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DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF GRADUATES IN RURAL TELANGANA: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY WITH TASK-BASED ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Communication skills play a vital role in present day world. Among these, speaking skill is a major skill. Most of the graduates from rural Telangana are not very good at speaking skills as they study in local medium of instruction. This gap can be fulfilled when there is a change in methodology of teaching English. Task based language teaching could be used to enhance these skills as TBLT creates a positive environment among the students and promotes language enhancement.

This paper primarily talks about the need of speaking skills in Rural Telangana graduates and secondarily, it advocates how TBLT activities can be used in language teaching to grow their skills.

Introduction

In this globalization, the language 'English' plays a significant role in the world, where nearly everyone uses English as a means of communication. Meanwhile, in India, English is considered as a foreign language and also official language of the nation. It has been introduced to educational institution which is learnt from school level to university level as a compulsory subject to study.

Telangana, a just born state. Many rural graduates go to Hyderabad which is the capital city. Hyderabad is hub for many international business setups and well connected to the world. People from the other states and countries come here for academics, business, jobs and research and it has become the land of opportunity.

Major part of the manpower has been coming from other states and countries to grab the opportunities and our own students after their graduation remain stagnant in this neck to neck competition of jobs due to lacking communication skills in English.

In spite of appropriate syllabus and materials prescribed and designed by various universities. The passed out graduates from both the government and private colleges are unable to their best in job market.

Among the major language skills (LSRW), speaking skills are very important and it decides the students' career in the present market. Students who graduates from rural areas mostly lacking speaking skills and feel very difficulty in expressing their thoughts in English and it also becomes a hurdle for them getting jobs, particularly in interviews and discussions. There are many reasons behind it including pedagogical practices and materials used in the English classroom.

The textbooks prepare students to be ready to enter job directly through education and training which are based on their competences, therefore it does not only improve their productivity but also

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increase the competitive of employment in the global market. But there is no update of syllabus which market demands mostly the speaking tasks useful for facing global challenges.

Speaking is a very important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and their success later in every phase of life. Therefore, speaking class should have more portions. It means that the teacher have to give time as much as possible for the students to speak. English speaking class should be developed through various controlled conversations.

Therefore, language training should aim at designing the Task-based Speaking Activities as "supplementary material" to develop speaking skills and build confidence in them to face the competition.

Review of Related Literature

According to Oxford Advanced Dictionary the definition of speaking is: "to express or communicate opinions, feelings, ideas, etc., by or as talking it involves the activities in the part of the speaker as psychological (articulator) and physical (acoustic) stages." Or "speaking is to make use of language in an ordinary, not singing, to state view, wishes etc. or an act of spokesman".

Penny Ur (1996:120) in her definition on speaking states: "Speaking is the most important skill since people who know a language are referred as "the speaker" of a language. In addition, speaking is the ability that includes all other kinds of knowing. The productive skill in the aural mode".

There are numerous meanings for the term speaking. According to Thornburry (2005: 8) says that speaking is a speech production that becomes a part of our daily activities. Most of speaking activities are in the form of face-to-face dialogs; therefore speaking involves interaction and Widdowson (1978: 59) says that speaking has two meanings; first, it refers to the manner in which language is manifested. Second, it refers to the manner in which language is realized as communication.

Littlewood (1981: 6) opines that the linguistic competence, communicative competence,

strategic competence and social competence are the four domains of speaking skill. The first domain, linguistic competence, requires that students should improve their ability in manipulating language system to express messages or ideas. The second domain, the communicative competence encourages them to differentiate between the forms of language used and the communicative function which is going to be performed. The third domain, the strategic competence will encourage them to improve their ability and strategy to use the language as effectively as possible in a real situation. And finally the fourth domain is the social competence suggests that the students should be aware of social functions of the forms of language used.

Thornburry (2005: 40) proposes the terms of the basic knowledge that enable speech in a second language, as follows: (1) a core grammar (2) a core vocabulary of at least 1000 high-frequency items (3) some common discourse markers (4) a core _phrase book' of multi-word units (chunks) (5) formulaic ways of performing common speech acts, such as requesting or inviting. (6) mastery of those features of pronunciation that inhibit intelligibility.

According to *Martin Bygate's Theory on speaking* (1972:3), in order to achieve communicative goal through speaking, there are two aspects to be considered. The one is knowledge of the language and the other is the skill use in this language. It is not enough to possess the knowledge of the language, but a speaker of the language should be able to use in different situations.

