INVESTIGATING APPLICABLE METHODS AND TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT: - The present study seek to define the concept of varied language input in EFL speaking classes by applying various teaching strategies, techniques and methods. The difference between modern and traditional approaches with regards to efficacy in reinforcing oral competence of EFL learners has a deep investigation in this paper through applying in authentic experimental teaching process. A total of 20 upper-intermediate second year students of Uzbek State World Languages University participate in the experimental process to analyze deeper the issue of examining the applicable approaches and methods to foster the speaking skills. The findings of the study suggest that emphasizing the role of varied input plays significant role in enhancing speaking skills of students.

KEYWORDS: Grammar-Translation method, Direct method, Suggestopedia, Audio-lingual method.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking as a skill of oral communication is regarded as one of the speech activities, so the empirical study firmly takes into consideration beliefs of L2 learners about how they would prefer to socialize in their target language. The current investigation puts special considerations to analyze various latest methods, techniques and tips that can be applied in better acquisition of speaking skills.

The research aims at examining the significance of these methods in language classroom along with the implications that may be brought into action by exploiting them in authentic teaching practice.

Initially, the paper looks through the most widespread types of methods in teaching speaking such as, direct, indirect, audio lingual and total physical response which are highly acclaimed by experts of language teaching

practice and theory. Besides, there will be special connection with applicability of techniques like brainstorming, storytelling, simulation, role-play, story completion, and information gap, picture describing, and finding the difference. In later stages the researcher will benefit from above mentioned points in teaching speaking to L2 learners more effectively. The paper seeks out solutions for integrating these methods and techniques within the speaking classes so that students can accelerate their potential in mastering oral communication in a quick and effective way. Linguist experts have always been intrigued by the question of how to lessen the pressure that is emerged from the complex nature of attaining fluent and perfect speech which can be linked as the primary reason to perceive language learning too complicated by majority of L2 learners. However, there are ongoing researches that have attempted to find out the most applicable methods in teaching speaking taking into consideration learners' both abilities and advantages that may play significant role in better acquisition. The same holds true in this current investigation where the researcher will try to answer the questions like 'What are the common problems in teaching speaking?', 'What are the most approvable methods?', 'How can we improve quality of teaching speaking?', 'Should we apply all these methods or to select the most appropriate one?'.

On achievement of these aims the researcher will conduct an experiment among university students on the basis of communicative and traditional approach whether this will have certain peculiarities in effective instructional delivery of language classrooms. Further, there will be special considerations for the implications of traditional and modern methods by applying them during the experimental period meaning that the participants will enhance the chance in clarifying the most applicable way of learning in speaking classes.

Literature review

The Role of Speaking in Teaching Language

In the field of teaching second languages, speaking is a demanding skill, as Brown (1994), has described with phenomena such as vowel reduction and elision making the production of good spoken language difficult. Lazaraton (2001), also considers that elements such as slang and idioms render speaking a difficult skill to acquire, not to mention stress, rhythm and intonation. Concerning the speaking influence, Baker and Westrup (2003:5-6), propose that speaking has a positive impact on students educationally and professionally.

EFL Teaching Methods and their Correlation with the Development of Speaking Skills

The principles of grammar-translation method

According to the teachers who use the Grammar-Translation Method, a fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to read literature written in the target language. To do this, students need to learn about the grammar rules and vocabulary of the target language. In addition, it is believed that studying a foreign language provides students with good mental exercise which helps develop their minds. The role of the teacher is very traditional. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. Students are taught to translate from one language to another. Often what they translate are readings in the target language about some aspect of the culture of the target language community.

The principles of Direct Method

Direct method was revived as a method when the goal of instruction became learning how to use a foreign language to communicate. Since

the grammar-translation method was not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively, the direct method became popular. This method has one very basic rule: No translation is allowed. In fact, the direct method receives its name from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids, with no recourse to the students' native language (Diller, 1978).

The principles of Audio-lingual Method

The Audio-lingual method, like the direct method is also an oral-based approach. However, it is very different in that rather than emphasizing vocabulary acquisition through exposure to its use in situations, the audio-lingual method drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns. It also, unlike the direct method, has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology. Charles Fries (1945) of the University of Michigan led the way in applying principles from structural linguistics in developing the method, and for this reason, it has sometimes been referred to as the 'Michigan Method.' Later in its development, principles from behavioral psychology (Skinner, 1957) were incorporated.

