sensitivity that are in demand to facilitate an inclusive classroom. ‘Themed time sessions’ comprises of multimodal activities such as storytelling, reflective writing, video viewings, and gamified tasks on the theme selected for the week. These multimodal tasks anchored in the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) framework, will cater to both linguistic enrichment and the cultivation of empathy. To evaluate the efficacy of the strategy, the research proposed suggests the conduct of pre- and post-intervention assessments to measure the student progress in language proficiency and empathetic understanding. The anticipated outcome is a measurable enhancement in both language acquisition and the development of inclusive attitudes among learners, thereby offering a sustainable and replicable model for inclusive education in diverse classroom settings.

**Keywords:** Inclusive pedagogy, value-based learning, LSRW techniques, empathy development, pedagogical innovation, theme time

**INTRODUCTION**

A classroom is a space that brings together a diverse community, often without awareness of societal gaps. An inclusive classroom ensures that all learners, including those with special needs, are treated equally, fostering an environment of true inclusiveness. In short, an inclusive classroom is a space where all learners learn, work together, and feel equal. It is important in a diverse classroom to help learners feel equal and become more humane through innovative pedagogical approaches. Existing pedagogical practices include the 80-20 rule, scaffolding, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, problem-based learning, experiential learning, and gamification, all of which help learners stay engaged and become more conscious of their learning. The study proposes the concept

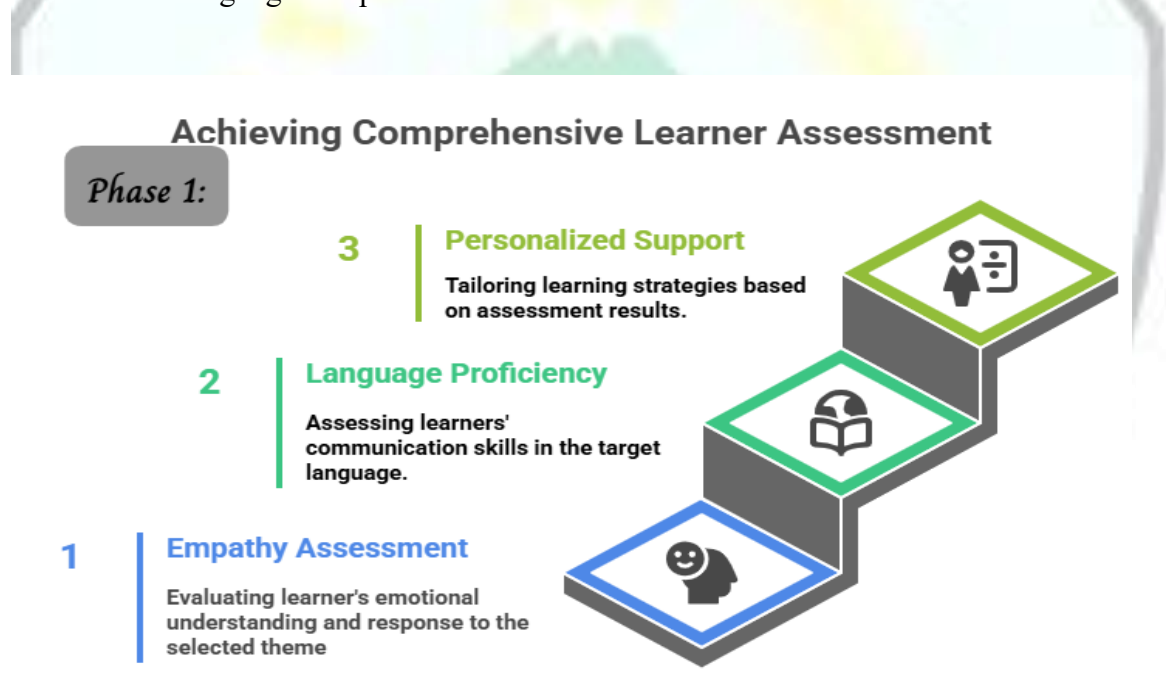
of ‘Themed Time, a pedagogical innovation that integrates various LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) techniques around a selected inclusive theme each month, followed by gamified activities in different digital environments. This method encourages the practice of LSRW in multiple forms aligned with the inclusive theme to foster both humanity and language development among learners. The intended outcomes will be measured through pre- and post-tests assessing language skills and empathy in an online format.

