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Assessing the ways of Interactive Speaking Skills through Pictures at BS Level

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Abstract

The wide spectrum of language compels the readers to find out the exact crux of the language itself. English has become the most crucial and dynamic language in the world. It has become a dire need of this age. Speaking is a significant skill to learn. The current study evaluates the ways to improve the students' ability to speak English by using their own pictures through pair work. Major objectives of the study were to identify the problems of the students in speaking skills and to improve this skill of the learners by using pictures. Research design was mix method of research. Hypothesis of the research was that the students can improve their English speaking skills by using their own pictures. Sample of the study was taken from the Islamia university of Bahawalpur-Pakistan. Stratified sampling technique was used to collect the data. The research data was collected by using interview and questionnaire. It was found that the students were motivated to interactive speaking by using their own pictures. Some of the key recommendations include – strengthening of the teacher development initiative, redefining the entry and exit levels of the learners, providing alternative and supplementary instructional materials and reforming the assessment system.

Key Words: Language speaking, proficiency, Picture Making, Pair work.

Introduction

In the English communicative aspect our community is at a backstage. Speaking is a skill which deserves attention at every bit. But unfortunately in Pakistan most of the people do not use English language in their daily life. Therefore, it becomes a greater responsibility of the English language teachers to improve the speaking skills of the students. According to Brown (1994); Burns and Joyce, (1997) “Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information”.

Language is a system of systems. It is not a random collection of items. Patterning is all important. Each language has its own structures, its own system. It has its own unique way of organizing its units into an internal structure. Same is the case with English. Spoken English seems to have become essential for social and career advancement. But no practice is provided to students in Speaking English Language. They passively hear the lesson and attend the class. We cannot afford to isolate ourselves and live in any soft protective covering in this computer age where knowledge is spreading at a breath taking pace. We must have proficiency in this language so that we may be able to benefit from the original books on various subjects and disciplines being published in thousands every year.

The picture activities focusing on ESC have a wide use. Ruis (2003) said that teaching by showing pictures can make the students remember more, more impressed, more interested and more focused. Practice makes the man perfect. If the teacher tries to encourage students to speak by using as many ways as possible and creating a good language speaking environment, students will speak actively, willingly and naturally. The use of pictures provides an interesting environment for language learners. They become more excited to speak in the target language as their interest develops.

Researchers think that teaching English speaking skill to the students with their own hand made pictures is a healthy technique. So, researchers think that Ruins (2003) is correct in his approach towards improving speaking English skill by showing pictures. The focus of the current study remained on the same part in a little difference that students will learn spoken skill with the help of their own hand made pictures.

Research Background

It is noticed from the past that teaching speaking skills is really tough job. The Students and the teachers feel difficulty in its use. While learning, whenever some spoken activity comes, the teacher skips that activity by saying that it is not important. At the same time students find pronunciation and sentences structure very difficult while using in conversation. In Pakistani public universities, this problem has remained unsolved yet. We can say that it is an issue needs to be solved. But from last few years, some interesting ways have been introduced in private classrooms where spoken English is taught with the help of pictures and authentic material but in Government sector the old situation is still present. So we need some more logical methods of teaching which can enhance students' motivation in their English speaking classes. Teaching speaking skills through pictures is really very interesting method.

Significance of the Study

The teaching of English generally and the problems of Spoken English are particularly similar in almost all the Government universities of the country with the few exception. This fact demands a country wide survey of the Government universities to bring out a real situation. The present study provides a remedy for this problem. To create interest of the students in English spoken class is the first step. After that they themselves start to take participation in spoken activities. This study tells that with the help of student made pictures, English spoken skill can be made interesting.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the current study were:

1. To identify the problems of the students in Speaking Skills.
2. To improve the Speaking Skills of the students through pictures.
3. To enable the students to speak fluently with the help of their hand made pictures.

Research Hypothesis

Teaching spoken skill with the help of students' made pictures create motivation in students to learn it.

Literature Review

Speaking in traditional methodology usually meant repeating after the teacher, memorizing a dialog, or responding to drills, all of which reflect the sentence – based view of

proficiency prevailing in the audio lingual and other drill – based or repetition based methodologies.(Bygate, 1987)

The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second – language or foreign – language learners. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency. Oral skills have hardly been neglected in EFL/ESL courses (witness the huge number of conversation and other speaking course books in the market), though how best to approach the teaching of oral skills has long been the focus of methodological debate. Teachers and textbooks make use of a variety of approaches, ranging from direct approaches focusing on specific features of oral interaction (e. g., turn – taking, topic management, and questioning strategies) to indirect approaches that create conditions for oral interaction through group work, task work, and other strategies (Richards, 1990)

Writing about the functions of pictures Wright (1976: 42) says: “A sequence of pictures is more likely to guide the students to use certain language than a general stimulus pictures. The question set on these pictures can lead to a close control of the type of answer, and yet provide a variety of interpretation”. From the review of related literature, the researchers found some studies had been conducted using the pictures through pair work in improving their ability to speak English. Some of them: (1) Clark and Clark (1977) stated on speaking talk in order to have some effect on their listener. They assert things to change their state of knowledge. They ask them questions to get them to do things for them; (2) Shannon and Weaver in Jabu (2000) on the speaking found that the model of a communication system into Interpersonal Communication through speech. In this model, an information source emits a message, which is encoded for transition as signal. This signal passes through a Channel to a receiver, which decodes the message for use at its destination. (3) Sari in Nappu (1995) who investigated the use of pictures in teaching reading concluded that there was a significant difference between the students reading achievements by using text with pictures and that without pictures.

