

Enhancing Speaking Skill through Task Based Instruction

Athira Minu . K

M.Phil Scholar

The Research Dept of English

The American College

Madurai - 625002

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to employ task based instruction to enhance speaking skills. Speaking skills is much neglected by students mainly because of their fear in committing mistakes and they do not show interest in listening to the traditional way of teaching. Learning through tasks help them grasp the language quickly. This paper also discusses the results of empirical study that was conducted in K.R.S Higher Secondary School, Madurai. It establishes that pep-talks enhance speaking skill.

Key words : Pep-talks, productive skill, Task Based Instruction, traditional teaching, learner-centred classroom.

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Introduction

Speaking is the central concern in second language learning and teaching. As it is one of the two production skills that are generally considered to be difficult to master, it requires rigorous and regular practice and strong determination to achieve high proficiency. Compared to other methodologies, Task Based Learning helps students in acquiring speaking skills. Simple and creative tasks help students to grasp the language my research examines how pep-talks helps students to develop speaking skills.

Speaking Skills

Primarily English consists of four skills such as Listening Speaking Reading and Writing. Speaking is of central concern in second language teaching and learning as it is one of the two productive skills that are generally considered as difficult to master as it takes rigorous and regular practice and strong determination to achieve high proficiency. During a conversation, a speaker has to pay attention planning, editing, and re-correcting and simplifying the utterances in order to achieve the objective of speaking. Speaking also

involves tone, intonation and stress patterns and mastering these prosodic features can be a challenge to a non-native speaker of English. According to Nunan (2003) speaking involves producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. It has temporary and immediate reception.

Task-Based Learning

According to Samuda and Bygate, "Tasks have been an element in second language teaching and research for over thirty years, and yet their use continues to invite controversy. A task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning through process or product or both. According to Long and Gookes (1991), Task-Based Instruction enables acquisition process to operate, particularly by allowing meaning to be negotiated. Willis (1996) proposes a framework for information on design and implementation of the task-based lesson. The five principles of Task-Based Instruction are

1. There should be exposure to the worthwhile and authentic language.
2. There should be a use of language.
3. Tasks should motivate learners to engage in language use.
4. There should be a focus on language at some point in a task cycle.
5. The focus on language should be more or less prominent at different times.

Pep-Talk

The teachers can adopt different methodologies in order to help the students to grasp the language. Task Based Learning is one of the best methods that help the students in acquiring a second language in a better and easier way. Pep-talk is such a method that trains

the students to speak English in a precise and effective manner. Instead of making the students speak for a longer duration, which makes both the learner and the co-learners get bored, pep-talks make the students feel more comfortable, as generally, the pep-talk will be only for two to five minutes.

According to Learner's Dictionary, Pep-talk is defined as a short speech that is given to encourage someone to work harder, to feel more confident and enthusiastic. Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines, Pep-talk as usually brief, intense and emotional talks designed to influence or encourage the audience. Cambridge English Dictionary defines pep-talk, a short speech intended to encourage people to work harder or try to win a game or a competition. Macmillan Dictionary defines pep-talk, a talk during which someone encourages you to do something better or to work harder.

Regarding this research, pep-talk has been adapted in a different manner. Pep-talk can also be termed as 'small talk' as it is usually given for two to five minutes within which the whole information is conveyed in a brief and effective style. Embracing this concept in a different manner, the researcher has adopted pep-talk as a means to enhance speaking skill. Wherein the students will be asked to speak for two to five minutes on the topic of their choice. This method is adapted to increase the vocabulary of the students by which speaking skills can be enhanced. As the students are provided with only five minutes they have to be very precise in their speech for which they have to keep accuracy with the words they use.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions.

- What are the problems faced by the students while they speak in English?

- How does Task Based Learning help the students in learning the second language effectively?
- How can pep-talks help learners in developing their vocabulary?
- What method can be adopted to kindle interest in learners?
- Why do students hesitate to speak in English?

Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses framed for the research.