## METHOD

The study adopts a four-phase methodology aimed at fostering inclusivity among learners both within and beyond the classroom, while concurrently enhancing their LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills. This approach is designed to span six months or more, with each phase integrated into the first fifteen minutes of the daily language instruction period.

### Phase One: Pre-Assessment of Language Proficiency and Empathy

The initial phase involves pre-assessments targeting both empathy and language proficiency, conducted prior to the implementation of the *Themed Time* technique. These diagnostic tools are intended to establish a baseline understanding of learners’ empathetic dispositions and foundational language competencies.



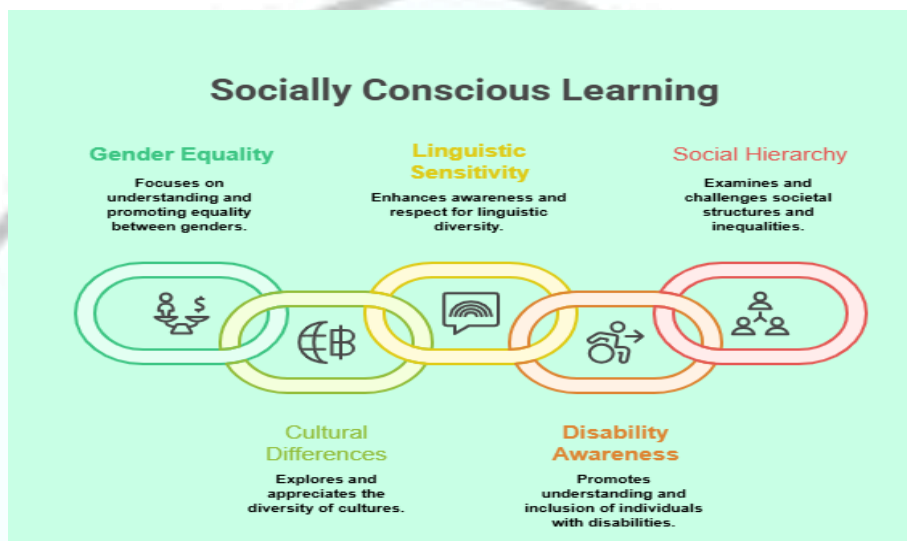
**Figure 1:** Illustration of Phase One methodology

### Phase Two: Implementation of Themed Time

The second phase entails the implementation of thematic instruction aligned with LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills, facilitated through the use of digital tools and technological resources. Weekly themes—such as gender equality, linguistic sensitivity, social hierarchy, cultural diversity, and disability awareness—are explored through a range of activities that integrate all four language skills. The incorporation of AI tools during this

phase aims to actively engage learners and foster increased awareness and interest within the 15-minute language segment each day.

This phase is subdivided into three steps. The first step involves a needs analysis to determine the most relevant themes of inclusivity required for a classroom with diverse learners. Based on the findings, five common thematic areas have been identified: gender equality, linguistic sensitivity, social hierarchy, cultural diversity, and disability awareness. The study posits that addressing these core areas contributes to the development of a positive and inclusive classroom environment.



**Figure 2:** The above figure depicts the needs of the learners with mixed needs

In the **second step**, the teacher is expected to curate and customise an inclusive theme aligned with LSRW tasks and introduce it to the learners. The researcher has provided a detailed lesson plan that can be implemented during the first fifteen minutes of each daily language class over the course of one month.

This curated plan integrates LSRW-focused activities under the guiding principle of “a skill a day,” culminating in a reflective session at the end of each week. Each day is dedicated to developing one of the four foundational language skills, accompanied by a follow-up activity specifically designed to deepen learners’ understanding of both the selected theme and the targeted skill. These follow-up activities will be delivered through digital tools, thereby facilitating learners’ engagement with digital learning environments.