The principles of Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia, the application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy, has been developed to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful of the negative association they may have toward studying and thus to help them overcome the barriers to learning. One of the ways the students' mental reserves are stimulated is through integration of the fine arts, an important contribution to the method. In this method, learning is facilitated in a cheerful environment. Students can learn from what is present in the environment, even if their attention is not directed to it (Peripheral learning).

The principles of Community Language Learning

The community language learning advises the teacher to consider their students as 'whole persons'. ' Whole-person learning means that teachers consider not only their students' intellect but also have some understanding of the relationship among students' feelings, physical reactions, instinctive protective reactions, and desire to learn. The community language learning method takes its principles from the more general Counseling-learning Approach developed by Charles A. Curran. Curran studied adult learning for many years. He was also influenced by Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology (Rogers 1951; Brown 1994), and he found that adults often feel threatened by a new learning situation. They are threatened by the change inherent in learning and by the fear that they will appear foolish.

Classroom Speaking Activities

Applying speaking tasks in the English classroom is basically important. Harmer (2001: 87-88) mentions three reasons why teachers should conduct speaking in their English classroom. First, through speaking tasks, students can rehearse the skill by having discussions or practicing some conversations. Second, speaking tasks provide feedback for both teachers and students. Teachers may evaluate how well the class is doing and what language problems the class are having. Students can see how easy they find a particular kind of speaking and what they need to improve. Conducting performance on the speaking skill also needs knowledge of possible activities in the classroom. It is important to make students perform meaningful speaking activities. Harmer (2001:

271-275) suggests some activities related to the classroom speaking as presented below :

1. Acting from a script
2. Communication games
3. Prepared talks
4. Questionnaires
5. Simulation and role play

The analysis of the theoretical data in support of the foreign language teaching methods reveals that incorporating each method into speaking classes plays significant role in the development of the EFL learners' oral communication skills along with emphasizing specific age groups, for instance, young learners whose speaking skills can be fostered enormously by applying TPR. As for the other methods like direct, audio-lingual and community language learning the primary objective is to teach language for communication which asserts the fact that they can contribute great share to improve spoken output of the learners. Further, they enhance students' chance to familiarize with real target language speaking environment with the help of constant attachment to the application of target language in giving instructions and conducting EFL lessons.

Also, it is worth mentioning that although other language teaching methods like Silent Way, Suggestopedia and Grammar-translation focus on form rather than meaning, they feature certain essential point that favor in reinforcing speaking skills of the students. Hence, it can be deduced that EFL learners should not restrict themselves with being reliant only one and the same method instead it should be prioritized that teachers need to incorporate variety of the methods so as to lower the potential drawbacks of each method.

Research questions

In attaining more successful outcomes of the experiment, chief considerations were given to the following points:

- What are the most applicable methods in teaching speaking?
- To what extend students will be more competent if they can expand their exposure to different approaches?

Methodology

Research methodology

In the initial stage of the experimental process, the researcher gathered information about the matter of improving speaking skills through perusing articles, journals and scientific papers. The foundations of the research plan were laid by exploring different sources of information in order to accomplish best of the outcomes in further development of educational syllabi.

Then, the researcher clarified the perspectives of the teachers' on the application of the different teaching strategies with the help of the purposefully designed questionnaire for the teachers which would help the investigator to determine the key factors needed to be taken into consideration in teaching speaking.

After that, actual experimental process which included a two- month time frame lasting from first of February till thirty first of March commenced. Each group took part in the research process; the first group 'M' received all instructional delivery through modern approaches while the second group 'T' were exposed to traditional approaches this was to sift the novelty of suggested teaching practice. To start with the experimental lessons, the respondents were allocated with Needs Analysis with the aim of identifying individuals' beliefs on varied language input and cognitive factors that may influence in second language acquisition. The participants of two groups,

experimental and control, were delivered with different instructional delivery. The former was taught applying variety of the learning strategies while the latter received only explanation of the rules and do the exercises to strengthen their knowledge. The researcher struggled hard to integrate all language teaching methods over the experimental process in order to analyze specifications of the strategies in fostering speaking skills. After having been explained rules the students performed different tasks on the base of the learned strategies.

