

How to Cite:

Nayakam, X. A. M., & Aksharagovind, U. S. (2022). A critical study on enchaning speaking skills. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S8), 2517–2523.

<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS8.12730>

A critical study on enchaning speaking skills

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Abstract--English is one of the most used languages around the globe. It connects people beyond a geography region. Developing ones communication skill gives scope to the capable talents to express their opinions and ideas to the world they live in. Spoken English enables the learner to transform ones views, idea, opinions, emotions, thoughts, etc to gain information to analyse and solve problems and issues that they may be faced with. The study attempts to study the requirements and needs of the learners/students in using English as a medium of communication and to explore ways to enable the student to speak English fluently and confidently which in turn helps them in attain employment and be successful in their careers. The study given below was conducted in two phases –The Pre intervention stage and The Intervention stage.

Keywords--task, task-based learning, task based teaching, communication, language learning, learning outcomes.

Introduction

Man began to talk and listen long before he began to read. It would be rightful to say that language is first and foremost a spoken entity and not a written one. Speaking is not just the oldest but also a major skill that humans possess. One's efficiency in speaking enables acceptance and acknowledged for the speaker as being competent in the language, especially if it is a foreign and non-native one. Speaking is not limited to forming grammatically correct sentences; it rather covers a broad area such as pragmatics, functions and social interaction, etc. Therefore, we see that any foreign language teaching methodology used in a classroom throughout the history has always sought to develop ways to improve the competency of learners in these areas. In a second language teaching and

learning process, speaking can be considered as one of the difficult skills to be taught and mastered. Teaching speaking is a productive skill that is in general considered to be difficult to acquire and learn, as it needs meticulous practice and strong determination in order to achieve high proficiency. The speaker has to pay attention to planning, editing, re-correcting and simplifying the utterances so as to achieve the speaking efficiency. Pronunciation, intonation; stress patterns, etc play a major role in speaking and mastering these prosodic features can be a difficult task for non-native speakers of English. Nunan (2004:48) says speaking involves producing systematic verbal utterances in order to convey meaning. In spoken language, one must have the ability to be listened by others. It has temporary and immediate reception. It has intermediate feedback from the listener during the conversation with others.

Methodology

Task-Based Approach (TBA) has over the years gained popularity in the field of language teaching especially in the last decade of the 20th Century. There are plenty of discussions and analytical studies on the same. There is difficulty in the implementation of this method of teaching in the classroom, the difficulty in elaborating materials following the Task based teaching and the limitations of task-based manuals is one major factor. But we cannot completely ignore the presence of theoretical implications in Task Based Teaching which do not seem to be fully convincing or may lack sound foundations. The design of a Task Based teaching model suggest that tasks may contribute to the production of a more refined and complete foreign language syllabus, helping to encourage students and focus their attention of teachers and learners on the meaning and communicative language use.

Task-Based Language Teaching is specially designed to provide Instructional tasks and activities to students and, the right kinds of teaching processes can be created in the classroom for language learning to take place. Instead of teaching a conventional syllabus in a traditional method, especially a grammar-based syllabus or an objective based syllabus, TBLT argues that grammar and other dimensions of communicative competence can be developed and honed as a by-product of involving learners in conversational tasks like spontaneous personal experiences or with topics with which they are familiar. Intellectual growth and critical thinking can happen only when the learner actively participates and engages oneself in the application of the tasks. Hence, the idea that TBLT tries to mimic is "learning by doing" (Nunan, 2004, p. 12) or what we otherwise call as experiential learning, where a learner's first-hand experience enhances a student's cognitive skills. This will enable the learner to move from what they already know to what they can do or do differently by incorporating the new knowledge and skills that they have acquired. This is done when learner understands and makes sense of his immediate experience, and then goes beyond it through a process of reflection and transformation as suggested by (Kolb, 1984, as cited in Nunan, 2004). Therefore, tasks can be seen as a useful tool to engage the learners in a communicative classroom where learners are encouraged to be more creative, spontaneous and interactive with each other in order to reach the desired outcome through contemplating and strategizing. Since learners use their existing language resources to carry out the given tasks, the outcome may not

only involve language the target learning but also helps in the language acquisition as well. It would focus on meaning, and develops the use of communication strategies and interactional skills (Richards, 2006). Tasks are activities in which the target language is used for communicative purpose to achieve a desired outcome or to obtain the object of the syllabus/ lesson.