The template for this five-week pedagogical innovation is presented below:

S.No	Week	Theme	Activity
1	1	Gender equality	Day 1: Listening (video) & follow-up quiz Day 2: Reading (Web article) & follow-up quiz Day 3: Speaking (Deep- dive conversation using Notebook LM)

			<p>Day 4: Writing: AI prompts to generate images</p> <p>Day 5: Reflection using Padlet</p>
2	2	Linguistic sensitivity	<p>Day 1: Reading (Translated texts) &amp; follow-up Quiz</p> <p>Day 2: Speaking (Live conversation with AI assistant)</p> <p>Day 3: Listening (Podcasts in different languages) and follow up quiz</p> <p>Day 4: Writing: Translation using different AI tools</p> <p>Day 5: Reflection using online canvas</p>
3	3	Social Hierarchy	<p>Day 1: Writing: A chat with AI – simulated interaction with persons of different hierarchy</p> <p>Day 2: Reading: Articles by the achievers from the downtrodden section &amp; Quiz</p> <p>Day 3: Listening: News stories pertaining to the theme and poster creation</p> <p>Day 4: Speaking: voice-over for a documentary on the theme.</p> <p>Day 5: Reflection using online canvas</p>
4	4	Cultural differences	<p>Day 1: Speaking: sharing ideas on different cultural artefacts in an online group presentation platform</p> <p>Day 2: Writing: simulated AI interaction with people of other countries</p> <p>Day 3: Listening: Video Documentaries &amp; quiz on online platforms</p> <p>Day 4: Reading: switch and read AI generated articles prepared by other students on different cultures &amp; follow-up quiz</p> <p>Day 5: Reflection using online canvas</p>
5	5	Disability awareness	<p>Day 1: Listening to a podcast online and mindmap creation</p> <p>Day 2: Reading: reading crip time stories &amp; follow-up quiz</p> <p>Day 3: Writing: writing prompts to generate posters on Disability awareness</p> <p>Day 4: Speaking: simulated interviews with the supercrips</p>



		Day 5: Reflection using online canvas
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**Table 1:** Table for the five week pedagogical innovation.

he teacher is expected to adapt the above template and develop a customised lesson plan by incorporating materials appropriate to the learners' proficiency levels. Differentiated instruction is essential in a mixed-ability classroom, as the absence of such an approach compromises the goal of inclusivity. The researcher has developed an exemplar lesson plan tailored for undergraduate students in higher education, which is presented below:

Day	Skill	Activity
Day 1	Listening	<b>Video Viewing:</b> <a href="#">Gender Equality Video</a> <b>Follow-up Quiz:</b> <a href="#">Google Doc Quiz</a>
Day 2	Reading	<b>Article:</b> <a href="#">What Does Gender Equality Mean?</a> <b>Quiz:</b> <a href="#">Google Doc Quiz</a>
Day 3	Writing	<b>Prompt Writing:</b> Students write a prompt that would generate an image of a workplace that values gender equality. <b>Tool:</b> DALL·E (via <a href="#">ChatGPT</a> )
Day 4	Speaking	<b>Deep-Dive Conversation:</b> Based on video and reading. <b>Notebook LM Link:</b> <a href="#">NotebookLM</a>
Day 5	Reflection	<b>Reflection Task:</b> Students create a Padlet post to share reflections. <b>Tool:</b> <a href="#">Padlet</a>

**Table 2:** Exemplar lesson plan tailored for undergraduate students

### Third Step: Implementation of the Customised Lesson Plan

The third step involves the implementation of the customised lesson plan, as described above, during the first fifteen minutes of each language class over the course of one month. Each week should focus on one of the five selected themes to ensure comprehensive coverage of the inclusivity spectrum.

### Phase Three: Post-Assessment of Language Proficiency and Empathy

This phase entails the administration of a formal online assessment to evaluate students' LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills and empathy levels following the implementation of the pedagogical innovation Themed Time.