In final stage of the research, the researcher distributed post-tests to validate the practicality and actuality of the research paper by involving participants to perform different tests that challenged their brain to perform their abilities in each learned method. The researcher put special considerations to the final implications of the research so there were excluded minor points so that learners would find solutions themselves later while carrying out post- tests.

The last step was examining and establishing the results in order to validate the credibility of the experimental lessons that focused on examining involvement of varied language input in teaching target language.

Research participants

The sample for the study was selected from the second-year students of World Languages University which is located in Uchtepa district, in Tashkent. The participants comprised of twenty upper- intermediate learners with equal divisions in two groups. Majority of the participants were 19-year-old EFL learners who had fairly well operational command in English. The groups were assigned as groups 'M' and 'T' in accordance with the initials of the instructional delivery (Modern and Traditional approaches) they would be receiving during the experimental period. The

driving force behind this initiative was to analyze the dichotomy between innovative and conventional methods with regards to their efficacy in teaching speaking skills. Nearly one third of the participants had been involved in active daily conversations of target language, English, so they had elusive notion about particular modes of methods, activities and techniques that would favor in boosting one's performance in oral communication. The respondents of the study consisted of a fairly equal amount of both genders, however, girls dominated over boys accounting for 61% and 49% respectively. In accomplishing better outcomes, the views of each gender were taken into account in this current paper.

The students of the experiment were of one and the same ethnic group, Uzbeks who handled complex academic vocabulary in English as well. Thus, it did not lead to any noticeable misunderstanding between the researcher and students. They willingly abided by all terms and conditions of experimental lessons.

Analysis of the data

Throughout the research three types of data were collected. First of all, the researcher gathered the opinions of teachers and future teacher-students on the matter through questionnaires whose responses were the preliminary essential data in clarifying the matter of applicable effective techniques, strategies and methods to reinforce speaking skills. This data helped the researcher to outline the lessons and to choose the methods for the investigation. The second questionnaire was collected from the students in order to know their opinion and knowledge about the English language, particularly about speaking. Further, they analyze students' hardships that challenge them most while mastering competent speaking skills. This data helped the researcher to know about the

learners' level and their motives which were of the greatest essence to improve the quality of the lesson by taking into account learners' specific interests and needs. Finally, the last type of data was gathered during the study according to the results of pre and post test results of the students which indicated accurate measurements of their abilities in handling with speaking tasks; the former was catered for checking students' background knowledge while the letter was conducted to assert the efficacy of the experimental lessons by carrying out final exams.

Pre-tests

At the beginning of the study, the researcher took a sample of pre-test in order to clarify the students' overall awareness concerning the level of their language proficiency. The learners were distributed a handout with different tasks. There were a multiple-choice and true/false question types with pictures on the handout. The experimenter asked the learners, firstly, to look through the task and speak about their weekends, secondly, to find answers for the questions provided by speaking aloud and do not shy making a mistake. While they were undertaking the task, she observed what modes of learning strategies were being used. Furthermore, she asked the students to be able to predict some words and not to lose concentration at the most.

Post-tests

The investigator presumed to make sure whether the students developed their language skills through the use of effective strategies. She chose the rating from 25 to 30 score scale as an evaluation system for participants' involvement in the experiment. It should be mentioned that at the end of the research the investigator compared the results of the pre and post- test in order to validate the reliability of the suggested teaching methods whether they improved language competence of the learners or not. This was the exclusive research tool to ascertain the actuality and reliability of the research paper by giving relevant comparisons on the overall achievements of the subjects. The process of data collection was successfully finished. The researcher gathered all the information and began analyzing them. All the collected data were used to determine the efficacy of the teaching process. Every fact was carefully learned.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that to educate EFL learners through variety of techniques in speaking classes has beneficial effects in their academic progress. According to the data reported in questionnaires it can be concluded that students have differing attitudes towards the application of various approaches in language classrooms. The chief considerations in selecting the groups were based on the implications of the conducted surveys that focused on appraising individuals' preference on two types of the approaches: modern and traditional.