Functions, fluency, accuracy, appropriateness, grammar, turn taking skills, relevant length, responding and initiating, repair and repetition, range of words and discourse markers are some important aspects that are integral to developing ones speaking skills these can also be seen as Sub-Skills of speaking. Fluency is nothing but a student/speaker who speaks with a logical flow without any prior planning or rehearsal. In order to achieve this a speaker requires to focus on the meaning while communicating rather than accuracy in activities. Accuracy is when the speaker speaks using words, pronunciation and structures focusing on pronunciation of the words and structures while the tasks are done. Role-plays and simulations require verbal communication and for these using functions, students use phrases for giving advice, request, apologies, etc. Students require to stress on the purpose of communication therefore determining what language is appropriate. To achieve this, the students require to speak with appropriacy deciding their choice of vocabulary and grammar used while communicating.

According to Harmer (2001, p. 269) Fluency in speaking needs language knowledge and ability to process information and language spontaneously without much effort says Harmer (2001, p. 269) The essential elements for speaking fluently are as follows: Connected speech: The speaker needs to be able not only to produce the individual phonemes of English but also to use fluent 'connected speech' while communicating. The connected speech sounds are modified (assimilation), omitted (elision), added (linking), or weakened (through contractions and stress patterning). Students should be given activities that are designed to target in improving the use of connected speech. Expressive devices: Native speakers of English use pitch and stress, modulation in volume and speed, and use physical/verbal and non-verbal (paralinguistic) communication while having a face-to-face conversation. The use of these devices contributes to their ability to convey meaning and message of the speaker more effectively. Students must be able to use supra segmental features and devices to some extent in order to be effective communicators.

Lexis and grammar: lexical phrases are commonly used, particularly in the use of certain language functions. Teachers should hence use a wide variety of phrases as examples for different functions such as agreeing or disagreeing, expressing surprise, shock, or approval, etc. students should converse in specific speaking contexts such as a job interview, common day to day conversation, telephonic conversations, etc with certain useful phrases which they can produce at various stages of a conversation.

Researchers across the field have given different functions for speaking in different ways. Some view the skill to be comprising of two components: one being Production skill and other being interaction skill. Production Skill: This modifies the oral production with the help of facilitation devices such as simplified structures, formulaic expressions, and using fillers and hesitation devices,

compensation, etc. while, in Interaction skills: communicator is proficient and is able to speak their mind and communicate their thoughts and ideas in a way in which the listener understands.

Spoken, visual data and written data that the learners work within the course to complete the task given to them is usually said to be the input technique and the tasks are considered to be the materials used for achieving the objective. Input for the student or the learner could be anything like an article from the newspapers or a magazine, or even a simple flyer or poster. Even Radio and television documentaries and scripts can be an input material. Short stories, poetry and plays, drama Post cards, Picture stories are some other resources that can be used. Once we have an idea about the input material it is important to understand Procedures. Procedures specifies and instructs on what learners should do with the input provided. This is where learning begins for the learner. The only role of the Teacher is to facilitate learning for his learners while the learners engage themselves in the process of their growth. They need to be an active participant. The learner is mostly responsible of their learning outcome. The students need to ensure that they gain knowledge by developing autonomy and their skills. classroom arrangements need to be made in a way that student has the most favourable conditions to enable them to achieve their learning objectives.

In Task-based language teaching framework there are three main and essential phases, they are Pre-task, Task cycle, Task, Planning, Report, and the Post-Task stage. In the Pre-task stage the student or the learner is Prepared to perform tasks in a way that promotes acquisition of a language and they are made aware of the tasks. In the second stage or the Task cycle stage the learner uses the language they already know in order to carry out the given task and improve their language with the help of the teacher's guidance while planning their progress. There are three components of task cycle that is Task, where the learner uses whatever language, they can know parallelly working in pairs or groups to attain the objective of the tasks provided. Meanwhile, the Learner plans their progress effectively in order to maximize their learning progress. Report is nothing but a natural condition of the task cycle. In this phase learners brainstorm and debate in class about their learning outcomes and findings. After which come the post-task stage. In this stage there is scope to reflect on the learners tasks and this helps them identify the areas they need to improve and the areas that they excel in are also understood.

According to Tomlinson (2011, p. 7) there are six basic principles to designing a task-based materials for second language acquisition (SLA). The prerequisite for this is that the learners are exposed to a good, meaningful and understandable input of language that is in use. They need to have a wide range of exposure to language and they need to be involved and engaged in it both effectively and cognitively in the entire language experience. Learners who receive positive impact are likely to acquire their communicative competence when compared to those who cannot. Learners can benefit by observing these important features of the input given and observing on how they are used. Learners need to be provided with the opportunities to use language in different situations and for different purposes. Tomlinson highlights on the impact of this through novelty, attractive

presentation, appealing content and variety. The basic steps required to design a task-based material has been discussed in order to promote oral skills through tasks. This can be easily achieved by customising appropriate speaking tasks keeping in mind the learner and his requirements. Tasks such as information-gap, story-telling, role-play, etc can be used.