Role of Pictures in Speaking Skills

A wise statement says ‘I hear I forget, I see I know, and I do I understand’. This means that if we have learning experience by observing, drawing, doing and also what our eyes see and catch most of the time will stay long in our memory. Therefore, the statement strengthens to

improve the student's ability to speak English by using pictures (observing and then drawing pictures) of certain objects in the classroom as media to teach English. Pictures as visual aids will attract students' attention, and motivate them to learn. In addition, using students' own pictures means that the students create or construct their knowledge as they attempt to bring meaning to their experiences.

The Role of Pictures as Instructional Media

In general, according to Latuheru (1988) the use of instructional media can give rise to certain advantages in the teaching – learning process:

- Attracting and increasing student's attention
- Helping to cope with the difference of the student's experience due to differences in their social and economic background
- Providing learning experiences that may be difficult to get in any other way
- Helping to arrange the experience of the students to acquire systematically to promote their cognitive development

Research Methodology

It is very important for the teachers to adopt as many ways as possible to let the students practice English in class. We believe the success of this teaching strategy is mainly due to the fact that the learners can choose what they want to read, listen to, watch, and talk about in class. The researchers tried to get the results through qualitative research being focused on improving the students' ability to speak English using their own pictures through pair work. The subject of the research consisted of thirty seven students of BS level from the Islamia University of Bahawalpur-Pakistan. This research had one dependent variable and one independent variable. Seven lesson plans were given to teachers where English speaking skill is taught with the help of drawing pictures.

(1) The independent variable of this research was the teaching device using students' own pictures through pair work. Using students' own pictures means the pictures belonging to the student (e.g. pictures taken from magazines and newspapers) or the pictures that the students had drawn by themselves. Pair work was a teaching technique/activity which allowed students to act in accordance with the assignment.

(2) The dependent variable of this research was the students' ability to speak English.

It was empirically by the students' mastery of using their own pictures through pair work which covered fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, structure, discourse and the social context of speaking. To collect data, the instruments to be used were:

(a) Interview for students (b) Questionnaire for teachers

Research Participants

Sample of the students was consisted of mixed ability students. Students who had achieved up to 39% marks in their previous annual examination were categorized as below average, the students who had achieved marks ranging 40% to 59% were categorized as average students and those who had achieved 60% and above marks fell in the category of high achievers. This population was consisted of 37 students of BS level.

Research tools

Tools for this research and data collection were interview and questionnaire.

Interview

Ten questions were framed to ask in interview. After that the selected students were allocated time and place according to their availability. Students were interviewed on daily basis and their interviews were recorded in mobile phone. Before the interview, the students were given question to study for the facilitation in interview. After recording student's interview the recorded material was copied in computer and all the interviews were then typed for further proceedings.

Questionnaire

The researchers found the opinions of 20 teachers by giving them a questionnaire separately. They were asked to mark tick what was correct in the questionnaire. Each questionnaire had 10 questions. These questionnaires were given to different college teachers. These teachers were of BS level. The departments were Translation Studies and Language Teaching, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur-Pakistan.

Procedure

For this present study mixed method research style is chosen. Teachers' questionnaire result is elaborated in quantitative manner. While students interview is analyzed in qualitative style.

Data Analysis**Students' Interview**

After attending the planned classes, an interview was conducted by the students. The interviewers asked different questions from the students written on the interview protocol. When students were asked about their feelings in their planned classes where they had to prepare their own pictures and with the help of their partner they had to speak in English or same like activities, they became excited. Most of them belonged to middle class families so that such technique was a new and unique one for them. Students told that they felt motivated in such classes. They had a chance where they had to perform something not the teacher. This feeling gave them a better support and they started to take more participation in speaking English. They also felt confident as they were having an opportunity to express their own ideas related to the topic. They became excited in work with their partner. So they felt that it was more beneficial for them while drawing their own pictures and then describing them.