Jeremy Harmer's View on Speaking: Harmer (2001) distinguishes two aspects, 'language features' and 'mental/social processing' with regard to elements of speaking which are necessary for fluent and oral production. The first aspect of the language features, necessary for the oral production involves connected speech, expressive devices, lexis, and grammar. In brief the language features are given below: connected speech- conveying fluent connected speech including assimilation, elision, linking 'r', contractions and stress patterning-weakened sound; expressive devises- pitch, stress, speed, volume, physical-non-verbal means for conveying meanings (supersegmental features); lexis

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and grammar- supplying common lexical phrases for different functions(agreeing, disagreeing, expressing shock, surprise, approval etc.); negotiation language- in order to seek clarification and to show the structure of what we are saying. (p. 269-270)

The list of definitions, meanings, and theory on speaking skills is abundant but the work is very less since our examination pattern only concentrates on writing skills and neglects rest of the other languages skills.

Language classrooms endeavor to engage and sustain learners in the learning process. Instructional tasks are important components of the language learning environment, and ''hold a central place'' in the learning process (Ellis, 2003, p.1). The type of task used in instruction may positively influence learners' performance. Hence, the curriculum or course designer tries to create tasks that foster a language learning context in which the learners can be involved and supported in their efforts to communicate fluently and effectively (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). Among the ways to create this language learning context, Task-Based Instruction (TBI) presents opportunities to employ effective and meaningful activities and thus promotes communicative language use in the language classroom.

Task-based instruction can thus be defined as an approach which provides learners with a learning context that requires the use of the target language through communicative activities and in which the process of using language carries more importance than mere production of correct language forms.

Task-based instruction (TBI) is regarded as an alternative method to traditional language teaching methods because it favors a methodology in which functional communicative language use is aimed at and strived for (Brumfit, 1984; Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). "Knowledge itself is not enough: knowledge has to be used in action."(Martin, B.1987.) A task is an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process.'(Prabhu.N.S., 1987.) Task is an activity which takes place in the classroom. Tasks can easily

be related to student's real-life language needs. Students are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation in a task-based approach. Tasks promote interaction and language learning in the classroom. It is more on learner - centered as well as learning – centered.

Speaking tasks are helpful to fulfill the conditions to practice the target language communicatively. Through design of communicative tasks in speaking classes, fluency can be achieved, and accuracy can be promoted through these pedagogic tasks (Brumfit, 1984).

The British Council reports the following advantages of TBL Task-based learning:

Unlike a PPP approach, the students are free of language control. In all three stages they must use all their language resources rather than just practicing one pre-selected item.

- A natural context is developed from the students' experiences with the language that is personalised and relevant to them. With PPP it is necessary to create contexts in which to present the language and sometimes they can be very unnatural.
- The students will have a much more varied exposure to language with TBL. They will be exposed to a whole range of lexical phrases, collocations and patterns as well as language forms.
- The language explored arises from the students' needs. This need dictates what will be covered in the lesson rather than a decision made by the teacher or the coursebook.
- It is a strong communicative approach where students spend a lot of time communicating. PPP lessons seem very teacher-centered by comparison. Just watch how much time the students spend communicating during a task-based lesson.
- It is enjoyable and motivating.

Speaking is using the knowledge of language effectively for interactions, transactions and for communication in the form of utterances.

An examination of teaching materials suggests that they are more explanations rather

than tasks or task based activities which develop the essential oral communication skills in the graduates.

Therefore there is a strong need to develop the graduates' oral communication skills in English through task-based, contextualize teaching methodology.

The teaching should help the graduates to present effectively and with confidence about a variety of topics in nursing in front of the class

Participate actively in group discussions and able to communicate in English in a classroom.

Designing Task-based teaching. The tasks will be chosen according to the learners' learning style, their interest and catering to specific needs.It is hypothesized that graduates will improve their fluency in speaking English language with appropriate task-based activities.

1- Syllabus designer and text book writers will become aware of using tasks to help the learners to speak English.
2- If the students are taught by using appropriate supplementary materials materials which is contextual and a blend of their day to day life in village/rural area, culture, tradition, etc. and corporate (joboriented) with certain tasks and activities interesting to them surely enhance their speaking skills.

Conclusion

The teaching should focus on the effective use of task-based speaking activities with the graduate from rural areas may benefits to the textbook designers. The researcher's designed material exclusively task-based speaking activities would work as remedy to overcome the speaking skills among the rural students.

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