Role of Tasks in Developing Speaking skills is that, activities enable learning to happen by using the target language primarily for conveying meaning (Ellis 2003). It boosts the learners' confidence by giving them the chance to use the language in a free and meaningful manner. Combines with the language efficiency that they already have in combination with the limited grammar resources that they have in the new target language they can accomplish the task and this leads to the confident use of the target language by the learner. Willis (2012, p. 139) puts forth that most tasks are derived and should be derived from everyday language and it needs to be real world activities and they need to be closely connected together in order for the learner to make sense and comprehend and connect in order to perform the task effectively. While doing an activity the learner can use the prior knowledge that they possess and take into account the prior experiences which will not only made them an active participant but also makes interesting. Nunan in his research says about five features of task-based approach and he emphasis ones learning to communicate in the target language by introducing authentic texts, that enhance the learners' own personal experience. Language exposure both inside and outside the classroom is essential for the learner to acquire efficiency of the language. Therefore, task play a vital role for a facilitator. It not only provides opportunities but also challenges the language learners at various stages of their learning journey.it can also be seen as a way to encourage learners by giving them first-hand real-world experience to use the target language in the form of pedagogical tasks. Pedagogical tasks give the learners the chance to produce language in a natural setting which is relevant to them and familiar with the learners' personal experience. While doing a task or activity, the learner plays a vital role as they interact and negotiators with the dictators to control their language.

Conclusion

Learners who do the tasks regularly and practice will be in a better state to more spontaneously articulate the target language as the less pressure on them is much less and they are more confident. Six basic principles for designing a task-based material for second language acquisition research is given by Tomlinson. An important criterion to learn a language is that the learners is exposed to plenty of meaningful and comprehensible input of the target language. In order to achieve this the learner needs to be exposed to the language frequently and they need engage themselves actively and effectively and cognitively and experience the language. Students who get a positive impact out of the tasks performed are likely to perform better and acquire more communicative competence than those who do not get this kind of impact. Second/L2 language learners can benefit noticing the important features of the input give and from analysing on how it is used. Students need opportunities that favour their learning and encourage them to use the language for not just academic needs but also for interacting and communication purposes. He throws light on task-based material being very

impactful and they are novel, varied, and is appealing to the learner and it looks like an achievable challenge to the learner. To design task-based model tasks such as role-play, information-gap activity, story-telling, reasoning-gap activity, etc can be used to enhance their speaking skills.

Materials employed in a language classroom play a vital role in enabling a teacher in inculcating motivation, a sense curiosity and enthusiasm in students and spike the interest in them to enhance the learning process. By using classroom material students can be encouraged and channelised to use, elicit, guide and encourage them to use the language effectively. Additionally, ones surrounding and the exposure they have had also influences this. Tomlinson talks about materials, like anything used by a trainer to enable the learners to acquire language which brings about improvement in the students learning process. Tasks/activities such as talk about a picture, Question and answer after reading and analysing a text, acting out a dialogue or a script, fill up a chart, storytelling followed by Q and A, fill in gaps are widely noticed as being a part of the curriculum text books. This study gives other support materials which can help students to improve and evolve their communication skills. These materials are designed for teachers and learners make learning easier and less monotonous. These could include songs, poems, articles, pictures, magazines, newspapers, cue card, etc that can be utilised by the teachers/trainers to develop speaking skill in a language classroom. The tasks and activities provided in this study, for the students are as follows Theme: Places and people, regional cuisines, Tradition and festivals celebrated, etc. Functions such as introducing one self and others, narrating and event or incident, expressing ones opinions or feelings, ageing and disagreeing of a certain topic, talking about ones future plans, requesting something, providing clarifying, providing suggestions, giving instructions, providing descriptions, comparing and contrasting the provided topic or ideas, inviting and declining an invitation, etc. In order produce language of varying lengths and to produce reduced forms of words and phrases; one must orally articulate and show differences among the phones and allophonic variants. Providing oral presentation on an assigned topic, listening for specific information in a conversation or text, using accurate and appropriate pronunciation, intonation, etc. In Task type, tasks such as information gathering, information gap, opinion sharing, sorting, picture description, role-play, matching and opinion sharing, etc can be made used we can hope that materials/tasked developed with the idea of developing ones speaking skills would provide a positive response when the students work in pair or a group. This will enhance lively discussion, exchange of ideas and bring confidence in them. We will be able to see that these materials will have positive outcomes its learners and will make way for effective communication and by developing and enhancing fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, etc of the learners'. These materials will not just inspire teachers to be creative but also by give scope to improve their students' performance. These materials must be customised and adapted to suit the needs and requirement of the students in accordance to their requirements and settings. Efficient and logical practice of these materials will help students to comprehend and think in order to express themselves in more creative and innovative ways. The development of critical thinking in the learners would eventually lend to a more realistic assessment of the= learner proficiency. Therefore task-based

materials must be structured and designed and utilised by teachers and trainers in their language classroom.

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