The participants of the study stated that their previous language learning atmosphere did not emphasize excessively the involvement of different teaching methods. Consequently, they seemed to be unaware of the efficacy of particular methods such as total physical response and audio-lingual methods that are highly acknowledged by linguists to be of the greatest essence in developing spoken output. This was carried out as a top priority due the fact that the main target of the experiment group "M" was expected to be taught on the basis of aforementioned methods along with including direct method. The other group 'T' was taught on the basis of the traditional approaches like task-based and context-based.

The results of the study also show that acquisition process of the students has been improved as a result of the teaching practice they are engaged in. Majority of the students claimed that the experimental lessons they had been exposed to was very helpful in terms of selecting appropriate learning strategies for themselves. Also, they affirmed that being introduced with current teaching practice they discovered new encouraging motivational initiatives to foster their spoken output. Especially, total physical response method and the application of direct method, which disregards the usage of L1, were approved mostly since the learners noticed substantial improvements in their oral competence as they consisted of task- oriented tasks to practice during the lessons.

As a final consideration, it can be summarized that research found appropriate answers to the qualification paper questions. The benefit of the usage of effective strategies for developing speaking skills and mastery of language proficiency were highly evaluated. The students in the experiment were satisfied with the presented experimental lessons. Further, they noticed positive alteration in the way they produce speech in L2. The process of teaching and learning helped to establish enjoyment in speaking classes that resulted in reaching intended outcomes of the study.

Conclusion

Developing the speaking comprehension of foreign or second language learner is a difficult task. It requires more attention of teachers and regular practice of speaking skill inside or outside the classroom. The best way to do that for many researchers is to use the real speech as using effective strategies. The current study focuses on the learners' opportunities to engage with the real speech of native speakers in improving their comprehension in speaking.

It is worthwhile to note that there were some factors that resulted in the limitations of the study. The first and major problem was the time frame which covered very short period. The second was the size of the population selected for the experimental study. Specifically, this might have led to the overgeneralization of the research findings. Therefore, it would be better to duplicate the results of the study in other educational establishments and other settings in order to validate the practicality of the research paper. For instance, it should be conducted among smaller age groups as the study mainly concerned with older age groups and level, thus in order to clarify specific patterns of the suggested teaching process further researches should be carried out.

The research findings helped to clarify several essential conclusions both for the language educators and EFL learners. Furthermore, it was much clear from the contrast between pre-tests and post tests taken from the subjects. The final indications of them facilitated the researcher to make relevant comparisons in support of the research questions. The actual achievements of the subjects could be examined exclusively with the help of the data presented in these assessment tools. So, the ultimate aim of this study was to show whether it is possible to develop the speaking comprehension of learners through the use of effective strategies. It was shown that using different effective strategies, learners can develop their speaking skill, reduce their problems in understanding the incoming messages and have the chance to correct their pronunciation of certain words. Moreover, they can learn new words, vocabulary and more than that speak fluently. The analysis of second-year students' pre- and post- tests' results showed that the learners have chances to improve

their speaking through the use of as effective tools in providing the real speech.

Students' attitudes were positive towards the use of effective strategies for developing speaking skills. They were fairly optimistic and realistic about the outcomes of the recommended teaching methods, techniques, strategies and approaches that created very enjoyable language learning environment. Moreover, it was highly acknowledged by learners that they could enjoy the efficiency and applicability of the various strategies if one does not accommodate with their learning styles. This would in itself tackle the issue of language learning deformities which is regarded to be the incapability in handling with the operational command of the language effectively, particularly, in comprehending the new information in target language.

As recommendations of the study following can be suggested to investigate and apply in further education.

- It would be beneficial if applying and implementing certain materials in classroom in the World Languages University's classroom such as English dialogs, songs, Video, to engage students to practice the speaking task.

-Training and bringing from time-to-time native speaker as a real source of English language.

Helping learners in choosing the appropriate material would enhance them in practicing the speaking skill.

-It would be more reliable if it was designed a material and implement in classroom to investigate deeply the learners weaknesses in improving their speaking.

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