### Phase Four: Measuring Progress

In the final phase, teachers are expected to conduct a comparative analysis of the results from Phase One (Pre-Assessment) and Phase Three (Post-Assessment) to measure student progress in both language proficiency and empathy development.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

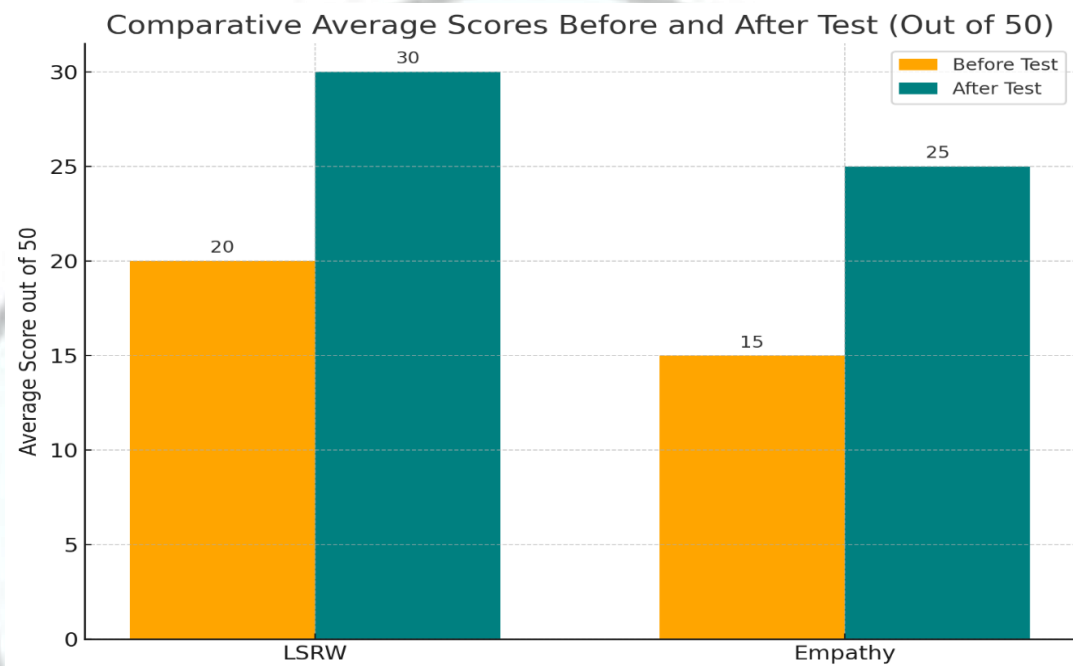
The pedagogical innovation *Themed Time* proved to be highly effective in achieving the intended objectives. The study was driven by three primary goals:

1. To facilitate the acquisition of fundamental LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills in a diverse classroom environment.
2. To promote inclusivity by fostering a more humane, learner-centered, and joyful classroom experience.
3. To integrate LSRW instruction with inclusive themes through the use of digital learning environments.

The results indicate that the innovation successfully addressed all three objectives. There was a marked improvement in student performance following the implementation of *Themed Time*.

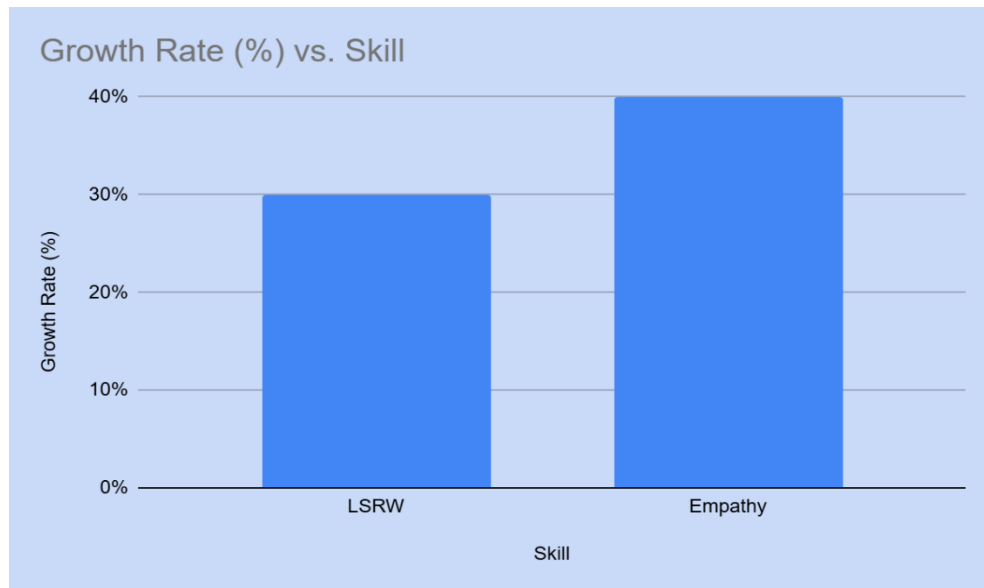
In a pilot study involving a class of 50 students, the average LSRW score (out of 50) increased from 20 (pre-assessment) to 30 (post-assessment). Similarly, the average empathy score rose from 15 to 25. This improvement underscores the effectiveness of the integrated thematic approach in enhancing both language proficiency and empathetic understanding among learners.

