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On enhancing spoken fluency in students using task-based teaching: An exploratory study

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Abstract---A person can identify oneself as an expert in any particular language only when he or she has the potential to communicate both in written and spoken mode of the given language. In order to enhance and develop this, it is essential that one requires a good amount of training and teaching using methodologies and strategies that will enable the students to acquire the language. For a student to develop and acquire expertise in speaking the target language one needs to be taught and trained using effective methodologies and strategies. Students' curriculum and materials used in classroom needs to be designed by taking into account the needs and students demand for theory oral proficiency in the language. The research paper aims at enhancing a students' oral fluency in the given target language by incorporating task-based language teaching methods.

Keywords---speaking skills, fluency, spoken language, task-based learning, task based teaching, communication, language teaching, language learning, learning outcomes.

Introduction

According to Nunan Speaking is a critical skill that is required for one to learn a language and the students' success in learning the language can be measured in terms of their accomplishments in observing their oral communication skills. While speaking usage of meaning and Form are greatly reliant on its context, that includes the speaker himself, his collective expressions and the environment that he is exposed to, etc. It can be anything spontaneous or open-ended or even engaging. However, speech is unpredictable and not always predictable. Language

patterns that repeat in certain situation such as requesting for leave at college or accepting an invitation can be identified. For instance, when a teacher asks her student "what is your problem?" we can expect anything for an answer. It could be a statement, or a request, or a reason or excuse, etc.

while speaking, the learner needs to learn to produce and articulate specific points of the target language such as the linguistic competence, grammar, pronunciation, etc. They need to understand the w's(when, why, what ,etc) and master their sociolinguistic competence. An efficient speaker can acquire and master the language in any given situation.to achieve this it takes more than just pronouncing words. Speaking expresses, one's thoughts. You can articulate one's opinions directly or indirectly. of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW)) speaking skill is one of the most important. Overlap and repetition between speakers use non-specific orientations. students need to hone their skills to be able to communicate well. Nunan (1996) suggests that we could apply bottom-up and top-down distinction to speaking. speakers start with the smallest unit of language like individual sounds and move to master sentences and words this is called bottom-up. If the speakers begin to interact using larger and meaningful sentences that is called as top-down.

Speaking skills can be broken down as micro skills and by mastering these micro-skills the learner can acquire efficiency in the language gradually. micro-skills can evaluate the student's speech production. Trainers must be aware of these micro-skills, that would enable them to plan their lessons. According to Brown (2001), micro-skills of oral communication involve producing chunks of language with varying lengths, to producing differences in allophonic and phonemes. The use of stress and patterns rhythmic structures, intonation, etc also play a vital role. Reduced productions of words and phrases and good number of usess of lexical units is required to achieve pragmatic needs fluency in various levels of speaking and monitoring the production of oral language making use of strategic devices like fillers, pauses, self-corrections, etc to improve the clarity of the message spoken and use of grammatically correct words patterns and rules etc. producing speech in fitting sentences and phrases and expressing meaning in diverse grammatical forms and to accomplish communicative functions that rendering situations by producing pragmatic registers and conventions, and additionally putting use of sociolinguistic features to communicate and interact. use speaking strategies like rephrasing, enhancing key words, giving a context for interpreting, etc. Speaking is one of the most difficult skills to teach. Speaking is a complex skill that does not have a definitive set of rules that it follows. Therefore, it is best taught by giving examples in very naturalistic conversations, such as how to open and close conversations or speaking about one's personal experience, responding etc.

Analysing the cognitive process of speaking, learners frequently come across the use of pauses to combat difficult situations and therefor involve and use different cognitive processes. It is key, that the learners engage and support in developing interaction in an informed 'manner. Language learners go through different degrees of anxiety while the articulate the language. The failure to adapt and acquire the cognitive demands is one reason for the student's anxiety. Learners do not have enough background knowledge and content to pick the content, and

it is not suitable for the activity. learners are not in a position to express in Grammatically correct terms.

The learner usually has a faint idea of the conversation he intends to have, but has difficulty in rendering that into meaningful and correct language by picking the correct use of words or sentences. learners might have a formulated proposition, but they may not be in a position to articulate. In certain learners' poor pronunciation results in embarrassment and thereby avoid articulation of the language altogether. The above factors may affect the learners' performance drastically, and provides a observable change in one's speech. Over-taxing a student's capacity by providing activities that need attention to conceptual preparation, formulation of the same and articulation. As an alternative, we need to provide tasks and activities that focus on various cognitive requirements in order for the learner to develop their speaking skill without stressing. Students need to use elements such as discourse and communication strategies to process. learning objective needs to have clarity for each task and activity thereby the teacher can assess the performance in a realistic manner. Tasks need to be planned in a way in which the learner focuses on expressing the structure and the meaning in a way of interlacing coherence.

Willis states task as "a goal-oriented activity with a specific outcome where the emphasis is on exchanging meaning, not producing specific language forms". Providing students with Tasks surges the learners interest motivates them make meaningful use of language. Tasks are intensive on meaning and have better chances for use in classroom and make for a genuine communication. Using this technique in classroom, classes tend to be more interactive, motivating and effective. In interactive classes when compared to a traditional classroom has space for group or/and pair work. learners are motivated to involve in unprompted and reliable conversations in the classroom space. actual purpose of the course is practiced and everything is original and nothing or nobody is faking. They prepare the students for the world beyond their classroom. While designing the curriculum one should keep in mind that the created tasks should enhance language learning and makes sure that the learners are not just involved but are also encouraged to communicate effectively. Activities and Tasks are significant tools use for effective language teaching, as stated by many researchers, activities and tasks completed using the target language communicatively throwing focus on its meaning to reach an expected outcome, classrooms are a best option for task-based instruction. This favours real language use in a positive and motivative communicative situations(classroom).

