

Enhancing Speaking Skills: English and Arabic in the Selected Colleges at Chennai through Activity – Based Approaches

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Abstract – This paper aims to find suitable short activities for enhancing speaking skills in two languages: (i) English and (ii) Arabic of the targeted Tamil medium students from two colleges: (i) The New College and (ii) Kilakarai Bhukari Alim Arabic College. The learners who come from Tamil medium background need to be encouraged at the entry level of their higher studies because they face difficulties in communicating their ideas in English or Arabic. These activities will support the learners to speak independently by generate words and sentences on their own. Ten short activities are applied and tested in the selected classrooms in two colleges. The positive feedbacks have been received from the students which ensure that good results in their speaking skills after the implementation of the activities.

Keywords - Speaking Skills, Activity Based Approach, Communicative Confidence, Enhancing Urban Background Students

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study tries to seek suitable tasks to enhance speaking skills in two languages: (i) English and (ii) Arabic of the targeted Tamil medium and rural students in The New College and Kilakarai Bhukari Aalim Arabic College. This study tries to implement the selected tasks in classrooms to build their confidence level in speaking more and more on their own at the entry level. The students from rural areas with regional influence face a lot of problems to communicate with their peers in English and Arabic in their classrooms who are from an urban atmosphere with moderate speaking skills. The tasks are devised especially to develop their speaking skills which may connect them not only to their peers but also to teachers and finally if, adequate training through tasks is given to them, they will connect to global world independently.

For the above objectives, ten tasks are devised to enhance the following in classrooms of two colleges. This study initially tries to create a rapport between urban and rural students in communicative usages and then to analyse their outputs in oral communication after implementing them with tasks. This study will not only build their confidence level to speak without any fear with their peers but also ensure a good communicative bond in teaching and learning process in the classroom. The paper

attempts to find out how ten chosen tasks are achievable for teachers to enhance speaking skills in English and Arabic of Tamil medium students effectively. This paper provides teachers with simple tasks that they can use anytime during their classrooms. This study helps to enhance the targeted students to jell with other students in a heterogeneous classroom.

M. Long frames his approach to task-based language teaching in terms of target tasks, arguing that a target task is: a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, making a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between. (Long, 89)

The tasks are planned to cater the needs of the students who are from Tamil medium background. The selected students need special attention in teaching when compare to other students in a classroom. They are very reserved and scared of the new atmosphere when they join the college for

Under Graduation after finishing schooling. As Assistant Professors from two different colleges and two different departments, foundation English and Arabic are taught for different branches of classes at undergraduate level, where a lot of problems arise while teaching speaking skills in two languages. Approaches to teaching English and Arabic may be changed to draw the students' attention that will motivate them to grasp ideas quickly like other peer students in the same classroom. As faculty members, the selected tasks have been practically tested in classes for teaching speaking skills at the undergraduate and good feedbacks have been received from the students of two colleges.

2. RATIONALE

It is always challenging to teach speaking skills of two languages to ESL students. They face a tough challenge in understanding English and Arabic speakers from native and non-native speakers and translating their ideas from (i) Tamil to English, (ii) Tamil to Arabic for replying to speakers. These tasks are specially planned for boosting their confidence level in classes before everyone which will help them to get rid of nervousness. These tasks are planned for the following reasons: Firstly, the students can be approached easily through tasks than lecture mode. Secondly, they need to be practically exposed to the experience of a fun way of learning languages and to create rapport between their peers. Thirdly, change in customary method will help to alter the classroom atmosphere and make learning experiencing very easier with focus. Finally, these tasks can be made implemented on the time available in classrooms.

3. THE HYPOTHESIS

When the selected tasks are practiced in the targeted classes for developing their speaking skills of English and Arabic, there are some improvements in learning experiences of the students who come from Tamil medium background.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is initiated by a research question which is : (i) How to approach Tamil medium students through classroom tasks that will support them to speak independently with confidence in English and Arabic?

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was divided into two phases. Firstly, the students were tested at the preliminary level of speaking skills in classroom atmosphere before the research. Secondly, feedback has been taken after implementing these tasks in the classes.

6. SAMPLING

There are two groups of samples taken for this study. (1) Forty students who are studying in First year B.A History and B.Sc Physics in The New College, Chennai. (2). Thirty students who are studying in third year B.A Islamic Studies. The experimental groups have been tested in two phases which are mentioned in the Research Design.