- The students are interested in Task-Based Learning as it is a practice-oriented, relatively speaking.
- Pep-talk helps the learners to enrich their vocabulary and motivates them to develop the reading skill.
- Practising pep-talk helps the students in job interviews.

Task

A task is an activity which learners carry out using their available language resources and leading to a real outcome. In carrying out tasks learners are said to take part in such process as negotiation of meaning, paraphrase, and experimentation which are thought to lead to successful language development.

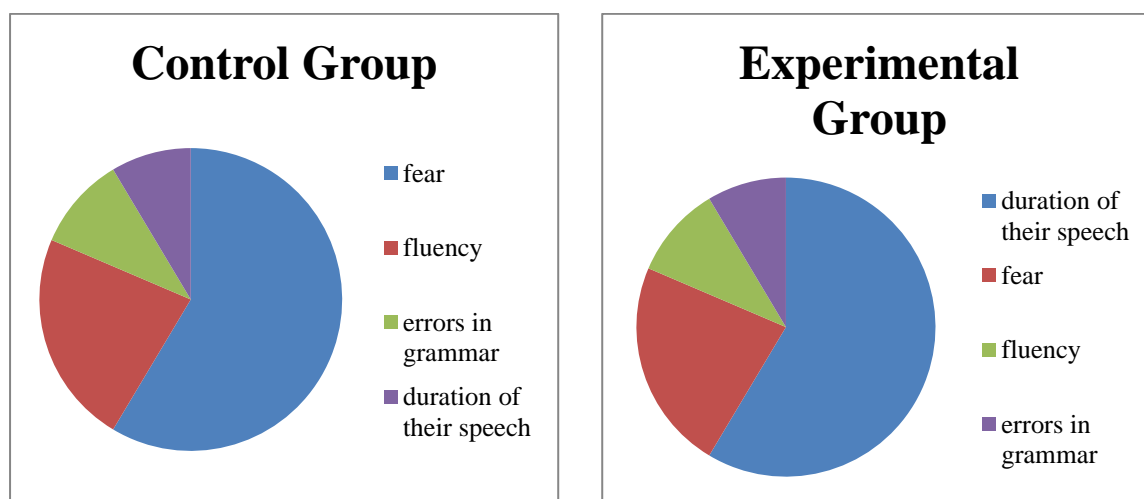
Willis (1996) defines the task as an activity where the target language is used by the learners for a communicative goal in order to achieve an outcome. The primary intention of a task in the means of communicative approach is to exchange meanings.

Regarding this research tasks such as speech tests and debate was conducted to test the speaking ability of the school students. At first the students were divided into two groups

namely, experimental and control group. The tasks were conducted separately to them and the results were as expected. The result from experimental group was much better than the control group.

Individual Task

Speech test were given as individual task for both the groups separately. The control group was given a topic, whereas the experimental group was given freedom to speak on any topic, of their own choice. The students of the control group were not able to speak for more than one minute, they were stammering with words and they felt really hard to limit their ideas within a given topic. Whereas the students of the experimental group were able to speak freely compared to the other group, they did not face much problems in speaking as they were speaking about the topic that they had chosen. Compared to the control group the experimental group excelled well.



Group Activity

A debate was conducted as a group activity, where the students are divided into two groups and topics were given to them. Every student was given an opportunity to speak for

two to three minutes. In this activity every student was very interested to deliver their ideas as they were supported by their fellow members. As the time limit provided to them was about two minutes they were very free in conveying their ideas. It was a kind of pep-talk for them, so they felt comfortable in speaking. As the time limit was less they did not commit much mistakes in speaking.

Conclusion

Practising it regularly will help the students' second language acquisition faster and easier. Doing tasks in an informal manner helps the students to overcome fear and speak fluently. This can also improve the students' vocabulary and which in turn helps them speak precise and clear. Practicing pep-talk helps the students in job interviews as the candidates are always expected to be brief and clear when they are asked to introduce them in personal interviews.

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