The performance data is illustrated in the graph below.



**Figure 3:** Comparative Average scores before and after the Themed time

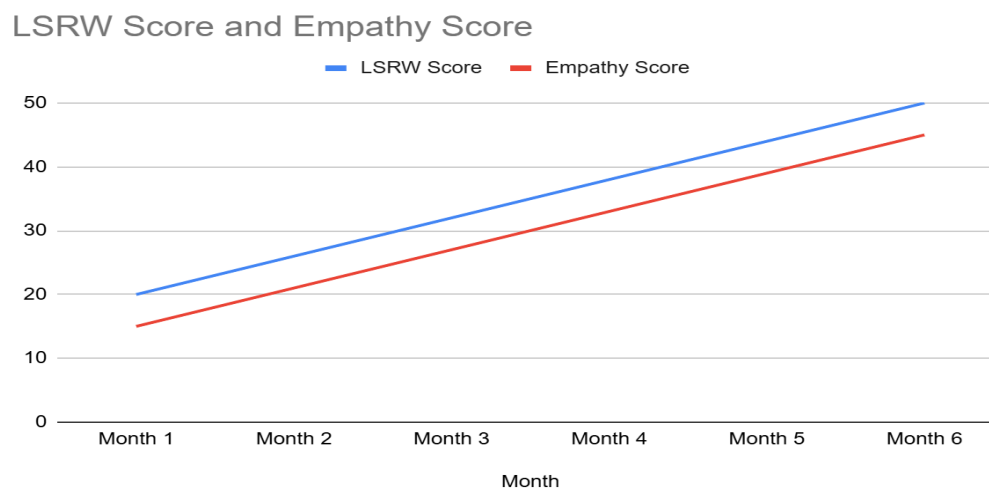
Analyzing the results, it is identified that there is a 30% improvement in the LSRW score and 40% improvement in the empathy level of the students after the administration of the innovated practice, “Themed- time”. Below is a graph depicting the growth rate of the students in both the categories.



**Figure 4:** Growth rate of the students in LSRW and Empathy

The results of the study indicate promising progress, supporting the recommendation for the sustained implementation of the proposed pedagogical innovation. Continuous administration of *Themed Time* over a period of six months or one academic semester is expected to significantly enhance learners' proficiency in LSRW skills and positively influence their perceptions of inclusive themes.

Based on the data collected after one month of implementation, the researcher has projected the potential long-term impact of the practice. The estimated growth trajectory over a six-month period is illustrated in the graph below.



**Figure 5:** Outcome of the long term practice

Any teacher planning to integrate this innovation in their classroom must follow all the above-mentioned steps to obtain the results mentioned.

## CONCLUSION

Creating a joyful and inclusive learning environment is essential for meaningful educational progress. Such a space must not only acknowledge but also celebrate diversity. This study

identifies the specific needs of a diverse classroom and constructs pedagogical activities around socially conscious themes. The results demonstrate clear progress, revealing that the innovation fosters both language proficiency and empathy—making learners more reflective and socially aware.

While numerous studies have addressed pedagogical innovation, inclusivity, and social consciousness separately, the novelty of this research lies in its integration of these elements through the use of digital environments. Moreover, the study moves beyond mere theoretical suggestion by offering a universally adaptable template that can be customized according to learners' age and proficiency levels.

The findings from the pilot implementation confirm that the proposed pedagogical innovation significantly enhances fundamental LSRW skills and learners' engagement with themes of inclusivity. Thus, the study advocates for the sustained and global implementation of *Themed Time* in English language classrooms to promote inclusive, human-centric, and skill-enriching learning experiences.

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