7. TASKS

There are ten selected classroom tasks which are tested in the classrooms are presented in this paper:

1. Quiz for specific information
2. Communicating through Whisper
3. Ready for Attack
4. Nervous Seven
5. Hands Up
6. Trouble your Friends
7. Self-talk
8. Dialogue Translation
9. Network through Thread
10. GD with Three

7.1. Quiz for specific information



In every class, at least three to five minutes should be spent on asking specific questions to the selected students regarding the ideas discussed in the class. Teachers can encourage all the students to be ready for questions and answers session at the end of every class. Teachers can start asking one-word specific answers from the subject. In the following methods, students can be selected for this activity:

ABC mode.

Register Numbers. (Odd/Even)

Ascending or Descending. (Date of birth)

Starting alphabets of the name.

7.2. Communicating through Whisper



In this activity, there will be three groups from the selected class. Each Group consists of three members. Each group will be given six statements to share message by whispering to only one in another group. One has to communicate with the other two in the group. Finally, the three groups will be asked specific questions. We can test them how they understand from their peers and communicate with ideas given in the task. This will give them scope to experience how to listen to their peers and share messages to others by converting ideas from Tamil to English.

7.3. Ready for Attack



In this activity, the teacher needs to start by throwing ten cotton buds towards students and ask them to catch. Then, ask the students to stand and wait for a chance to answer. After they answer, they can sit. Paper rocket also can be used to select students for asking questions. Initially, one can ask easy questions, and then from the topic of discussion in classes.

7.4. Nervous Seven



In this activity, there are seven students selected and given them a topic for discussion. The first person can share one statement and the second person can share two statements and likewise, the activity can be followed up to the seventh student who wants to share seven statements.

7.5. Hands Up



In this activity, ask the students to raise their hands or stand up. Then, give them a topic for discussion. A person who shares ideas can drop their hands or sit down. In this activity, all students will try their level best to share their ideas in public. Finally, everyone has to share ideas, the teacher can consolidate and share ideas on the whole.

7.6. Trouble your Friends



In this activity, one can call one student out and ask him a question. Then, give him an opportunity to call his close friend out to answer for the same activity. Finally, almost everyone will be coming out in the classroom to share ideas.

7.7. Self-talk



In this activity, students can be selected through ABC mode and ask students to describe how he spent one day from 9 am to 9 pm. The selected students can be asked to explain their day to day activities or weekend activities or ask them to narrate their past or recent experiences before everyone in the classroom. This activity will create situations in which students express their ideas and suggestions on their own.

7.8. Dialogue Translation



In this activity, one can use mute videos with only subtitle. For each statement, one can pause and ask three students to interpret or translate in their own language. One can get three interpretations for the given statement and students to learn from each other. This activity will bring out their knowledge of grammar rules and this will give their ideas precisely.

7.9. Network through Thread



This is an interesting activity for creating ideas using thread cube with a group of ten students sitting in a circle. The first student can pick an initial part of the thread and after one idea; the student can pass cube to another by holding the thread and allow others to

continue like that. After the discussion, one can find out who dominated the discussion and how many students shared their ideas.

7.10. GD with Three



In this activity, initially a topic is given for discussion; three students in logical order want to share their ideas continuously with coherence. Students can attempt to share their ideas on their own and they get a chance to express their opinions in order by listening to their peers in a group.

CONCLUSION

As Assistant Professors of English, the responsibilities have been given for developing oral communication skills of the students who are from Tamil medium background. Positive feedbacks have been received from the students in this regard which indicates their ability to practice speaking skills on their own through the selected tasks. These tasks are tested before, during and after finishing regular classes. All these tasks have created a good ambience among everyone in classes. The tasks give chances to students to interact with teachers and their peer students. These tasks are very effective for fresher students who come from Tamil medium to English and Arabic learning atmospheres. When these tasks are introduced at the beginning of the semester, then English and Arabic learning atmosphere may be approached effectively with good teaching and learning process. Students give effective feedbacks when they are asked about these tasks and these support students to create rapport with teachers in better perspectives.

If the above tasks are applied in classrooms, then the classes will be interactive, interesting, and motivating for students to enlighten their knowledge about speaking in English and Arabic. This may lead to subject knowledge with clear objectives. These methods have been implemented successfully in foundation classes since January 2016. This study may be the path-breaking scenario for the students who are from a downtrodden society who come to colleges with fear of communicating their ideas in English and

Arabic. There are three recommendations for teachers: 1. Teachers can modify the selected tasks based on their students' needs. 2. Students should be motivated through short tasks to make classrooms of learning languages more interesting. 3. Students should be motivated to express their ideas and suggestions on their own in English and Arabic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers can plan their own activities effectively based on the activities given in this study.
2. Students should be motivated to speak through these short activities which will build their confidence level.

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