Analysis of Teachers questionnaire

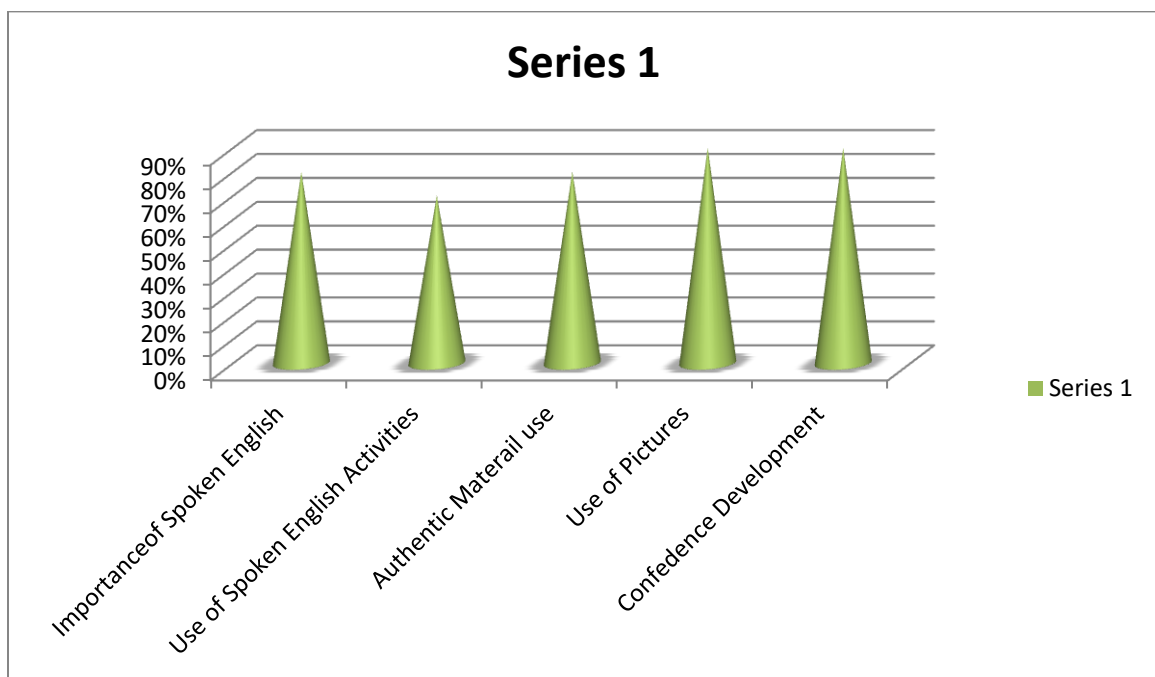
Twenty teachers were provided a questionnaire. In that questionnaire, eight questions were asked. When the question was asked about the importance of spoken English in their classrooms, 12 teachers ticked on "NO" because they thought that English spoken skill is a difficult task. 10 teachers said that these activities must not be included in their English text books as this is just wastage of time.

The use of authentic material is very important now a days. But in English spoken classes its use is necessary. From 20, 18 teachers said that authentic material is very important in language teaching classes. For teaching, resources are very important but in government colleges these resources are not provided. Teachers and students lack resources. 19 teachers told that in government universities less resources are provided to them according to the needs of teaching English language.

Pictures attract human beings at every stage and same is the case with students. 17 teachers said that the use of pictures always makes their lesson plans interesting for the students. As the teachers were provided with researchers' made lesson plans in which students had to perform different spoken activities after working in pairs and making their own pictures, so when

teachers were asked about the progress of the students in those classrooms, the result remained 100%. Means all the teachers admit that every student showed interest in those classrooms.

Factors	No. of Teachers
Importance of Spoken English	80%
Use of Spoken English Activities	70%
Authentic Material use	80 %
Use of Pictures	90 %
Confidence Development	90%



Findings

It was found that the students felt confidence among themselves after making and presenting their own picture through speaking skill. They were highly excited and motivated to speak about their pictures and past events, parties or picnics.

It was found that students felt motivated while describing their own pictures and when they were asked to share it with their pair. It really helped them in improving speaking skills. Even the dull students showed a greater interest in such English spoken classes.

It was found that the students were confident as they were given an opportunity to express their own ideas related to the topic.

Recommendations and suggestions

For this purpose, following suggestions are being presented to solve the problems and for the betterment of teaching speaking skills in these departments. The first and main suggestion is that trained English teachers should teach the Speaking Skills. There should be refresher courses during summer vacation to refresh the knowledge of the teachers and the learners of Speaking Skills. It is strongly suggested that such teaching strategy “Assessing the students’ ability to speak English using the pictures through pair work” could be continually implemented in teaching speaking skills.

Conclusions, Suggestions and Recommendations

Data has been collected to find out the facts for the under sight problems. After analysis and interpretation of data, it has been concluded that the teaching of English Speaking Skills in Govt. universities is facing numerous problems that is why the standard of English in these departments is deteriorating day by day. Teachers know nothing about the methodology of teaching Speaking Skills. Therefore, teacher’s weaker knowledge is directly affecting the teaching of English Speaking Skills. Majority of the teachers who are teaching English have favored that, pictures are beneficial in teaching learning process. The teaching of Speaking Skills becomes more effective with the help of pictures.

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous parts, the following suggestions were made: (1) The implementation of teaching English in this research using student’s own pictures through pair work as teaching strategy could nurture the students’ motivation in improving their ability to speak English both at the first cycle and second cycle (2) The use of students’ own pictures through pair work as teaching strategy could improve the students’ ability to speak English significantly. This led to the conclusion that using of students’ own pictures through pair work as a teaching strategy is a need in English language teaching and learning for

improving their ability to speak English in terms of vocabulary, grammar, discourse and their performance based on the context of situation. It has brought a good nuance and variation in English language teaching particularly in teaching speaking ability.

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