Methodology

The study explores enhancing spoken fluency in students using task-based teaching and the effectiveness of certain kinds of task-based. Students and teachers are provided with questionnaires. In addition to that classroom sessions are observed by the researcher to assess the teacher's scope, and opportunities for progress of the student's fluency. The students are given a pre-test to assess their already existing competence and later on a post-test, is given after intervention to assess and understand the development in the student's performance. During the intervention phase tasks and activities were given to

develop the learners speaking skills through TBLT. The students were made to write a diary entry to and talk about their opinion on the using of TBL T in their language classrooms. follow-up interviews were steered with the students to aggregate their opinions on the same.

The current study is can be viewed as an experimental study wherein the data is qualitative and quantitative. Questionnaire, Classroom observation checklist, Interview protocol, Pre-test and post-test were conducted to attempt the study. The collected data throws light on the current classroom practices and the interaction, problems and conversation, etc that the students have in English in a classroom setup is recorded. An all-inclusive report of the research was recorded which comprised of descriptions and settings available in the classroom, and the environment, and surrounding in which the class is setup and the students are exposed to. From the data received a programme was conducted for the instruction providers in other words the teachers that focused on improving ones speaking skill making use of TBLT. The research was conducted for a period of ten days. A pre-test and a post – test one day each. While Three days were dedicated for data collection in classroom through observations and aids such as questionnaires and casual interviews between the student and trainer.

Close-ended as well as open-ended questions are provided in the questionnaire given to the students. The key goal of providing a questionnaire to students is to understand their ideas and opinions on the options available to them having developed their speaking skills, and on the scope that they have before them. While doing a study with select students it is important to understand the profile of the learners and their perception on the objective of this course, they undergo to enhance their fluency in speaking skills. Through the use of questionnaire, we get to understand the student's opinion and views on the provided course book. The methodologies and techniques used by the trainer to teach speaking skills in the classroom can be assessed. The above are some main objectives of providing the students the questionnaire. Teachers were also provided with Questionnaires to understand their take on the same just like the students. Teachers were encouraged to voice out their opinion and to enable them to understand the scope of the skills that they were enhancing in their classroom.

It throws light on the steps that need to be taken by the trainers in order to enhance and develop student interaction and model their curriculum. For our purpose of research, a random select of eight teachers of English from tertiary level were chosen. The selection of this was majorly on the basis of availability and accessibility. The chief aim of the research being observation of teachers in their classroom and observing the scope they have/provide in their students' development of speaking skill, also to understand the information provided by the teacher's and students in the questionnaire that they were provided with. The main focus is to identify if there's a gap between the questionnaires and the classroom practice. Moreover, factors such as environment in the classroom and the interaction they can potentially have, materials used, and the curriculum, are observed. five consecutive English classes of each teacher was observed in order to maintain consistency.

A pre-test was given to the students, in order to assess their initial level of proficiency with regard to speaking skills. Speaking activities such as talk about yourself, talk about your family, what you're your hobbies, describe a place or person, etc was given. Each learner gave his/her views on the topic provided to them, one for and the other against the same topic. After this testing process intervention is given to the student to document and study impact students had in their speaking skills. During the period where tasks are given, clear instructions are given to the students about the task and the procedure to be followed and what the expectations are. Students work in groups or pairs depending upon the tasks given. Tasks such as making an identity card of their classmate by communicating and understanding. Students figure out the personal information, goals, etc. Each task ends with a discussion within the classroom.

A post-test is conducted after the intervention phase and this helps us understand the student's response to the intervention phase and we can understand the influence it had in their speaking fluency to some extent. Post-test is very similar to the pre-test, but the questions differ. The research study was aimed at enhancing the interactional skills in students using the aid of Task-based language teaching. It also analyzes the effectiveness of task-based instructional modules in developing the learners' interactional skills. With the data collected, using questionnaires and interviews the existing state of teaching English is established. Yet we detected those speaking skills of the students was not the expected level, especially in terms of their interaction, and this is evident through the data we collected. The study should identify the learners' problems respect to the skill we are focusing on. Initial results show that an intervention programme designed based on the needs and requirements of the students using the principles of task-based language teaching to hone the communicative skills of the student, the students actively involved and engaged themselves in the task with a single achievable goal as their target.

Conclusion

Therefore, we can rightfully say that TBLT does positively impact students communication skills they show noticeable difference in their fluency. Students communicate confidently and fluently than what they did earlier. We see a tremendous difference in the quality of their task performance and language usage. These positive changes are noticeable post the intervention phase. Hence, we can conclude that from the findings acquisition of language function (spoken) is possible and successful with the use of TBLT. It is both effective and successful. Noteworthy improvement of the students' fluency is noticed, which implies that the tasks given has motivated and encouraged the students to articulate the target language more without hesitations and thereby inducing a positive impact in them. This research throws light to a space that could be experimented more on in the future.

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